

**(B)ORDERS. Re-Imagining Cultural, Political, and Media Spaces in a Globalizing World**

**Veranstalter:** Graduate Program „Formations of the Global“, School of Humanities, University of Mannheim

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The Graduate Program „Formations of the Global“ (University of Mannheim) organized the international conference “(B)ORDERS. Re-Imagining Cultural, Political, and Media Spaces in a Globalizing World” at Bronnbach Abbey on September 3-4, 2010. The overall research interest of the Graduate Program is centered on constructions of „worlds“ in historical, literary and communicative perspectives, encompassing descriptions of the heterogeneous, homogeneous, or hybrid phenomena of cultural globalization. The fourth conference of the Graduate Program focused on the role of (b)orders in a globalizing world. Borders and orders are interdependent. Geographical, epistemological, and metaphorical (b)orders are subject to constant processes of redefinition and thus, whenever borders are resituated, orders are changed as well. Academic research across disciplines focuses on (re)structuring processes of political, economic and cultural orders. The transdisciplinary character of the conference, which was reflected by the range of participants and their diverse academic background, aimed at a multiperspectival understanding of these processes.

The conference featured three panels that offered notions on (b)orders in processes of globalization. The panel “(B)ORDERS and the Polis: PR, Politics and Public Spheres” discussed the issue of globalizing public spheres in Media and Communication Studies. The panel “(B)ORDERS and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (I)” focused on the (re)definition and (re)construction of communities and collective identities in the fields of Sociology and Cultural Anthropology. The panel “(B)ORDERS and Subjectivity: Hybridity, Liminality, and Experiences of Con-

tingency” portrayed border cultures, hybrid spaces, and identity formation in Cultural and Literary Studies. The panel “(B)ORDERS and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (II)” explored territorial borders and their geopolitical significance in the discipline of Political Science. Each panel was accompanied by a corresponding keynote address.

The conference was opened with the keynote speech „Media and the transformation of (b)orders since the 19th century“ by FRANK BÖSCH (Justus Liebig University, Gießen). According to Bösch, media constitutes a primary means of global infrastructure. Throughout history, every media innovation can be regarded as a technology with the potential to eliminate borders across the globe, resulting in a compression of time and space. Furthermore, media innovations lead to a remapping of the world, creating new borders and spaces beyond the traditional geographical concepts of space. New media technology alone cannot explain this phenomenon. Rather, its connection to political and cultural conditions have to be considered as well. Bösch argued that at the time of their invention, all new media developments enabled global communication. This is exemplified by the radio broadcasting of BBC World or Voice of America during the Second World War and the Cold War. However, radio broadcasting recently became an important agent for nationalization and regionalization. This can be observed by analyzing the content of news emissions, weather forecasts, and advertisements. A possible reason for this phenomenon can be the lack of supranational media formats and organizations. Instead, the global public sphere is rather selective and linked to particular global events.

Whereas Bösch introduced an encompassing historical view on changes of structures of public spheres, the first panel “(B)orders and the Polis: PR, Politics and Public Spheres” focused with a quantitative media and communication study paper on the structure of a transnational Arab public sphere. In “(B)orders within a transnational public sphere: The case of the Arab public sphere” MARIA RÖDER (University of Mannheim) provided insight into her empirical study and conceived public spheres as spaces between

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government and society. Transnational media channels such as Al Jazeera grant more freedom for a discussion of legitimated controversies than national public spheres. By applying pressure on politics, these communicative areas may help to underpin democracy in the region. Röder commented upon a quantitative content analysis of 25 transnational Arab talk shows. The empirical results showed the wide range of discussed issues in Arab talk shows. Furthermore, a strong bias towards male experts became obvious.

The first panel demonstrated that transnational public spheres are not only subject to historical changes but also to specific cultural discourses. The second panel "(B)orders and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (I)" focused on the exploration of culture and community constructions and its representations in the context of inclusion and exclusion processes from a rather anthropological perspective. ANDRAMIRONA DRAGOTESC (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) analyzed the intersection of (gendered) violence and its re-presentation in the Congo by using Edward Said's theory of Orientalism in her paper "Towards an imaginative cartography of violence? (De)Constructing spatial identity in the context of wartime gendered violence representations". NGOs construct the Congo as a rape-culture of violence, while they represent themselves as humanitarian. As a result, the re-presentation of the Congo is itself an act of violence because it reduces the Congo to violence, above all rape. The presentation aimed at exposing the supposedly humanitarian representations by NGOs that rather achieve the opposite, a stereotypical representation of the Congo within the boundaries of gendered violence. FELIPE RUBIO (University of Leipzig) demonstrated the variety of inclusion and exclusion processes in "Andean region immigration and the (re)configuration of social spaces in Madrid". Using the example of a Madrid suburb, Rubio illustrated how "Andinos" (indigenous peoples from the Andes) feel more at home in the diaspora than in their original homeland Peru because their identity in Madrid is not based on Peruvian national identity constructions. In contrast, the "Latinos" (descendants of the

European colonizers), who rather see themselves as Peruvian nationals, feel more alienated in Madrid. The presentation showed that migration patterns have become increasingly complex due to flexible (b)orders. ANNETTE SCHROEDL (Free University Berlin) showed the clash between local "stayers" and so-called "cholos" (juvenile migrants returning to their Mexican village from the United States) in "Divided identity: Migration and the recreation of borders among the youth of a Zapotec village in Southern Mexico". She emphasized how the Zapotecan adolescents who stayed in the community of Teotitlán del Valle in the Oaxaca region "weave" their identity on the basis of their local community traditions. As a consequence, they define themselves in contrast to the "cholos". Schroedl's methodical approach is based on anthropological participatory observation.

The panel emphasized the fluid character of (b)orders and the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion in various communities across the globe. The panelists showed that global migratory flows deconstruct notions of (b)orders as merely physical demarcations, which functioned as a cultural-historical background for the following keynote address. In "Orders across borders: From difference to diversity and cross-cutting cleavages", PAUL DRECHSEL (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz) described the coexistence of modern and traditional cultural elements in multicultural societies. The cultural anthropologist introduced the phenomenon of the so-called cultural switching, using the example of South Africa. For instance, cultural switching implies the coexistence of modern and traditional cultural elements. One example is the South African president Jacob Zuma who switches between his official monogamous life in the capital and his traditional polygamous life in KwaZulu-Natal. As a result of this observation, Drechsel developed a theory of culture that illustrates different levels of complexity of varying cultural, social, and political structures. This interdisciplinary approach combined the study of culture with organizational and sociological theories. The more complex a cultural structure becomes the more emphasis lies on individuality as

well as on flexibility and permeability of cultures. These characteristics allow to cross-cut cultural cleavages. Discourses across disciplinary borders in the academic fields of Social and Cultural Anthropology as well as Sociology constitute the criteria for this modernized condition of a culture or society. Therefore, Drechsel pleaded for a modernization of traditional cultures in the sense of favoring diversity and cross-cutting cleavages instead of differences separated by (b)orders.

The ambiguities of traditional and modern elements in societies lead to the necessity of finding new models and terminologies in order to describe the switching, cross-cutting, or shifting of cultural borders. The third panel "(B)ORDERS and Subjectivity: Hybridity, Liminality, and Experiences of Contingency" discussed physical, social, and cultural borders with regard to concepts such as race, ethnicity and transnationalism from the perspective of Cultural and Literary Studies in works of fiction by Danzy Zenna, Thomas King, and Zadie Smith. VERENA HARZ (Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf) analyzed the color line as a metaphorical border in „Where nothing is certain: The color line as the new frontier in Danzy Senna’s *Caucasia and Symptomatic*“. Harz arrived at the conclusion that the color line is necessary in *Caucasia* (1998) and obsolete in *Symptomatic* (2004), revealing the fact that race constitutes a fundamental category in the human mind. Simultaneously, the need for a revision of former categorizations was stressed to enable identity formation as a process involving more than race. Instead, identity in the context of global configurations is characterized by dynamic borders, multiplicity, permeability, and contingency. EVELYN MAYER (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz) emphasized the complexity of national identity in „Culture-identity nexus: Canada-U.S. borderlands in King’s short story *Borders*“. Borders between nations and the effects of those borders on self-perception and social membership were discussed. Mayer focused on the thickening of the U.S.-Canadian borderlands after 9/11. The example used was the indigenous Blackfoot portrayed in Thomas King’s *Borders* (1991) who are inhabitants of the U.S.-Canadian borderlands.

The case of the Blackfoot contested familiar notions of national membership, citizenship, and identity formation. NATHALIE AGHORO (Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich) discussed the problematic situation of migration and integration through the lenses of transnationalism and liminality in „Imagining transnational subjects: Becoming, belonging, and the liminal ‘I’ in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*“. The disparity between self-perception and external perception as well as the need to align one’s identity with given national structures were analyzed. In Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000) and *On Beauty* (2005), subjects in a transnational context are depicted who are often caught-up in-between the fragmentation of traditional frameworks of identity and the globalizing forces of modernity. Aghoro concluded that identity is shaped according to a multiplicity of relevant aspects, which is irreconcilable with the binary order.

The third panel illustrated how fictional characters negotiate notions of identity and processes of othering in a globalizing world, based on real or imagined cultural, ethnical and national borders. The fourth panel "(B)ORDERS and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (II)" focused on the political dimension of borders and their consequences for non-fictional borderland societies. In his presentation „Domestic pressure and the conception of the ‘other’“, MANUEL UNTEN KANASHIRO (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit - GTZ) presented a case study on the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Africa. Depicting the multiple dimensions of significance of the borders between the two Spanish autonomous cities and the Kingdom of Morocco, Unten Kanashiro showed how political decision makers, armed forces, and the media in Spain and Morocco respectively create a sense of togetherness among their own population. In order to reach this solidarity, they exploited historically established negative images of the respective ‘other’. The unique geographical situation of Ceuta and Melilla has created considerable tension between Spain and Morocco. Both deny the fact that the cities can rather be characterized as a ‘borderland micro-cosmos’ of cul-

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tural, political, and societal encounter than as purely mono-national entities. BASTIAN SENDHARDT (Universität der Bundeswehr, Munich) sketched a theoretical framework designed to account for dynamic border changes in „Borders as processes – rebordering and debordering in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood“. Using the recent history of the Polish-Ukrainian border as an empirical background, Sendhardt pointed to the tremendous transformations that took place during the last 20 years. While the Soviet-Polish border had been almost as impermeable as the Iron Curtain, after 1989, it turned from a barrier to a contact zone between Poland and Ukraine. Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 and the gradual enforcement of the Schengen Agreement affected the cross-border relations once again, including negative impact on trade and labour market dynamics. This resulted in new alienation which the EU then sought to counter by means of its new ‘European Neighbourhood Policy.’ Sendhardt regards the apparently contradictory policies concerning the EU’s Eastern border as a way of regulating globalization. Processes of rebordering are reactions to simultaneous processes of debordering, referring to the dissolution of the territorial congruence of state, economy, and society. STEFAN ALEKSIC (University of Belgrade) dealt with the legitimization of national borders and identity constructions in former Yugoslavia in „Borders of Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians“. After a brief introduction into the history of Yugoslavian nation building processes after the Second World War, Aleksic focused on the former federal state Bosnia-Herzegovina and the tensions among its multi-ethnic inhabitants. Based on an analysis of Serbian nationalism, he introduced concepts of identity construction as well as consequences of the social interaction in-between the multi-ethnic societies on the Balkans.

The last panel showed that the constant defining and re-defining of political and geographical borders has various reasons, such as the political interests of institutions, regional and historical developments, or intranational discourses of self and other. Based on the insights and the questions raised on notions of borders in the previous panels, the cul-

tural philosopher RENÉ BOOMKENS (University of Groningen) concluded the conference with a broad outlook on globalization processes and their impact on political entities such as the nation state. The keynote „The end of the world as we know it? Global popular culture, failing nation states and a new public sphere“ not only shed light on the dismantling of traditional notions of the nation state through cultural globalization but also on philosophical questions of altering public spheres. Cultural globalization has profoundly changed the relation between elite and popular culture, the role of the nation state, and the structure as well as the content of the public sphere. National elites can no longer manufacture national culture or control the national public sphere, as global commerce and popular culture provide entire ways of life, thereby creating new senses of belonging and a new form of consumer citizenship. The „world as we know it“ – that is, the modernist conception of autonomous nation states, manufacturable public spheres, and enlightened citizens – has indeed come to an end. Boomkens’s analysis of the social, cultural, and political consequences of cultural globalization underlined the need for new theoretical approaches towards contemporary society and culture. These new approaches, Boomkens contended, should break with traditional dichotomies such as that of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* or that of the consumer and the enlightened citizen.

In conclusion, the conference illustrated that there are not only different academic approaches to the discussion of (b)orders but also various subject matters that touch upon the problem of (re)bordering processes in a globalizing world. Shifting borders and (re)bordering within communal, urban, geographical, political, or national contexts is of interest across a great number of disciplines and on many levels. (B)orders exist within individuals who try to define their subjectivity along ambiguous orders of identification. The wide range of conference participants showed that (b)orders are not only interpreted as outdated constructs of a bygone age but also as an accompanying human constant. Media spaces paradoxically dissolve traditional borders of communities and nation states

and create new alliances and public spheres, thus inventing new orders of communication. Communities go beyond the transformation of established ethnic (b)orders. They create new orders of exclusions and inclusions along newly defined demarcations. Identity formation transcends the construction of the other as a negative counter-image but also accepts both, the alien and the familiar within oneself. For the last two decades, scholars from various academic fields predominantly analyzed borders as concepts of decreasing importance. In the future, however, not only the separating conditions of (b)orders need to be recognized but above all their connective quality.

**Conference Overview:**

Keynote by Frank Bösch (Justus-Liebig-University Gießen): Media and the transformation of (b)orders since the 19th century

*Panel 1: (B)Orders and the Polis: PR, Politics, and Public Sphere*

Maria Röder: (B)orders within a transnational public sphere: The case of the Arab public sphere

Renata Demeterffy Lančić: Influence of new media cross-border communication on PR and public sphere

*Panel 2: (B)Orders and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (I)*

Andra-Mirona Dragotesc: Towards an imaginative cartography of violence-(de)constructing spatial identity in the context of wartime gendered violence representations

Felipe Rubio: Andean region immigration and the (re)configuration of social spaces in Madrid

Annette Schroedl: Divided identity: migration and the recreation of borders among the youth of a Zapotec village in Southern Mexico

Keynote by Paul Drechsel (Johannes-Gutenberg-University Mainz): ORDERS across BORDERS: From difference to diversity and cross-cutting cleavages

*Panel 3: (B)Orders and Subjectivity: Hybridity, Liminality, and Experiences of Contin-*

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Verena Harz: 'Where nothing is certain': The color line as the New Frontier in Danzy Senna's *Caucasia* and *Symptomatic*

Evelyn Mayer: Culture-identity nexus: Canada-U.S. borderlands in King's short story *Borders*

Nathalie Aghoro: Imagining transnational subjects: Becoming, belonging and the liminal 'I' in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*

*Panel 4: (B)Orders and Community: Integration, Exclusion, and Solidarity (II)*

Manuel Unten Kanashiro: Domestic pressures and the conception of the 'other'. A case study on Ceuta and Melilla

Bastian Sendhardt: Borders as processes – rebordering and debordering in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood

Stefan Aleksić: Borders of Albanians, borders of Bosniaks and borders of Croats

Keynote by René Boomkens (University of Groningen): The end of the world as we know it? Global popular culture, failing nation-states and a new public sphere

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