Qualities of Bordering Spaces

A Conceptual Experiment with Reference to Georg Simmel's
Sociology of Space

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INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the spatial turn and with the consequent impetus of deessentialising borders in general, this contribution is interested in the qualities of bordering spaces (*Grenz-Räume*). Assuming that borders can be conceived of as spaces of their own right, some of their general qualities are inquired. For that purpose, this contribution applies Georg Simmel's sociology of space, set out in his 1908 essay on "Space and the Spatial Order of Society," to the empirical example of the external border of the European Union (EU) in the Mediterranean Sea. In the conceptual experiment below, each of Simmel's qualities of space (*Raumqualitäten*) are briefly explained. The experiment then consists of applying these qualities of space to selected analysis of the EU border management in the Mediterranean region. From this, some proposed general qualities of bordering spaces are extrapolated.[1]

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1 | Passages in German or French texts have been translated by the author when not available in English. With regard to quotations from Simmel, I have decided to provide them in the respective footnote.

APPLYING SIMMEL'S QUALITIES OF SPACE TO BORDERING PROCESSES

Several authors refer to Simmel's sociology of space and discuss its potential analytical value.[2] Some of the more controversial aspects of Simmel's approach are, firstly, his use of the euclidic, and with it the idea of an absolute space, frequently subsumed under the metaphor of the container. Second, his purported support for the thesis that social ties are becoming emancipated from space. Finally, his analytical framework for a sociology of space in general. It is argued that his analytical frame, constructed on the building blocks of the "qualities of spaces" (*Raumqualitäten*) and of "spatial formations" (*Raumgebilde*), is not systematic. Moreover, Simmel's approach is criticized as illustrative rather than conceptual.

Andrea Glauser explicitly addresses the first two critiques in her essay, "Pioneering Work with Paradoxical Consequences". Glauser shows that Simmel refers to Euclidean space as an "ideal-typical auxiliary construct" (Glauser 2006: 254). However, Simmel does not offer a mere analysis of space as an abstract concept, but of space as perceived by and employed by societal groups. This is the context in which Simmel makes reference to Euclidean space.[3] By emphasizing the relevance of human percipience, Simmel presents the antithesis to the thesis of mechanical causation as promoted by the early natural sciences and as idealized by social scientists of his time. To Simmel, space is conceivable, perceptible, producible, designable; but it is not a fixed, a priori constant. The sociologist analyzes social projections into space – from imagined, to architectural to institutions – and the way these projections turn back and affect the lives and forms of social groups (Schroer 2006: 63). This emphasis on socio-spatial interactions (*Wechselwirkungen*) is not compatible with the second criticism which has reproached Simmel for his assertion that the social can be delinked and

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2 | See Konau 1973; Strassoldo 1992; Ziemann 2000; Löw 2001; Schroer 2006; Glauser 2006; Canto Milà 2006; Eigmüller 2006; Cuttitta 2006, 2007.

3 | Similarly, Vilém Flusser in his 1991 essay, "Räume," describes humans as organic tubes, as worms that crawl up and down, left and right and which thus live in three-dimensional space. With regard to contemporary spatial perceptions, however, Flusser sees abstract and imaged forms of virtual space and outer space as challenging the "worm's" perception from the ground and enabling topological understanding and experiencing.

emancipated from space (Läpple 1991; Löw 2001). Addressing the imputed unsystematic nature of Simmel's analytical framework, Glauser argues that Simmel's qualities of space "can be used as a kind of observer's horizon, against which selectivity can be revealed and questioned" (Glauser 2006: 265). Simmel's framework does seem to lack a clear taxonomy. However, considering that Simmel's program for the study of space was intended to be a counter-proposal to the emerging field of anthropogeography[4], his choice to employ qualities of space can also be attributed to a more sophisticated conceptual strategy. With regard to sociation, Simmel stresses the relevance of the qualities of space in contrast to the quantities of geometry. Moreover, he is interested in the analysis of historical and cultural manifestations of societal relations onto space, rejecting causal and geo-deterministic analyses. In this spirit, he writes that "for nature, any demarcation of borders is arbitrary"[5] (Simmel 1992: 695). Likewise, Simmel considers the social reception of "merely" political borders stronger than those of the so-called natural borders along rivers, seas, or mountains (Simmel 1992: 694). His analytical frame of using qualities of space turns out to be a methodological tool when aiming at strengthening the historic and cultural dimension of space, which, in essence, can be seen as an early premise of the spatial turn. Therefore, each of Simmel's five qualities of space – exclusivity; decomposability and delimitation; proximity and distance; fixity; and movement – is

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4 | Werner Köster (2002) describes how the scientific dealing with space at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century had been shaped by the historical context of two emerging disciplines in the humanities – sociology and geography – competing for institutional viability. In this context, Georg Simmel and Friedrich Ratzel are often contrasted. Interestingly, both Simmel and Ratzel drew on Immanuel Kant's concept of space as pure form of intuition. While Simmel sociologizes the Kantian concept (Glauser 2006: 258), Ratzel turns it into a "naiv-empirical" spatial concept (Köster 2002: 62). However, a coeval review of Simmels On the Spatial Expressions of Social Forms by Émile Durkheim (1904) considered the Simmelian approach less comprehensive and less sophisticated than Ratzel's thoughts on space. Yet, Durkheim pointed to a certain ambiguity within Ratzel's works. Ratzel, he wrote, would vacillate between two premises: the logic of the social and a certain geo-determinism (Köster 2002: 93).

5 | "Der Natur gegenüber ist jede Grenzsetzung Willkür, selbst im Falle einer insularen Lage, da doch prinzipiell auch das Meer "in Besitz genommen" werden kann."

explained below and applied to contemporary analysis of EU migration and border control policies in the Mediterranean.

Exclusivity

In his first lines on exclusivity (*Ausschließlichkeit des Raumes*), Simmel points to the uniqueness of every part of space. "Just as there is only one universal space, of which all single spaces are pieces, so is each part of space unique in a way for which there hardly exists any analogy" (Simmel 1992: 690)[6.] According to Simmel, several objects of the same kind might be found in different places, yet positing a plurality of the same space seems absurd. This apparently banal but crucial characteristic is best understood through its linkage to territory (*Grund und Boden*). "To the extent to which a societal formation is linked or is 'loyal,' so to speak, to a specific stretch of territory, it has a uniqueness and exclusivity that cannot be achieved otherwise"[7] (ibid.). In this sense, territory renders the uniqueness of any part of space palpable. The state is the only example of a spatial formation fully characterized by exclusivity, as it is "so strictly linked to territory that it is impossible to think of the co-existence of another state on the same territory" (Cuttitta 2006: 31 referring to Simmel). Due to its limited scope and reach, the modern national state provides an unambiguous point of orientation. It should also be mentioned that Simmel distinguishes between local manifestations and territorial appropriation or bonds. While the latter produces identity, or rather 'territorial belonging' in the sense of exclusivity, the first refers to the manifestation of particular, social relations in buildings, architecture, and spatial arrangements. Exclusivity thus alludes to membership and its significance for the spatial organization of social structure, amongst which territory is but one mode. While territory evokes the uniqueness of each part of space, it is crucial not to confuse this with the social mechanisms of exclusion,

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6 | "Wie es nur einen einzigen allgemeinen Raum gibt, von dem alle einzelnen Räume Stücke sind, so hat jeder Raumteil eine Art von Einzigkeit, für die es kaum eine Analogie gibt."

7 | "In dem Maß, in dem ein gesellschaftliches Gebilde mit einer bestimmten Bodenausdehnung verschmolzen oder sozusagen solidarisch ist, hat es einen Charakter von Einzigkeit oder Ausschließlichkeit, der auf andre Weise nicht ebenso erreichbar ist."

which are often organized and justified with reference to territory.[8] With Simmel it is thus possible to obviate the "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994), as he sees exclusivity as one element of the construction of territory, rather than as one of its effects.[9]

Exclusivity as a Quality of Bordering Spaces?

Territorial (state) borders define the inside and outside by drawing a line. They demonstrate and materialize exclusivity by creating the space where membership is regulated. They allow for the operationalization of distinction and exclusion. The definition of inside and outside is manifested in fences and walls, as well as in the metaphor of 'Fortress Europe'. Alluding to Simmel's essay *Brücke und Tür* (1909), Paolo Cuttitta writes that "the EU, as all fortresses, does, however, have a gate and a drawbridge, which occasionally can be opened or lowered" (Cuttitta 2010: 29). Through the metaphors of the gate and the drawbridge, selection is posited as a bordering process. In his article, "Das europäische Grenzregime: Dynamiken und Wechselwirkungen," Cuttitta illustrates the extent to which exclusion and selection are conflated within the framework of EU migration and border-control management. Transit zones or detention centers, he argues, do not function as a means to ultimately exclude third-country members who arrive by boat on EU territory. Rather they are meant to decelerate (Panagiotidis/Tsianos 2007) the project of migration. According to Cuttitta (2010: 31ff.), the status of illegality has become an intermediary stage in the migration process. But where do these (biographical) stages occur? And

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8 | Simmel further distinguishes between supra-territorial formations (überräumliche Gebilde) and territorial formations (räumliche Gebilde). Territorial formations are characterized by the liaison between territory and social ties while supra-territorial formations go beyond territorial definitions or belonging. The latter might correspond to what has recently been described as transnational formations (Pries 2008; Wimmer/Glick-Schiller 2002).

9 | The fact that borders and territory are defined in reference to one another has been explored by Stuart Elden (2010). According to Elden, borders are a second-order phenomenon and depend on the historical meaning of territory as a dimension of space. The question whether border studies are territorially trapped has been of interest for David Newmann (2010), Fiona McConnell (2010) and John Agnew (2007, 2008, 2010).

where would they come to an end? Locked in the status and the places of illegality, third country members can only get access to selection processes which operate along bordering questions: money enough to pay the facilitator?, fit enough to make the trip?, castaway enough to be rescued on the high-seas?, victimized enough to apply for asylum?, patient enough to wait in a detention centre?, strong enough to survive in the irregular economy of European labor markets? A topology of illegalized border-crossings would reflect different sites along the 'way', such as the refugee boat, the slums in Tripoli, the detention centers, or asylum offices.[10] In so doing, a spatial sociology would link bordering processes to their spatial fulcra.

Whereas inside and outside are about physical access and are decided 'on site,' the tension between open and closed is about access to a legal sphere. In the negotiation of membership, the tensions between open and closed[11] as well as between inside and outside are conflated. With regard to third-country nationals migrating by boat, the selection process seems to be affected by an exclusionary logic.[12] Analytically, however, these two dimensions need to be divided into distinct qualities of bordering spaces, precisely for the reason of disentangling the container-like connotation of an inside-outside binary, which might be at work along a border, from the idea of selection.

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10 | An outstanding example for such a topology is Silja Klepp's (2011) ethnography of the sea border in the Mediterranean. With reference to Georg Marcus call for a multi-sided ethnography, Klepp follows the people in Tripoli, on arrival in European shores, in the detention center, in court.

11 | Having examined Simmel's qualities of space, Schroer states they can, in fact, be applied to contemporary examples. He states that additional qualities or tensions might well exist and proposes the dichotomies of inside-outside as well as open versus closed (Schroer 2006: 77f.). My argument is that these tensions are already part of the quality of "exclusivity."

12 | In their ongoing research project, "State Project Europe," Sonja Buckel, John Kannankulam, and Jens Wissel analyze the re-grouping of the European population into zones of stratified legal titles, one zone being illegalized migration. A first account is provided in the essay "State Project Europe: The Transformation of the European Border Regime and the Production of Bare Life" (Buckel/Wissel 2010).

Decomposability and Delimitation

When Simmel is quoted on borders, the context from which the quotations have been drawn is seldom mentioned. Under the second quality of space, namely 'decomposability and delimitation' (*Zerlegbarkeit und Begrenzung*), Simmel elaborates on borders between individuals and groups, which in a first step, are defined as 'functional compartments'. He writes: "Another quality of space that significantly influences societal interactions consists in the fact that for the purpose of utilization, space is divided into pieces that are considered discrete units and that are – as both cause and a result of this – framed by borders" (Simmel 1992: 694).[13]

According to Simmel, social differentiation is spatially marked by borders and boundaries. However, and this is important, social differentiation is not necessarily exclusive. In this sense, Simmel defines border in the following way: "The border is not a spatial fact with sociological effects, but a sociological fact that forms itself in space" (Simmel 1992: 697).[14] This definition is frequently quoted by way of stressing the socially constructed character of political borders and other boundaries between individuals and groups. Although Simmel does point to the constructed character of boundaries with this remark, he equally acknowledges the social repercussions of a materialized border, its "physical power," and its "lively energy" (Simmel 1992: 697f.).[15] Once it is materialized or repre-

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13 | "Eine weitere Qualität des Raumes, die auf die gesellschaftlichen Wechselwirkungen wesentlich einwirkt, liegt darin, dass sich der Raum für unsere praktische Ausnützung in Stücke zerlegt, die als Einheiten gelten und – als Ursache wie als Wirkung hiervon – von Grenzen eingerahmt sind."

14 | "Die Grenze ist nicht eine räumliche Tatsache mit soziologischen Wirkungen, sondern eine soziologische Tatsache, die sich räumlich formt."

15 | "Ist sie freilich erst zu einem räumlichen-sinnlichen Gebilde geworden, das wir unabhängig von seinem soziologisch praktischen Sinne in die Natur einzeichnen, so übt dies starke Rückwirkungen auf das Bewußtsein von dem Verhältnis der Parteien. Während diese Linie nur die Verschiedenheit des Verhältnisses zwischen den Elementen einer Sphäre untereinander und zwischen diesen und den Elementen einer andren markiert, wird sie doch zu einer lebendigen Energie, die jene aneinanderdrängt und sie nicht aus ihrer Einheit herausläßt und sich wie eine physische Gewalt, die nach beiden Seiten hin Repulsionen ausstrahlt, zwischen beide schiebt."

sented by a physical or geographical border line, the border becomes a part of the interaction. This is congruent with his conceptualization of space as both the projection of societal relations and source of effects on the lives and forms of groups (Schroer 2006: 61ff.; Ziemann 2000: 250ff.). The principle of interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) – prominent throughout Simmel's œuvre – is at the heart of his assessment. Drawing on Simmel, Natalià Cantó Milà describes borders as the phenomenon in which social relations, including power relations, crystallize. She writes that "the projection of demarcation onto space strengthens the border and perpetuates it" (Cantó Milà 2006: 192).

At the same time, Simmel emphasizes the ordering and relieving function of borders, pointing to the "security" and "clarity" they provide (Simmel 1992: 699). Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Simmel thinks of darkness as a distorting circumstance for social and spatial arrangements. Darkness transforms social borders, it brings about "a completely unique augmentation and combination of encompassing and expansion in the confinement of space" (Simmel 1992: 705).[16]

These remarks will be considered in the following passage when analyzing contemporary EU migration and border control policies against the background of the spatial quality of decomposability and delimitation.

Decomposability and Delimitation as a Quality of Bordering Spaces?

An application of the second quality of space, "decomposability and delimitation," to borders might not seem necessary at first glance. Yet, Simmel writes about the "line of definition" and the "moment of decision" with regard to societal membership. In his view, physical boundaries facilitate and perpetuate social differentiation. Conceptualizing borders as spaces

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16 | "Andererseits läßt eben dies auch die wirklich vorhandenen Grenzen verschwinden, die Phantasie erweitert das Dunkel zu übertriebenen Möglichkeiten, man fühlt sich von einem phantastisch-unbestimmten und unbeschränkten Raum umgeben. Indem nun die im Dunkeln natürliche Ängstlichkeit und Unsicherheit hier durch jenes enge Zusammengedrängtsein und Aufeinander-Angewiesensein Vieler behoben wird, entsteht jene gefürchtete Erregung und Unberechenbarkeit des Zusammenlaufes im Dunkeln, als eine ganz einzige Steigerung und Kombination der einschließenden und der sich expandierenden räumlichen Begrenzung."

in their own right allows one to probe further into the decomposability of borders (its practices, institutions, and processes) and into the rationale for geographic demarcations of a given border.

Turning first to the decomposability of borders, the work of the French philosopher Etienne Balibar (Balibar 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b) is significant "for the priority he accords borders in the study of democracy, citizenship and the question of European identity" (Rumford 2011: 37). Balibar argues that the term 'border'

is profoundly changing in meaning. The borders of new politico-economic entities, in which an attempt is being made to preserve the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer at all situated at the outer limit of territories: they are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled (Balibar 2002a: 71).

The (cross-border) movement of goods, information, money, and people challenges the ambition of public institutions to establish and maintain order, argues Balibar with much of the globalization literature. Just as the deconstruction of the territorial nation-state resulted in a diversification and multiplication of spatial matters, bordering processes, too, have been diversified. They are becoming fragmented administratively, legally, and practically and they have become increasingly specialized. The transformation of borders over the past 20 years has often been described as the reconfiguration of territorial borders – defining the territorial nation-state – to a networked system of control and surveillance that reproduces the border both inside and outside the respective state. In this context, the metaphor of the network has attracted attention.[17] Moreover, borders have been described as flexible: "The different kinds of frontier, far from dis-

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17 | Doris Schweitzer's (2011) analysis of Manuel Castells' concept of a network-society as it relates to the topography of borders shows that the topography of a networked society allows for a radicalization of bordering processes. Athanasios Karafillidis (2009) even argues that the network itself is a border. Stefan Kaufmann (2006) describes the transformation of borders as three topographical transformations of the border-line: forward relocation, tightening, an in-folding. He shows that the societal conceptualisation of a network-society has found its manifestation in the reconfiguration of the EU migration and border control regime.

appearing, reproduce and diversify themselves. Therefore, they become potentially omnipresent, and their number and types are potentially infinite" (Cuttitta 2007: 2). With regard to the European external border in the Mediterranean Sea, the phenomena described above are "localizable" as in the case of ex-territorial detention camps in Libya (Nosh 2008) or in the vessels and advising officers provided by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Coordination at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) to patrols in Senegalese territorial waters – notably meant to secure the external borders of the Member States of the EU. The decomposition of borders has also been described as de-localization, meaning a geographic transfer of border control into the territorial waters of a third country or onto the high seas, and as externalization, which refers to the outsourcing of tasks and responsibilities to third countries (Cuttitta 2010: 26; Buckel 2011). A certain distributedness, in parallel to a specialisation, merge in the example of Frontex whose mandate is 'pioneering' in the field of a supranational border management (Kasparek 2010: 116ff.; Neal 2009; Fischer-Lescano/Tohidipur 2007)[18]. In general, the spatial distribution of bordering practices corresponds to a distribution of competencies and to an overlapping and consequent blurring of legal spheres. The border-land appears as decomposable as it becomes reorganized in the process of Europeanization[19]. Bordering practices no longer run along a fixed geographic borderline. Moreover, the means and practices of border control and surveillance are continually renegotiated and relocated. In keeping with this, the question of *where?* does not merely refer to a geographic coordinate. *Where?* also asks for the legal framework, the policy context, and the position. It asks for the topology of bordering practices, processes, institutions, and sites. This *where?* not only challenges the concept of territory. It challenges the visibility of borders. Similarly, the technologies deployed for border control and border

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18 | The latest amendment concerning Frontex's competencies has been formulated in Regulation (EU) No 1168/2011 of 25th October 2011. Three aspects point to a strengthening of the Agency's capacities: the possibility to acquire or lease equipment, the task to set up European Border Guard Teams which can be deployed during Joint Operations (JOs), and the fact that Frontex may initiate JOs.

19 | Georg Vobruba (2010) provides a comprehensive discussion on the impact of the European integration on the formation and shaping of common external border policies.

surveillance alter the visibility of borders and produce clandestine and invisible figures, such as the stowaway (Walters 2008). Divers surveillance technologies, such as radar, satellite, sensors, cameras as well as information and communication technologies (ICT), contribute to the production of bordering spaces and determine their qualities. In any decomposition of space to produce a border, there is tension between (being) visible and (making) invisible (or vice versa). The tension between visible and invisible can thus be considered a quality of bordering spaces. While the border, as a contract between states, has hitherto limited the scope and visibility of sovereigns, the border now appears as the mandate for border-related surveillance and intelligence. This way state borders are not only blurred on the high seas where proactive patrolling and surveillance are untied from territorial limitations codified in geographic distances.

The tension between visible and invisible further plays out in the cat-and-mouse game of unauthorized border-crossing vis-à-vis mandated border control and surveillance. In this context, Simmel's remarks on darkness add an astute aspect: under the distorting condition of darkness, the proportionality between means and ends are both on the side of law enforcement authorities while the potential trespassers enter a win or loose scenario. Night-watch cameras, radar and intelligence-driven operations on the one side counter the maybe strategic, maybe frightened attempts to cross the blue sea in dark hours.

Regarding issues of border delimitation and border qualities, these can be simplified into the question of *where should we make the demarcation?* This question raises concerns about the legitimization and the techniques of demarcation, of measuring, and of political decision making. If borders cannot be drawn arbitrarily, the question of demarcation touches upon the criteria which legitimize them, which render them considered "good," "natural," "necessary," etc. This brings to the fore the tension between natural and cultural as relevant to bordering spaces. This tension often appears in border studies as "the enduring geographical myth of natural borders" (Fall 2010).

Proximity and Distance

With the advent of globalization theories, Georg Simmel's sociology of space frequently has been cited to shed light on the relations between proximity and distance (*Nähe und Distanz*), his fourth quality of space,

and on movement and migration (*Bewegung, Wanderung*), his fifth quality of space. Both qualities are used to describe the effects of modernity on social relations and to assess the ambivalence of urban life (Allen 2001). According to Simmel, proximity encourages intimacy and social cohesion. Social relations at a distance allow for individualization and freedom; yet they require the capacity to abstract (Simmel 1992: 717). How does the modern ambivalence between proximity and distance apply to bordering spaces?

Proximity and Distance with Regard to Bordering Spaces?

If the border is a point of crystallization, as Cantó Mila suggests, tensions appear at the border more pronounced and more drastically. Asymmetric power relations thus seem to be traceable both along a demarcation line and throughout unequal mobility policies. For the case of migration, distance implies that more than just geographic space is overcome. From the perspective of a person migrating to Europe from a place in Senegal, for instance, distance could rather be described as the amount of capital and resources required to arrive in the Schengen Area. The way in which asymmetric power relations play out in bordering processes is bitterly illustrated by the fact that the route of repatriation (for most routes less then ten hours by air) obliterates resources that may have taken the migrant months or years to accumulate. The tension between proximity and distance, which Simmel rather unsystematically introduced as a quality of space, has been noted in arguments about how social relations are becoming emancipated from their spatial limits. However, resources for overcoming geographic distance are unevenly distributed (Baumann 1998). This alone bestows yet another quality to the tension between proximity and distance on a global scale.[20] For the case of the EU border on

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20 | Discussions on the global-local dichotomy echoed Simmel's ambivalent take on the effects of proximity and distance on social relations (Robertson 1994; Massey 2005,2006). Recently, this tension has been widened to discussions on uneven development (Harvey 2005) and "spatial justice" (Soja 2010). Manuell Castell's network-society is not organized around the ordering principle of distance and proximity; instead, one is either in or out of the network. Inside the network, distance approaches zero. According to Castells, black holes stand for radical exclusion (Castells 1996; Schweitzer 2011). Marc Augé argues that under

the Mediterranean Sea, the tension could be measured as noted above by comparing geographic distance to time, money, and resources invested in migration, as well as to the time individuals wait or are detained. Reformulated as tension, Simmel's fourth quality of space, "proximity and distance" is also valuable when investigating border-spatialities.

Fixity

"Fixity" (*Fixierung*) describes the extent to which a particular social content is fixed or localized on a place or a building such as the house or the clubroom. Under this quality of space, Simmel addresses questions of belonging as they relate to physical presence or absence, and he discusses the function of a pivotal point to social relations. With regard to the latter, he writes that "meaning, as the fulcrum (*Drehpunkt*) of sociological relations, is held by a fixed spatiality wherever the encounter or the engagement of otherwise separated elements can only occur in a particular place" (Simmel 1992: 708).[21] By means of the fulcrum, relations that otherwise might have remained invisible appear, at least to the sociologist. These relations serve to support the continuation of social processes. Simmel's elaborations are perfectly compatible with the idea of virtual space, and the meaning of the chat room experience functions as a fulcrum for societal relations which otherwise would not occur or be tangible.

Another interesting example that illustrates the spatial quality of "fixity" is the difference between individual and numeric naming of houses:

The 'being numbered' of urban houses signifies, in a higher sense, the spatial fixation of individuals, as they can be traced with the help of a mechanical method. Obviously, this traceability differs in nature from the designation of particular quarters and streets to certain classes and professions and from the separa-

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the condition of supermodernity there is merely the near, anything of no concern to the self would occur elsewhere (Augé 2008 [1992]) – a nuance not captured in the German translation "Das Nahe und das Ferne".

21 | "Die Bedeutung als Drehpunkt soziologischer Beziehung kommt der fixierten Örtlichkeit überall da zu, wo die Berührung oder Vereinigung sonst voneinander unabhängiger Elemente nur an einem bestimmten Platze geschehen kann."

tion into Christian, Jewish, and Muslim quarters in oriental towns (Simmel 1992: 712).[22]

Contrasting houses that are numbered as parts of an ordering inventory and houses with names, Simmel works out the advantages and disadvantages of aggregate and individual classifications. Simmel's rather innocent example should not hide the momentousness of the underlying thought: different ordering logics have different implications for sociation.

Movement, Migration

Under the concept of "movement or migration" (*Bewegung, Wanderung*) Simmel analyses the extent to which the structure of a social group is affected when some or all members of a group are migratory. Simmel argues that a sociological assessment which looks at the "effects of migrating" (*Wirkung des Wanderns*) (Simmel 1992: 748) does not have to distinguish between nomadism and migration, for the reason that "the effect on the form of society is typically the same in both cases: oppression or removal of the internal differentiation of the group, a subsequent lack of actual political organization, which, however, is often compatible with despotic leadership" (Simmel 1992: 748f).[23] When describing the advantages and disadvantages in social status of itinerant and sedentary individuals, Simmel writes, "the person who is sedentary in principle can at any time move anywhere, so that he, in addition to his sedentariness, enjoys all advantages of mobility, whereas not all advantages of sedentariness apply to the same extent to the person who is mobile in principle"

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22 | "Die Nummeriertheit der Stadthäuser bedeutet in einem höheren Sinne überhaupt erst die räumliche Fixierung der Individuen, indem diese nun nach einer mechanischen Methode auffindbar sind. Diese Auffindbarkeit ist ersichtlich ganz andrer Natur, als sie in der mittelalterlichen Designierung besonderer Quartiere und Straßen für bestimmte Stände und Berufe liegt oder in der Trennung von Christen-, Juden- und Mohammedanerquartieren orientalischer Städte."
23 | "Denn jene Wirkung auf die Gesellschaftsform ist typischerweise in beiden Fällen die gleiche: Niederhalten oder Aufhebung der inneren Differenzierung der Gruppe, daher Mangel eigentlicher politischer Organisation, der sich aber oft mit despotischen Einherrschaften durchaus verträgt."

(Simmel 1992: 764).[24] According to Simmel, mobility implies more advantages when combined with a sedentary status. Simmel does not describe migration as a global phenomenon that affects local circumstances; instead he is interested in processes of sociation within the migrating group itself. Moreover, he takes up the relationship between migrants and non-migrants but does not necessarily assume different group affiliations. Note that, concerning membership, the itinerant is not the same thing as the stranger.[25] Itinerant and the sedentary individuals compete for social resources. Subsequently, sociation implies a tension over negotiating membership policies. Reading Simmel, it becomes clear that movement policies and spatial clustering of social groups are interrelated, and this deserves attention.

Fixity and Movement with Regard to Bordering Spaces?

In times of globalization, Markus Schroer argues, asking about space corresponds to asking about one's origin, destination, and level of access in respect to a certain area (Schroer 2006). Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman considers mobility as the key condition of social stratification in a globalizing world. "The dimension along which those 'high up' and 'low down' are plotted in a society of consumers, is their *degree of mobility* – their free-

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24 | "Es scheint überhaupt, als ob, je näher der Gegenwart, um so günstiger die Position des Seßhaften gegenüber dem auf Bewegung angewiesenen Gegner sei. Und dies ist durch die Erleichterung der Ortsveränderung begreiflich. Denn sie bewirkt, daß auch der prinzipiell Seßhafte dch jederzeit sich überallhin begeben kann, so daß er neben seiner Seßhaftigkeit mehr und mehr noch alle Vorteile der Mobilität genießt, während dem Unsteten, prinzipiell Beweglichen nicht im gleichen Maße die Vorteile der Seßhaftigkeit zugewachsen sind."

25 | In his essay, "The Stranger" (1908), Simmel writes in the section on proximity and distance: "The stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow – the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a certain spatial circle – or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries – but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially [...]" (Simmel 1972).

dom to choose where to be" (Baumann 1998: 86). According to Baumann, the consumer society has created the social figures of tourist and vagabond. Vagabonds are stuck in a place because of their limited possibilities, watching the world go by. Tourists, however, move around the world as they please. In contemporary debates, the term "migrant" is commonly used for those whose mobility is restricted, whereas the term "mobility" is used to describe something possessed by "global elites," who are able to overcome geographic distance quickly and with little disruption of their personal lives. This distinction is clear from the perspective of border management: the "bona fide" passenger is supposed to be helped across the border as seamlessly as possible, but those who are not allowed to cross must be held up. Considering that movement can also be conceptualized as power, as Trutz von Trotha (2006) argues with reference to Albert O. Hirschman, mobility constraints cannot simply be reduced to an issue of resources. Rather they reveal asymmetric power relations, traceable within migration patterns and border control policies. With regard to the EU's external border in the Mediterranean, practices such as interception operations at sea, the detention of migrants and asylum seekers, and the acquisition and storage of individual travel records or personal data in databases[26] result from the tension between fixity and mobility as a quality of bordering spaces. The small boat, with its undocumented (read un-fixed) passengers, has thus not emerged by accident as the preferred means of transport into the EU. It rather indicates a constant maneuvering through fixity and movement.[27]

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26 | The tensions between visibility and invisibility and between fixity and movement overlap in the example of databases as Leon Hempel (2011) shows in his essay "Das Versprechen der Suchmaschinen. Der europäische Sicherheitsraum als Sichtbarkeitsregime."

27 | In her 2011 monograph, Silja Klepp provides compelling examples of the transit economy based around the small boat. Sicco Rah (2009) explores in detail the different legal arguments relating to the small boats transporting asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees on the high seas and across territorial waters. In his lecture "Where are the missing vehicles?," William Walters describes these small boats as the "anti-ship of state" (Walters 2011).

AMPLIFYING SIMMEL:
SOME GENERAL QUALITIES OF BORDERING SPACES

This essay set up a communication between Simmel's qualities of space and contemporary analysis of migration and border control policies in the Mediterranean. Simmel's qualities of space were examined to asses their potential merit for border studies and for further development when appropriate. The qualities of bordering spaces (*Grenz-Raumqualitäten*), extrapolated from this conceptual experiment, are meant to spur further debate.

Qualities of space, it was found, reflect social interactions and formations as much as they affect them. In the specific case of bordering spaces, their qualities reflect and perpetuate social tensions, differences as well as mechanisms for the regulation of membership, and for the granting and negating of liberties. The qualities of bordering spaces, proposed here as tensions, are based on the premise that demarcation occurs as these tensions are negotiated and resolved.

Discussing Simmel's quality of exclusivity against selected analysis of contemporary EU migration and border control policies indicated two general tensions inherent to bordering spaces. Both an *inside-outside* tension which captures distinction and an *open-closed* tension which addresses selection, revolve around the quality of exclusivity and should be separated when analyzed and deployed as qualities of bordering spaces. Two further tensions, namely those between *visible and invisible* as well as between *natural and cultural* have proven relevant for bordering spaces when examining the decomposability and delimitation of borders. Whereas the latter tension addresses the legitimizing narrative of borders, the first revolves around the scope, range, means of law enforcement on the one hand, and around the practices of border-crossing on the other. Although Simmel's quality of space *proximate-distant*, proved applicable to bordering spaces, this did not work without the reinterpretation of geographic distances to uneven development, a reinterpretation which would require further investigation and critical reflection. Finally, Simmel's qualities fixity as well as movement and migration, could be applied to bordering spaces and taken together as the tension between *fixed and mobile*. This tension allows for capturing policies regarding mobility, data storage, and detention. Table 1 provides an overview of both Simmel's qualities of space and

spatial formations and the extrapolated tensions that are characteristic of bordering spaces.

Simmel's five qualities of space (and his examples)	six proposed general tension characteristic of bordering spaces	practices and policies which negotiate the proposed tensions of bordering spaces
exclusivity (territorial nation-state)	inside-outside	othering, exclusion
	open-closed	selection, biopolitics
decomposability and delimitation (Gebietshoheit, Zentralität)	visible-invisible	cat and mouse game, sovereign and deviant
	natural-cultural	routing borders, legitimising them
fixity (club, house, numbering of houses)	fixed-mobile	data storage, politics of identity
movement and migration		politics of mobility
proximity and distance (empty space, the in-between)	proximate-distant	uneven distribution of resources and infrastructure

Table 1: Tensions of bordering spaces as extrapolated from Simmel's qualities of space

Bordering spaces are characterized by the negotiation of these tensions. Demarcation is marked through a decision to inhibit these dichotomies. The proposed six tensions characteristic of bordering spaces should allow for a more methodical approach to those spatial formations which have emerged as the constitutive "architecture" of the EU border control regime in the last 20 years. For the purpose of testing its value, the proposed bordering tensions need to be applied to different empirical sites of European demarcation, such as, for instance, the French waiting zone, the European Surveillance System, the small boat, the court, the detention center, the

island of Lampedusa or Lesbos etc. Only then can we decide whether this approach, derived from Simmel, fulfills its promise of conceptual rigor regarding the qualities of bordering spaces or whether it leads to essentially descriptive outputs. Yet, in this first experimental step, Simmel's way of thinking sociology about space has indeed pointed to some possible general qualities of bordering spaces, applicable to many empirical cases of demarcation.

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