

Europe and America in the Modern World. Frictions and Transformations of Globality

Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) & University of Regensburg (UR)

Project title & number:	LSC Europe and America in the Modern World W20/2018
Project duration:	1 September 2019 – 31 August 2025
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Executive Summary

Launched in September 2019, the LSC Europe and America forms a visible platform for interdisciplinary area studies, strengthening collaboration between IOS and UR, while forging sustainable networks with international partners. Despite pandemic-related delays, the first phase met all major objectives, with approximately 95% of the allocated budget spent. Key outcomes include [four completed or near-completed doctoral dissertations](#) by international researchers, numerous scholarly publications, launching the open-access [Frictions blog-journal](#), and creating the [VHB online lecture series](#) as a globally accessible open educational resource. LSC measures supported successful third-party funding applications, furthered UR's research profile in [Dynamics in the Global World](#) laying conceptual foundations for six permanent professorships in the [Department for Interdisciplinary and Multiscalar Area Studies \(DIMAS\)](#), while generating a broader focus on the plural Americas at UR and encouraging IOS to position its regional expertise within global frameworks. The LSC contributed to the new joint IOS-UR professorship in Normativity in International Politics. The LSC's core concept of multiscalarity and its transcomparative approach shape interdisciplinary research across UR while gaining traction in area studies more broadly.

Successful externally-funded projects, including seeFField (Volkswagen Foundation, 2022–29) and Denkraum Ukraine (DAAD, 2024–28), drew on the IOS-UR collaborative structures developed through the LSC. Targeted LSC seed funding facilitated international networking and new partnerships, while supporting innovative fieldwork. Visiting fellowships and professorships, fully operational from 2022, yielded publications, contributions to the VHB series, mentoring, co-supervision, and new partnerships with universities including UAH in Chile, Gdansk and Arizona State, while the [University of Kansas signed its first ever strategic cooperation](#), namely with UR.

The LSC contributed to teaching, including [lecture series on War, Peace & Security or Transatlantic relations](#). The milestone of developing a cross-programme teaching module in area studies was not concluded, but DIMAS addresses this gap with LSC support. The LSC has an extensive outreach programme on current affairs, including [Ukraine](#) and [US politics](#), expanding in the second phase to include national and international transfer activities involving substantial exchanges with policymakers, notably an [event at the 2026 Munich Security Conference](#).

The open, transparent structures at the LSC have enabled significant early career researcher-led initiatives. Equally, the new pre- and post-doctoral positions respond to lessons learned in the first phase, ensuring salaries over grant-based funding, while acknowledging challenges transregional approaches pose to doctoral researchers.

The LSC is committed to open science with the *Frictions* blog-journal, the VHB course and open access publications. The second-phase project *Areapedia* will leave a sustainable legacy as an open access living handbook showcasing conceptual and methodological innovations.

The LSC's first phase has demonstrated substantial scientific, structural, and societal impact, creating internationally visible outcomes, fostering innovative, comparative research, and establishing resilient networks and structures. It will consolidate existing work in its second phase while exploring emerging topics and pressing themes with social, scientific and policy relevance.

1. Contribution to strategic goals of the funding programme

A key part of Regensburg's strategic focus on area studies, the LSC builds on earlier developments, including IOS joining the Leibniz Association and the creation of CITAS (Center for International and Transnational Area Studies) at UR, both in 2017. As the first large-scale joint IOS-UR initiative, the LSC **clusters expertise** on East and South, West and Southern Europe, and the Americas, to develop a sustained focus on European-American entanglements and global frictions.

Quickly achieving **critical mass**, the collaboration contributed to a successful Bavarian High-Tech Agenda initiative securing six permanent UR professorships at the core of the Department for Interdisciplinary and Multiscalar Area Studies (DIMAS). Integrated into UR's strategic research priority [Dynamics in the Global World](#), the LSC promotes plural understanding of the Americas, making Latin and Central America and Francophone Canada increasingly visible. Supplementing established transatlantic and (post-)Cold War frameworks, it encourages research along transregional vectors, including East European-Latin American interconnections.

The LSC advances IOS' objective of embedding East and Southeast Europe within global analytical frameworks and advancing region-specific themes in transnational contexts, in line with recommendations from IOS' successful 2023 evaluation. **Capacity building and network formation** between UR and IOS contributed to two major externally funded projects: seeFField (Volkswagen Foundation, 2022–2029) and Denkraum Ukraine (DAAD, 2024–2028).

Beyond research, the LSC contributed to public knowledge on issues with **social- and policy-relevance**, including geopolitical transformations, academic freedom, migration, and memory cultures. It has supported higher-risk and creative research approaches, including collaborations with artists, digitally oriented area studies research, and fieldwork-intensive doctoral projects. The LSC thus contributes to the Leibniz Association's *Theoria-cum-praxi* ethos and, more specifically, to IOS' science communication agenda.

Despite pandemic-related disruptions, the LSC achieved strong **international visibility** via fellowship and visiting professorship programmes. The partner network has expanded from twelve to sixteen institutions across Europe and the Americas, with strategic use of seed funding and visiting fellowships contributing to this goal. By **pooling expertise**, the LSC has helped consolidate Regensburg's area studies landscape while strengthening institutional integration between IOS and UR. It offers a stable foundation for comparative, transregional and multiscalar research on a global world increasingly shaped by friction, transformation and rupture.

2. Achievement of objectives and milestones

Objectives | The LSC Europe and America fulfilled its core objective of enabling **interdisciplinary and cross-regional fertilization** in Regensburg. DIMAS, strengthening Latin American studies and the new IOS interdisciplinary politics department with a joint professorship with UR in Normativity in International Politics offer the clearest illustrations. These initiatives create a durable framework for further third-party-funded projects.

The six **doctoral projects** supported from March 2020 onwards were significantly impacted by COVID-19. Two doctoral researchers have defended or submitted their theses, while two are close to submission (all by international scholars). Two German doctoral researchers withdrew, one for career reasons and one for health reasons. Additional IOS and WGL funding enabled six-month extensions for the remaining doctoral researchers. Competitive writing-up grants were introduced, resulting in the LSC supporting a further completed thesis.

International partnerships are thriving. The cooperation with the University of Kansas contributed directly to KU's first ever strategic partnership, namely with UR. Visiting professorships generated new partnerships with Gdańsk and Arizona, while seed funding enabled agreements with UAH (Chile) and the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at Alberta, while also expanding cooperation with Francophone Canada. Competitive fellowship schemes strategically prioritized postdoctoral researchers. At the national level, the LSC cooperated with Leibniz Institutes, especially HI, GIGA, ZMO, IfL and GWZO – now a formal Phase 2 partner. CrossArea and the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences (ZMSBw) are close collaborators, with the [joint conference](#) with the latter shaping the LSC's highly pertinent focus on peace and security.

Milestones | Six work packages enabled the LSC to serve as an interdisciplinary incubator, with all major Phase 1 milestones achieved or nearing completion during Phase 2.

1: Research Spaces were organized into [five modules](#): Transatlantic Political Transformations; Cultures and Hierarchies of Translation; Trade and Institutions; Practices of Belonging; and the cross-cutting module Towards Multipolar and Multiscalar Area Studies. These modules crossed institutional, disciplinary and career-level boundaries while informing the recruitment of doctoral researchers. Thematic consolidation from 2024 formed four focal [research trajectories](#): Sovereignty and (In)Security; Translating Knowledge and Cultures; Uneven Economic Flows; and Refugee Worldmaking, with multiscalar, multipolarity and digital (augmented) spaces remaining important cross-cutting concepts. The first-phase research concepts shaped the six DIMAS professorships while informing an Excellence Cluster application on polycentricity. All milestones were fulfilled.

2: The Reflection Space adapted to pandemic conditions, producing durable digital formats, including the [Area Studies under Discussion](#) series with Leibniz partners and the [Frictions blog-journal](#) (launched on schedule 2021). The VHB [digital lecture series](#) features visiting scholars' contributions, delaying its launch by several months. Planned annual retreats were replaced by regular member meetings. Winter and summer schools, alongside the LSC events programme, supported reflection and theoretical engagement with area studies concepts, methods and themes.

3: The Early Career Scholar Network, with the UR's Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies (GS), integrated doctoral researchers into [structured training](#) with quality assurances measures. Graduate workshops shaped the second-phase research agendas (notably [digital spaces](#) and [sovereignty](#)), strengthened junior scholars' organizational capacities and resulted in an [edited volume with Routledge](#). Competitive travel costs awards prioritized early-career researchers, while the flexible programme design of ScienceCampi enabled creation of writing-up grants. Two remaining doctoral theses will be submitted in 2026. All milestones were implemented bar the annual predoctoral programme, which proved unnecessary after fellowships were allocated. A one-off predoc event in September 2019 yielded four applications to the LSC.

4: Visiting Fellowship and Network Programme – delayed significantly by COVID-19 until 2022, by August 2025 some 35 visiting researchers had completed extended stays here. Sustainability was ensured through publications and recording units for the VHB series, while three Phase 1 visiting fellows joined the second-phase [early career research network on Memory](#). Visiting professorships generated new institutional partnerships, while outgoing fellowships and seed funding supported new international cooperation agreements and funding applications (including Denkraum Ukraine). Doctoral researchers benefited directly through international fieldwork and collaborative research networks. All milestones were fulfilled.

5: Publications and Knowledge Transfer activities include concluded and ongoing publication outputs, the consolidation of *Frictions* as a sustainable open-access format, journalist seminars, public lecture series, and sustained cooperation with local cultural institutions and civic knowledge platforms. All milestones were fulfilled.

6: Curriculum Development outcomes include interdisciplinary lecture series (*Ringvorlesungen*), training formats by visiting scholars, and the VHB course. A planned cross-degree module in areas studies methods and epistemology was instead integrated into DIMAS structures, drawing on groundwork laid at the LSC. The annual Area Studies Prize (with DIMAS), is a visible marker of Regensburg's interdisciplinary area studies profile in teaching and research.

Finance | Financial planning was most significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a cost-neutral two-year extension. Approximately 95% of the total award was spent.

Personnel costs remained stable (636,000 € actual vs. 627,000 € planned), with reallocations reflecting the LSC's growth, hence the two-year office assistant position. Surplus doctoral funding enabled writing-up grants. Student assistant costs almost doubled to support expanded PR, and social media and transfer activities, including the VHB lecture series. Material PR costs were much lower than planned (19,000 € vs 37,000 €). **Research travel** exceeded projections (48,000 € vs. 28,000 €) due to fieldwork-intensive doctoral projects, offset partly by lower conference travel expenditure. **Publication funding** was under-spent, in part due to new Open Access agreements. **Event funding** remained stable, with a strategic shift toward smaller, targeted thematic workshops and network-building activities rather than large-scale events.

3. Activities and obstacles

Fault lines of globalization, tensions around multipolarity, and the global significance of supposed peripheries were all anticipated in the 2019 application. However, COVID-19, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, and Donald Trump's re-election affected planning and content more profoundly than expected. Still, all work programme elements were implemented and most milestones achieved within the extended six-year period. The unavoidable eleven-month overlap between both phases created some challenges in balancing meeting first-phase objectives with developing new trajectories.

Pandemic restrictions particularly affected doctoral scholars, delaying fieldwork and archival research by up to two years. The war against Ukraine affected research community members personally while reshaping the LSC's thematic orientation, intensifying the focus on security, sovereignty, and reconfigurations of post-Cold War orders and transatlantic relations. Multipolarity was critically reassessed in light of the concept's geopolitical instrumentalization.

The LSC engaged with renewed debates on democracy and US global leadership, while including pressing themes such as digital transformation (AI, augmented virtual spaces, and unmanned warfare) into its agenda. Controversies on the Israel–Palestine conflict, including debate

over the co-hosted [2023 CrossArea conference keynote](#), were addressed through open discussion, fostering [reflection on academic freedom](#), memory cultures, and democratic and human rights.

Overall, the LSC demonstrated capacity to transform external crises into new analytical frameworks and research directions. Major joint funding initiatives involving IOS and UR emerged from this process. The LSC's conceptual framework and personnel were central to the emergence of DIMAS and the consolidation of transregional area studies, including innovative approaches towards virtual and augmented area studies. By combining the strengths of IOS and UR, the LSC has created durable synergies that position Regensburg as a visible centre for interdisciplinary, transregional, and multiscale area studies

4. Results and successes

The first **doctoral thesis** supported by the LSC was defended on 27 January 2026: "Knowledge(s) of Displacement: Thinking Migration from Greece (2020-2022)". A further thesis submitted in October 2025, "Maneuvering towards 'The West': U.S. Army-Bundeswehr joint War Games as Conduit for Western Identity Formation", is awaiting the viva. Another supported by a writing-up grant ("The Material Culture of European-Indigenous Diplomacy in North America in the 18th Century") was defended in 2026.

LSC activities shaped publications including the [Routledge volume on Sovereignty](#) co-edited by a LSC doctoral scholar (Matlack) and postdoctoral researcher (Bescotti), and Ulf Brunnbauer's multi-authored book on [In the Storms of Transformation](#) (University of Toronto Press 2024). Visiting researchers also completed significant works while in Regensburg, including [Topouzova's book on the Bulgarian Gulag \(Cornell UP\)](#) and Wroblewski's contribution to a Regensburg-led edited volume [with Bloomsbury on Nationalism from Below](#).

LSC seed funding and activities laid groundwork for securing the DAAD-funded Denkraum Ukraine project and establishing DIMAS. The LSC framework supported Joanna Moszczynska's successful 2022 application for a DFG Walter Benjamin Award on Literary Journalism in the Cold War and the Volkswagen Foundation seeFField project.

Research-led and public-facing events generated substantial visibility. In Phase 1, some 200 events were organized directly at IOS and UR or in collaboration with academic partners or local multipliers such as the Evangelisches Bildungswerk (EBW) or city-run centres like [M26 cultural centre](#) or the municipal [Nacht.Schafft.Wissen](#). Collaboration with Flossenbürg Concentration Camp Memorial advanced debate on memory cultures, migration and the US-led 'liberation' of camps. The collaboration on the 2023 [Un/Free Spaces](#) international workshop showcased the value pooling expertise across IOS, UR and external partners. The January 2021 online workshop on [Migration, Mediality, Liminality](#) laid digital foundations for close cooperation with the University of Michigan, while shaping how the "Belonging" module evolving into the second-phase focus on Refugee Worldmaking. Seed funding supporting the doctoral-led initiative to collaborate with the ZMSBw led to the joint [2024 annual conference on Playing War](#) and a [side event at the 2026 Munich Security Conference](#).

5. Equal opportunities, career development and internationalisation

The Executive Board was gender-balanced at founding, with a male professor replaced by a female in 2023. The Steering Committee consistently had a female majority among principal investigators and included international members, non-professors, and elected doctoral representatives. The LSC coordinator has an international background. The 2020 doctoral cohort were also international (four of six), the majority female. All recipients of doctoral writing-up grants and additional COVID-19 funding extensions were international. Internationalization and equality have been integral to staffing and recruitment from the outset.

The Graduate School's structured PhD programme tailors its programme, including writing skills workshops, career advice, mentoring programme and funding advice, to international researchers. A dedicated LSC Equality Measures fund (4,500 €) was established in year 5 to support gender and diversity-related activities. Open calls for conference and research funding targeted early career scholars. Female doctoral researchers successfully accessed additional equality funding from UR. Publication support aided international researchers with proofreading costs. The temporary supporting positions – student assistants and the two-year office assistant post – offered opportunities to gain specialist experience (in digital humanities or public relations and science communication) to aid career development.

The [Regensburg Area Studies Prize](#), awarded with DIMAS, raises master's and state exam students' visibility, highlighting pathways to doctoral research at UR and beyond. Events were

organized with gender balance and diverse representation in mind. A key takeaway is giving employment contracts to doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, rather than grants as was the case in Phase 1, thus aligning with German academic norms.

6. Structures and collaboration

The LSC work programme is underpinned by efficient **management structures** centred on a coordination position and the IOS-UR cooperation agreement. The platform connects eminent area studies units with diverse regional and disciplinary profiles, strengthening strategic priorities at UR and IOS. The LSC facilitates new linkages between the Regensburg European American Forum (REAF), the Spanish Studies Centre (CEH), DIMAS and the Graduate School (GS), and with IOS. LSC doctoral researchers' involvement in the GS encourages engagement with comparative area studies, with the LSC providing a structure for transnationalizing research and making the plural Americas more prominent. Profile and capacity building measures are proving successful for funding acquisition, from individual grants to large-scale collaborative projects. New partnerships have emerged organically from both strategic international networking measures (fellowships, professorships and seed funding) and bottom-up, early career researcher-led measures.

7. Quality assurance

The ScienceCampus prioritizes Open Access with dedicated funding. Where full OA costs were prohibitive, introductory chapters of edited volumes are made available. The blog-journal *Frictions* is OA and is working on DOAJ recognition, while the VHB online lecture series is a globally accessible open educational resource. LSC training and events, offered with the GS and IOS library, also highlight open science. Doctoral supervision and progress are closely monitored via supervision agreements, six-monthly progress reports, and monthly Jour Fixe meetings with LSC and GS management. Extending doctoral grants after 18 months required successful completion of a chapter workshop with peer feedback. LSC management and oversight are transparent and inclusive, with doctoral researchers on the Steering Committee. Annual meetings allow all members to shape future developments. The effective first-phase structures are continued in Phase 2. The Scientific Advisory Board is informed and regularly consulted about LSC plans and activities.

8. Outlook

Global frictions make the LSC's focus on relations between Europe and the Americas acutely relevant. The first-phase modules evolved into flexible trajectories on (In)Security & Sovereignty, Translating Knowledge and Cultures, Uneven Economic Flows, and Refugee Worldmaking, complemented by the cross-cutting Augmented Area Studies LAB. The new joint UR-IOS law professorship in Normativity in International Politics, whose holder Cindy Wittke-Hohlfeld is a member of the LSC executive board, and the recently-established Department of Politics at IOS greatly expand the LSC expertise on international relations and comparative politics while interfacing with the Bavarian Research Alliance for Peace, Conflict and Security Studies ([FoKS](#)).

A new instrument in Phase 2, emerging from first-phase experience, are early-career international research networks. They will focus on Margins of Memory and Borders & Law, bringing together Regensburg scholars with Germany- and internationally-based researchers. One network speaker, Volha Bartash, recently received an ERC Consolidator grant, which will feed back into the LSC network. We plan to continue seed funding awards as a cost-effective measure enabling higher-risk research on themes pertinent to the LSC research trajectories while generating new partnerships. One focus shall be comparative studies linking Eastern Europe and Latin America. Another major future plan is the Areapedia open-access digital handbook, promising a sustainable legacy for almost a decade of funding.

The LSC will serve as a hub for the establishment of new strategic partnerships across the world, focusing multiple regional perspectives on frictions of globality. We understand how such partnerships strengthen academic resilience at a time of increasing threats to academic freedom. One strategic aim, therefore, is to deepen cooperation with partners in Canada and Japan (other "middle powers" that can participate in some European funding schemes). For this purpose we received an LSC-initiated Bavarian internationalization grant (BayIntAn) to further collaboration with Toronto alongside funding from the German Center for Research and Innovation (DWIH) Tokyo to develop cooperation with the University of Hokkaido – Japan's foremost research centre for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. We want to consider: How does the "East" look from even further east? And what is the "West" in an age of multipolarity? Our partnerships are used to support US-based colleagues. Ultimately, the LSC's goal is to initiate a Horizon Europe (or ERC Synergy Grant) application while continuing to submit applications to relevant German funding streams.