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Flight – BORDER - Integration

2nd Conference on the Phenomenon of Displacement in Europe

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Flight – BORDER – Integration

2nd Conference on the Phenomenon of Displacement in Europe

(October 5th/ 6th, Lovenno di Menaggio)

Ulla Connor

The increasing global interdependence of large parts of social life represents a major challenge for the social sciences at the beginning of the twentieth century. Economic and social inequalities disturb established orders when they become the impetus for worldwide migration today. What we face on a daily basis and what has become a pressing issue in Europe and at its borders are new and partly intensified processes of inclusion and exclusion. The three-part conference series, which takes place between 2017 and 2019 at the German-Italian Centre for European Excellence „Villa Vigoni“, delves into this topic area under the keywords “flight,” “borders,” and “integration.” The “2nd Conference on the Phenomenon of Displacement in Europe” focuses on the topic of borders. The understanding of these borders that has been developed is not solely focused on a border crossing, a fence or a wall. Instead, the border is viewed as a complex phenomenon that is constituted through interrelations between practices of demarcation and border crossings. Borders thus become “continuously updated regulatory practices” and can be understood as “performative processes” (see call for papers). Their conceptualization can only be multidimensional, because they concern economics, politics, art, space and mechanization as well as experience or corporality.

CHRISTIAN WILLE (University of Luxembourg) emphasizes this complexity of the border phenomenon in his opening speech. Not only have the places of border multiplied and transformed, but also the spaces of experience, manifestation forms, and technologies associated with it. Consequently, there is a need to reformulate the idea of the border for academic research. For this purpose, Wille presents a systematization of the development of border studies for the period from 1960 onwards in order to combine its institutionalization and theoretical concepts within the context of political events. Based on this overview, the great lines of transformation can be worked out regarding how the border is thought of: From the “processualization” of the border, via the “multiplicity shift” (multi-layered production of the border), Wille arrives at the identification of a “complexity shift” within border studies. The latter forms a suitable basis for grasping borders as complex entities and thus developing a “different” understanding of borders that does justice to the new transformations.

CAROLIN LEUTLOFF-GRANDITS (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder) also draws on a multidimensional understanding of borders and flight, focusing in particular on the previously neglected aspect of time. Using the example of her empirical field, the refugee reception centers in Germany, she traces the role of temporality and borders as “temporal barriers.” Time becomes relevant in two topic areas: On the one hand, state practices and public discourses on the reception of refugees show that various understandings of time are used for categorization. Accordingly, migrants are understood along implicit narratives of progress in attributions of underdevelopment and regression and are addressed by appropriate measures.

On the other hand, temporality also plays a central role in everyday life in refugee homes, for example when it comes to waiting for requests from the authorities or reacting as quickly as possible. One of the central theses is that refugees are thus turned into underage “patients of the state.”

STEFANO DEGLI UBERTI (National Research Council) also addresses these forms of categorization processes, which he examines using the example of “out-of-quota” refugees in South Tyrol on the border with Austria. Since this group of migrants falls through the administrative categorization grids for recognition as refugees, they are particularly affected by marginalization and exclusion. Borders, understood here as daily regulatory practice, are directly related to attributions in public discourses and politics. Through a double process of exclusion, which morally and legally questions the refugee status, a real “illegalization” of this group occurs. The result is not only that the access to living spaces and sanitary facilities is blocked, but also the forced mobility by the regional authorities in order to avoid aggregation and settledness. Those affected react to these political measures with resignation in the face of powerlessness, but also with forms of resistance, if they criticize the situation, make themselves publicly felt, and show solidarity with one another.

EVA NOSSEM (Saarland University) extends this focus to Italy, its particular location on the external borders of the European Union and the internal division between North and South. Italy, however, can not only be described as a “borderland” (Balibar) in terms of migration, but also with regard to other socio-cultural bordering processes, which, due to their complexity, must be found beyond the dichotomous juxtaposition of inside and outside. Nossem finds a good example of this in the social negotiation of subject positions regarding racism, sexuality, and gender. Here, the concept of “homonationalism” (Puar), which refers to the inclusion of homosexuality in national discourses, also seems to hold promising information in the case of Italy. On closer examination, however, Italy reveals itself to be a more complex case: In fact, there is an interplay between a heterosexual national space declared to be backward and the European context, which is modern and liberal in terms of sexual policy.

In the afternoon, CHRISTOPH PURSCHKE (University of Luxembourg) returns to the questions asked at the beginning about the conceptualization of borders. In a theoretical and philosophy-of-life-oriented approach, Purschke discusses the character of action for limitations. The aim is to develop a concept for drawing borders that does justice to their practical characteristics. Typologically, a distinction is made between the terms “edge,” “boundary,” and “border” (Kulik). The structure of the argumentation begins systematically with the focus on the practical implementation of border demarcations. Borders are bound to the intentional categorization of units and lead to the question of motives and the ideological legitimation of their implementation. In addition, there are the consequences of action, which are not always manageable even for those involved. In this perspective, borders are a means to the worldly order of the environment and at the same time an object of social negotiation processes in which interpretative sovereignty and claims to validity have to prove themselves time and again.

CHIARA BRAMBILLA (University of Bergamo) is concerned with the Mediterranean as a special border area, which has become the subject of spectacularizing representations in the

media. According to critical objection, the narratives oriented towards death and military intervention only provide a highly sub-complex picture of this border area. In fact, it should rather be seen in the context of a “policy of visibility/invisibility” (Arendt) that regulates what is perceived as relevant or irrelevant. With the help of the concept of “borderscapes,” Brambilla captures what is happening in the Mediterranean as a complex dynamic between globalization and localization, aesthetics and politics, national hegemony and plural counter-movements. Based on previously unheard voices, room can be made for alternative representations of the Mediterranean. Brambilla demonstrates this with the example of the experiences of young people from the Italian-Tunisian border region, who oppose the state hegemonies to ideas of cross-border citizenship.

The question of possibilities and forms of resistance is also addressed in the contribution by ASTRID M. FELLNER (Saarland University). Here, performance and action art become the starting point for critical reflection when they deal with the topics of borders and flight and provide new interpretations. Fellner draws attention to the negotiation of “limits of hospitality” (Frieze) by means of two performances that address the shared meal and the celebration. The artistic productions are dedicated to the encounter of cultural positions in interspaces and at the same time try to overcome the usual dichotomies between the “self” and the “other.” Fellner’s understanding of border corresponds to the concept of “bordertextures,”¹ which serves here to do justice to the agonistic relationships typical of borders. The border textures span the space between things that are normally separated from each other and condense into figures that can provide new means of identification.

CLAUDIA GUALTIERI (University of Milan) is also searching for perspectives beyond hegemonic discourses. In connection with postcolonial studies, Gualtieri adopts an interdisciplinary perspective and asks about the critical potential as well as the “agency” of voices that are otherwise ignored in dominant discourses. This implies the question of how academics in general have to deal with the terminologies of popular discourses. What vocabulary can be used in order not to support the rhetoric of war and threat? For this, Gualtieri suggests the term “connectivity” (Broodbank), which emphasizes historical connections. The Mediterranean, as an example, can be understood from this perspective as the connecting element of distant worlds (e.g. the ancient Mediterranean cities). This description is not tied to national visions, nor to Western knowledge, but takes into account an unavoidable untranslatability, to which research also has to submit.

NATHALIE ROELENS (University of Luxembourg) focuses on one of the instruments par excellence of human displacement: the ship. From a psychoanalytically oriented analysis perspective, the ship can be understood as a “transitional object” (Winnicott); as a mediator between the inner and outer worlds. Thus, the ship can be interpreted in several ways: On the one hand, it stands between the individual and the anticipated destination, promising liberation and at the same time representing the threat of destruction. On the other hand, while fleeing, the inflatable boat becomes a kind of prosthesis that questions the autonomy of the human being and demonstrates his dependence. The border becomes a “transition area” through the ship,

¹ Concept developed by the German-Luxembourgian working group “Bordertextures” (www.bordertextures.org) (29.10.2018)

implying the processuality of the voyage and the escape experience. This experience of the ship had by the migrants can bring about a different attention and visualization of the Mediterranean beyond simply its spectacularization.

The topic of borders, as the intensive final discussion following the contributions also showed, touches on fundamental questions of the disciplinary organization of science. The complex relationships that border studies attempts to do justice to today require the cooperation of cultural and social sciences, geography, border and migration studies. However, disciplinary and university barriers repeatedly oppose such cooperation. Regardless of questions of scientific organization, cooperation across disciplines cannot, however, be about homogenizing methods or approaches when it comes to content. Though, a common research approach can serve as fertile ground for interdisciplinary exchange. During the conference, the common attempt to oppose hegemonic discourses with different and contradictory perspectives proved to be a driving force behind the debate. The point is to show the widespread reductionist representations their own blind spots and to enrich them again with complexity. Appropriate strategies for understandably communicating scientific results for the non-university world are a prerequisite for this.

At this point, the topic of borders not only challenges disciplinary differences, but also the researchers' self-image. In view of current political events, the question of social responsibility and the need for critical intervention on the part of the sciences is becoming increasingly urgent. The researchers' commitment here, according to the consensus, is in demand both in university teaching, participation in public discourses and cooperation with artists and activists. It is important to question the socially relevant topics and discourses time and again and to open them up to supplementary perspectives. One such topic would be that of "integration," which in its definition up until now has largely been left to a state perspective and an essentializing cultural understanding. Thus, it is logical that the next meeting of the series in 2019 will focus on this topic.

Translated by Eva Nossem (Lingotransfair)

Conference Program

October 5th, 2018

09:00 - 09:30 Welcoming Address

Matteo Scotto (Villa Vigoni)

Nathalie Roelens (Key Area MIS, University of Luxembourg)

Christian Wille (UniGR-Center for Border Studies, University of Luxembourg)

09:30 - 10:30 Introductory Presentation

Christian Wille (University of Luxembourg): *For a 'Different' Understanding of Border: Requirements and Developments in Border Studies*

11:00 - 12:30 Presentations

Moderation: Nathalie Roelens (University of Luxembourg)

Carolin Leutloff-Grandits (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder): *On the Diversification of the Right to Asylum and the Creation of Temporal Barriers for Refugees in Germany: An Explorative Approach*

Stefano degli Uberti (National Research Council): *Confini e processi di categorizzazione. L'esperienza dei "profughi fuoriquota" in Alto Adige (Italia) - (Borders and Categorization Processes. The Refugees' Experience "fuori quota" in South Tyrol (Italy))*

14:30 - 16:00 Presentations

Moderation: Christian Wille (University of Luxembourg)

Eva Nossem (Saarland University): *Omo(trans)nazionalismo nei borderlands italiani ed europei - (Homo(trans)nationalism in the Borderlands Italy and Europe)*

Christoph Purschke (University of Luxembourg): *Theoretical Approaches to a Praxeology of the Border*

16:30 - 18:00 Presentations

Moderation: Nathalie Roelens (University of Luxembourg)

Chiara Brambilla (University of Bergamo): *Per una de-spettacolarizzazione delle frontiere mediterranee attraverso l'approccio del borderscaping. L'esempio di una ricerca etnografica con i giovani nel borderscape italo/tunisino - (Towards a De-spectacularization of the Mediterranean Borders Through the Borderscaping Approach. An Example of Ethnographic Research with Young People of the Italian-Tunisian Borderscape)*

Astrid M. Fellner (Saarland University): *“Limits of Hospitality”: Cultural Practices and Aesthetic Negotiations of Borders in Refugee Areas*

October 6th, 2018

09:00 - 10:30 Presentations

Moderation: Christian Wille (University of Luxembourg)

Claudia Gualtieri (University of Milan): *Attraverso il Mediterraneo: la linea del confine e l'estetica del confine nel mare di mezzo - (On the Mediterranean: The Line of the Border and the Aesthetics of the Border in the Mediterranean)*

Nathalie Roelens (University of Luxembourg): *“E la nave va”. L'oggetto transizionale della fuga - (“The Ship of Dreams.” The Transition Object of Flight)*

11:00 - 12:30 Closing Discussion

Moderation: Christian Wille and Nathalie Roelens (University of Luxembourg)



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