

Kosovo's B/Orders and Beyond: Crossing Borders, Challenging Social Orders

Workshop

at the

Viadrina Center B/ORDERS IN MOTION,
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder) (EUV)

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organized by PD Dr. Carolin Leutloff-Grandits (EUV),
in collaboration with Dr. Linda Gusia and Dr. Nita Luci (University of Prishtina)

In Kosovo and more generally in South-eastern Europe, borders and social orders are contested both from outside and within and are anything but stable. They shifted enormously in the late 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire ceased to exist. After World War I and World War II, new political orders were created and state borders were redefined, dissolved, and reinvented. A prominent place is occupied by the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, which existed from 1945 to 1990 and of which Kosovo was a part. With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the borders again shifted. After the violent disintegration of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, new nation-states were established within new borders. These changes also mark a new political order, the transition from the previous socialist society to a capitalist and neoliberal one, in which the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' has often been replaced by antagonistic and partly extremely aggressive nationalism. The new state borders and social orders are still partly contested, and Kosovo is an example par excellence of this. The political leadership of neighbouring Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence, not least because Kosovo is considered the historical cradle of the Serbian nation and northern Kosovo is inhabited by a majority of Serbs. But Kosovo's social order is also disputed from within. While some criticize the influence of the EU, others complain about the paternalistic, often patriarchal and corrupt approach of the political representatives and institutions in the country and the fact that EU membership is still not within reach. This also affects the situation of migrants and those who attempt to travel abroad. to enter the EU. Still, already for decades, migration takes an important place within the region and migrants cross and traverse borders and challenge social orders.

In this workshop, we will focus on the interrelationship between shifting state borders and social boundaries which effect social orders in Kosovo and more generally South-eastern Europe. In the context of contested geopolitical borders, contributions focus on shifting social boundaries that mark social orders within society. This includes the exploration of gender, ethnic, racial and class boundaries and their contestation from an intersectional approach. Simultaneously, we want to link to European and global dimensions, including the influence of the EU on South-eastern Europe and the importance of migration.

Keynote: Assembling Borders in the Supervised European Semiperiphery

Prof. Dr. Stef Jansen, University of Sarajevo / University of Manchester

Abstract

How can we best understand and theorise the ongoing making of polity borders in Southeast Europe? Which tools do we have to avoid the weaknesses of explanations that posit 'the state' as a sovereign subject that draws borders? In this presentation I will explore how the conceptual apparatus of 'assemblage' can help us grasp the provisionality of bordering processes as well as the heterogeneity of the actors involved in it. Yet, going against a dominant tendency in uses of assemblage theory, I will pay particular attention to hierarchical relations between these actors: in a constellation of semiperipheral 'supervision' as part of EU conditionality, some of them are much more capable to provisionally stabilise particular border assemblages than others. This, in turn, produces particular tensions in terms of how stable these assemblages really are. The presentation will draw on research on the post-1990 bordering of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the hope that the subsequent discussion will make connections to Kosova.

Abstracts of workshop participants:

Illegal crossing borders through legal ways – 2014-2015

Prof. Ass. Dr. Tahir Latifi, Department of Anthropology, University of Prishtina

By the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, more than one hundred and nineteen thousand people from Kosovo left the country. This wave of emigration was massive and illegal. Although their crossing into the EU was illegal, without visas or other proper documentation, it also occurred under broad daylight, under the watchful eyes of border guards, just some distance from the official border crossing. As such, an ambiguous physical and administrative space of illegality was created. At that time, a depressing socio-economic situation had been emerged. People had come to see leaving Kosovo as the only means for making a better life for themselves and their families. Media reports, also, indicated that those who were fleeing were no longer only from among the mass of the unemployed, although this group made up the majority, but also individuals and families fleeing for other reasons as well. There were those who until that moment were employed and those coming from middle class. The paper aims to analyse the reason why at that time this massive emigration happened. What urged such an outbreak of emigration reaching the dimension of a mass exodus? Which social and economic categories of people emigrated and for what reasons? The research is based on media reports from 2014-2015 as well as few interviews with persons who fled Kosovo at that time.

New memory practices on-line and off-line: Hyper-connectivity, proximity and distance

Dr. Linda Gusia, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina

Abstract

This paper aims at reflecting on the memory of conflict with the focus on connectivity, creation, adaption, and circulation of the affective and aesthetic politics of memory (oral histories, commemorative and new memory practices). Focusing on travelling images of online and offline memory practices, as well as narratives of internal and external representations, this paper asks how the mediated re-presence and our entanglements with mediated events reconfigures our presence and repurposes our memories. Looking closely at the narratives and social actors in the process of excavation and construction of pasts, online and offline, I rely

on the research from a project of a digital media platform with former students of the house-school system and young people from University of Prishtina, looking at the events of peaceful resistance during 1990's in Kosovo. Because memories change, shift and rely on political contexts it becomes crucial to interrogate how the memory of the events travels online and offline. Connectivity they create and the digitally fostered instant access, availability and accountability. The paper asks how are past events interpreted and mediated today and in what ways do they inform current experiences of violence? And, in what ways digital remembrance is shaping and informing new social action and connectivity?

Travelling Back Home: Rerouting Restrictions and Freedoms

Dr. Lumniqe Kadriu, Ethnology Department, Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë

Abstract:

Kosovo Albanians have a long history of migration but its peak was reached during the end of its socialist era, during 1990s. Because of the political tensions, for almost a decade, migrants had very restricted mobility toward homeland, if at all, including those who owned proper residence and travel documents. This restriction ended in 1999 when Kosovo Albanians, due to the change to a new political order, began to visit homeland at least once a year, mostly during the summer holidays. In this paper I will try to elaborate how for more than a decade restrictions (to travel through Serbia) and freedoms (to travel through Montenegro and Albania) enabled Kosovo Albanian migrants travelling back home to establish a new way of summer holiday practicing. As research loci were chosen Ulcinj, Montenegro and Velipoje, Albania as two most popular and visited seaside places among Kosovo Albanians in general. Why were these two particular places chosen? What was the effect of new holiday practices and what new connotations did the holidays gain in the meantime including the concept of homeland and its borders? How the interplay between global, regional and local, i.e. transnational freedom is manifested in their identity expressions and behavior, based on imagined borders? How new agreements do re-route travel but already established routine of holiday practicing remains. The research is based on participant observation and conversation with numerous migrants from different countries holidaying in these two locations.

A field analysis of the struggle for legitimacy in Kosovo

Prof. Ass. Dr. Gëzim Selaci, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina

Abstract

This paper looks into the legitimation strategies of the international transitional administration in Kosovo and the reaction of local political actors, as well as the implication of this for the dynamics of the legitimacy of the international administration. Using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field", the aim is to analyze the challenge to the legitimacy claims of the international authority by local actors in the context of the race for legitimacy in Kosovo's political dynamics. Locating the analysis of the legitimacy struggle within the concept of "field", enables the investigation of the logic of the competition between the international power structures in Kosovo and the government, the source of the conflict between them in the field of power, as well as the rules of the game in the field. Here I analyze the self-legitimizing and delegitimizing strategies for the other party, which have been used by both parties, focusing more on the delegitimizing strategies of local political actors towards international authority and the impact this has had on the attitudes and perceptions of the local population about international authority in the country.

Family photographs as means of cross borders communication

Dr. Zanita Halimi, Department of Anthropology, University of Prishtina

Photography is not a mere cultural artifact since it enables the focus on the historical, social and cultural context that they may reflect. As a document, family photograph is a very important and an inseparable part of modern human life being present at any moment, starting from the picture taken at birth all the way to all important phases of life. Human beings are spiritually and emotionally connected with family photography, since these make possible for family members to compare and analyze the past and the present of family history.

Due to changeable and mostly difficult political situation in Kosovo, Albanians had to migrate all around the world for different reasons. Families were divided and very often the family photography was the only way to preserve family ties.

In this paper through narrative interviews taken in a number of different families I will analyze how family photographs in Kosova in different political, historical economical times have served as means for cross border communications. The migration was mentioned almost in every family, being revealed through the stories behind the photographs they were showing and talking about. So, what was role of the migrants in this process? What were the ways they communicated by photographs, how were the messages coded and embedded in photographs are few questions that were answered during the research.

Capital and Connections Across Borders

Migrant Entrepreneurs, Families and State Policies in Kosovo and Serbia

PD Dr. Carolin Leutloff-Grandits, European University of Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)

Abstract

In this presentation, I will present the design of a new research project (together with Ulf Brunnbauer and Judith Möllers) on business start-ups of migrants, also of the so-called second generation, in their "old homeland" in Kosovo and Serbia in its cross-border dimensions. The project investigates the role of social networks and acquired know-how, but also of politics for the foundation of enterprises and their success. A particular focus is on exploring the influence of family, gender and generation from an intersectional perspective. Consideration will also be given to the extent to which companies produce for the Kosovar market, or cross-border or even exclusively for the EU market - as in the case of call centers, for example, which often employ people who have lived for some time in Germany, Austria or Switzerland. What significance do state and EU borders have for the success of investments? To what extent do borders become resources or what are the advantages of cross-border entrepreneurship? To what extent do state institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora in Kosovo, encourage migrant entrepreneurship. In the presentation I would like to explain and discuss the questions and approach of the project in more detail.

(Un)liveable Lands - Bosnia and Herzegovina

Snežana Stanković, Viadrina Center B/ORDERS IN MOTION (EUV) and FSU Jena

When war breaks out, most people set off and flee. Geopolitical disputes and b/orders arrest the environment, cause immense suffering and pass their legacies onto other generations. Environments battered in post-war violence and poverty remain behind as desolate landscapes, often with few elderly people who are unable or, for some reason, unwilling to flee the conflict. There is always someone who stays behind to live out their life. This paper approaches the few remaining elderly in Bosnia and Herzegovina ravaged by the Yugoslav wars. How does it feel to grow old in places where sounds of firing weapons, killings and torture echo through time — in places that simultaneously and often unknowingly hold remains of missing persons, i.e., missing loved ones? Everything interacts with the environment.

Thus, by using the lens of ageing and land, I aim to explore how older people live out their lives in relation to the altered place where the remnants of the past continue to seep through the ground/land/terrain/soil into the flesh and the very soul. The given perspective of the human-to-nonhuman companionship between the remaining elderly and their land — in terms of the ground they walk on and the surrounding they inhabit — calls for a more sensitive understanding of lifeworlds in harmful environments. It wants to trace resilience while confronting precarity as an all-knowing existential condition that defies any border.

Black families across borders in the Balkans: biographies, memories and everyday life

Dr. Elife Krasniqi, Southeast European History and Anthropology, University of Graz

The Black history in the Balkan has only seldom been in the focus of the researchers, and only peripherally. While there is research that dealt with race or racialisation for instance in Yugoslavia (Backer, 2013), little attention (if at all) was given to the domestic nature of Ottoman slavery (Ferguson & Toledano, 2017) in the Balkans. My research, on the Black history in the Balkans, so far, does not speak about cases of domestic slavery, but rather of Black families, communities or individuals who worked as household servants or nannies mainly up to mid 20th century in various cities in the Balkans. It is unclear, however, if the ancestors of these families/individuals were household slaves earlier in the Ottoman Empire. There is already published research on Black community in Ulqin, Montenegro but almost no attention was given to the lives of Black people in other locations of the Balkans such as Shkodra in Albania (or other cities such as Prishtina, Sarajevo, Thessaloniki etc.). The focus on the Black community/families or individuals across borders in the Balkans, especially in Ulqin and Shkodra, has to do with two aspects: border politics and different types of socialisms that these countries had. The closing of border after WWII between Albania and Yugoslavia affected the Black families' relations who were spread in these two locations. This paper will focus on family and individual biographies that has been affected by both socialisms and borders. The micro level approach allows me to shed light in the everyday life experiences and memories of communities and individuals in question, while relying also on the visual material such as photography retrieved from private and public archives.

Borders and boundaries in recent Albanian and Kosovar literature

Prof. Dr. Christian Voss (HU Berlin)

Abstract

The paper is analyzing the contribution of literature in fostering or challenging ethnic, national and gender boundaries among the Albanian-speaking population in the Balkans today. We are presenting the anonymous novel “The Border” (*Kufiri*) narrating the love story of a couple

from Tirana and Tetovo as well as the queer novels by the Finnish-Kosovar author Pajtim Statovci “Crossings” and “Bolla”: He is connecting the ethnic and gender identities of his Albanian and/or Kosovar protagonists and provokes with a Serbian-Albanian gay love story in Prishtina in the 1990s-2000s. The German literature on the Wall and on the reunification (Mauer- und Wendeliteratur) offers an appealing comparison to study mutual intraethnic heterostereotypization – starting with the classic GDR literature like Christa Wolf’s “Der geteilte Himmel” and Brigitte Reimann’s “Die Geschwister” up to Jana Hensel’s “Zonenkinder” or Lutz Seiler’s recent bestseller “Stern 111”). To which degree is literature contributing to a nostalgic discourse of “motherland”, or is it on the contrary deconstructing this discourse by stressing divergence and alienation?

Borders of return: Kosovo Albanian returnees between the poles of adaptation, participation and resistance

PD Dr. Robert Pichler, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, AAS Vienna

Abstract

The “return to Europe” was one of the great political promises after the end of the Cold War. With this in mind, people in transition countries were not thinking primarily of integration into the European Community - of which they had only a very vague idea – , but of reconnecting with European values and traditions. Europe was primarily associated with freedom of movement and residence of people. However, this goal was only gradually implemented and for a part of Europe - the so-called Western Balkans - it has not been achieved at all. In the meantime, with the so-called refugee crisis, the Corona Pandemic and neo-nationalistic tendencies all over Europe, it seems that the post-cold-war-vision of de-bordering and free mobility has succumbed to the reality of widespread re-bordering.

Kosovo is the country in Europe towards which the EU maintains a particularly rigid border regime. For many Kosovars, the border 'to Europe' is insurmountable; the desire, however, to get there is still very pronounced as can be seen in the high number of irregular migrant who strive to reach EU member countries, particularly Germany. In most of the cases, these people are facing repatriation. This contribution deals with the efforts of deported Kosovar Albanian returnees who try to re-establish themselves in their country of origin by either adapting to changed living conditions or by attempting to modify them. Based on interviews and autobiographical narratives, I want to shed light on the relationship between age/generation and gender in the process of return. I argue that experiences abroad trigger age- and gender-specific claims and needs that are negotiated within the patriarchal family. The patriarchal family is by no means a fixed and stable unit, but a flexible web of relationships that is able to integrate very different positions. However, there are also boundaries that can only be transgressed at the risk of losing family allegiance. Returnees contribute to a pluralization of views and a diversification of values. Returning, however, is an ongoing process that rarely concludes. There are friction and conflicts on this way, but also ever-new compromises and points of view that are fed by the experiences of migration as well as by local convictions and positions.

When sport helps towards recognition, beyond borders: The case of Kosovo

Albert Mecini, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Prishtina

In addition to its competitive, economic and recreational character, sport in the last decade in Kosovo has been a successful activity in promoting social-recognition for its citizens in the

large international community sphere. Although politically and institutionally Kosovo still suffers the lack of visa liberalization and non-membership in important international organizations of political and cultural character, sport in a way has managed to break this modes of political isolation. In its nature, sport does not associate to politics, but sport can produce political practices, in which the sentiment of freedom, unity and communication between individuals and communities flourishes.

The matches of the Kosovo National Team in football, then the Olympic Games successes of women in judo and recent successes in skiing, are just some of the events and practical elements that support the theoretical articulation on this paper.

Keywords: Sport, Kosovo, women, social-recognition, community, Olympic Games, football, politics

Rethinking migrant figures and solidarity from the peripheral borderland of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Prof. Dr. Danijela Majstorović, University of Banja Luka

Following the post-2015 migration crisis, forced migrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia have been stranded in the Western Balkans and particularly Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). At the same time, Western Balkans citizens have been migrating in large numbers to the EU, more specifically Germany, in search of livelihood opportunities rendering the Western Balkans as the new frontier of border struggles, and BiH a country of *double transit*, which its citizens and non-citizens occupy or want to leave. My study of BiH citizens as emigrants seeking labor in Germany and their refugee and migrant counterparts in BiH while *en route* to the EU in search of asylum invites to rethink migration across the border as well as border struggles in BiH as the peripheral European borderland raising the question of comparative contextualization, political commitment and solidarity among different peripheral selves.