

Association for Borderlands Studies Second World Conference 2018 (July 10 – 14) – Final Report

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1. Introduction

After having won a global BID, PD Dr. habil. Machteld Venken was able to bring the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS) Second World Conference to Vienna and Budapest (July 10-14, 2018). The conference had as its central topic 'Border-Making and its Consequences: Interpreting Evidence from the "post-Colonial" and "post-Imperial" 20th Century' and was co-organized by the University of Vienna and the Central European University in Budapest on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The dissolution of empires such as the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman in the early 20th century, as well as the creation of new states and/or borders in Western Europe, are momentous historical events with consequences reaching far beyond Europe. One of the lessons that emerged from these historical events is that nationalisms that insist on single identities and cultural homogeneity are constant sources of conflict and human suffering. Whereas borders and the creation of new nation-states were considered a solution to war after WWI, subsequent events and the disaster of WWII have proved otherwise. Still, borders are regarded as marks of national identity by state elites even in the post-colonial world, and any societal change contrary to these nationalistic views is strongly resisted, and results in angry rhetoric and misguided border policies.

At the Second ABS World Conference, we paid attention to the historical and contemporary dynamics of border creation, border management and border shifting, as well as the consequences of these practices for the societies concerned. We sought to gain deeper insight into the similarities and differences in the way borders are made around the world, as well as the forms and functions borders fulfil throughout time. We also explored ethical questions that emerge from border politics and border-making. On a more visionary note, the conference considered borders and borderlands as spaces of encounter and plurality. Indeed, the possibility of pluralism, not as a collection of separate cultural realms as some might envision, but as a context where shared commitments, and not necessarily shared values, could allow for more inclusive understandings of community and more accommodating attitudes to multiculturalism and migration.

2. General Information & data

The Association for Borderlands Studies Second World Conference 2018 was a joint effort by the University of Vienna (UV), the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS), and the Central European Service for Cross Border Initiatives (CESCI). It took place from July 10th to 14th, for the first two days at the Juridicum of the UV, for the last two days at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. Its organizing theme was 'Border-Making and its Consequences: Interpreting Evidence from the "post-Colonial" and "post-Imperial" 20th Century'. The conference chair was Machteld Venken, assisted by Manuel Neubauer. The Local Organizing Committees consisted of Matthias Kaltenbrunner (Vienna) and Flora Ghazaryan, Isidora Grubački, Nikola Pantić, and Agnes Kende (Budapest). We are furthermore indebted to our partners Mátyás Jaschitz (CESCI), Fabrizio Sarrica (UNODC), Alexei Croitoru (IACA) and Astrid Fellner (Saarland University).

The organizers had the honor to host 448 participants from all fields of the humanities and the social sciences, 382 scholars from 49 different countries as well as 66 Citizen Scientists¹ from 12 countries. Of those 448 participants, 279 attended only in Budapest, 411 took part in Vienna, and 242 joined us for both parts.

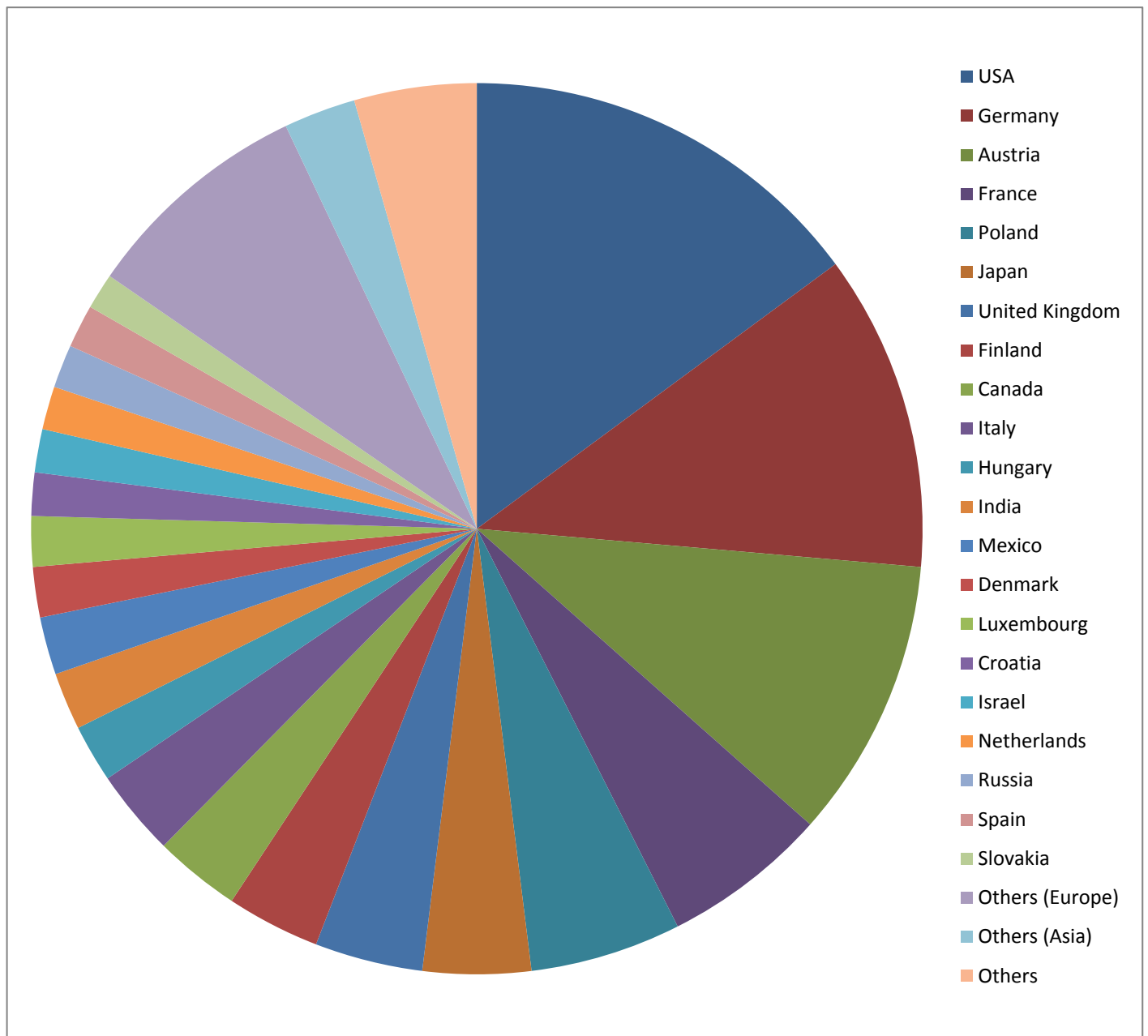
The organizers are grateful for the support of ABS, especially the current President Francisco Lara-Valencia, the former President Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, as well as Laurie Trautman and Jussi Laine, both members of the Board of Directors. Furthermore, we would like to thank the members of the Scientific Committee and the Head of the SC, Philipp Ther. The Scientific Committee consisted of renowned scholars from around the world:

- Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, University of Texas
- Laurie Trautman, Western Washington University
- Francisco Lara-Valencia, Arizona State University
- Jussi Laine, University of Eastern Finland
- Ilkka Liikanen, University of Eastern Finland
- Dhananjay Tripathi, South Asian University
- Naomi Chi, Hokkaido University
- Martha Patricia Barraza de Anda, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez
- Paul Richardson, University of Birmingham
- Olivier Walther, University of Florida
- Adriana Dorfman, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
- Éva Kovács, Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies
- Gábor Egry, Institute of Political History
- Tatiana Zhurzhenko, Institute for Human Sciences
- Libora Oates-Indruchova, University of Graz
- Alexandra Schwell, Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt
- Albert Kraler, International Centre for Migration Policy Development
- Tamás Tóth, Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives

¹ within the framework of the Citizen Science Project 'Talking Borders' financed by the Austrian Science Fund (TCS028) and led by PD Dr. Machteld Venken

- Christian Wille, Université du Luxembourg
- Erika Nagy, Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- Chiara Brambilla, University of Bergamo

Information on the budget can be found in Appendix I. The organizers managed to secure financial support from ABS, the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria (Zukunftsfonds), the Institute for Eastern European History (University of Vienna), the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna, the Research platform European History, and the Vienna Convention Bureau. Furthermore, material support was provided by the University of Vienna and the city hall of Vienna as well as CEU. Different programs and tracks received funding from the Polish Embassy, the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, the Czech Embassy in Vienna, the Polish Academy of Sciences in Vienna, the Polish Embassy in Vienna, the Austrian Culture forum in Budapest and the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb).



3. Program

In total, 104 panel sessions took place (62 in Vienna, 42 in Budapest), consisting of 319 papers (Vienna: 190, Budapest: 129). On average, three papers were presented per panel. Unfortunately, three panels had to be cancelled/rescheduled due to last-minute cancellations. Besides the panels, the program featured five keynote speeches, one plenary session, four book presentations, and three film screenings. Four posters and an art exhibition were on display in Vienna. The full program is available on the internet.²

a. Plenary session & keynote lectures

On July 10th, a plenary session titled 'Migration, Trafficking and Borders: Contemporary Global Challenges', chaired by Philipp Ther, took place right after the opening ceremony. It gathered specialists from international organisations in Vienna: Fabrizio Sarrica (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Research Officer Global Report on Human Trafficking in Persons Unit); Jarosław Pietrusiewicz (International Anti-Corruption Academy); Marian Benbow Pfisterer (International Organization for Migration); Alberto Andreani (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe); Bernhard Perchinig (International Centre for Migration Policy Development)

The program included five keynote speeches: On July 10th, Donald Nicolson discussed 'Conferences within Borders; Borders within Conferences'. The following day, Irina Marin's presentation 'New Frontiers, New Realities? The Case of the Banat of Temesvár' and Leisy Abrego's speech 'Expanding Borders, Revealing Crises: Central American Refugees' Embodied Resistance to Crises of the State' took place. In Budapest, participants had the opportunity to listen to Michelle Miller's presentation 'Transboundary communities of commoning in environmental governance' (July 13th) as well as Machteld Venken's keynote 'What is a Borderland Child? Age as a Central Category of Analysis in Border Research' (14th)³.

b. Exhibitions & Screenings

In Vienna, four posters submitted by the participants were on display on the 10th and 11th. In addition, participants had the opportunity to visit the art exhibition 'Texas Borderlands: The Visual Iconography of Mestiza Resistance and Survival', which had been donated to the conference by Santa C. Barraza, artist and professor from Texas A&M University at Kingsville.

² https://www.abs2018world.com/fileadmin/user_upload/k_abs2018/abs_booklet_2018web.pdf

³ These Keynote lectures can be consulted on YouTube.

Three screenings were included in the program: 'The Wall [El Muro]' by Rosalva and Ramon Resendiz, 'Inner Mapping' by Stéphanie Latte-Abdallah, and 'Strangers at Home' by Shayna Plaut.

c. Social events

The conference hosted two receptions, one at the city hall of Vienna (July 11) and one at the Residence Center of CEU in Budapest (July 13) as well as a picnic on the 14th. During the first reception, two UV awards were granted to the two best papers submitted by students. The second reception was sponsored by ABS and included the "Meet the Editors of Journal of Borderlands Studies" event, as well as the ABS Student Awards Ceremony. Before departing back to Vienna on the 14th, participants were invited to join for an informal picnic at the atrium of CEU.

d. Excursions

On the 12th of July, participants of the ABS World Conference 2018 had the opportunity to participate in one of the three different excursions. The first excursion was organized by the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives. It brought the participants to the city of Sopron at the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian border, where they paid a visit to the Pan-European Picnic Memorial Park, where the first breakthrough of the Iron Curtain took place in 1989. The guests were provided with a brief tour to the past and informed about the Iron Curtain, the border regime between the East and West and the events of the picnic which sent the signal of freedom to the nations of the Communist bloc.

During the second excursion to the International Anti-Corruption Academy in Laxenburg, participants were made familiar with the work of the IACA as well as the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). IACA has a unique dual character, as both an international organisation and a post-secondary educational institution which seeks to overcome shortcomings in knowledge and practice in the field of anticorruption and empowers professionals for the challenges of tomorrow. IIASA is a scientific research institute conducting policy-oriented research into problems of a global nature that are too large or too complex to be solved by a single country or academic discipline.

The third excursion offered an insight into the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an

extensive network of field offices. During a guided tour, participants received more information about the organisation in general, as well as about the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons.

e. Petitions

The participants of ABS World 2018 initiated two petitions, one in favor of academic freedom,⁴ the other one criticizing the European Union's refugee policy.⁵ Francisco Lara-Valencia, Shayna Plaut, Peter Dörrenbacher, and Machteld Venken were interviewed within the program "Challenge of the Mind" by Radio Tilos while at CEU.⁶

4. Borders in Academia

The main aim of the Conference Chair was to experiment with shifting borders in academia along the applied dimension of border research. As Henk van Houtum wrote: "(...) a border is not and can never be an answer. It is a question. The imperative geo-philosophical border question of our time is how and why we create a just border for ourselves and thereby for others" (2001, 60).

a. The Austro-Hungarian border

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the first part of this conference was organised at the University of Vienna and its second part at the Central European University in Budapest. The border separating Austria from Hungary had to be crossed by all those attending both parts of the conference. This border had recently returned to international attention, as due to the 'refugee crisis' new border controls were temporarily introduced. One of the three excursions, organized by CESCO, brought the participants to this border, commemorating the long history and especially the Pan-European picnic. In addition, the Central European University in Budapest has felt political pressure to downplay its ambition to guarantee academic freedom.

b. Financial and visa borders

Financial and visa issues have always had a huge impact on the composition of the audience of international conferences, as was pointed out by Donald Nicolson during his keynote speech on

⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/machteld-venken-univie-ac-at-message-regarding-academic-freedom>

⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/council-of-europe-hundreds-of-border-studies-scholars-protest-refugee-policies>

⁶ <https://archive.tilos.hu/cache/tilos-20180716-183000-200000.mp3>

the evening of the 10th. These very issues were experienced by the organizing committee of ABS World 2018, as, for example, potential participants from Iran were denied entrance to the Schengen area.

To attenuate these effects, the Local Organizing Committee and ABS introduced several initiatives to ensure broad access and representation of students and non-European participants. ABS and UV provided grants for graduate students. In order to promote and support global participation in the World Conference, ABS awarded 100 Euro for students attending from within Europe and 400 Euro for those traveling from overseas (4400 Euro in total). The recipients (14 in total) were selected by a committee consisting of Laurie Trautman, Dhananjay Tripathi, and Chiara Brambilla. They were honored during the ABS reception on the evening of the 13th. The University of Vienna provided two grants (500 Euro each) for the best abstracts submitted by Matthias Kaltenbrunner and Jakob Mischke. The award ceremony was held as a part of the city hall reception on July 11th.

As a part of their endeavours to turn the ABS World Conference into an event of global scale, the partners organised a "global view" track to provide an overview over the state of the arts in border research worldwide. This program consisted of seven panels in total, covering Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America, and South America; each panel was organized by an expert on the respective region. To enable the broader public and students around the world to profit from the concentrated knowledge present at the conference, these panels were filmed and made accessible via the internet.⁷ The organizers managed to secure funding by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) which enabled us to make this possible. Furthermore, we would like to thank our partners, the University of Saarbrücken, and in particular Astrid Fellner and Bärbel Schlimbach for taking care of the organizational issues.

In addition, the LOC organized a series of panels that dealt with borders and border-drawing processes in the Central European area, focussing on the consequences of the Habsburg monarchy's dissolution for the region. In the framework of this program, entitled the "Habsburg track" and financially supported by various embassies in Vienna, scholars working on a state or region once (wholly or partly) part of the monarchy (12 in total) received the opportunity to create a panel on the developments concerning the respective region. Unfortunately, the panel on Slovakia had to be cancelled and the panels on Bosnia and Serbia had to be merged.

c. Expertise: Top Citizen Science Project ,Talking Borders'⁸

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVE6rfS5dXcwTBbBUY7sOMw>

⁸ <https://www.univie.ac.at/talkingborders/index.php>

In turning the 2018 ABS World Conference into a platform for an experiment, the Top Citizen Science project brought us to the applied dimension of border research by lifting the borders of expertise, age and method in science. The event thus became a site of scientific investigation itself, where 66 non-trained experts (first year students in the humanities from border regions throughout the ex-Habsburg area) met 23 trained experts (border scholars working on topics not related to the ex-Habsburg area) as equals for a cross-disciplinary (border/citizen science) experiment.

The TCS project asks: (1) what do borders mean to border scholars? (2) What do borders mean to young adults from the (ex-) Habsburg area? And: (3) what new knowledge does a global encounter between non-trained and trained border experts reveal? In total, 41 dialogues were recorded. A digital café now offers scholars and Citizen Scientists the opportunity to discuss extracts from their conversations. The online page wants to demonstrate how scientific knowledge on the global meaning(s) of borders is generated. A special focus is put on potentially common narratives among citizen scientists in articulating the meaning of borders. How is the border verbally drawn and how did it evolve during the further global conversations? The project aims to offer a solid empirical data basis for future research in border studies. It also aims to draw attention to the limits of public expertise in the knowledge and information society of the 21st century, as well as the limits of the production and consumption of science. This project was made possible by the generous support of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).⁹

d. Gender borders

The 2018 ABS World Conference invited five scholars to hold their first keynote speech along the applied dimension of border research, thus opening it up for 'new faces' by providing them with a new opportunity. In addition, the conference continued the initiative of one of its partners, the Central European University, to invite women to talk by including female keynote speakers.¹⁰ Featuring four women and one man, the keynote speakers' list reversed the gender disparity of the Association for Borderlands Studies 1st World Conference, which had featured four men and one woman.

⁹ <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/>

¹⁰ Virginia Valian (2013) Invite women to talk, *Nature*, 495:2013, 36; Anonymous (2013). CEU Professor's Online Petition Prompts Academic Conference Gender Equity Policy.

e. Borders and Conferences

The purpose of the last initiative was to make participants reflect on scientific conferences as bordering practices within academia. The opening keynote speaker David J. Nicholson shared his viewpoint of academic conferences as neoliberal commodities with the audience. Using a special survey, participants were finally asked to evaluate this conference's attempts to overturn existing borders within academia. The results are currently being analysed.¹¹

¹¹ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YM6VR3Z>