

15th Berlin Roundtables on Transnationality, March 28 – 31, 2012

Borders and Borderlands: Contested Spaces Between States

*“The border can be a stimulant or an obsession, an opportunity or a curse, a place where it is easier to know and love the other or easier to hate and reject him; a place to make contact or to exercise intolerance.” (Claudio Magris, *The Fair of Tolerance*)*

For almost thirty years, the Berlin Wall represented the quintessential border: a systemic political, economic and cultural divide of a city, a nation-state and the world. Its fall in 1989 was seen as the beginning of a new stage in world history—the ‘end of history’ itself – and as a consequence the dream of a world without borders and the return of geographic/regional rather than political mind mapping.

More than twenty years later we can observe that some border systems have softened while others have been consolidated, and many more border-based regulations have been created on national and supra-national levels. The nation-state has not disappeared and neither have its borders. A borderless world turned out to be a myth, despite the global flow of capital, information and goods.

In the twenty-first century, borders and borderlands persist as extremely contested spaces of exclusion and inclusion, of hope, disillusion, and fear; they map limits as well as opportunities and mark options of policy making and governability. Borderlands, often the periphery of national entities, persist as “an impossible project” (Sammartina) and often symbolize the failure of states and their economic and political systems. As borders divide, often at odds with natural geographic and established cultural circumstances, they also exist as spaces of social, ethnic, cultural and economic blending – territories of their own.

The 15th Berlin Roundtables, a cooperation between the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), Humboldt-University Berlin and the Irmgard Coninx Foundation attempt to reflect the new interest in the studies of borders and borderlands in a variety of scholarly fields. Through three interdisciplinary workshops, scholars, practitioners and journalists are invited to discuss their

findings on the persisting and changing concepts and realities of state and other borders and borderlands.

Workshop I: The Social Life of Borders and Borderlands

Chaired by Julie Chu (Professor of Anthropology, University of Chicago) and Tatiana Zhurzhenko (Research Associate, Institute for Political Science, University of Vienna)

This workshop will focus on social and cultural dimensions of everyday life along national borders and in borderlands with an emphasis on border cities. How do borders shape social and cultural relations in the life of borderland populations? How do they influence cultural and political identities? How do they stimulate tolerance or intolerance, economic and social creativity, and cultural hybridity? How do new and shifting borders influence the social realities of people, regions and states? How do different types of borders create different forms of border crossings and cultural and economic blendings (closed borders; one-way-borders; ‘smart’ borders; permeable borders etc.)? Are there archetypes of border and borderland inhabitants – the smuggler, the guard, the human trafficker, the trader, the prostitute? How do they shape these spaces? Who inhabits the borders and border regions (minorities; marginalized populations, etc.) and in what role? How have these roles evolve over history? In what ways do the changing functions of borders influence the economic and social realities in current or former borderlands? In what ways do borderlands suffer from economic and/or democratic deficits? How are these realities reflected in literature and film? In what ways are borders transformed into modern icons of division and exclusion (Fortress Europe; the Israel/Palestinian Wall; the US-Mexican Border; former colonial borders) or hope (the Berlin Wall)? Contributions from a variety of fields such as anthropology, history, sociology, cultural, literature, and film studies are invited to participate in this workshop.

Workshop II: The Politics of Borders: Security and Control

Chaired by Mattias Kumm (Professor of Law, Humboldt University Berlin and New York University) and Eric Tagliacozzo (Professor of History, Cornell University)

This workshop will focus on the changing role of borders with respect to their control and security functions for the state. In what ways have the modes of exclusion and inclusion persisted, shifted or changed, especially with historic turns of e.g. 1884 (Berlin Conference on European colonization in Africa), 1918, 1945, 1948, 1961, 1989 and 9/11? How do political institutions in the era of a global network society attempt to guarantee security, integrity and sovereignty of the state and/or supra-national entities (NAFTA; EU)? How has the understanding of national security and the role of national defense changed the function and role of borders and borderlands (e.g. preventive war and

strikes)? In what ways are border systems consolidated and border functions extended beyond national, geographic border lines (international searches, processing camps in the forefront of borders; international tax fraud investigations; intellectual property cases etc.) and into the national territory (customs investigations; airport asylum procedures; bugging and wiretap operations)? How is freedom of movement weighted against economic protectionism and security issues with respect to different forms of risks (terrorism, health, property frauds)? What roles do borders play in this respect? In what ways do borders create and stimulate illegality? What distinguishes borders dividing one nation from other kinds of borders? Contributions from the fields of law, political science, political economy, sociology, security and peace studies, history, anthropology, and related fields are particularly encouraged for this workshop.

Workshop III: Natural Resources and the Environment along Borders and Borderlands: Conflicts and Solutions

Chaired by Michael Redclift (Professor of Geography, King's College London) and Maria Tysiachniouk (Head of the Environmental Unit, Center for Independent Social Research, St. Petersburg)

Natural resources have always been a source for conflict between empires, nations and various interest groups. Today, economic developments and growing populations in many regions fuel already competing claims of ownership of water, oil or other natural resources, and border regions are especially vulnerable to resource-related conflicts. In many of the affected regions, conflicts over claims lead to war-like situations or open wars. However, many border regions still house incredible environmental diversity – many remain environmental havens - that have to be maintained and protected: excessive fishing, forest clearance or poaching are just some examples of the threats to these havens. Furthermore, border areas are often exposed to environmental hazards such as waterborne and airborne pollutants. Toxic wastes are often willfully discharged close to national borders into rivers and soil, causing harm to the health of border populations and jeopardizing economic survival by causing damage to agricultural production and livestock. The same holds true for radioactivity waste. In contrast there are also positive, creative examples for cross-national, cross-border attempts to preserve and safeguard landscapes as well as environmental resources. What do these projects look like? What kind of national, cross national, regional governance as well as civil engagement do they entail?

The workshop will investigate the role of border areas and border regimes for environmental conflicts. How are national and international agencies of policy making and environmental activists organized across borders? In what ways do transnational corporations act in borderlands? How can they be made responsible for environmental damage? How are borders and border populations

instrumentalized in such conflicts? What political tools are used to aggravate, ease or solve such conflicts? What do innovative and constructive solutions for environmental conflicts along borders look like? Potential contributors from the fields of environmental studies, environmental law and history, sociology, anthropology, political economy, the natural sciences and related fields are particularly encouraged for this workshop.

Literature:

Sammartina, Annemarie. H. (2010). *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East 1914 – 1922*. Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press.