



# IEG

Leibniz-Institut für  
Europäische Geschichte

## Research Programme for 2018–2023

The theme of this research programme, which has been running since 2012, is »**negotiating differences in modern Europe**«. It implements the objective enshrined in the Institute's statutes of researching the traditions, changes and crises of religious, political and social differentiations in particular, as well as the effects of these in Europe. It is cross-departmental and pursues current academic questions. It facilitates the historical-critical scrutiny of both contemporary self-definitions of Europe and normatively loaded analyses. Instead of declamatory statements about tolerance, diversity and pluralism as characteristics of Europe, the interest is in the various forms, actors, developments and cycles in the generally conflict-laden negotiating of differences, and in the process nature of differentiations. Europe is understood as a laboratory for the development of forms of regulating and confining – but also producing and maintaining – otherness and inequality. The conflictual dynamics of the space known as »Europe« arises out of the manifold interactions and involvements that have led to exchange, appropriation and integration, as well as to exclusion and confrontation on the continent and beyond its borders.

Since 2018, the theme »negotiating differences in modern Europe« (i.e. since c. 1500) has been pursued in a second phase with *new focuses*, which trace in a trans-epochal perspective the creation of differences, the interaction of various categories of difference, as well as their contingent hierarchies.

By researching the conflictual interplay between pluralisation and marginality, the IEG investigates, *firstly*, the challenge that plurality poses for the pursuit of unity and the conditions under which a respect for diversity and multiplicity developed or was rejected. Additionally, the projects enquire into how individuals and groups found themselves in a marginal position or were able to use this position to further their own ends, and how specific actors claimed the authority to speak on behalf of, and advocate for marginalised groups.

*Secondly*, the IEG examines the socially impactful dialectic of the sacralization and desacralization of action-guiding ideas, and asks how »sacrality« as a negotiable resource for the creation or bridging of differences is invoked or abandoned. Proceeding from the insight that experiences of difference are made palpable and reflected by mobility in particular, the IEG analyses, *thirdly*, the significance of mobility and the crossing of boundaries – spatial, social and conceptual – for processes affecting individuals and groups. It investigates how transnational and trans-cultural boundary-crossing influenced the ascription of religious, ethnic, cultural, social and gender-specific affiliations.



Through the joint work in the research areas, the disciplinary research interests of the two departments increasingly interlock with each other and receive stimuli from the [Digital Historical Research Unit | DH Lab](#). The latter was established in 2019 as part of a so-called minor strategic expansion. The aim is to systematically incorporate digital processes and instruments in the sense of »embedded digital humanities« into the academic work of the IEG and its research areas. It is also intended to promote the shared use and continuing use of digital research data and the integration of this data into open access publications.

The cross-sectional publication [On site, in time. Negotiating differences in Europe](#) makes the research perspectives and project results available to a broader public. It focuses on »sites« where the varied and conflict-laden negotiating of differences in European history is concentrated in a quintessential way. The articles demonstrate the creation of differences, the often conflict-laden negotiating of these differences, and the strategies that were developed to promote, alleviate or remove these conflicts. Up to 2023, further »On site, in time« articles emerging from current and future research projects at the IEG will be added.

## Research Area 1 »Pluralisation and Marginality«

The dynamic relationship between pluralization and marginality in politics, religion and society from the 16th to the 20th century is central to the work of this research area. On the one hand, it investigates processes of diversification, as well as the tensions between them and completing concepts of unity. On the other hand, it examines the significance of marginality for processes of pluralization, and also ultimately of differentiation. The research area analyses processes for the regulation of plurality, strategies for marginalizing others and oneself, and practices of advocacy and affiliation.

The research area examines four manifestations of the relationship between pluralization and marginality, which structure the projects in four interlocking topic areas. Firstly, a number of projects follow *intra- and interconfessional differentiations* as strategies for creating differences. Secondly, the interplay between self-definition and external control is analysed through the prism of the actions of *minorities in spaces of religious/ideological pluralism*. Thirdly, the research area turns its attention to specific institutional mechanisms for regulating conflicts in the early modern period and the 19th century, taking the example of the *regulation of differences of religion and worldview in the context of state-formation*. Fourthly, a number of projects examine the *depictions, forms of articulation and practices for representing marginalized groups and communities* – in the form of advocacy for one's own community and claims to advocacy for others in need of assistance.

Advocates of European integration use the slogan »united in diversity« to depict the ideal of plurality as a fundamental characteristic of Europe. But is plurality really part of the DNA of Europe or is it an invention of the postwar period intended to legitimize the process of European integration? Research area 1 contextualises the emergence of the idea of a pluralistic Europe in the history of the modern era. By means of case studies from the religious and social history of Europe between the 16th and the 20th century, it sheds light on the negotiating of differences in politics, religion and society from the perspective of the dynamic relationship between pluralisation and marginality. On the one hand, processes of diversification are investigated, as well as the tense relationship between these processes and competing concepts of unity. On the other hand, the research area examines the significance of marginality for processes of pluralisation and, ultimately, of differentiation. How did the construction and perception of cultural, social and religious diversity and the way this diversity was negotiated change through history? And what happened to those who were not understood as part of the majority or who did not define themselves as part of the majority?

The research area investigates – partly with digital quantitative processes – four expressions of the relationship between pluralisation and marginality: (1.) strategies for the creation of differences, (2.) the interplay between self-definition and external control, (3.) institutional mechanisms for the regulation of conflicts, and (4.) the practices of articulation of marginalised groups and their advocates. These phenomena are researched using a diverse range of primary sources, ranging from ego-documents to journalism, images, and official documents. The projects can be divided into four topic areas, which are not thought of as mutually exclusive, but rather as interlocking.

Firstly, the research area investigates *intra- and interconfessional differentiations*. The example of controversies within Protestantism from 1548 onward shows how debates conducted through the print media, in which the emergence of different theological positions was manifested, could lead to the establishment of doctrine in a way that was consensus-oriented and excluded dissenters (I. Dingel et al., *Controversia et Confessio*). In the context of the historiographical treatment of these processes, the use of the term »orthodoxy« since the 18th century has facilitated the analysis of how categorisations emerged in academic discourse, which were then used in a polemically pointed way in the controversies between the competing doctrinal positions (C. Witt, *Marginalisation*). Finally, based on the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe the research area investigates how in the 20th century interconfessional differences were interpreted as an expression of religious richness, and played a constructive role in specific forms of church community (C. Witt, *GEKE*).

Secondly, there is a focus on *minorities and their actions in a religiously or ideologically plural space*. For example, the Anabaptist congregations that existed from the 16th century illustrate how a partial social separation, which was chosen by the congregations in question, could be justified in religious normative terms, the arguments that could be employed to propagate it, and the reactions this could provoke in changing political contexts (H. Jürgens). Taking the example of the Catholic church in the Netherlands, a project is investigating how intra-confessional differences escalated to a schism between 1650 and 1750, towards which lay Catholics were forced to take a position in their daily practice (J. Geraerts). At the same time, an analysis of Jewish political action in France in the 19th century explores how minorities in society considered their own, but also the marginalised positions of others, and from this developed claims to rights and integration strategies (N. Duhaut).

The third focus of this research area is the *regulation of religious and ideological differences in the context of processes of state formation*. On the one hand, a comparative analysis of early modern religious treaties shows how efforts were made to contain religious diversity through political and legal provisions, through efforts to establish a theological consensus or through everyday practices aimed at ensuring coexistence, and how these approaches ultimately made religious diversity possible in the long term (I. Dingel, C. Voigt-Goy et al., *EuReD*). By contrast, a study of religiously-motivated acts of protest and violence in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries highlights the limits of state-regulated pluralism in everyday life and lifeworlds (E. Bouwers, S. Mehlmer, P. Techet).

Finally, the fourth focus enquires into *depictions, articulation forms and practices for representing marginalized groups and communities*. On the one hand, the political configurations and mechanisms of the advocacy and claims of members of the respective social collective are discussed (M. Thulin; N. Duhaut). On the other hand, the research analyses examples of advocacy that articulate the interests of other or related people in need, as occurred with humanitarian organizations. Here the focus is mainly on medial representations, gender distinctions and questions of global justice (B. Gißibl; E. Möller; J. Paulmann).

By investigating the dynamic relationship between pluralisation and marginality, the research area demonstrates how pluralisation processes dynamized the life of society and gave rise to experiences of difference that were strengthened or nullified by members of different political, social and religious groups through their everyday practices. Furthermore, the analysis of differentiation processes demonstrates the strategies through which religious and other minority groups were marginalized, or conversely the strategies through which they positioned themselves in relation to hegemonic discourses and laid claim to cultural sovereignty. Thirdly, the work of this research area documents the contested structuring and precarious acceptance of pluralistic orders and thus the reversibility of processes for regulating pluralism, as well as the durability of marginal positions. Ultimately, the research demonstrates how religious doctrinal formulations, academic concepts and legal norms emerged and became established in reaction to the unfolding of conflict within confessions, as well as societal pluralisation processes. Overall, research area 1 shows the historical conditionality of pluralisation processes and marginal positions, and thus confirms that the way differences were negotiated in Europe in the modern era was shaped by the respective time and place.

## Research Area 2 »Sacralisation and Desacralisation«

This research area analyses »sacralisations« and »desacralisations« in politics, religion and society. It thus examines the change, manifestations and differentiation of fundamental values and their societal functions. Under de/sacralisations, the research area understands the processes and practices through which things, people and ideas are communicated as intangible, immutable and ordering authorities, or through which their exceptional status changes.

The projects in this research area pursue three areas of interest. Firstly, they investigate processes of sacralisation and desacralisation that manifest as *coping strategies in extreme or marginal existential circumstances*, or are triggered by such circumstances. Secondly, the research area is interested in the phenomenon of the *sacralisation of concepts of order* and the practises connect with them, through which these concepts gained relevance for broader society. The third focus is on varied, historically mutable *forms and practices of »sacrality management«* and the resulting conflicts.

In all periods of history and in all societies, specific ideas, principles, texts, objects or practices were viewed as superordinate and intangible, and an order-giving function for collective modes of thought and action were attributed to them. These included, for example, religion, political ideologies, war, the nation, progress, technology, the individual and human rights, but also art and nature. In Europe's past and present, sacrality has been attributed to all of these at different times, or they have produced sacrality.

The discernible plurality of the sacred casts doubt on the idea that an all-encompassing and teleological long-term process of secularisation – understood as the progressive disenchantment of the world – was the dominant trend of modern European history. Instead, we observe an interplay between controversial and partly interrelated processes of sacralisation and desacralisation. The incredibly mutable nature of the sacred can also be observed, as well as its continuing relevance in different religious, societal and political fields, even outside of institutionalized religions.

Under »sacralisations«, the projects in this research area understand repeated acts and forms of attributing, through which sacrality and the »sacred« were produced and distinguished. Thus, the research area analyses processes in which people and actions, but also objects and spaces, are established and perceived as absolute and intangible, normative, constitutive of meaning and community, and stabilizing order. Conversely, »desacralisations« are those processes through which sacralised institutions and phenomena change or lose their status. Thus, at issue is the paradox of the negotiability of that which is supposed to be non-negotiable. Sacralisation and desacralisation are revealed as processes of (de-)differentiation. By making the sacred absolute, differentiating between it and the profane and that which is everyday and worldly, and by suggesting that this definition is binding, these processes provoke knock-on differentiations in society in the form of adherents and »believers«, but also in the form of critics, the excluded and those who have been devalued, and even opponents.

In the context of this broader question, the projects in this research area pursue the following three knowledge interests: Firstly, they investigate sacralisation and desacralisation processes that are *coping strategies in extreme and marginal existential circumstances*, or that are triggered by such circumstances. This was the case, for example, with the interpretation of experiences of war and relating to the mass, deindividualized dying at the beginning of the twentieth century (A. Hofmann). But already in the early modern period, death and dying prompted the sacralisation or desacralisation of an individual liminal experience for posterity in printed and widely-disseminated publications, such as the funeral literature that emerged in the second half of the 16th century (B. Brunner). The fundamental experience of dying gave rise to entirely different processes of sacralisation and desacralisation in these two cases – on the one hand the sacralisation of the individual life and the desacralisation of death in itself, on the other hand the sacralisation of mass, deindividualized dying in war, which also made necessary other forms of collective self-sacralisation. At the same time, the extremes of the 20th century – mass murder, the collapse of social structures and changes of political regimes – promoted a strong dynamic of sacralisation and desacralisation in other fields.

Consequently, the research area also has a second interest in the phenomenon of the *sacralisation of concepts of order* and the related practices through which these concepts received societal relevance. Insecure societal structures made it necessary for concepts of order to be more ideologically adaptable,

for example in the form of the idea of the »new (wo)man« that was so virulent in many societies in the 20th century. For example, a project on a modernistic factory city in Czechoslovakia analyses how this »new (wo)man« was formed on the basis of rationalized industrial production in the first half of the 20th century, and then desacralized multiple times between 1938 and 1948 (G. Feindt). In other circumstances, for example in Christian intellectual networks, these extremes prompted a renewal of sacrality that was presumed to have been lost. One project investigates how Christian intellectual networks in Great Britain in the aftermath of the Second World War attempted to question the sacralisations of ideals of technologizing progress that were emerging at that time. This also at all times included efforts to re-establish the cultural validity of Christian sacrality, which the intellectuals viewed as having been lost (J. Wood).

While in this example we see sacralisations serving to stabilise societal understandings of the world and concepts of order, in other contexts desacralisations served these same functions. The example of the initiatives to promote reconciliation after the Second World War (U. Pękala) illustrates how a sacral understanding of »reconciliation« and the religiously connoted concept of »reconciliation« was desacralized in the course of its transfer from the religious to the political sphere, even if this process was accompanied by religious gestures and symbolic actions.

»Nature« is one of those societal concepts that have historically been sacralised for longest in very different forms and societal formations. More recently in the environmental and nature conservation debates of the 20th century, this occurred through concepts of »wilderness« that is worth protecting, but also of »creation« worth retaining. Taking the iconic Serengeti National Park in East Africa, one project investigates the ritual, scientific and touristic performances that the sacralisation of the national park has given rise to, as well as how native concepts of the nature -god, which is venerated in the Serengeti, were marginalised as a result (B. Gißibl).

Finally, a third focus is on different, historically mutable *forms and practices of »sacrality management«* and the conflicts that result from them. The insistence that the sacral is binding made rules, ritualisation, discipline and supervision necessary. Public offices and institutions drew power from the sacred, which in turn had to be administered and communicated by »sacral experts«. In the case of the spatialization of sacred nature already referred to, this occurred in the form of restrictions on access to, and behaviour within national parks and areas of conservation, though the »believers« were able to bend the rules and establish their own sacrality practices (B. Gißibl).

Modifying the content and form of canonical texts was a form of negotiating the sacred that was historically common both in religious and non-religious contexts. Taking the example of Jewish prayerbooks in Italy in the 19th century, one project in this research area employs a digital comparison to examine how concepts of sacrality changed in the context of Jewish self-perception and against the backdrop of the respective historical contexts. What situations in everyday life were given a religious treatment in these books, how did the content of the prayer cannon change in the course of political developments, and who served as the »gatekeeper« and selection authority for this content, which was presented to congregations of Italian Jews in these books (A. Grazi)?

This understanding of the sacred with a cultural studies emphasis enables the projects of this research area to identify forms of sacralisation in the area of institutionalized religiosity, but also beyond it. In this way, the particular collective and individual binding power of competing and historically mutable concepts of sacrality come into view. Sacrality was structured in a deliberate way; its claim was contested. The sacred exercised its power and its obligation within societal systems of interpretation and order, as well as in the coexistence and competition between these systems. Of interest is the often asymmetrical, but reciprocal interference between religion and other social-political fields, such as those that are often investigated under the term sacral transfer (resp. transfer of sacrality). Finally, an investigation of processes of sacralisation and desacralisation across historical periods also enables the analysis to specifically thematize changes in the significance of religion in Europe in the modern era, while going beyond the proposition of universal secularisation.

### Research Area 3 »Mobility and Belonging«

At the centre of the projects of this research area is the question: How did the forms and phenomena of mobility in Europe in the modern era affect the political, social, cultural and religious »belonging« of actors who crossed borders, and, conversely, what effect did these ways of belonging have on mobility potential? The research area thus investigates how the interaction between mobility and belonging led to changes in the perceptions and concepts of difference.

The research area examines the interplay between practices of mobility and the creation of belonging in modern Europe in three complementary and overlapping perspectives – of actors, spaces and texts. Firstly, a number of projects investigate from an *actor-centred perspective* the multi-layered – self-perceived and ascribed – ways of belonging and in individual lifepaths and the autobiographical practices of migrants and other mobile actors. Particular attention is paid to strategies of biographical navigation, through which the actors sought to position themselves spatially and socially in the different phases of their lives. A second approach focuses on *texts*, which not only functioned as a medium in which actors reflected on their mobility, but which through their own mobility transported ideas and concepts. In this way, they created belonging independently of the mobility of the actors, and consequently increased or decreased the mobility potential of other actors and texts. Thirdly, the research area examines *border regions and spaces of concentrated and overlapping mobility*, in which actors of different backgrounds came into contact. Through this coming into contact, liminal spaces and transit zones emerged, in which differences dissolved and affiliations had to be renegotiated.

Mobility makes otherness particularly visible. The movement of people and concepts calls into question existing political, social, religious and regional differences and affiliations, and transforms them. Differences and belonging had to be (re-)defined and (re-)negotiated by mobile actors and the societies that were confronted with them. Conversely, changing affiliations and forms of belonging affected the mobility of actors. Here a distinction must be drawn between forms of belonging perceived by the individuals and collectives themselves, and those attributed to them by others. These affiliations attributed by the actors to themselves and those attributed to them by others often resulted in multiple, overlapping forms of belonging, which the actors actualised in their practices and which were represented in objects such as texts and images.

The research area investigates this interplay of practices and the creation of belonging in Europe in the modern era in three complementary and overlapping perspectives, focusing on actors, spaces and texts.

In the *actor-centred perspective*, a number of projects investigate the multi-layered forms of belonging in the individual lifepaths and autobiographical practices of migrants and other mobile actors (A. Friedrichs; M. Grigore; D. Klein; S. Panter; M. Sing; Th. Weller; DigiKAR Project). Particular attention is paid to strategies of biographical navigation, through which the actors sought to position themselves spatially and socially in different life phases and roles. The social practices of these actors are investigated in their interaction with the migration regimes and borders of states, as well as in their interaction with their respective social surroundings. Of particular interest are conditions of transition and liminality, which are particularly apparent in transit zones (A. Friedrichs; S. Panter). While strategies can be identified that attempted to hide the migrant's own migration history and to adapt to a new social environment (Th. Weller), there are also examples of mobile actors who sought to do the exact opposite, particularly figures such as missionaries (St. Paulau) and refugees from revolution (S. Panter). The attempt to convert people of other beliefs implied the active creation and transformation of belonging in the majority society.

Texts are not only a medium in which mobile actors reflected on their mobility (A. Friedrichs; D. Klein; S. Panter; Th. Weller), they are themselves mobile and they transport ideas and concepts (M. Grigore; Projekt DigiKAR). Like human actors, texts also had allegiances ascribed to them, which could also change through mobility. For example, some theological texts that were considered »Catholic« in the place they were written were expurgated in places that were »Catholic«. The semi-automated comparative investigation of such expurgations shows how differently the affiliation to »Catholicism« was across early modern Europe (M. Müller). In spite of such local variations, religious narratives of belonging nonetheless always developed a transregional integrative force (M. Grigore; St; Paulau; M.

Sing). In this way, mobile texts created belonging independently of the actors, and consequently promoted or reduced the mobility potential of other actors and texts. Based on early modern depictions of islands, one research project investigates how the mobility of those describing can shape the object being described and its affiliations, and how texts can create belonging through communicated or imagined mobility (M. Barget).

Spaces are first created by mobility. Spatial mobility goes hand in hand with transformations of the social space, just as social affiliations also always relate to space. Traversing borders of political territories, for example, raised questions of belonging. Social exclusion also often implied a structuring of space. Contact zones are of particular interest for research on belonging, such as Seville (Th. Weller), Istanbul (D. Klein), the Russian-Iranian-Ottoman border region (St. Paulau), the Ruhr region (A. Friedrichs), Le Havre (S. Panter) and European islands (M. Barget). These are border regions and spaces of concentrated and overlapping mobility, in which actors from different backgrounds came into contact. This coming into contact gave rise to liminal spaces and transit zones, in which differences dissolved and affiliations had to be renegotiated. From a religious-historical perspective, the religious self-understanding of decidedly trans-confessional or interreligious milieus becomes visible in these contexts (M. Grigore; M. Müller; St. Paulau; M. Sing). Mobility can also promote the formation of cross-border networks, which in some cases strengthened across large distances, such as the transatlantic (S. Panter; Th. Weller) and the trans-Ottoman spaces (M. Grigore; D. Klein; St. Paulau). In particular, the circulation of texts gave rise to translocal communication spaces, in which affiliations were defined and called into question (M. Grigore; M. Müller).

In some of the projects, digital tools and methods play an important role, for example the quantitative evaluation of bio-bibliographical databases, semi-automated text comparisons and the analysis of genre-bound narrative structures. Digital maps are also important as an analytical tool in research into mobility phenomena.

An overview of the individual projects enables the narrative of a constant increase in mobility potential to be called into question. Instead, discontinuities, upheavals and waves can be observed in relation to mobility, and these affected forms of belonging. Similarly, it is not possible to identify clear dominant categories of differentiation in individual historical periods or cultures. Rather, in different circumstances there was an *overlaying of various difference categories*, which could reinforce each other, compete with each other, or neutralise each other. A multi-perspective analysis across historical periods is particularly useful for making cycles, continuities and discontinuities visible. For example, the weighting of »national« and religious aspects of belonging varied depending on the context, but at no point was either of them completely irrelevant as a category of difference. Against this backdrop, mobility can be understood as a test case for the *ambiguity tolerance* of societies, which varied in strength between different times and spaces. Processes of ambiguitization and dis-ambiguitization were in a dialectic interdependence.

Across the historical periods, processes of social and spatial *interconnection and disentanglement* can be observed. In many projects, a close interlocking of local rootedness and global networks can be observed for individual actors. This research area thus places the focus on the relationship between transit zones (micro-perspective) and transregional spaces (long distances). This becomes particularly apparent in the projects that deal with actors in imperial and trans-imperial structures.

In all of the projects, it becomes clear how communicative practices influenced the *aggregate conditions of belonging*. Language played a central role as a medium of communication and differentiation. Mobile actors were to the fore as carriers of ideas and authors of autoreflexive texts, though they also had affiliations ascribed to them by third parties. The spectrum of aggregate conditions of belonging stretched from situational self-attributions and attributions by others to classification by the authorities and formal membership in organisations.