



European Border Studies Conference

“Mapping Conceptual Change in Thinking European Borders”

3-5 July 2013
Bergamo, ITALY

The University of Eastern Finland, in cooperation with the University of Bergamo, will organize the first general Conference of the EU-FP7 project EUBORDERSCAPES¹ in Bergamo, Italy on July 3-5, 2013. This conference will be organised as a joint event in conjunction with the FP7 project EUBORDERREGIONS².

The Conference is intended to present on-going research activities within these two large-scale international projects to the wider public and to make a constructive contribution to the debate within border studies opening up a dialogue with scholars external to the project who are contributing to pushing conceptual, methodological and empirical research on borders and border crossings forward. However, the Conference does not aim to merely gather together researchers and academics who work in the issues of borders, but also social actors, policy-makers, practitioners, institutions and interested parties that are directly (and daily) involved in borders issues, implementing projects and solving problems, providing therefore a broad and multidisciplinary discussion. This will be done in line with policy relevant aspect of the EUBORDERSCAPES and EUBORDERREGIONS projects that involve different levels of political and economic agency and a variety of social spheres.

Conference Description

The concept of the border has undergone significant changes during the last decades. After the somewhat premature attempted discard of political borders in the early 1990s in a paradigm suggesting a “borderless”, globalized world, newer approaches solemnly acknowledge the continued relevance of borders for politics and everyday life. However, research interests increasingly shifted from an initial focus on territorial dividing lines and political institutions to borders regarded as socio-cultural and discursive practices, proposing a processual reading of borders. As a consequence, border research developed from being a subdiscipline of political science and international relations into an interdisciplinary field combining expertise from political science, geopolitics, human and cultural geography, anthropology and sociology as well as cultural, literary and media studies.

Accordingly, in order to gauge its significance, conceptual change in the study of borders must be seen in relation to fundamental social, economic and geopolitical transformations that have taken place in the past decades. In addition, major paradigmatic shifts in scientific debate, and in the social sciences in particular, must also be considered. Recognising the close interrelationships between social change and paradigm shifts, the Conference aims to contribute to tracking and interpreting conceptual change in the study of borders. Viewed from a contemporary perspective, a major research task lies in understanding the complex construction of borders through a robust comparative framework. This will be addressed here by gathering together researchers who work in the issues of borders adopting an approach that expresses the multilevel complexity of borders – from the geopolitical to the level of social practices at and across the border.

Reflecting contemporary border studies debate, the Conference will employ the concept of *bordering* as a key interpretational tool. Bordering can be defined as the everyday construction of borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and everyday forms of transnationalism. Bordering is, by nature, a multilevel process that takes place, for example, at the level of high politics, manifested by physical borders and visa regimes, as well as in media debates over national identity and migration. Another important and closely related element in bordering is the embedding of everyday border-crossing experience and issues of family, gender, sexuality and cultural and personal understandings of borders. The bordering perspective is thus based on a notion of conceptual change that involves shifts from largely functional to cognitive and symbolic perspectives on borders. Accordingly, borders themselves can be seen as products of a social and political negotiation of space; they frame social and political action and are constructed through discursive practices at different levels and by different actors. Borders can be conceived as a bridge to understanding social, political and spatial change. On the other hand, through the notion of bordering the Conference aims to bring the somewhat abstract level of conceptual change to bear to

¹Bordering, Political Landscapes and Social Arenas: Potentials and Challenges of Evolving Border Concepts in a post-Cold War World (EUBORDERSCAPES), contract: SSH.2011.4.2-1-290775, is Funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (2012-2016), see: www.euborderscapes.eu

² EU External Borders and the Immediate Neighbours. Analysing Regional Development Options through Policies and Practices of Cross-Border Cop-operation (EUBORDERREGIONS), contract: SSH-2010-2.2.1-266920, is Funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (2011-2015), see: www.euborderregions.eu

actual “on-the-ground” situations. In line with this, presentations on research that operationalise bordering through different analytical dimensions (policies, practices, perceptions/interpretations) will be particularly appreciated.

Adopting this theoretical perspective, the Conference will employ another evocative concept that is crucial in the debate for the critical shift in border studies, *borderscapes*. Borderscapes is not used here in order to suggest a hard and fast empirical category but rather as a way of approaching bordering processes in specific geographical and social contexts, both in borderlands but also wherever a specific border has impacts, is represented, negotiated or displaced. Borderscapes are understood here to be local configurations of bordering processes connecting different communities, case-specific reflections of how notions of border and perceptions of identity are conditioned by the interplay of historical, socio-cultural, geographic and political narratives as well as by the experience of living at and with borders. Borderscapes also reflect “local politics” of borders understood as framing of social arenas and political landscapes and strategies of accommodation, adaptation and contestation – challenging the top-down geopolitical control of borders. Combining the bordering and borderscape perspectives provides a powerful link between processes of social and political transformation, conceptual change and local experience.

In progressing beyond the state of the art, the Conference wishes to uncover important connections between borders as a “challenge” to national (and EU) policies and borders as potential elements of political innovation through conceptual (re-)framings of social, political, economic and cultural spaces. This requires a nuanced and critical re-reading and understanding of borders as resources in terms of the exercise of power, the management of conflict, cross-border cooperation, and the everyday negotiation of borders by “ordinary” citizens and non-citizens. The Conference will thus focus on the emerging epistemologies of how state borders are perceived, understood, experienced and exploited as political and social resources.

These different but largely interlinked research dimensions suggest an agenda for a more complex understanding of borders recommending that it is important to link several social, political and methodological issues that at first glance might appear rather disparate by adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, able to highlight borders as complex multidimensional entities. “Building bridges” between disciplines in order to trace and conceptualize borderscapes enables us to develop a plurivocal reflection on bordering processes and practices and allows us to unlock the combined critical potential created when many different disciplinary inquires are brought to bear on the conceptual evolution of border studies.

Keynote Speakers

Prof. Elena dell’Agnese (University of Milano-Bicocca - Italy)

Prof. Prem Kumar Rajaram (Central European University, Budapest – Hungary)

Call for Papers

The organisers particularly encourage submissions of papers in the following themes:

- Conceptual Change and the State of the Debate in Border Studies
- Post-Soviet Borders and Conceptual Change
- Europeanisation: European Integration and Conceptual Change
- Post-Colonial Bordering and Euro-African Borderscapes
- Borders and Critical Geopolitics of Neighbourhood
- Cross-Border Cooperation as Conflict Amelioration
- Rebordering State Spaces: Cities, Borders and Integration Processes
- Borders, Intersectionality and the Everyday
- Border-Crossing and Cultural Production

Only proposals for individual presentations will be accepted. Accepted papers will be grouped as panels according to topic rather than academic discipline.

Please include the following information in your proposal:

- Name, title, affiliation, mailing address, telephone number and email address;
- Title of presentation;
- Abstract (not to exceed 250 words)

Scholars willing to serve as moderators or discussants should indicate their interest in the proposal.

Please send your proposal via email in Word format to: bergamoconference@gmail.com

Call for Posters

Apart from paper presentations, you can participate in the conference with the display of a poster. During the conference, posters will be exhibited at the conference venue, for conference guests to study at their convenience. In order to participate in the poster exhibition, please submit your poster abstract in accordance with instructions above. A limited number of posters will be accepted.

A **Summer School** will be organized in conjunction with the Conference. PhD students and young researchers will have the opportunity to listen to keynote speeches and senior researchers presentations during the Conference bringing their contribution in the discussion afterwards. A workshop is being prepared specifically for PhD students and young researchers who wish to share and discuss their research with other colleagues working in the same field of border studies. Those PhD students and young researchers interested in joining this session can submit an abstract specifically for this workshop, where they will have a chance of presenting and discussing their current research. In accordance with their specific geographic and thematic angle, for each presentation a senior discussant will be assigned. Please send your proposal via email in Word format to: bergamoconference@gmail.com indicating clearly that you wish to present in the Summer School session.

Key dates

Deadline for submitting abstract proposals:	March 28, 2013
Notification of abstract acceptance:	April 10, 2013
Registration payment deadline:	April 30, 2013
Submission of papers to discussants:	June 7, 2013

Note: Even though encouraged, no full-length paper is required. Each presenting participant is, however, expected to provide at least a three-page summary introducing the subject, empirical frame, analytical approach, theme, and the key results.

All papers will be made available to participants prior to the conference.

Fees

Participation fee of 40 EUR per person includes all the meals marked in the program. The fee can be paid by bank transfer or, upon request, by credit card. On-site registration (cash only) is possible for 50 EUR.

Those PhD students who present a paper in the Summer School are exempt from the charge. A limited number of papers will be accepted.

Detailed instructions regarding the payment will be sent together with notifications of acceptance.

Preliminary Agenda

Venue: Dipartimento di Scienze Umane e Sociali, Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Piazzale S. Agostino 2, Bergamo

Wednesday, 3 July

19:00 Get-Together Happening: border video & border photo exhibition

Thursday, 4 July

9:30-13:00 Conference I (with coffee break)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-18:00 Conference II (with coffee break)

20:30- Social Dinner

Friday, 5 July

9:30-13:00 Conference III (with coffee break)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-18:00 Summer School Sessions

Organizers



UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

Please contact: Jussi Laine, jussi.laine@uef.fi or James W. Scott, james.scott@uef.fi



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI BERGAMO



Centro di Ricerca sulla Complessità

Please contact: Chiara Brambilla, chiara.brambilla@unibg.it or Gianluca Bocchi, gianluca.bocchi@unibg.it