



Workshop program

Borderland Vigilance: re-conceptualising borders in comparative perspective

19th July: IBZ Internationales Begegnungszentrum der Wissenschaft München e.V., Amalienstraße 38

20th July: Geschwister-Scholl-Pl. 1, Hörsaal M 001

Organisation: Project (B06), PI: Eveline Dürr; Project (B07), PI: Irene Götz

Borderlands are places where antithetical elements mix and combine in unexpected ways, where people face choices about how to place themselves in relation to often fluid boundaries which are meant to keep people apart but which they nevertheless cross, and where nationhood and citizenship may be displayed and called into question. We will discuss the vigilant and watchful behavior that ordinary people incorporate into their everyday lives to deal with living in borderland contexts in which their own belonging may be denied; how borderland subjects attempt to transform their social reality individually and collectively through actions that assert belonging, and how subjects are shaped in parallel both with political projects assert the primacy of borders and those that question them.

Day 1 (19th July)

13.30-14.00: Registration

14.00-14.30: Welcome

14.30-16.30: Panel 1

Panel chair: **Irene Götz** (LMU)

Annika Pohl Harrisson (Aarhus University): "Wild boar fencing in the Danish-German Borderlands: Disruption, vigilance, and competition for the right-to-define"

Based on recent ethnographic fieldwork in the Danish-German borderlands, this talk will discuss local competing descriptions and affective qualities, which have emerged following the construction of a fence between the two countries. The fence was constructed in 2019 spanning the entire length of the 70 km long borderline, with in order to prevent the immigration of wild boars and the potential spread of African Swine Fever (ASF).

Numerous factors such as human and non-human perceived external threats, political imaginaries, global trade, economic interests and ideas about nature and wildlife are entangled and applied in either justifying or rejecting the fence. While some express fear that AFS would destroy their livelihood and therefore support the fence, critics say that the construction of the fence is against EU regulations and will harm wildlife. Others argue that the fence is purely a symbolic gesture tackling a largely non-existent problem.

While this barrier was erected as a wild boar fence with that particular aim, I will argue that it is a misapprehension to construct a fence along a border and determine its function, consequence, and affective qualities. A fence along a national border can never *not* be a border fence and its definition cannot be instructed politically, as it will be subject to the context, time, and space it is situated in. The talk will unfold those real-life effects on border communities and show how they spur vigilance, positioning, discussions, and competition for the right-to-define the past, present and future.

Justyna Szymańska (University of Warsaw) "Future Makers at the Shifting Border. Activism and civic engagement in Donbas region"

The Donbas region has been presented as troubled borderlands since beginning its modern history, although its borders and extent has never been incontestably set. Additionally the ongoing war on its territory filled the region with conflicted narratives and memory even more. Based on my months-long ethnographic field research conducted in the span of 5 years (2016-2021) in the city of Kramatorsk and its neighbourly towns of Slovyansk, Kostyantynivka and Druzhkivka, all of which present a specific form of settlement called 'monotown' or mono-specialised town, so a town based and centred around one industry or even one industrial plant, I would like to present the grassroots initiatives of young local activists aim to create the change in a challenging environment of monotowns.

I specifically focus on the intersection of civil society-strengthening projects that flourished after 2014 up to the 2022 full-scale war, with this region's difficult history and demographic, as well as its common stereotypical view from the outside. Before Russian mass invasion in February 2022, local activists crafted their work based on hope and imaginary of better future (ex. Appadurai 2013) balancing between two main actors of the monotown: the state and town-forming enterprises. While scales in this case have never been balanced, the local future

makers had tried to find a place for their actions in the local landscape of activism not only along those two actors, but also a third one: the influent external models of activism. Indeed during the time of my field work a significant change in the local landscape of activism could have been noticed. The forementioned external models of activism coming mostly from abroad with international projects and NGOs has been intersecting with foregoing and alluvial forms of being active citizen, creating new modes of engagement, as well as new patterns of adjustment to political and social reality. The complexity of the local social environment was even more intricate with additional layer of identity with vital place a national identity plays in everyday choices and declaration that speaks not only of one's ethnicity or language, but also, and maybe predominantly, of their vision of desired future(s) and shared values.

At the same time I believe those phenomena and changes I would like to briefly describe during my presentation fall into the definition of small changes or 'creeping changes' or 'politics of small things' (Goldfarb 2006, 2008) that are often overlooked without using an ethnographic toolkit.

Anna Casaglia (University of Trento) "Epidermal Politics: Control, Violence and Dissent at the Biometric Border"

In this paper, we critically interrogate the registration of migrants and asylum seekers in pan-European, large-scale biometric databases, like Eurodac (European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database). We employ the notion of "epidermal politics", which analytically captures how human bodies – and skin in particular – become sites of identification, violent control, and contestation. Thinking through epidermal politics allows us to understand how the development of technologies that render skin visible and analysable, such as fingerprint scanners and biometric matching algorithms, are entangled in relations of power, structural racism, and subjugation. Drawing on the work of Simone Browne (2015) and her elaboration of Fanon's theory of epidermisation, we argue that migration control in Europe and its violent and racialising effects are embedded within socio-technical, data infrastructures that stigmatise post-colonial "others" with codes to control their mobilities. We unpack this argument in three stages. First, we discuss the governmental rationales that inform the deployment and use of Eurodac for the management of migration and asylum in Europe. Second, we discuss the ways that biometric control is related to legitimated forms of state violence, including deportation, prolonged detention, and physical violence associated with the forced registration of migrants' fingerprints. Third, we attend to strategies employed by migrants to contest biometric control, paying particular attention to fingertip burning and mutilation, which we interpret as acts of dissent and self-determination to escape control.

16.30-17.00: Coffee break

17.00 – 19.00: Panel 2

Panel chair: **Catherine Whittaker** (Goethe University, Frankfurt a.M.)

Roberto Hernández (San Diego State University) "Epistemic and Cartographic Disobedience to the Prison of Modernity/Coloniality"

In *Coloniality of the U-S///Mexico Border*, I built on Gloria Anzaldúa's theorization of borders as "set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" and borderlands as "created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary." I did so introducing the idea of an "epistemic and cartographic prison of modernity/coloniality" to

understand how it is that the construction of modern nation-states and ensuing nation-building projects have worked to delimit the ways in which people come to identify themselves, their subjectivities and, in turn, their relations to others who have taken on distinct subjectivities by virtue of the same epistemic and cartographic prison. National borders are often taken for granted as normal and necessary for a peaceful and orderly global civil society, yet my presentation will focus on how national identities and the policing of national-territorial boundaries function as a way to police the social boundaries of belonging, replicating long histories of racialized and gendered colonial violence. Based on two decades of border activism and research in San Diego-Tijuana, I will speak to the historical context of anti-Mexican sentiment as a form of anti-Indianism, lessons for decolonial theory from communities of struggle and resistance in border contexts, and the implications of a decolonial imperative for building a world without borders.

Alex Gómez (San Diego State University) "US-Mexican Border Cinema"

The region surrounding the US–Mexico border region is probably one of the most frequently screened landscapes of North America. Since the beginning of commercial cinema, the border has been a leading or secondary character in dozens of movies, ranging from the obvious westerns to the less obvious horror, science fiction, and film-noir categories. For decades cinema has been the leading popular form of entertainment. Film productions from Hollywood and Mexico have served as a powerful source of informal education, but they also have reinforced biases along the US-Mexico border region. The cinematic productions both from the US and Mexico have served as a barometer of the social, political, and economic issues facing the border since the 1930s.

Rihan Yeh (University of California San Diego) "Dis/appearance: Refractions of Surveillance around Illicit Border-Crossing (Tijuana, Mexico)"

In the main port of entry connecting Tijuana, Mexico to the United States, crossers both submit themselves to and find ways to flout the scrutinizing gaze of the US state. To negotiate US state surveillance at the border, people rely on tactics of dis/appearance: strategies of appearance and disappearance that may fold the two together in the same gesture. Dis/appearance is both mobilized in encounters with US state agents and elaborated in narratives that circulate and share the power of illicit passage. In this paper, I focus on how dis/appearance relies on the refraction of the state's surveilling gaze: on the emergence not just of counter- or sousveillance, but also of practices of lateral or side-veillance amongst actual and potential crossers.

19.30: Dinner: Georgenhof, Friedrichstraße 1, 80801 München

Day 2 (20th July)

14.30-15.30: Keynote

Jussi Laine (University of Eastern Finland) "Reconceptualising Borders: A Multidisciplinary Perspective"

Borders have taken on an immense significance in recent years. The "borderless world" has not only become increasingly bordered, but throughout the world borders have also become more impalpable, aterritorial, ephemeral, and in many ways invisible. The witnessed shift from a static understanding of borders to more dynamic processes and practices of bordering have stimulated an array of contributions from several academic disciplines, which have questioned why the study of borders is conducted in a particular way. As a research field, border studies now encompass a wide range of disciplines besides social geography: history, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, international law as well as the humanities – notably art, media studies and philosophy. Furthermore, the realisation that borders are too complex constructions to be properly analysed and understood from the perspective of a single discipline only has fuelled increasingly inter- and multidisciplinary perspectives that escape the conventional territorial confines and allow us to extend our analytical gaze to also include the various processes and phenomena that transcend borders or that are transformed, diverted, or even prevented by them. A multidisciplinary border studies places borders centrally in relation to broader social and political transformations in the contemporary world and treats the border as an operational looking glass on a broad array of major forces of change that can have a strong effect on our societies and daily lives. This talk will highlight the recent advances and innovative potential in border thinking, but also point to the observable shortcomings and possible ways of enhancing the relevance and impact of border studies further.

15.30-16.00: Coffee break

16.00 – 18.00: Panel 3

Panel chair: **Fabio Santos** (FU Berlin)

Alena Zelenskaia (LMU) "The Effects of Externalized Border Control Management by Germany on Marriage Migrants from Third Countries"

This paper discusses the effects that highly selective visa policies engender on social institutions like the family, and the ways in which these policies affect intimate mobilities. Based on an autoethnography and on ethnographic interviews with partners from several post-Soviet states married to German nationals, this paper illuminates how tightening border work policies and practices at German consulates directed at marriage migrants from Third countries, influence households and couples' life trajectories. The reverberations of this form of externalized border control encompass marriage conditions, family planning, maintenance of two households, (re)negotiation of gender roles, i.e., the "housewifisation" of women, as well as a disenchantment of migrants with the postulated transparency in the EU decision-making processes and human rights protection. The paper argues that migrant experiences and externalization are mutually constitutive.

Michelle Téllez (University of Arizona) "Border Women and the Community of Maclovio Rojas: Autonomy in the Spaces of Neoliberal Neglect"

Through an analysis of the autonomous community of Maclovio Rojas located near Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, this project looks at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands as a space of resistance, conviviality, agency, and creative community building where transformative politics can take place. More than a community, Maclovio Rojas is a women-led social movement that works for economic and political autonomy to address issues of health, education, housing, nutrition, and security in the shadows of the U.S.-Mexico geopolitical border. I argue that neoliberal neglect exacerbates the structural violence endemic to the border region—a continuation of colonial systems of power on the urban, rural, and racialized poor. The residents of Maclovio Rojas have challenged prescriptive notions of nation and belonging and a way out of displacement and disposability.

Jonathan Alderman, Eveline Dürr (LMU), Catherine Whittaker (Goethe University, Frankfurt a.M.) “Watchfulness in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands”

As border studies theorists have argued, borders are not just lines in the sand, but are processes and performances, sites of struggle where inequality is reproduced through spatial configuration. The social and political effects of borders are felt beyond the physical infrastructure itself and influence the behaviour and social relations within borderlands. We propose that inequality of power relations in the US-Mexico borderland, experienced as coloniality, produces vigilant or watchful responses from individuals, particularly Chicanx, Latinx and other racialized people, that are internalized and reproduced in individual subjectivity. This individual watchfulness is a response to surveillance from state and non-state actors, including other community members. The movement north of the border at the end of the Mexican-American War produced subject - Chicanos, defined by their hybrid belonging to two cultures. However, Chicanx and Latinx belonging within the US is set against a backdrop of media and political discourse in which Mexicans have been portrayed implicitly or explicitly as an invading force who threaten the American way of life. Increasingly, draconian immigration policies are criminalizing immigration, which affects not only immigrants, but also their communities and those who are racially profiled as potential immigrants in encounters with the law, including legal citizens of the US. The contested nature of belonging in this borderland space creates particularly watchful selves. It has also formed political subjects forged through the struggle to assert rights in various forms and community use of space in the Chicanx neighbourhood of Barrio Logan.

18.00-18.30: Coffee break

18.30-19.30: Round table/Response

“Fluid Belonging, Movement, Mobility and Vigilance in Borderlands”

Chair: **Anna Casaglia** (University of Trento)

Avital Binah-Pollak (Technion: Israel Institute of Technology), **Fabio Santos** (FU, Berlin), **Roberto Hernández** (SDSU)

Discussion of conceptual questions arising from the workshop: how does vigilance relate to other borders/borderlands? What is the broader scope for research?

Workshop Organizers

Project B06: The Vigilance of Those Mistaken for Migrants in the U.S.-Mexican Border Area

PI: **Prof. Dr. Eveline Dürr**

Researcher: **Dr. Jonathan Alderman**

Alumna: **Prof. Dr. Catherine Whittaker**

Research assistant: **Carolin Luiprecht, M.A.**

This project examines constellations of vigilance in the border city of San Diego, Southern California.

Many US citizens of Chicano, Mexican, or Puerto Rican heritage have always lived in the mainland US, yet are often falsely perceived as “strangers” and “immigrants.” We ask how members of these partially connected communities respond to overlapping forms of vertical state surveillance and horizontal citizens’ vigilantism by employing their own practices of watchfulness, self-defense, healing, and consciousness-raising to resist, reproduce, or avoid racism, and to seek respect and self-determination. We thus investigate forms of vigilance (in the widest sense) directed towards oneself as well as towards others near the world’s most militarized border.

In what ways are cultures of vigilance inflected by the built environment, policing technologies, phenotype, ethnic belonging, gender, age, class, and political attitudes? As it profoundly shapes individual and collective ways of being in the world, how does vigilance transform notions of citizenship and illegality, sociality, and belonging among border residents in San Diego? What are the material and embodied dimensions of vigilance and life on the border?

More about the project: https://www.en.sfb1369.uni-muenchen.de/research/projects/project-area_b/project_b06/index.html

Cooperation Partner

Project B07: The Impact of the Border Regime on the Immigration of Spouses from Non-EU Countries into the European Union. The Case of Russian Marriage Migration to Germany

PI: Prof. Dr. Irene Götz

Researcher: Alena Zelenskaia, M.A.

The subsequent immigration of spouses from Third World countries subject to visa requirements to the European Union takes place in an institutionally controlled space. The review of marriage migrants is carried out in a space caught between constitutional rights and migration management, so that before entry into the EU can be granted various administrative bodies have to survey and inspect the individual. Consulates are tasked with determining which marriages are "worthy of protection", in accordance with the German constitution, and which were merely registered for immigration purposes. Cultural norms play an important role (for example, unions of love versus marriages of convenience). As a marriage cannot really be proven to be "legitimate" one way or another, and the validity of a union is defined using culturally coded characteristics, administrative bodies use different strategies and practices to position couples on a scale stretching from "not suspicious" to "abusing the marriage migration system/fraudulent". The Goethe Institutes are also partly responsible for the testing of spousal immigrants.

The aim of the project is to highlight, using a multi-perspective approach, the cultural value system of all participants, as well as the practices used, within this closely monitored space. In order to do so, a keen focus will be on case studies relating to marriage migration from Russia to Germany and the project will investigate how the relevant institutions in Russia conduct checks into spouses wishing to immigrate to Germany and how couples cope with them.

More about the project: https://www.en.sfb1369.uni-muenchen.de/research/projects/project-area_b/project_b07/index.html