



Photo by Artemis Fyssa, February 27, 2023: The evacuated Reception and Identification Center and make-shift Camp at Vathy, Samos.

Border as Public Space

AgorAkademi Seminar
in collaboration with
Nomis Research Project Elastic Borders, Uni Graz

organized by **Nilüfer Göle** and **Bilgin Ayata**

Friday, June 14th 2024 / 9:30am - 5:30pm
Columbia Global Paris Center (Salle de Conférence)
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Border as Public Space

The issue of human mobility and border security is increasingly becoming a decisive socio-political concern, particularly with the rise in global migration trends and the militarization of borders. Border governance and its surveillance techniques serve to both restrict mobility and determine the criteria for selecting population flows.

In the context of borders and immigration, practices such as refoulement, border militarization, detention policies, and decisions regarding who is permitted to survive and who is abandoned to perish all represent facets of necropolitics. These practices not only limit people's mobility but also perpetuate conditions of precarity and insecurity, relegating migrants to the margins. In contrast, politics of solidarity and hospitality challenge this logic by emphasizing the ethical imperative to support those in need and engaging politics of care and humanity with migrants.

In this AgorAkademi seminar in collaboration with the NOMIS Research Project "Elastic Borders", Nilüfer Göle and Bilgin Ayata bring together researchers and artists to rethink borders from the perspective of public space. Borders are not to be seen as a linear line of demarcation but as a space with its own social life. In this seminar we will approach borders from the perspective of diverse actors implicated in politics of migration and will explore the kind of public space that emerges from the co-presence and interdependence between asylum seekers, local residents, humanitarian aid workers, and border personnel.

In this transitory border-public space, migrants endure a period of waiting, transforming this threshold into a provisional home while envisioning a future beyond the border. The artistic work helps us to open our vision to human and social life at the border space as well as to bring into our consciousness the human experience of loss.

Program:

9:30am - 9:45am: welcome coffee

9:45am - 10am : Introductory remarks by **Nilüfer Göle**

10am - 1pm : The Social Life of Borders: Space, Temporality and Transformations

- **Bilgin Ayata**: "The temporality of the militarization of borders: The evolving elastic border zone in the Canary Islands as a journey back in time"
- **Artemis Fyssa**: "From Old to New: The Time and Space Compression of the Elastic Border Zone in Samos"

Short Break

- **Chiara Pagano**: "Cahiers de deuilléances at Tunisian-Libyan Frontier: commemora(c)tions to turn mourning into mobilization"
- **Laura Jung**: "Advanced Technologies at the EU Border"

1pm - 2pm : lunch break

2pm - 4pm : Artistic Interventions: Border as a Contested Public Sphere

- **Melissa Moralli**: "Frontières (In)visibles: researching (in)visible borders and activism at the crossroads between disciplines"
- **Carolyn Defrin**: "Can art disrupt border-constructed social relationships? Exploring possibilities for dignity and compassion through image and poetry"
- **Arkadi Zaidés**: "Choreography as an Investigative Tool: Exploring Europe's Border Mechanisms"

4pm - 4:30pm : coffee break

4:30pm - 5:30pm : General Discussion

Participants and abstracts:



Nilüfer Göle is a sociology professor at EHESS, Paris. Her sociological approach aims to open a new reading of modernity from a non-western perspective and engages a broader critique of Eurocentrism. After finishing her ERC funded research project on Islamic visibility, secularism and intercultural controversies in European public spheres (2008-2013), she explores the emerging forms of social agency, collectivity and creative expressivity within the newly emerging Maidan protest movements in her project on Public Space Democracy (2016-2019) and the emancipatory potential in Public space making with art and humanities in her current AgorAkademi project (2020-2025). Her books include *The Forbidden Modern, Veiling and Civilization* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1996), *Islam in public. Turkey, Iran and Europe* (with Ludwig Ammann eds, Bilgi University Press, 2006), *Musulmans au quotidien. Une enquête européenne sur les controverses autour de l'islam* (La Découverte, Paris, 2015), *Public Space Democracy. Performative, Visual and Normative Dimensions of Politics in a Global Age* (ed., Routledge, 2022), *Revendiquer l'espace public* (with Richard Rechtman, Sandra Laugier, Yves Cohen, CNRS éditions, Paris, 2022).



Bilgin Ayata is professor for southeast European studies at the University of Graz. She is the director of the NOMIS Research Project “Elastic Borders: Rethinking the Borders of the 21st Century” which undertakes a comprehensive study of the EU’s external frontiers over time and space. Previously she was professor for political sociology at the University of Basel (Switzerland). She obtained her PhD at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA) and her MA degree from York University (Toronto, Canada). Her teaching and research centers on socio-political transformations with a focus on migration, borders, citizenship, affect and emotions, postcolonial studies. Her regional expertise includes Europe and the MENA region. She is co-speaker of the research cluster “migration, borders and mobility” within the field of excellence “Dimensions of Europe” at the University Graz. During 2019-2023, she was the DFG-Mercator Fellow at the CRC “Affective Societies” at the FU Berlin.

“The temporality of the militarization of borders: The evolving elastic border zone in the Canary Islands as a journey back in time”

This presentation compares the different temporalities of border militarization based on short field visits in 2023 and 2024 in Samos, Lesbos, Lanzarote and Tenerife. Juxtaposing the relatively silent construction of the new CCAC in Lesbos (planned to be opened in 2024/5) to the public negotiations of enforcing (and circumventing) the securitization of the border zone in Lanzarote and Tenerife, this presentation will employ a comparative lens on the varying temporalities of the EU’s external frontiers.



Artemis Fyssa is a researcher within the Elastic Borders Project, conducting an ethnography on sociopolitical impacts of the elastic border on Samos island in Greece. She is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Basel under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Bilgin Ayata. Artemis' research interests stand at the intersection of politics and migration, especially the socio-political transformations that have been put in motion in Greece due to the implementation of EU and Greek state migration policies since 2015. She previously explored these questions in the project "Infrastructure Space and the Future of Migration Management: The EU Hotspots in the Mediterranean Borderscape," during which she conducted extensive field work on the five Eastern Aegean islands where the EU Hotspot Approach is being implemented. Artemis holds a joint Master of Science in Urban Studies by Vrije Universiteit Brussel; Université libre de Bruxelles; Universität Wien; Københavns Universitet; and Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She also holds an interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Music Culture and Communication by the Department of Music Studies and the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies of National & Kapodistrian University of Athens.

"From Old to New: The Time and Space Compression of the Elastic Border Zone in Samos"

This presentation will explore the transformations of the elastic border zone in Samos based on several rounds of ethnographic fieldwork in 2023, not only to Samos but also to Lesbos and Chios. With the opening of the new "Closed Controlled Access Center of Samos", a highly securitized camp for migrants who arrive from the Turkish coast, efforts have been undertaken to erase the memory of the old Hotspot facility which was near the town center of Vathy, the capital of Samos. This shift of the camp from the center of the town to a hidden and remote location is symptomatic of the recent efforts on the islands to remove the imprints of the 2015 crisis from the public space, which Artemis Fyssa could observe during her fieldwork in summer 2023. As various members of the local community in Samos experience exhaustion and strain due to the ongoing pressure of a militarized border zone, moments of silence, violence, and despair are often punctuated by instances of hope and collective action.



"**Chiara Pagano** works at the intersection of African Studies, Critical borderlands studies, and Critical Migration Studies to explore the historical constructions and contemporary (re)configurations of geographical, political, and identity-based frontiers in North Africa and the Mediterranean, as well as the palimpsestic evolution of mobilities along and across these frontiers, with a focus on the Libyan-Tunisian borderscape. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Southeast European Studies (CSEES) within the research project "Elastic Borders: Rethinking Borders in the 21st century". Her research explores the outward extensions of EU borders in the 21st century by looking at the Mediterranean neighborhood. She conducts an ethnographic study of the Medenine governorate along the south-eastern Tunisian border with Libya, which has been at the forefront of the post-2011 and EU-led reconfiguration of Tunisian border practices.

Cahiers de deuillances at Tunisian-Libyan Frontier: commemora(c)tions to turn mourning into mobilization

Based on fieldwork observations conducted between September 2022 and October 2023 across the Medenine province, this presentation advances preliminary reflections on how inhabiting a deadly borderzone at the intersection between Tunisian and Libyan formal sovereignty - where the impact of EU's efforts for an anticipatory governance of migration are experienced more strongly - has resulted in turning mourning into mobilization. Coping with the rising toll of border deaths and disappearances has catalyzed collective introspection on the essence of citizenship as entitlement. This reflection has led to the emergence of organized campaigns advocating for truth and justice regarding missing migrants and border fatalities, thereby reshaping perceptions of belonging to the State and within the political community, particularly from its alleged "margins". Transformed into arenas of "commemorations," public squares and streets in this border governorate have become sites of contention, where both migrant individuals and Tunisian citizens confront border violence exacerbated by militarization. These commemorations, however, reveal underlying racial and socio-economic inequalities, and therefore both perpetuate and challenge existing power dynamics.



Dr. Laura Jung is the postdoctoral researcher within the Elastic Borders project. She is examining the technological and scientific framework which enables the elasticity of the EU's external border. Dr. Jung's research interests center on the interactions between science, technology, and medicine with political orders, with expertise in critical international relations and theories of sovereignty, race, and disability. In her dissertation, *Traumatic, neurotic, hysterical: the psychiatric production of sovereign German order, 1871-1969*, she analyzed how scientific knowledge and medical expertise inscribed particular versions of political subjectivity, contouring national collectives on the basis of specific attributes of "the psyche" or "the soul." Dr. Jung received her PhD in International Relations from the University of Sussex in 2021. Prior to coming to the University of Graz, she completed an MA (Political Science) at the Freie Universität Berlin and a BA (History and Sociology) at Goldsmiths.

"Advanced Technologies at the EU Border"

This presentation considers the elastic border through the lens of technology. Advanced technologies have led to a transformation of contemporary bordering practices, which are increasingly dispersed, mobile, and flexible. But how exactly are these transformations made possible? Which technoscientific innovations as well as established practices are they enabled by? This presentation focuses on three aspects: Datafication, the compression of time and space, and the production of certainty. Datafication designates practices of data collection, categorization and analysis which take place at every moment of the migratory journey and serve a wide range of purposes, from identification to prediction and risk analysis. The compression of time and space are evidenced through the employment of remote surveillance and in the immediacy of data retrieval from interoperable databases. Certainty is produced through recourse to rationalistic, positivistic scientific methods (of measurement, identification, projection, etc). The presentation will map each these instances of technoscientific border transformation and weigh their impacts on our understanding of temporalities, spatialities, and social lives of contemporary borders.



Melissa Moralli is sociologist of culture at the Department of Sociology and Business Law, University of Bologna, where she teaches 'creative methods' and 'social innovation and collective action'. She holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Research and has worked at CRISES (Centre de Recherche sur les Innovations Sociales, Université du Québec à Montréal), IPK (Institute for Public Knowledge, New York University), CRISES Redefined (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) and MESOPOLHIS (Centre Méditerranéen de Sociologie, de Science Politique et d'Histoire, AMU, Sciences Po Aix and CNRS). She is the scientific coordinator of the projects 'Collaborative imaginaries on territories in change across Europe' (Utrecht University, the Netherlands) and "Imaginaries Migratoires" (MUCEM-Mesopolhis, France). She was senior researcher in the 'Welcoming Spaces' (Horizon2020) and 'Atlas of transitions. New Geographies for a Cross-Cultural Europe' (Creative Europe) projects. She has published over 40 books, articles and chapters on activism, migration, social innovation and creative methods in social research and co-edited the *Edward Elgar Encyclopaedia of Global Migration: New Mobilities and Activism*. She is the curator of the international exhibition *Connections* (2022) and director of the short documentary *Frontières (In)visibles* (2023). She co-founded the research collective 'Reimagining Mobilities', which explores policies, practices and narratives related to climate justice and mobility regimes through creative methods.

Frontières (In)visibles: researching (in)visible borders and activism at the crossroads between disciplines

The term activism refers to those practices and projects created by artists, activists and scholars that aim to respond to and critically reflect on the challenges of our time using different languages and forms of creative expression (Lemoine, Ouardi, 2010; Salzbrunn, 2019). By combining the aesthetic dimension with ethical and political issues, activism represents an important form of dissent and a powerful expressive device to counter hegemonic discourses such as those currently surrounding migration and borders (Belfiore, Bennett, 2007). In front of an excessive spectacularization sustained by media and political discourses that portray migrants as "impossible citizens" or invaders and criminals, the need to build a "third imaginary" of human mobility emerges strongly. This contribution proposes to start from the concept of activism in order to present "Frontières (In)visibles", an arts-based study (Leavy, 2018) conceived since its elaboration through the intersection of gazes between the worlds of cultural studies and experimental artistic production. Since its elaboration, the research has been conducted by a cultural sociologist and an Iranian illustrator and filmmaker and has focused on a particular right, defined here as the

"right to the discourse". Drawing upon the Lefebvrian concept of the "right to the city", the "right to the discourse" is conceived as the right to participate in and re-appropriate narratives by people on the move. How do artists deal with social injustices associated with exile, and how can art redefine these social, political, and narrative inequalities? How does artistic creation recreate alternative forms of "feeling at home"? The outcome is a documentary co-developed with four artists "in exile" in Marseille, divided into four chapters: Resistances (on social injustices related to mobility); Baggage (on cultural "baggage"); Crossings (on borders); Bodies (on the theme of identities).

References

- Belfiore, E., & Bennett, O. (2007). *Rethinking the social impacts of the arts. International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13 (2), 135-151.
- Leavy, P. (eds.) (2018). *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Lemoine, S., & Ouardi, S. (2010). *Artivisme : art, action politique et résistance culturelle*. Paris: Alternatives.
- Salzbrunn, M. (2019). *Artivisme*. Laval: Anthrophen.



Dr Carolyn Defrin is an affiliate researcher on the Elastic Borders project. As a Marie Curie post-doctoral fellow, she is examining the role of art in border zones, specifically exploring whether and how co-designed, participatory arts practice with key actors enacting and impacted by the EU's southern border policies might hold potential to create more dignified and compassionate social interactions than what currently exists. Carolyn's research explores how artistic practice can illuminate, express and build understanding across different stakeholders in socio-political contexts. Her PhD thesis *Intra-vulnerabilities: An artistic strategy for co-creating culture and policy*, explored how vulnerable communities, artists and local funding bodies could open up differently to each other through arts activities in order to better understand community needs. Follow on research has focused on the role of art in migration contexts – how migrant artists find home through artistic practice and how artistic practice can expand singular views of the migrant experience to other stakeholders such as political and cultural policy makers.

Carolyn received her PhD from London South Bank University in 2021, an MA from Central Saint Martins College of Art (London) and a BA in Drama from Northwestern University (Chicago.) Her artistic work has been awarded funding from Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs, Arts Council England, London South Bank University's Knowledge Exchange Voucher, with recent commissions including an interactive digital artwork for the children's health service at the Tessa Jowell health centre (Dulwich Picture Gallery, London 2022-2025) and a series of 28 moving image artworks about cycles and power (Camden People's Theatre, 2021.)

“Can art disrupt border-constructed social relationships? Exploring possibilities for dignity and compassion through image and poetry.”

In this interactive presentation, Carolyn will share a card game she is developing with the Elastic Borders team as part of the early stages of her Marie Curie project. Through image and poetic text these cards explore different characteristics and qualities of the key actors in the border alongside a range of emotional landscapes arising from the team's fieldwork conducted in Greece, Tunisia and the Canary Islands. Workshop participants will be invited to engage with the cards, connect their own positionality to them and begin a process for imagining future worlds of dignity and compassion by experimenting with a concept of “wild cards”.



Arkadi Zaides works as a choreographer, curator, and researcher. He obtained a master's degree at the AHK Academy of Theatre and Dance in Amsterdam. Since 2021, he is a doctoral researcher in the Arts at the University of Antwerp, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, Ghent University, and KASK/School of Arts (HoGent). He is a member of the CORPoREAL research group at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp and the research centre S:PAM (Studies in Performing Arts & Media) at Ghent University. His performances and video installations have been presented at numerous dance and theatre festivals, museums, and galleries across Europe, North and South America, and Asia. Zaides is a recipient of various awards, among them a prize for demonstrating engagement in human rights issues, awarded to him by the Emile Zola Chair for Interdisciplinary Human Rights Dialogue.

More info: www.arkadizaides.com

Choreography as an Investigative Tool: Exploring Europe's Border Mechanisms

In this presentation, I examine two artistic projects that I have developed with a diverse team of collaborators: Talos (2017) and Necropolis (2021). These projects are interrelated. Talos interrogates the fortification, militarization and robotization of European borders, while Necropolis exposes the lethal consequences of this process. Both projects adopt a documentary approach, drawing on existing documents, and challenge the notion of choreography, which is my main artistic practice, as they feature little or no dance (a frequent point of criticism from programmers and dance institutions). Nevertheless, they expand the choreographic field to more engaged and critical domains and explore how this practice can be used as an investigative tool to address topical issues.