

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE CONCEPT OF BORDERLESS EUROPE?

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE PERSPECTIVES
OF BORDER POLICIES AND TERRITORIAL
COOPERATION IN AN AGE OF MULTIPLE CRISES

Panel 1: The border as a symbol and producer of identity



NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION OFFICE
HUNGARY

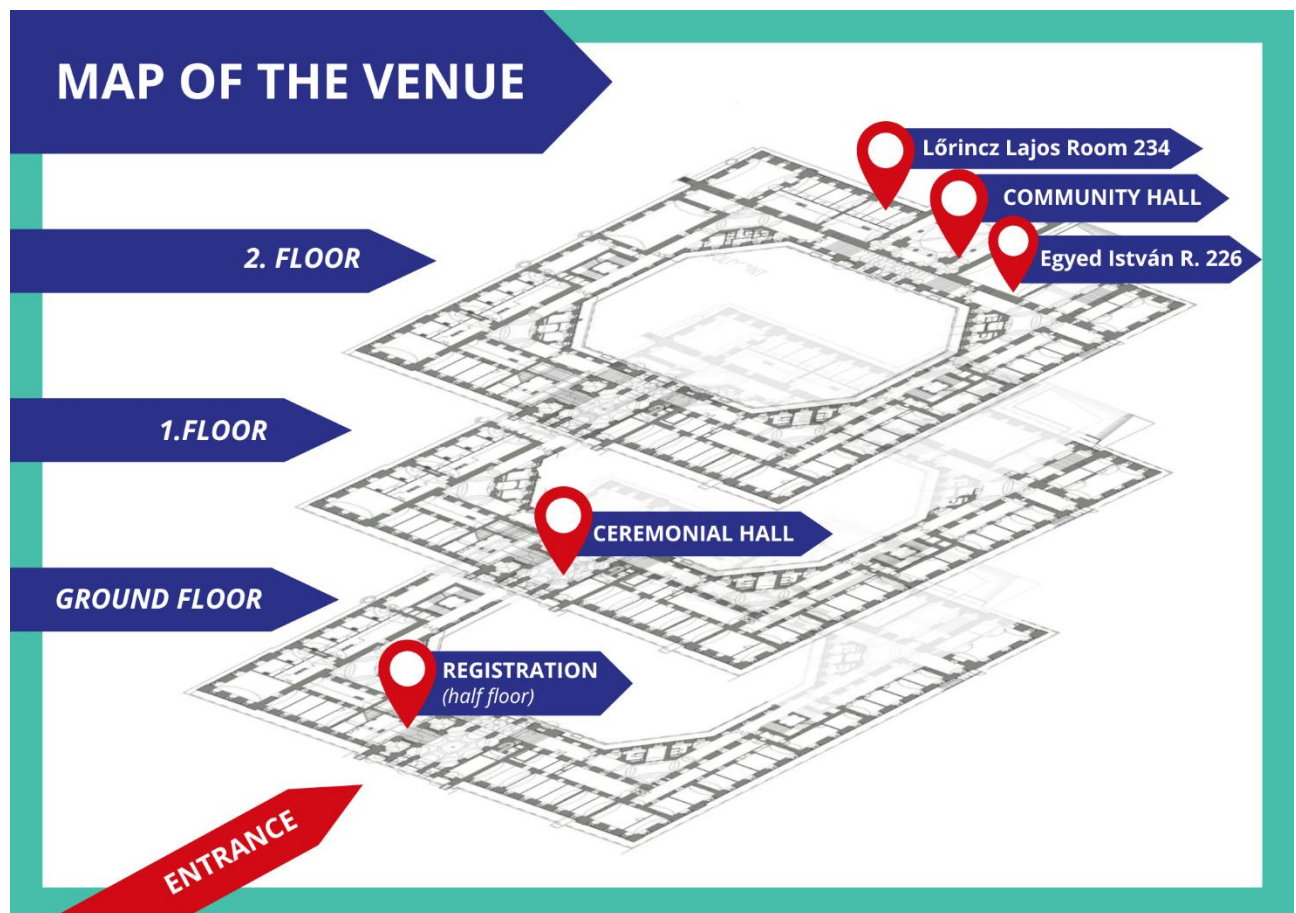
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Time

13 May 2025: 13.00 to 14.30

Venue

The venue of the panel is Ludovika University of Public Service, Ludovika Main Building, 2nd floor, Lőrincz Lajos Room 234



Topic

The aim of the panel is to discuss the role of administrative borders in creating identity and exclusive narratives; and the role of ethnic minorities and intercultural learning in overcoming the barriers generated by these narratives. The topic will be treated from historical, anthropological and sociological perspectives.



Speakers and presentations

Birte Wassenberg

University of Strasbourg, France

Birte Wassenberg is Professor in Contemporary History at Sciences Po at the University of Strasbourg. She holds a Jean Monnet Chair, is director of the Franco-German Jean-Monnet Center of Excellence and director of the Master in Border Studies, International Relations. From 1993 to 2006 she was responsible for cross-border cooperation at the Région Alsace. Her research fields are: border regions, EU territorial cooperation and the history of European Integration, especially of European Organizations (EU, Council of Europe).

1. European narratives and regional identity at the Franco-German border (Upper Rhine and Greater Region)

This contribution presents the research results for the Franco-German border region of working package (3) on Euroscepticism which is conducted the framework of the Horizon Europe project B-Shapes on Border Shaping perceptions of European Societies. It analyses perceptions on Europe, European integration and cross-border cooperation in the two cross-border regions at the Franco-German border (with a main focus being placed on the Upper Rhine Region covering Alsace, Baden-Württemberg, the South of Palatinate and the Swiss region around Basel). Based on a regional media analysis preceding the European elections in 2024, on interviews with candidates and members of political parties standing for election in the border region and on two focus groups with stakeholders in the Pamina-Region, it assesses attitudes on European Integration and the attachment or not to a regional identity. The contribution evaluates if there is resilience of a common identification with the Franco-German border region, a push towards Euroscepticism in the border region or if the attitudes on the EU remains rather positive, taking into account the specific “in-between” situation of the borderland. It will also examine the main issues favoring pro cross-border, pro-European or Eurosceptic attitudes, for example: mobility, exchange on the one hand and fear of the other or resentment on the other. Specific attention will also be drawn to the pertinence of the so-called identity of a “Franco-German” model of European Integration in the border region. Finally, the contribution also inserts the research results of this project into the more historical perspective on regional identity in the border region.



Hynek Böhm

University of Opole, Poland, Technical University of Liberec, Czechia

Dr. Hynek Böhm is affiliated with the University of Opole, Poland, and the Technical University of Liberec, Czechia. His research interests include political and cultural geography, with a focus on cross-border cooperation and regional development in Central Europe

Artur Boháč

Technical University of Liberec, Czechia

Artur Boháč is an assistant professor at the Department of Geography, Technical University of Liberec. He researches cultural geography and political geography and is interested in the Central European and Middle Eastern regions, focusing on border areas and minorities. He has published several book chapters and journal articles on these topics. He is a member of the Borders and Migration Research Group and the Czech Geographical Society.

2. Employing mental mapping in studying cross-border togetherness – examples from Czech-Polish borderlands

Borders simultaneously divide and connect, shaping identities and territorial perceptions. In the Czech-Polish borderlands, the historical division of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia has produced a complex socio-spatial landscape where national, regional, and ethnic identities intersect. Our research employs mental mapping to explore how upper-secondary school students in the divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn perceive and navigate cross-border spaces.

Using mental maps as a methodological tool, we examine whether young people experience the town as a cross-border lived space or remain confined to national narratives. The findings reveal significant differences in spatial practices between students from Polish minority schools in Czechia—who exhibit high levels of cross-border interaction—and those from majority-language schools, whose engagement with the "other side" remains limited. While official political and economic frameworks promote integration, symbolic and mental borders persist, often reinforced by educational systems and linguistic divides.

This research highlights how mental maps expose underlying mechanisms of border construction and identity formation. It argues that beyond administrative realities, the everyday experiences of young people reflect the durability of mental borders and the selective permeability of cross-border spaces. Understanding these perceptions is key to fostering a more inclusive borderland identity and overcoming inherited divisions.



Jaume Feliu

Universitat de Girona, Spain

Associate Professor in the Department of Geography of the University of Girona. He is currently director of the Department of Geography and director of the Chair of Geography and Territorial Thought of the University of Girona.

He is part of the Territorial and Environmental Analysis and Planning (APTA) research group. He has developed postdoctoral research in the impact of the TAV in European intermediate cities, the analysis of cross-border cooperation, the analysis of social mobilization, local development and governance and low-carbon societies. Regarding cross-border cooperation, he has analysed and mapped the projects, actors and territorial impacts especially on the border between France and Spain, but also on other European borders such as Portugal-Spain, Austria-Italy or Poland-Germany. Recently, he has been involved in research on cross-border relations and social mobilizations in mountain areas.

3. The limits of cultural identity for the Cooperation of the Catalan Cross-border Space

The Catalan Cross-border Space (ESCAT by its original acronym), more than a historically and administratively existing entity, is a project of territory conceived and promoted by several local and regional institutions in recent years. The ESCAT is formed by the French department of Pyrenees Orientales and the Spanish province of Girona, two territories of similar extension and geographical configuration. They are divided by the Pyrenees massif, where several rivers symmetrically arise and create valleys and alluvial plains to flow into the Mediterranean. In the past, practically all of these territories were part of the Principality of Catalonia, and were divided by the Treaty of the Pyrenees of 1659. For this reason, for many years, a culturally similar society was preserved on both sides of the border, with a common language and traditions. Over the years, also, the different national logics, including the standardization processes of the respective states, especially the French one and especially in the 20th century, created a social and economic divergence between the two territories. Currently, the analysis of the demographic, economic, labour, social and even cultural characteristics, show two markedly different territories, although with a common substratum. In economic and functional terms, these are two territories that are very poorly integrated, not very interdependent, that have created few dynamics of cooperation and that have rather been perceived as competitive. In other words, two territories that were initially very symmetrical, have ended up becoming very asymmetrical. Cross-border cooperation initiatives between the two territories, driven especially by Spain's entry into the EEC and by regional development programs such as Interreg, have tended to increase, especially since the 2000s due to a progressive improvement in the funding of the POCTEFA program or other programs such as the Cross-border Microprojects. Despite this growing dynamic, it is difficult to find cooperation actions on the initiative of the actors in the territory, that is, without the support of a subsidy behind it. Another characteristic observed is that, despite the participation of



multiple institutions, it is the network of actors with a Catalan cultural matrix, already very reduced on the French side, who has maintained and promoted a good part of the cooperation actions. In this research we reflect on whether this cultural bias could be limiting cooperation to too small areas and networks. We wonder if this dynamic is not facilitating the expansion of the range and number of cooperations, precisely because of the strong identification with the Catalan cultural (identity) fact, especially with the language or with the political options. If this were so, future strategies for greater cooperation between these territories should add to the identity reasons, economic, environmental, social, intercultural, multilingual reasons. They should seek new balances between the network of actors traditionally activated for cross-border cooperation and new actors who are not challenged by the Catalan identity but perhaps by reasons of an economic or functional nature. New narrative frameworks should be sought to explain the reasons for cooperation, based on aspects such as improving living conditions. The activation of ESCAT as a cross-border functional area to manage cooperation grants or the latest cooperation projects of the universities of Perpignan and Girona (ACROSS, Uniescat, ESTAC) seems to be heading in this direction and could represent a new stage of cross-border cooperation in this territory.

Karolina Radłowska

University of Białystok, Poland

Dr. Karolina Radłowska is a cultural anthropologist, sociologist, and museum curator. She works as an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Białystok. She is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Polish Open-Air Museum Association (PSMWP). Her research interests include the sociology of ethnicity, contemporary museology, and folk culture. She explores the role of museums in contemporary society, with a particular focus on how they represent ethnic minorities and engage with cultural diversity. Her work places special emphasis on the Polish Tatars as a case study in minority identity, heritage preservation, and museum representation.

4. Borderland Museums in Poland: Narratives of Heritage, Identity, and Memory

Museums serve to protect and interpret the past for future generations; paradoxically, however, their approaches to preservation are shaped by the present. If museums are understood as cultural institutions shaped by their specific socio-historical context, then borderlands—characterized by their complexity and fluidity—present a particular setting. As regions of historical, ethnic, and cultural intersections, borderlands challenge traditional museological approaches by demanding narratives that reflect their dynamic and contested histories. Museums located in such spaces play a crucial role in negotiating cultural heritage, shaping collective memory, and influencing intercultural relations. Depending on their curatorial choices, they can foster either social integration or the reinforcement of historical divisions. This makes borderland museums an excellent laboratory for examining museum narratives, revealing the mechanisms of memory construction, their relationship with historical



politics, and their impact on identity formation. This presentation will discuss findings from research conducted in Poland between 2024 and 2025, focusing on how borderland museums engage with cultural heritage, historical narratives, and community participation in the construction of collective memory. The main objective of this study was to analyze how museums construct narratives about borderlands. The study was based on an interpretative approach, which assumes that museum narratives are socially constructed and result from the decisions of museum professionals, political conditions, and social processes.

Andrea Ulhôa*

University of Aveiro, Portugal

Andrea Ulhôa is a teacher at the Secretariat of Education of the Federal District, Brazil, currently undertaking a PhD in Education, specialising in Didactics and Curriculum Development, at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. She is an integrated doctoral researcher at the Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers (CIDTFF) and a scholarship holder funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT). Her research, part of the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Programme (PEBIF), addresses the continuing education of teachers in border contexts, with particular emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity.

Maria Helena Araújo e Sá

University of Aveiro, Portugal

Maria Helena Araújo e Sá is a Full Professor at the Department of Education and Psychology at the University of Aveiro (UA), Portugal. She specializes in language teacher education and supervises master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral research. She coordinates the Research Centre on Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers (CIDTFF) and the Doctoral Program in Education. She is one of the scientific coordinators of the Border Bilingual and Intercultural Schools Program (PEBIF). Her research areas include networked intercomprehension, plurilingual and intercultural communication, and language policies for language education.

5. The Border as Curriculum: A cartography of in-service teacher training in the Luso-Hispanic borderlands

This study is part of the Bilingual Intercultural Border Schools Project (PEBIF), a cooperation initiative between the governments of Portugal and Spain, with the strategic partnership of the Organisation of Ibero-American States and the scientific coordination of the Universities of Aveiro and Complutense University of Madrid. The project aims to promote cooperation between the two countries in the educational, social and economic development of borderlands, through the creation of a network of “mirror schools” that foster plurilingual and intercultural teaching practices, recognising the border as a space for training, learning and



the construction of knowledge and identities. In-service teacher training is at the core of the PEBIF project. Structured according to an action-research methodology, the training encourages plurilingual and intercultural collaboration between teachers, students and the school community, as well as engagement with local institutions committed to strengthening the linguistic and cultural diversity of the territories. This contribution aims to map the formative journeys of PEBIF teachers, examining how they construct and transform their educational practice in cross-border educational contexts. In particular, it seeks to understand how the border is configured as a space for teacher professional development and curriculum construction through plurilingual and intercultural interactions between teachers from the two countries when planning and implementing joint learning projects. To this aim, three objectives were defined: (i) to explore how teachers perceive and experience the border as a space for learning and curriculum construction; (ii) to analyse the training process as a field of tensions and possibilities, based on the principles of Border Pedagogy (Giroux, 1992); and (iii) to discuss the potential and challenges of an emergent curriculum developed through in-service teacher training in borderlands, analysing its implications for the production of a transnational educational identity. The methodological approach combines the cartography of formative journeys (Passos et al., 2016, 2020) with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while also mobilising the rhizomatic perspective of Deleuze and Guattari (2011). Inspired by the metaphor of the rhizome, this approach conceives teacher education as a non-linear process, characterised by multiple connections, unpredictable movements and trajectories that expand in different directions, enabling the mapping of knowledge flows and teacher interactions in curriculum construction. The training experience analysed took place during the first edition of PEBIF (October 2021 - May 2022), with participant observation of one of the pairs of “mirror schools”, located in Bragança (Portugal) and Zamora (Spain), involving eight teachers (four Portuguese and four Spanish). Data production included logbooks, recordings of synchronous sessions, written and photographic records, which were then validated by the participants and organised into a single document entitled ‘Multimodal and Polyphonic Narratives of a Border Investigation’. The results show that PEBIF teachers act not only as mediators of plurilingual and intercultural teaching practices but also as agents of cross-border cooperation, promoting educational networks that challenge territorial, linguistic and curricular boundaries. They also highlight that the PEBIF training experience underlines the importance of teaching in the creation and development of educational spaces for sharing and dialogue between nations, strengthening the construction of a transnational educational identity and contributing to the development of shared Iberian citizenship.

** Speaker presenting the paper*