

In the radius of borders—and beyond

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“Beyond Borders” is the focal topic of this new edition of the “Yearbook Migration and Society”. The view goes from the border as a basic figure of demarcation to the border area as a potential for overcoming it. Migration and borders are conditional on each other. There may also be inner migration, movements within a state, but even in this case such movements only become problematic when at least imaginary border lines are crossed—between country and city or vice versa, between north and south, east and west, rich and poor, or even between regions of different ethnic or religious prevalence in the same state. The yearbook draws in part from an intensive scholarly examination of border and migration on two levels, firstly through the preparatory work for a Horizon2020 project on narratives of migration, and secondly within the program committee of the International Migration Conference 2021 in Klagenfurt (Austria) with its focus on “Border Thinking”.

In its geographical dimension, the concept of “border” points to migration movements as such: migrants leave their previous central place of living and livelihood, departing for somewhere else. They do so in order to begin a new life there, although it does not by any means have to be the final destination of their migration. However, bound up with this is a venture, subjectively experienced in very different ways, into a more or less new transnational (life)world. In traversing the geographical border, at the same time they must grapple, come to terms with—and successfully surmount—political, social, linguistic and socio-cultural borders as well.

Border research in migration deals principally with political questions in the framework of confronting and dealing with border regimes. The interest there looks at complex, national and supra-national activities and

policies of the respective states concerned, the securing of existing borders and the constituting of new national-state borders, as well as the political and populist discourses accompanying these developments in regard to the control and supervision of migration. The main topic of previous investigation has been the border regimes along the external boundaries of the EU and the border between the United States and Mexico. Going beyond such political questions and closely associated with them is the broad palette of borderland topics, extending from political-geographical practices to social and cultural practices, and to practices transcending what is cultural, such as in connection with social practices of “bordering” and “border making.” Here the prime focus is on questions of the genesis and treatment of group-related differences, historical, political, social and cultural forms of border making within societies, which can be bound up with structural and personal processes of exclusion and discrimination. The central key words here in the context of migration are racism, ethnicization and culturalization. Examples of criticism of and resistance to the various forms of exclusion and marginalization are the Black Lives Matter Movement, postmigrant discourse and also the new post-colonial debates, such as those within Critical Whiteness Studies. Forms of negative exclusion are countered by forms of self-determined boundary making, such as in the framework and creation of forms of cultural, ethnic or religious self-determination by migrants. Central to these forms of boundary making are in particular the development and establishing of forms of joint action grounded in solidarity and oriented to reciprocity, mutuality, modes of mutual aid. A further form of dealing with borders involves practices in life, work and the economy extending over and beyond borders, where—beyond political and media discourses on crisis—border regions harbor a wealth of experience for the shaping of transnational exchange and convivial strategies for multi-, inter- and trans-cultural forms of living together, synergy and collaboration. However, in regard to positively experienced and tangible forms of border making, it is necessary to keep in mind that they are variable and mutable. This means that modes of border making in social practices are also subject to changes; they can alter their significance and character. Thus, for example, a positive attitude toward regional contexts can give rise to narrow-mindedness, dissociation and distancing in regard to neighboring regions or persons who have fled or who are in need of protection and care.

Thus, in respect to migration very different forms of borders and border-making develop their impact. In the dynamic process, social, political and cultural factors and contextual situations become visible, within which societal and social structures and specific social practices are manifest. In the context of these practices, very individual and diverse forms of dealing with migration—and also with borders—arise and crystallize. The Yearbook seeks to investigate these aspects, inter alia with reference to the debates on decolonizing through critical case studies about borders and migration in Europe, between USA and Mexico, in Mideast and in Africa. In line with this international radius, this issue is published exclusively in English. It includes following contributions:

Regina Römhild, Hans Karl Peterlini, Nadja Danglmaier, Jasmin Donlic: The Border as research space: Potentials of historical and contemporary border narratives for a better understanding and addressing of migration

The article proposes a research approach for addressing controversial challenges through migration by focusing on experiences in border regions. This is based on the assumption that narratives of belonging, defence and threat have emerged around borders over centuries, which have produced prevalent national identities over the past 150 years. Among these problematic and heavily mediated discourses, the regions on both sides of the border are guarding a precious treasure of experiences of border crossing, cultural exchange, social and economic transactions. This hidden knowledge and underestimated potential of border regions can be recovered through research and used for inclusive processes in migrant and ethnicised societies.

Naif Bezwan: Borders, authoritarian regimes, and migration in Kurdistan: An Intersectional Inquiry

This paper examines the interplay between borders, regimes, and migration by focusing on the Kurdish case. It explains migration as being causally related, (a) to the ways in which territorial boundaries of the states were redrawn, (b) the processes by which the political regimes have been established and (c), to the authoritarian and homogenous state policies and practices that followed and continue to exist. To make sense of this interconnected-

ness, I present the concept of structural migration to explain the phenomenon of migration as being engineered by and built into the institutional and ideological structures of the political regimes ruling over Kurdistan.

Isabel K. Latz: U.S. immigration enforcement policies, health care utilization, and community health

Under the Trump administration, immigration policies have become more restrictive and immigration enforcement has been strengthened, particularly at the U.S.-Mexico border. We conducted a survey study examining immigration policy perceptions in relation to mental health and health care utilization among 211 Hispanic residents with different immigration statuses in El Paso, County in the Spring of 2019. Findings showed associations between deportation fears and increased psychological distress as well as experiences with immigration enforcement and lower health care utilization. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights a need to understand how immigration policies affect health care utilization and health outcomes to mitigate community harm.

Emina Osmandzovic: Lessons learned between Ebola and COVID-19: Border politics and securitization of migration flows in West Africa

Border politics in West Africa is a gravely misunderstood topic. Externally securitized in a way that does not necessarily serve the local communities and the sustenance of cross-border flows of people and goods, West Africa has persevered through the Ebola outbreak in a rather miraculous way. Given the acuteness of the West African socio-economic condition and healthcare security, this chapter attempts to explore migration patterns and contextualize viral outbreaks—from Ebola to COVID-19—in the fluid framework of border flows within this Sub-Saharan region, thus invalidating extant prejudice against West African migration patterns.

Hans Karl Peterlini: Particular to time and space: Historical and life-world explorations on the Brenner border Austria–Italy

The border at the Brenner Pass crossing the Alps between Austria and Italy is politically and emotionally charged: Here, where for millennia there was an open transition between North and South and made possible the cross-border togetherness of the Tyrol region, an arbitrary boundary was drawn in 1918–1920 and Tyrol was divided. The article explores the historical developments and lifeworld potentials beyond an exclusively political definition of border. Exploration in the two border villages of Brenner and Franzensfeste reveals experiences of living together across ruptures and crises, especially with regard to migration.

Alexandra Schwell: Imaginaries of sovereignty: Visualizing the loss of control

“The night that Germany lost control.” This headline on the cover of the German weekly DIE ZEIT was published in fall 2016 on the 2015 border opening anniversary when German chancellor Angela Merkel had decided to allow Syrian and other refugees into the country. DIE ZEIT situates its visual and linguistic narrative within a discursive framework that echoes far-right and right-wing populist discourses in the way it instrumentalizes images, metaphors, and visual imaginaries of Others and relates them to imaginations of control and sovereignty. Drawing upon a closed reading of DIE ZEIT’s title page, the article seeks to elaborate on the broader relation of images, imaginaries, and emotional practices of border transgression and the invocation of the border in media and political discourse on refugees in Germany. It explores how the cover epitomizes, alludes to, and at the same time fosters a growing unease of large parts of the German liberal middle-class concerning the “refugee crisis”.

Tatiana Zhurzhenko: A border on the move: The Ukrainian-Russian frontier from the Soviet collapse to the conflict in Donbas

The border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation is the longest in Europe. It runs across densely populated territories and is crossed by millions of people for private visits, business and tourism. The annexation of

Crimea by Russia and the military conflict in Donbas resulted in new dividing lines, caused flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, affected labour migration and disrupted the cross-border cooperation between the two countries. This development has significant impact on border crossing regimes, transport routes and routines of cross-border movement.