

CROSS-BORDER CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

Concepts and Practices of (Un)doing Borders in Humanities & Society

The 2020's in the European Union, more generally in Europe and beyond, appear to be a time of aggressive revival of borders. State borders within the Schengen area are being reinforced as result of a rather panic-fuelled reaction to global migration caused by wars, poverty, hunger, climate change as well as pandemics. Language borders are interpreted again as unbreachable cultural, national, 'ethnic' borders; as such, they are misused once again to exclude groups of people from society (autochthonous minorities and migrants) as well as to wage wars - the large-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine being the current example of a series of wars that have been legitimised by their initiators as defensive wars in the name of allegedly national-cultural interests. Nationalism, xenophobia, and racism are particularly rampant in the current political discourse of today. Yet, at the same time, there are visible tendencies in politics as well as a range of social and individual practices and movements contrasting to divisive tendencies and opposing critique as well as resistance.

Located at the intersection of the Germanic, the Slavic and the Romanic linguistic areas, the Alps-Adriatic region displays a specific historical and sociocultural situation. It was one of the major front lines of World War I, which brought along the end of the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires, not only fostering substantial political, social, and economic changes but also introducing new state borders in the area. Plagued by Nazism and Fascism and the resulting World War II, the area witnessed further territorial changes. The following Cold War turned the area into the dividing line between opposite political-economic systems. Finally, in the 1990's the Alps-Adriatic region had to witness the Yugoslav civil wars, which again brought along new borders and states. At the same time, local populations, communities, and individuals have long-standing experiences of navigating between various linguistic, cultural, and political systems as part of their everyday lives.

Rooted in the peculiar and at the same time typically European Alps-Adriatic region, located in Slovenia right on the triangle border of Italy and Austria, the Summer School of Bovec has always been a cross-border space by means of its plurilingualism as well as its interdisciplinary approach. Established in 1994, the Summer School of Bovec is the unique result of a cooperation of seven universities in four countries (Austria, Slovenia, Italy, and Croatia), where five Alps-Adriatic-languages (German, Slovene, Italian, Croatian and Furlan) are taught and learned by participants living in the mentioned countries. As a *locus cooperandi* (Forum Tomizza), the Summer School of Bovec is an ideal space for a critical, creative, and explicit confrontation with the meaning of linguistic, territorial, and mental borders and, even more, with inclusive concepts and collaborative practices.

Thus, this year the specificity of the Bovec Summer School is turned into an input for an explicit, conscious reflection on borders and even more on cross-border concepts and practices in society. The focus is on undoing borders, especially in the Humanities (Linguistics, Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Visual Studies, History, Philosophy, Cultural Anthropology, Pedagogy, etc.) as well as in society. The general approach is to consider borders not solely as divisive factors, but also as a chance for encounters, an opportunity for exchange, and a cause of curiosity for the (presumed) Other beyond the border. The chosen border-metaphor of the Bovec Summer School 2023 is the *zipper* (*Reissverschluss, zadrga, cerniera, patentni zatvarač*), which divides and unifies at the same time.