

ABS Europe Conference 2016

Differences and discontinuities in a 'Europe without borders'

04 – 07 October 2016 | University of Luxembourg
In cooperation with the UniGR-Center for Border Studies ([UniGR-CBS](#))

Call for Papers

In 2016 the biannual European Conference of the Association for Borderland Studies (ABS) will be hosted by the University of Luxembourg. The Conference will take place at the Belval campus, in close proximity to the French-Luxembourg border, and in cooperation with the University of the Greater Region (UniGR) – a confederation of six universities from Luxembourg (University of Luxembourg), Germany (University of Kaiserslautern, Saarland University, University of Trier), France (University of Lorraine), and Belgium (University of Liège). The conference is thematically connected to the 30-year anniversary of the Schengen Agreement, which was signed in the Luxembourg village of Schengen. The conference wants to test the vision of a 'Europe without borders', by considering questions that focus on mobility, diversity, responsibility and change from a multidisciplinary perspective. The questioning should consider differences as well as discontinuities in a spatial, social and temporal perspective.

With the abolition of regular border controls in Schengen Europe, and the fall of the iron curtain, the field of Border Studies has opened up new objects of research and has experienced a noticeable development boost. Although the initial focus was on freight, services, capital and passenger traffic, and the resulting questions in relation to spatial, political, cultural and social aspects, this was followed by social constructivist approaches and relational thinking. The idea of a 'borderless world' has become popular, with a certain sensibility for the processes of 'new border demarcation'.

The conference aims at further expansion of this sensibility and reinforced attention to the processes of demarcation, for there are not only radical cultural and political changes in Europe, but also concerns to open up differences and discontinuities:

- (1) as resources e.g. as driving forces for exchange, movement and learning
- (2) as instruments e.g. in critical power perspectives on governance and marginalisation
- (3) as materialisation e.g. in social, aesthetic or spatial manifestations.

The conference aims to intensify this multidisciplinary dialogue with an orientation that understands differences and discontinuities as resulting from economic, institutional and social processes, and through a border studies approach that seeks deeper reflection on categories of difference and discontinuity. The focus then is on mobility, diversity, responsibility and change, with differences as well as discontinuities considered through a spatial, social and temporal perspective.

Contributions in the following areas, and beyond, are therefore welcome: papers that develop theoretical models and concepts, present empirical case studies or show scientific desiderata. Moreover, paper proposals from practitioners and institutional representatives that deal with questions of border areas are also welcome.

Mobility and multi-locality

Mobility, has long been considered as a central characteristic of the social reality of life. Mobilities can be examined within different thematic structures, where they can be discussed as circular, unidirectional, or consecutive movements. With regards to cross-border mobilities, streams, borders and differences can turn out to be central driving forces for movements and spatial continuities. Equally they can limit cross-border mobilities and (re-) produce discontinuities. Therefore, emphasis needs to be placed on the consistency of borders being viewed as either permeable or resilient. Both of these borders characteristics can be understood as the result of powerful-instrumental acting as well as, paradoxically, expressions of social practice in cross-border regions. Thus, the gained permeability of European borders can encourage spatial continuities whilst, simultaneously, borders can recover their resistance. This divergent dynamic can be lead back to differences and discontinuities which can, however, as driving forces for mobility, lose their attraction due to practised mobility and familiarity. Furthermore, differences and discontinuities can be observed in scope of themes where mobilities effect the emergence of new spatial configurations. Such spatial emergences resulting from multilocality in cross-border contexts, are often described as social spaces, spaces of borders, functional spaces and the like. This in turn can cause new border demarcations. This refers to an often neglected reciprocal relationship between the overcoming of differences and discontinuities through mobility in creating (new) differences and discontinuities

Multilingualism and diversity

The term of diversity is spread in different scopes and always related to plurality and dealing with difference. Thereby we can differentiate between perspectives of outward demarcation, an internal differentiation or a productive-creative recombination of differences. In the context of cross-border regions, the focus is mainly on linguist and cultural diversity in social and cultural studies. Depending on the research context, they can be seen as resources or as powerful instruments.

Diversity as a resource is relevant when – territorial as well non-territorial – cross-border regions are considered as places of interactions of distinct systems, codes, linguistic and cultural repertoires where differences liquefy and form creative alliances. From this perspective, cross-border areas are privileged contexts to study (cultural or linguistic) forms of betweenness and they can give information about dynamic developments on superior spatial levels. Diversity as a powerful instrument is taken into account when differences are projected and used to establish (social) discontinuities. Similarly, strategic negation of diversity e.g. through (cultural or linguistic) normalization can be seen as a powerful practice. These processes that aim at the construction of (cultural and linguistic) borders or the homogenisation of (cultural and linguistic) diversity can be studied through discursive-media attributions and/or social practises as well as in a diachronic and synchronic perspective.

Growth and sustainability

For some years now capitalist market systems have been criticised while the interest in alternatives to growth based economic models has increased. In this context, as well as under the impression of current economic- and structural crisis cities, regions and citizens are increasingly searching for more sustainable approaches. This development is called 'transition' and not only marks a break in the handling of environmental and energy political

questions, but is confronted with specific conditions in border regions. Cross-border sustainable transition processes need to overcome discontinuities that result from e.g. differences of systems, political cultures or a complex situation of involved actors. Simultaneously, there is enormous potential for the development of innovative approaches in cross-border regions due to the diversity of strategies, initiatives, actors and structures based on differences. Therefore, the study of sustainable transition in cross-border regions can discuss differences and discontinuities as a specific challenge, but also as opportunities for creative-productive solutions.

Instability and change

The categories 'instability' and 'change' are form their own scope in spite of their transversal character. The discussion of 'instability' and 'change' aims to contribute to a stronger theorisation within border studies. Following diverse developments in different disciplines, we can discuss models and methodologies that deal with the conceptualisation and exploration of discontinuities and transformation in time (change), as well as with processes of subversion and destabilisation (instability). Both categories describe differences and discontinuities as dynamic processes that are essential for theory-based research of borders phenomenon, and realities of life under increased conditions of contingency.

Interested participants are asked to submit a short abstract of max. 3 000 characters (incl. space characters) using the following online form: www.abseurope2016.eu
(Please first register at the website and then upload your paper proposal.)

Closing date for the paper proposals: 15 February 2016

Feedback for submitters: 15 April 2016

For further information: www.abseurope2016.eu

Details for writing the proposal

Max. 3 000 characters (incl. space characters)

Title of the paper

Short bibliography (max. 2 000 characters incl. space characters)

Contact address (institution, E-mail, phone and postal address)

4-5 keywords

Papers should be in English language.

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