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The category of space in the historiography of religious education

Transnational perspectives

Abstract

This chapter introduces the historical concept of ‘Educational Spaces’ as a means of analyzing the transnational dimension of religious education. Educational spaces are “not priori fixed units, for example marked by political or geographical borders, but they emerge and consolidate themselves by relations, interactions and perceptions. These include a wide range of communication, transfer and construction processes” (Kesper-Biermann 2016). Borrowing this approach used by Kesper-Biermann and other historians, the following chapter will engage three important questions: What does “transnational perspectives” mean? What does the category of space mean in the historiography of education? And what does the “spatial turn” mean in the historiography of religious education? The answers to these questions will show the contribution of religion and religious education to modern societies.

Although the educational sciences have shown increased interest in spatial analysis over recent years, there is still a degree of uncertainty about the terminology. For example, the German term ‘Lernort’ (learning location), as well as the term ‘Bildungsraum’ (educational space), focuses on social relationships within and through families, school communities, parishes and media (Grethlein 2009). Therefore both terms are less about a location in physical terms (e. g. the school *building*) or a place with meanings and significance through human interpretation (e. g. the *Franklin Elementary School*), and are instead used to describe locations and places as spaces for social activities and relationships (‘Sozialraum’).

In this paper the term ‘location’ will come to be used to refer to someone or something in physical terms: a classroom or a church building is the “meeting point of various physical factors that impact on the experiences of those who find or take themselves there” (Ipgrave 2017; for materials on the history of education see also Burke/Cunningham/Grosvenor 2010, 677–680). According to the definition provided by Ipgrave, a place will be understood as a location with meaning and significance through human interpretation (e. g. a *holy* place). Apart from these helpful distinctions, space remains a poorly defined term, especially from a historical point of view. Therefore my paper on transnational history in (religious) education identifies what we can learn from historians of (religious) education about space. For this purpose, I introduce the historical theory of educational spaces as a means of analysing the transnational history of religious education. Borrowing the approach used by Kesper-Biermann, educational research should engage three important questions.

1. What does ‘transnational perspectives’ mean?

There is an increasing number of attempts today to compare either religion or education in the United States, the Near East and Europe. Therefore it is not difficult to combine both perspectives and to point out the need for international comparative research on religious education (cf. Schröder 2016 and Schweitzer 2016). With regard to one joint research project between the Protestant and the Catholic departments at the University of Vienna, a central purpose of comparative research on religious education is to describe national traditions of religious education in schools in Europe (for Central Europe see Jäggle et al. 2016, for Western Europe Rothgangel/Jackson et al. 2014, and for Northern Europe Rothgangel/Skeie et al. 2014).

Over the years, scientists have been asked to explain the differences between an international comparative and a transnational approach. As a consequence of this concern, let me focus my attention on the additional benefits of the latter compared to the former. Although one could argue that every comparative study looking into two or more countries is transnational, it does not necessarily focus on transnational relations, interactions and perceptions, including a wide range of communication, transfer and construction processes between two or more countries. To give you an idea of what I mean let me begin by referring to three outstanding studies in the field of religious education.

First, in their comparative study of religious education in the United States and in Germany, Richard R. Osmer and Friedrich Schweitzer focus on the processes of modernisation (e.g. the large-scale industrialisation and the confidence in the power of science). The guiding thesis of Osmer and Schweitzer’s book, published in 2003, is the following: ‘Protestant religious education [in the United States and Germany] stands in an interdependent relationship to the social contexts in which it is located and these contexts are best understood today on the basis of international, comparative analysis’ (Osmer/Schweitzer 2003, 3). Consequently, the authors compare a number of leading figures of the religious education reform movements on both sides of the Atlantic, such as George Albert Coe and Friedrich Niebergall. On the completion of their research, Osmer and Schweitzer offer several striking parallels between Coe and Niebergall’s understanding of religious education. Furthermore, they show in what sense the theories of Coe and Niebergall can be seen as paradigmatic responses to the processes of modernisation mentioned above.

At this point let me emphasise the importance of Osmer and Schweitzer’s studies – they acted as a wake up call for historical, as well as international comparative research in religious education. Although the authors do not pay special attention to transnational relations, interactions and perceptions via media, mobile actors and networks mentioned above, I did find some interesting remarks on the influence of the early works of Karl Barth in the United States, as well as on the influence of William James and Edwin Diller Starbuck in Germany. Furthermore, the authors mention Coe’s regular visits to Germany, as well as the translation of academic work and international conferences (cf. Osmer/Schweitzer 2003, 113). This excellent study

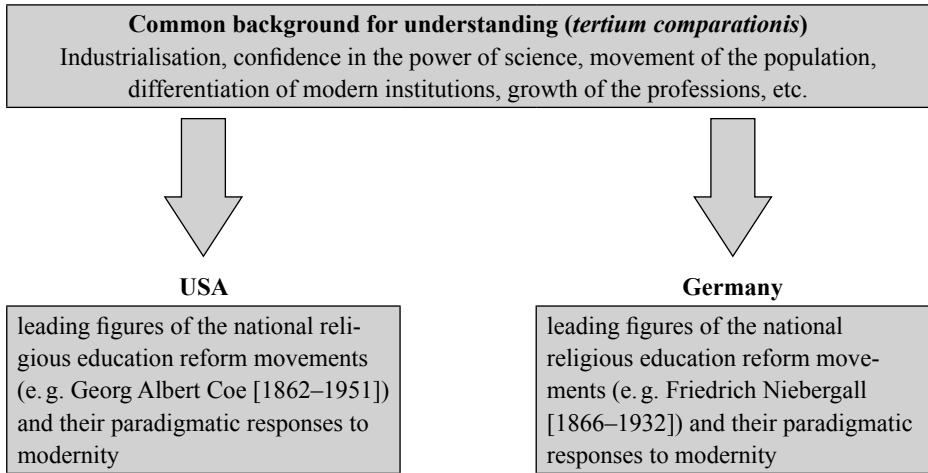


Figure 1: Comparative research methodology developed by Osmer/Schweitzer 2003

showcases the importance of transnational research beyond a comparative approach (see also Schweitzer 2017).

Another example of what I am describing can be found in the book titled *Jewish Education in modern Israel*, written and published by Bernd Schröder in 2000. This outstanding study can also be read as an introduction to the methodology of international comparative research in religious education. With regard to the social, economic, political and religious aspects of modernisation, Schröder developed nine criteria for analysing similarities and differences between religious education in Israel and Germany, criteria that are very useful for further studies. For example, there are important differences between the German term ‘Bildung’ (‘education’) and *חינוך*, which has come to be used in Israel. Furthermore, a generally accepted definition of ‘Kirchenmitgliedschaft’ (‘church membership’) and *יהודיות* (‘Jewishness’) and *ישראליות* (‘Israeliness’) is lacking.

As Schröder shows in his study, religious education in Israel and Germany stands in an interdependent relationship to the historical and social contexts in which it is located. I agree that these contexts can be understood today on the basis of international, comparative analysis. However, with regard to one of the most fundamental assumptions of transnational history – the notion that historical development does not take place exclusively within the boundary lines of individual religions or cultural regions – the method of analysis might have some limitations. Therefore, there continues to be a need to discuss cross-cultural interactions and exchanges in the field of religious education by examining transnational processes between Europe and Israel, as well as between the United States and Israel (cf. Schröder 2017).

My third key example for the comparative approach within a national framework is a study of Norway and England, published by Oddrun M. H. Bråten in 2013. Following her analysis of comparative studies in the field of comparative religious education (such as that of Osmer/Schweitzer 2003), it became increasingly clear to

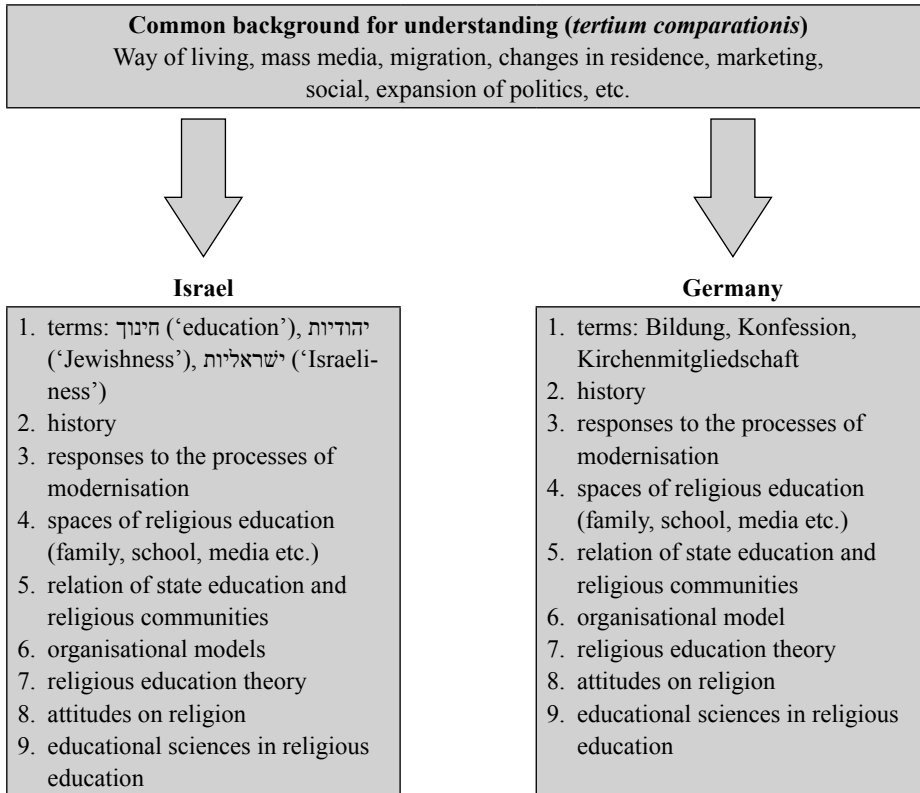


Figure 2: Comparative research methodology developed by Schröder 2000

her that comparison in religious education should include supranational, national and subnational processes. What does this mean? First, supranational processes mean the politics of the *United Nations* or the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (these are rather formal processes), as well as the secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation of religion (these are informal processes). Second, national processes mean the educational policy and, specifically, the religious education policy in Norway and in England, as well as the development of a national curriculum. Third, subnational processes mean the teachers' and pupils' context at a local and regional level.

In her study Bråten emphasises that supranational processes influence national and subnational processes, and this is her central argument for the relevance of comparative studies in the field of religious education. For her, the essential aim is to study "how supranational processes affect national systems" (Bråten 2013).

In contrast to these comparative studies that are interested in a common background of understanding (*tertium comparationis*), historians of education and religion (such as Fuchs/Lüth 2008, Fuchs 2012, Kesper-Biermann 2013, Möller/Wischmeyer 2013, and Wischmeyer 2014b) make it clear that a top-down approach is not appropriate for the explanation of globalisation in the field of education. What are the

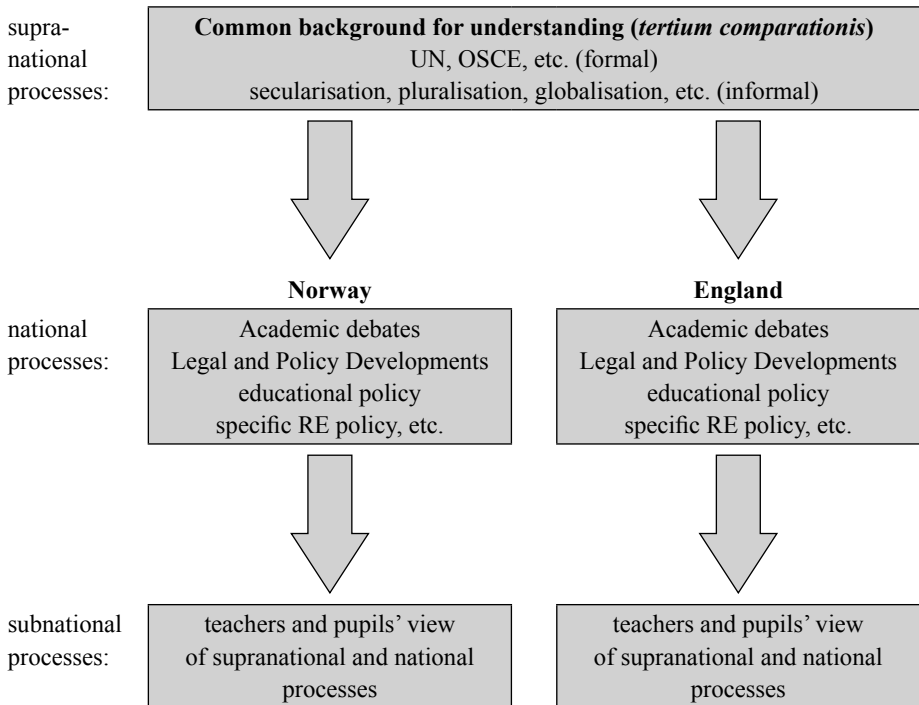


Figure 3: Comparative Research Methodology developed by Bråten 2013

conclusions and consequences for these historians? In the course of the spatial turn Fuchs describes social-scientific, political and historical models for the explanation of transnational processes in the historiography of education:

- 1 The “social-scientific reconstruction of globalization processes focuses on the process of networks and dissolution of borders [e. g. through media] in an international system determined by national states. [...]
- 2 While international regime research long accepted in political science has traditionally limited itself to national politics, an expansion of research to non-national actors and global political networks can be observed as an explanation of international political systems since the 1990s. In relation to the globalization in the field of education, international educational organizations shift into the focus of research [...]
- 3 Thirdly, attempts to unite transfer history and comparison analytically bring them closer to global educational processes come from comparative education. Here the concept of ‘lending and borrowing’ [e. g. organizational models of education] has achieved particular appeal” (Fuchs 2012, 8 f.).

In addition to a comparative methodology in religious education, which is focused on supranational, national and subnational processes, the concept of educational spaces

is also interested in historical studies that have examined transnational processes determined by media, non-national actors and global networks.

2. What does the category of space mean in the historiography of education?

In Germany, the historiography of (religious) education has become an important part of (religious) education research over the past two decades. In addition to the numerous individual research projects of leading figures of (religious) education, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, the historiography of (religious) education has focused on the history of learning materials and methods, media, ideas, attitudes, and – most important for my paper – learning locations and institutions within a national framework (see Käbisch 2017a, Schröder 2009, Wischmeyer 2014a). With regard to these general observations, the concept of transnational educational spaces can enrich educational research in religious matters. As Sylvia Kesper-Biermann pointed out, this concept can be elaborated in three steps:

First, educational spaces are not priori fixed units, for example marked by political or geographical borders, but they emerge and consolidate themselves by relations, interactions *and* perceptions. These include a wide range of communication, transfer and construction processes which can lead to interdependencies, self-assurance or to competition and demarcation. Educational spaces have a certain stability and longevity which, however, does not at all exclude historical change. Finally, they feature a different scope and quality, that is to say they can comprise local, regional, national or transnational spaces, institutions, organizations, levels or sectors of education (Kesper-Biermann 2016, 93; cf. also Kesper-Biermann 2013).

It therefore seems worthwhile to look at various modes of communication (the textual, the visual, the material, etc.), for example, through mission activity and networks of convent schools, media (such as learning materials), illustrated children's Bibles, journals and dictionaries, encyclopaedia and text editions in the fields of theology and education. One example is the *Encyklopädie des Gesamten Erziehungs und Unterrichtswesens*, published by Karl Adolf Schmid (1st edition 1859–1875; 2nd edition 1876–1887). The objective of this German encyclopaedia was to describe the educational systems of the civilised world. Consequently, a wide range of articles refers to educational systems all over the world (including Sunday schools as an organisational model of religious education in the USA and England and its reception in Germany), as well as learning materials and methods (see Wischmeyer 2014b). Those educational spaces constituted by media are neither fixed units nor exclusively marked by political or geographical borders. Apart from media, mobile actors, such as travellers, missionaries, emigrants and students abroad, play an important part in the concept of educational spaces:

Second, the said definition of educational spaces emphasizes the significance of historical actors: Through their practices of interaction, their ideas and perceptions, educational spaces are created and stabilized in the first place; juridification and institutionalization could contribute to their consolidation. While other considerations concerning present transnational educational spaces restrict them explicitly to civil society (e. g. Adick 2005), I suggest to take state as well as non-state actors into consideration and to analyze their relations (Kesper-Biermann 2016, 93).

With regard to studies of scholarship on religions and education, there are important historical actors and networks in the field of (religious) education, such as ‘mission and missionaries,’ ‘convents and religious women,’ ‘churchmen, clergy and charitable societies,’ and ‘Anglicans, Dissenters, Roman Catholics, Jews’ (see Raftery 2012). Moreover, the development of Sunday schools and Methodist elementary schools in the USA, England and other European countries serves as an example for the transference of organisational models from one country to another. As Kesper-Biermann suggests in her paper, a wide range of non-state actors should be considered and analysed in their social relations and interactions. Moreover, the concept is not limited to one epoch:

Third, the concept of educational spaces is not tied to a particular historical time period but can be applied to all epochs. It avoids restricting the perspective to the modern era represented prominently in the history of education and thus allows the analysis of developments and over long periods of time. That way, different research approaches and their results, originally framed with respect to specific epochs, can be integrated (Kesper-Biermann 2016, 94).

However, most historians of religious education in Germany are still focused on the 19th and 20th centuries. One important exception is the textbook titled *History of religious education in Germany*, published by Rainer Lachmann and Bernd Schröder (Lachmann/Schröder 2007). The editors organised the book chronologically. Consequently, the authors present a summarising survey of the political, legal and institutional background for the religious education system.¹ Nevertheless, even this excellent textbook is still focused on the category of time only within a national framework. Therefore, the concept of educational spaces can enrich the historiography of religious education in different ways.

1 The chapters of the textbook describe religious education in the Middle Ages (written by Horst F. Rupp), the Reformation Epoch (by Bernd Schröder), the Napoleonic Era (by Rainer Lachmann), the Post-Napoleonic Era (by Horst F. Rupp), the German Empire (1870–1918, written by Antje Roggenkamp), the Weimar Republic (1918–1933, written by Rainer Lachmann), the time of the so-called “Third Reich” (1933–1945, written by Folkert Rickers), the German Democratic Republic (1949–1990, written by Raimund Hoenen) and the Federal Republic of Germany until the reunification (1949–1990, written by Christian Grethlein).

3. What does the ‘spatial turn’ mean in the historiography of religious education?

In recent years historians of education have shown a growing interest in questions of space (in the sense of social relationships and interactions) and the way in which knowledge travels within a national or international framework (Burke/Cunningham/Grosvenor 2010; Fuchs 2012). One key example is Richard R. Osmer and Friedrich Schweitzer’s comparative study of religious reform movements in the United States and in Germany:

In fact, many American students of theology and philosophy went to Germany for graduate education. In addition, translations played an important role in making the discussion more international – less in the field of religious education in the narrow sense but certainly in practical theology. A variety of European books became available in English, for example the works of A. Vinet and J. J. van Oosterzee. The same can be said about the psychology of religion, where the pioneering works of scholars from the United States (those of W. James and E. D. Starbuck, for example) were quickly made available in German. In addition, German practical theologians and religious educators such as Carl Clemen traveled to the United States and, upon their return to Germany, published academic reports on the situation of religious education there. The increasing number of international conferences – whether on moral education, general education, or, with the emerging worldwide ecumenical movement, on religious education in an ecumenical perspective – also point to the growth of international awareness within the field of religious education (Osmer/Schweitzer 2003, 113).

Apart from this general observation, by examining their paradigmatic responses to modernity this national-comparative (and less transnational-transfer oriented) study still focused on a number of leading figures of religious education. In so doing, the authors describe conceptions in distinction to previous approaches.² A second key example for the predominant category of time within a national framework is the history of leading figures of religious education, written by Michael Meyer-Blanck in 2003. This author also organised his book chronologically and describes a limited number of German leading figures and concepts:

- Richard Käbisch and his Foundation of Liberal RE (in the author’s point of view, predominant around 1910/1920)
- Gerhard Bohne and his Foundation of Religious Instruction (seen as predominant in 1930/1940)

2 Such as the religious education movements in the US (George Albert Coe and Sophia Lyon Fahs), as well as in Germany (Friedrich Niebergall only) until 1930, further religious education after 1945 in the US (James Smart and Lewis Joseph Sherrill) and Germany (Magdalena von Tiling, Helmuth Kittel and Oskar Hammelsbeck), as well as a few scientists after the 1960s in the US (John Westerhoff) and Germany (Karl Ernst Nipkow).

- Martin Stallmann and his Foundation of Hermeneutic RE (seen as predominant in 1950/1960)
- Hans Bernhard Kaufmann and his Foundation of Problem-Oriented RE (seen as predominant in 1970/1980), and
- Peter Biehl and his Foundation of Symbol Didactics (1980/1990).

From this historical perspective, a limited number of concepts were formed that were distinct from previous approaches and dominated the theory and practice of religious education in all parts of Germany at a given time. This historical point of view is very popular in German academic debates and can be found in many textbooks on religious education (such as those by Pohl-Patalong 2013 and Rothgangel 2014).

In the course of the ‘spatial turn’, however, scientists have had to acknowledge that a history of leading figures and concepts is unable to describe the travel of knowledge from one place to another on a local, regional, national, international, as well as transnational level. Furthermore, a history of leading figures and concepts simplifies the plurality of educational knowledge at a given point in time and at different locations and places. As can be seen on the following page, there were about seventy-four professors of religious education in the thirty-five local universities focused on teaching education in Germany, which were founded in the late 1920s (PA: Pädagogische Akademie) and early 1930s (HfL: Hochschule für Lehrerbildung).

Gerhard Bohne, for example, was only one professor amongst many. He taught at the local university in Frankfurt/Oder from 1930–1932, thereafter at the local university in Elbing from 1932 to 1933 and then at the local university in Kiel from 1933 until 1938. Knowing this, there is no reason to believe that Gerhard Bohne and his concept of religious education would have dominated the teaching at other universities or influenced the practice of religious education in other (let alone all) parts of Germany (cf. Kabisch 2011). Regarding educational spaces on a local, regional and national level, it also cannot be said that Friedrich Niebergall was a leading figure at the university in Marburg and in the State of Hessen (cf. Kabisch 2016a). Nevertheless, there are some remarkable relations, interactions and perceptions between Niebergall and the Hungarian Reformed theologians in Transylvania, which are hardly considered in international comparative approaches (cf. Kabisch/Schröder 2016). This leads me to my conclusions.

1. Adamski, Roman (kath., PA Beuthen)	38. Mann, [?] (HfL Bonn)
2. Arneth, Michael (kath., HfL Bayreuth)	39. Maurer, Karl (HfL Eßlingen)
3. Bartsch, Gottfried (HfL Frankfurt/Oder)	40. Neumüller, Eugen (HfL Saarbrücken)
4. Bergmann, Gerhard (HfL Hannover, HfL Schneidemühl)	41. Niehaus, Franz (kath., HfL Oldenburg)
5. Biedenkapp, Friedrich (HfL Darmstadt)	42. Pauls, Theodor (PA Erfurt, HfL Hirschberg)
6. Bohne, Gerhard (PA Frankfurt/Oder, PA Elbing, HfL Kiel)	43. Peters, Ilse (PA Dortmund)
7. Bruhn, Wilhelm (PA Kiel, PA Erfurt)	44. Philipp, Titus (HfL Dresden)
8. Buchmüller, Karl (HfL Eßlingen)	45. Pohlmann, Hans (HfL Schneidemühl)
9. Burgardsmeier, Alfred (kath., PA/HfL Bonn)	46. Preisker, Herbert (PA Breslau, PA Halle/Saale)
10. Czekalla, Theophil (kath., HfL Schneidemühl)	47. Rang, Martin (PA Halle/Saale)
11. Deinhardt, Wilhelm (kath., HfL Würzburg)	48. Redeker, Martin (PA Cottbus 1930–32)
12. Dosse, Friedrich (HfL Braunschweig)	49. Riedmann, Alois (HfL Würzburg)
13. Droege, Peter (kath., HfL Dortmund)	50. Roesner, Emanuel (kath., HfL Beuthen)
14. Eckstein, Richard (HfL München-Pasing)	51. Schäfer, Joseph Hermann (kath., HfL Schneidemühl)
15. Ellwein, Theodor (HfL Weilburg an der Lahn)	52. Schafft, Hermann (PA Kassel, PA Dortmund)
16. Fenske, Walter (HfL Frankfurt/Oder)	53. Schmidt, Martin (PA Frankfurt am Main)
17. Fliedner, Fritz (HfL Bonn)	54. Schnitzler, Michael H. (kath., PA Bonn)
18. Fuchs, Emil (PA Kiel)	55. Schulemann, Günther (kath., HfL Hirschberg)
19. Gaeßler, Paul (HfL Karlsruhe)	56. Schüler, Alfred (kath., HfL Darmstadt)
20. Ginter, Hermann (kath., HfL Karlsruhe)	57. Schulze, Fritz (HfL Leipzig)
21. Greulich, Gottfried (HfL Schneidemühl)	58. Schütz, Roland (PA Kiel)
22. Güldenber, Otto (HfL Hirschberg, HfL Hannover)	59. Schwindel, Kurt (HfL Würzburg)
23. Hainz, Josef (kath., HfL Darmstadt)	60. Schwarz, [?] (HfL Lauenburg in Pommern)
24. Heidenreich, Gustav (HfL Schneidemühl)	61. Steitz, Heinrich (HfL Darmstadt)
25. Hesse, Adolf (kath., HfL Hannover)	62. Sucker, Wolfgang (HfL Lauenburg in Pommern)
26. Hoffmann, Alfred (kath., PA Beuthen)	63. Völger, Willy (PA Stettin)
27. Hoffmann, Fritz (PA/HfL Elbing)	64. von den Driesch, Theodor (kath., PA Beuthen)
28. Hoffmann, Karl (HfL Rostock)	65. Wagner, Kurt (kath., HfL Weilburg an der Lahn)
29. Horowitz, Jakob (jewish., PA Frankfurt am Main)	66. Wahn, [?] (HfL Beuthen)
30. Kästner, Alfred (HfL Dresden, HfL Leipzig)	67. Wärthl, Friedrich (kath., HfL Bayreuth)
31. Kittel, Helmuth (PA Altona, PA Kiel, HfL Lauenburg, HfL Danzig)	68. Weber, Wolf (HfL Karlsruhe)
32. Kleinau, Wilhelm (HfL Schneidemühl)	69. Weinrich, Oskar (HfL Hirschberg)
33. Kober, Alois (kath., HfL München-Pasing)	70. Wendt, Kurt (HfL Weilburg an der Lahn)
34. Körber, Kurt (PA Frankfurt am Main)	71. Werdermann, Hermann (PA Hannover, HfL Dortmund)
35. Krecher, Fritz (HfL Cottbus)	72. Wissmann, Erwin (HfL Darmstadt)
36. Lang, Wilhelm (HfL Oldenburg)	73. Wüsten, Franz (kath., HfL Saarbrücken)
37. Lange, Leo (kath., HfL Schneidemühl)	74. Zeimet, Johannes (kath., HfL Koblenz, HfL Trier)

Figure 4: The plurality of educational knowledge at different locations in Germany 1925–1938

4. Conclusion

First, a history of religious education after the spatial turn should distinguish between educational spaces on ...

- a local level, for example the 35 local universities mentioned above and, furthermore, local schools and parishes,
- a regional level, for example, characterised by the legal and political framework of a state within Germany, such as Prussia, Bavaria or Saxony,
- a national level, for example, the legal and political framework of the German Confederation,
- an international level, characterised by international laws and politics or international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE),
- a transnational level, which “emerge and consolidate themselves by relations, interactions *and* perceptions” through mobility, migration, mission activity and media (Kesper-Biermann 2016, 93).

Secondly, the reconstruction of globalisation processes in the field of religious education should focus on media (books, catechism, encyclopaedia, journals, etc.), on mobile actors (travelers, missionaries, emigrants, students abroad, etc.) and on networks (education reform movements, peace education movements, ecumenical movements, mission and migration, global alumni networks, informal networks, etc.). In contrast to comparative approaches, the concept of educational spaces does not depend on a common background for understanding (*tertium comparationis*).

Thirdly, the concept of educational spaces is able to grasp the ‘path dependency’ of teaching religious education in a globalised world (cf. Simojoki 2016) by examining a wide range of transnational relations, interactions and perceptions (cf. Kabisch/Wischmeyer 2017). In so doing, the concept of educational spaces seeks to understand people, ideas and practices of religious education that have crossed national boundaries.

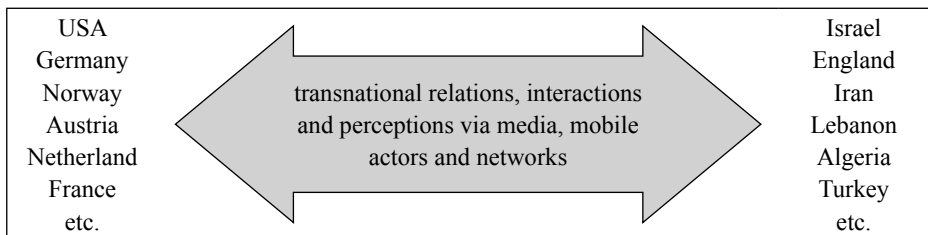


Figure 5: Transnational relations, interactions and perceptions

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