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1 Binding letter of intent as advance notification or non-binding letter of intent

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Binding letter of intent (required as advance notification for proposals in 2019)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binding letter of intent (anticipated submission in 2020)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-binding letter of intent (anticipated submission in 2021)

2 Formal details

- Planned name of the consortium
Local and Regional Research Data Infrastructure
- Acronym of the planned consortium
LoReData
- Applicant institution
Halle Institute for Economic Research e.V. (IWH)
IWH Research Data Centre
Cornelia Lang (Head of Research Data Centre: www.iwh-halle.de/rdc)
- Spokesperson
Christian Rademacher, Christian.Rademacher@Uni-Passau.de,
University of Passau

3 Objectives, work programme and research environment

- Research area of the proposed consortium (according to the DFG classification system) www.dfg.de/download/pdf/dfg_im_profil/gremien/fachkollegien/amtperiode_2016_2019/fachsystematik_2016-2019_en_grafik.pdf
- 11 Humanities, 12 Social and Behavioural Sciences, 23 Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, 34 Geosciences, and 45 Construction Engineering and Architecture

- Concise summary of the planned consortium's main objectives and task areas

The federal system in Germany vests the German Länder and local self-governance with the legal, political, and scientific significance. This significance given multi-level governance also applies to the European Union (EU). For the EU, this is reflected in the vision of a Europe of Regions and the process of Europeanization at the local level. Internationally, this significance is also apparent in the worldwide Agenda 21 process of good governance following the UNCED in Rio in 1992 or more recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the new Agenda 2030.

In Germany, both subnational levels are guaranteed by Germany's Basic Law (GG). Article 20, paragraph 1, GG guarantees the general principles of a social and federal state, which Article 79, paragraph 3, GG guarantees in perpetuity; and Article 28, paragraph 2, GG renders local self-government a state objective.

The political significance is apparent in public management as well as in political practice, as both subnational levels are distributing public spending. In general, expenditure on public services is a local affair. German municipalities have been estimated to account for about two thirds of all public expenditure (Holtmann/Rademacher/Reiser 2017: 16). The Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR 2017) has gone beyond this by proposing a "Strategy for the Provision of Public Services at the Regional Level".

As for research, the regional and especially the local level are transdisciplinary fields of interest in which several disciplines closely work together. Furthermore, from a methodological perspective, both subnational levels are important social contexts (e. g. Deth/Tausendpfund 2013). Moreover, in the context of the above-mentioned Agenda 21 processes, diverse projects have been initiated to develop and implement indicator systems to provide information for sustainable good governance and spatial planning at the regional and local level.

Despite the constitutional, practical, and scientific significance of the local level, researchers are frequently confronted with unsurmountable obstacles when it comes to gaining an accurate understanding of local or regional structures. This is a major problem according to the "Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management" (Wilkinson et al. 2016).

Regardless of their disciplinary origin or research interests, researchers often conclude that it is not the theoretical significance of the local and regional level that is in question; the issue is rather that not enough is known about local reality to give it systematic consideration. In particular, the various indicator systems that have been proposed time and again have mostly failed in the end and have mainly fallen victim

to an insufficient supply of data. The SDG indicators for municipalities, developed by the Bertelsmann Foundation and other stakeholders such as DIFU or BBSR, have to cope with the same problem: It *“should be noted that not all relevant indicators can be defined or not all defined indicators are well available”* (BSt et al. 2017: 1).

According to this, we propose establishing a transdisciplinary data consortium for regional and local data. Its central objective is to provide empirical data that facilitates investigations of the relationship between politics, social cohesion, and subjective wellbeing on a local and/or regional scale. The key questions of the consortium concerning the FAIR data principles (Wilkinson et al. 2016) are therefore defined as follows:

1. Which institution or organization provides what type of information and with which analytical depth with regard to local and regional politics, social cohesion, and subjective wellbeing? (Findability and accessibility)
2. How can the local and regional data be processed and harmonized to make it comparable across time as well as across state and national borders? (Accessibility and interoperability)
3. Which data gaps can be deduced from existing research desiderata for research projects with a local or regional focus? (Accessibility and re-usability)
4. How can the strongly diverging interests of information providers, scientific users, and practical users in this transdisciplinary field of research be synchronized? (Interoperability and re-usability)

References:

- BBSR 2017: A Strategy for the Provision of Public Services at the Regional Level. BMVI-Online-Publikation; 1/2017, Berlin, March 2017. URL: <https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN/Publications/BMVI/2017/bmvi-online-01-17-node.html> [accessed: March 21, 2019].
- BSt et al. 2017: SDG-Indikatoren für Kommunen. URL: https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Monitor_Nachhaltige_Kommune/SDG-Indikatoren_fuer_Kommunen_Kurzbeschreibung.pdf [accessed: March 21, 2019].
- Deth, J. van/Tausendpfund, M. (eds.) 2013: Politik im Kontext: Ist alle Politik lokale Politik? Individuelle und kontextuelle Determinanten politischer Orientierungen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Holtmann, E./Rademacher, C./Reiser, M. 2017: Kommunalpolitik: Eine Einführung. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Wilkinson, M. D. 2016: Comment: The FAIR Guiding Principles for Scientific Data Management and Stewardship. In: Scientific Data 3:160018. DOI: 10.1038/sdata.2016.18.

- Brief description of the proposed use of existing infrastructures, tools and services that are essential in order to fulfil the planned consortium's objectives
- Recently, we have informal commitments to cooperate with LoReData by the following institutions (in alphabetical order):
 - Centre for Social Research Halle (ZSH)
 - German Association of Towns and Municipalities (DStGB)
 - German Institute of Urban Affairs (DIFU)
 - German Political Science Association (DVPW) Workgroup „Local Politics“ (LoPoFo)
 - German Sociological Association (DGS) Section „Urban and Regional Sociology“
 - Hanns Seidel Foundation, Munich (HSS)
 - Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ)
 - Johan Heinrich von Thünen Institute, Federal Research Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries
 - Research Centre Innovative Local Development and Public Service (FINKO)
- The Halle Institute for Economic Research (IWH) is a member of the Leibniz Association. The IWH conducts economic research and provides economic policy recommendations which are explored on evidence-based research.
The IWH research Data Centre (RDC) supports the IWH research groups with their data projects, and the procurement of data, in the generation of proprietary data, as well as data preparation and archiving. Data output is not merely transmitted to RDC but also made available to external researchers.
- The Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) is a decentral national institute, financed by the German Ministry of Research and Education, which will start its work in 2020. The project studies processes of solidarity formation and dissolution on different levels of society. The Halle branch of the RISC has planned a quantitative regional panel that examines the spatial conditions of social cohesion in twelve municipalities. This regional panel is an additional starting database of the planned consortium.
- The third pillar of the planned LoReData consortium could be a possible continuation of a project funded by the GRF on 'Local Party Systems in Germany' (LocPSG) at the University of Passau. Over the course of the projects research a database of all local elections in all German non-urban, territorial states since 1990 was created. The latest version of this database is available via the data catalog of the GESIS Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences (ZA6914). The original local election database was developed in the subproject A6 of CRC 580 (see Holtmann et al., 2012) which took place from 2004 to 2012. Up to 2019, it was continued by the LocPSG project.

Reference:

- Holtmann, E. et al. 2012: "Die Anderen": Parteifreie Akteure in der lokalen Risikogesellschaft. In: Best, H./Holtmann, E. (eds.): Aufbruch der entscherten Gesellschaft: Deutschland nach der Wiedervereinigung. Frankfurt/Main et al.: Campus, pp.: 123–147.

- Interfaces to other proposed NFDI consortia: brief description of existing agreements for collaboration and/or plans for future collaboration
- Accredited as one of 34 research data centers in Germany by the German Data Forum (RatSWD), the IWH RDC is a partner within the ConsortEcoSoc application. This much bigger NFDI consortium is planning to deal with socially relevant issues – “including digital transformation, globalization, demographic decline and aging societies, migration, and social aspects of climate change” – from a more global perspective. In contrast, LoReData will not focus on global issues but on subnational ones.
- Beyond this, we plan to collaborate with ECONSOCHIST at the University of Regensburg. It shares the same regional and local focus but in contrast to LoReData in a more historical perspective. Conceptually, a cooperation between both NFDI consortia will allow to analyze social changes in “longue durée” (Fernand Braudel) or at least in “moyenne durée”. Michael Fritsch, an associated research professor at the IWH discovered a “long persistence of regional entrepreneurship culture” in Germany between 1925 and 2005 (Fritsch/ Wyrwich 2012). His results promise fascinating advantages in combination with longitudinal historical data (ECONSOCHIST &LoReData). Furthermore, both NFDI consortia have to cope with similar data problems especially the manifold territorial changes in German history. They will be a particular challenge with regard to producing consistent time series. Methodologically it would be productive to develop common approaches for the temporal harmonization of our longitudinal data sets.
- The longitudinal data, that LoReData (and also ECONSOCHIST) will be collecting, will be attractive to several other small disciplines – e.g. administrative science, demography, economic, public and social history on local and regional levels or research on building, urban and spatial planning.¹ Therefore, another consortium to collaborate with could be the NFDI for Small Disciplines at the Humboldt University in Berlin.
- Other NFDI consortia also share the similar local or regional focus with LoReData; e.g. 4NFDIBiobanks, NFDI4NutEpi, NFDI4Life-Umbrella or BERD@NFDI. We are certain that these and similar later NFDI consortia will be able to profit from the longitudinal time series of economic and democratic leadership on German regional and local levels collected by LoReData (and ECONSOCHIST).

¹ See the taxonomy published online by NFDI for Small Disciplines: <https://www.kleinefaecher.de/kartierung/kleinefaecher-von-a-z.html> (accessed June 22, 2019).

4 Cross-cutting topics

- Please identify cross-cutting topics that are relevant for your consortium and that need to be designed and developed by several or all NFDI consortia.

1. Data Quality and Metadata
2. Interoperability and Open Standards
3. Governance and Use of Existing Infrastructures
4. Training and Support
5. Software & Online Applications, Software Curation

- Please indicate which of these cross-cutting topics your consortium could contribute to and how.

1. Data Quality and Metadata

The improvement of data quality is one of the main aims of LoReData. It depends especially on the harmonization of economic, political, and social longitudinal data sets across time as well as across state and national borders (see above).

LoReData agrees with a statement by the executive committee of the DGS (2019) on the “Provision and Re-use of Research Data”.

- Not all scientifically collected research data can be – or are allowed to – made available for reuse
- Additionally the selection of research fields or interests cannot be based on reuse of data.
- Legal and research-ethical questions, the effort to achieve an adequate research output as well as organizational-technical considerations are taken into account when asked which data can be provided when, for whom, for what purpose and in what form.

In Germany, administrative, economic, political and / or social studies at regional or local level are often carried out on behalf of public services, in particular by certain federal or state ministries. The data collected in this manner therefore belong to the respective principals. Research institutes as well as their clients, however often cannot access or pass on this data. The only way to solve this principle agent dilemma – by making this data available or reusable – would be metadata about which results and data are available and who owns the copyright.

2. Interoperability and Open Standards

The harmonization of longitudinal data across time as well as across state and national borders is the main challenge for LoReData (and ECONSOCHIST) with regard to making these data interoperable.

Data quality is important for data integration. As ECONSOCHIST and LoReData will be trying to establish common approaches to this harmonization of our datasets (see above), we are already adopting some best practice suggestions from the first NFDI conference. From an international perspective we can combine our approaches with strategies of “harmonizing demographic and socio-economic variables for cross-national comparative survey research” (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik/Warner 2014). Insofar as neither territorial nor institutional changes in our field of research will cease, we have to be prepared to adapt to such dynamic changes. Therefore, we need to establish a kind of open standard that is able to face changing data harmonization challenges in order to improve the quality of our data.

3. Governance and Use of Existing Infrastructures

The LoReData is seeking to involve political stakeholders and intermediaries from science and society already active in our fields of research in order to jointly and deliberately negotiate the goals of the community of interest. IWH RDC, as part of the consortium, is embedded in the research data infrastructure in Germany due to its accreditation by the German Data Forum (RatSWD). Moreover, RDC provides internal and external scientists with data for their research activities.

Most important for LoReData is to improve and harmonise the findability and usability of data by providing users access to relevant data and /or information where to find the research data they need for their studies.

4. Training and support

The LoReData consortium aims to get in touch with its users in order to provide the following services to external scientists:

- advice to the prospective data-users concerning supply and access of data,
- provision of widely used statistical software,
- support for researchers in their handling of complex data sets,
- clarification of data protection issues,
- creation of specific workplaces for guest scientists and support during their research visit.

5. Software & Online Applications, Software Curation

Like the DGS (2019) states: Given the diversity of empirical approaches, sociology can not speak of a “normal case” of research data management, but always differentiated assessments depending on the research interests and data types.

LoReData wants to use the best practices of the gesis database (Zenk-Möltgen 2019: SPSS, STATA) and other international secondary data providers – such as: ESS (2019: SAS, SPSS, STATA) or WVS (2019: csv, R, SAS SPSS, and Stata) –

in order to provide all data in various software formats, they are (and will be) used in the scientific community.

The same applies to the qualitative secondary data that is to be made available within the framework of the LoReData NFDI consortium. Qualitative secondary analysis is a relatively young and therefore especially challenging research strategy. Applying this innovative methodology, uniform software formats still need to be defined (see Medjedović 2019: 249). However, for original qualitative data we recommend the ©MS Rich Text Format (RTF) as standard. RTF is a proprietary document file format for cross-platform document interchange with Microsoft products. RTF files can be processed in almost all word processing programs and thus processed in the typically used QDA software solutions – e.g. atlas.ti, MAXQDA, Python or RQDA.

References:

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- Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, J./Warner, U. 2014: Harmonising Demographic and Socio-Economic Variables for Cross-National Comparative Survey Research. Dordrecht et al.: Springer.
- IWH RDC 2019: The IWH Research Data Centre. URL: www.iwh-halle.de/rdc/ [accessed: June 23, 2019].
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- ESS 2019: The European Social Survey. URL: www.europeansocialsurvey.org [accessed: June 23, 2019].
- WVS 2019: World Values Survey. URL: www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp [accessed: June 23, 2019].