

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 D1: State Borders and Technology in Europe: Between Openness and fortification

Falk Flade (Frankfurt/Oder), **Aristotelis Tympas** (Athens)

The panel will bring in conversation two lines of state-of-the-art research on the relationship between state borders and technology. The first points to the pursuit of a border-less European ‘integration’ through the application of technologies. This research takes into account the role of technology in overcoming division lines inside Europe by penetrating and relativizing state borders. The second starts from the other end, the rise of ‘euroskepticism’ regarding the vision of a border-less European society, which has resulted in attempts at intensifying the technological control of borders within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world. Central here are a series of ‘challenges to Europe’, from economic crises in the European South and the Brexit political decision in the European North to the pressure from migration waves to Europe and nationalist parties in Europe. In the face of these challenges, political stakeholders argue in favor of (re-)strengthening internal or external borders by relying on border-keeping technologies.

PANELISTS:

Datafied bordering moments and Brexit

William L Allen (Oxford)

This paper considers how we might theorise the relationship between technologies and borders given political imperatives for more control and restriction on the one hand, but freer movement of goods and people (in certain circumstances) on the other hand. ‘Datafied borders’, or the use of data produced through biometrics, advance passenger information (API), and surveillance practices, increasingly characterise how states (aim to) manage their borders. Brexit provides a lens through which we can look at datafied borders in their material, temporal, and discursive senses. By developing the concept of a ‘border moment’ as particular instantiations of border assemblages, I explore how it can help us make sense of the competing—and sometimes contradictory—views about what the UK’s borders can and should look like in the future. As politicians, civil servants, and members of the British public imagine these future borders, they contribute to bordering moments in the present. These moments, in turn, shape what is practically and politically possible.

Processing Alterity, Shaping the European Order

Annalisa Pelizza (Twente, Paris)

This presentation draws upon data collected in the context of the “Processing Citizenship” project (ERC StG No 714463) part of the broader research trajectory which I named “Vectorial Glance” (Pelizza 2016). The project asks how contemporary information infrastructures for processing the Other shape the European order. As such, it aspires to contribute to technology studies on the infrastructural construction of Europe with a focus on information infrastructures.

Historically, population and territorial information flows have contributed to the formation of the most powerful techno-social assemblage for knowledge handling – the nation-state. How can contemporary data infrastructures for “alterity processing” (Pelizza, forthcoming) show and shape elements of the multi-level European construction? Which values are implied by the choice of a standard, a procedure, a protocol? Which actors are downplayed by such technical decisions, and which new ones are emerging? The lecture introduces data infrastructures for “alterity processing” as a field of inquiry concerned both with the management of Otherness and with the infrastructural construction of polities. Drawing on early evidence collected at Hotspots involved in registration and identification (R&I) procedures in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as on design documents of data architectures at the European level, it suggests that institutional practices, (meta)data and procedures designed to translate unknown people into European-readable identities co-produce migrant people and polities.

Connections, Curtains, Collisions: The Role of Borders in Energy Systems between East and West

Vincent Lagendijk (Maastricht)

Due to the Cold War and a split between Western and Central-Eastern Europe, existing energy connections between both sides were disconnected. For obvious reason, one would argue, that energy resources are vital and strategic during peace, but also during war. Yet political boundaries, or in the case of the Cold War, geopolitical demarcation lines, do not always correspond and correlate with efficiency and rationalization concepts of engineers. After the Second World War, this led to an inherent tension between the political and technical. Whereas technicians favored to look across borders, politicians have been more hesitant to connect energy systems across borders. Though one would assume the primacy of power politics, particularly given the strategic nature of energy resources in a Cold War-setting, power lines and pipelines were connected. While this happened during a period of relative detente, the inertia of these hard infrastructures kept them – and the resulting energy relations in place – during hotter cold war periods (until even today). This paper thus explores the role of borders, both technological and political ones, in the realm of energy during the post-1945 period.

Complexity, Emergence and Digital Borders

Götz Herrmann (Paderborn)

In this paper I want to address the interrelation between a hegemonic definition of the world as emergent and inherently threat-generating and the “digitalization” of processes of bordering in Europe.

Over the course of the last two decades policy makers and security experts have been increasingly concerned with the impossibility of “achieving a complete state of protection” (US Department of Homeland Security, 2007: 25). In a globalized, complex and interconnected world some threats are considered indistinguishable from the general environment (Massumi 2009: 154). In reaction to this epistemological problem, new technologies of surveillance and automation at the border are claiming to identify and filter out dangerous subjects within the flow of moving bodies at the border by using vast amounts of data.

By explaining the increased datafication of borders with the rise of a new techno-rationality which conceives of the world as flexible, dynamic and open I explore how algorithmic systems replace concepts of rationalistic causality with a very particular concept of probability and thereby reframe the definition of threats: Machine learning algorithms are holding the promise to calculate with multiple likelihoods simultaneously. High or low probabilities are no longer relevant only certain patterns of probability.