

International and interdisciplinary conference

**“B/ORDERS IN MOTION: Current challenges and future perspectives”**

15-17 November 2018 at the European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder



**PANEL A1: Borders, boundaries, categorizations**

**Dominik Gerst** (Frankfurt/Oder), **Maria Klessmann** (Frankfurt/Oder)

The panel seeks to discuss the relationship of borders/boundaries and categorizations. While border studies, for example, identify borders to have an ordering effect which leads to a specific treatment of specific categories of people (but also objects), the field of boundary research conceptualizes boundaries as categorial distinctions with symbolic but also practical implications. Both research traditions are characterized by their interest not in the stability of identities or groups which categories are said to produce, but a “view from the border/boundary” which focusses on the relational distinctions and differences. Empirically, on the one hand, we are interested in the categorial ordering work facilitated by borders, that means in the ways different categories (e.g. tourist vs. terrorist) are shaped by specific rights and obligations and thus produce different practical bordering effects. On the other hand, we want to focus not only on the organization but the emergence of border-related categories, both representing a clear demarcation as well as a state of in-between-ness. Methodologically, we aim at discussing the productiveness of different methods and research strategies (ethnography, conversation analysis/membership categorization analysis etc.) and their usefulness in border contexts. From a theoretical viewpoint, we ask how concepts such as boundary work, selectiveness/permeability of borders, boundary infrastructures or border knowledge implicitly or explicitly try to capture the relationship of borders and categorizations. In this way, the panel contributes to the ongoing debate about how a connection of border and boundary studies may gain new insights.

PANELISTS:

**Complex research strategies for complex borders. What ethnography and discourse analysis can offer in the study of (conflictual) borderlands**

**Ulrike H. Meinhof** (Southampton)

The panel postulates a distinction between border studies and boundaries leading to different emphases on the creation specific categories of people or objects on the one hand and forms of social differentiation on the other. It also suggests that these distinctions are or should be brought together so that the emphases on territorial borders and those of socio-symbolic borders and boundaries can be studied in an interconnected interactive way. My own research in 3 interconnected research projects since 1999 has focused since 1999 on this interdependency, without however adopting the sociological terminology adopted here. To our work, these interconnections were the outcome of the research methods adopted, a combination of ethnography on various sites of existing, former, or newly formed geopolitical borderlands and with

ethnically determined divisions between groups of people in transnational settings, and as well as a discourse -analytically driven analysis of the resulting narratives and conversational data.

My paper will offer a brief overview of these research projects so as to establish the premises from which our research established the ways in which people constructed and enacted their ongoing identifications and differentiations. but But mainly, it will mainly offer an empirically grounded analysis that shows our work in action.

### **Boundary-Making in Transnational Perspective: Benefits from the Sociology of Knowledge and the Sociology of Space**

**Anna Amelina** (Cottbus-Senftenberg)

Various recent studies of cross-border relations have proposed ways of differentiating between the concepts of 'borders' and 'boundaries'. The aim of my presentation is to show how these two concepts can be linked to each other while remaining distinct conceptual entities. First, I argue that the most recent conceptualizations of borders can use the conceptual perspective of migration regime, which builds on the processual perspective on 'borders', defining them as a nexus of knowledge (e.g. powerful classifications) and power (articulated in the unequal life chances of movers). Second, I introduce the concept of sociocultural boundaries, which makes it possible to rethink Lamont and Molnár's sociology of social boundaries by using the sociology of knowledge/culture, which highlights the primacy of classification and categorization processes. Sociocultural boundaries, thus, are understood as classifications linked to class, ethnicity/race, gender, age, sexuality, health/'disability', and space. In other words, the concept of sociocultural boundaries integrates intersectional theory with the sociology of space, proposing to view 'space' as a separate 'axis of difference', with local, national, transnational, and global scales as its components. Finally, I discuss the European migration regime to illustrate that 'borders' (= migration regimes) incorporate various types of sociocultural boundaries, arguing that European regulation of borders includes classifications in terms of class, ethnicity/race, gender, space, and so on, which generate unequal life chances for moving individuals.

### **Symbolic boundary work: how the integration paradigm produces exclusion and limits resistance**

**Kerstin Duemmler** (Lausanne)

Symbolic boundaries – conceptual distinctions between categories of people and their practices – are pervasive and participate in the daily production of feelings of belonging or separation. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Swiss schools, the paper focuses on the immigrant-native boundary and uncovers the exclusionary effects that the paradigm of integration has on so-called "foreign" pupils. These pupils are judged on their willingness and capacity to integrate and are at risk of being attributed with deficient or incomplete integration. Although individuals can employ strategies to question boundaries, such as boundary blurring, crossing, celebrating diversity or promoting tolerance – these strategies remain marginal. In fact, the native-foreigner divide and the related cultural narratives are institutionalized in societal key spheres, in particular the integration policy defining who can enter, settle and become naturalized. Institutionalized boundaries are difficult to challenge.