Taking borders elsewhere: the political performance of phantom borders in Central Germany

Baars, Roger; Schlottmann, Antje

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ROGER BAARS **und** ANTJE SCHLOTTMANN

Abstract

This paper considers the impact of sub-national territorial and administrative borders on cross-border cooperation. Such invisible and seemingly insignificant borders (RUMFORD 2011) at the local level we consider as demarcations that are not only remnants of historical social practices but also contemporary administrative lines in the sand (PARKER & VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS 2009). We argue that sub-national borders as remnants of social practices can be conceptualised as phantom borders that affect everyday cross-border cooperation by facilitating certain political projects while delimiting others. The example of the Central German Demography Initiative shows in more detail how sub-national borders impact significantly on political processes of cross-border cooperation. Contrary to BOUZAS (2012) suggestion that borders are an interlinking and cooperative space, we illustrate that sub-national phantom borders seem to have predominantly a dividing and separating effect. This is attributed, among other reasons, to the structure and purpose of Germany's financial administration and allocation system as well as to current procedures and mechanisms of public funding. In addition, we demonstrate that territorial container images and their seemingly fixed borders are highly influential in everyday political practice. Sub-national cross-border cooperation proved as regularly trapped in strict container spaces of financial administration that obstruct rather than facilitate political initiatives across administrative borders. As an overall result, it is suggested that territorial and administrative phantom borders should be considered carefully regarding their effects on everyday social practices, no matter at what scale these borders are performed.

Borders, Social Practices, Container Spaces, Central Germany, Demography

Zusammenfassung

Die Verlagerung von Grenzen – die politische Performanz von Phantomgrenzen in Mitteldeutschland

Der Artikel untersucht die Auswirkungen von lokal territorialen und administrativen Grenzen auf alltägliche Formen grenzüberschreitender politischer Zusammenarbeit. Es wird aufgezeigt, dass unsichtbare und scheinbar unbedeutende Landes- und Gemeindegrenzen (RUMFORD 2011) sowohl als Erscheinungsformen historisch sozialer Praktiken angesehen werden können, als auch gleichzeitig gegenwärtig wirkliche Verwaltungs-Grenzen wiederspiegeln (PARKER & VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS 2009). Solche sub-nationalen Grenzen als Formen sozialer Praktiken, können begrifflich als Phantomgrenzen gefasst werden, welche direkte Auswirkungen auf alltägliche Formen der politischen Zusammenarbeit haben. Hierbei können bestimmte grenzüberschreitende Projekte gefördert und unterstützt werden, während andere mehr oder minder starke Behinderungen erfahren. Am Beispiel der Mitteldeutschen Demografie-Initiative wird aufgezeigt, wie sich Länder- und Gemeindegrenzen konkret auf politische Formen der Kooperation im Bereich Demografie auswirken (können). Im Gegensatz zu BOUZAS (2012) Grenz-Konzept als Raum der Vernetzung und Kooperation, argumentieren wir in diesem Artikel, dass Phantomgrenzen auf sub-nationaler, lokaler Ebene eine überwiegend trennende Wirkung haben. Dies lässt sich, unter anderem, auf das föderale System der öffentlichen Finanzierung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zurückführen. Darüber hinaus wird in diesem Artikel aufgezeigt, wie sich territoriale Container-Vorstellungen und deren scheinbar feste Grenzen auf alltägliche Praktiken der politischen Zusammenarbeit auswirken. Konzeptionell streng abgegrenzte administrative Räume scheinen eine grenzüberschreitende politische Zusammenarbeit eher zu behindern als zu fördern. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass territoriale und administrative Phantomgrenzen erhebliche Auswirkungen auf alltägliche Formen sozialer Praktiken der politischen Kooperation haben können, egal auf welcher Ebene diese verortet werden.

Grenzen, soziale Praktiken, Containerräume, Mitteldeutschland, Demografie

Introduction

While some scholars have been tracking the processes of border-making to the national scale (e.g. Bigo 2000; Coleman 2007), less is known about political bordering processes at the local scale (cf. Madsen 2014; Mountz 2011). Sub-national borders at the level of (federal) states are largely lacking material indicators of their boundaries and are commonly perceived as less relevant to bordering processes. They have been comparably under-analysed in the context of processes of political cross-border cooperation. Sub-nation borders, however, are both actual existing lines in the sand (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009) and invisible phenomena of spatial bordering processes. In this paper, we argue that sub-national borders as remnants of social practices can be conceptualised as 'phantom borders', i.e., as often invisible and seemingly insignificant demarcations on a sub-national scale that nevertheless can cause diverse effects in different contexts. Whereas in one context these phantom borders may not be constitutive, they can emerge as spatial barriers to political processes in others. Taking the example of the Central German Demography Initiative we aim to illustrate in more detail, in what ways sub-national borders may impact on political processes of cross-border cooperation and have significant effects on everyday social practices no matter at what scale these borders are performed. This paper is therefore organised into five parts. In the subsequent section, we outline our prescriptive concept of borders and 'phantom borders' in particular, with a specific reference to their multidimensionality and social performance, before we add some brief comments on the data collection for this paper. In the following case study of the Central German Demography Initiative, we illustrate the impact of both territorial and administrative phantom borders on political projects of cross-border cooperation. The final section of the paper presents some conclusions and outlooks for further research.

Borders and Boundaries

Geography was probably the earliest discipline to study boundaries and borders. Problems of boundaries and their delimitation are virtually fundamental to the discipline of (Kolossov 2005). However, the idea of borders has changed not only over time but also due to scholarly perspective and respective episteme. In his article, Bauder (2011) states that current research on borders emphasises their multidimensional character (see also Ganster & Lorey 2005; Newman 2006a, 2006b; Newman & Paasi 1998; Nicol & Minghi 2005; Nicol & Townsend-Gault 2005; Rumford 2006, 2008; Shields 2006; van Houtum, Kramsch & Zierhofer 2005; Wilson & Donnan 1998; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler 2002). The diversity of geographical concepts in academic scholarship, illustrated, for example, by the recently emerging conceptualisation of regions as polysemic spaces (e.g. Elden 2005, 2009, 2010; Jonas 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Jones 2009; Murphy 2012; Painter 2010), gives way to articulate new multidimensional meanings of the border (Bauder 2011). This paper draws on this recognised literature to illustrate some of the ways in which multiple concepts and meanings of the border are integrated in various social practices. It thereby follows the socio-geographical tradition of recognising that social practices produce meanings of space, territory, and boundaries (Lefebvre 1991; Werlen 1995). Balibar (2002, p. 75) states that "we cannot attribute to the border an essence" and that borders have a *polysemic* nature: "they do not have the same meanings for everyone" (Balibar 2002, p. 81). In what follows we recapitulate that instead of looking at borders only as given political lines on the ground or viewing borders as neutral *objects* of political geography, a wider perspective is needed (Paasi 2013). Our key aim then is to uncover in more detail the processes of border-making and the power relations embedded in these as both the result and origin of political practices of regionalisation.

Borders: Material and Relational

At the outset of a new regional Geography scholars started treating borders as a variable and shifting concept (Gottman 1973; Newman & Paasi 1998; Paasi 1999). According to related literature, borders are experienced in various ways and must be theorised as multifaceted and polysemic (Nikiforova 2005). Scholars, who concur that the border concept embodies multiple dimensions, or aspects (Bauder 2011), have offered various schemes of perception and classification of these aspects (e.g. Anderson 1996; Brunet-Jailly 2005; Nicol & Minghi 2005; Shields 2006). In all of these perspectives, borders are seen not simply as existing material entities, but the sum of social, cultural, and political processes (Johnson & Jones 2011). They emerge in multiple forms constituted through everyday practices of language, culture, heritage, politics, legislation and the economy (Paasi 2011). Borders as social constructions are temporal appearances in permanent flux (Mountz 2011). They are never just out there, but always in a state of becoming (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2012). However, Steele et al. (2013) contend a focus on borders as part of the lived spaces and places of everyday politics rather than as physically fixed markers of administrative territorial units. This focus is particularly important when analysing sub-national (local) borders, as will be demonstrated later. On a similar account, Gielis and Van Houtum (2012) emphasise the empirical inaccuracy of the 'container-box' model to analyse spatial constructs (e.g. the region). It is difficult, however, to completely dispense with the popular organising concept of territories even when they are seen to be flawed (Schlottmann 2008; Madsen 2014). Consequently, one should suppose that territorial container images and their seemingly fixed borders are still persistent and highly influential in everyday politics, be it on a national or sub-national scale. As will be demonstrated in this paper, sub-national cross-border cooperation, for instance, is regularly trapped in

strict container spaces of financial administration, which obstruct rather than facilitate political initiatives across administrative borders. This somewhat contradicts concepts of borders as spaces of parallel processes of separation and connectivity. According to Rumford (2012), borders are seen as sites of cultural encounter rather than simply as mechanisms of division and exclusion. The border is seen as an interlinking and cooperative space (Bouzas 2012). Without denying cooperative and connecting features of borders in general, we suggest that sub-national borders seem to fulfil predominantly functions of division and separation rather than connectivity.

Yet, borders are always open to contestation and allow certain expressions of identity and memory to exist while blocking others (Paasi 2011). Much work has been done on the ambivalent character of national borders that are perceived as both separating different entities while, at the same time, bringing them together. Concepts of borderland (e.g. Bouzas 2012; Konrad & Nicol 2008; Miggelbrink 2014; Nikiforova 2005; van Schendel 2005) and borderscape (e.g. Gielis & van Houtum 2012; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr 2007) are just two examples that have been developed in this field. Less research, however, has been done on parallel processes of separation and conjunction occurring at the intersection of sub-national territorial (*Ländergrenzen*) and administrative (*Ressortgrenzen*) borders. Most territorial borders can appear as material 'lines in the sand', whereas administrative borders are predominantly conceptual constructs. On the other hand, both territorial and administrative borders of, for example state territories (*Bundesländer*) and financial departments, can emerge as material borders inasmuch spaces are constructed and taken for granted as material containers in discourse. Though such borders are almost invisible and designed not to look like borders (Rumford 2011), they nevertheless can be highly influential on political initiatives and processes.

Borders as Socially Performed

In academic research, there has been a recent shift away from legal boundary drawing and cross-border economic trends towards the performativity of the border, the ways that borders are given meaning to through practices (e.g. Johnson & Jones 2011; Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2012; Salter 2012). Borders can be performed and reproduced in various ways through such bordering *practices* (Lefebvre 1991; Paasi 2013) and are the result of multiple historical and geopolitical developments (Kolossov 2005). This resonates with Salter (2011), who suggests that the performativity of borders increasingly resembles Butler's (1988) idea of stylised repetition of performative acts. Borders as the organisational basis of society are a social phenomenon and not given boundaries of social life. They can be regarded as both the means and outcomes of processes related to power, space, and people (Walker 2010). This is reflected by current work that emphasises the importance of bordering *practises* (e.g. Miggelbrink 2014; Van Houtum & Van Naerssen 2002; Van Houtum & Pijpers 2007; Vaughan-William 2008; van der Velde & van Naerssen 2011).

Bordering practices can be both intentional and unintentional (Parker & Adler-Nissen 2012) and are carried out by actors engaged in the conduct of what Rumford (2012) terms borderwork. We use the term bordering practices in this paper to clarify contested political actions that are characterised by the struggle to define and inscribe authority and legitimacy on particular spatial entities but are, at the same time, limited by these entities. Some bordering processes attempt to seize control of, and define, political spaces in highly specific ways. Rather than treating borders as territorially fixed and static or conceptualizing them as the final result of a past practice, we think of them in terms of a series of past and present practices, which yet may let them appear as fixed and static. This approach allows "a more political, sociological, and actor-oriented outlook on

how divisions between entities appear, or are produced and sustained" (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009, p. 586). In addition, such relational thinking facet accentuates the notion that borders are social constructs that always reflect and impact upon changing power relations (Wood 1992). Massey (1995) suggests that borders do not embody any "eternal truth of places" (p. 67) but are socially constructed to serve particular (political) purposes (Paasi 2013). If borders are networked throughout society, then the capacity to make or undo borders becomes a major source of political power (Rumford 2011, 2012). Borders, thus, are exercises of power (Sibley 1995) and can be constructed by the political elite as a way to protect their position (Massey 1995), while, at the same time, constrain the scope of possible political actions.

Borders and Aspects of Power

The concept of borderwork (Rumford 2012) raises attention to the issue of who is responsible for making, dismantling and shifting borders. When making the claim that certain aspects of the border enable specific forms of action, the success of these claims can be attributed to the political actor's ability to legitimate his/her position (Perkins & Rumford 2013). Hence, borders work to "strengthen some people while disempowering others" (van Schendel 2005, p. 41). Paasi (2009) argues, borders are never neutral, but rather "important institutions and ideological symbols that are used by various bodies and institutions in the perpetual process of reproducing territorial power" (p. 213). In other words, borders function in a range of important, but often unnoticed ways, which reflect different political agendas (Steele et al. 2013). Borders are simultaneously instruments and expressions of territoriality. Territoriality – attempts of individuals and groups to control territories and population politically, culturally, and economically (cf. Anderson 2012) – persists in social practices of borderwork and the control over access to territories (Sack

1986). Hence, territorialising attempts are always driven by (political) actors and interests (Miggelbrink 2014). Rumford (2012) emphasises that territorialising borders are not always the national edges (Konrad & Nicol 2008) of state borders. There are multiple types of borders emerging that can be found at a wide range of places throughout society (Amoore, Marmura & Salter 2008). Borders are simply everywhere (Balibar 1998).

Methodology

This paper builds upon preliminary research undertaken in a pilot study for a current research project on the spatial multidimensionality of political processes of everyday regionalisation in the context of Central Germany (Baars & Schlottmann 2013). Semi-structured extended interviews were recorded in 2013 with political key stakeholders involved in the Central German Demography Initiative. The interview participants are senior executives at the federal state level. They represent the official positions communicated by the ministries in charge of the Demography Initiative in Central Germany. These are: the Ministry of Construction, Development and Transportation Thuringia (Ministerium für Bau, Landesentwicklung und Verkehr), the Saxonian State Chancellery (Sächsische Staatskanzlei), and the Ministry of Development and Transportation Saxony-Anhalt (Ministerium für Landesentwicklung und Verkehr). The intention of the interviews was to find out more about the spatial concepts inherent in everyday political practices and about how political actors both utilise multidimensional spatialities to push their political agenda and are constrained by these at the same time. For this purpose, we discussed the motivations and aspired benefits of cross-border cooperation at the federal state level. In addition, we conducted a critical analysis of official documents (e.g. brochures, webpages, policy papers, reports) to complement and contextualise the information gathered in the interviews as well as our analysis of the different spatial concepts used for conceptualising the social reality of demography.

Phantom Borders in Everyday Political Processes

The Central German Initiative for Demography (also known as Central German Demographic Dialog) is a political project established in 2011 by the three federal state governments of the German states Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia to intensify regional cooperation on the conjoint development of strategies and solutions in response to the challenges associated with demographic change (Fig. 1). The three governments agreed to regularly communicate about developments and consequences of demographic change, for example at ministerial level, to exploit synergies and to increase the potential for common solutions. The objectives of this initiative are summarised in a joint statement: "Key Issues for the Cooperation of Central Germany States: Shaping Demographic Change Together" (*Eckpunktepapier zur Zusammenarbeit der mitteldeutschen Länder: Gemeinsam den demografischen Wandel gestalten*). The main goal of the dialog is the regular exchange of knowledge and experiences at all administrative levels to systematically increase the potential for mutual le-

Fig. 1: Federal Republic of Germany

arning and common solutions to the challenges of demographic change. Municipalities, in particular, are encouraged to engage in practices of cross-border cooperation and information exchange. Several joint projects on demographic change management are planned to be implemented in the border regions at all scales (state, district, and municipality). We will demonstrate, however, that, so far, initiatives on cross-border cooperation have been very scarce and pilot projects are located predominantly *within* the spatial boundaries of the state. The three Central German states have strong similarities regarding their demographic challenges. The territorial region of Central Germany, therefore, is seen as a useful spatial framing for this initiative of cross-border cooperation. Demographic change, however, is not an isolated phenomenon of these three states alone, but extends their territorial boundaries and has captured large parts of Germany and Europe.

According to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), stronger cooperation is required between spatial entities to meet the challenges of demographic change in Europe: cooperation at the point of contact between city/city, city/district, district/district, state/district, state/state, and state/federal government entities. Implicit in this account is the traditional arrangement of territorial spaces into separately confined spatial structures represented by Germany's administrative system (e.g. federal states, districts, and municipalities). This concept of borders and bounded territories perceived as confined spaces is also evident in official discourses of the Central German region. It is emphasised by all interviewees, however, that in the case of demographic change it is exactly these inflexible borders of the administrative system that prevent, or at least severely constrain, effective cross-border strategies to be developed and implemented. The softening or weakening of the rigid spatial structures is seen to be essential to allow for successful regional (cross-border) cooperation; not only in the context

of demographic change. Central Germany's territorial borders, however, are seen to disrupt such necessary cross-border cooperation.

It is all about looking for solutions. Joint projects in the state triangle could make a difference. So far, however, the state borders prevent such cross-border cooperation. (Es geht vor allem darum, nach Lösungen zu suchen. Durch gemeinsame Projekte im Länder-Dreieck könnte man versuchen, etwas zu bewegen. Die Landesgrenzen verhindern jedoch bisher eine solche länderübergreifende Zusammenarbeit.) (Interview Thuringia)

Moreover, borders are not only to be understood in territorial means but are also visible in other daily practices of administrative boundary making. Such invisible (phantom) borders between political departments (politische Ressorts) lead to problematic practices of everyday containerisation into administrative units, which prevent the development of cross-departmental cooperation and the implementation of strategies and procedures to tackle the challenges of demographic change.

Thinking in departmental structures, regardless of whether it is in the federal government or on the state level, is still an obstacle. Funding is indeed assigned to different departments and this naturally promotes thinking in mental boxes. A regional budget would be required to really make a difference, but that is incredibly difficult. (Das Denken in Ressort-Strukturen, egal ob beim Bund oder in den Ländern, ist nach wie vor ein Hindernis. Die Gelder sind ja auf verschiedene Ressorts verteilt und das fördert natürlich dieses Schubladen-Denken. Um wirklich etwas zu verändern bräuchte man ein Regionalbudget, aber das ist unheimlich schwierig.) (Interview Thuringia)

Thinking in department structures (*Ressort-Strukturen*) and territorial cont-

ainers, for instance federal states, districts, municipalities (see above), as spaces confined by functional phantom borders is one important problem in cross-border cooperation. In every government agency, and at all levels, these container structures exist and impose administrative boundaries on everyday governance. These rigid structures prevent successful cross-departmental cooperation, which is deemed necessary to solve issues like demographic change. Fields of action (*Handlungsfelder*) across multiple departments are needed rather than inflexible administrative structures. In addition, cross-boundary projects are facing other political obstacles (boundaries). Political competencies and responsibilities are usually assigned to particular administrative units. These units pursue certain policies and serve specific, often conflicting, political interests (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Education Ministry). This regularly results in political competition between departments and can prevent, or at least obstruct, cross-departmental (across administrative boundaries) cooperation.

The Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance argue regularly about whether and how many teachers should be hired. Instead of working together on a solution people think only in their own structures and lose sight of the common goal. (Der Kultusminister und der Finanzminister streiten regelmäßig darüber, ob und wie viel Lehrer eingestellt werden dürfen. Anstatt zusammen nach einer Lösung zu suchen, wird hier nur in eigenen Strukturen gedacht und das gemeinsame Ziel aus den Augen verloren.) (Interview Saxony-Anhalt)

It really is a very difficult issue. There are so many blockages. Our finance minister is not willing to participate [in the initiative]. Also the spatial planners find it really difficult to abandon their professional thinking and to translate the whole thing into other categories. (Es ist wirklich ein

sehr schwieriges Thema. Es gibt so viele Blockaden. Unser Wirtschaftsminister ist [bei der Initiative] überhaupt nicht gewillt mitzumachen. Auch den Raumplanern fällt es wirklich schwer, aus ihrem fachlichen Denken heraus zu kommen und das Ganze in andere Kategorien zu übersetzen.) (Interview Saxony)

One key issue in cross-border cooperation considered in this paper is public financing in general and Germany's federal system in particular. Public funds are usually allocated to bounded administrative units (containers) and designated to the performance of specific tasks (of that unit). There is no regional (Central German) budget in place that would allow for direct funding of projects across the territorial and administrative phantom borders. Funding schemes of the European Union (EU), for example, offer (co-) funding opportunities of cross-border cooperation at different scales, although most funded projects are focused on cross-*national* border cooperation. The federal states of Central Germany offer a similar arrangement for cross-border cooperation *within* their territorial entities, usually at the district and municipality level. Funding of cross-border cooperation *between* federal states is largely underdeveloped. Although federal funding schemes exist that would allow for such cooperation, these are predominantly utilised for projects within territorial state borders and not cutting across these territorial phantom borders. This not only illustrates the impact of public funding and political structures on cross-border cooperation, but also exemplifies the re-emergence of territorial and administrative (phantom) borders between and within federal states.

One example, in the context of demographic change, is the Central German City-Network Demography (Fig. 2). One would assume this network involves the cooperation of multiple cities *across* several state borders to exploit synergies and to increase the potential for common solutions beyond territorial distributive
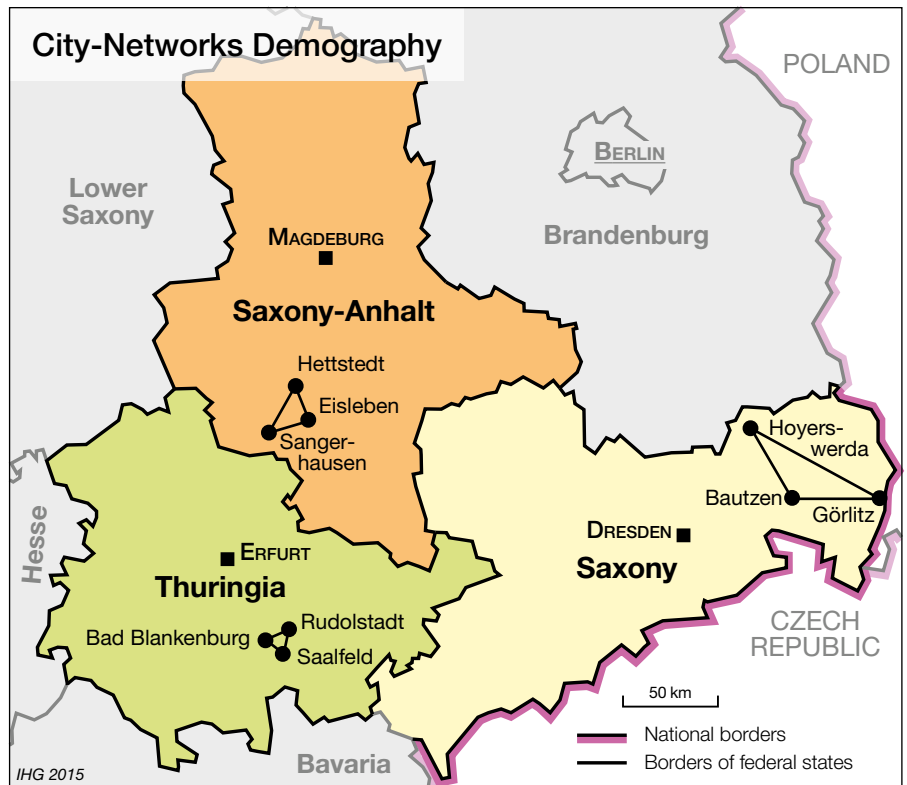

Fig. 2: City-Networks Demography

logic (see above). The city-network demography, however, consists of three individual networks, bounded by rigid territorial phantom borders and embedded in the administrative container of each single federal state. Existing efforts of cross-border cooperation, therefore, are often constrained by (financial) department structures and confined by sub-national phantom borders.

Another issue connected to public funding is the structure of funding schemes. Taking the EU funding scheme INTERREG IVC[1] as an example, at least 15 to 25 % of the overall budget need to be co-financed by the local project partner (e.g. the district or municipality). In most cases, this financial burden for the already underfinanced (local) administrative units is an obstacle to benefit from

these funding schemes. Local governments face a similar problem regarding federal state funding schemes. Here, the district or municipality has to make a similar financial contribution (co-payment) to the overall budget funded by the federal state.

In many cases, co-financing cannot be implemented, because the local funds simply do not exist. At the state level, many municipalities cannot raise their own contribution to benefit from federal and state funding. (Eine Co-finanzierung kann nicht in jedem Fall umgesetzt werden, weil die Mittel dafür oft nicht da sind. Auf Landesebene können viele Kommunen ihren Eigenanteil einfach nicht aufbringen, um die Bundes- und Landesmittel zu nutzen.) (Interview Thuringia)

In addition, both EU and federal state funding periods constrict long-term financial security of the (cross-border) project partners. Despite some overall positive experiences made during pilot projects on the cross-municipality and cross-district level, at the end of the fun-

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1 INTERREG IVC provides funding for regional cooperation across Europe. It is implemented under the European Community's territorial co-operation objective and financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The overall objective of the INTERREG IVC Programme is to improve the effectiveness of regional policies and instruments. A project builds on the exchange of experiences among partners who are ideally responsible for the development of their local and regional policies. For more information visit www.interreg4c.eu

ding period all these projects were lacking sustainable structures and often disappeared without viable impacts. This illustrates the negative effect of public funding schemes on cross-border (both territorial and administrative) cooperation projects and the political impacts of phantom borders on them.

There were regional development concepts aimed to cut across municipality and district borders. Pilot studies with municipalities that had similar starting points and frameworks have, unfortunately, been implemented only in a very few cases, so that they were self-perpetuating. No self-supporting structures emerged before the funding period ended. (Es gab regionale Entwicklungskonzepte die Kreis- und Ländergrenzen überschreiten sollten. Solche Modellversuche mit Kreisen die ähnliche Ausgangslagen und Rahmenbedingungen haben, haben sich aber leider nur in ganz wenigen Fällen so umsetzen lassen, dass sie zum Selbstläufer wurden. Es kam keine selbsttragende Struktur zu Stande bevor die Förderung dann ausgelaufen war.) (Interview Thuringia)

Historic commonalities as well as shared meanings of the Central German region, however, seem to suggest a close connection between the individual states. Experiences and projects within the region of Central Germany are seen as more viable and valuable than experiences made outside. The idea of a similar mind-set and neighbourliness in Central Germany was expressed by some interviewees.

There are obvious commonalities. These are historically founded and to some extent also linked to the idea of fellow countrymen-ship as well as facilitated by common facilities such as the MDR. There are close links. (Es gibt deutliche Gemeinsamkeiten. Die sind historisch und ein Stück weit auch landsmannschaftlich bedingt und durch solche gemeinsamen Einrichtungen wie dem MDR bestimmt. Es gibt

hier enge Verbindungen.) (Interview Saxony-Anhalt)

At the same time, fundamental differences and the autonomy of each individual federal state were emphasised by others. A strict territorial separation of the three federal states in an administrative and political sense, despite their geographic proximity in Central Germany, was communicated. The specific challenges faced by the three states were seen as very different in their focus, potential pathways to follow, and regarding the initial position the states have/had, for example their public debts. Some interviewees, thus, emphasise the lack of commonality and connectivity between the federal states and that Central Germany would be just an artificial construct: a phantom region.

The three countries are structured, at least in part, very heterogeneously. There is no Central German bond. I am sorry. That is just an artificial construct. (Die drei Länder sind ja zum Teil sehr heterogen strukturiert. Es gibt hier keine mitteldeutsche Verbundenheit. Also, tut mir leid. Das ist halt ein künstliches Konstrukt.) (Interview Saxony)

The field of public education is another aspect where thinking in administrative containers becomes evident. In the context of demographic change the political cooperation across state-, district-, and municipality-borders becomes an essential political project. Areas of cooperation include cross-border planning and mutual recognition of degrees (also from outside the region/country) and common syllabi and schoolbooks, both to facilitate the mobility of individuals within and beyond the region in the context of demographic change. Problematic, however, are perceived inter-state competitions and territorial delimitations, which impact on public education policies and impede on cross-border cooperation efforts.

We have to think in border-crossing education systems. It should not be the case that a student, who lives near the state border, has to visit a very distant

high school, just because the closest school is located in another state. This is a problem of mutual financing. (Länderübergreifende Schulsysteme muss man denken. Das ist ja kein Zustand sondern eher ein Missstand, wenn ein Schüler, der an der Landesgrenze wohnt, ein ganz weit entferntes Gymnasium besuchen muss, nur weil die nächst gelegene Schule in einem anderen Bundesland liegt. Das ist ein Problem der gegenseitigen Finanzierung.) (Interview Thuringia)

Mobility and transport is another field of cross-boundary cooperation required to tackle demographic change. Joint planning efforts to harmonise public transport networks (e.g. school buses) with the mutual acceptance of tickets and the coordination of routing and cross-border transport-networks are just some examples to mention here. The problem of mutually exclusive funding regimes (see above), however, prevents cooperation efforts and restricts project planning that stretches across central Germany's administrative and territorial phantom borders. These invisible phantom borders are perceived by some as system immanent boundaries, which are impossible to circumvent.

We experienced certain limits of the system. To make the next step, we would need to overcome these system boundaries. This is very difficult if not impossible. (Wir sind innerhalb des Systems an gewisse Grenzen gelangt. Um jetzt den nächsten Schritt zu machen, müsste man diese Systemgrenzen überwinden. Dies ist ganz schwierig wenn nicht sogar unmöglich.) (Interview Saxony)

Another aspect of cross-boundary cooperation encompasses stakeholders' political and personal interests. These can have significant impact on the success or failure of cross-border cooperation projects. On the one hand, the dissolution or softening of rigid administrative borders may lead to the perception among stake-

holders that they lose political power over *their* territory. Successful cooperation efforts may result in a shift of political power with political decisions been made elsewhere in the future. In addition, historic, (political) party-specific and intra- or inter-state rivalries are obstacles that impact on cross-border cooperation. Sub-state phantom borders might be utilised by political actors to even prevent collaboration. Phantom borders can stimulate competition between states, districts, municipalities and even cities over political power and public funding, thereby impeding cooperative efforts.

All these district boundaries within a state are obstructive. All the different competencies and responsibilities and fixed structures … These political structures must be organised differently. There is need for new ideas and above all for change. (Diese ganzen Kreisgrenzen innerhalb eines Landes sind hinderlich. Die ganzen Zuständigkeiten und festen Strukturen … Diese politischen Strukturen müssen anders organisiert werden. Hier braucht es neue Ideen und vor allem Veränderungen.) (Interview Thuringia)

On the other hand, cross-border cooperation may lead to political harmonisation that can result in stronger political power of the region (as one united stakeholder) towards the national government or the EU. Forming an alliance and speaking with one voice may support pushing the political agenda of the region.

Together, the three central German states are of course strong. The interests of the states are bundled and then reported to the Chancellor. (Zusammen sind die drei mitteldeutschen Länder natürlich stark. Die Interessen der Länder werden gebündelt dargestellt und dann der Bundeskanzlerin mitgeteilt.) (Interview Thuringia)

With the three states speaking with one voice and acting together to defend their your influence is stronger, *of course. The political motivation behind this [demographic] initiative is to build a kind of political alliance.* (Es ist natürlich so, dass man als drei Länder, die mit einer Stimme sprechen und gemeinsam auftreten, um ihre Interessen zu vertreten, größeren Einfluss hat. Das politische Ziel hinter dieser [Demografie] Initiative ist eine Art politischer Allianz.) (Interview Saxony)

Also, mutual marketing initiatives to combine common interests, for example in regional tourism, could be beneficial and more successful for the region as a whole. In the end, the balance between expected benefits and feared disadvantages determines in which contexts some phantom borders may become visible in political discourses while staying hidden in others.

Conclusions

The paper considered the impact of territorial and administrative phantom borders on sub-national cross-border cooperation. Such invisible (and seemingly insignificant) borders (Rumford 2011) at the sub-national level were suspected to be demarcations that are not only remnants of historical social practices but also contemporary administrative lines in the sand (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009). We exemplified how they impact on everyday cross-border cooperation by facilitating certain political projects while delimiting others. Contrary to Bouzas (2012) suggestion that borders are an interlinking and cooperative space, we illustrated that sub-national phantom borders seem to have predominantly dividing and separating effects. This was attributed, among other reasons, to the structure and purpose of Germany's financial administration and allocation system as well as to current procedures and mechanisms of public funding. These administrative and financial structures are system-inherent and (re)produced through everyday (political) actions. They are running like a common thread through Germany's federal state system and are seemingly fixed attributes of the system. This perception is clearly visible in current debates on rearrangements of Germany's financial equality scheme between the Federal Government and the states (*Länder*). In addition, we showed that container images and their seemingly fixed borders are still persistent and highly influential in everyday political practice. Thinking of conceptual department structures (*Ressort-Strukturen*) as rigid container spaces, and of territorial entities such as federal states, districts or municipalities as spaces confined by functional borders, was illustrated as one important constraining problem for cross-border cooperation. Such rigid structures prevent successful cross-departmental cooperation. Instead, fields of action (*Handlungsfelder*) across multiple departments seem to be needed rather than performing inflexible administrative structures in political and everyday thinking and doing. Moreover, conflicting political interests regularly result in political competition between departments and can obstruct cross-departmental (across administrative boundaries) cooperation. As an overall result, we demonstrated in detail that both territorial and administrative phantom borders can have substantial effects on everyday social practices no matter at what scale these borders are performed.

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Dr. Roger Baars
Prof. Dr. Antje Schlottmann
Goethe-University Frankfurt
Department of Human Geography
Theodor-W.-Adorno Platz 6 – PEG Building
D-60329 Frankfurt/Main
Germany
baars@em.uni-frankfurt.de
schlottmann@geo.uni-frankfurt.de

Резюме

Роджер Баарс, Антье Шлоттман

Изменение границ – вклад фантомных границ в трансграничное сотрудничество в Центральной Германии

В статье рассматривается влияние местных территориальных и административных границ на повседневные формы трансграничного политического сотрудничества. Показано, что невидимые и, казалось бы, неактуальные земельные и муниципальные границы (Rumford 2011) могут рассматриваться как проявление исторических социальных практик и одновременно как отражение реально присутствующих административных границ (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009). Такие субнациональные границы как формы социальных практик можно определить как фантомные границы, которые имеют непосредственное влияние на повседневные формы политического сотрудничества. При этом некоторые трансграничные проекты могут финансироваться и поддерживаться, в то время как другие испытывают более или менее сильные трудности. На примере концепции Демографической инициативы (Mitteldeutsche Demografie-Initiative) демонстрируется, как земельные и муниципальные границы в Центральной Германии могут влиять (влияют) на политические формы сотрудничества в области демографии. В отличие от концепции, рассматривающей границу как пространство взаимосвязей и сотрудничества (Bouzas 2012), в предлагаемой статье доказывается, что фантомные границы на субнациональном и местном уровне в значительной степени, характеризуются разделяющим эффектом. Среди прочего это может происходить из-за особенностей федеральной системы государственного финансирования и общественных фондов в ФРГ. Кроме того, в статье указывается, как соответствующие территориально-пространственные модели (territorial container images) с их, казалось бы, чёткими границами влияют на повседневные практики политического сотрудничества.

Представляется, что концептуально строго очерченные административные пространства более препятствовуют, нежели способствуют приграничному сотрудничеству. Это говорит о том, что территориальные и административные фантомные границы могут оказывать значительное влияние на повседневные формы социальных практик политического сотрудничества, независимо от того, к какому пространственному уровню они относятся.

Границы, социальные практики, container spaces, Центральная Германия, демография

Résumé

Roger Baars, Antje Schlottmann

Déplacer les frontières – La performance politique des frontières fantômes en Allemagne centrale

L'article étudie les répercussions des frontières territoriales et administratives locales sur la coopération politique transfrontalière quotidienne. Il est démontré que les frontières nationales et communales invisibles et apparemment insignifiantes (Rumford 2011) peuvent aussi bien être considérées comme des manifestations de pratiques historiques et sociales, que refléter par la même occasion d'actuelles frontières administratives bien réelles (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009). De telles frontières régionales, reflétant des pratiques sociales, peuvent être conceptualisées et devenir des frontières fantômes, lesquelles ont des répercussions directes sur la coopération politique quotidienne. Ainsi, certains projets transfrontaliers peuvent être financés et soutenus, alors que d'autres peuvent rencontrer de sérieuses difficultés plus ou moins handicapantes. En prenant pour exemple l'initiative de l'Allemagne centrale en matière de démographie, l'article montre comment les frontières nationales et communales affectent (ou peuvent affecter) concrètement les formes politiques de la coopération sur le plan démographique. Contrairement au concept de frontière de Bouzas (2012), considéré comme un espace d'interconnexion et de coopération, nous expliquons dans cet article que les frontières fantômes au niveau régional et local ont pour la plupart un effet de cloisonnement. Cette situation s'explique entre autres par le système fédéral du financement public en République fédérale d'Allemagne. De plus, cet article montre comment les représentations territoriales des containers et leurs frontières visiblement fixes se répercutent sur les pratiques quotidiennes de la coopération politique. Il semble que les espaces administratifs strictement délimités sur le plan conceptuel empêchent la coopération politique transfrontalière plus qu'ils ne l'encouragent. Cela signifie que les frontières fantômes territoriales et administratives peuvent avoir des répercussions considérables sur les pratiques sociales quotidiennes de la coopération politique, quel que soit leur niveau.

Frontières, pratiques sociales, espaces container, Allemagne centrale, démographie