De-Coding Socio-Spatial Relations: “Bordering” as a Way of Seeing

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CEPS Lecture, “Changing Borders: From Separation to Interface?”
Luxembourg, 22 July 2010
EUDIMENSIONS (CIT5-028804) is supported by the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme under PRIORITY 7, Area 4.2.1 “New Borders, New Visions of Neighbourhood”.
Europe: Geography und Borders
Borders and Geography: Central Research Focus

• Relationships between the emergence and development of nation-states and the functions of borders
• Spatial and societal impacts of borders
• Borders as elements of the cultural landscape (border landscapes)
Scientific Perspectives on the Nation-State

- **Geodeterminism**: National struggles for self-determination and territoriality
- **Functionalism**: Territorial organisation and geopolitical stability
- **Critical Realism/Postmodernism**: Systemic regulation, consolidation of political, economic and cultural power - but a “leaky container”
Scientific Perspectives on Borders

• **Geodeterminism**: Borderlines und frontiers as markers of socio-ecological space (nations)

• **Functionalism**: Genesis, structure and function von borders and border regions (in “real” space)

• **Critical Realism/Postmodernism**: Socio-political processes that create categories of difference in socio-political space (borders are relational, not given)
Ratzel’s Borderlands
Europe as a “Pan-Idea”
Haushofer (1928)
Social Geography as Cultural and Civilisational Bordering (Source, Haushofer 1928)
Border Typologies
(Source: de Blij 1967)
States and Core Areas
(Source: de Blij 1967)
Emergence of the Bordering Perspective

The Bordering Perspective: associated research questions

• Why and how are borders constructed in terms of (geo)politics and everyday life? How are social practices, political discourses, cultural understandings and policy contexts connected in this regard?

• How and in what ways does the EU lower/intensify the dividing power of borders?

• Does cross-border co-operation help create new borderlands identities?
Borders tell stories

• In terms of their symbolism
• In terms of functional transformations
• As markers of identity
• As geopolitical markers of space
• As a spatialisation of ‘bordering’
Borders as Social Construction
Borders and the “Coding” of Space
Post Cold-War Borders as a Meeting Place
Gallardo: Symbolic Dimensions of Re-bordering Spain-Morocco

- Geopolitical, functional and symbolic rebordering
- Inside-Outside
- Factory of ‘Otherness’
- Collective Identities through ‘bordering’
- Securitisation

Fig. 1. The Ceuta-Morocco Border. February 2006. Source: Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo.
De-Bordering, Re-bordering at Szelmenc
Szelmenc “Reopened”

• Exemplifies an area in historical transition
• Exemplifies a European periphery
• A BIG thing for local society
• Exemplifies Europe’s geopolitical anxieties?
The Cyprus Case

• Multilayered border symbolisms involving the physical border and its uses to indicate sovereignty, legitimacy, statehood
• Multilayered bordering symbolism involving the visual representation, even dramatisation, of group struggle, sovereignty, statehood, etc.
Cyprus: Quasi EU External Borders
Cyprus: Borders and Identity Politics
Cyprus: Yet More border Symbolism
Borders as Landscape Markers
Borders as markers of exclusion
Conclusion

• The bordering perspective reflects a genuinely interdisciplinary and critical approach to understanding the significance of borders

• It highlights the futility of positivistic and hegemonic concepts of border

• De-codes and dismantles Hobbesian geopolitics

• Evolves as society itself evolves, reflecting borders as a relative, rather than eternally given, concept
Thanks for your kind attention!