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Space, Borders, Borderlands:
Global and East European Approaches in Historiography

In an international research perspective, an increased interest in questions of migration and in the significance of space has contributed to more attention being dedicated to border regimes. The vast field of border studies crosses several disciplines from political science, through geography and anthropology, to history and literature (see e.g. Wastl-Walter 2010). It subsumes a broad range of subjects including both metaphorical and material borders. The study of material borders, which is our concern here, has been a dynamically developing field in the last two and a half decades. After the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, the opening of former communist archives as well as the "spatial turn" in historiography stimulated interest in past border regimes. Karl Schlögel, among others, noted that in the preceding period since the end of World War II, the field was tainted with negative political connotations (Schlögel 2003). The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, and European integration, in particular the Schengen process – research areas highly relevant to Central Europe, including Austria – provided the field with a new impetus (e.g. Andreas/Snyder 2000; DeBardeleben 2007). Globalisation and its attendant discourse of borderlessness on the one hand, and new concerns with demarcation on the other also spurred the discussion of the 1990s, with the latter concern dominating the 2000s (Newman 2006; Ambruster/Meinhof 2011).

Geographically, research on Cold-War borders has focused on the Soviet and German cases, in the latter on the inner German border and the German-Polish border. Thematically, the studies cover a broad range of concerns: from the border regime in the Eastern bloc, the specifics of the Soviet border regime and the bordering of the Soviet "empire" (Chandler 1998; Martin 2001; Schultz 2001; Segert 2002; Baumgarten/Freitag 2005; Weiner 2006; Coeuré/Dullin 2007; Trutkowski 2011; Applebaum 2012), through the development of collective and local identities in the borderlands (Berdahl 1999; Brown 2004; Sheffer 2011), to everyday life at the border (Jajesniak-Quast/Stokłosa 2000; Meinhof 2002; Silberman/Till/Ward 2012).

Economically rather than militarily or ideologically motivated border crossing comes to the forefront of interest in the studies of the Schengen process and European integration (e.g. Schlögel 2002; Bruns 2009). The euphoric rhetoric of the dissolution of borders becomes overshadowed by the notion of "Fortress Europe" and re-bordering, which implies explorations of new identity formations (e.g., Hurd 2006) and, by extension, research on memory and the transition from the Cold War to post-communism (e.g. Blaive/Molden 2009; Zhurzhenko 2010). The inner borders of the former Eastern bloc and, particularly, the Eastern border of the enlarged European Union stand in the centre of interest of border research dealing with the post-Cold War era (Anderson/Bort 2001; Schmidtke/Yekelchyk 2007; Weitzel et al. 2009).

This special issue originates from presentations at the international conference "From the Iron Curtain to the Schengen Area: Bordering Communist and Post-communist Europe" which was co-organized by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres (LBI EHP), the Historical Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), and the

Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in September 2011 in Vienna.[1] The conference – and the three articles collected here – aimed at contributing to shifting the focus of border research from the political aspects of border regimes to everyday practices at the border in an historical perspective. They reflect on the historical relevance and implications of space, borders and borderlands in historiography and in 20th-century Central and Eastern Europe, while balancing the political history of borders with the everyday life aspects of bordering, namely, with the social and cultural practice in borderlands and cross-border cooperation. Here, bordering as well as the implementation and shaping of border regimes are not perceived exclusively as top-down processes, but also as a result of interaction, e.g. with the role of the population in reinforcing, supporting, or counteracting certain measures.

Alfred Rieber's article provides a theoretical framing for the discussion. It takes a *longue durée* perspective on the treatment of space and frontier in political historiography. In a broad geographical and temporal sweep it shows how historians have grappled with the problems of political and cultural territory, and its delimitations, and how these were defined by changing criteria over time. As Rieber delineates the development of historiographical approaches through the 19th and 20th centuries, he points to inspirations from the social sciences and from extra-European and global history. In contrast, the other two articles show the practice of the borderland in 20th-century Central and Eastern Europe, each from the perspective of different actors.

Katarzyna Stokłosa draws on post-1989 narrative research about the perceptions and memories of post-World War II border regimes in Poland's east and west to take a closer look at the consequences of the demarcation of the border for the borderland space and its inhabitants: while the border line is drawn to divide, in everyday reality borderlands often become a contact zone, in which identities are co-created and separation becomes undermined by growing functional, structural or even cognitive interdependence of borderland inhabitants on both sides of the border. The article indicates that the perceptions of the inhabitants of Poland's eastern border region differ significantly from those of the western one.

Finally, Matěj Spurný takes a look at the Czech-Austrian borderland after 1945. Drawing on archival research, he underlines that the creation of a special border regime comprising expulsion, repression, resettlement, and homogenization in the borderlands preceded and accompanied the formation of communist dictatorship. These measures were explained by their proponents with the alleged necessity of having "reliable citizens" capable of protecting the security of the nation and the state settled in the borderlands. In Spurný's view, this discourse, whose logical consequence was the removal of all allegedly "unreliable" inhabitants, fostered ever more radical demands among the Czech-speaking population, especially the new settlers, for expropriating and expelling German-speaking and other non-Slav groups. After the communist takeover, the suspicion of unreliability was extended to other groups – a strategy that was used by the regime for intimidating and controlling the population and increasing its "vigilance". This is a case study of pre-communist and communist social engineering in the Vitorazsko (Weitra) region: the border has been demarcated and the state, with the help of some parts of its population, creates a borderland population that would embody the abstract ideal of national and ideological "purity".

In their methodical diversity, ranging from a global history of historiography through archival-based area studies to interregional comparison, based on interviews, the articles represent a selection of current interdisciplinary approaches to the study of space, frontiers, borders and borderlands. As they question their function as mental and material constructions and point to the role of perceptions and the dynamics of de-central response in shaping them, they indicate possible new directions for further research.

NOTE

1   For more details see: http://ehp.lbg.ac.at/en/past-events

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