

Guest Editorial

With the first issue of this exciting new e-journal, the network of links between nationally-circumscribed traditions of geographic research has been augmented in important ways. In the foregoing months, the editors have been energetically and creatively engaged with the problems and politics attendant on crossing inherited boundaries between language regions. The long-term goal of a truly multi-directional cross-fertilization of traditions could hardly have found a more timely and appropriate vehicle than Social Geography. And the field of social geography itself is ideally situated to form an arena of discursive exchange of the highest order.

In the shorter term, as a first step toward that larger goal, Social Geography will focus on work in English by a younger generation of German-speaking geographers. This is an exciting prospect. The level of familiarity younger German-speaking scholars have with recent scholarship coming out of the Anglo-American tradition is truly impressive, and a growing number of dissertations and research monographs published in German testify to an enormous potential for mutual enrichment. The fact that academic traditions in different languages often differ also in styles of argumentation, narrative construction, evidential priorities, and the meanings they

assign to “scientificity” only increases the potential for unanticipated creative interactions. English-speaking geographers can expect, inter alia, to be confronted with fresh new perspectives on seemingly “familiar” approaches such as critical realism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism.

The chief practical barrier is of course that the Anglophone geographical community is generally less well equipped to profit from German-language research than German, Austrian and Swiss scholars are to immerse themselves in English work. This is where the editors of Social Geography have already invested a substantial amount of ingenuity, and we can expect to see innovative new proposals emerging from this journal regarding ways to overcome and work with difficulties of translation. In the longer run, Social Geography promises to set an example for cross-cultural academic fora adequate to the globalizing conditions of the 21st century. Its inaugural number is thus an event that will perhaps only later be fully appreciated.

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