



Self and Society in the Corona Crisis

Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences

Herausgegeben von Georg Mein und Johannes Pause

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Analyzing border geographies in times of COVID-19

Christian Wille & Florian Weber

When a new type of coronavirus was first reported in China in December 2019, it was not yet clear how rapidly and in what a short time frame COVID-19 would affect the entire world. In January 2020, Wuhan, the capital of Hubei, was quarantined and just two months later, the virus had spread to Central Europe; a subsequent wave of infections followed in many places, including the United States. As a result, presumed certainties began to erode: freedom of movement was restricted, entry restrictions were imposed and, paradoxically, precisely 25 years after the Schengen Agreement came into force, many EU internal borders were closed. This article focuses on these border closings, but also deals with drawing social boundaries in the wake of the pandemic. Thus, the border geographies examined range from the subject level to the global level and will be put into context with the security measures that have been introduced, the orderings and ordinances used, political re-nationalization reflexes and civil society resistance. The article ends with an outlook of some additional topics and questions from the perspective of Border Studies with and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Creates New Borders

In December 2019, originating from the Chinese city of Wuhan with eleven million inhabitants (Hubei province), a number of illnesses that indicate a new virus, some serious, are reported in increasing frequency. In retrospect, researchers assume that the first patient was admitted to the hospital for treatment on 12 December (Wu et al. 2020). On 31 December, pneumonia infections in Wuhan are reported to be increasing, but the Chinese government has not yet identified this as a far-reaching threat. However, the rapid spread means that Wuhan will go into quarantine on 23 January 2020 and one day later the entire Hubei province, i.e. entry and exit will be prevented in order to stop further spread (Tian et al. 2020). By sealing off the provincial borders and making them a line of demarcation, a territorial approach to containment comes into play. However, at this point, it is already too late: travel within China, internationalisation, and globalisation ensure the rapid spread of the virus on a global scale. The United States, Italy, France, and Germany already register the first infections at the end of January, but at this point they are still assumed to be isolated cases. The idea of a threat is rejected—with sometimes more and sometimes less thought given—since the massive spread of the coronavirus still primarily affects China and the neighboring countries.

Geographically and in terms of consequences for daily life, the virus still seems very far away. At the same time, though, with personal quarantine measures, the first boundaries are drawn between the sick and the healthy.

The records of the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG 2020) begin on 27 January 2020 with a reference to a person from the district of Starnberg in Bavaria who was infected and isolated. Around this time, the officially reported cases of infected people in China increase significantly (WHO 2020), however, the German Minister of Health, Jens Spahn, with reference to the Robert Koch Institute, initially assesses the “danger to human health in Germany” as “still low” (BMG 2020). The slow initial approach of the virus does allow the threat to take root, but it can still be easily attributed to others. The Bavarian cases can be traced back to contact of a company employee with a Chinese colleague and thus the virus was supposedly tamed. Under this assumption, people returning from Wuhan in February are placed in quarantine in an army barracks in the city of Germersheim in Rhineland-Palatinate to prevent the potential spread of the virus and thus to control the danger. However, more and more cases of infected people are being recorded in many countries around the world, so that on 12 February Jens Spahn comments that “it is not yet clear whether a regional epidemic in China will develop into a global pandemic or not.” (BMG 2020). The hitherto painstakingly established border between China as a corona hotspot, on the one hand, and Germany as an almost unaffected country, on the other, begins to crumble. This means that the dichotomous order of the us/them got into disarray and finally eroded entirely when, at the end of February, the carnival celebrations caused a manifest spread of the coronavirus in the Heinsberg district (North Rhine-Westphalia) (Gortana et al. 2020). The external attribution of the supposedly distant danger—as it continues in the USA with the designation Wuhan and/or Chinese virus (Nossem 2020)—is thus really no longer possible.

By the time when northern Italy and the French Grand Est region became the first corona epicenters in Europe at the end of February/beginning of March and dramatic scenes from Italian and French hospitals were shown in the media, the perception of risks among scientists, governments and the media had changed (Gillmann 2020). From a disease outbreak that initially qualified as an epidemic, starting in mid-March the virus spread with increasing speed to become the global COVID-19 pandemic (Robert Koch Institute 2020), which is not held back by national borders and it does not spare certain social groups. Rebekka Kanesu (Kanesu 2020) aptly commented: “Corona doesn’t know borders, doesn’t care about skin color, gender, race, age, education or sexual preference.” The politically responsible respond—and this, in turn, globally—almost reflexively with spatial action by noticeably curtailing freedom of movement, imposing entry restrictions and closing national borders (BMI 2020a; Trump 2020; ZDF 2020). The largely operational and hitherto selectively active border and migration regimes (Genova 2017; Hess/Kasperek 2012; Pott et al. 2018) are readjusted in the course of the corona crisis: for example, via the universal entry restrictions on 13 March for European Union residents to the USA and border controls or border closings on 14 March at various European internal borders. Denmark, the Czech Republic and Poland close their borders to Germany on 14 and 15 March, before Germany again

temporarily introduces border controls at its borders with Austria, Switzerland, France, and Luxembourg on 16 March (BMI 2020b). On the same day, the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, successfully introduces the proposal to freeze entry to the EU for 30 days (EC 2020b). The chronology of the border closures continues on 17 March, when the external borders of the Schengen area are only passable for a few select groups of people and goods, and on 19 March, when Germany tightens its regulations in turn and only allows its borders with Austria, Switzerland, France, and Luxembourg to be crossed at certain border crossing points (BMI 2020a).

Since mid-March at the latest, it has become clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is the subject of action at a national level and that, in this context, national borders have become more important. However, a closer look shows that these processes are also linked to bordering processes in people's everyday lives. Both the constant erosion of the familiar, the rapid emergence of new (dis-)orderings and other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ultimately go hand in hand with changed or new border(ing)s in a variety of areas. When this is taken into consideration, some of the familiar perspectives for Border Studies shift, and new questions arise. They focus on border(ing)s that cannot be reduced to a national-territorial level, but also take effect at the subject level. A border geography of the COVID-19 pandemic must therefore be thought of in the plural and include multiple border(ings), which are classified as spatial and social (dis-)orderings on different scales. Without being able to be comprehensive at this point in time¹, this article will discuss various border geographies from the subject level up to the global level and certain connections between them will be presented in detail. The security measures taken and ordinances adopted play just as much of a role for the bordering and territorial rebordering processes discussed as the controversial border closures and their management in spring 2020. The article closes with an outlook on some additional topics and questions from the perspective of Border Studies with and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

B/ordering and Ordinances

The quarantine measures and the lockdown (e.g. in Italy, Spain, and France), which has a huge impact on private lives, as well as the restricted freedom of movement (e.g. in Germany and Luxembourg) can be seen as one of the most radical forms of bordering. While, at the beginning of the epidemic, the one hundred people returning from Wuhan in February (BMG 2020) were isolated from the outside world by ordinance in Gernersheim, Germany, for two weeks, nationwide social distancing ordinances were initiated in mid-March. In many countries these orders are centrally given, in federal Germany, they differ depending on the federal state. They are intended to prevent contact and thus help to establish a border between supposedly safe and unsafe space. This differentiation of space through disciplining social behavior follows a tried and tested method of border geography, which Foucault (Foucault 1995: 195) points out:

1 Developments after the editorial deadline in mid-May 2020 could no longer be taken into account.

The following, according to an order published at the end of the seventeenth century, were the measures to be taken when the plague appeared in a town. First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals, the division of the town into distinct quarters [...]. It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space.

The partitioning of space in the course of COVID-19 expresses itself in the ‘borders of the habitat,’ which not only mark limited horizons of movement, but also find their way into the interior of the habitat. For example, households in which infected people live with non-infected people or risk groups with non-risk groups organize themselves into new spatial forms of living. The functions of work (working from home), learning (homeschooling) and childcare, which have now been shifted to the private sphere, are creating new forms of bordering in everyday life. In some places, the prescribed and required border geographies at the subject level produce a community of the immobilised (*les confinés*), as is expressed, for example, when Italians sing together from their balconies or when cross-generational neighborhood aid is provided. At the same time, the new borders of the habitat are decisive for the increased incidences of family violence or for riots, such as those that occurred in April in Paris and Toulouse (Kuchenbecker 2020; Gauthier 2020).

Such violent riots are related to the enabling and enforcement of disciplinary measures—largely legitimised by rapidly deployed emergency ordinances—to ensure the order of distinct quarters. This addresses the reproductive processes of borders by means of continuous regulation and control of the immobilisation of the subject. However, absolute and self-regulating monitoring of the individual habitat—such as with a Panopticon (Foucault 1995: 195–209)—is only possible to a limited extent. One such approach can be seen in the written self-certification (*attestation de déplacement dérogatoire*), which was centrally introduced in France on 17 March as a technique of power and in which one of the five legitimate reasons for entering public space must be ticked. The signed document is carried with you when you leave the house, but even before, it already requires self-regulation in your own habitat. In addition, “new techniques of power” are used in many countries, which can be understood as “post-panoptic” (Bauman 2017: 18–22) and with which the movement activities in connection with the tightened or relaxed measures are observed. Prominent examples of surveillance are the digital control and monitoring measures that are carried out in China and Israel (Satra 2020; Shachar 2020). A controversial tool of such digital border regimes at the subject level are tracking or contact-tracing apps that collect data about spatial (dis-)orderings of movement and individual contacts.

With Foucault (2005), the b/orderings and ordinances described can be classified into the conflict area between government and self-government. This addresses external leadership on the one hand—that is, government as the control of social problems by law or ordinance (Benz/Dose 2010, 26; Bröchler/Blumenthal 2006)—and self-government as well as the social practice mediating between them: “Government integrates subjectivity (governing oneself) and political rule (being governed), integrating power,

but also resistance (‘not wanting to be governed so much’, ‘not wanting to govern yourself so much’)” (Füller/Marquardt 2009, 89–90). This relationship between government and self-government, also known as governmentality (Foucault 2004) describes methods of dealing with (regulated) border geographies, as they come into play for distance regulations and admission restrictions at farmer’s markets, in supermarkets, or hardware stores (Fig. 1) or on playgrounds (Fig. 2). This expanded perspective on COVID-19 ordinances also makes it possible to take into account the appropriation of the prescribed limits, such as violating the distance regulations while waiting in line, going out to “corona parties” or going to the illegally opened pub. In addition, the perspective of governmentality in the sense of the “technologies of the self” (Foucault 1988) enables one to consider self-restrictions and thus the voluntary practice of borders: for example, the voluntary wearing of gloves or a face mask, without this implying disciplinary measures.



Figure 1: Waiting in line due to supermarket entry restrictions in Luxembourg. Photo: Christian Wille 2020



Figure 2: Playground access regulations. Photo: Anette Krause 2020

Self-restrictions in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly observable with regard to your own body and to protect your own health and that of others. In addition to the recommended hygiene measures—such as hand washing according to a standardized choreography—a relatively widespread wearing of face masks could be observed in public spaces in March. At this time, its usefulness was still controversially discussed, but the self-chosen drawing of a border between one's own body and the other bodies seemed to be establishing itself. In light of the fact that this is a potentially fatal disease, this observation is not surprising, but Bauman (2017: 215) calls for another explanation:

The body has become, as it were, a retreat from continuity and longevity [...]. This is the last line of defense for security, and it is exposed to constant fire from enemy forces [...]. Hence the body mania, the concern for the body and its defense. The border between the body and the outside world is one of the most closely guarded in our world.

According to Bauman, in postmodernity the body is really the last bastion of security, which is now contested even more in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This clarifies why wearing a face mask is already shaping public space before this has been ordered

by the authorities. In Luxembourg, for example, masks became mandatory on 20 April with an individual starter kit of five disposable masks, which every citizen will receive in their mailbox. In Saarland, five disposable masks are distributed to the residents through the municipalities starting on 27 April.

The borders drawn by politics and medicine are also connected to the body and its protection. This includes the categorisation into healthy, sick, and recovered people as well as the differentiation of those who usually have a less severe course of the disease and risk groups to which older people and those with pre-existing conditions belong. These orderings are discursively (re-)produced, solidified, and become socially effective (i.a. Robert Koch Institute 2020; for the power aspect in the (re-)production of social realities, see Angermüller and van Dyk 2010; Glasze and Mattissek 2009). For example, certain groups of people are marked as particularly vulnerable and thus more worthy of protection than others, as can be seen, for example, in the European Commission's roadmap to exit the lockdown (EC 2020a; also Gutschker 2020). Vulnerability thus becomes a differentiating criterion that creates borders at the subject level, but does not actually prove very reliable: Even younger people can experience a severe course of the disease. In the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, ordering principles also become effective, which are based on characteristics such as gender or simply on administrative categories. Kanesu states:

While in Germany, discourses especially focus on age boundaries, by advising to keep a safe distance from grandparents and elderly neighbors, in Panama City control of movement functions through divisions along binary gender lines where females are allowed to leave the house on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and males can go outside on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Columbia, on the other hand, tries to organize mobility in public spaces according to National ID numbers, which creates boundaries between those who hold the citizenship and those without proper documents. (Kanesu 2020)

Territorial B/ordering

The movement orderings outlined and social bordering at the subject level are related to national borders and the territorialisations carried out through them. They can be understood as (dis-)orderings of security, which were already the subject of early state action in China and its neighboring countries:

When a cluster of mysterious viral pneumonia cases struck in Wuhan, China in January 2020, neighboring Asian countries that had already borne the brunt of the SARS and MERS outbreaks—notably Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea—wasted no time. These countries swiftly introduced public health responses that included extensive testing, isolation of patients, and quarantines. But they also quickly introduced another set of measures: travel bans that restricted access to their territories. Officials in these countries boarded planes arriving from Wuhan to screen passengers, barring admission to those with symptoms. (Shachar 2020)

In Europe too, risk areas were quickly declared in mid-March, with the consequence that borders were reactivated and returnees (and later those entering the country) from such areas had to go into a two-week home quarantine. In the Greater Region SaarLor-Lux, the French region of Grand Est is classified by the Robert Koch Institute as a risk area, which means that the COVID-19 pandemic on 11 March practically officially affects areas in the immediate vicinity of Switzerland, the German states of Baden-Württemberg, Saarland and Rhineland Palatinate, the Belgian region of Wallonia and the nation state of Luxembourg. However, the territorial category “risk area” in such a super region with an area of 57.500 km² that stretches from the Ardennes department on the Belgian border to the Haut-Rhin department on the Swiss border, must be questioned. The purpose of this description is to draw attention to the fact that on 11 March the area around the French city of Mulhouse was considered a serious site of infection, even though it is more than 200 km away from Saarland and approx. 300 km from Luxembourg. These parameters relativise the officially declared safety risk for some of the residents. The risk also appears relative when the still-young French region is examined more closely: Grand Est emerged in 2016 from the French territorial reform as a merger of the former regions Est Lorraine, Alsace, and Champagne-Ardenne (Harster/Clev 2018). This not only shows the contingency of territorial ordering, but also the contingency of safety ordering. Because in 2015 the risk would still have been attributed to Alsace, and Lorraine would initially have been spared the risk status. Saarland, Luxembourg, and Wallonia would not have become neighbors of a risk area. Incidentally, this category became obsolete in Luxembourg in mid-March when the epidemic was declared a pandemic and the Ministry of Health no longer operated according to the spatial ordering principle of risk/non-risk, but now assumes a general risk of infection “in the world” (MSAN 2020).

As previously outlined, it is precisely national borders that are becoming the focus of media and scientific attention in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Securing Europe’s external borders and the associated migration regime (Camperi 2018; Cuttitta 2015 and 2018; Genova 2017; Hess/Kasperek 2012; Miggelbrink 2013; Pott et al. 2018)—despite all its harshness for refugees arriving and seeking help—has become a ‘normal’ reality of life in recent years. In contrast, new national migration regimes, which, because of the change in border geography, have an internal impact on the European Union, are not part of ‘normality’: the Schengen area has meant that, for Europeans, national borders could be crossed without any controls—in some places relics such as abandoned border posts serve as the only reminders of the time when systematic border controls were still in place. Ultimately, it is paradoxical that exactly 25 years after the Schengen Agreement came into force (1995), these borders will be controlled again in 2020 or, in some places, even closed (Fig. 3 and 4). Nossem sees a profound impact in the closures: “[A]s the idea of open borders has been such a crucial element in the formation of a ‘European’ identity and the shared self-image across the entire Schengen area, border closures weigh particularly strongly in Europe” (Nossem 2020). The revitalisation of national borders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic suggests the return to a strong nation-state that acts in its own interest (Crossey 2020), a “post-governance” (Berr et al. 2019: 20–24), which impressively illustrates that even in a glob-

alised world of networks, flows of people and goods, mobility (generally see also Rumford 2006: 163) and “cosmopolitan viruses” (Kanesu 2020) borders still exist and can easily be reactivated. Borders and the territorial ordering that marks them can therefore always be changed:

There is no single border situation. Borders are opening and closing throughout the world at one and the same time. Borders are differentiated through society and space, such that while they are becoming more porous and amenable to crossing in one place, they are becoming more restrictive and sealed to movement in other places. (Newman 2011: 33 et seq.; also Anderson/O’Dowd 1999)



Figure 3: Closed border crossing between Saarland and the Grand Est region: Emmersweiler-Morsbach. Photo: Peter Dörrenbächer 2020

The renewed importance of national borders can initially be understood in terms of re-bordering as a process of renationalisation intended to ensure health and safety. However, such renationalisations are more symbolic in nature, since national borders do not prevent the virus from spreading (Hamez et al. 2020; Kanesu 2020). However, reactivating national ordering prevents coordinated and uniform EU action, which is limited in the current situation anyway, since infection protection is the responsibility of the individual EU member states (Berrod/Wassenberg/Chovet 2020) and the European Commission can only submit proposals in favor of coordinated measures. In the border regions, renationalisation processes—such as national and/or regional ordinances—have a direct effect. Here, increased border control or closed borders collide with interwoven realities of life ‘on site’ and thus the everyday border geographies of the residents (Spellerberg et al. 2018; Wille 2015 and 2020a; Wille/Nienaber 2020). For example, many families who live in the cross-border region of Saarland, Lorraine, Luxem-

bourg have family members on both sides of the border, and their contact is now severely restricted in some cases. In some villages (for example in Leidingen in Saarland) the border runs through the town, so that different pandemic ordinances/orderings apply on different sides of the street; going to the neighboring country to purchase food and household supplies is no longer possible and cross-border commuters are severely affected. The latter can cross the border with a pass, but due to the closure of certain border crossings, this sometimes involves long journeys and detours.



Figure 4: Closed border crossing between Saarland and the Grand Est region: Friendship bridge between Kleinblittersdorf and Grosbliederstroff. Photo: Peter Dörrenbächer 2020

These insights illustrate the consequences of some political measures in border regions and the extent to which borderlands have already developed in Europe (Boesen/Schnuer 2017; Brunet-Jailly 2011; Pavlakovich-Kochi/Morehouse/Wastl-Walter 2004; Špaček 2018; Wille 2012). They are being noticeably challenged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to various resistance and protest initiatives related to the aforementioned relationship between government and self-government. One example that has become well known is the couples on the German-Swiss border who are no longer able to visit each other due to the border closure, but meet at a construction fence that serves as a makeshift form to mark the border (Molitor 2020). However, this act of ‘fencing’ was quickly regulated and made more difficult: In order to prevent physical contact through the fence between the couples, a second row of fences was set up after a few days, which now keeps the lovers at a distance. Less ‘romantic’ challenges to the border closings are based on the actions of citizens’ initiatives, which have led to public expressions of solidarity or protest in the form of banners in places that are sometimes symbolic:

- at a highway entrance in Trier, Germany, with the text “L’Europe, c’est la liberté, l’amitié et la solidarité. Metz + Trèves pour toujours”² (Fig. 5),
- on the friendship bridge between the German town of Kleinblittersdorf and the French town of Grosbliederstroff: “La Sarre ou la Lorraine. Aidez-vous les uns les autres et restez fort!”³ (Figure 6),
- on the city bridge between Frankfurt (Oder) in Germany and Słubice in Poland: “United in the heart and strong together. We’ll meet again soon! | Razem łatwiej przetrwać najtrudniejsze chwile. Do zobaczenia wkrótce!”



Figure 5: Banners of citizens’ initiatives: at a highway entrance in Trier, Germany, “L’Europe, c’est la liberté, l’amitié et la solidarité. Metz + Trèves pour toujours”. Photo: André Melzer 2020

- 2 “Europe is freedom, friendship and solidarity. Metz + Trier forever.” This banner as well as others placed in the city of Trier was hung up by the Ultras of the soccer club Eintracht Trier and is aimed at the “Tribune Ouest” from Metz (Grand Est, France) and the Ultras of the “Curva Sud” from Vicenza (Italy). The Trier soccer club has maintained a close friendship with the “Tribune Ouest” from Metz, Trier’s partner city, for over ten years (SV Eintracht Trier 2020).
- 3 “Saarland or Lorraine. Help each other and stay strong!”



Figure 6: Banners of citizens' initiatives: on the friendship bridge between the German town of Kleinblittersdorf and the French town of Grosbliederstroff: "La Sarre ou la Lorraine. Aidez-vous les uns les autres et restez fort!" Photo: Eva Nossem 2020

Civil society activism in the face of prescribed border geographies can also be seen in the "Schengen is alive" campaign, which was (already started in 2016 due to the temporary closure of some Schengen borders at that time (Evrard/Sommaribas/Nienaber 2018)) launched in April first by various border municipalities in the tripoint Schengen and then continued for several weeks by the citizens. Protests specifically against the border closures take place on 24 April at the German-Polish border, especially in the twin cities of Frankfurt (Oder)/Ślubiце, where citizens demonstrate for "Let us go to work, let us go home" (Fig. 7). At the German-French border, activists of the transnational youth association "Young European Federalists" dismantle the barriers on 3 May in a symbolic action at two closed border crossings in Saarland and spray "#Dont-TouchMySchengen" onto the asphalt (JEF 2020). These examples show that the borders in the regions directly affected are contested and clearly illustrate the interrelation between re- and de-bordering processes.

In the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European idea and the question of its practicability have become an explosive issue; the foundations of Europe are at stake:

Le danger est la remise en question des principes fondateurs de l'idée européenne, basée sur l'unification des peuples européens et non pas sur leur différenciation nationale. Si l'Union renonce au modèle de gouvernance à multiples niveaux associant le niveau européen, les autorités nationales et les collectivités locales et régionales dans les régions frontalières, elle va y perdre son âme sans parvenir à combattre la propagation d'un virus qui ne suit certainement pas une logique de contamination nationale.⁴ (Berrod/Wassenberg/Chovet 2020).



Figure 7: Demonstration “Let us go to work, let us go home” against border closures on April 24th, 2020 on the city bridge between Frankfurt (Oder) and Stübice. Photo: Janek Coppenhagen 2020

Various activities, such as the coordinated retrieval of citizens, the joint procurement of medical material, the initiative to act globally against the virus or the attempt to coordinate easing measures, show that the European Commission is trying not to lose “its soul” (*âme*):

Internal border controls should be lifted in a coordinated manner. Travel restrictions and border controls should be removed once the border regions epidemiological situation converges sufficiently. External border should be reopened in a second stage and take account of the spread of the virus outside the EU. (EC 2020a)

Many member states have joined in and transcend national logic. Thus they do not follow the border geographies of strictly national delineation and, for example, provide cross-border assistance, such as patient care. In this context, Crossey underlines the symbolic dimension of such solidarities, which has become all the more important:

- 4 “There is a danger that the basic principles of the European idea, which are based on the unification of the European peoples and not on their national differentiation, will be questioned. If the Union abandons the model of multi-level governance, in which the European level, national authorities and local and regional authorities in the border regions are involved, it will lose its soul without being able to fight the spread of a virus that certainly does not follow a national logic of infection rates.”

Symbolic and practical acts converge—for example, the admission of French emergency patients may relieve hospitals in Grand Est, but at the same time, given the apparently shaken confidence in the actual resilience of the France-German partnership, it has a high symbolic scope. (Crossey 2020)

Such a symbolic dimension is also inherent in the actions of the Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Luxembourg mayors of border municipalities: with joint video messages or joint letters (Solidaritätserklärung 2020; Büttel 2020; Dylla 2020; Maillason 2020) they not only fight to open up border crossings, but at the same time they stand up for the European idea and make it visible. Their activism for local needs recalls the open EU internal borders and the associated freedoms as achievements to be fought for. In this respect, the COVID-19 pandemic, despite its political renationalisation reflexes, and above all because of civil-society challenges to border closures and cross-border solidarity, can be seen as an opportunity to revitalise the European idea and its principles. This interpretation is underpinned by the numerous practical and symbolic acts on and around Europe Day on 9 May 2020 which further increase the pressure to open the closed EU internal borders and work towards the re-establishment of the ‘normal’ border regime in the Schengen area (Commune de Schengen 2020; Cruchten/Hoffmann 2020).

Border Geographies: Additional Topics and Questions

In this article, border geographies of the COVID-19 pandemic on different scales and some of their relationships were shown. The insight given at the time of the editorial deadline in mid-May is not exhaustive and represents a first approximation to outline some additional topics and questions from the perspective of Border Studies with and after COVID-19 with the expected opening of the EU internal borders. The approaches have shown that b/ordering and ordinances at the subject level have an immediate effect and can represent borders of the habitat. Subsequently, a variety of questions can be developed under the keyword “boundary coping,” which aims at negotiating parcelling and bordering in everyday corona life. This includes appropriation methods and coping strategies in connection with lockdowns, contact and access restrictions as well as private risk management. In the same way, the (decreed) retreat into private life is an object of analysis that can be viewed as a rediscovery of the habitat from different perspectives. One example is the *cités* (large housing estates) in the French *banlieues*, which were neglected and socially disadvantaged during the lockdown: not only were the cramped living conditions that prevail here exacerbated by the imposed lockdown (until 11 May), the social situation of the residents has also deteriorated in the lockdown due to the already fragile working and living conditions. Behind this example is the general question of inclusion and social justice, which has become even more explosive during the COVID-19 pandemic and should give impetus to critically rethink largely unquestioned categories such as privileged/disadvantaged or essential/non-essential and their assumed contexts.

Aspects of boundary coping and questions of social justice remain controversial and relevant beyond the lockdown. The perspectives that open up for this primarily aim at the everyday and long-term established border geographies with COVID-19, which can be examined at the subject level of corona convivialities. This addresses the—empirically answerable—questions about the ways in which subjects practice constructive coexistence: “conviviality can be used as an analytical tool to ask and explore the ways, and under what conditions, people constructively create modes of togetherness” (Nowicka/Vertovec 2014, 342). Naturally, it will be necessary to continue to observe the solitary bottom-up initiatives (neighborhood aid, homemade face masks, etc.) that arose during the lockdown and their possible transformations up to corona commons (generally, following Helfrich/Bollier/Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2015) with the potential for destabilising exclusion mechanisms. Additional access to corona convivialities can take place via the expected growing sensitivity for body and security, if, for example, distance regulations or body/outside-world boundaries are incorporated at the subject level, thus integrating safety ordinances/ordering as routine physical performances into coexistence and bordering, thus, to be continued in the long term as residual practices. Such access via the body can help social theories to be valued, which consider animate and inanimate actors equally as participants of the social (Latour 2005; Reckwitz 2003; Schatzki/Knorr Cetina/von Savigny 2001).

The body probably also plays a role in the future consideration of government regulation and control practices. In the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, state authorities have temporarily given themselves controlling powers, some of which have been legitimized by emergency ordinances, which have far-reaching consequences for private lives. Empirical and critical observation will show what role the strengthened nation state will play in corona convivialities and to what extent the enhanced (digital) surveillance practices will remain unchallenged. For this, approaches can be used that consider bodies and (control) apparatuses as participants in the social and that connect them with power techniques. These include, for example, the concept of iBorders, which takes a look at digital border regimes and opens up critical access to “sorting, profiling, categorizing, predicting, and filtering” (Pötzsch 2015: 104) as digital and cultural surveillance practice:

Borders refers to a sociotechnological apparatus that employs techniques of biometric and algorithmic bordering to validate, establish, and indeed produce, identities and patterns of life. The deployed practices enlist individual subjects as both target and source in bordering processes that disperse locally as well as across transnational space. In these processes, individuals become objects of governance to be analyzed and assessed, but also serve as implicit contributors to the databases enabling algorithm-driven mappings of patterns of behavior and association. (Pötzsch 2015: 111).

The territorial dimension of borders, according to a number of existing cross-border research projects (Heintel/Musil/Weixlbaumer 2018; Pallagst et al. 2018; Ulrich 2020; Wille et al. 2016), should be re-examined, especially on a regional scale. The focus

should be on the negotiation processes in border regions by and between state and civil society actors, which are effective in the re-activation and deactivation as well as in the management of borders. This may initially include cross-border cooperation issues, regarding which Saarland Minister-President Tobias Hans and the President of the Grand Est Regional Council Jean Rottner emphasise that the crisis in the Greater Region shows “that we need ever closer cross-border cooperation” (FAZ 2020). In this context, Crossey states that different actors want to “contribute ‘their part’ to cross-border friendship, even in times of crisis, as much as possible” and raises the far-reaching question of how “this framework for the respective actors in the border region” could actually look (Crossey 2020). In doing so, she (also Eurodistrict SaarMoselle 2020) refers to the future of cross-border cooperation and its structure, for which a productive intersection of multi-level governance and cross-border governance in the Greater Region seems to be worthwhile for both research and practice. The representatives of the highest political body for cross-border cooperation, the summit of the Greater Region, decided at the end of April to “deal with the medium and long-term handling of the corona pandemic and its effects on the Greater Region” in early summer 2020 (Luxemburger Regierung 2020), although fundamental governance issues are probably not on the agenda.

Furthermore, civil society forces and their actions in border regions form an object of investigation that has gained a higher profile in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Protests and symbolic actions at the EU’s internal borders, such as were observed during the lockdown to restore the Schengen regime, have been the exception in the past in “areas of the border” (Wille 2014). Through the experience of rebordering processes and the associated effects, the border has (temporarily) been brought back into the everyday lives of border area residents (border experiences, Wille/Nienaber 2020). The active/activist commitment to the deactivation of the border regime has made the border directly tangible as an object that is not firmly in place and is definitely negotiable. The participation of border area residents in debordering processes, which can be described as borderwork (Rumford 2012, 897), can be seen as an “act of [European] citizenship” (Isin/Nielsen 2008) and, from this perspective, allows for the to-be-examined assumption that the border closures have strengthened European citizenship in border regions.

Transformations in relation to Europe in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic can also be examined from a discourse-theory perspective (Glasze 2013; Keller 2007; Laclau/Mouffe 1985; Weber 2018) by focusing on shifts (dislocations) in supposedly irrefutable discourses. Fundamentally, the previously powerfully anchored discourse on climate change has lost its dominance, at least temporarily, compared to COVID-19. The considerations should primarily focus on the changing European and border discourses and emphasise their dynamics on the basis of dislocations, sub-discourses and counter-hegemonic voices. For example, the following questions from border geographies can be examined:

- To what extent are the (early) re-nationalisation reflexes in Europe owed to a certain helplessness regarding the task of coping with a hitherto unimaginable and potentially fatal epidemic?
- To what extent has the shared moment of crisis and (cross-border) solidarity brought EU member states or border regions closer together again?
- To what extent can border closings and national solo efforts be seen as a danger, but also as an opportunity for the European idea and its principles?

Discourse analyses can also be used to differentiate the territorial ordering principles activated in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and their effectiveness over time and across countries. This addresses linguistically coded bordering processes that can be seen in attributions or discursive spatialisations. This is clearly illustrated by the so-called Wuhan or Chinese virus, which Nossem has already presented as a border-geography technique (also tagesschau.de 2020):

The G7 countries' failure to issue a joint statement because of Washington's insistence on using the label 'Wuhan virus' hit the headlines, and the U.S. administration has been working hard over the last weeks to enforce the name 'Chinese virus' as the official label for the coronavirus during their press conferences. This move of rebranding the virus by using a specific 'place-mark' is just one of many strategies of apportioning the blame for the (spread of the) virus to a specific place/country and to construct the disease as a foreign-grown threat to the nation. (Nossem 2020, 5)

A critical examination of such examples of discursively produced border geographies helps to understand the performative techniques with which the untamability of the virus and the associated risks are attributed to others in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to equip one's own group or one's own territory with virus tamability, health safety and sovereign ability to act.

Finally, the COVID-19 border geographies considered here repeatedly make it clear that border(ing)s are not reduced to "lines in the sand" (Parker/Vaughan-Williams 2009), but that the latest conceptual developments in Border Studies, particularly in light of the pandemic, should be applied and further differentiated. Above all, this includes the expanded views of bordering processes, which raise awareness of their multiplicity and the aspects that are effective in them and call for multiple access to border(ing)s. In addition, there are the subsequent texture-oriented considerations that understand border(ing)s as effects of the complex interplay of activities, discourses, objects, bodies and knowledge (Brambilla 2015; Rumford 2012; Weier et al. 2018; Wille 2020c). The latter take into account the aspects that are effective in and for border(ing)s, project them as a dynamic, complex structure that can be determined socially, materially, spatially, or temporally, and are interested in how bordering effects are reinforced or relativised by the interactions and interplay of the aspects considered. This approach to bordering processes, also known as bordertextures (Weier et al. 2018; Wille 2020c) conceptualises the aspects addressed in this article from Wuhan (China) to Lei-

dingen (Saarland), or from the subject level to the global level as a structure held together by certain (power) logics with re- and de-bordering effects. In addition, bordertextures give an analytical place to the currently well-known protagonist of border geography: the coronavirus. Known in academics as a quasi living being (Fleischmann 2020), it can be seen as an effective actor in bordertextures in the sense of the actor-network theory (Latour 2005). Such an analytical inclusion of the virus in complex bordering processes allows for a readjustment, and thus reinforces certain questions:

- How far do certain virus-related governmental practices radiate, which inscribe themselves in space as border geographies in the form of parceling or movement ordering/ordinances and ultimately spatialise the virus?
- To what extent does the virus, as a powerful subject, destabilise the Schengen area, re/deactivate borders, or bring forth new practices in border management interwoven with it in the future?

The topics and questions outlined here are intended to provide impulses for further developments and future research that deal with the temporary and, in part, likely long-lasting border(ing)s with and after the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time this article was written, it was already clear that the border geographies would remain dynamic and their observation would continue to provide information about new border(ing)s and thus about new relationships between power, border, and space.

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