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## **SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY – THE PLUS EMBARKS ON A NEW COLLABORATIVE PATH**

As part of the restructuring at the PLUS, the previous departments of Sociology, Social Geography and Economic Geography have formed a joint department. This cross-faculty restructuring has not been obvious, but this merger proved to be quite exciting.

Indeed, it is even a cooperation of disciplines still unique at institutional level among universities in the DACH region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). Not only does this merger provide opportunities for innovative research projects, but it is also highly topical and should attract students with a variety of research interests. In fact, shared teaching activities were already implemented and will be expanded in the near future.

### **Interrelations between physical and social dimensions of space**

Overall, the cooperation between Sociology and Social Geography at the new department is not understood as a combination of research subjects, but rather as a research agenda connecting the interrelations between physical and social dimensions of space being focused on both in Sociology and Social Geography. This focus is even more relevant as the global society is undergoing fundamental socio-ecological transformations triggered by these interrelations of physical and social dimensions of space which are also necessarily reflected in the latest developments of the two disciplines.

The dynamics of global transformations triggered by these interrelations, however, show unequal consequences in different regions, such as new kinds of centre-periphery structures, shifts in the meaning of nation states or changes in geopolitical power structures. Moreover, global transformations influence or even shape living conditions of all individuals; they also pose major challenges for urban environments which have to organise production processes, work and living spaces as well as mobility, preferably in a resource-saving and low-emission way. All that has

to be considered against the backdrop of blurring of socio-spatial boundaries, forced flexibility and accompanying risks of poverty.

The new department critically analyses all these dynamics of socio-ecological transformations and pays special attention to new and old social inequalities. Inequalities arise due to social conditions of life-style both on the level of individual social positions and/or or the specific physical environment. Furthermore, people's life can also be influenced in such a way that privileges for one social group precisely generate problems for other social groups who are more or less affected by their spatial 'proximity'.

### Digitalised social spaces

At the new department, the research agenda is also focused on transformations by digital communication technology which are causing changes in the organisation of space and how these changing spaces are experienced. We develop innovative approaches and methods for analysing digitalised social spaces in order to better understand how digitalisation influences the dynamics of social life and contributes to socio-ecological transformations.

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Those interested in the new department and its research agenda and teaching activities can visit this [website](#)

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Photo: Some sections of the department are housed in Freisaal (former NaWi). | © Luigi Caputo



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