

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND BORDERS

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY OUTLOOK

Edited by

Machteld Venken, Virpi Kaisto and Chiara Brambilla



ROUTLEDGE

Children, Young People and Borders

This edited volume increases knowledge about children and young people living in borderlands, passing through borders and (de)constructing borders, as well as highlights the potential of studying how children and young people imagine, act, cross, and inhabit symbolic and material borders.

The study of borders and borderlands is growing extensively, but the experiences of children and young people in the turmoil of border changes and border crossings remain under-researched. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach, this edited volume has a twofold objective: to increase knowledge about children and young people living in borderlands, passing through borders and (de)constructing borders; and to highlight the potential of studying how children and young people imagine, act, cross, and inhabit symbolic and material borders, with the aim of advancing the theoretical and empirical debate within border studies.

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A Multidisciplinary Outlook

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**Machteld Venken, Virpi Kaisto and
Chiara Brambilla**

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Children, Young People and Borders: A Multidisciplinary Outlook

Machteld Venken , Virpi Kaisto  and Chiara Brambilla 

The study of borders and borderlands is growing extensively, but the experiences of children and young people in the turmoil of border changes and border crossings remain under-researched. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach, this special issue has a twofold objective: to increase knowledge about children and young people living in borderlands, passing through borders and (de)constructing borders; and to highlight the potential of studying how children and young people imagine, act, cross, and inhabit symbolic and material borders, with the aim of advancing the theoretical and empirical debate within border studies.

Children and young people have begun to interest researchers from various social sciences and humanities disciplines seriously over the last couple of decades. What used to be the pursuit of only a few scholars has turned into one of the most active fields in academia today, valued for offering an interesting lens through which to view societies (Saxton 2012, 103–104; Montgomery 2020). Childhood and youth studies are carried out in geography, history, psychology, law, children's rights, social policy, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies. Thus, the field is characterized by multidisciplinary and enriched by insights from a considerable number of different geographical and social settings. The interest in children and young people as “objects” of social and human science research owes much to the so-called “new” social studies of childhood (see Prout and James 1997). This approach that emerged during the last two decades of the twentieth century saw children and young people as beings in their own right and not as adults-in-waiting or receptacles of adult teaching and child policies. Inspired by social constructionism, it considered children and young people as active agents in the creation and determination of their own social lives and in the societies and social lives of those around them (Prout and James 1997; Melton et al. 2014).

Incorporating this idea and involving children and young people in border research has begun only in recent years (Spyrou and Christou 2014). Thus far, research has focused on two major themes: children and young people living in and experiencing borderlands (past and present) and children and young people encountering voluntary or forced migration. Studies in the first group have examined the cross-border practices,

perceptions, and identities of children and young people in borderlands (Jukarainen 2001; Bejarano 2010; Mendoza Inzunza and Fernandez Huerta 2010; Ongay 2010; da Silva 2014; Christou and Spyrou 2014; Sandberg 2016; Venken 2017; Kaisto and Brednikova 2019; Brambilla 2021) and at contested borders and urban spaces (Akeson 2014; Grinberg 2014; McKnight and Leonard 2014; Christou and Spyrou 2017; Lundgren 2018); the activism and political work of borderland children and young people (Bosco 2010; Burrell 2010; Fickers 2017); and ethnic minority youth's experiences and perceptions of the state and the nation in borderlands (TrầnThị and Huijsmans 2014; Wung-Sung 2017). Studies in the second group have explored how unaccompanied minors experience border crossings (Aitken, Swanson, and Kennedy 2014; Buil and Siegel 2014; Clacherty 2019); how migrant children and youth negotiate practicalities, identities and belonging in new societies (Aitken 2010; Kim and Dorner 2014; Halicka 2017; Assmuth and Siim 2018; Hakkarainen 2018); and how they and their families experience transnational life (Pratt 2010; Kutsar, Darmody, and Lahesoo 2014; Ruiz Marrujo 2014). In addition to this research, scholars have been interested in how young people understand borders conceptually and how their border-crossing experiences influence their perceptions of borders and other nations (Ahponen 2011; Nielsen 2019; Seidel and Budke 2019).

These studies have shown that, just like the lives of adults, the lives of children and young people are influenced by the institutional power of borders, and that certain experiences and practices are actually specific to children and young people. Furthermore, children and young people are not passive participants in bordering processes; they can impact borders and borderlands through their own activity and agency. This highlights the need to include children and young people in the agenda of border studies, to discover characteristics of borders and bordering processes that would otherwise be overlooked or remain invisible.

This special issue meets this challenge and broadens the emerging body of literature with seven original articles. The first three articles by Machteld Venken, Lisbeth Matzer, and Olga Gnydiuk deal with border changes that took place in Europe after the First and Second World Wars and study the experiences of borderland children during and after these historical events. In her analysis of the interwar German-Belgian borderlands, Venken examines historical "ego-documents" – texts in the form of letters, magazine articles and diaries – written by children and stored in archives and newspaper repositories as rare examples of sources left behind by children. These texts provide a glimpse into the lives of children and young people in the conflicted territory that belonged to Belgium but had previously been part of Germany. Venken investigates children's capacity to actively participate in their environment and to imagine a better world. She uses Michel Foucault's notion of a heterotopia to illustrate how at a time when categories of national belonging became more diffuse, borderland children were able to create "borderland child heterotopias" – that is, parallel material or linguistic spaces where they could express and overcome the confusion dominating their environment.

Matzer investigates Germanization practices directed at young people in the occupied border regions of Slovenia during the Second World War. Children and young people have long been a major target group of nationalization practices, especially in disputed borderlands, and the Nazi regime was no exception. It used the Hitler Youth organization

to consolidate its rule in the annexed border regions that had belonged to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia until 1941. Matzer's analysis of historical and empirical materials shows how the supposed "German" character of individuals lacked clear definition. Thus, arbitrary criteria determining the German descent of local young people were applied so that they could be included in youth organizations and, later, called to serve in the German army. Fostering the feeling of belonging to an imagined collective of "Germans" was also flexible to maximize the evocation of a "German" feeling among local youth and to exert ideological control.

Gnydiuk studies how welfare workers for the United Nations and the International Relief Organization negotiated the belonging of displaced unaccompanied minors in the American zones of occupation in Germany and Austria after the Second World War. These children originated from territories that were annexed by the Soviet Union and included in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1945. By analyzing working correspondence and reports and children's personal files, Gnydiuk observes how the understanding of belonging of unaccompanied minors evolved in the minds and practices of the welfare workers. Between 1945 and 1948, their interpretation of belonging changed from being a sole matter of descent and identification to one of biopolitics at the dawn of the Cold War, with many children being "saved" from repatriation to the Soviet Union and resettled in the West.

The next two articles, by Marijana Hameršak and Iva Pleše and by Martin Lemberg-Pedersen, look at children and young people in the context of migration and mobility. These contributions shed light on contemporary processes of forced migration to Europe and discuss often controversial border and migration policies by drawing attention to the experiences of children and families. The article by Hameršak and Pleše focuses on the case of the Balkan corridor (active in 2015 and 2016) and more precisely its Croatian section where the Slavonski Brod transit refugee camp was built as a compulsory stopping point. The authors consider the camp as "a site where the concept of a 'lone child' in migration was defined and re-defined in practice" (Hameršak and Pleše this issue, 1). By conducting ethnographic research in the camp, Hameršak and Pleše offer novel insights into the complexity of lone children's experiences within the wider framework of European Union border policies. They unravel how the children turned into competent social actors who could adjust their behavior and tactics in accordance with the changing norms guiding the movement of people along the corridor. The authors point out that although the independent child migrants were able to leave the Slavonski Brod camp, it will be far more difficult for them to leave a life composed of camps, hiding and restrictions on movement.

Lemberg-Pedersen shifts the attention to the case of the Northern European policy drive to deport unaccompanied Afghan minors to so-called reception facilities in Afghanistan. His empirical material covers the period between 2006 and 2018 and focuses on the case of the European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors (ERPUM), coordinated by Sweden with the participation of Norway, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden. Lemberg-Pedersen argues that ERPUM represents a concrete case of how border operations are framed as humanitarian interventions by portraying unaccompanied minors as being "at risk" and deportation as a way to empower child displacees and their families. This way of framing nationalistic geopolitical goals as universal human and child rights is considered extremely problematic by the author.

The last two articles, by Virpi Kaisto and Chloe Wells and by Vanessa Falcón Orta and Gerald Monk, introduce novel methodologies for studying children's and young people's perceptions of borders. The article by Kaisto and Wells discusses the method of mental mapping as a tool for analyzing how borders and bordering are related to the way in which young people identify with territories of various scales. Mental mapping is a visual method during which research participants are asked to draw on paper what they think about a particular place or space. Kaisto and Wells compare two mental mapping studies conducted in Finland and the Finnish-Russian borderland to demonstrate different ways in which the method can be used for studying borders with young people. Their study illustrates how different choices in the research design process influence mapping outcomes, determining the extent to which identification processes can be examined with mental maps.

Falcón Orta and Monk engage in an intriguing example of participatory action research. Their aim is to investigate the needs of higher education students who live a transborder lifestyle, residing and commuting between both sides of the border and attending higher education institutions in San Diego, CA. These "transfronterix" students have special needs related to their everyday lives and development as students. During their commute they are exposed to intense policing, racism, a culture of impunity at the border, and long wait times that can hinder their on-campus engagement and academic success. At their higher education institutions, they might experience microaggressions and discrimination. Together with a group of students and higher education professionals, the authors implemented institutional change through a five-phase process and created a Transfronterix Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU) to foster the success of transfronterix students.

The findings of these seven articles further support previous research on children, young people and borders, emphasizing the agency of children and young people in bordering processes and the social life of borderlands. Yet the authors also acknowledge the often detrimental power of the political context and border policies over children and young people. Connected with this, Spyrou, Rosen, and Cook (2018) have lately challenged researchers to revisit the idea of children as individual subjects and agents in their social surroundings. They argue that it is necessary to constantly problematize children's agency and to consider the material and social contexts (on different scales) that children live in and that determine how they construe their worlds. Recent re-bordering processes as a result of forced migration, the global rise of populism, and the COVID-19 pandemic only accentuate how essential it is to pay attention not only to children and young people as social actors but also to the contexts in which they operate.

From a practical point of view, researchers studying children and young people must be especially careful in conducting research according to ethical principles, to avoid causing risks, damage or harm to the participants and to present their views in fair and unbiased ways. Researchers must deal with ethical issues not only at the beginning of their research, checking whether they need to obtain ethics clearance before undertaking research on/with minors, but consistently during the entire research process. When doing research with children and young people, scholars will not always have a fixed ethical rule to follow in every situation. Instead, "ethics serve as a framework of principles that guide the researcher during the research process, rather than as 'laws'" (Escamilla García and Fine 2018, 377). Many issues in ethics arise in relation to the specific contexts

in which researchers work with minors. Therefore, ethics in research involving children and young people should always be “situated,” with an approach to ethical decision-making that highlights the importance of the context in developing “tactics” to solve ethical issues.

The diverse perspectives on children, young people and borders presented in this special issue contribute to the conceptual and methodological dimensions of border studies and carry important messages for researchers and policy-makers. In terms of border conceptualization, the papers produce rich empirical insights into how borders are continuously constructed, de-constructed, and re-constructed through multiple, mutually constitutive, shifting, and ambiguous processes of bordering (see van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005; Scott 2015). This challenges the “linearity” of stable, unchanging, definite borders while acknowledging borders’ conflicting multiplicity.

The authors demonstrate this multiplicity: first, by exploring how borders and bordering processes are related to identity and belonging. With their mental mapping study, Kaisto and Wells use physical maps drawn by young people to illustrate and visualize the nuanced and complex ways in which borders and territorial identifications are intertwined, and how young people engage in the social, cultural and mental construction of borders and the negotiation of territorial identities. Matzer’s study about the Germanization practices of the Nazi regime, in turn, highlights the arbitrary nature of bordering processes, when boundaries are constructed between social and cultural groups in everyday life and especially for ideological purposes. Matzer therefore reminds researchers and policy-makers to be cautious of the ways in which “borderland ideologies” and labels of belonging can be used to promote hegemonic and territorial interests. Gnydiuk’s study into welfare workers’ decision-making processes after the Second World War further adds to the understanding of how borders and belonging are interrelated. Gnydiuk’s research illustrates how the welfare workers engaged in borderwork (see Rumford 2008) by negotiating the belonging of displaced children and eventually “establishing a border where it had ceased to exist on the political map of Europe” (Gnydiuk this issue, 15).

Second, the articles enter into a productive dialogue with emerging approaches to problematize the border-migration nexus (e.g. the “borderescaping” approach and the approach of “ethnographic border regime analysis”), highlighting borderscapes as shifting fields of claims, counter-claims, and negotiations among various actors and historically contingent interests and processes (see among others Brambilla et al. 2015; Brambilla 2015a; Hess and Kasperek 2017). From this viewpoint, borders can also be regarded as a site of alternative political subjectivities and agency (Brambilla and Jones 2020). In this regard, Lemberg-Pedersen shows how politics of deportability towards unaccompanied Afghan minors exemplify how borders can function as “places of becoming” where child migrants activate themselves and “strategize to form an existence based on their lived experience of complex struggles, identity and subjectivity formations” (Lemberg-Pedersen this issue, 6). As mentioned above, Hameršak and Pleše also present an inspiring reflection on the transformation of unaccompanied child migrants from “privileged humanitarian subjects” to children traveling alone as “competent social actors”. Hameršak and Pleše provide valuable insights into how child migrants used tactics of in/visibility “as a form of resistance against the European Union border

and migration regime" (Brambilla and Pötzsch 2017, 81; for a reflection on the tactics of in/visibility adopted by children and young people in the context of a Mediterranean borderscape, see Brambilla 2021). In so doing, both contributions claim that border studies need to engage more directly with the specific situation of unaccompanied children and examine how their rights feature in humanitarianized border politics, by moving away from an idealized monolithic figure of the child and returning agency to children. Indeed, this seems to be a core epistemological blind spot at the heart of both deportation and critical border studies, as currently configured. Both articles also shed light on bordering as a constant process of renegotiation that retains the ultimate indeterminacy and temporariness of any in/exclusion regime. Thus, both articles expose some of the ambivalences and paradoxes of border and migration politics at the external borders of the European Union and might help us reinterpret the contemporary securitarian-humanitarian management of people on the move.

Third, the authors contribute to the understanding of borderlands as specific "in-between" places between states, nations and cultures and as homes for constantly developing and shifting border cultures and identities (see Martinez 1994). In particular, the first three historical papers by Venken, Matzer and Gnydiuk and the study of transfronterizx students in the San Diego-Tijuana border region by Falcón Orta and Monk present borderlands as places where power struggles over territory and people's belonging to cultural, national and ethnic categories can occur. With her study of child writers in the interwar German-Belgian borderlands, Venken, for example, proposes a deconstructed understanding of children's agency to decipher children's opportunity to contribute to lives of borders and borderlands. This means that she widens the notion of political agency and investigates children's access to politics rather than their political achievements, considers children as rational and capable of having a "mind of their own" (Archard 2014, 4) and focuses on the scale of children's activities, bearing in mind that the local cuts across wider notions of childhood, government policies, and adult interventions. Falcón Orta and Monk, for their part, illustrate how challenging borderlands can be as living environments, while at the same time giving evidence of border-transcending revolutionary imaginations and actions that young people living in borderlands are capable of evoking and undertaking (see Aitken and Plows 2010).

Last but not least, it is worth considering how the articles contribute to border studies in methodological terms. The first three articles by Venken, Matzer and Gnydiuk discuss the complexities of understanding children's voices of the past. They demonstrate how a close reading and interpretation of historical sources with the help of contemporary conceptual literature on borders encourage an understanding of borders and borderlands as historically contingent processes that can place current child policies and child experiences in a broader perspective. Hameršak and Pleše show how an ethnographical lens is helpful for advancing research on the border-migration nexus by providing a specific tool for investigating the social reality of the border from the perspective of border people and crossers and border sites, capturing the complex socio-cultural texture and arenas of life at, in, and across the border (Brambilla 2019). Lemberg-Pedersen adopts a multidisciplinary perspective in his analysis of Afghan unaccompanied minors and manages to pinpoint the urgency of problematizing the epistemological "centric" perspective on borders by enlightening instead the entangled nature of borders as complex multidimensional textures crisscrossed by negotiations between a

variety of different actors, and not only the state. Kaisto and Wells introduce mental mapping and Falcón Orta and Monk participatory action research as rarely used but especially fruitful methodologies for exploring borders, bordering processes, and borderlands.

Children and young people are only beginning to appear on the agenda of border studies. The articles in this special issue represent several different disciplines and work with rich, original research materials that include sources and testimonies produced by children both now and in the past. Together, they demonstrate the potential but also the extreme importance of studying borders through the eyes of children and young people, as well as through policies directed at them. Possible future directions of research include involving children and young people as researchers of borders and bordering processes (see Kaisto, Brednikova, and Malkki 2014; Brambilla 2015b; Venken 2018; Brambilla 2021).

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Borderland Child Heterotopias: A Case Study on the Belgian-German Borderlands

Machteld Venken

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the capacities of children to participate actively in their lives in the Belgian-German borderlands in the time period between World War I and World War II. The article interprets a body of historical sources that has hitherto been left unexplored – namely, borderland child ego documents – with the help of insights from child studies and border studies. These ego documents unfold as borderland child heterotopias. Borderland child heterotopias include material places and creative linguistic loci established by or for those considered in crisis in relation to the rest of society based on their age within or outside child spaces of modernity. The borderland child heterotopias offer a unique gateway to borderland children's past imaginations for a better world.

1. Introduction

As the anthropologists Spyrou and Christou have noted, children are “linked with the power struggles that accompany the processes that give rise to, maintain, and transform borders and their role in the world” (2014, 2). Case study research on the history of children in borderlands revealed that states, upon acquiring new pieces of land near their political borders, invested their hopes in child policies in order to raise a generation of socially engaged citizens able to bring the periphery closer to the country's core (Präger 2015; Mezger 2016). In order to understand how individual children reacted to such policies, researchers have used the oral history method. The testimonies of adults recalling their childhood years in borderlands after World War II, for example, have revealed that children were more flexible than adults in adopting, and adapting to, the premises of a post-war reality (Wylegała 2015).

Deepening the investigation into the capacities of borderland children to participate actively in and report about the world in which they lived, the author asks what scholars today can learn from historical sources that have hitherto been left unexplored by researchers. What happens if materials composed by borderland children in the interwar years are put at the center of the analysis? This article presents the argument that so-called

historical ego documents (such as a letter, a youth magazine, or a diary) authored by borderland children offer a different gateway to examine their opportunities to articulate acceptance, refusal or propositions of change to the environment they encountered in a time of uncertainty regarding the future state sovereignty of the Belgian-German borderlands in the years between World War I and World War II.

The article uses Michel Foucault's concept of a heterotopia, which has been appropriated by border scholars (Pugliese 2009; Konrad and Nicol 2011; Green 2012; Lafazani 2013) in order to interpret the materials produced by children in the past. By introducing the notion of the borderland child heterotopia, the paper emphasizes that age mattered. The interwar Belgian-German borderlands harbored child spaces of modernity in which child writers could take an active role in the shaping of their everyday lives. In contrast to adults, these child writers articulated creative solutions to overcome the uncertainty about the state sovereignty of their home grounds. A reading of borderland child heterotopias, therefore, gives us a different gateway to the past; they open up the past imaginations of borderland children.

After an introduction to Foucault's notion of heterotopia and the way it has been used in interdisciplinary research on borderlands, borderland child heterotopias are defined and explained. What follows is a presentation of the specific historical context the Belgian-German borderlands found themselves in at the end of the 1930s, as well as a clarification of the author's selection and reading of those historical sources foregrounding the agency of borderland children. The article then continues with an in-depth analysis of the literary oeuvre of three borderland child writers, before showing in the conclusion how the notion of borderland child heterotopias can contribute to border studies and historical research.

2. Borderlands and heterotopias

Michel Foucault referred briefly to the term heterotopia in his book *The Order of Things* (1970) and elaborated on it in his published speech "Of Other Spaces" (1986). He put forward six principles of heterotopias. First, he considered heterotopias a constant feature in most societies, but that "in civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates" (Foucault 1986, 27). More specifically, according to another of Michel Foucault's principles, heterotopias appear among individuals encountering a temporal rupture with their conventional lives. The next principle is the appearance of heterotopias as spaces with restricted access, which may seem to be open, but which have exclusion mechanisms. Heterotopias also offer a temporary world harboring "several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1986, 25). Heterotopias often provide an inversion of the meaning of a given space, with the purpose either to invent a parallel space where life is more organized than in the everyday confusion or to expose the profound cleavages within a certain system of power. According to the last principle, Michel Foucault's heterotopias are places that relate to all other places in a society (Foucault 1986, 27).

Border scholars have used Michel Foucault's notion of a heterotopia in order to interpret the complexities related to bordering processes. In borderlands, when state border lines become less distinct and categories of the inside and outside become more diffuse, Sarah Green wrote: "the source of the distinctions that borders mark (the differences that make a difference) are not condensed into an abstract line at the edge of a place,

but are located elsewhere” (Green 2012, 587). Sarah Green contrasted heterotopias with utopias (non-existent spaces where life is beautiful), citing Foucault’s description of them as real but external spaces, where “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault 1986, 24). “One proposed example of a heterotopia would be islands. Functioning both as places where asylum seekers arrive and as luxury holiday destinations for tourists, they are “spaces that can accommodate simultaneously often violently contradictory differences” (Pugliese 2009, 663).

Border scholars have almost exclusively referred to heterotopias as material places. However, whereas in “Of Other Spaces” Foucault described heterotopias as “real places – that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society” (Foucault 1986, 24), in *The Order of Things* he referred to heterotopias as linguistic places: “heterotopias desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences” (Foucault 2002, xix). Kelvin T. Knight, investigating an overlooked radio broadcast by Foucault, moreover, expressed an insight that is probably unfamiliar to border scholars: that the concept of the heterotopia “was never intended to refer to real sites, but rather pertains exclusively to textual representations of these sites” (Knight 2017, 141). In this article, a heterotopia is referred to either as a material place (a real site) or as a linguistic place (a text taking the form of a literary source and representing a real site).

Although Foucault described heterotopias as a “constant of every human group”, he was convinced heterotopias were more likely to appear among groups considered in crisis compared to the rest of society (Foucault 1986, 24). Angie Voela has already indicated how “in the past women were able to resort to crisis heterotopias, places suitable for re-examining femininity as an object of desire and for fashioning new forms of subjectivity” (Voela 2011, 168). Taking this argument further, this article will examine whether borderland child heterotopias were “places suitable for re-examining” childhood.

3. Borderland child heterotopias

The definition of a child used in this article is inspired by Michel Foucault’s idea of groups in crisis. An introduction into the historical development of childhood will make this clear. Throughout the Europe of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, efforts were made to create children as a social group: to establish age borders and make cohorts of children experience an increasing part of their childhood in specially designed child spaces. Thanks to a prohibition of child labor, children’s time was devoted to new forms of socialization, such as in schools and youth organizations. Children received different opportunities in special spaces set aside from the world of adults, and increasingly experienced situations differently than adults (Sandin 2010). Child spaces of modernity could include members and acquaintances with biological ages exceeding the legal definition of a child at the time. Interwar Belgian law differentiated between a schoolchild (aged between six and fourteen), a working child (from fourteen years old), and majority (sexual majority at the age of sixteen, juridical at eighteen, and civil at twenty-one) (Jamin and Perrin 2005, 159–162).

In historical sources from the interwar years, adults did not refer to children in terms of belonging to a specific biological age cohort; instead, they at times considered that

members of a youth organization – irrespective of their actual age – were children in a state of crisis in relation to the human environment.¹ Therefore, most of the borderland children focused on in this article are here called children because their written output was found within the archival collection of a youth organization. The actual biological age of these children was considered less relevant at the time and was not always mentioned. The historical ego document of one borderland child was added to the analysis, even though we do know neither whether the girl belonged to a youth organization, nor what her biological age was; in her letter, she called herself an “underage child”². This borderland girl was included because she sent out a written description of what she considered to have been a crisis in her family, an action no adult in her environment undertook at the time. Because she offered a different perspective on everyday life than borderland adults, we will see that German civil servants valued her creative written output as a source of information.

Children in the past were indeed not only “simply beings” but also “significantly doings” (Oswell 2012, 3). The British sociologist David Oswell has stated that children’s activities are often presented “in terms of the local, the face to face, the interpersonal”, despite the fact that relationships between children cut across different scales: adult interventions, government policy, notions of childhood and infrastructure (Oswell 2012, 268). The Finnish social scientists Kirsi Kallio and Jouni Häkli, in turn, have demonstrated how children are omitted in a traditional understanding of political agency congruent with “rational intentional action concerning collective matters known to have political relevance, practiced by actors who are capable of understanding and acting on the issues at stake through official or semi-official channels” (Kallio and Häkli 2013, 7). The authors encourage researchers “to find politics in people’s experienced and practiced worlds” and to investigate how “children’s access to politics relates to growing awareness in public matters, the emancipation of the subject and more inclusive policy-making” (3, 4). The British philosopher David Archard, moreover, indicated that Western thought traditionally assumed a connection between adulthood and rationality, which made it logical to consider the acquisition of reason decisive for a coming of age, and to consider children deprived of the (full) capacity to act rationally. Archard proposes an alternative definition in which children can come to possess “a mind of their own”, while having to rely on the networks of adults to proliferate their ideas (Archard 2014, 4).

The above-mentioned insights on the creation of child spaces of modernity, as well as children’s capacities to participate actively in their environment, shape the definition of a borderland child heterotopia. Borderland child heterotopias are referred to in this article as including material places and creative linguistic loci established by or for those considered in crisis in relation to the rest of their borderland society based on their age within or outside child spaces of modernity. These material places did not incorporate the entire Belgian-German borderlands but were limited to the places where children experienced their lives and could express themselves.

4. The Belgian-German borderlands in the interwar years

Whereas studying “a place where two entities (usually nations or societies) border each other” has been most common in borderlands studies, this article foregrounds a temporal dimension of borderlands and studies “what happens when distinct societies [...] contest

lands in between” within a specific time period in the past (Duval 2010, 3). The Belgian-German borderlands are defined as the lands that belonged to Germany and switched to Belgian state sovereignty after World War I ended, while still being contested by people in Germany and by borderland inhabitants. The Belgian-German borderlands consist of the region of Eupen, the region of Sankt Vith, and the region of Malmedy (hereinafter ESM). Most local inhabitants remained and exchanged German for Belgian citizenship. Approximately six percent of the population, around 4,800 people, emigrated to Germany, and a smaller number of professionals, including teachers (whose number amounted to 68 in ESM in the year 1925), moved from other parts of Belgium to ESM (Lejeune, Rauw and Jousten 2019, 244–260). Local inhabitants from the regions of Eupen and Sankt Vith could continue using the German language while communicating with Belgian state authorities, whereas inhabitants from the region of Malmedy needed to approach state representatives in French. The German-speaking children of local inhabitants from the regions of Eupen and Sankt Vith, who were born as Belgian citizens, are the focus of this inquiry.

This article focuses on the Belgian-German borderlands in the years between World War I and World War II. Soon after the February Revolution had come to an end, the Petrograd Soviet started to speak of self-determination and peace. Imperial paternalism needed to be exchanged for national self-determination. The Western Allies condemned the German expansionism formulated in the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty of March 1918 and responded by making the dissolution of imperial regimes and the self-determination of people in Central and Eastern Europe their war aims (Sanborn 2014, 236). After the war, statesmen and diplomats gathered in France to lay out the conditions of peace. Situating the cause of the war in Prussian militarism and the autocratic ruling style of the Hohenzollern dynasty, Woodrow Wilson argued that Germany’s power needed to be restricted. The principle of self-determination Woodrow Wilson so vehemently supported was often given a national interpretation and used as an authoritative rhetorical means by parties involved at the negotiation tables in Paris (Cattaruzza and Langewiesche 2012, 4). The Treaty of Versailles prescribed (instead of a plebiscite, as happened in the Danish-German borderlands of North Schleswig) a public consultation in order to determine the state sovereignty of ESM. Borderland inhabitants considered this consultation an infringement of their perceived right to self-determination and continued to contest the consultation throughout the interwar years (O’Connell 2018, 4).

Initially, ESM functioned as a separate administrative entity with colonially inspired rule. One year after the regions had been included in the Belgian province of Liège in 1925, Belgian politicians secretly tried to sell the regions of Eupen and Sankt Vith back to Germany, but the Great Powers put a halt to the negotiations. The historian Victor O’Connell recently came to the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that, for as long as ESM was under colonial rule, there was a policy, whereas as soon as they were administratively integrated within the Belgian Kingdom, their future was in the hands of politicians often acting opportunistically in order to keep their own heads above water within fragile and rapidly changing coalition governments (2018, 291). Borderland inhabitants were indeed confused about the kind of integration Belgian statesmen had in mind and expressed that feeling in their voting behavior; parties demanding a new consultation on self-determination received 75 per cent of the vote in 1929 (Lentz 2000, 333). On the other hand, Belgium was in an economically better position than Germany and –

especially during the recession at the end of the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s – offered borderland inhabitants more social benefits than its neighbor.

After the National Socialists seized power in 1933, Germany massively increased its support for activities preserving the language and culture of what it considered its countrymen living abroad, out of the conviction that borderland inhabitants belonged to the German *Volk* (people). Financial support issued by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its *Reichszentrale für Heimatdienst* (Reich Central Office for Domestic Propaganda), and later by the German Ministry of the Interior through the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (Association for Germanness Abroad) for German-minded cultural organizations in ESM had already amounted to 60,000 Reichsmark yearly at the end of the 1920s, but by the end of the 1930s, this sum had increased to 113,200 Reichsmark, the equivalent of 765,000 USD in 2019, and was provided by the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers' Party or NSDAP), which had forced the VDA into political conformity, with the clear aim to influence borderland inhabitants ideologically and politically (Lejeune 1992, 120–137; Kartheuser 2001, 108). The coordinator of most of that aid was the German civil servant Franz Thedieck, who closely cooperated with the VDA (Brüll 2013).³

In 1936, German military forces violated the international agreements made in Versailles in 1919 and in Locarno in 1926, and put its troops into the demilitarized zone on the German side of the Belgian-German state border. Belgian politicians faced parliamentary elections in May 1936, which brought parties denouncing parliamentary democracy almost a quarter of the votes, some of them condemning Belgium's vassalage towards France. Embarking on a neutral course, Belgian statesmen buried their promise to offer France military assistance in the case of a German invasion and started bilateral negotiations with Germany (Gérard 2006, 1040). The Belgian-German borderlands were systematically kept out of the bilateral talks in the late 1930s, as both German and Belgian state representatives considered them currency to pay off a supposedly imminent geopolitical deal (Hyde 1937, 126). Initially, borderland inhabitants adopted “a wait and see approach” during this period of uncertainty (O'Connell 2018, 144). By the end of the 1930s, however, that option was no longer possible given the increased politicization of public life, a breakdown in communication between borderland adults wanting to remain part of Belgium and those wanting reunification with Germany, and the (characteristically Belgian) pillarization of social and cultural life along ideological profiles (mainly Catholic, socialist or liberal) gradually reaching out to more spheres of the lifeworlds of borderland inhabitants (Christmann 1974, 506; Kartheuser 2001, 148). In 1939, for the first time, revisionist parties in ESM received less than half of the votes in the parliamentary elections (Lentz 2000, 333). Although most of the voters had expressed the will to remain under Belgian state sovereignty, Germany annexed ESM in May 1940.

Germany eventually annexed all the territories it had lost after World War I (with the exception of North Schleswig). Following World War II, more or less the same pieces of lands switched state sovereignty again (with the exception of Poland, where the changes were greater). However, attitudes toward ethnic and linguistic minorities changed. An ethnically clean nation-state was now deemed most desirable, with minorities being considered “a cause of conflict per se” who should no longer be granted the privilege to use their language and nourish cultural contacts with people across the political border (Lemberg 2000, 179).

Children have mostly been left undiscussed in the historiography on the Belgian-German borderlands, and the existing work focuses on the policies designed by adults for children (Lejeune 1989). Using a different methodological approach makes it possible to include the sources children produced themselves into our understanding of the borderlands' past.

5. Methodology

This article analyzes the creative written output of children who grew up in the Belgian-German borderlands in the interwar period. That output is referred to as borderland child ego documents. The borderland child ego documents composed in the interwar period are analyzed as historical sources. At the heart of a historical analysis is a contextualization of the creation process, meaning and outreach of archival sources in their time and place. Childhood historians have been asking whether there is something that makes the historical analysis of sources composed by children different. The cognitive, linguistic and emotional boundaries of children have long been used as an argument against exploring children's voices throughout history. Children were not thought to be rational, which, according to Mary Jo Maynes, has long been at the heart of many historians' definition of a social actor (2008, 114). Today, however, scholars "often denounce the general theory of human agency called rational choice" (Aya 2001, 143) and pay more attention to the practices of people who differed from each other regarding gender, age, class and race (Little 2017). There are methodological challenges in finding out how children viewed their treatment by adults, how they articulated this experience in their own practices, and how they recall(ed) it in sources historians have access to today. Child historians agree that the contextualization of the labor that went into the facilitating, hindering or prohibiting of expressions of children in the past allows us to uncover children's descriptions of interpersonal relations and everyday life conditions. In this way, the insights of children contribute to the reconstruction of a fuller picture of the past (Stargardt 1998; Blessing 2006).

In a global history of girlhood, the editors remarked: "to uncover girls' agency, we are forced to deal with the paucity of sources left behind by children and youth, especially by girls in cultures where female education was not well established [...] children as a rule are some of history's most silent subjects. [...] Scholars who wish to uncover girls' voices must be methodologically creative" (Helgren and Vasconcellos 2010, 3–4). A similar statement can be made about children's agency in the Belgian-German borderlands in the interwar years. The scarcity of borderland child ego documents is a given, as is the need for an interdisciplinary analysis of them.

The borderland child ego documents this article presents were discovered during the research for a systematic comparison of children's past in the Belgian-German and Polish-German borderlands (Venken 2021). The author consulted the literature, read archival sources written by or related to borderland children in fifteen archives across Europe, and analyzed press articles. Not all regional sources survived World War II, as the French-speaking school of Eupen, for example, was set on fire during the German invasion in 1940, and Sankt Vith and Malmedy were bombed during Hitler's last offensive in 1944–45. Interwar sources produced at the Belgian national level were disappointingly meager. The archives of Belgian governmental cabinets and the Belgian

Ministry of Education were practically non-existent (Depaepe, de Vroede, and Simon 1991, 371). In much better condition were German archives reporting on the institutions and historical actors involved in contacts with borderland inhabitants, such as the documents of Franz Thedieck, the Special Consultant of the German Reich's Home Office for ESM throughout the 1930s. Diplomatic archives in Brussels and Berlin provided information about the child policies directed towards the borderlands.

6. Three borderland child writers

The author discovered the oeuvre of three borderland child writers. The historical ego documents of two writers were created within a youth organization. Youth organizations were a new phenomenon in the 1930s in ESM, and although they enjoyed growing acclaim, they remained marginal phenomena. Youth organizations operated as structures where children could express themselves under the watchful eye of adults (Depaepe 1998, 146). Pro-Belgian youth organizations such as the scouts were a grassroots phenomenon, although they also enjoyed the approval of Belgian statesmen.⁴ The number of scout members never equaled that of pro-German youth organizations (Pfadfinder Obere Weser 1991, 26). Our first borderland child writer is Lubi, a boy who saw his letter published in the "Scouting Corner", the only bulletin published by a youth organization in ESM in the interwar years (Lubi 1939). Lubi was the only ordinary scout whose letter was printed. Pro-German youth organizations were coordinated by Karl Pütz, who was made responsible for youth work in ESM within the German Ministry of the Interior and worked under Franz Thedieck's supervision. Among a total population of around 60,000 borderland inhabitants, these revisionist youth organizations gathered 120 members in 1934, and increased their ranks to 660 by 1938 (Wiesemes 1995a, 1995b). Our second borderland child writer is Billy Bredohl, the leader of a pro-German youth organization for girls. Her diary and a private letter were found in the only archived collection of borderland child documents in ESM.⁵

The third borderland child writer is an anonymous girl. Since in Belgium adults had a decisive say on how children were turned from spoken children into speaking children until the 1960s, we need to rely on the rare historical actors such as this third borderland child writer in order to glimpse beyond the control of adults over the way children articulated their knowledge, practices, emotions and imaginations (Depaepe 1998, 146; Oswell 2012, 3). Nevertheless, she composed and sent out her letter without the knowledge of her parents. The letter illustrates how hard it is to gain access to child sources not supported or directly provoked by adults. The girl wrote: "I am writing this while my mother is taking a walk with my aunt" and "I may not give any names, or else my father is going to beat me up".⁶ Her letter is the only ego source we possess today shedding light on the everyday life within interwar families from the perspective of a borderland child. Discovering the existence of such a letter does not happen often and was something of a thrill for the author of this article.

The ego documents composed by these three borderland child writers contain or refer to four child heterotopias. The diary of Billy Bredohl was partly written at a youth hostel, which, as we will see below, was a material place specifically designed for the young and operating as a heterotopia. The other three borderland child ego documents are linguistic loci functioning as child heterotopias. One common feature of the four child heterotopias

is Michel Foucault's principle of time; the writers arrived "at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (Foucault 1986, 26). The child heterotopias are multifaceted responses to – and were prompted by – the competition between opinions, facilities or infrastructural networks offered by pro-German and pro-Belgian actors to borderland inhabitants in the late 1930s, which appears to have triggered the borderland children into articulating a stance, predominantly within the newly established youth organizations.

The creative literary output of our borderland child writers is not representative of how children acted in the past. Most borderland children never wrote letters, did not keep a diary, did not join a youth organization, and left school at the age of fourteen.⁷ Nevertheless, the author considers the oeuvre of borderland child heterotopias meaningful. First, the work of the borderland child writers reached out within, and sometimes beyond, their environment. Lubi's letter was printed in the "Scouting Corner", a column that functioned as the mouthpiece of the scouting movement. Billy Bredohl was the head of an approximately hundred-strong youth organization. And the letter of the anonymous girl was circulated within the German state administration because civil servant Karl Pütz believed her description offered an insight into the situation in borderland families. Second, although these individual child writers did not discuss their activities with each other, they all put forward alternative solutions for life in the borderlands at a time of uncertainty.

7. Lubi

We will now analyze the literary output of the three borderland child writers successively. A week before the outbreak of the Second World War, a scout named Lubi (a member of the scout group of Saint Georg in Eupen) had his handwritten letter published in the "Scouting Corner" section of the borderland daily newspaper *Grenz-Echo*. Between August and December 1939, scouting leaders in ESM ran a one-page section in a newspaper that advocated the equal use of languages (as had been laid down in the Belgian constitution) and spread the message that the German language deserved equal treatment within the Belgian Kingdom (Pabst 2007, 195).

Scouting was founded in the border region in 1933 by the borderland inhabitant Jean Rentgens (1914–57), who became acquainted with scouting during his education to become a priest in a seminary elsewhere in Belgium⁸. The scouting movement was established in 1907 by Robert Baden-Powell after becoming aware that his books on scout training for the military were also being read by children. Scouting was to help children acquire the desired skills of an exemplary future citizen through adventure, physical training and social learning (Mechling 2013, 423).

The "Scouting Corner" is an example of a borderland child heterotopia as a textual representation of borderland scouting composed at the brink of World War II and harboring "several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1986, 25). The pro-Belgian adults who ran this section intended it to be a neutral, parallel space where children were given the opportunity to escape the tensions over the region's future sovereignty status that marked everyday life in the borderlands in the second half of 1939. However, as a result of their cooperation with the daily *Grenz-Echo*, scouts in ESM were accused of being pro-Belgian. In an open letter written in December 1939, scouting

leaders attempted to defend themselves, arguing that they had an apolitical profile (Pfadfinder Obere Weser 1991, 17). In a society where adults could no longer prevent politics from infiltrating more and more aspects of their everyday lives, the scouts publicly claimed a neutral stance. Nevertheless, the attacks continued and the section was dropped from the newspaper later that month.

In his letter, Lubi reported how his scouting leader, who worked for the *Grenz-Echo*, had asked him to publish a letter he had composed at the summer camp and sent to his aunt. Summer camps were a new phenomenon for borderland children in the late 1930s, with 130 boy scouts attending them in 1938.⁹ Instead of writing about his own exploration, which was essential to scouting ideology, Lubi focused on the activities of his adult caregivers. He wrote about how a “brown monk from Brazil” paid the scouts a visit to their summer camp, reporting that scouts in Brazil were allowed to shoot monkeys when they disturbed their summer camp¹⁰ (Illustration 1 (Lubi 1939, 1)).

The boy was invited to become a speaking child in the printed public sphere of ESM, as a member of a youth organization that put almost exclusively Catholic upper- and middle-



Illustration 1. The “Scouting Corner” in the borderland daily *Grenz-Echo* on 23 August 1939 with Lubi’s letter to his aunt.

class children, a majority of whom were boys, under the watchful eye of the Roman Catholic Church. With National Socialism reigning in neighboring Germany, the scouts aimed to raise future citizens who would be prepared to take up apostolic duties for a society in which the freedom of religion was respected. According to the borderland scouts, scouting did not stand for direct political engagement, even though it implicitly respected the Belgian nation-state (Pfadfinder Obere Weser 1991, 59). Karl Pütz at the German Ministry of the Interior, however, interpreted the borderland scouts' activities as political: "What the state Catholic education prepares mentally and culturally is politically and ideologically completed in Belgian scouting".¹¹ Lubi's words do not offer us an insight into whether the boy considered himself a politically engaged agent or not, and that was most probably the purpose of the scouting leader's decision to print his letter. The banal story of an obedient child was supposed to demonstrate the scouts' neutral stance in an increasingly politicized environment. In other words, recalling how his scouting leaders had entertained him, instead of referring to the self-government and social learning so crucial to the ideology of Baden-Powell, Lubi showed himself as faithful to the dogmatic Catholic ideas of his local caregivers. This leaves us with an image of borderland scouting as a child space of modernity where children could experience life differently than adults; but whether it also functioned as a space "suitable for re-examining" childhood through the emancipation of scout members, and whether "new forms of subjectivity" were fashioned, was never reported in historical sources (Voela 2011, 168).

8. Sibylle Bredohl

In the mid-1930s, Sibylle (Billy) Bredohl, born in 1919 in Eupen, established and ran the hiking group *Frohe Mädels Eupen* (the Merry Girls of Eupen – hereinafter FM). Billy also coordinated the work of all revisionist borderland girls' organizations in ESM (Schenk 1997, 191). In 1936, Karl Pütz advised Billy to temper her enthusiasm in setting up her own activities.¹² Within Germany, where membership to the National Socialist *Bund Deutscher Mädels* (League of German Girls – hereinafter BDM) was mandatory, authorities could demote girls whose practices deviated from the expected totalitarian, disciplining norm from leaders to ordinary members. In ESM, however, Karl Pütz could do no more than send Billy the BDM journal *Mädels in Dienst* (Girl on Duty) for self-study, and hope she would translate National Socialist ideology into the activities of her youth organization.¹³ Nevertheless, by 1937, Pütz had begun to intensify his cooperation with Billy Bredohl because talented organizers in ESM were difficult to find (Schenk 1997, 195).

Billy organized activities in the property of her father, Bernard Bredohl, the owner of a spa hotel and one of the most important logistic centers for revisionist activities in the 1930s. Officially, he was an ordinary member of the *Heimatbund*, an organization promoting cultural ties with Germany, but in reality he also offered support to political organizations with a National Socialist agenda, most prominently the Homeland Loyalty Front (*Heimattreue Front* – hereinafter HF). In 1934, Belgian authorities had passed a law on the basis of which Belgian inhabitants could have their Belgian citizenship revoked if they were found to have seriously undermined democratic principles. This law was used in 1935 to make four members of the HF leave for Germany. Billy's father knew that, while Belgian authorities could, in principle, allow public cultural activities, they

viewed with suspicion the mobilization of borderland inhabitants for a National Socialist agenda. He knew what to say and what to keep silent, teaching his daughter how to do likewise.

Billy's private archive provides an insight into how she developed her activities along different scales.¹⁴ Billy not only separated her activities between the open and the hidden but also practiced different translation strategies between the different scales on which she developed her activities. Billy articulated different relationships to borderland inhabitants, her father, her father's friend, borderland soldiers in the Belgian army, and the German Ministry of Interior, all the while managing to stay out of the spotlight of Belgian security authorities. She deliberately publicized her cultural activities, and kept hidden her more politically oriented activities. Three documents from Billy's personal archive demonstrate in detail how she did this.

The first document is a printed invitation. In November 1937, Billy premiered a theatrical play she had written for an open-air festival of her organization in the city of Eupen. Titled *You Belong Where Your Homeland Is!*, the play featured "the lost child" as the main character. Billy had the invitations printed by her father. The play was performed by members aged between fifteen and eighteen, and preceded by songs and dances performed by the younger members, the *Küken* (aged between two and ten) and the *Jungmädels* (ten to fourteen) (Ruland 2013, 29) (Illustration 2¹⁵).

Whereas Billy chose to stage the theatrical play in the open, she decided to locate other activities further away from the public eye, in a youth hostel in the village of Hauset¹⁶. Her diary reveals that in the summer of 1939, she organized a training course for forty borderland girls here¹⁷. The hostel was funded by a regular visitor to Bernard Bredohl's hotel, Peter Bohlen, in 1934. Having renovated the building first with secret financial support from Germany, he then joined the Federation of Belgian Hostels and received Belgian state subsidies. The hostel welcomed not only regular Belgian tourists but also members of the German National Socialist mandatory youth organization for boys, the *Hitlerjugend*, dressed as civilians. At other times, it hosted schooling weekends for revisionist borderland youth organization leaders such as Billy.

The youth hostel can be viewed as a material place functioning as a child heterotopia. This heterotopia held similarities with what Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol characterized as cross-border heterotopias in the Mexican-American borderlands. Cross-border heterotopias are brought about through "a cross-border community sharing of cultural facilities and institutions among residents of a common ethnic origin, which link different 'nationalities' bridging a boundary". This "enables ideological extremes to co-exist in proximity and sustains a mosaic of cultural production in uncertain space" (Konrad and Nicol 2011, 82–83). Although the youth hostel existed at another moment in time, the scope of its activities was limited to the building and the surrounding woods, and only involved members of pro-German youth organizations, it was the place where the cross-border nature of borderlands generated its effects. Here, members of the HF and the German *Hitlerjugend*, along with other pro-German borderland youth organizations, could freely communicate with each other and organize joint training sessions (Schenk 1997, 294).

The hostel operated in a space which seemed to be open for the public but to which access was nevertheless restricted. It was situated deeply hidden in the woods, and although it officially operated as a public institution recognized by the Belgian Tourist

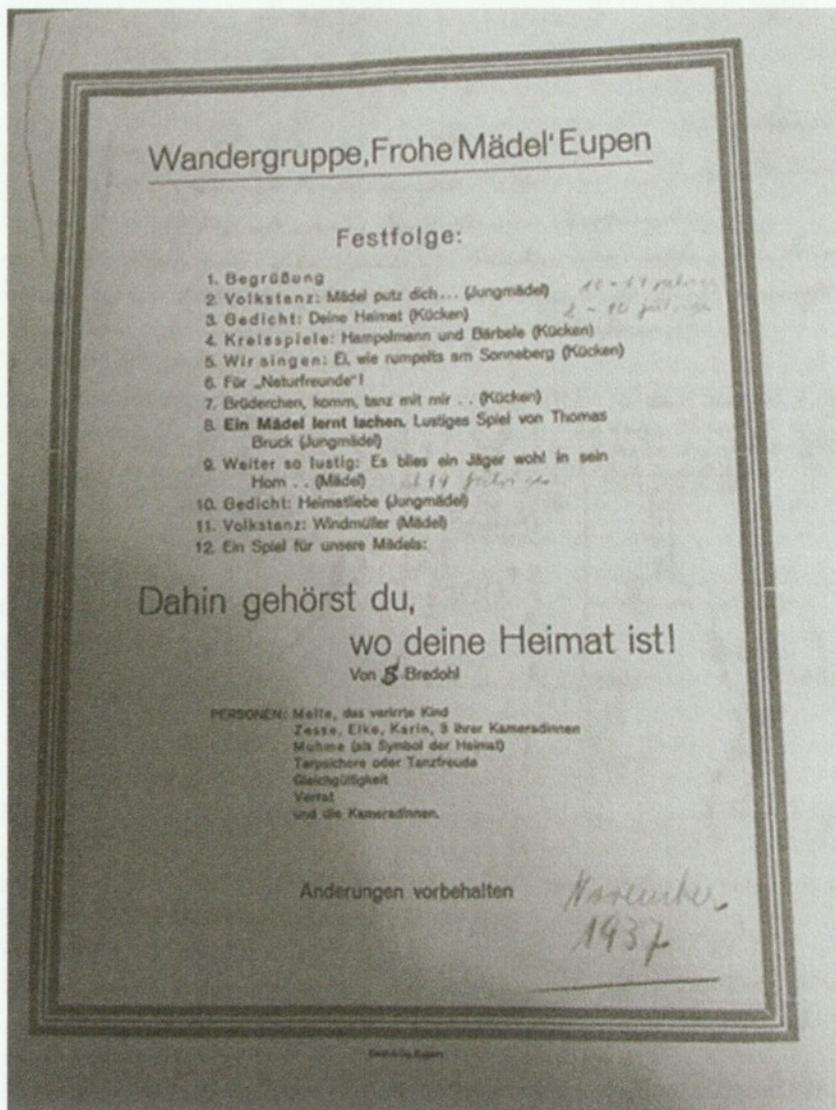


Illustration 2. The invitation for the premiere of Sibylle Bredohl's self-written play "You Belong Where Your Homeland Is!" (November 1937).

Association, it also organized closed meetings for youth organizations that were kept secret from that association (Schenk 1997, 294). It also functioned as a parallel space where children could find a temporary refuge from the everyday confusion that characterized life in ESM in the late 1930s. Established and approved by adults as another space where children were given the opportunity to live in harmony, unburdened by the imperfect actuality of adult life, the hostel could have functioned similarly to what we know about contemporary child heterotopias. While historians have not discussed child heterotopias, Sara McNamee has demonstrated how video games for children provide an adult-created and adult-approved parallel digital space where children can "resist and escape the control" over the organization of their lives (2000, 479).

The purpose of the youth hostel, however, was not merely to provide a place where children could escape control over the organization of their lives, but also to relate to other places in the society in which it operated. Yang fleshed out this principle of Michel Foucault in her description of heterotopias as: “places that are different from yet ambivalently connected with the rest of society, and where imagination interacted with the real”; they are characterized by “a desire to ardently prepare, if not purely for the future, then for the birth of a constructive attitude toward building a more sensible and livable world” (Yang 2018, 13). The activities at the youth hostel involved training for a cause in the future. The bodies and minds of those such as Billy Bredhol and the other FM members were strengthened according to an imagined National Socialist ideal. Given the restricted access to, as well as the hidden character of, this borderland child heterotopia, and the fact that it ceased to exist more than 70 years ago, a researcher today faces a difficult task in ascertaining whether the purpose of the youth hostel back then was also to “offer a constructive attitude” (13). Whereas the youth hostel in Hauset was indeed set up as a “place suitable for re-examining” childhood, the question whether “new forms of subjectivity” were fashioned will always remain unclear (Voela 2011, 168). Today, we can only speculate what may have caused Billy to advance to the function of deputy leader of the BDM section of the Province of Cologne–Aix-la-Chapelle after Germany’s invasion of Belgium in 1940 (Ruland 2013, 51). Was she capable of adapting well to German youth organizational structures or did she enrich these organizations with the new insights she had developed during her activities at the youth hostel in the late 1930s?

Equally hidden to the public eye remained Billy’s correspondence service with young borderland men during their obligatory military service in the Belgian army. She received, among other items of correspondence, a letter from three such soldiers in October 1939, when the Second World War had already broken out in Poland. That letter is the third document of Billy’s we discuss in this article. The archived letter includes a borderland child heterotopia in the form of a crossword. Billy was invited to fill in that crossword in order to decode a highly controversial secret message composed by soldiers serving a neutral country: “Our soul for the devil – our heart for the girls – our life for Adolf Hitler” (Illustration 3¹⁸).

Borderland soldiers enrolled in the Belgian army sent their declarations of loyalty to Adolf Hitler to Billy by the regular French- and Dutch-speaking national post service, but hid their message in a crossword to be deciphered in the German language. This child heterotopia offered a temporary world harboring “several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault 1986, 25). The crossword inverted the meaning of the soldiers’ service to the Belgian army by mixing up the political categories of belonging and articulating radical fragmentation. Historians do not have enough information today to answer the question how the borderland soldiers’ “imagination interacted with the real” (Yang 2018, 13). The untenable tension between borderland soldiers enrolled in the Belgian army but endorsing National Socialism was resolved a couple of months after the crossword was drawn when, following the German invasion of the Belgian-German borderlands in 1940, borderland inhabitants were granted German citizenship, and local men were enrolled in the German army (Quadflieg 2008).

Despite the development of activities that were suspicious from the viewpoint of Belgian authorities, Billy managed to remain out of their spotlights. When in November 1939, the Belgian Ministry of Transports forbade its civil servants and their children to

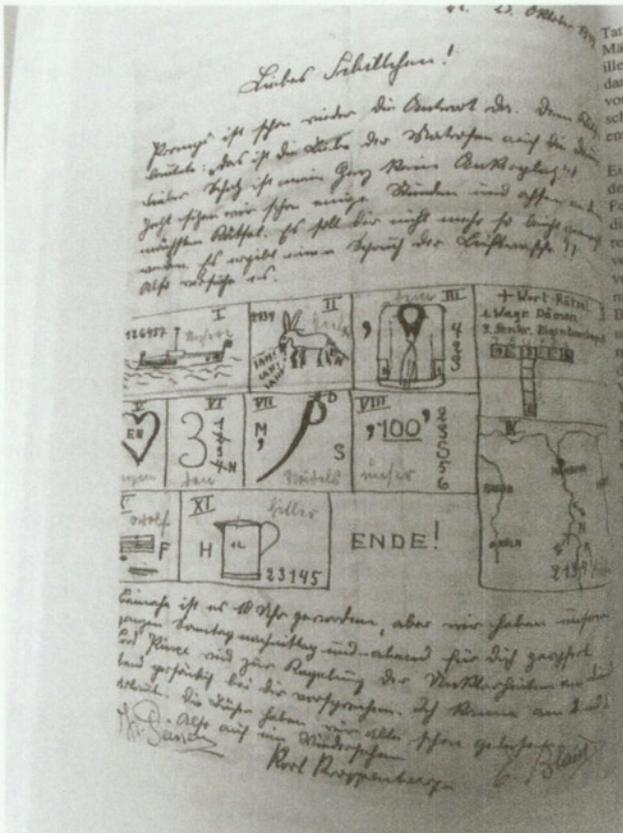


Illustration 3. Borderland soldiers enrolled in the Belgian army sent this letter to their “lovely Sibylle” in October 1939.

enroll in what it considered anti-national borderland organizations, on the proscribed list were both the organizations her father was active in, the *Heimattbund* and the HF, but not Billy’s FM (Kartheuser 2001, 144–148). While this meant Billy had been successful in playing on different scales and using accurate translation strategies, it could additionally point to the fact that Belgian state authorities considered a youth organization less harmful than its adult counterparts.

After the war, Billy was charged with collaborationism, convicted, and imprisoned. She encountered a Belgian collaborationist from Flanders in prison, with whom she moved to Germany when both were released in the early 1950s (Ruland 2013, 56). In a rare interview conducted in the 1990s, she claimed: “We, *frohe Mädels*, were connected with the *Heimattbund* [...] The *Heimattreue Front* tried to integrate us [...], which I always vehemently rejected” (Velden-Bredhol 1994, 6). Again, Billy was revealing here only part of her past experiences. In the 1930s, she took an active role in interpreting the lines between a pro-German attitude and a National Socialist conviction, between the public and the private sphere, in a much more multidimensional way. Thanks to the help of her father’s friend and the German Ministry of Interior, she could become actively involved in juggling ways of layered apprehension across the different scales of her activities.

9. An anonymous girl

The last borderland child ego document discussed in this article is the letter of an anonymous girl from Eupen, written on October 18 1938, to Adolf Hitler. The girl revealed the different narratives the borderland adults in her family were articulating. Her father “says I am now a Belgian, and I should honor those whose bread I am eating, what would Hitler say if people didn’t honor him and publicly offended him”, while her mother was oriented towards Germany (*heimattreu*). Her aunt, a visiting German citizen, in contrast, scoffed that HF leaders, whom she deemed “louts”, were paid with German taxpayers’ money, and advised the girl’s family to prefer the higher living standards in Belgium rather than wish to join poor Germany. The girl reported the family situation this had led to: “and so we children often sit together in a corner, crying because our parents are bickering and screaming” (Illustration 4¹⁹).

The anonymous girl from Eupen wanted to establish peace in the family, and thought she could convince Hitler with her arguments: “Dear Führer, I once heard you saying on the radio that you were also just a poor soldier once, so you must also feel the pain for everyone.” She continued: “It [Eupen] is really just a small town, think about how nice the English [and] French were to you and how they gave you the Sudeten territories only to save everyone’s life”. Based on that argument, she dared to invite Hitler to “talk

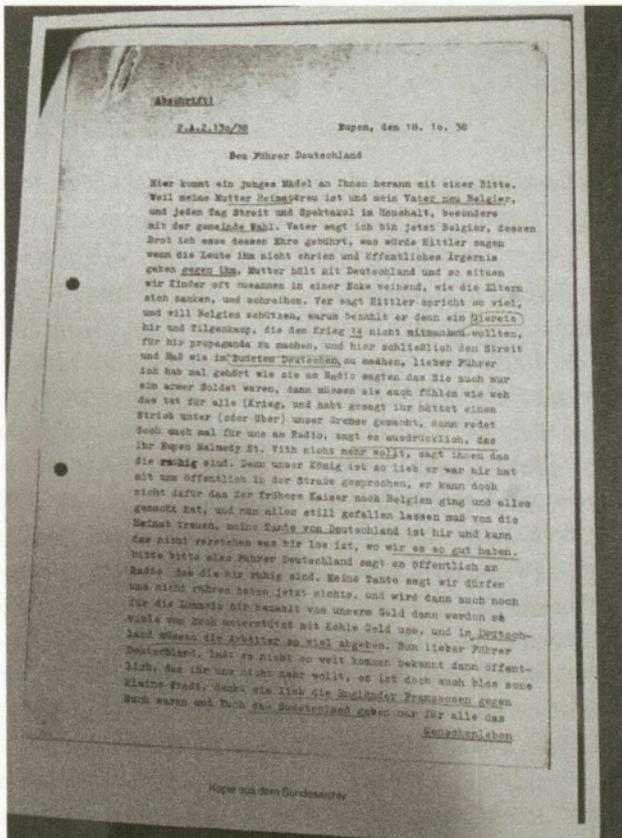


Illustration 4. The letter of an anonymous girl from Eupen to Adolf Hitler in October 1938.

in favor of us on the radio, say clearly that you do not want Eupen–Malmedy St. Vith any longer, tell them we are peaceful”²⁰

The letter is an example of a borderland child heterotopia composed without the support of adults. It is a textual representation of a family home as experienced and spontaneously expressed by a borderland girl. In contrast to the youth hostel and the scouts' column, but similar to the soldiers' letter, the letter of the anonymous girl exposed the severe cleavages of the everyday confusion and articulated these in a way unutterable in public by adults at the time.

The girl's action may be interpreted as irrational. Who did she think she was to offer a dictator like Adolf Hitler her advice? And why would she put her own aunt in danger? How should we, indeed, assess the literary imagination of her borderland child heterotopia? Yang suggests that in heterotopias, “the literary imagination could work in reverse, becoming a viable means by which to mold the intellectual discourse and even the real” (2018, 15). The imagined better real world depicted by the anonymous girl in her letter did cause an effect in the real world, albeit different from the one intended.

Back in 1938, the girl's request to be taken seriously (“I worked on this letter for some days”) was not ignored. Her handwritten letter received special attention within the German state administration. It was sent from the office of the Chancellor of the Reich, Adolf Hitler, to Karl Pütz. He meticulously transcribed the letter on a typing machine and sent it further to his superior, Franz Thedieck, arguing that: “The letter gives an interesting insight into the political relationships within many Eupenian families. At the same time, the letter sheds a significant light on the influence of many German-speaking relatives visiting Eupen”²¹. In a way, the anonymous girl was considered a rational human being. The letter was valued as a unique source of information, because of the insights it gave into the inconsistent relationships within borderland families, and because the girl did not respect the breakdown in public communication between borderland adults wanting to stay within Belgium and those aspiring to a reunification with Germany in the late 1930s.

10. Conclusion

Starting from Spyrou and Christou's recognition of “the constitutive role of children in the social lives of borders and borderlands” (Spyrou and Christou 2014, 2), this article investigated the opportunities of borderland child writers to co-shape their existence in the interwar Belgian-German borderlands. An exploration of hitherto untouched historical sources made it possible to see how children's literary output in the Belgian-German borderlands of the 1930s unfolded in accordance with Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias. At a time when categories of national belonging became more diffuse, borderland children could create or participate in child-specific material spaces and linguistic loci functioning as other, parallel spaces.

Discovering how borderland child writers had the opportunity to contribute actively to their environment was made possible as a result of a deconstructed understanding of children's agency. Through a widening of the understanding of political agency, Lubi's letter, for example, could reveal itself to be an example of a literary source representing borderland scouting as an activity capable of shaping a neutral political space for children. Interpreting Billy Bredhol's practices as a skillful maneuvering across various scales, as well as a redrawing of the lines between these scales, enabled the author to decipher at which

moments, where and how, she could reconsider girlhood with like-minded borderland girls. Moreover, instead of considering an anonymous girl an irrational child, the author found behind the confusing words of her letter a human being capable of independent thinking. Nevertheless, adults often had a decisive say on the ways in which the borderland child writers discussed in this article could convert an opportunity into a way of making a contribution. They decided which children were turned from spoken children into speaking children (as in the case of Lubi) and held decision-making power over the resources needed to proliferate the borderland children's ideas (as in the case of Sibylle Bredhol and the anonymous girl).

Notwithstanding the effect of the actions of borderland child writers, their literary output provides us with access to their creative solutions to overcome the confusion over the state sovereignty of their environment. Borderland scout Lubi presented himself as a member of an imagined neutral space parallel to the politically deeply divided world of adults. Borderland group leader Billy invested her hopes in an ideal (ized) National Socialist childhood prepared for within the borderland child heterotopia of the youth hostel. And the anonymous borderland girl believed that by advising Adolf Hitler how to proceed, she could secure peace.

It is to be hoped that borderland child heterotopias can contribute to scholarship in border studies and historiography. Whereas heterotopias as a concept have been appropriated by border scholars, no attention has been paid to the situation of children. With children experiencing an increasing amount of their childhood in child spaces of modernity, it is not entirely surprising that borderland child heterotopias could emerge in the interwar Belgian-German borderlands. These borderland child heterotopias, whether they took the form of material or linguistic places, were multifaceted responses provoked by the increased cultural support for youth organizations sent in from Germany, and could be created precisely because borderland children, youngsters and young soldiers found themselves, or were considered to have found themselves, in crisis in relation to the rest of the borderland inhabitants in their environment at the brink of World War II. It ought to be evident that border scholars who are not bound by the scarce traces the past left historians with today possess more possibilities to further develop the notion of borderland child heterotopias presented in this article.

An analysis of borderland child heterotopias also offers up insights that are unavailable in other historical sources, such as archival documents created by adults about the everyday practices of borderland children or interviews conducted with adults who were children in the interwar period. These testimonies were produced at a time when different perceptions on childhood were prevalent and were made by people with very different verbal and abstracting capacities than when they were young. Moreover, rather than conjuring up the past, such accounts tend to take the form of narratives serving to give meaning to that past for the sake of the present (Förderverein 2007). Borderland child heterotopias, however, are uniquely able to open up the past imaginations of borderland children, and in this way enrich our knowledge about the past.

Notes

1. For example: Anonymous. *Sonder-Bericht über das Turn- und Sportfest der Turnerjugend in Sankt Vith am 18. September 1938*, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereinafter BAK), NL, 174, 23, 1;

- Auszug aus den Verhandlungen des Schöffenkollégiums, 01.05.1934, SE, 916/62/130; Die Gesandtschaft in Brüssel. *Pressebericht*, Brüssel, 16/08/1937, The Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, R 102828, 3; Le comité pour la sauvegarde de l'enfance, *Aux parents qui entendent*, 1934, Nord-Rhein Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Reg. Ac., Präs., 1656, II, 6847, 262.
2. Anonymous. *Brief an den Führer [von] Deutschland*, Eupen, 18/10/1938, BAK, NL, 174, 23 P, 5b, 1.
 3. Providing financial support for *Volksdeutsche* (inhabitants considered to have been of German descent) was also a practice in other regions of Europe. In Polish Upper Silesia, for example, buildings for German-speaking schools were financed by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Fałęcki 1970, 97). German mass organisations, such as the *Hitlerjugend* (the mandatory organization for boys under National Socialism), communicated with and traveled to *Volksdeutsche* (Buddrus 2004, 742–753).
 4. Anonymous. *Note pour le Premier Ministre. Tableau de la politique suivie dans des cantons d'Eupen, Malmédy et St. Vith pendant 1934*, Bruxelles, 13/11/1934, Archives Diplomatiques, B, 331/3, 12.
 5. Private Archive of Herbert Ruland, Eynatten, Belgium (hereinafter RULAND).
 6. Anonymous. *Brief an den Führer [von] Deutschland, Eupen*, 18/10/1938, BAK, NL, 174, 23 P, 5b, 2.
 7. Not all of the few borderland child ego documents composed in the interwar years contain child heterotopias. For instance, three school essays from 1934 depicting the everyday life of children engaged in such activities as cattle-herding, which were gathered by a local teacher from the village of Büllingen in an unpublished booklet for the highest class, do not meet Foucault's description of a heterotopia, as these are literary representations of practices that were not set apart from, but took place in the everyday reality of the child writers' lives (*Lehrpersonen und Elternrat der Gemeindeschule Büllingen* 1978, 77–8).
 8. Schillings, L. *Entre Allemagne et Belgique. La guerre au pays des frontières. Souvenirs personnels des années trente et quarante. Mémoires 1936–1945*. Le Mesnil, 2002, 19, Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, Bruxelles (CEGESOMA), JP 1522.
 9. *Die belgische Pfadfinderbewegung 1938*, Archiv Landesverband Rheinland (hereinafter LVR), Akt 4743.
 10. The monk in Lubi's story could have been a Belgian missionary returning from Brazil, as scouting in Brazil was founded in 1910, and Belgian missionaries were active in Latin America at that time. It is, however, most unlikely that the monk had a dark skin color, as it would take until the second half of the twentieth century until Belgians included missionaries of non-European origin. Alternatively, the monk could have been a scouting leader dressed up during a game.
 11. Karl Pütz. *Die belgische Pfadfinderbewegung in Eupen-Malmédy-St. Vith*. Aachen, 24/09/1938, LVR, 4744, 50.
 12. Karl Pütz. *Monatsberichte Februar-März 1936*, Aachen, 31/03/1936, BAK, NL, 174, 19, 13b, 5.
 13. Landesleiter Crumbach an Landesrat Hilgers, Düsseldorf, 09/01/1939, LVR, 4735/67.
 14. The private archive of Sibylle Bredhol consists of the documents she wrote, letters she received, and photographs of activities of FM (RULAND).
 15. Sibylle Bredhol. *Programm eines Festes*, 11/1937, RULAND.
 16. Sibylle Bredhol. *Tagebuch*, 1938, 26, RULAND.
 17. F. Katzan. *Schulung der Mädels aus Malmédy und St. Vith*, 18/08/1939, LVR, 4745/56, 3.
 18. Karl Kroppenber, E.H.R. Blaise [third unreadable]. *An das Liebe Sibillchen*, 1939, RULAND.
 19. Anonymous. *Brief an den Führer [von] Deutschland*, Eupen, 18/10/1938, BAK, NL, 174, 23 P, 5b, 1–2.

20. After Austria was swallowed up by the Third Reich in March 1938, Hitler expressed his interest in the Czech-German borderlands. In September 1938, the British and the French Prime Minister allowed Nazi Germany to incorporate the Sudetenland, which it did less than a month later.
21. Pütz an Herrn Regierungsrat Thedieck, Aachen, 04/11/1938, BAK, NL, 174, 23 P, 1.

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Be(com)ing “German”: Borderland Ideologies and Hitler Youth in NS-occupied Slovenia (1941–1945)

Lisbeth Matzer

ABSTRACT

On the example of the Austrian-Slovenian borderlands Upper Carniola and Lower Styria under National Socialist occupation, the article examines Germanization practices directed at youth as part of the Nazi struggle for domination in Europe. Following a historical example of how to approach the topic of youth in contested borderlands in terms of theory, sources and methodology, this investigation questions categorizations of belonging deployed in these areas. It shows that the ideological fight for border regions may rely and build upon a long tradition of emphasizing and evoking the very “borderness” of territories and people. These specific narratives are called borderland ideologies and rely on harsh differentiations between “us” and “them” characterized by a high degree of flexibility and ambiguity. This vagueness of being and becoming “German”¹ is elaborated based on the example of the Hitler Youth’s involvement in defining and spreading this supposed “Germanness”. In this manner, the article demonstrates that the cornerstones of grouping and ordering people were constructed categories such as culture, language and descent. Showing that the grounds for evaluation as well as the hierarchy of the latter were interchanged in subjective and opportunistic ways, the article puts national, ethnical and cultural claims of belonging into question.

Introduction

As the next generation, the Hitler Youth must awaken the consciousness of belonging to Germanness in everyone. (Kaufmann 1940, 162)²

Throughout history, regions close to state borders have been “spaces that simultaneously invite and challenge the exercise of state power” (Pergher 2018, 16). Perceived as zones of contact, transition and demarcation of competing ideological and/or national claims, these so-called borderlands could and still can become sites of various power struggles (Newman 2003, 2011). Borderlands, thus, sometimes were and still are contested not only in terms of territoriality (Komlosy 2018, 17), but also regarding the population’s belonging to cultural, national or ethnical categories (Newman 2011, 37). In relation to the latter, special bordering practices targeted children and youth to influence their loyalty along with their feelings of belonging to certain constructed collectives. This

kind of mobilization of the young for one or the other side of a conflict has been labeled as key to ultimately defeating the constructed opponents since the early twentieth century (Stambolis 2003). In this respect, children and youth have long been a major target group of claims to power and attempted processes of nationalization especially in disputed borderlands (Venken 2017a, 23).

Both aspects become particularly clear when looking at the extreme case of National Socialist expansionism during the Second World War and the activities of the Hitler Youth in occupied and contested borderlands. Waging a brutal “war of occupation” (Judt 2005, 14) from 1939 to 1945, the Nazi regime continuously enlarged its territory by either incorporating (parts of) other countries into the Third Reich or by establishing varying forms of occupation systems all over Europe (Pohl 2008). The Hitler Youth in general was a central pillar of National Socialist domination (Buddrus 2003) and strove to play an equally central role in consolidating Nazi rule in these newly conquered territories (Buddrus 2003, 742–851). Despite this claim, the practices of Nazi Youth organizations in borderlands and occupied territories remain less researched especially when it comes to the Hitler Youth’s involvement in Germanization (to make “German”; *Germanisierung*). The latter was a special bordering practice deployed by the Nazi regime to guarantee its long-term domination over occupied territories. In terms of Nazi propaganda, this strategy was directed at the population of newly conquered territories as well as at the land itself (Luthar 2008, 422; Stiller 2012, 235). The basic aim of Germanization as practice was to foster the feeling of belonging to the imagined collective of “Germans”. This, however, was only directed at those who survived the radical processes of in- and exclusion based on constructed racial categories. Nazi occupying forces considered the populations of western and northern European regions to be (more) related or closer to “Germanness” than those living in the east or south-east of the continent. In this context, the racial ideology of the Nazi regime highly influenced the level of extreme violence the local populations had to face when Germanization measures were employed. Altogether, being categorized as the Other by Nazi authorities and being excluded from the “German” collective not only meant oppression, exploitation and denial of rights and life chances. In extreme cases, the Germanization project would result in deportation and/or systematic murder (Pohl 2008). In combining the extreme cases of Nazi occupation with the general evaluation that the fluid and flexible character of racial, ethnical and cultural categorizations manifests more strongly in areas of direct conflict such as contested borderlands (Brambilla 2015), a closer look at disputed areas of the Third Reich, thus, provides insights into the underlying strategies, functionalities and agendas of bordering and group-making practices, which – in varying ways – can be found in border conflicts up until today.

To this end, the article focuses on two historical examples from the contested Austrian-Slovenian borderland – Upper Carniola (Gorenjska/Oberkrain) and Lower Styria (Spodnja Štajerska/Untersteiermark). Both regions were exceptional in terms of Nazi Germanization policy as – despite being located in south-eastern Europe – the vast majority of the population was deemed “German” by descent based on borderland conflicts dating back to the nineteenth century. Investigating the intertwinement of the Hitler Youth’s role in Germanization and Nazi occupation, I ask the following questions: Who was considered “German” or who could become “German” (and how) and what role did the Hitler Youth play in ascribing certain characteristics of belonging? How and where would they

manifest and be propagated? What measures were meant to ensure this new sense of belonging to “Germanness” of the young and how successfully were they put into practice? In dealing with these questions, this historical case study not only enables a thorough understanding of the including and excluding mechanisms of National Socialist rule, but particularly contributes to the field of borderland studies on a conceptual and theoretical realm.

After an explanation of the theoretical and methodical approach pursued in this article, I briefly outline the historical context of the investigated borderlands. Following this, the first chapter explores the relationship of groupness and borderland ideologies and its instrumentalization in the examined areas. The next chapter focuses on practices of Germanization deployed by regional Hitler Youth agents in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola and deals with the structural developments as well as the different indoctrinative strategies and measures of Germanization. The conclusion provides ideas for further research and abstracts principles for analyzing bordering processes in general.

Theory, Methodology and Sources: A Historical Research Approach to Youth in Borderlands

Deriving from the theoretical background of Cultural Studies, the relationship between power and agency is a central cornerstone of my analytical approach (see e.g. Barker 2012). Building upon that, I question categories of belonging and the functionalities of their exploitation based on Rogers Brubaker’s (2004) theory on groupness and groupism. The latter is integrated into this analysis to illustrate the varying aspects of what being and becoming “German” meant in NS-occupied Slovenia. Pieter Judson (2006, 6–7, 2012, 22) has already highlighted the importance of this theory to better understand and interpret nationalized conflicts in contested areas. This article builds upon that by putting a special emphasis on the representation and instrumentalization of the border and a propagated borderland character in the hegemonic struggle over territory and people based on the example of the Hitler Youth’s engagement in the Austrian-Slovenian borderlands.

The historical examination of the Hitler Youth’s activities can be challenging when faced with the question of what sources to look at. In general, records on regional and local activities in Germany and Austria were deliberately destroyed in the last weeks of the Second World War and only fragments survived in official and private collections (Gehmacher 1994, 33). Therefore, internal communications are rarely available. However, in the case of Lower Styria and Upper Carniola, a comprehensive collection of local correspondences (letters, internal manuals, staff files, evaluations) documenting the Hitler Youth’s transborder activities was preserved in the Slovenian State Archive.³ Together with fragments from Austrian regional archives, these records allow a detailed study of the conditions and practices of National Socialist youth organizations in the Austrian-Slovenian borderlands. In my research, I can use these sources in combination with a broad range of published propagandistic materials, leaflets and bulletins, as well as autobiographical data, such as diaries, interviews and memoirs. Working with heterogeneous corpora like that is a patchwork-like project, which requires the historian to put together puzzle pieces from different sources to make an informed statement. To highlight the origin of the various findings for the reader, and for reasons of transparency in working with historical documents, I cite all archival sources used in this article in endnotes.

The diversity of the materials allows different perspectives on the research subject to be explored, which constitutes the overall benefit of this extensive detail (patch-)work. In turn, this demands a flexible analytical approach to consider the different characteristics of each source. For example, the conditions and contexts within which the different types of sources emerged vary as strongly as their respective contents: Internal and often confidential communication of the regional Hitler Youth units can, thus, not be put on the same level as a propagandistic publication or a private diary. For example, a letter sent from a Nazi youth leader working in the borderlands to his or her superior might contain information on the persisting difficulties and obstacles hindering the task of Germanizing the young, while at the same time concealing the (potential) doubts of the writer as well as aspects of his or her personal failure. By contrast, a newspaper article reporting on the same topic would, owing to censorship, be more likely to emphasize the permanent and increasing successes of the Hitler Youth's bordering endeavors. To take that into account, I deploy the basic historical method of source criticism (e.g. Arnold 2007) to consider the discursive limitations of each source analytically. Questioning the different conditions of origin, author- and readership, purpose as well as preservation, thus, ensures a critical reflection of each source's informative value. Furthermore, the Cultural Studies approach adds another layer of interpretation to this basic historical procedure and ensures the consideration of the intertwined nature of power relations, human agency and their respective textual representation (Winter 2014). This analytical lens is especially helpful when reflecting why some things are (not) written – represented – in certain ways in different documents.

Contested Borderlands: The Case of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria (Figure 1)

By investigating agents and practices of Germanization aimed at youth in South-Eastern Europe, Caroline Mezger's (2016, 2018) work highlights the hegemonic interest of the Nazi regime in relation to the indoctrination of the young. Mezger exemplifies this with the successes of the Hitler Youth's work in relation to the young's mobilization in settlements of so-called "ethnic-Germans" ("Volksdeutsche") (Mezger 2016). The latter comprise a constructed collective, whose members lack German citizenship but claim to (or are claimed to) belong to "Germanness" based upon the use of the German language and the evocation of "German" descent (Schmidt 1999, 199). "Ethnic-Germans" played an important role in justifying Nazi expansionism to the east and south of Europe during the Second World War as their "Germanness" was portrayed as being continuously threatened by the Other in Nazi propaganda (Promitzer 2004). Additionally, Jürgen Finger (2016) showed that regional case studies on Nazi occupation enable researchers to better understand the link between the territorial claims of regional agents and their influence on and relation to Nazi expansionism in Europe. In this respect, the regional example of the Austrian-Slovenian borderland illustrates the strong regional interest in regaining territories deemed "lost" after the First World War from the Austrian point of view, the tradition of nationalizing territorial disputes and the propagandistic evocation of an existentially threatened "German" population.

As former multilingual parts of the Habsburg Empire, the investigated territories of today's Slovenia have been sites of nationalist campaigns since the late nineteenth

century (Judson 2006). Following armed border conflicts of varying intensity at the end of the First World War, the disputed territories of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria eventually became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. German-speaking minorities – as defined vaguely through self-declarations based on everyday language use in state censuses – remained in both regional entities, though stronger in numbers in Lower Styria (Ferenc and Repe 2004, 162–164). This fostered the continuation of the so-called Habsburg nationalities conflict (*Nationalitätenkonflikt*), nationalist power disputes in linguistically mixed (border) regions of the (former) Habsburg Empire, where language was instrumentalized as the central marker of constructed national belonging (Judson 2006, 3–4). Propagating a national and cultural conflict in this tradition, small German-nationalist groups on both sides of the Austrian-Yugoslav border continued to evoke the threat of “Slavic” oppression of “Germans” in the 1920s and 1930s (Judson 2006, 257). Central agents in this nationalist conflict were, for example, the German-nationalist associations *Deutsche Schulverein* (German School Association; established in 1880) and *Südmark* (established in 1889), which merged into the *Deutsche Schulverein Südmark* in 1925. Claiming to protect “Germanness”, these clubs privately financed and orchestrated the establishment of German-only schools in the borderlands, pursued various activities like trips to the border and cultural events with “German” music and literature and tried to encourage “Germans” from Austria or Germany to move to these contested areas they called the “language frontier” (Judson 2012, 20, 26–27; Promitzer 2004, 94–95). Agents coming from these circles called for the Nazi regime to annex the investigated borderland territories after Austria had joined the Third Reich in 1938; a wish eventually fulfilled when the Second World War led to the dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and to the de facto annexation of the northern parts of Slovenia in April 1941 (Ferenc and Godeša 2004, 225–227; Nečak 2004). Subsequently, the Austrian *Gaue* (NS-provinces) of Carinthia and Styria established occupation authorities in their neighboring borderlands Upper Carniola and Lower Styria. The system implemented was called civilian administration and the affected territories were also referred to as regions under the leadership of a *Chef der Zivilverwaltung* (head of civilian administration; short: CdZ-regions). In this system, the leader of the neighboring *Gau* would automatically take up the responsibility as CdZ, linking the occupied territories with regional National Socialist authorities (Luthar 2008). The regional Hitler Youth organizations of Carinthia and Styria joined this transborder effort of annexation in different ways and at different paces as is outlined later on.

Borderland Ideologies, Groupness and Being “German”

As outlined above, the investigated area of the Austrian-Slovenian borderland has been a highly contested one. In line with what Andre Gingerich (2016) called “frontier orientalism”, a conflict was imagined and charged with constructed threats of the respective “dangerous” Other. From the German-nationalist point of view, this “danger” came from the pejoratively imagined “Slavic” people. This resulted in evocations of what Judson called frontier ideology: a form of consciousness that built upon specific notions of a constructed cultural and national struggle in border regions (Judson 2006, 25–28, 257). In reference to the ubiquitously used German term “*Grenzland*” (border region), I refer to this phenomenon as borderland ideologies. As a highly

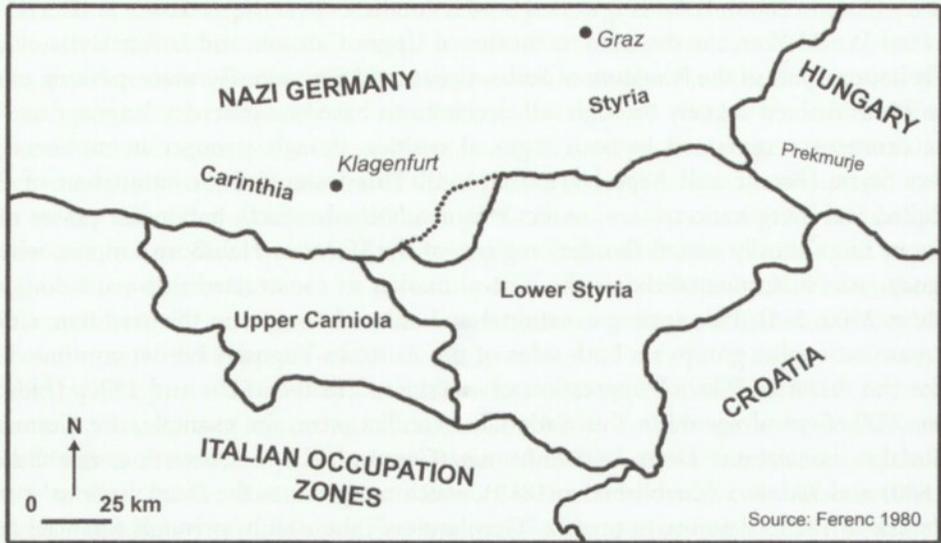


Figure 1. Division of today's Slovenia during the Second World War (1941). This map shows the division of today's Slovenia as of Summer 1941 with Upper Carniola and Lower Styria under Nazi occupation (1941–1945), the region Prekmurje occupied by Hungary (1941–1945) and the southern territories under Italian occupation (1941–1943). To the south-east the zones border Croatia, to the north is Nazi Germany, respectively the Austrian Gaue of Carinthia and Styria. The dotted line marks part of the initial border between Nazi Germany and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before Carinthia fully incorporated this region comprising the Mežiška valley and the small town of Dravograd in the course of 1941. In 1943 the Italian occupation zones were annexed by the Third Reich and formed a third German occupation zone administered by Carinthia in addition to Upper Carniola. After the Second World War Upper Carniola and Lower Styria became part of Yugoslavia. Today's borders between Austria and Slovenia correspond with the northern border marks including the dotted line as shown in this map.

ideologically loaded form of border narratives (Newman 2003, 20; Scott 2015, 28, 32), varieties of borderland ideologies were instrumentalized at the Third Reich's borders to the east (Harvey 2010), to the west (Williams 2012) and to the south. From 1938 onwards, Austrian National Socialists propagated these southern versions for the whole of former Austria, depicting it as "German bulwark" (*"Deutsches Bollwerk"*) against the "Slavic threat". The Austrian provinces Carinthia and Styria were also labeled as "German" *"Grenzländer"* by Nazi propagandists. This reinforced the imagination and propagation of a self-ascribed special mission to "save" and "protect" "Germanness" and, thus, fostered a self-confident stance of these regions within Nazi Germany (Hagspiel 1995). Furthermore, borderland ideologies were instrumentalized by institutions to emphasize their dedication to the National Socialist cause. For example, the Styrian University of Graz used the label *"Grenzfeste deutscher Wissenschaft"* ("Stronghold of German Science") to present itself as a guardian of "German" science and culture in the south-east and to strengthen its own reputation and position within the National Socialist regime (Fleck 1985, 3). The de facto annexation of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria was furthermore presented as a necessary measure in the propagandistically constructed fight between "Germans" and "Slavs". This strategical framing (Brubaker 2004, 16–17) of the expansionist intention

successfully concealed the regional hegemonic interests of, among others, the *Gaue* Carinthia and Styria. Altogether, borderland ideologies were strategically used to promote the hegemonic positions of regions, institutions and groups within the Third Reich's internal power structure (Hagspiel 1995, 259). Based on the evocation of special identities in relation to the constructed "borderness" of these regions" (Judson 2006, 257), borderland ideologies were, thus, used to justify the occupation and Germanization of large parts of Europe during the Second World War.

Blood and Language – Cornerstones of Evaluating and Defining "Germanness"

Building upon the work of German-nationalist groups of the nineteenth and early twentieth century such as the aforementioned *Südmark*, the ideologists in the regional capitals of Graz (Styria) and Klagenfurt (Carinthia) divided the borderland population into constructed ethnic groups: "German", "Slovene" and an in-between category named "Wends" (*Windische*) (Judson 2006, 121; Stiller 2012, 245). While the portrayal of "Slovene" by Nazi propaganda mirrored the pejorative notions ascribed to "Slavic", the "Wends" were supposed to be "German" in terms of descent and/or considered to be "German-friendly", but had at the same time assimilated linguistically and/or culturally under "Slavic" rule (Promitzer 2003, 195–196). The adherence to one of these collectives would determine the rights and opportunities in professional and private matters of each person living in the occupied territories. Therefore, the (externally) ascribed belonging to the "right" group can be understood as a kind of entrance ticket to the National Socialist conceptual collective that was the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Stiller 2012, 235). The promised access to this propagandistic ideal was meant to foster the subordination of the borderland population to National Socialist rule (Kershaw 2014). In this respect, Nazi propagandists such as Helmut Carstanjen evoked the legend of shared "blood" in order to suggest that anyone willing to follow the Third Reich would stand a chance of eventually belonging to the "German" group:

Yes – but what about the language!? You, a peasant and worker of Lower Styria, ask. Aren't we after all Slovenes? What is more important, your history, your character, your attitude or the language? The decisive thing is the blood. You are called today by the voice of the blood that flows within you. According to your blood you belong to us. (Carstanjen 1942, 59)⁴

The core argument was that most of the inhabitants of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria descended from "German" settlers of previous centuries and, thus, shared "German blood". To put this ideological argumentation more bluntly: The National Socialists took it upon themselves to "remind" the borderland population of their "true German nature" and to instigate feelings of belonging to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The latter especially was supposed to ensure the locals' loyalty to the occupation regime (Promitzer 2004). A similar line of argument was at the same time used by the Italian fascist government to justify its Italianization policies in South Tyrol (Pergher 2018).

Overall, the evaluation of this supposed "German" character of individuals – based on vague categories such as history, character or attitude – remained arbitrary, subjective and permanently lacked a clear definition. For example, leaders of the *Deutsche Jugend* (German Youth), the Hitler Youth branch in Lower Styria, evaluated local girls participating in a skiing camp in March 1943 as either "good" or "suitable" in terms of character or

as not “German” enough despite a display of diligence, which was, however, considered to be a “German” quality.⁵ Although Carstanjen’s quote suggests that the individual’s knowledge of the German language was not decisive in determining his or her “German” character, NS-propaganda continuously emphasized that the learning of the language was the uppermost order and individual sign of belonging to Germanness (Untersteirischer Heimatdienst, April 12, 1942, 12–13). Learning and speaking German was not only considered necessary if one wanted to become part of and stay within the “*Volksgemeinschaft*”, but also a central aspect of Germanization itself. For that reason, the use of Slovenian language was officially banned from the public sphere, from schools and from the youth organizations in both CdZ-regions. In Upper Carniola, however, the use of Slovenian was continuously tolerated for pragmatic reasons, as the local population showed a far lesser extend of German knowledge than was the case in Lower Styria (Luthar 2008, 422). Nevertheless, language skills were, on the one hand, interpreted as signs of belonging and, on the other hand, discredited as an attempt to fake one’s own “Germanness”, as the winter camp evaluations cited above illustrate.

Flexible Inclusion into the “Volksgemeinschaft” as Hegemonic Strategy

The arbitrariness of these evaluations, as well as the vague and flexible definition of “Germanness”, relates to the specific context of the occupied regions: As mentioned before, the annexed territories of Lower Styria and Upper Carniola comprised a multilingual population, of which only the minority spoke German. As necessary precondition for the consolidation of National Socialist rule, the authorities had to provide opportunities for inclusion into the “*Volksgemeinschaft*” even for those with no or only little knowledge of German to foster the (un)willing subordination and/or collaboration of the local population. This became especially important with the end of the initially planned deportation of people who were racially categorized as the “Slavic” Other or perceived as too persistently adhering to the “Slovenian” national cause by the Nazi authorities. These resettlement plans, however, soon came to a halt as the Nazi authorities simply lacked the resources to continue their racial population policies following the German attack on the Soviet Union – the so-called Operation Barbarossa – in June 1941 (Ferenc and Godeša 2004, 236–240; Luthar 2008, 421). Therefore, the notion of “German blood” was broadly ascribed to the remaining population to include everyone into the collective of “*Volksgemeinschaft*” eventually. In this manner, National Socialists hoped to instigate and preserve what Brubaker (2004, 22–23) called a high level of groupness – a strong and permanent self-identification with the constructed group of “Germans” – which was supposed to result in equally strong support for the occupation regime.

As groupness is highly variable and subject to constant development and change (Brubaker 2004, 4, 11), the agents had to evoke the desired feeling of belonging permanently and repeatedly to consolidate their domination. To do so, the core narrative of borderland ideologies – the differentiation between “them” and “us” or the dichotomy between an in-group (“Germans”) and an out-group (“Slavs”) (Stiller 2012, 235–236) – was used to create events of groupness. The latter describes moments in which the sense of belonging to, for example, “Germanness” is made visible, emerges and influences the actions of individuals (Brubaker 2004, 12). One essential measure in this respect was the establishment of preliminary branches of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (*Nationalsozialistische*

Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP; Stiller 2012). The *Steirische Heimatbund* (SHB; Styrian Homeland League) took up the task of mobilizing the masses in Lower Styria, and the *Kärntner Volksbund* (KVB; Carinthian People's League) was set up in Upper Carniola (Luthar 2008, 422). While admission to the KVB and SHB equated to recognition of one's "ethnic German" character by the National Socialist rulers, even provisional membership in these organizations offered a certain degree of protection from persecution and resettlement, professional opportunities as well as access to basic goods such as food and clothing (Ferenc and Godeša 2004, 236–240; Steber and Gotto 2014, 3). Despite these incentives, the desired unquestioned support for the National Socialist regime was rarely achieved (Judson 2006, 255), and Nazi propagandists still sold the rather opportunistic actions that were the membership applications as expressions of high levels of groupness (Untersteirischer Heimatdienst, April 12, 1942, 10).

Altogether, the Germanization of Lower Styria and Upper Carniola can be interpreted at least as an attempted group-making project (Brubaker 2004, 13–14). Groups of agents such as the SHB and KVB tried to evoke feelings of belonging to "Germanness" and to secure Nazi rule in the borderlands. In reference to this group-making endeavor, Günter Kaufmann, a leading ideologist and propagandist of the Reich Youth Directorate (*Reichsjugendführung*, RJF), emphasized the central role of the Hitler Youth in propagating "Germanness" specifically in borderlands (Kaufmann 1940, 162). This mission of mediating "German" groupness significantly shaped the measures and practices employed by the Hitler Youth in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria as outlined below.

Germanizing Youth in the Borderland – Becoming "German" in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria

As the SHB and KVB were administratively linked to and directed from Styria and Carinthia, the different measures and practices in organizing the young were also determined in the respective regional capitals of Graz and Klagenfurt. In Lower Styria, the *Deutsche Jugend* was formed in style of National Socialist youth organizations operating in Croatia, Romania and other European countries with a German-speaking (minority) population (Buddrus 2003, 773–774). Although formally and officially independent and subordinated primarily to the SHB structure, the *Deutsche Jugend's* personnel and activities were strongly dictated from and coordinated with the leadership of the Styrian Hitler Youth (Kregar 2012).⁶ Its male leader, Rudolf Schilcher, was a veteran of the former illegal Austrian Hitler Youth from the time of the NSDAP's party ban in Austria (1933–1938) and a high-ranking member of the Styrian youth organization before being charged with building up the National Socialist youth structure in Lower Styria. His female counterpart and head of the girls' organization in Lower Styria, Traute or Edeltraut Lorinser, was also a leading figure of the Styrian regional League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*, BdM) (*Ämter-Führer* 1939, 125).⁷ In the 1930s, she already led one of the first clandestine camps for "German" youth in Celje/Cilli (Ferenc 1968, 96) and, thus, already knew the area as well as its conditions. These camps were organized by the *Schwäbisch-Deutsche Kulturbund* (SDKB, Swabian-German Cultural Union), a German-nationalist organization active in South-Eastern Europe during the interwar period. The SDKB became one of the main pillars of National Socialist rule in the Slovenian territories, as many of its personnel were recruited into the SHB structure (Ferenc

and Repe 2004, 172–176; Luthar 2008, 422). The *Deutsche Jugend* also recruited trained youth leaders from this organization from the very start of the occupation. Based in Maribor/Marburg, this Hitler Youth branch expanded relatively quickly and set up local units continuously even in remote rural areas. Weekly activities on local levels started already in autumn 1941.⁸

Although similarly relying on the expertise and experience of regional Hitler Youth veterans (Buddrus 2003, 764), the project of the *Kärntner Volksbundjugend* (KVBJ), Youth of the Carinthian People's League) did not progress at the same speed because the initial conditions for setting up a youth organization structure in Upper Carniola appear to have been less promising.⁹ Copying organizational strategies also used after the incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich in 1938, a so-called *Befehlsstelle* (command post; Buddrus 2003, 761–762) was set up in Bled/Veldes (from 1942 in Radovljica/Radmannsdorf) to administer the building up of a Hitler Youth branch in Upper Carniola from summer 1941 on.¹⁰ While the Carinthian interim *Gau* leader Franz Kutschera had not shown much interest in the annexation and Germanization of Upper Carniola in general, this changed when Friedrich Rainer took over as CdZ in late 1941. This led to a (belated) reorganization of the overall occupation structure (Ferenc and Godeša 2004, 235). Around the same time, the reorganization of the KVBJ started with the appointment of its new leader, Martin Rauter, former head of the Hitler Youth of the Carinthian capital Klagenfurt (*Kärntner Amts- und Adressbuch* 1939, 645).¹¹ Over the course of two years, the KVBJ was then slowly transformed into official Hitler Youth units and fully incorporated into the Carinthian regional organization by early 1943 (NS-Gaudienst *Gau* Kärnten, February 1, 1943, 5)¹² – a practice that was also propagated as proof of the belonging of the Upper Carniolian territory to Carinthia. Following the dissolution of the command post, Rauter was sent back to Klagenfurt where he continued to coordinate the interests and needs of the Upper Carniolian youth within the Carinthian Hitler Youth organization.¹³ As for the girls' organization within the KVBJ, the female leading position was held by Erika Eberle (maiden name Liaunigg) from 1941 to 1942. Eberle was a primary school teacher, a veteran of the Carinthian League of German Girls and a member of its regional command from 1938 onwards. Following the transformation of the KVBJ into Hitler Youth units, this female leading position similar to the one Traute Lorinser held in the *Deutsche Jugend* was rendered obsolete.¹⁴

While the *Deutsche Jugend* and the KVBJ/Hitler Youth aimed at the indoctrination of all "German" youth aged 10–18, the conscription of those between the ages of 14 and 18 was the utmost priority of the occupation regime: After all, the older ones were needed for the war effort and especially boys should receive their basic military training within the Nazi youth organizations. The huge losses suffered by the German Army at the battle of Stalingrad in winter 1942/43 intensified these efforts directed at the conscription of the young (Buddrus 2003). As for the success in acquiring new members, internal communications of both the *Deutsche Jugend* and the KVBJ/Hitler Youth show continuing difficulties in motivating the young to join the respective local units. Nevertheless, both organizations officially propagated rapid successes in their local development – (slowly) spreading from center (small towns) to peripheries (remote villages and settlements) – as well as a continuing rise in membership numbers. The rate of conscription, however, varied strongly from center (small towns) to periphery (remote villages and settlements), as did the development of local organizational structures in general.¹⁵

“Speak German, Think German and Feel German”: Education and Language as Pillars of Germanization

Rudolf Schilcher emphasized that the core condition for consolidating National Socialist domination was to ensure that the youth would “not only learn German, but speak German, think German and feel German” (Schilcher 1942, 79). In this respect, a precondition for introducing “German” culture to the children and youth in the occupied territories was teaching them the German language. For this, the educational system and especially primary schools were immediately reorganized in terms of the teaching staff and curriculum in both regions. Following special language courses held during the summer, German-only instruction started in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria in autumn 1941. As the ruling authorities in both regions fired almost all the Slovenian-speaking teachers, hundreds of Austrian ones – mainly from Styria, Carinthia, Vienna and Salzburg – were sent to these southern regions to take up their positions (Amt Schulwesen 1941, 95–112).¹⁶ The Styrian Hitler Youth held special training courses for these teachers with no or little Hitler Youth experience as well as for Hitler Youth leaders who were to help out in schools as so-called *Laienlehrer* and *Laienlehrerinnen* (lay teachers) (Marburger Zeitung, May 10, 1941, 5; Amt Schulwesen 1941, 45–47). Most of them were very young and were not only supposed to teach, but also to build up National Socialist youth groups in the villages they were assigned to (Ferenc and Godeša 2004, 250). Helga Bachner (maiden name Schmitzer, born 1922), a young teacher candidate from Salzburg, was one of these youthful teachers that were deployed across the border from 1941 on. Upon accepting the placement in the occupied territories, she emphasized that she strongly believed in the just nature of the “German” claim to this territory as well as the need to teach the local youth the “German” way of life.¹⁷ One strategy to fully encompass and reach all young people in the borderlands was, thus, to hijack the formal educational system. Youth leaders were thereby better able to monitor the participation in organized youth activities outside the school, as their Germanizing mission comprised taking ideological control of all boys and girls remaining in the occupied territories. This extensive target group was a rather pragmatic reaction to the premature halting of the initial resettlement plans for the “Slovenian” population as explained above. Building upon the vague characteristics of “Germanness” and the notion of “German blood”, the National Socialist youth agents henceforth directed their attention to the registration of all the young people left in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria.

Even though the Hitler Youth agents pursued this kind of inclusive approach in planning their group-making projects, the latter were still hindered by persisting and widespread deficits in German language skills among the young. While German was taught in schools and obligatory language courses were held for all members of the National Socialist youth organizations,¹⁸ multiple evaluations of camp participants and local youth leaders in training illustrate that this obstacle for large-scale Germanization prevailed up until the end of the war.¹⁹ After all, the standard repertoire of National Socialist youth indoctrination – weekly meetings in small groups, mass events and camps – built strongly on talks, speeches and group activities that required at least some communicative basis (Kollmeier 2011). In reaction to that, the *Deutsche Jugend* devised different content guidelines for *Heimabende* (weekly meetings of youth groups on local levels). According to these guidelines, even boys and girls who had little or no knowledge of German should

playfully internalize the typical “us”/“them” dichotomy that was the foundation for “German” groupness.²⁰ Consequently, youth leaders – especially in rural areas – would only play games or do handicrafts and other things that did not require a high level of language skills from both sides.²¹ To motivate the young even further, the *Deutsche Jugend* and the KVBJ/Hitler Youth organized competitions between local youth units. In order for one group to win, the members of the units needed to prove their German skills regardless of the official goal of the contest.²² Furthermore, the use of Slovenian was strictly forbidden, in particular in the *Deutsche Jugend* of Lower Styria.²³ Nevertheless, the young would continue to use their mother tongue when not being watched.²⁴ By comparison, the Hitler Youth in Upper Carniola – as well as the KVBJ before – chose a somewhat more diplomatic and pragmatic approach towards the Slovenian-speaking youth. While the official language to be spoken remained German, the use of Slovenian was not banned completely (Ferenc 1980, 406–408; Luthar 2008, 422): For instance, letters and invitations distributed to the young were always composed in both languages.²⁵ In addition, the regional version of the 1944 edition of the *Kriegsberufswettkampf* (a competition for young workers all over the Third Reich) allowed the contestants from Upper Carniola to answer the ideological questions in Slovenian or German or even to mix both languages. Even practical parts, such as dictation, were held and completed in Slovenian.²⁶

All these attempts related to the propagation of the German language among the young marked a continuation of the aforementioned Habsburg national conflict in the tradition of linguistic nationalism, an ideology that had placed language at the center of a collective’s definition since the late nineteenth century (Barbour 2000). In light of this concept, it becomes clear why speaking Slovenian was interpreted as an event of “Slovenian” groupness, shared especially by the young. In this respect, the National Socialist security apparatus perceived the use of Slovenian as a sign of non-conformism with the occupation and, thus, as an act of resistance.²⁷ Therefore, when the majority did not express the (ascribed) “German” groupness through learning or speaking the language, the notion of “German blood” came in handy for the occupying power: Whenever Germanization failed in terms of language acquisition, the National Socialists continued to insist that the local population was nevertheless “German” by descent (Carstanjen 1942). The flexible character of the German-nationalist borderland ideology, as outlined above, was conveniently adapted to justify not only the Nazi occupation in general, but particularly the conscription of the young into the Nazi youth organizations.

Agricultural Work as an Instrument of Germanization

Large-scale programs of organized farm work constituted a major pillar in the attempt to spread “Germanness” and German language skills among the young. The RJF had already pursued a number of different programs concerning youth deployment in the agricultural sector all over the Third Reich, such as the one-year *Landdienst* (rural deployment) and short-term harvest work initiatives (*Ernteeinsatz*) during harvest seasons, both building upon camp structures to better control the young. Glorifying peasant life, these agricultural programs aimed to prevent rural depopulation within the Third Reich and encourage the young to take up professional careers in this sector. These programs were also instrumentalized in light of the “*Blut-und-Boden*” (blood and soil) ideology of the Nazi regime

and were used within the scope of expansionist settlement programs directed at especially Eastern European regions (Buddrus 2003, 651–741). In addition to establishing the standard version of *Landdienst* camps for Upper Carniolian youth in Carinthia, the KVBJ/Hitler Youth strongly promoted single placements of boys and girls with (German-speaking) farmers and their families for the period of ten to twelve months. This measure pursued two educational goals closely linked to the overall task of Germanization: to make the young improve their German language skills and to teach them the “German” way of life and make them experience the “*Volksgemeinschaft*”. These aspects were to eventually raise and strengthen the feeling of belonging to “Germanness” among the young. At the end of one term, each farmer would be asked to evaluate the boy or girl who had worked at his property in terms of his or her (increase in) “German” groupness, language skills and concerning his or her political attitude. Besides the work on the farms, the Upper Carniolian youth were required to participate in the respective local Hitler Youth activities as well. In theory, the experience of how the Hitler Youth worked and operated in Carinthian villages – assuming that this work followed the directives issued in Berlin – was supposed to enable and motivate the young to help build up the National Socialist youth structure in Upper Carniola upon returning home.²⁸ Individual participants of this agricultural deployment wrote letters to Martin Rauter to thank him (and the KVBJ/Hitler Youth) for this opportunity to travel to Carinthia, to learn the German language and also for rewarding those who completed a *Landdienst* term with uniforms (clothes and shoes). Paradoxically, some of these letters were written in Slovene despite the goal of spreading the knowledge of the German language through the *Landdienst*.²⁹

A similar measure was planned in Lower Styria but never achieved a comparable impact.³⁰ Instead of welcoming large numbers of Lower Styrian youth to Styrian territory, the agents relied on short-term harvest work (*Erntedienst*) as an instrument of Germanization. The Styrian Hitler Youth tended to focus on the geographically southbound deployment of youth in the agricultural sector. Styrian youth leaders were, thus, sent to Lower Styria to assist local farmers during harvest season. Their main task was to build up the *Deutsche Jugend* in rural areas and to teach the German language and “Germanness” to the local population (Untersteirischer Heimatdienst, July 24, 1941, 3).³¹ Both strategies – sending youth to the Reich and deploying Hitler Youth in the occupied territories – were aimed at two different things at the same time: the Germanization of the borderland youth, as explained above, and the spread of knowledge and acceptance of their “Germanness” amongst the citizens of the Third Reich.

Inclusion into the “Volksgemeinschaft”: “Homecoming” and Gatekeeping

The same twofold goal was pursued by Nazi propaganda in continuously emphasizing the narrative of “*Heimkehr*” (“return home”) in reference to the occupied territories and their population. In a general example of what Brubaker (2004, 16–17) called strategic framing, Lower Styria and Upper Carniola were presented as territories oppressed by “Slavic” rule, which in the Nazi line of argument had kept the people and the land from (re-)joining the “German” collective. As part of the distinct borderland ideology instrumentalized in these areas, the evocation of “*Heimkehr*” presented the brutal occupation simply as an act of liberation. To spread this understanding among the population, the “German” belonging of the occupied territories was constantly accentuated in speeches, newspaper coverage and

other propagandistic publications (e.g. *Untersteirischer Kalender* 1942). It was also symbolically staged at mass events for youth, such as competitions, festivities and marches. For example, the *Deutsche Jugend* immediately participated in the Styrian youth championships from the beginning of the occupation in 1941 onwards. This integration was not only framed as the ultimate proof of the Lower Styrian youth's "Germanness", but also performed as the realization of this "return home" into the Third Reich (*Marburger Zeitung*, July 3, 1941, 5). The choice of location of events was another measure containing the same symbolical labeling of belonging: In June 1941, the Styrian Hitler Youth organized its regional *Kulturtage* (a cultural event of the Hitler Youth) as joint venture of the cities Graz and Maribor. As the two cities had been in two different countries up until the Nazi occupation of 1941 but shared the same regional Habsburg legacy, this choice of venue was used to highlight the "Heimkehr" of the Lower Styrian region (*Marburger Zeitung*, June 9, 1941, 6).

The "Heimkehr" staged in these mass events also held an important propagandistic message: The people who had "returned home" according to this ideological frame would now – finally – have the chance to access the collective of the "Volksgemeinschaft" with all the benefits outlined above. However, the Hitler Youth/KVBJ and the *Deutsche Jugend* – as did the KVB and SHB for adults – exercised what Newman (2003, 22) called a social gatekeeping function. Given that membership in the Nazi youth organizations was the basic condition for the young's approval of and subordination to Nazi rule, the Hitler Youth leadership created more and more incentives for the young to join the *Deutsche Jugend* or the KVBJ/Hitler Youth. For example, local Hitler Youth agents determined whether a boy or girl would be able to take up a certain profession, such as teaching, or would be allowed to pursue higher education in general. A positive evaluation of "German" character and simple confirmation of attendance issued by local youth leaders in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola would ensure or prevent the realization of these individual career choices (Žižek 1993).³² As outlined in the examples given above, the grounds for these evaluations were vague and subjective, and the local youth was often left with no other choice than to subordinate themselves and to join the Nazi youth organizations. Whereas some young people did so simply because they feared the persecution of their parents,³³ examples from Upper Carniola show that a few members of the local KVBJ/Hitler Youth leadership even defected during the Second World War and joined the Partisan resistance – armed guerilla-like resistance organizations, unified by the shared opposition to Nazi rule and by ideological ties to communism.³⁴ As the consulted archival sources only contain minimal traces of these radical acts of resistance and defection, further research is required to better understand the feelings of belonging that led to these actions.

Concluding remarks

Being "German", as well as the individual potential for becoming "German" in NS-occupied Slovenia, was inseparably tied to constructed borderland ideologies and the propagated idea of "shared blood", shared language and culture. Based on vaguely defined characteristics such as attitude and character, the evaluation of these categories remained ambiguous and, thus, preserved the possibility for almost everyone to gain access to the "Volksgemeinschaft" eventually. This implied openness of the constructed "German" collective served as an important mechanism of consolidating Nazi hegemony in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria. Varying in relation to the overall course of the Second World War,

this ambiguity in itself was not only a necessary precondition for the Nazi Germanization project, but also an integral part of its daily practices. The *Deutsche Jugend* and the KVBJ/Hitler Youth used these vague and flexible characteristics to fulfill two main tasks in the occupied territories. First, the evocation and mediation of a “German” feeling of belonging among the young. Second, the overall ideological control of the young to guarantee their subordination to Nazi rule.

While this article focuses on the proliferation and evocation of “German” groupness among the young, a future investigation of alternative and competing borderland ideologies and forms of belonging (e.g. the Partisan resistance) as well as their developments following the rupture of 1945 and the building up of the communist regime might provide further insights into the link between power relations, territorial domination and the propagation of belonging. In this respect, a comparison of group-making activities and events of groupness similar or contrary to those conducted and fostered by the Hitler Youth in NS-occupied Slovenia would certainly contribute to an even more comprehensive portrait of the youth’s involvement, role and agency in spreading feelings of belonging (Venken 2017b, 203–207). Additionally, an investigation into the development of competing memory discourses might foster a deeper understanding of hegemonic practices in border regions with a violent history of territorial struggles. As for Upper Carniola and Lower Styria, these struggles of the past eventually led to the integration of these regions into today’s independent state Slovenia, while the memory of the Nazi occupation and its end in 1945 remains contested (Luthar and Radonić 2010).

As David Newman (2003, 22) pointed out, the reflection of hegemonic interests is a central analytical pillar of researching borderlands today. In this respect, historical inquiries of this sort help to question the motives and agendas behind past and current border conflicts, especially when claims to territory and people are justified based on ethnic, national, cultural or historical categorizations. Raising awareness of the constructed, arbitrary and flexible nature of belonging, this article cautions researchers and policymakers alike to pay special attention to the ways in which borderland ideologies and labels of belonging were and still can be used as “facts” to promote certain hegemonic and territorial interests.

Notes

1. Terms and concepts that refer to imagined and constructed groups or characteristics are marked with double quotation marks to highlight that related categorizations and ascriptions are not based on natural, given or even biological facts.
2. All direct quotes from historical sources are originally in German and have been translated into English by the author.
3. The Slovenian State Archive reorganized its collections during my research. The citations are based on the system used until 2018, except for some parts of the collection 1611, which were quoted using the current signatures.
4. The original quote in German is as follows: “Ja - aber die Sprache!? So fragst Du, untersteirischer Bauer und Arbeiter. Sind wir nicht doch Slowenen? Was wiegt mehr, Deine Geschichte, Deine Art, Deine Gesinnung oder die Sprache? Das Entscheidende ist das Blut. Dich ruft heute die Stimme des Blutes, das in Dir rollt. Deinem Blute nach gehörst Du zu uns.”.

5. Anonymous, evaluations of girls participating in a skiing camp in Tassach from March 1 to March 10 1943, Arhiv Republike Slovenije. Ljubljana, Slovenia (SI AS) 1605, box 96, envelope II.
6. Bundesjugendführung der Deutschen Jugend im Steirischen Heimatbund, Wochenbefehle, 1941–1943, SI AS 1631, box 90, envelope I.
7. Index card of Traute Lorinser, Prokrajinski Arhiv Maribor. Maribor, Slovenia (SI PAM) 1243, box 3.
8. Bundesjugendführung, Wochenbefehle, SI AS 1631.
9. Box 95 of SI AS 1605; Box 94 of SI AS 1605.
10. Willi Waldner to Hans Schuh, October 8 1941, SI AS 1605, box 95, envelope I.
11. Willi Waldner to Adolf Thaler, November 19 1941, SI AS 1611, box 11, envelope III.
12. Befehlsstelle Radmannsdorf, *Befehlsblatt der Befehlsstelle des Gebietes Kärnten (31) Radmannsdorf* issue 1, 1942, 1, SI AS 1603, box 55, envelope V.
13. Oberkrainer Führerinnendienst für die Hitlerjugend Oberkrains im Gebiet Kärnten (31). Ausgabe JM und M. June 1943, Inštitut za novejšo Zgodovino Knjižnica. Ljubljana, Slovenia (INZ).
14. NSDAP membership card of Eberle/Liaunigg Erika, Deutsches Bundesarchiv, Berlin, Germany (BArch), R 9361-II-189156; Rotraud Liebenwein to the Carinthian school administration, April 30 1938, Kärntner Landesarchiv. Carinthia, Austria (KLA), LSR Akten, Allgemeine Reihe, box 473; Erika Eberle to Steffi Wolbank, May 4 1942, SI AS 1605, box 98, envelope III; Waldner to Schuh, October 8 1941, SI AS 1605.
15. Hitler Youth propaganda suggested a fairly high number of members, while internal documents from local administrative levels contradict these claims. It can be stated that, owing to the engagement and devotion of individual leaders, some local units were more successful than others. The overall development of the Deutsche Jugend and KVBj/Hitler Youth was drawn from the example of the development of the Bann Trifail/Trbovlje contained in boxes 87 and 88 of SI AS 1631, from the administrative correspondences contained in boxes 94 and 95 of SI AS 1605 as well as from box 11 (f. 992, 993) of SI AS 1611.
16. Anonymous, Lists of teachers deployed in the area of Kranj/Krainburg 1942–1944, SI AS 1604, box 85, envelope I (f. 948).
17. Bachner, Helga. 2008. *Ein weiter Weg mit vielen Stolpersteinen. Aufwachsen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Autobiographical Manuscript, 103–105, 112, Sammlung Frauennachlässe, Institut für Geschichte der Universität Wien, Vienna, Austria (SFN), NL 119.
18. Hermann Ebner to leaders of Bann Stein, May 28 1942, SI AS 1603, box 55, envelope V; Bundesjugendführung der Deutschen Jugend im Steirischen Heimatbund, Sonder-Wochenbefehl issue 29a, December 22 1941, SI AS 1631, box 90, envelope I.
19. Evaluations of camp participants and low-level youth leaders from Bann Radmannsdorf 1941–1944, SI AS 1605, box 96, envelopes II, III.
20. Führerdienst der Deutschen Jugend im Steirischen Heimatbund, Ausgabe für Mädel. February 1944, 6–10, INZ.
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31. Thomas Trummer, "Erntedienst und Arbeitseinsatz 1941 der Steirischen Hitler-Jugend," 1941, StLA, Realschule Realgymnasium Graz Keplerstraße, box 26.
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33. Savodnik, Bert. 2018. Interview by Lisbeth Matzer. Collection of the Author.
34. Kartoteka za izkaznice vodij v oddelku Kranj, unknown dates, SI AS 1611, 1611/56.

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Bordering and Repatriation: Displaced Unaccompanied Children from the Polish–Ukrainian Borderland after World War II

Olga Gnydiuk 

ABSTRACT

After the end of World War II, the welfare workers of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and, from 1947, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) took care of displaced children and helped them to return to their home countries. This paper explores how the post-war controversies between the Soviet and Anglo-American governments and (re)bordering of the Polish–Soviet borderland changed the welfare workers' approach to interpret belonging of unaccompanied displaced children of presumably Ukrainian origin. In the winter of 1945 the region of Eastern Poland was annexed by the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1945, British and American officials declared that they refused to recognize the acquisition of these territories by the Soviet Union. In result, the repatriation of unaccompanied Ukrainian children who originally came from this borderland became the subjects of intense controversy between the former Allies. The welfare workers used the fact of these children's belonging to the Polish–Soviet borderland as an argument against their repatriation to the Soviet Union. By looking into the social dimension of bordering processes, this article suggests that the UNRRA's and IRO's social workers redefined the border between the two countries in their daily work.

Introduction

In 1945, welfare workers from the international humanitarian organization United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) sailed to Europe to assist the Allied powers in occupied Germany and Austria to care for adults and children who had been displaced during the war. They provided them with food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, and counseling as well as assisted in their repatriation. Unaccompanied children became of particular concern to the welfare workers. The strict bureaucratic language stated that unaccompanied children were minors who had been separated from their parents or relatives:

Orphans or children whose parents have disappeared or who have been abandoned, or whose parents are unattainable; Not provided with a legal guardian, or children whose guardian has disappeared or abandoned them, or who is unattainable; Not accompanied by a close relative (adult brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or grandparents).[i]¹

The UNRRA declared that regardless of the reasons for separation, they aimed to return each and every lost child to their or their family's home country. In 1947, the UNRRA was replaced by the International Refugee Organization (IRO), and from that moment on its welfare workers continued the UNRRA's mission. While the definition cited above set the frame for defining a child as unaccompanied, each child's case provided a unique story that illustrated how children were found far away from their parents, relatives and homes and how the welfare workers arranged their future.

The story below explores how the humanitarians and the military authorities in the American zone of occupation in Germany² attempted to answer thorny questions about the belonging, nationality, citizenship and repatriation of unaccompanied children from the Polish-Soviet borderland in their daily work, at a time of post-war bordering and population transfers. Particularly, it focuses on the case study of children who were defined as Polish-Ukrainian children. These were minors of Ukrainian ethnic nationality who were born to families from the eastern Polish territories that in 1945 were annexed by the Soviet Union and incorporated into Soviet Ukraine. The story begins in late 1945, when the issues surrounding the repatriation of unaccompanied children of presumably Ukrainian origin became apparent and continues until 1948, when policy decisions gave way to a more coherent and consistent approach adopted by the welfare workers dealing with these children.

By researching into the case files of Polish-Ukrainian children and their fates after the war, this paper takes a historical perspective on bordering processes in the contested lands divided between Poland and the Soviet Ukraine. Bordering is understood here as constant production and reproduction of borders via discourses and everyday practices. This concept treats borders as multilevel complexes that consist of social, cultural and political levels and explores dynamic relations between state, territory, citizenship and individual identities (Scott 2012, 86-87). Borders appear as flat lines on a map separating one state from another, but in practice, they have a significant impact on the people who live on or near them. At the same time, people, citizens or non-citizens, take part in constructing, maintaining, redefining and demolishing borders, or in other words, perform borderwork (Rumford 2008a). Historical and sociological research has explored the relationship between children and borders, experiences of youth and children from borderlands as well as the impact of borders and bordering on children's lives. It was shown that children living in borderland regions take an active part in borderwork, imagining, constructing and making use of borders in their daily lives (Spyrou, Spyrou, and Christou 2014; Venken 2017). When looking into the social dimension of bordering in the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, this paper explores welfare officers' borderwork, as defined by Rumford (2008a). It demonstrates that their redefinition of the border profoundly changed the understanding of unaccompanied children's belonging and fates of Polish-Ukrainian children who were found in Germany after 1945.

The UNRRA's and IRO's social workers came from various countries, although those from the U.S. and Britain were in the majority. They often determined the leading approaches and ideas about emergency welfare provision and the rehabilitation programs

for displaced people (Cohen 2011, 59–64; Reinisch 2013, 74, 77–79). In many cases, the men and women who joined the UNNRA and then IRO were already professionals in the field of social care and provision (Reinisch 2011; Salvatici 2016). They had already completed their professional training or gained the necessary experience while working for the state or for voluntary welfare associations that took part in the local humanitarian initiatives and missions after World War I or during World War II. Alongside these well-trained social workers, the UNNRA and IRO employed volunteers who stepped into the field of welfare relief for the first time (Gemie, Reid, and Humbert 2012, 148–159). Despite such a varying professional background, the welfare workers believed that they knew how to help displaced people (Salvatici 2016, 236–238, 2017, 10). Their self-assurance grew throughout their years of fieldwork in occupied Germany, and this gave them the confidence to argue with the military authorities or governmental representatives about policies concerning displaced children, as well as to criticize them for their incompetence in regards to humanitarian questions and the lack of empathy on the ground. In this paper, I suggest that the welfare workers' borderwork allowed them to successfully justify and practice the inclusion of unaccompanied children in one or exclusion from other citizenship categories.

Researching children of war

World War II left thousands of children lost, orphaned and often displaced. Post-war policy-makers, child welfare experts, humanitarians, educators, psychologists, and psychoanalysts often thought of children as innocent victims of war. They were concerned about how to help children recover from the traumas of war, reconnect them with their families, improve their childhood experience, and rehome lost, displaced and orphaned children. Many children were deported to Germany as forced laborers or for the purpose of Germanization; others survived the concentration camps and often had to survive the bombing or flee from the advancing frontline. Recent historiography has historicized the perception of children as innocent victims of war and demonstrated that children's roles and experiences during and in the aftermath of World War II differed depending on their age, gender, nationality, and place of residence (Stargardt 2005; Fehrenbach 2010; Mouton 2015; Venken and Röger 2015; Taylor 2017).

The experiences of displaced and lost children from different European countries also gained the particular attention of scholars (Zahra 2011a; Taylor 2017). It has been shown that the care and wellbeing of displaced children were part of the broad-ranging social recovery and democratization that occurred after the war in Western Europe. The psychological rehabilitation of displaced adults and children became a distinctive feature of post-World War II reconstruction. Anglo-American theorists and social workers insisted that the wounds inflicted on the souls of children of war had to be regarded as seriously as their physical wounds (Zahra 2011a, 2011b; Fieldston 2015). They brought these ideas into the relief and rehabilitation program launched in Europe by the UNRRA and carried on by the IRO. For national governments that were drained of their population, the symbolic meaning of children as precious assets of the nation and as future citizens became an important part of their post-war biopolitical and reconstruction programs. The government officials strived to return home and renationalize refugee children. The child care and education initiatives were developed on the national level to "normalize" childhood for those who had survived the war, correct any psychological and behavioral damage

that had been caused by the war and to educate them into becoming good citizens (Zahra 2016).

This paper tells the largely untold story of unaccompanied displaced children of Ukrainian origin, exploring it in relation to bordering processes in the Polish–Soviet borderland. While researching the working correspondence and reports produced by the UNRRA’s and IRO’s welfare workers regarding the fates of unaccompanied children in the American zone of occupation in Germany and Austria, I discovered numerous discussions about the nationality and citizenship of “Polish–Ukrainian” children and whether it was appropriate to repatriate them to the Soviet Union. To establish which group of children was under discussion, I examined the debates between the welfare workers as well as the administrative orders and regulations issued by the humanitarian and military authorities. The same documents contained information about the guides and the written advice on how to determine a child’s nationality and citizenship, and how to make a distinction between Polish–Ukrainian, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian or Soviet children.

Then, to test these policies and regulations against the welfare officers’ practices I analyzed the children’s personal files, which have been preserved at the International Tracing Service (ITS). This allowed me to reveal the practical decisions that humanitarians made on an everyday basis when working with contested children’s cases. Instead of asking whether the welfare workers were right or wrong in determining the child’s nationality and citizenship, my aim was to examine in which cases they decided to call the children Polish–Ukrainian, and under which circumstances they changed their opinions. To select just the Polish–Ukrainian children’s files among all others I used the name of the city or village as a search reference. As a result, this study based on 45 cases of children below the age of eighteen, who were identified as presumably being born to parents from post-1945 Ukrainian territory.

The archival sources used in this paper present the history of children primarily through the eyes of adults. Remarkably, however, the process of planning a future for minors suggests that children were not only passive objects of care. Children and adolescents had a chance to indicate their own choices in the UNRRA or IRO registration files or during the interviews with the welfare workers. Typically, adolescents preferred to emigrate to the U.S., Canada, Australia or other countries. For instance, Zaharij, a young Polish–Ukrainian boy, who was deported as a forced laborer in 1944, told the welfare workers that he neither wanted to return back home nor look for his parents. He wished to emigrate to the U.S. and in the end he left Germany on a ship to America.³

Polish–Soviet Borderland

The western border of the Soviet Union and the so-called Polish question were the most disputed issues raised during the negotiations of the post-World War II order that were held between the British, American and Soviet governments in 1943–1945. The Soviets had been trying to incorporate the multiethnic eastern Polish territory since the end of the Great War (1914–1918). When in 1919 the Supreme Council of the Allied powers discussed the borders of the Second Polish Republic they proposed to mark its eastern frontier with the rising Soviet Union along the so-called Curzon Line. This dividing line reflected the ethnic frontier between Poles and Ukrainians and envisioned that the eastern Polish borderlands, or *kresy*, would belong to the Soviet side. However, both

Poles and Russians refused to accept such a configuration of the border. During the Polish–Soviet War of 1919–1921, Polish forces moved deeper into the east of the Curzon Line and took over the territories inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians. As a result, the Treaty of Riga, which ended the Polish–Soviet War, set up the border that cut across the Curzon Line, divided the historic *kresy* and incorporated Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, including Lviv, into the Second Polish Republic (Brown 2004; Plochy 2010; Gousseff 2011).

In 1939, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, together with the secret protocol that divided the spheres of interest between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, awarded the Soviet Union control over the eastern Polish borderlands. The new border stretched almost along the Curzon Line so that the former eastern Polish territories fell under the control of the Soviet Union. After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the region was in jurisdiction of the Nazi occupation administration until in 1944, advancing to the west, the Red Army reoccupied the Polish–Ukrainian borderlands.

Having entered the war against Nazi Germany, Stalin also joined the Allies in the negotiations on post-war order in Europe and the reconfiguration of its borders. His aim was to restore the Polish–Soviet border to its 1939–1941 placement, or as close to the Curzon Line as could be achieved. At the Teheran Conference in 1943, the Allies had provisionally approved the implementation of Soviet-friendly borders, although some controversies remained. The agreement signed in Yalta in 1945 only reaffirmed that the Soviet Union was able to retain the territories that the Red Army had occupied in Eastern Europe after September 1939. The new border between Poland and the USSR was set up so that the eastern Polish lands became a part of Soviet Ukraine, Soviet Belorussia and Soviet Lithuania. What had been Polish Volhynia and Galicia became the western part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Plochy 2010; Holian 2011, 35–36).

The mixed and culturally diverse population of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland consisted of three major ethnic groups, namely Poles, Ukrainians and the Jews who had survived the war. In September 1944, the Soviet–Polish “evacuation” agreement, which technically was signed between the Polish Committee of National Liberation and Ukrainian SSR, marked the beginning of ethnic cleansing and deportations in the region. The Polish Committee, known also as the Lublin Committee, was formed in Moscow in the summer of 1944. Controlled by the Polish communists, it represented the Polish state instead of the Polish government-in-exile in London, which the Soviet authorities did not recognize as legitimate. The aim of the agreement was to resettle Poles and Polish-Jews from Western Ukraine to Poland, and Ukrainians from Poland to Western Ukraine so that an “ethnographic frontier” could be established. Similar agreements about exchange of ethnic populations were signed between the Polish Committee and Soviet Lithuania and Soviet Belorussia (Gousseff 2011, 93–94). Having absorbed the new territories and completed population transfers, the Soviet Union argued that the people in those territories had automatically acquired Soviet citizenship. According to Soviet law, everyone who had resided in what became Western Ukraine was naturalized regardless of their wish and displacement during the war (Lohr 2012, 182–183).

The repatriation of displaced populations was another important topic in the heated debates on the post-war settlement held between the Allies in 1945. In Yalta, the British, American and Soviet leaders agreed to exchange the liberated civilians and prisoners of war, indicating that all Soviet nationals should be voluntarily or forcibly repatriated.

People from the newly annexed lands were supposed to be returned to the Soviet Union like any other Soviet citizens (Plokyh 2010). On the whole, mainly during the summer of 1945, the allied armies moved around 2,272,000 eastern Europeans to the Soviet Union (Judt 2010, 30). In this circumstances, the Ukrainian adults in the DP camps started to fight against their forced repatriation to the Soviet Union and to have their nationality recognized by the western Allies. They created national organizations in the DP camps and struggled to secure permission to emigrate (Dyczok 2000; Luciuk 2000; Pastushenko 2009; Holian 2011; Khromeychuk 2013). In this study, I focus on the fates of the unaccompanied children of Ukrainian ethnic origin who were left in the DP camps and the UNRRA/IRO children's centers after the wave of forced repatriation.

Polish–Ukrainian vs Ukrainian Children

The annexation of Eastern Poland by the Soviet Union, and the subsequent population transfers in the region almost inevitably led to disputes about the nationality and citizenship of the displaced unaccompanied children of presumably Ukrainian origin who came from the former Polish–Soviet borderland. At the end of 1945, Cornelia Heise, the chief of the child search branch of the UNRRA, called for guidance on how to establish the citizenship “of the group of children called Ukrainian.”⁴ Fourteen months later, however, she again emphasized in her report that the “policy and legal problems involving children from Baltic countries and children of Ukrainian descent who lived within the 1939 boundaries of Poland require clarification.”⁵ In 1947 the UNRRA’s closing report on the United Nations’ progress in repatriating unaccompanied children included again a paragraph on Ukrainian children. It summarized issues that were of great concern to the welfare workers working throughout Germany and Austria:

The political uncertainty which existed for many months with regard to Ukrainians has, of course, affected children. In some instances the difficulty in determining geographical boundaries, makes determination of nationality, (or more accurately in this instance, citizenship) a problem. The decision whether to repatriate child to Poland or to Soviet Union is not a simple one.⁶

The decision on repatriation of children of presumably Ukrainian origin was not a simple one because repatriation, as well as the organization of the UNRRA’s and IRO’s work with displaced populations, was tightly connected to the notion of belonging to a particular nation or state (Zahra 2016). Therefore, in order to repatriate children, the UNRRA’s and IRO’s workers had to know where they originally came from, to which country they now belonged and what their nationality and citizenship was. The rules that the welfare workers were supposed to follow equated a person’s nationality to his or her citizenship and before 1946 discouraged them from using ethnic nationality without relation to existing nation-states (Taylor 2010, 35–37; Holian 2011, 44). In other words, the UNRRA’s definition of citizenship was oriented on the nation-state principle. Organizing the repatriation of children from Western Europe according to this principle rarely caused additional problems. The citizenship of, for instance, Norwegian, French or Belgian minors was hardly ever disputed and was quite easy to determine by making enquiries with the existing nation-states and their governments. In such cases few questions arose when a welfare worker handed these children over to the national representative of their country.

However, repatriating children from the territories that had been seized by the Soviet Union in 1945, such as children of Ukrainian origin from the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, became puzzling and problematic. The nation-state definition of citizenship was insensitive to the multiplicity of national, ethnic, cultural and religious identities that flourished in this territory. In addition, two main obstacles, which often merged together, obstructed the welfare officers' quest to establish their citizenship: geography and politics. In the whirlwind of the bordering process, political changes, and population movements in the Polish-Soviet borderland during the first half of the twentieth century, the most difficult task was to locate the birth country and to identify the citizenship of an adult who came from that territory. To do the same for children was an even more complicated problem. The welfare officers often did not know where the minors had been born or what their parents were called. Even if the children could recall some aspect of their background, according to the legal practice established in the U.S. zone of occupation, minors below the age of majority could not opt for a particular citizenship or choose between repatriation and emigration.⁷ It was the responsibility of adults to make these decisions on the children's behalf. Typically, parents made such choices for their children, but in the cases of unaccompanied displaced children the welfare workers had to take on this role.

Even when the UNRRA's and IRO's welfare officers established that the children came from the former Polish territories, they still found it difficult to ascertain their current home country. Welfare officers hesitated, unsure of whether Polish-Ukrainian children should be sent to the Soviet or Polish representatives to be repatriated to the Soviet Union or Poland, respectively?⁸ Could they be resettled in any other country? The fact that similar requests were circulating throughout the period of two years suggests that welfare officers did not receive any particular answer either from their authorities or from the military zonal command. Meanwhile, unaccompanied children in such cases were not sent anywhere until some decision about their belonging was reached.

The political uncertainty and confusion about the geographical boundaries that the welfare workers experienced – and thus mentioned in the UNRRA's closing report – referred to the emerging early-Cold-War controversies between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union over the recognition of the annexed Eastern Polish lands. After the war, the Soviet authorities demanded that all children of Ukrainian origin be repatriated, including those who came from the newly added Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. And yet, already by the summer of 1945, British and American officials began to declare that they did not recognize the acquisition of the Baltic States and the former eastern Polish territories by the Soviet Union. Consequently, in July 1945, the headquarters of the Commander of the Allied forces issued a directive defining Soviet citizens as the people living within the pre-war Soviet territories, thus excluding those who lived in the newly annexed territories from this category (Holian 2011, 45; Fitzpatrick 2018). It was during the autumn of 1945 that the (re)population issue, notably, echoed the first rumblings of the Cold War.

Such political change inevitably had a significant impact on displaced people and particularly on displaced unaccompanied minors, who remained in the UNRRA's DP camps and children's centers waiting for repatriation or emigration. From autumn 1945 onwards, Ukrainian adult DPs were given the opportunity to reject repatriation and instead to opt for resettlement in a different country. Those who had expressed a desire to return to the Soviet Union were sent back (Cohen 2011, 7–8). Still, the question about the

unaccompanied minors' fates was unanswered; deciding their repatriation remained the UNRRA's task, and in 1947 was passed to the IRO. The U.S. military government, in turn, did not explicitly state that the repatriation of Polish-Ukrainian children to the Soviet Union would be denied. Nevertheless, from late 1945 onwards, the humanitarian workers and military authorities in the U.S. zone began withholding these children from repatriation to the Soviet Union. However, it took the U.S. authorities two more years to clearly articulate a policy regarding the citizenship and repatriation of children of Ukrainian origin to the Soviet Union.

Remarkably, throughout this time, it was rather exceptional in welfare workers' practice to indicate children of presumed Ukrainian origin as Soviet or Polish nationals. Instead, they used a range of definitions that relied on ethnic nationality to define them, as they did in the cases of adults (Taylor 2017, 305–310). From 1946, social workers often wrote "Ukrainian" in the working correspondence or in the nationality column when they filled in the forms for these children, and statistical charts. At times they added presumed state of belonging or place of origin.⁹ Taking into consideration the new Polish-Ukrainian border, they used the term "Polish-Ukrainian" when it was known, or assumed, that children, or their parents, came from the former Polish territories. Children who originated from pre-1945 parts of Ukraine were identified as being either Soviet-Ukrainian or USSR Ukrainian. Using the term "Ukrainian Undetermined" typically indicated that little was known about a child or that the information that they did have was unconfirmed.

Over the course of the investigation into each individual case, the same child could at different stages be identified as Ukrainian, Polish-Ukrainian, Russian or Soviet. For instance, during the investigation of Jurgen Babunjka's case, which started in 1946, the UNRRA's and IRO's welfare, care and search specialists defined him as Russian, Ukrainian, again Russian, Ukrainian-Soviet, as of unknown nationality, and then again as Russian and Ukrainian-Soviet. Finally, in 1950 the IRO's child care division closed his case and in the last record stated that he was "Ukrainian."¹⁰ The supposed nationality of Babujka, and children like him, depended on the information that the welfare officers collected about his relatives, on the circumstances of the investigation and the welfare officers' ideas regarding his belonging.

The UNRRA's administrative orders outlined and regulated a series of steps that the administrative and field welfare officers had to follow with every unaccompanied minor in order to establish his or her background. Typically, to decide whether or not to repatriate a child, the social workers investigated the background of each unaccompanied child, weighed up a range of psychological, educational and welfare elements that helped them to determine what was the best option for the child's future. In the first place, however, it was important to locate the child's place of origin in order to establish his or her nationality and citizenship, and to ensure that repatriation would be enacted on rightful and democratic principles. This aspect became an especially critical issue for the cases that concerned children from contested territories, such as the Polish-Ukrainian borderland. Their citizenship was crucial for welfare workers, as it indicated whether Soviet representatives would become responsible for them and organize their repatriation.

For humanitarians working in the field, the first step was to fill in forms where they had to indicate the child's presumed nationality. They based this assumption on the children's or their parents' place of origin, or their last place of residence before they came to

Germany unless other information was already known.¹¹ Then, social workers conducted an in-depth investigation into the child's background in order to confirm that the claimed nationality was correct. As such, they searched for the child's birth certificate and information about where they and their parents came from, as well as collected any available details from people who knew the child or his or her family. The humanitarians in the U.S. occupation zone worked on the legal principle that children normally succeed to their father's nationality and citizenship. If they could not find the father or a child was born out of wedlock, the mother's background became indicative of the child's nationality and citizenship.¹²

When enquiring into a child's past, the welfare workers tried to make use of all available sources of information, they even had extensive individual interviews with the children. Special manuals on how to uncover repressed "true nationality" or Germanized foreign children advised welfare officers to pay attention to the smallest details of the children's stories, fragments of memory and the use of occasional words and names. The hope was that something insignificant could point to their native language, culture, religion or place of origin.¹³ All these elements were to help welfare workers to find out the child's origin, although in practice the place of birth or residence before the war were the most important indications of probable citizenship. When it came to Ukrainian children, the relief officers had to conduct a long and complicated search for a child's definite place of origin within the Soviet territories to make a distinction between children of Ukrainian origin born on one or the other side of the former Polish-Ukrainian border.

Welfare officers paid particular attention to the Ukrainian children's place of origin and the way they would be identified in the files because it was not just a question of identity and geography. It gradually became a matter of politics and biopolitics, as it determined which national representatives would become legal guardian for the children. The legal guardians held the right to decide to which country unaccompanied children would be repatriated. According to the UNRRA and IRO regulations, when the welfare officers reached their final conclusion on a child's nationality, they passed the documents on to the national representatives of the child's country of origin who would then forward the case on to the authorities in their countries. Therefore, children who were determined to be Soviet citizens, or Russian nationals, were supposed to be referred to the Soviet liaison officers, while children who were considered to be Polish were referred to Polish representatives.¹⁴

In an attempt to clarify the issues with legal guardianship for children of Ukrainian origin, welfare workers from the UNRRA and later the IRO – such as Cornelia Heise, cited at the beginning of this section – wrote to the U.S. military zonal authorities asking how to approach the citizenship of these children. Their inquiries, however, referred to a larger issue that was of a great concern to humanitarians. They were particularly eager to understand whether the U.S. military authorities accepted Soviet claims over the custody of children from the newly annexed Polish territories. After all, humanitarians in the U.S. zone of occupation had to comply with the geopolitical considerations and nuances that were related to the policies of the U.S. military government regarding the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland and the citizenship status of these children. The U.S. authorities adhered to the statement that Ukrainian DPs from the former Polish territories annexed by the Soviet Union did not automatically acquire Soviet citizenship.

However, they did not provide any clear instructions on what to do with unaccompanied children.

"Nationals Without Governmental Representation"

The lack of a clear policy from the military authorities regarding legal guardianship for minors of Ukrainian origin implied that social workers in the U.S. zone were left without clear instructions on what to do in their cases. In such circumstances, the UNRRA's and IRO's field workers took the initiative and used their personal opinions, professional experiences and standpoints when assessing options for a child's future. For instance, the IRO office in Austria dealt with many children whose families had lived in the former Polish territories. During May and June of 1945, many of the mothers from these families were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union in accordance with the agreement signed in Yalta in February of 1945. The welfare workers in this office, like many others in the U.S. zone, were confused as to whether the children should follow their mothers or should be sent to another country. In September 1947, Charles S. Miller, the acting chief of the IRO in Austria, described the method that the welfare officers in his zone had developed and used to ascertain the Polish-Ukrainian children's nationality and citizenship, and thus determine their legal guardians and resettlement plan. The solution they adopted, which on the surface seemed to work, was to send the child's dossier to both the Polish and Soviet senior liaison officers in the U.S. zone. In this way, after both representatives had examined the files and visited the children, they could settle on the plan for the children's citizenship and future. Then one of them would get custody of the child and make the necessary arrangements for his or her repatriation. The head of the IRO care and repatriation division in Austria believed that such an approach showed positive results and could be recommended as a working template for other offices.¹⁵

In fact, the IRO's chief care and repatriation officer, it seems, knew about the practice of the joint certification of children even before Miller's report. In May 1947, he also suggested that welfare workers could adopt this practice as a possible remedy for cases in which they found it problematic to determine an unaccompanied child's future:

The child search workers have reported difficulties in referring unaccompanied children of Ukrainian origin to the appropriate liaison officers for determine of nationality, and acceptance for repatriation. [...] However, when documentation has been completed, and probable nationality indicated, it may be necessary to refer the case for joint decision by more than one liaison officer. You may be interested to know of the method of determination of nationality of unaccompanied children in Austria, which has proved effective. [...] and you perhaps will find it possible to develop a similar procedure [...].¹⁶

The UNRRA's and the IRO's working routine demonstrated that some of the welfare workers did indeed use the method described by the Austrian office to identify the nationality of children who came from the former eastern Polish territories. According to the rules in the U.S. zone, all decisions about children's resettlement had to be approved by the military authorities. The fact that the UNRRA had submitted relatively few requests to the military government in the U.S. zone to release Polish-Ukrainian children for emigration attracted the American authorities' attention. They presumed that the small

number of release requests with the purpose of emigration, compared to the requests for repatriation, indicated that the Soviet representatives had already seen children and agreed to repatriate them before the welfare officers had gathered enough evidence to confirm that children were of Soviet citizenship.¹⁷

The military authorities' suspicion was not unreasonable. Although such a method of child identification provided an opportunity for the Polish and Soviet representatives to forge an agreement, it is possible to assume that the Soviet officers were more likely to claim any Ukrainian children from the former Polish territories because they believed that these children acquired Soviet citizenship. Therefore, once they received the Ukrainian children's files, the Soviet authorities most likely confirmed their citizenship as Soviet and accepted them for repatriation to the Soviet Union, regardless of whether they were identified in the documents as Polish-Ukrainian or Soviet-Ukrainian children. In other words, they accepted for repatriation all children of presumed Ukrainian nationality, be they from the former Polish territories or not.

The Polish authorities in Warsaw, it seems, would not protest against the Soviet Union's plans regarding Polish-Ukrainian children, even though they were extremely enthusiastic about having children that were deported during the war returned home (Zahra 2011a, 126–27). From the fall of 1945 onwards, the Polish government accepted children of presumably Ukrainian origin for repatriation to Poland providing that their parents or close relatives were already living there and were recognized as Polish citizens. In all other cases, they often rejected the repatriation of Ukrainian children in the Soviet officers' favor. Between 1946 and 1948, the UNRRA's and IRO's offices corresponded with the Polish repatriation office in order to establish the Polish government's position regarding the Ukrainian DPs from the territories that had been annexed by the Soviet Union from Poland. Humanitarians were particularly interested to know whether the Polish government in Warsaw would accept them for repatriation to Poland.¹⁸ Polish authorities clarified that they would not welcome Ukrainian nationals because it would contradict the Polish–Soviet agreements on population transfer that had been signed in 1944 (Gousseff 2011, 94). Based on this argument, in conversations with humanitarians in the American zone, the Polish representative typically stated that all adults and children of Ukrainian ethnic origin from Eastern Galicia and Volhynia automatically lost their Polish citizenship.¹⁹ For instance, when clarifying the fate of a girl named Maria, who was born in 1938 near Ternopil, a city in the former Polish territory, the IRO officer enquired the Polish liaison officer about the girl's citizenship. The Polish officer in reply signed a statement that refused her Polish citizenship.²⁰

The representatives of the Polish government-in-exile in London also took part in care for displaced children, their education and welfare provision in Germany. Unlike the Warsaw government, they actively argued against repatriation of Polish adults and minors to communist Poland or the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, officially the Polish government-in-exile was not in the position to decide about children's nationality and repatriation. From 1945 the British and American officials recognized the government in Warsaw as a legitimate representative of the Polish state and as Polish children's legal guardians (Taylor 2009; Zahra 2011a, 206–212; Taylor 2017, 300–305). Therefore, in the American zone the UNRRA's and later the IRO's welfare officers forwarded all official requests regarding doubtful citizenship and possible repatriation of Polish-Ukrainian children to Warsaw.

In view of these facts, not all the participants of the post-war resettlement programs were as enthusiastic about the method of joint certification of children as Colonel Miller was. In the end the method as well as the general participation of the Soviet authorities in cases concerning Ukrainian children received more criticism than support. Father Edward G. Killion, delegate from the Vatican to the IRO and a field representative of the Vatican Migration Bureau in Geneva, wrote a remarkable plea for the non-repatriation of seventeen Polish-Ukrainian children that had been submitted to the U.S. military authorities for release and repatriation to the Soviet Union. He criticized the IRO's procedure that allowed the Soviet representatives to take a role in verifying the children's nationality and questioned whether repatriation was the best solution for them. He argued that welfare workers should not consult with the Soviet representatives on issues concerning Polish-Ukrainian children because they would inevitably take these children to the Soviet Union. These children, in his words, had to enjoy "freedom of movement," not be compelled to go to the Soviet Union, and the Soviet authorities should not be given the liberty to decide their future:

UNRRA's right to dispose of [the Baltic and Polish-Ukrainian] children through repatriation must be challenged. To give the liaison officers from Soviets, control over the movement of these children, who are in our care in the United States Zone is an inadmissible abrogation of sovereignty and a betrayal of our American principles. American liaison officers have never had any such liberty of movement in the eastern zone in Germany, nor have they been allowed contact with American citizens, held in camps of Soviet dominated countries.²¹

Concluding his letter, Father Killion, assured the IRO that the Vatican Migration Bureau, which he represented in Geneva, offered emigration opportunities for children coming from the Baltic States and former Eastern Poland.

Father Killion's appeal is also noteworthy because it seems that it represented the concerns of Bishop Ivan (John) Buchko, the Apostolic visitor for Ukrainians in Western Europe, who was in contact with Father Killion. Bishop Buchko, who was the founder of the Ukrainian Relief Committee in Rome, actively opposed the repatriation of Ukrainians to the Soviet Union and assisted in their emigration. His viewpoint corresponded with the general anti-Soviet mood and political activity of the Ukrainians émigré communities in exile and among Ukrainians in the DP camps. The members of the Ukrainian organizations abroad strongly argued against the participation of Soviet officers in matters that related to Ukrainians and their repatriation to the Soviet Union (Dyczok 2000; Luciuk 2000, 75-78; Holian 2011). In September 1947, the Central Ukrainian Relief Bureau based in London and in 1948 the United Ukrainian American Relief Committee (UUARC) offered the IRO's welfare workers their personnel, so that they could work with displaced Ukrainians, manage their lives in the DP camps and, most importantly, consult the IRO's officers in entangled and controversial matters regarding their nationality, citizenship, language and culture.²²

The U.S. military authorities, and some of the welfare workers, in general, were not opposed to the appeals written by people like Father Killion. For them, the joint certification of nationality as a method of handling the problem of the citizenship and repatriation of Polish-Ukrainian children was also not entirely acceptable. It went against their views on occupation policies as well as inter-Allied politics. In the first place, it undermined the policy on citizenship and repatriation that followed the Anglo-American

refusal to recognize the transfer of the former eastern Polish territories to the Soviet Union and consider the people from Polish-Soviet borderlands Soviet citizens. On top of that, the fact that the Soviet representatives interviewed the children before the humanitarian officers and U.S. military authorities reached an agreement on their belonging went against the established principles of the U.S. zone. As Father Killion pointed out, it suggested that the Soviet repatriation representatives were deciding the future of displaced children in territory controlled by the U.S. Army. The American occupying authorities could not agree to such a state of affairs.

As a result, in late 1947, after having communicated with the EUCOM on the matter of the joint certification of Polish-Ukrainian children's citizenship, IRO headquarters ordered welfare officers to stop consultations with the Soviet officers regarding Polish-Ukrainian children. They were asked to consult the Soviet representatives only in regards to children who had already been identified as Russians or Soviet citizens. The IRO headquarters reassured the U.S. military government that children from the Baltic and former eastern Polish territories were not sent for repatriation to the Soviet authorities. Additionally, they promised to repeat these instructions once more to their zonal personnel.²³ It would seem that the joint certification of the Polish-Ukrainian children did not become a rule in the U.S. zone of occupation.

Even though the decision to exclude the Soviet representatives from the process of certifying Polish-Ukrainian children's belonging was an important one, it still remained unclear as to how to determine their status, and who would represent the children if not the parents or Soviet government. When in 1949, Eleanor Ellis, an IRO child care officer, wrote to the Women's Voluntary Services in Canada to provide them with an overview of the types of problems that the IRO had with children, she told the story of a Ukrainian boy who was in her care. Describing his situation, she observed that he was Ukrainian but this belonging meant nothing to others: "Dmitrij or Dmitro, age 16, one of the most appealing youngsters, [he is] alert, helpful, polite, and cheerful. Dmitro is 'Ukrainian', which is to say, he has no nationality at all."²⁴ Her comment reflected how the welfare workers perceived the problem of children like Dmitro, who were of presumed Ukrainian nationality. The set of circumstances around them suggested that they had lost their family home as well as their national home – two main domains to which they belonged and which complemented each other when creating an appropriate atmosphere for child rearing, but were at the same time structurally and functionally different. There was a need for a working definition that could reflect the complicated situation of unaccompanied Polish-Ukrainian and Baltic children, who also appeared to be in a similar situation. This definition had to distinguish them from other children from the same territories – specifically those who were called Soviet citizens.

In spring 1948, the members of the IRO and representatives from the U.S., Britain and France informally met in Geneva to solve the numerous problematic issues connected to the child care policy in occupied Germany. This meeting gave shape to a policy regarding Polish-Ukrainian children that, from that moment on, became more consistent. The representatives of the three occupying powers agreed that, since their governments did not recognize the Soviet's annexation of the Baltic countries and eastern Polish territories in 1939, children from these lands were to be considered as "nationals without the protection of a national government or a national liaison representation."²⁵ Calling children

"nationals without the protection of a national government" was indeed much the same as calling them stateless. As with all other stateless children, or those of undetermined nationality, in the American zone of occupation, the U.S. zonal military command (EUCOM) became a legal guardian for Polish-Ukrainian children and held the right to decide their future.

The declaration that Polish-Ukrainian children were not represented by any national government was needed to clarify the choice of legal guardian for these children, which the UNRRA's and IRO's officers had been asking for since the autumn of 1945. Statelessness relied on the geographical place of the children's origin and underlined that Polish-Ukrainian children were not Soviet subjects. It provided the military and welfare authorities the formal grounds to dismiss the claims made by the Soviet representatives. The welfare officers were not obliged to hand unaccompanied Polish-Ukrainian minors over to Soviet representatives because these children were not Soviet citizens. Statelessness opened the possibility to resettle them abroad or in Germany, whichever would best serve the interests of these children.

In the light of such policy changes and welfare officers' redefinition of border, geography and toponymy became the remarkable instruments that they at times used to justify their decision to withhold Ukrainian children from repatriation. The place of origin and the principle of classification turned from being merely a bureaucratic or ordering definition into a statement. The category under which a child was registered could be changed to Polish-Ukrainian when the child was prepared for adoption in Germany or emigration. For instance, this happened in the case of Anna-Rosalina.²⁶ After the war, the girl lived in a German family. The welfare officers found her to be of Ukrainian nationality but initially determined that she was of Soviet citizenship. According to the documents her mother had been born in a place called "Byelowseria," near Kyiv; a place that was situated in the Soviet territories before 1939. In accordance with the rules, it was concluded that the girl should be repatriated. However, revising the case, one of the welfare officers working on Anna-Rosalina's case argued that she was not a Soviet citizen. He stated that there had been a mistake in locating her birthplace on the map. He explained the town's name should be "meaning something like White Lakes" and "as no lakes are known near" Kyiv it probably was situated in Polesie, a region that used to be a Polish territory and famous for its swamps and lakes.²⁷ Based on this assumption, the girl was supposed to be considered as a Polish-Ukrainian national and could stay in Germany. Anna-Rosalina was never sent back to Soviet Ukraine; she stayed with her German foster family.

Conclusions

After 1945, discussion over the belonging and repatriation of unaccompanied displaced children was as much a political matter as it was a logistical and humanitarian one. This paper showed the long and complex story of how the welfare workers and authorities in the American zone of occupation attempted to establish a single policy for attributing citizenship to unaccompanied children from the Polish-Soviet borderland and decided on their repatriation. This story overlapped with the changing relations between the Soviet and Western occupying powers and changing discourse of Polish-Soviet border as well as related to it inclusion and exclusion practices. From this perspective, it demonstrated

how the post-war bordering process, as defined by Scott (2012, 86–87), in the region, affected the lives of borderland children.

The suspension of cooperation between the Soviet and Anglo-American officials after 1946 pushed the U.S. military and welfare authorities to reject repatriation plans for Polish-Ukrainian unaccompanied minors and to initiate their resettlement or local installment. They used the disagreement with the Soviet government over the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands as a pretext for raising doubts about Polish-Ukrainian children's belonging to the Soviet state so as to argue against the Soviet's claims to their custody and repatriation. In order to uphold and maintain this position, from 1946 onwards it became important for the welfare workers not to define Polish-Ukrainian children as Soviet citizens. Belonging to the contested Polish-Soviet borderland granted such an opportunity. Humanitarians, following the U.S. zonal authorities, treated the children of Ukrainian nationality who originally came from the contested Polish-Soviet borderland as stateless. It might seem surprising that the UNRRA's and IRO's welfare workers agreed with such a conclusion, when they typically avoided statelessness as a category for DPs. However, as this paper suggests, rather than being undesirable, statelessness, based on the exceptional status of belonging to a contested borderland, turned out to be advantageous for Polish-Ukrainian children. By these means, humanitarians and the U.S. authorities found it easier to oppose Soviet attempts to nationalize these children and demands for their unconditional repatriation to the Soviet Union. This also was a timely decision considering that the IRO became in charge of DPs and introduced resettlement schemes. Being formally stateless, Polish-Ukrainian children could emigrate or settle in Germany.

Researching into the fates of Polish-Ukrainian children allows us to look closer at the social dimension of the postwar bordering of the contested lands along the border between Poland and the Soviet Union. This case study demonstrates that borders, as "territorial marker of citizenship and 'belonging'" (Scott 2012, 87), and political (re)bordering also affected adults and children who belonged to borderlands even if they did not reside there. Particularly, the post-war geopolitical bordering between Poland and Soviet Ukraine resulted in the fact that the Soviet state unilaterally granted Soviet citizenship to Polish-Ukrainian children who were living in Germany after the war. In this example, the state's political power of inclusion transcended the physical limits of its territory.

The analysis of displaced unaccompanied children's experience with reference to bordering theory (Scott 2012; Brambilla 2015, 26) reveals that the geopolitical issue of the bordering process along the Polish-Soviet frontier after the war was deeply interwoven with social practices. By using Rumford's borderwork concept (2008a, 2008b), this study shows the presence of the border in the place where it ceased to exist on the map. In his research, Rumford refers to contemporary borders and possibilities of "ordinary people" to construct, contest, and redefine them through their daily practices (Rumford 2008a, 2008b). By adopting a historical perspective, this paper pushes this argument forward to suggest that in the past, borderwork was also not an activity performed exclusively by political elites and nation-states. Various social actors, including non-citizens, could redefine the border by their everyday activities. In 1945, according to the international agreements, the new formal border between eastern Poland and the Soviet Union was moved westward. And yet, non-state actors, such as international welfare workers, informally and successfully challenged, redefined and negotiated the border in their everyday practices and decisions.

They moved the border if not on the map then in the minds of the people. This case study could be a useful historical reference for the exploration of continuities and disruptions of the contemporary unaccompanied children's movement across borders.

Notes

1. Anonymous. *Provisional Order No 33. Unaccompanied Children*. PCIRO, Headquarters Geneva, 18/11/1947, AJ/43/604, Archives Nationales, Site de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Paris (hereinafter AN).
2. The American zone of occupation in Germany consisted of Bavaria, Hessen, and parts of Wüttemberg-Baden (the north part of present-day Baden-Wüttemberg), as well as the ports of Bremen and Bremerhaven.
3. Anonymous. *Emigration to U.S. Zacharij Wolodymyr*, 23 July 1946, 6.3.2.1/84583220 ITS Digital Archive, Paris.
4. Heise, Cornelia. *Child Welfare Field Report on Eastern Military District. 28 November 1945 to 9 December 1945*, 6.1.2/82486985-82486989. ITS Digital Archive, Paris.
5. Heise, Cornelia. *Monthly Report. Child Welfare Branch. April 1947*, 6.1.2/82487356-82487358. ITS Digital Archive, Paris.
6. Anonymous. *UNNRA Closure Report on United Nations Unaccompanied Children in Germany*, June 1947, AJ/43/596-597, AN.
7. Anonymous. *Provisional Order No 33. Unaccompanied Children*. PCIRO, Headquarters Geneva, 18 November 1947, AJ/43/604, AN.
8. Heise, Cornelia. *Child Welfare Field Report on Eastern Military District. 28 November 1945 to 9 December 1945*, 6.1.2/82486985-82486989, ITS Digital Archive, Paris.
9. Anonymous. *Statistical Reports for 1947, 1948, 1949*, AJ/43/892, AN.
10. Anonymous. "Case Files of Jurgen Babunjka," 1950 1947, 6.3.2.1/84149078-84149182, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
11. Anonymous. *Procedure for Tracing of Unaccompanied Children*. CTB, October 1945, 6.1.1/82502598, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Anonymous. *The Registration and Identification of Displaced Unaccompanied Children in Enemy Territory*, 1946, 6.1.1/82502600-82502604, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
12. Anonymous. *Provisional Order No 33. Unaccompanied Children*. PCIRO, Headquarters Geneva, 18 November 1947, AJ/43/604, AN.
13. Huyssoon, W.C. "Who Is This Child" *Sample of an Interview with an Unaccompanied Child*, May 1946, 6.1.2/82485962-82485973, ITS Digital Archive, Paris.
14. Anonymous. *Procedure for Tracing of Unaccompanied Children*. CTB, October 1945, 6.1.1/82502598, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Anonymous. *The Registration and Identification of Displaced Unaccompanied Children in Enemy Territory*, 1946, 6.1.1/82502600-82502604, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
15. Miller, Charles S. *To Miss Deborah B. Pentz*, 10 September 1947, AJ/43/596-597, AN.
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Passing by In/Visibly: The Lone Child in the Croatian Section of the Balkan Refugee Corridor

Marijana Hameršak and Iva Pleše

ABSTRACT

The Balkan refugee corridor was active in 2015 and 2016 in order to facilitate and control the movement of refugees towards their destination countries in the EU. In this article, the Slavonski Brod camp, a kind of obligatory stopover in the Croatian section of the Balkan corridor, is approached as a site where the concept of a “lone child” in migration was defined and re-defined in practice. After presenting a short overview of the corridor and the camp, and the genealogy of the concept of the child traveling alone, the article discusses the procedures and practices regarding the position of such a child in this unique form of the European migration regime. The article focuses on the interrelation between changing norms of the corridor and conceptualization/behavior of “lone child” in migration. In that framework we follow the transformation of child traveling alone as privileged humanitarian subject to the child traveling alone as competent social actor.

Introduction

As the migrant movement of summer 2015 in Europe

manifested itself through depictions of the seemingly endless masses of people crossing borders, climbing fences or camping out in parks, one figure came to occupy the centre stage: the child refugee. Stories about large groups of children travelling without parents or adult guardians rapidly made their way into media reports. (Lems, Oester, and Strasser 2019, 1)

The figure of a child traveling alone, the lone child refugee, the lone child in migration or, in terms used in legal and similar documents, the unaccompanied child/minor emerged in public discourse throughout Europe with many ambivalences and changes in meaning (see, e.g. Lems, Oester, and Strasser 2019; McLaughlin 2018; Wernesjö 2019). In this article we alternate between the terms “lone child in migration,” “child traveling alone,” “unaccompanied child,” “independent child migrant,” terms that sometimes overlap and sometimes are differentiated depending on the context, regardless of their limitations in view of, for example, the agency, the involved social actors, the distinction between children and youth, etc.¹

The aim of this article is to address the meaning and practices connected to the abovementioned child as manifested at the external borders of the European Union, more precisely, at the Balkan corridor as a historically unique, short-lived bordering form of the European migration regime. In the first part of the article, we present an overview of the Balkan refugee corridor established in the late summer of 2015, more precisely its Croatian section with the Slavonski Brod transit refugee camp, which opened in November 2015, where we were conducting our ethnographic research from January to April of 2016. We also reflect briefly on that research in the first part of this article. Among the different topics that seemed relevant to our analytical rethinking, the topic of lone children in migration also emerged. In the second part, we address the institutional foundations and history of the concept and term of the unaccompanied child in the international – but predominantly the European and Croatian – context, with the aim to not only outline the construction of the concept and the term, but also to connect the genealogy of the term with the procedures and practices regarding the position of the lone children in the Slavonski Brod camp. The latter is the focus of the third part of this article. Thus, our research contributes to the body of work about children and borders (see, e.g. Bhabha 2014; Kaisto and Brednikova 2019; Spyrou and Christou 2014; Venken 2017) and to the opening field of discussion about the ambivalences of European politics concerning so-called unaccompanied children (Lemberg-Pedersen, in this issue). Our focus and point of reference is research on the lone children crossing different borders and borderlands, as well as how these children are perceived within the context of the particular border format of the Balkan corridor. Our aim is to gain insights into the position of lone children in one specific manifestation of the European border regime.

The Balkan refugee corridor and the Slavonski Brod transit camp

The bordering of the European Union relies on

different bordering logics. Among these logics we can include the creation of new post-national relational spaces, the consolidation of territorial development within the EU but also the creation of a highly selective border regime that regulates access to the Schengen Area. (Scott 2015, 29)

Furthermore, as we discuss elsewhere (Hameršak and Pleše 2018), bordering in the EU features specific characteristics when “unwanted migrants” are a relevant factor. For them, the EU borders are not only external, but also externalized (see, e.g. Cobarrubias et al. 2015) and interiorized. Borders recede and disperse in the interior of the Union and its member states, both in everyday spaces (such as public squares, hotels and airports) and spaces designed precisely to control migration and exclude the undesirables (detention centers etc.). These interiorized borders are part of an apparatus of capture, which, as Federico Rahola writes, following Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, reterritorializes the “deterritorialized borders of the EU, by precipitating their weight into an archipelago of scattered points, each of them being a manifestation of border” (Rahola 2011, 99). In response to the unprecedented movement of people that had disrupted the logic and mechanisms of the external border of EU, a special type of interiorized border was formed in 2015, known as the Balkan corridor. Thus, the punctiform manifestation of

the interiorized European borders (Rahola 2011, 96–97) is joined by a linear one. The network of detention centers is joined by the refugee corridor.

The Balkan corridor originated from the Balkan route, a clandestine passage to the EU for people coming from countries stricken by wars and conflicts, poverty and devastation. Until recently, the Balkan route was almost completely invisible to the general public in countries on the route, such as Croatia. The perception drastically changed in 2015 when the illegalized route known for decades in some circles (see, e.g. Frontex 2011; Hassan and Biörklund 2016; Tsianos, Hess, and Karakayali 2009) transformed into a visible and state-tolerated or state-organized transit across the Balkans to Germany, and further to the North and West. It was “no longer just a route, but rather a corridor, i.e. a narrow and highly organised mechanism to channel and facilitate the movement of people that only states seem capable of providing” (Kasperek 2016, 6). This transit corridor was the response from the EU and the states along the way to the collapse of the EU external border control under the tremendous increase in the number of people on the move to Europe. This was primarily driven by the war in Syria, then in its fourth year, a further destabilization of long-term conflict and war areas in many parts of the world, as well as the perception of Europe as a place that offered the potential of a “way out,” as framed by the narratives, images and the hopes of a better life accumulated during the years. In other words, the established corridor was, as stressed elsewhere (see, e.g. Hameršak and Pleše 2018, 23–24; Beznec, Speer, and Stojić Mitrović 2016; Lunaček Brumen and Meh 2016; Moving Europe 2016a; Santer and Wriedt 2016), a way to gain control over a movement that was not only massive, but also, it seemed, unstoppable, unruly and even rebellious at some moments, for example when thousands of refugees “protested their immobilization in the Hungarian capital [at Keleti train station] as authorities refused to allow them to travel to western Europe” (Kallius, Monterescu, and Rajaram 2016, 1; see e.g. Moving Europe 2016b). Detailed and critical descriptions of this corridor, which functioned differently in different states, are available today for almost all the states along the way: Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia (Beznec, Speer, and Stojić Mitrović 2016, 4; Lunaček Brumen and Meh 2016), as well as Croatia (Hameršak and Pleše 2017, 2018; Župarić-Iljić and Valenta 2019), a locus of this article.

When Hungary, in September 2015, closed its borders to refugees, the movement from Serbia was reoriented towards the west, through Croatia. After the initial period, when the journey of smaller or larger dispersed groups of people through Croatia towards Western Europe was partially organized by state services and was partially independent, in November 2015, the Winter Reception and Transit Center, i.e. the Slavonski Brod refugee camp, was opened by the Croatian government. The Slavonski Brod camp quickly became the central spot on the Croatian section of the Balkan corridor, an obligatory stopping point, with evident features of a border, such as a high fence, checkpoints and a surveillance security system. The camp was simply another European station for assembling, classifying and directing “unwanted” people (see, e.g. New Keywords Collective 2016).

According to some estimates around 350,000 people passed through the camp in Slavonski Brod in more than five months of its existence. People stayed in the camp only briefly, most for only a few hours, in order to process their registration and to receive humanitarian aid (see, e.g. Hameršak and Pleše 2017). During some periods, the trains that brought and took on refugees from the camp followed one right after the other, and a single day, for example, saw almost 8,000 people pass through the camp. Croatia,

as one of the less prosperous EU countries, with its dysfunctional asylum system and without any developed social or other networks relevant for the newly arrived refugees (Valenta, Zuparić-Ilić, and Vidović 2015), was only a transit country. The same could be said for the period before the opening of the corridor, when “Croatian politics and bureaucracy constructed Croatia’s identity as a transit state and modeled an image of refugees as people who do not wish to stay in Croatia” (Bužinkić 2016, 143). During the period relevant for this article, Croatia, along with other post-Yugoslav countries in cooperation with Austria, formed a transit corridor to the West to avoid a scenario in which people would settle in Croatia or the other states along the corridor, reaffirming “their transit position based on the discourse interpreting the agency of refugees by reiterating: ‘they do not want to stay anyway’” (Sardelić 2017, 8).

As the Slavonski Brod refugee camp was the only place in Croatia designed to be a stop-over for refugees, it was the only place during this period where those who were interested in volunteering, reporting or researching could gain access to the people in transit. After being in the Slavonski Brod camp as volunteers in November of 2015, we came to the camp in January of 2016 as researchers as well. We kept coming back to the camp until its closure, combining our roles as researchers and volunteers. As ethnographers, we were inclined towards participant observation, which could be achieved in the role of volunteers, as this was in line with our motivation to support the movement of people. We took on the exclusive role of researchers only in exceptional cases, such as when we conducted scheduled interviews with camp management, when we recorded the camp using a camera, or when we openly took notes as we observed (Hameršak and Pleše 2017). Our last visit to the camp was immediately before April 13 2016, when the last group of refugees who got stuck there after the transit completely stopped was taken from the camp. The closure of the camp was in line with the closure of the corridor and part of the re-establishment of the European border control regime (Hess and Kasperek 2017). In other words, this happened when the corridor fulfilled its previously mentioned function and gained complete control, coordinated among the states, over the movement, as we explain in detail elsewhere (Hameršak and Pleše 2018).

Our entrance and research in the camp was approved by the authorities, the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, but nevertheless it was characterized by numerous prohibitions and bans, the most prominent being the ones related to the restricted areas of the camp. Therefore, our ethnographic research had the characteristics of, as we call it elsewhere (Hameršak and Pleše 2017), investigative work, evident in the recurrent modification of standard ethnographic methods (for example, observing at distance). “In an environment where so much was hidden or inaccessible for various reasons, we continually had to discover the basic stratum of the world that we were studying, which the researchers in other contexts generally reach immediately, and without major difficulty” (Hameršak and Pleše 2017, 123). Regarding the issue of interviewing as one of the prominent ethnographic techniques, and given the radically reduced possibilities of longer contact with refugees in transit, as well as the language barrier, our communication with them did not achieve the form of an ethnographic interview. Instead, it primarily consisted of shorter, spontaneous verbal exchanges in English and a combination of English and non-verbal communication. When we had the chance to establish longer contact with refugees who were stuck in the camp after transit stopped, during the weeks before the closure of the camp, we nevertheless did not conduct interviews with

the refugees, as we summarized in the article dealing with this and other ethical issues of our research (Hameršak and Pleše 2017, 112–113). Besides the abovementioned language barrier, this was due to the impossibility of clearly presenting our role as researchers, the fear of secondary traumatization of refugees, etc. If we had been able to surmount these and other obstacles, and if we had decided to conduct in-depth interviews, we would not have recorded them, primarily because of the possibility of endangering our interlocutors simply as a result of their participation in recorded interviews, and particularly because of the danger of potential unauthorized access to them (Hameršak and Pleše 2017, 212–213). The only recorded interviews we conducted during our fieldwork were with the officials in the camp: police and army employees, Croatian Red Cross representatives, healthcare workers etc. In sum we did several interviews, mostly of, as we name it elsewhere, “spokesperson-like quality” (Hameršak and Pleše 2017, 113). Relevant for this article is an interview with one of the social workers familiar with the treatment of lone children in Slavonski Brod camp. After the closure of the camp, we conducted an interview with social worker with long-term, rich and diversified experience in the field of social care and treatment of unaccompanied children in Croatian context. In sum, the analysis we present here is based on our observation of daily life in the camp, short everyday conversations with volunteers and refugees, official and unofficial reports and correspondence of different kinds and from different periods, NGO/INGO/IO camp coordination meetings minutes, interviews conducted in the period when the camp was in function and later.

Conceptualization and institutionalization of the lone migrant child

The currently well-known and often used saying “Women and children first” gained its institutional affirmation relatively recently, in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations. The oldest international document to specifically and exclusively address children’s rights states: “The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress” (League of Nations 1924). The prioritization of assistance given to children in this declaration, as well as in modern western societies in general, is based on, as Jenks (2005, 64–65) described it, the Apollonian view of children, in which a child is seen as especially valuable and vulnerable, and therefore in need of special care.

In line with that idea of a child, but also with, in terms of Fassin (2012), the politics of humanitarian government of life and the politics of suffering, which produce different, more and less vulnerable groups,² contemporary migration management recognizes children as a specific and, moreover, particularly vulnerable group in the migrant population, i.e. as an “exceptional humanitarian category” (Lems, Oester, and Strasser 2019, 2). Within this contemporary securitarian-humanitarian management of people on the move with a strong tendency towards the segmentation of people, statuses and spaces (Zavratnik and Cukut Krilić 2018, 86), children as a group can additionally be segmented according to age, gender, nationality etc. Thus, children who travel alone and cross different and difficult borders are deemed even more vulnerable than children in general, which is also reflected in the terminology, such as the use of the term “unaccompanied child.”

It is important to note that the term “unaccompanied child,” as is the case with many other terms and concepts related to the rights of children and refugees, as autonomous rights conceptualized within human rights (Bhabha 2014; Malkki 1995), has a relatively

recent history. According to Bhabha (2014), “until the 1990s the vast majority of child migrants were subsumed within family immigration where they were simply ‘dependents’” (4). If any additional attention in terms of categorization was paid to children in this context, it was because they were alone. These children were at first referred to as “unaccompanied children” (Bhabha 2014, 4). Yet the term “unaccompanied child” and the concept related to it appear earlier, in the context of victims of the Second World War and children whose parents died or disappeared. Moreover, it is referred to in the first legal definition of the refugee, which also encompassed the “unaccompanied children who are war orphans or whose parents have disappeared” (Constitution of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) 1946, Part I, Section A, Article 4).

On the other hand, and in line with the idea of universal human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 and elsewhere, the text of the 1951 Refugee Convention does not refer to any particular group of children – for example, war orphans or unaccompanied children – but deals with the child as a universal child: any child or all children. But in the recommendations made by UN delegates attached to the Convention, this universal child becomes a child with some structural specificities. More precisely, the recommendations urge governments to take the necessary measures for the protection of several specific groups of children: “refugees who are minors, in particular unaccompanied children and girls, with special reference to guardianship and adoption” (UN 1951, IV, B, Principle of Unity of the Family, 2).

Although early explicit references to “unaccompanied children” place the origin of the term in the period after the Second World War, when the framework for the contemporary international protection and asylum system was established (see, e.g. Goodwin-Gill 2014), lone children started to gain more attention only decades later in relation to the new migration geographies based on the figure of the irregular migrant and asylum seeker (see, e.g. Sciortino 2004). Thus, during the 1980s, international humanitarian organizations began to refer to “the special situation of unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents” (UNHCR 1987; see, e.g. UNHCR 1985; Williamson and Moser 1988). As suggested in the previous quotation, besides the term “unaccompanied child,” a new term was adopted, “separated children” (see, e.g. Spindler n.d., 3–4), signifying children who were traveling in the company of an adult, but had been separated from their parents or customary caregivers. These children were perceived to be at particular risk, “highly vulnerable, if for example they were with traffickers, military recruiters, or other exploitative individuals” (Bhabha 2014, 4).

The proliferation of concepts and terms over the next few decades was encouraged by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child which refers to the unaccompanied child in relation to “a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee” (UN 1989, Article 22, 1). Although the Convention itself was not the first treatise of international and human rights law to categorize unaccompanied children as a particular figure, the Convention, with its child-centered approach making “states directly responsible for children in ways they have never before been responsible,” pushed states and non-state actors into the children’s rights field (Boyden 2005, 212; see, e.g. Bhabha 2000, 280–281). In relation to this new notion of childhood, one which embraced the concept of children’s rights (Woodhead 2005, 76), children traveling alone became more present in various sectors at the highest international levels, ranging from

humanitarian to legal (see, e.g. EU 1997; UNHCR 1997), and in academic discussions (see, e.g. Anderson 2001; Bhabha 2000). Over the next few decades, different concepts and terms, some overlapping, referring to children alone were introduced. Among them is the “independent child migrant,” which

advocates the need to take on board the autonomy and adolescent aspiration of many child migrants who are not looking to be “rescued” into state-run facilities where their opportunities to earn are blocked, or inducted into migration itineraries where their aspirations for agency and empowerment are erased. (Bhabha 2014, 7)

This new concept is connected to the new migration realities and adolescents’ migrations in “search of various key elements of a rights-respecting life absent in the home countries – safety, nurture, educational opportunities, economic prospects and perhaps family life” (Bhabha 2014, 4), as well as with the epistemological turn in childhood research that promoted the idea of the child as a competent social actor instead of being in the process of becoming such (see, e.g. James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup 1993).

In the narratives dealing with the history of social welfare interventions regarding unaccompanied children, the first encounters of the welfare system in Europe with migrant children traveling alone are described as a completely unexpected phenomenon. As stated in the report from Sweden published in the 1990s:

When the first two unaccompanied children – two boys from the Gambia – arrived at the Råda Bernen Refugee Office in the early 1980s there was little knowledge in society how to take care of such parentless children and no ombudsman to regulate their treatment. (Larsson-Bellander 1998, 8)

In Western Europe in general, in the 1980s, considerable numbers of children started to arrive, predominantly from non-European countries, for example, from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan (Children’s Legal Centre 1992). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, children from East European countries also started to arrive in West European countries, as well as, as a consequence of war in the former Yugoslavia, children from ex-Yugoslav countries, including Croatia (Children’s Legal Centre 1992).

In the Croatian context, the concept was adopted during the 1990s, also in the framework of war, and it was related to the children from ex-Yugoslavia who fled abroad as refugees or stayed, internally displaced, in Croatia (Selak Živković, Lisinski, and Spiz 1998). These children were, mostly temporarily, separated from their parents and, unlike the abovementioned children, they were not *foreigners*, but children from Croatia or neighboring countries. They were cared for as “our” unaccompanied children in the country, as well as abroad.³ In the post-war period, supported by the newly established NGO scene in Croatia (Stubbs 2012), the concept of unaccompanied children moved toward its present form which refers to the child foreigner (see, e.g. Selak Živković 2008; Spindler n.d.). As a social worker who was deeply involved in the development of the institutionalized social welfare framework for unaccompanied children in Croatia explained in an interview:

At the beginning of the 2000s, from 2001 till 2003, citizens from Asian and African countries started to arrive. [...] We were barehanded. You do not know their language, you do not know who these people are, you do not know anything about their countries [...], while we here have no means of dealing with those children, no experience and no support from the higher levels.

In the following decade, the term “unaccompanied child,” conceived at the point where social work, humanitarian and securitarian issues meet, started to receive a more prominent place. In accordance with supranational legislation, it is implemented in the first Croatian asylum law (Zakon o azilu 2003); the first guidelines for unaccompanied children in the field were formulated (Protokol 2009) and a professional community was formed (Jelavić 2008). Nevertheless, this issue remained limited exclusively to a few professionals in the field, as stressed by our abovementioned interlocutor, and almost invisible in the broader public space in Croatia, as was the case with the people on the move in general.

In the Croatian context, children traveling alone across continents were at best known primarily as the characters from movies such as *In this World* (2002), directed by Michael Winterbottom, or books such as *Nel mare ci sono i coccodrilli* (*In the Sea There are Crocodiles*, 2010, English and Croatian translation 2011), written by Fabio Geda. Only during the period of the Balkan corridor did they step out from literature and film and appear in alarming news broadcasts and reports mostly about missing refugee children (Bratonja Martinović 2016; Rujević 2016; Z. K. 2016). However, these news broadcasts and reports did not refer to Croatia, but to other European countries and mostly the situation in the EU destination member states, where an unprecedented number of these children arrived during that period. Namely, according to the official data, in 2015 and 2016 the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in the EU (28 countries) increased several times over, predominantly in the so-called destination countries. Overall, in 2015 their number reached almost 100,000 in EU 28 countries, while in 2016 it was over 60,000 (Eurostat n.d.). On the other hand, the number of unaccompanied children registered in the same years on their way to the destination countries, as far as Croatia is concerned, was insignificant, as we will elaborate in more detail later.

Lone children in the Slavonski Brod refugee camp

The Slavonski Brod camp internal statistics, which distinguished between male, female and children, did not register unaccompanied children as a separate category. This is in line with the invisibility of that category in the public statistics kept by the Croatian Ministry of the Interior. In those periodically published statistics, unaccompanied children are not registered as a separate group on its own, but are “hidden” and invisible in the general data about foreigners, asylum seekers and asylees.⁴ Unaccompanied children were mostly invisible for us as well. Although we conducted research and volunteered in the camp from its opening in November 2015 until its final days in April 2016, we did not “register” these children. Moreover, during our time in the camp observing the transit, we did not perceive them as specific individuals who could be passing by at any moment. Even when the Blue Dot hub signalization appeared one day in the camp, we did not associate it with the idea of a safe space intended explicitly, among other things, for “unaccompanied or separated children” (UNHCR 2016), but with children in general or, more precisely, children traveling with those families recognized as a distinct and relevant group in the camp on the different levels, from abovementioned camp statistics to organizational and spatial structure. Children’s presence in the Slavonski Brod camp was, for example, evident even when there were no refugees in the camp. The numerous banners of the humanitarian agencies and NGOs focused on children (and their families), such as Save the Children, UNICEF

and Magna (Medical and Global Nutrition Aid), on tents, fences, walls or containers in the camp signaled children spaces, i.e. that children had been there and would soon come back. Most of these spaces were aimed at providing basic care for small children, or drawing and similar children's activities.

On several occasions, we heard of or encountered children who had been separated from their families along the corridor. One of them was a teenage boy who had to wait in the camp while the camp services got in contact with his parents who, allegedly, were on their way to the camp. The social worker we interviewed during our research in the camp also referred to the few cases of children being separated from their families along the corridor. The separation of family members in the corridor was one of the recurrent topics in the camp, raised from time to time at the daily NGO/INGO/IO coordination meetings, such as when the Red Cross reported the daily numbers of *tracking service* cases. The general impression was that these children were almost routinely and successfully handled by the governments and humanitarian services along the route, which were at the moment in close coordination. The work of these services was furthermore signaled in the camp by the posters and leaflets on restoring family links.

Newly arrived volunteers were regularly advised not to accidentally separate families when, for example, there was a need to escort one family member in need of special assistance, such as medical help. Because of that, a small separate space was reserved in the camp for those waiting for their family members to come from the ambulance, registration etc. Some of the more experienced volunteers we talked to recounted how in the first days of the corridor, before the opening of the camp in Slavonski Brod, many families were separated because of the extremely chaotic situation and inexperience of everyone involved.⁵ It is important to note that separations along the corridor were more or less closely related to the functioning of the corridor itself, even when they seemed to result from someone accidentally getting lost in the crowd or the outcome of the internal dynamics and decisions within a family. As it was pointed out, the human suffering that became evident as a result of the corridor was not only connected with the events happening outside European territory, but co-created by the states along the corridor.

Restricting freedom of movement, locking up people in small and fenced spaces, forcing them onto overcrowded trains and buses, forced waiting outdoors in the cold, long administrative registration and recording procedures, restricting access to volunteers and self-organized activists, restricting access to toilets and doctors, separation of families and friends, closing borders and selective admittance – these were all practices that created a state of humanitarian exception and caused people to suffer. (Lunaček Brumen and Meh 2016, 32)

In general, during our time in the Slavonski Brod camp our impression was that the main risk for children was being separated from their group while on the move. While these separated children gained humanitarian attention, children who had left their homes and families in search of a better future life, some even years ago, and who are at the core of the humanitarian concept of unaccompanied children, were not registered as such by the authorities (police and/or social workers). Nor were they addressed in the internal and public reports about the camp, at the meetings or in small talks between the volunteers in the camp. Yet they were there, we can say with certainty today, and were passing by almost completely invisibly.

Unaccompanied children in the Croatian context are in the care of social welfare centers which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Politics and Youth. This ministry was involved in the so-called crisis management unit founded by the Croatian Government in September 2015 with the aim to ensure “coordinated action of all responsible bodies and institutions, with the aim of humanitarian reception and care of migrants” (Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2015).⁶ Thus, social workers from different social welfare centers were present in the Slavonski Brod camp. As we were informed during an interview with one of them, the main focus of social workers were the unaccompanied children. The social workers were supposed to apply different standard procedures envisioned in the legal and regulatory framework recently developed in Croatia in relation to this group (see, e.g. Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2013).

Social workers were present in the camp full-time, in three shifts, but they were not supposed to be in the so-called registration tents where police registered people and where the detection of unaccompanied children was supposed to take place. They were present in these tents only upon police request. As our interlocutor said, “when the police calls upon us, we join them.” In the camp division of power, space and professional duties, social workers were not only located outside the tents, but mostly also outside the areas with refugees. We were told that the social workers were present in these areas only after the opening of the camp, more specifically, “with the Red Cross” at the platform where the trains with refugees from Serbia were arriving. In this context it is not surprising that we did not meet at least some of them in the camp, as was the case for volunteers and employees of most of the organizations and services in the camp. The only personal encounter with social workers was at the interview with one of them outside the camp.

When social workers were present in the areas with the refugees, they would sometimes spot a young child who they could not be sure belonged to the family he or she was traveling with. However, in those situations they mostly did not intervene: “I could ask whose child is this, but I would probably prove nothing,” because “this identification which seems plausible [...] is hard to prove.” Regarding the older children, adolescents, who appear as “unchildlike” children (Aitken 2001) and who are the main representatives of the category of unaccompanied children in present-day Europe, our interlocutor said: “Seeing a group of young men at 3 am doesn’t mean much. You can’t say whether they are 16 or 19 years old.” In reality, in the context of the Slavonski Brod transit camp, the social workers’ incidental “perceptions and impressions” were deemed insufficient for opening an inquiry because it would take time and thus endanger the efficiency of fast transit and maybe even the best interests of a child. Without going into a discussion about the process of determination of what could be recognized as the best interest of a child in that specific context, it could be said that social workers, as was the case with many others in the camp (Hameršak and Pleše 2017), adopted and in their everyday work implemented the Balkan corridor imperative of super-efficient transit to the destination countries. Thus, according to our interlocutor, only a few cases of unaccompanied children were registered in the Slavonski Brod camp from its opening until mid-February when the interview was held. According to the official data provided by the social service which had jurisdiction of the camp, acquired by e-mail upon our request, during the entire operational period of the camp, which lasted nearly six months, only 48 unaccompanied children were registered.

In the “crisis management approach” of the corridor, the perception of migrants as a burden prevailed, and the presumable “needs of the most vulnerable individuals on the move, such as children, especially those travelling unaccompanied, trafficked individuals, pregnant women, etc. could not be adequately addressed by this pragmatic technical ‘solution’” adopted by the EU and the countries along the route (Zavratnik and Cukut Krilić 2018, 93). Intervention in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework for the unaccompanied children would contradict the corridor imperative of super-efficient transit and could in the end delay or disable the arrival of a registered unaccompanied child to their destination. The “perfect” humanitarian machine at the Slavonski Brod camp, which was supposed to serve the transit of as many people as possible as quickly as needed, denied a constitutive humanitarian element, the concept of a vulnerable unaccompanied child. In fact, this could be valid for the corridor in general, as we noticed, for example, from an encounter that happened before the opening of the Slavonski Brod camp. In October 2015, at the location where Croatian police escorted people to Slovenia (Lunaček Brumen and Meh 2016, 28–29), a sixteen-year-old from Afghanistan approached us asking for help because he had serious breathing problems. When we asked for assistance from the representative of a humanitarian organization that was present at the location, he told us that it would be for the best if he did not intervene. As the representative explained, the fact that he was underage and traveling alone could have resulted in prolonging his journey since an official intervention could be expected. In the perception of refugees as “human cargo” (Zavratnik and Cukut Krilić 2018, 91) on a fast-track journey to the West, any form of delay, including the identification of unaccompanied children, was probably unacceptable. In the atmosphere of *transit welcoming* (*welcoming through*) (Bužinkić 2016), the corridor rendered children traveling alone invisible as children, which was further supported by the appearance of “unchildlike” adolescents, who, moreover, did not want to be perceived as children in order to continue their journey as soon as possible. We could only guess what paperwork procedures were employed in the registration tents in the Slavonski Brod camp in order to smoothly send these children to the West: registering them as older than they were, as members of a family at hand, not registering them at all, etc.

When the corridor became a borderspace where people were segregated, filtered and immobilized or pushed in the opposite direction, it no longer represented the fastest way for reaching the West for everyone. When in November 2015, as part of the attempt to obtain further control over the movement of people, only citizens of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, the so-called SIA, were allowed to proceed along the corridor (Banich, Gerbig, and Homberger 2016; Moving Europe 2016a), while everyone else was not allowed to proceed. Moreover, SIA children traveling alone were treated differently than non-SIA children traveling alone.⁷ In fact, these SIA children were, so to speak, “ignored” by social workers and authorities in general as they were before, as we have already stressed. If they could not be ignored for some reason – for example, when they themselves reported separation from their family or their group in the corridor – they were processed in accordance with the procedures. As our interlocutor explained: “If an unaccompanied child is from one of these three states, Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria, he or she comes under our protection,” which includes, as it was said to us in very general terms, procedures such as appointing a special guardian, providing shelter, etc.

On the other hand, non-SIA children traveling alone who were not allowed to travel further along the corridor were registered as unaccompanied and came under the protection of the welfare system. However, they were also, as our interlocutor said, registered as such with a guardian appointed from the group in order to be sent back to the previous point of the corridor, i.e. deported to Serbia. "A lot of paperwork, but it must be done," as our interlocutor summarized. Thus, it could be said that social workers adopted the principle of segregation based on the supposed country of origin (separating SIA and non-SIA), as they had earlier adopted the imperative of the super-efficiency of the corridor. Regarding children traveling alone, they conducted explicitly different procedures for different nationalities. Moreover, what our interlocutor did not address, and probably did not know at the time, but which is evident from the activists' reports from that period (Banich, Gerbig, and Homberger 2016; Moving Europe 2016c), people labeled as non-SIA, among them also children traveling alone, were regularly pushed back to Serbia outside the regular border-crossings, on foot, etc., without any formal procedure in general or with regard to the category of unaccompanied children (Banich, Gerbig, and Homberger 2016). One of the published testimonies reads:

When I was standing in line to get registered [in Slavonski Brod], the translator picked me out of the line and asked me where I was from. I said: "I am from Syria, from Aleppo." He said: "No you are not from Syria." I said: "Sorry, I am from Morocco, but I am only 16 years old, please help me!" The translator looked down at me and said: "No, I will not help you." They brought me to a small place, like a house, where I had to wait. There was nothing, no mattress, no food. We never saw any translator again then, only police. The next day they told us that we are going to Slovenia now. We had to get into a police car. Then we had to walk 7 kilometers by foot. They told us this is Slovenia, but then it was Serbia.

Finally, when transit along the Balkan corridor stopped, after the borders for all refugees closed, and the last train left the Slavonski Brod camp for Slovenia on March 5 2016, there were around 300 people in the camp who had not been allowed to travel further sometime during the previous few days or even weeks on the basis of different arbitrarily applied selections (Banich, Gerbig, and Homberger 2016; Hameršak and Pleše 2018, 29–36). They were confined in different sectors according to the relevant camp logic at that time, which did not recognize the category of unaccompanied child. This was the extension of the abovementioned practice of not "recognizing" unaccompanied children as a specific group among refugees in the corridor. However, rather than being mostly invisible, as they had been before, during this period children traveling alone now started to appear and be addressed in the camp; granted, seldomly, but nevertheless more frequently than before. The NGO/INGO/IO coordination meetings minutes from that period refer periodically to the procedures regarding unaccompanied children among the people confined in the camp. Given the number of minors addressed at the meetings, it is evident that their percentage in relation to the total number of refugees in the camp during this period is several orders of magnitude higher than before. In that period, they also became visible to us when we finally entered these parts of the camp, a few weeks after transit stopped and the full suspension of entrance to these sectors was lifted (Hameršak and Pleše 2017)(). In the sector for so-called single men, we were approached by several individuals who introduced themselves as minors traveling to Europe without parents, some with friends and some with relatives, but who were registered as adults in Greece in order to join the corridor. Now they were confined in the

Slavonski Brod camp and not allowed to proceed on their journey. As excluded subjects in search of an exit out of the camp and in a state of forced immobilization, their options were extremely limited. One of these options, with varying efficiency, was to be recognized as an unaccompanied child. Just as hiding or not revealing the status of an unaccompanied child had been an efficient strategy in the previous period of the camp (and also, as in the previously mentioned conversation, in Greece and in other states and on the borders along the Balkan corridor), presenting yourself as an unaccompanied child and declaring that status turned out to be an exit strategy during the last days of the camp and the corridor.

From a humanitarian subject to a social actor

The norms of the corridor and camp bordering shifted and changed radically in the relatively short period of a few months. The changing norms had an effect on everybody involved, revealing at the same time the fluidity of concepts such as the unaccompanied child. When people were funneled to the West with no restrictions, children traveling alone were invisible and overlooked despite the internationally and nationally established framework aimed at detecting and protecting unaccompanied children as a privileged humanitarian subject. Decades of institutionalizing the figure of an unaccompanied child disappeared in the context of the imperative of super-efficient transit and the created state of exception, which served as an orientation point for the principle of the best interest of the child. Afterwards, when the differentiation between SIA and non-SIA was introduced, as well as other segregating differentiations, they were also applied to children traveling alone. While so-called SIA lone children continued to be invisible and almost completely ignored, some of the so-called non-SIA children were registered for the purpose of deportation to Serbia. They were recognized as unaccompanied children by the Croatian social welfare system, with a pragmatically appointed guardian from the group. At the same time, an unknown number of lone children who were excluded from the corridor – for example, under the presumption that they were non-SIA – were also invisible as far as the humanitarian and social welfare system was concerned. In their invisibility they were literally outside of any administrative or legal procedure, systematically pushed out of the corridor, i.e. they were pushed back. When the Slavonski Brod camp, after transit stopped, became a place of immobilization and confinement, children traveling alone were confined with the others.

The changing norms were reflected in the behavior of children traveling alone, not only on the level of a privileged humanitarian subject, but also as competent social actors (see, e.g. James and Prout 1990; Qvortrup 1993) who adjusted their behavior and tactics in accordance with those changes. Thus, during the super-efficient transit period, they appeared and acted like non-unaccompanied children, hiding or not revealing their status, invisibly passing by. On the other hand, in the period of confinement, after the transit period, they presented themselves as unaccompanied children and declared that status when doing so became one of the rare exit strategies at their disposal. In both contexts, it could be said that they acted as “invisible subjects” produced by the bordering practices, “who implement strategies of in/visibility as a form of resistance against European Union border and migration regimes” (Brambilla and Pötzsch 2017, 81). In other

words, in both contexts they acted as social subjects who actively struggled for themselves. Depending on the context, they were “hiding” in the mass or they stood out from the mass, instead of passively waiting to be “rescued.” In short, they were active even when they were hidden, when they were passing by invisibly. This kind of approach to the lone child in the Balkan corridor, unlike other possible interpretations, affirms the idea of the independent migrant child addressed above in this article. As a conclusion to the article, when addressing this independence, it is important not to forget that an independent child migrant, as well as an unwanted migrant in general, could perhaps leave a camp such as the Slavonski Brod camp, but it is a far more daunting task to leave the life made of camps, hiding, restrictions and, in one word, illegalization of human existence.

Notes

1. In the Western context, the terms such as lone child in migration or unaccompanied child are usually related to the male teenage foreigner, with additional particularities. For example, the term “unaccompanied child” refers to a specific humanitarian subject addressed in the legal, regulatory, media and similar discourses. Public perception of an underaged person on his or her way to Europe varies between the extremes of a small unprotected innocent child and a young imposter, a “bogus refugee”, (Lems, Oester, and Strasser 2019) in the blurred domain of the concept of a child, which encompasses toddlers, young children, teenagers, etc. Having in mind these overlapping but still differentiated layers of the term “child”, as well as the cultural and social specificities of the concept of a child, we will nevertheless use this term.
2. Of course, in the humanitarian context, children are not only recipients of aid and care. As embodiments of basic human goodness and innocence in the modern Western imaginary, they are also an important affective and moral fuel of the depoliticized and dehistoricized humanitarian machine (Malkki 2015, 77–104; see, e.g. Ticktin 2017).
3. For example, during the war in the 1990s, the Croatian government’s Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees was involved in the Unaccompanied Children in Exile project in Croatia, which had 13 offices outside Croatia (Spindler n.d., 43).
4. Website of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior refers only to the subgroup of unaccompanied children asylum seekers (Ministarstvo n.d.).
5. Some of the cases were reported in the daily reports from that period, representing the turbulent conditions in the field. For example, in the daily report from October 29, one could read:

The cases of separated families and friends still exist – usually they separate while getting on buses at Bapska or in the Camp, because of their placement in various sectors. Volunteers managed to help some groups to reconnect, but not all of them. It is important to establish practices of non-separation of groups traveling together. (Welcome! 2015; see, e.g. Župarić-Ilić and Mlinarić 2015, 344; Župarić-Ilić and Mlinarić 2018, 316)

The children separated during transit were also addressed in the special, operative crisis guidelines from September 2015.

6. According to the decision of the Croatian Government (Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2015), the Crisis Unit included representatives of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and the Pension System, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense, more specifically of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia, the National Protection and Rescue Directorate, and later the Croatian Red Cross. All these participants, indirectly or directly, to a greater or smaller extent depending on the phase, took part in the operation of the Slavonski Brod camp.

7. Arbitrary segregation on SIA and non-SIA people escalated in the following months, when additional official and non-official restrictions were introduced. For example, at the meeting of the heads of police services of Austria, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia held in February 2016, it was agreed that entry into the countries along the Balkan corridor would be granted only to those persons in possession of valid "travel documents, visa or residence permit, and other conditions if required", while on humanitarian grounds entry may be authorized to persons who do not fulfill these conditions "but who are arriving from war-torn areas and are in need of international protection (for example from Syria, Iraq)" (Joint Statement 2016).

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The Humanitarianization of Child Deportation Politics

Martin Lemberg-Pedersen

ABSTRACT

This article develops a multidisciplinary analysis of the Northern European policy drive to deport unaccompanied minors (UAMs) to so-called reception facilities in Kabul, Afghanistan. These policies and practices are traced through the analytical frameworks of deportation corridors and humanitarian borders, and relying on archival material and interview data from Nordic and Afghan public bureaucracies, the ERPUM project, the UNHCR and the IOM. The article conceptualizes the Afghan deportation corridors as one variant of "humanitarianized borders." It is examined how European deportation politics for unaccompanied minors from 2000 to 2018 has shifted from portraying unaccompanied minors as being "a risk" to being "at risk" within an overarching political ambition of turning them deportable. European states increasingly do this through appeals to child rights and seemingly compassionate concepts like "family tracing," "family reunification," "reintegration," and "care and education facilities" inscribed within narratives of vulnerable, irrational children and the universal family paving the way for humanitarianized care and control. This inscription re-constructs the agency and identity of both displaced children and of humanitarian practice. The article help establish a dialogue between the studies of deportation, humanitarian borders and child life in European border control.

Introduction

This article examines Northern European deportation politics towards unaccompanied Afghan minors. Spanning across the disciplines of forced migration, deportation studies, critical humanitarian and childhood studies, the article develops a multidisciplinary analysis of the deportation rationale regarding unaccompanied minors, that has emerged since the mid-2000s. This is done with a view to understanding the evolution of a Northern European policy drive to deport unaccompanied minors (UAMs) to so-called reception facilities in Afghanistan, and the case of the European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors (ERPUM) in particular.

The discourses, sociology and political economy of this case are analyzed through the conceptual frameworks of "deportation corridors" (Drotbohm and Hasselberg 2015).

The empirical material spans the period between 2006 and 2018, and has been collected between 2013 and 2016 through databases, archival searches, freedom of information acts, background interviews with staff from both public institutions and non-state organizations involved in UAM deportation politics. These include civil servants from Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Afghan public bureaucracies; staffers from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF; and staff from the European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors (ERPUM).

The article examines this deportation policy drive as an example of “humanitarian border control” (Walters 2011; Chimni 2000; Fassin 2007, 2011a; Pallister-Wilkins 2018). Thus, addressing a gap in both deportation and critical border studies, it analyzes attempts to govern unaccompanied minors through humanitarianized deportation politics, circumscribed by humanitarian discourses depicting deportation procedures as “family tracing,” “family reunification,” “humane and safe return,” “reintegration,” and “care and education facilities.” Thus, the article examines the intertwined logics of appeals to care and control in Northern European deportation practices through the specific case study of ERPUM, how it plays out with respect to idealized figures and narratives about the child, the family and the nation, in humanitarian discourse and practice. This aids in discussing and problematizing the dynamic intersections between childhood, humanitarianism and deportation politics in current European deportation practices.

The article is structured in the following manner: The first section introduces the analytical frameworks of deportation corridors, humanitarianized migration control and child displacement, and describes how humanitarian appeals to childrens’ rights in deportation politics can be used by different actors to navigate between policy venues. The second section then details the case study of Northern European deportation plans for Afghan UAMs with a particular focus on the ERPUM project. Finally, the third section discusses how this policy drive has deployed strategies of child displacee humanitarianization to justify its aims, and how such scripts are plagued by paradoxes and inconsistencies. Then follows some concluding remarks.

Deportation Corridors and Humanitarianized Borders

Within critical geography and border studies, the study of border control politics has increasingly been shifted to an empirically and theoretically informed landscape that counters the epistemological, ontological and methodological constraints yielded by nationalist and “territorialist” Western geopolitical imagination (Agnew 1994; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009, 586; see also Kolossov 2005). As argued by Ó Thuathail (1996), this nationalist-territorialist gaze functions as a “sovereign monocular eye,” inherently disposed to instrumentalize what it observes. Its optics is intimately tied to threads running back to and through European colonial practices and epistemologies.

Borders are not unproblematic and neutral containers of nationhood, but rather multidimensional differentiating mechanisms (Mezzadra and Neilson 2011). They function like socio-economic and geographic landscapes and are constantly reconfigured through abstractions of knowledge, practices and technologies (Lemberg-Pedersen 2017; Moreno-Lax and Lemberg-Pedersen 2019). Thus, it becomes crucial to distinguish between the many varying actors, like states, police, humanitarian NGOs, private security

firms, airlines and development agencies, diplomatic missions, and international organizations involved in the continuous construction and re-construction of borders, including deportation politics. To this end, some scholars have suggested that the notion of “borderscapes” can serve as a multifaceted analytical tool aiding in uncovering these landscapes of epistemology and power, by lifting submerged and hidden geographies of excluded and marginalized groups into visibility (Brambilla 2015; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Lemberg-Pedersen 2013a). Such multifaceted analyses have the potential to make visible the ways in which borders function as nexus points of not just converging views on spatiality, territoriality and sovereignty, but also as sites of generative struggles, where those deemed manageable shape alternative subjectivities, agencies and hope (Brambilla and Jones 2019).

As Peutz and De Genova (2010, 2) point out, deportation can be seen as “the formulation and emphatic reaffirmation of state sovereignty” through the construction of matrices of political subjectivities for citizens and non-citizens according to the prevailing national order of things (Malkki 1995). Drotbohm and Hasselberg (2015, 553–4), has proposed the useful conceptual framework of “deportation corridors.” This work builds on Nyer’s (2003) idea of “transnational corridors of expulsion,” as well as Natalie Peutz’s (2006) call for “an anthropology of removal.” Accordingly, Drotbohm and Hasselberg propose to study deportation not simply as the singular event of removal, but rather a process spanning multiple (national) spaces and times. This can be seen as connected to the processual understanding of on-going, dynamic and multifaceted social and strategic practices that differentiate the movement of peoples, money and products in space and time (Houtum and Naerssen 2002, 126). Deportation corridors thus denote different sequences of events that can be analyzed, such as legal reforms producing deportability, arrests, detention, attempts to motivate returns, negotiations with receiving countries, political discourse and contestation, as well as the social and physical life (or death) awaiting after expulsion (cf. Schuster and Majidi 2015; Majidi 2017).

Examining deportation corridors thus holds the potential for a transnational, multi-dimensional and dynamic gaze on the phenomenon of deportation. This gaze extends in multiple directions as deportations have ramifications both for those categorized as deportables (De Genova 2002), who must live in the amorphous shadow of deportation, for the social fabric of the societies from which these people are expelled, for those forcibly inserted in receiving countries as a “deportspora,” and for the societies to which people are deported (Khosravi 2018; cf. Kalir and Wissink 2016; De Genova 2018; Majidi 2017).

When border politics render certain groups “deportable” these people are transformed into a “distinctly disposable commodity” to be traded and speculated in, on national, transnational and organizational markets (De Genova 2002, 438). In the case of unaccompanied minors, such deportability has related, but also distinct ramifications. This is because such children, while often compelled to work in irregular and precarious economies, also, alongside this, may also experience being barred from a range of other connections to the surrounding society, such as access to general schooling, health care and social life and relationships. Politics of deportability therefore exemplify how the spatiality of borders can function both as “markers of belonging” and “places of becoming” (Brambilla and Jones 2019, 3).

Importantly, these and other consequences of life-as-deportable obtain even when the actual act of deportation does not occur. Put differently, understanding bordering activities of deportation politics along a temporal axis extending beyond the act of removal itself, to include dynamics, actors and processes both before and after deportations, means that attention is also given to the very real consequences of threats and fears of deportation. Moreover, deportation corridors may also fail for a variety of reasons, including instability and insecurity in the target country, authorities' refusals to accept returnees, or political controversies in the deporting countries. Still, European authorities often go to great lengths in their attempts to transform undeportable into deportable groups. Successful or not, these attempts bring with them the ascription of rights and duties and regimes of care and control in deporting and receiving states (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 190).

Multi-venued Humanitarianization of Deportation Politics

In refugee and forced migration studies, B.S. Chimni (1999) has identified a "repatriation turn" in Western refugee politics as an era beginning in the early 1980s when Western countries started focusing on repatriating asylum seekers through readmission agreements. On this policy view, voluntary repatriation represented a primary and durable solution to displacement situations, that allowed Western governments to minimize the presence of refugees on their territories. Matthew Gibney (2008, 148) has further argued that during the 2000s, this policy drive further transformed into a "deportation turn," whereby governments increasingly moved from facilitating voluntary repatriation to seeking forced removal. Accordingly, the number of readmission agreements between European and third countries has increased drastically: while 33 bilateral readmission agreements existed in 1986, there were 156 in 1995, 186 in 2004, and 216 in 2010 (Casarino 2010, 11). To this we can add a growing "humanitarianization" of deportation, in so far as states increasingly make use of humanitarian language to enable forced removals. This can be seen as according to the concept of "new humanitarianism," which "uses the language of rights to justify a range of questionable practices" and to "obscure the fact that the Northern commitment to humanitarianism coexists with a range of practices which have for their objective its violation" (Chimni 2000, 251). The focus on returning asylum seekers and refugees illustrates how human rights discourses can be co-opted and "placed in the service of a policy of containment" (Chimni 2000, 255).

Some scholars have distinguished between humanitarianism and human rights, perceiving the latter as socio-legal and the former as biopolitics, evoking compassionate responses but within a narrow binary between innocence and guilt (cf. Ticktin 2016). Here, children are often framed as quintessential passive and thus innocent victims that states or other actors can intervene to protect. Among the problems with such binary humanitarian appeals, says Ticktin, is that they shroud in opaqueness crucial questions about savior agency and responsibility, as well as how particular lives are deemed un/rescuable. At play here is humanitarianism's "emergency imaginary" (Calhoun 2010), which inscribes compassion into a temporality cyclically contracting into singular events of crisis, suffering, rescue, innocence and guilt.

According to Ticktin (2016, 264) humanitarianism is about feeling and not rights, and notions of “humanitarian rights” work as exceptions to regular laws. However, as Paulmann (2013, 215) points out, claims to humanitarianism do not fall into clear-cut definitions, but rather in complex constellations of terms and concepts depending on in specific situations and contexts. For instance, in a postcolonial analysis, Martinez (2012) has argued that the abolitionist-humanitarian movement against the transatlantic slave trade constitutes a crucial, but largely ignored, origin of international human rights, including how these rights came to be marshaled for imperial ends (cf. Lemberg-Pedersen 2019). This illustrates how the study of humanitarian conjunctures therefore requires analyses of both practices, strategic use of language as well as legal instruments by a variety of actors like aid agencies, organizations, governments and commercial actors (Lemberg-Pedersen and Haioty 2020).

Consequently, this article does not aim on taking sides between socio-legal and biopolitical understandings of appeals to humanity. Instead, it aims at building a critical gaze at European expulsion policies targeting unaccompanied minors, which encompass both. As explored below, both states’ emotive and rights-based appeals to responsibility, guilt and innocence means that the normative grammars of rights to asylum or of child-specific rights can in fact be marshaled for the purpose of exclusion. They can serve as control devices separating the innocent from those rendered suspicious, allowing states to ascribe the role of savior to themselves, using appeals to rescue, care and universal rights to launder their restrictive policies into rescue efforts (cf. Moreno-Lax 2018).

As mentioned, the different policy venues through which such policies are pursued also matter. Virginie Guiraudon (2000, 251) has argued that national governments may strategically “venue shop” in order to circumvent national constraints on migration control by lifting policy-making to transnational co-operation mechanisms. Thus, European transgovernmental working groups have avoided judicial scrutiny and eliminated national opposition by turning to transnational actors in the pursuit of controversial border control policies. In the EU context, some scholars have labeled this strategy as the “escape to Europe” (Lavenex and Wagner 2007).

Such shopping and escapes from national to bilateral or EU forums can also take place as part of the humanitarianization of deportation politics. Thus, while Guiraudon argues that the escape to Europe allowed national governments to pursue more restrictive border controls, we may note that such transnational collaborations can also lead to the assembling of alliances depicting transnational policy drives for more restrictive border control as humanitarian action.

In recent years, border studies have also engaged with the appeals to humanitarianism increasingly observable in EU border control efforts, and a growing body of research has emerged about “humanitarian borders.” William Walters (2011) defines these as sites of inequality and displacement between the Global North and South, which are operationalized as management tools to handle different forms of political crises (cf. Lemberg-Pedersen 2018a). More specifically, this “humanitarianization” of border control occurs when humanitarian scripts accompany border interventions, allowing the actors behind them to drift rapidly between specters of, respectively, care and control (Fassin 2011a; Carling and Hernández-Carretero 2011; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Cuttitta 2018).

Border control policies are framed and justified according to different contexts, times and audiences, and humanitarianism can therefore also attain a complementary function to policing at the expense of individual rights (Fassin 2011b, 221). As Claudia Aradau (2004) has succinctly put it, such drifts across the registers of care and control mean that migrants are caught between political framings depicting them, respectively, as *at* risk and *a* risk.

Work on contemporary humanitarian borders has focused on asylum systems (Ticktin 2005), Frontex and EU hotspots (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 2018), or search and rescue operations on the Mediterranean and humanitarian organizations (Carling and Hernández-Carretero 2011; Cuttitta 2018). But by comparison, the ways in which dynamics of humanitarianization has played out in deportation politics, and the particularities of these politics when it comes to child displacees, has been neglected in border studies. More concretely, this article explores states' strategic use of humanitarianized scripts and child rights-appeals to facilitate child deportations to Afghanistan. The following section therefore introduces North European deportation politics towards unaccompanied Afghan minors as a particularly controversial case through which the dynamics of "humanitarianized child deportations" can be analyzed.

The Northern European Construction of Deportable Unaccompanied Afghan Minors

The European attempts to construct a deportation corridor for unaccompanied Afghan minors brings with it several questions requiring engagement with the underexplored intersections between childhood, humanitarianism and deportation politics (see however Vitus 2010; Verdasco 2019).

One first question concerns how border studies needs to engage more directly with the specific situation of unaccompanied minors (see however Josefsson 2017; Verdasco 2019; Lemberg-Pedersen 2018b). Children constitute a particularly vulnerable population that features prominently in European asylum systems, and that states deal with through particular normative appeals and legal frameworks. This leads to further questions about the understanding and appeals to childhood and how the rights of the child feature in humanitarianized border politics.

Second, the case also exemplifies how the multi-venued strategies of humanitarianized border controls find their equivalent when proactive child migrants strategize to form an existence based on their lived experience of complex struggles, identity and subjectivity formations. Crucially, however, this complexity seems to remain unacknowledged by the homogenizing and universalizing childhood discourses which feature as part of states' deportation politics. This also leads to the more specific question of how discourses about how the rights of unaccompanied children can also be placed in the service of containment policies.

Ongoing discussions in childhood studies have concerned the problematic assumptions about the meaning of childhood, where critique has been voiced of the tendency to depict children as innocent, dependent, irrational, passive and helpless. This, it has been argued, paves the way for a template justification of various interventions, argued to relieve children of "problematic" responsibility and problematic agency, whilst also achieving other, less heralded goals (Burman 1994; Qvortrup 1994; Malkki 1995, 11).

This template has also been criticized as framing children exclusively as needy beneficiaries of Western aid or other intervention, leading to the postcolonial capture of childhoods in the global south (Liebel 2017, 79) in line with existing social hierarchies facilitated by externalization policies (cf. Lemberg-Pedersen 2017), since framing children exclusively as needy beneficiaries of Western aid or other intervention, leading to the postcolonial capture of childhoods in the global south. Research on child migration and work, indicates more nuanced understandings of childhood as a social construct, also taking place in asylum systems (cf. Wernesjö 2019).

In the context of child soldiers, Rosen (2007, 299) claims that humanitarian narratives “amplify the helplessness of children by contrasting their supposed irrationality with an excessively idealized version of adult autonomy” and that “[f]ew descriptions suggest that children ... possess individual survival strategies, apply their own intelligence, strategize about situations ...” This idealized figure of the child, he then contrasts with nuanced understandings acknowledging local knowledge and child agency. However, while Rosen directs the brunt of this critique towards humanitarian organizations, the recent policy drive for deporting Afghan UAMs necessitates reconsideration of the sources and dynamics of such problematic narratives. The case of envisioned reception facilities for child deportees illustrates this.

Reception Facilities or Deportation Orphanages for Afghan Child Displacees?

During the first decades of the 2000s, and following both deepening internal conflict and Western military interventions, Afghanistan became one of the world’s largest displacement crises, yielding millions of outbound migrants. Within this dynamic, the country has also been one of the biggest producers of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers to Europe. Since the mid-2000s, and amidst a general policy frame problematizing the arrival of asylum seekers, North European bureaucracies and governments have responded to this, by attempting to assemble a deportation corridor back to Afghanistan, for these children. The way in which these corridors were pursued can be gathered from observing the most active countries, and can be conceptualized as consisting of five stages: Asylum rejection, family tracing, deportation procedures, reception facilities and reintegration. Here, the focus is placed on reception facilities.

These stages also represent separate, and distinct barriers for the corridors. In particular, difficulties with family tracing has long hampered the political desire to deport UAMs (Danielsen and Seeberg 2006). This was presumably the reason why, already in 2004, the Dutch Aliens Act’s §3.56(1)(c) introduced the notion of reception facilities for child deportees, and set up two pilot structures in Angola and Congo. The Dutch experiment served as inspiration for the EU 2008 Returns Directive’s §10.2-formulation that

Before removing an unaccompanied minor from the territory of a Member State, the authorities of that Member State shall be satisfied that he or she will be returned to a member of his or her family, a nominated guardian or adequate reception facilities in the State of return.

However, as observed by UNICEF Netherlands, these Dutch pilot projects were in fact extremely limited: no children were actually returned to the Congolese facility and just one child was returned to the Angolan one, remaining there only for a few days

(UNICEF 2015, 33–5). Nevertheless, the weaving together of tracing, deportation and reception facilities, went on to become central components for the vision of European border control that included outbound corridors for displaced children to be returned to Afghanistan.

Thus, in July 2009, the Norwegian Stoltenberg government proposed to reduce the arrivals of unaccompanied minors and achieving faster returns by simultaneously constructing “care and educational” facilities in countries of origin, and lowering the required minimum safeguards of these (Norwegian Government 2009). Norway quickly began to deport adults, families and so-called “aged out minors” to the Janga Lak shelter in Kabul, which was under the jurisdiction of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and enacted a legal reform along the lines of the 2008 Returns Directive, that opened up for deportations to facilities in countries of origin.

With Norway assuming a frontrunner-role, in December 2009, the Swedish Ministry of Justice issued a Circular Letter instructed the Swedish Migration Agency to “work towards setting up an organized reception in the countries of origin of unaccompanied minors, who must return due to a legally binding decision on rejection and return” (Swedish Department of Justice 2009). And other Northern European governments joined in: Also in late 2009, the British UKBA and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) Migration Directorate worked to establish reception facilities for separated child deportees, focusing on Afghanistan in particular. In December 2009, the British Migration Directorate released a redacted document stating that its Returns and Reintegration Fund (RFF) was funding a so-called “feasibility study” on “the viabilities and options for the return” of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children “to a small number of Asian countries” (FCO 2009). As part of this study, the RFF issued a contract tender worth £4 million in order to attract bids for the construction of a “reintegration center” in Kabul to which 12 Afghan children could be deported every month (Channel 4 News 2010). These efforts were seen as aligned with existing provisions of section 55 in the UK’s Border, Citizenship and Immigration Act. Then, in August 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Norway, Afghanistan and the UNHCR, framing forced returns as a durable solution. This MoU was highlighted by ERPUM as a model for the pilot’s own negotiations.

Meanwhile, in Denmark, in the fall 2010, the Liberal-Conservative government, supported by Danish Peoples Party, also implemented a legal reform (L37), similarly paving the way for such deportations. The Danish reform is illustrative in its logic: the new reform’s §9c3.2, which emulated the Returns Directive’s §10.2 carefully worded disjunction between guardians, family networks or reception facilities (Lemberg-Pedersen 2015). This means that even if neither family networks nor legal guardianship can be found, separated children can still be deported – to the reception facilities.

Throughout this process, several politicians sought to legitimize and justify these controversial steps by falsely claiming to collaborate with various international NGOs and the Afghan government. The following sub-section explores the ERPUM policy complex as a critical case illustrating how the humanitarianization of child deportation corridors may develop through logics, tensions and contradictions.

The ERPUM Project

The attempts to construct a European deportation corridor for Afghan UAMs have suffered from asymmetrical communication, flawed assumptions and erroneous information. This also means that the invoked humanitarian scripts have been inconsistent. Oftentimes, there seems to have been little coordination between the various participating governments, leading to confusion about key components of the policy drive, the actors involved, the implications for children, and its future perspectives.

The European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors (ERPUM) was birthed, in 2010, out of a “coordinating group” consisting of bureaucratic civil servants, which, besides the coordinating role of the Swedish Migration Agency, included the Norwegian Immigration Service (UDI), the British UK Border Agency (UKBA), and the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). The Danish Ministry of Justice, and the Belgian Foreigner’s Office had observing roles. However, while this “observer” status indicates a loose affiliation with the project, this seems inaccurate with respect to at least the actual involvement of the Danish government: while Belgium only joined the pilot sometime during 2012, Danish civil servants had participated in the transnational preparation of the ERPUM grant application since 2009, thus predating both the pilot and the Danish 2010 legal reforms on returns. Internal mail correspondence between the Danish Ministry of Justice (2012) to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged that “while Denmark, formally speaking, is an observer in the project group, we are, in fact, involved in the development of the project.”

This group submitted the ERPUM I grant application to the EU Commission, timed to coincide with the EU’s first ever Action Plan for Unaccompanied Minors in June 2010 (Lemberg-Pedersen 2013b). The Action Plan urged member states to “systematically examine the possibility of introducing, in agreements with third countries, specific provisions addressing the migration of unaccompanied minors and enabling cooperation on issues such as prevention, family tracing, return or reintegration” (European Commission 2010, 7).

The application was successful, and eventually followed by a Grant Application for ERPUM II in 2012, which was also accepted by the Commission. Both were headed by the Swedish Migration Agency, but ERPUM was ultimately discontinued in June 2014, without having reached its primary goal of returns. Financially, ERPUM I was given funds of €692,775 by the European Commission and ERPUM II was given €596,356, with €143,280 coming from the participating countries.

The pilot had three different teams: The Project Management and Administration (PMA) team, the Third Country Relations (TCR) Team, and the Tracing Contact Points (TCP) team. Moreover, a Log Book was established and Local Facilitation Teams were hired and trained in order to organize reintegration support. While the PMA team coordinated activities, ERPUM also launched a civil servant Steering Group – continuing the work of the coordination group – which communicated about meetings, technical missions to and negotiations with third countries, workshops and media, or academic scrutiny of ERPUM. The stated goal was to “develop new methods for organizing family reunification and return for unaccompanied minors that need to return after receiving a final rejection of their asylum application” (ERPUM 2014, 6). This was justified by an alleged “massive influx” of unaccompanied minors to ERPUM

countries (Norwegian Government 2009, 8) and the dangerous conditions these faced on the journeys.

After the pilot's discontinuation, ERPUM officials did an internal review of its tracing efforts, describing them as "reasonably successful." This is surprising since only 34 out of 148 Afghan families were traced, and no children were returned to their families (ERPUM 2014; Lemberg-Pedersen 2018b). Moreover, no reception facilities were constructed, and organizations which had been envisioned as partners in the project, like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the IDCU (Identity Checking Unit), withdrew from any collaboration, after the IOM Mission compound was bombed in June 2013.

ERPUM, and its participating countries, faced much critique and questions concerning the legal responsibility of host countries for the facilities, independent post-return monitoring, the availability of welfare and support, the lack of individual assessment of children's cases, the transition from childhood to so-called aged-out minors and associated safeguards, and security arrangements for the facilities. As this critique expanded, so did ERPUM officials' and governments' use and appeal to humanitarian values in order to justify the project. The next section goes more in detail with these humanitarianized discourses on child deportation, and what kind of childhood they construct.

Turning Child Deportations into Family Reunification

The ERPUM deportation corridor is an illustrative example of humanitarianized border control. This is partly due to its particularity, since its humanitarian discourse specifically concerns the right, plight and dilemmas of exercising border control towards children. The corridor's failure to materialize, and the splintering and multiplication of the ERPUM-discourses into several national ones (Lemberg-Pedersen 2018b) makes it valuable as a case to study the complex landscapes of power within which the marginalized population of unaccompanied minors have been understood and forced to negotiate their existence.

From the 2000s and to the early stages of the ERPUM pilot, European policy documents described the components of the deportation corridor through very generalized humanitarian terms, such as "family tracing," "family reunification," "humane and safe return," "reintegration," and "care and education facilities" (Lemberg-Pedersen and Chatty 2015). The earlier script was often not specified in detail and soon, in response to criticism, it also appeared to evolve into a script with more explicit references to the rights of the child. However, the script on family reunification illustrates one recurring appeal throughout the policy drive, namely to the idea of "the universal family" (Barthes 1972, 100–2). This effectively recasts the deportation of unaccompanied children into vehicles of reuniting the child with a waiting family in Afghanistan. This appeal, though, is guilty of disregarding crucial contexts and dynamics, like displaced, fractured or missing families, the long deteriorating spiral of violence in Afghanistan, and the specific dangers facing children, like forced recruitment, sexual exploitation, explosive remnants of war, family interests and networks facilitating their migration and re-migration.

Moreover, the pilot offered practically no explanation of the concrete measures through which children would be protected. The 2010 grant proposal to the Commission

only featured one reference to the best interest of the child – in the form of an assumption that any cooperation with so-called third countries on deportation would simply be reflecting this concern (ERPUM 2010, 13). At the same time, the proposal was very clear on its desired “long-term impact”: To function as a deterrence tool, so that “those minors who are not in need of protection will not make the long and risky journey to Europe since the risk of being returned is higher,” and that ERPUM should lead to a “lowering influx of unaccompanied minors to Europe that are not in need of protection” (ERPUM 2010, 15). The Northern European discourses during the first decade of the 2000s were therefore characterized by quite generic appeals to humanitarian values coupled with quite specific ambitions to override unaccompanied minors’ decisions to emigrate in order to deter others from seeking protection in Europe.

Contrary to the assurances from European authorities, unaccompanied minor themselves perceived a “grey zone” between caseworkers’ efforts to trace their families and the assessment of their own asylum cases (Danielsen and Seeberg 2006, 40). The children, in other words, had reasons to believe that a positive result of family tracing would increase the likelihood of a negative result for their asylum applications. This constituted a rift between national authorities’ and ERPUM officials’ appeals to generalized human and child rights, and the expressed interests of the children themselves. While seemingly empowering the children, the policies in fact undermined their subjectivity and choices, giving rise to their struggle within the procedures in European asylum systems.

For a while, the ERPUM project tried to resolve this rift, by persuading UAMs to return voluntarily to Afghanistan. Thus, the 2010 grant application for ERPUM I included a component called “Returned children tell their story.” This idea was based on the vision that children returned to Afghanistan could be recorded on camera, telling their stories of successfully having been repatriated to Afghanistan. This video-component was referred to as “motivational tools,” and ERPUM caseworkers should then use it to persuade children to leave of their own accord. However, even though the 2010 Grant Application envisioned the clips to be in production by April 2011 and completed by September 2011, not a single clip was in fact produced. And the component was first withdrawn from the ERPUM 2012 grant application, and then not even mentioned in the summarizing 2014 ERPUM report. Once more, a generalized humanitarian script where irrational children were to be convinced about the appropriate course of action (to leave) was used to undermine the children’s own choices and agency. The video component did not fare well also due to societal critique of such instrumental use of displaced children.

The generalized humanitarian discourses, repurposed to the stated aim of motivating returns and deterring future arrivals, quickly faced fierce criticism. Thus, in 2010, in the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) plans to construct a deportation center in Afghanistan, sparked protests from child protection organizations, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, leading to headlines such as “Britain to deport 12 child asylum seekers a month to Afghanistan” (The Telegraph 2010). In Denmark, the policy drive was subjected to wide-ranging criticism from parliamentary opposition parties, and in Norway, in 2012, Save the Children Norway (2012) labeled the plans as “experimenting with children’s lives.” Also in 2012, the Danish Children’s Council and Save the Children submitted 25 critical questions to the plans for

reception facilities in Afghanistan to the then-Danish Minister of Justice Morten Bødskov (The Children's Council and Save the Children Denmark 2012).

In response, ERPUM governments and officials invoked two different strategies of associating the project to humanitarian values. The first tried to justify the deportation-and-reception nexus of ERPUM, by making references to allegedly successful Dutch experiences with deporting unaccompanied minors to facilities and family reunification in third countries (ECRE 2011; Danish L37 Proposal 2010). Thus, in line with the script of the universal family, ERPUM (2013, 19) claimed that

Dutch experiences from Angola ... show that there is almost always a family or close relative in the country of origin who is willing and able to welcome the minor once contact has been established and a decision for return is settled.

Claiming to be analogous to the Dutch practices in the two African countries, an ERPUM delegation traveled to Kabul. There, their sights fell on the Jangalak buildings in Kabul, the IOM's Refugee Reception Center. Here, adult voluntary returnees were housed for up to two weeks, and they decided to use the building's second floor as a reception facility for deported unaccompanied minors.

The second association-strategy tried to immunize the project from critique by claiming direct collaboration with humanitarian actors. For instance, in 2010, the British Minister of Immigration, Damian Green, claimed that the policy was developed alongside respected countries like Norway, and "valued international partners, such as UNICEF" (Channel 4 News 2010). Similarly, also in 2010, then-Danish minister of Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech, referenced existing and similar Red Cross/Red Crescent activities in order to facilitate the passing of new deportation-related legislation through the Danish parliament. In 2011, an ERPUM official interviewed by the BBC, claimed that the IOM would conduct the deportations (BBC Online 2011). In response to the critical questions from Save the Children Denmark, Morten Bødskov also repeated this claim in 2012 (Danish Committee for Aliens and Integration Policy 2012)

However, while both governmental strategies of claiming humanitarian association were intended to immunize the project against public critique, they quickly backfired. As regards the reference to Dutch experiences in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one obvious point of critique was the assumption of equivalence between the central African and Afghan contexts. Adding to this, UNICEF Netherlands quickly pointed out that while the Netherlands had indeed operated two orphanages in the two African countries, named Mulemba and Don Bosco, these had in fact only yielded extremely limited experience to build on. In fact, no children had been returned to the Don Bosco facility while only one child had been returned to Mulemba. There he had remained only for a few days, while five others were picked up at the airport by alleged family members (UNICEF Netherlands 2012, 47-9; UNICEF 2015, 5). The idea to convert the second floor of the Kabul Jangalak buildings into deportation reception facilities for UAMs was also quickly rejected by both the UNHCR and UNICEF due to their unsuitability for children. Part of a larger industrial complex originally built by the Soviets, the building had recently been squatted in by IDPs and then functioned as a mental health facility for drug addicts (Schuster 2013, 16).

The claim of collaboration with humanitarian actors did not fare better. UNICEF immediately denied any involvement with the ERPUM plans for a deportation center

in Kabul in the British press. Moreover, in Denmark, the Danish Red Cross immediately denied Rønn's claim that they were operating orphanages similar to the deportation vision, even claiming to have told the Minister as much, the day before she used that claim to secure the deportation law in parliament. This created media headlines such as "Birthe Rønn caught in misinformation about asylum children" (Politiken 2010). Similarly, the ERPUM-claim of IOM return operations was shot down, when an IOM spokesperson stressed that the "IOM is not and will not be involved with the return of unaccompanied minors under the ERPUM project" (BBC Online 2011). A rejection that notably took place a full year before Bødskov repeated the claim during a Danish parliamentary committee session. After the IOM compound was bombed, the organization withdrew altogether from ERPUM. Attempts were made to replace it by hiring the Identity Checking Unit (IDCU) to conduct family tracing, but it also seized its activities after January 2014, citing security reasons.

At the level of public debates, the early attempts to humanitarianize the North European plans for an Afghan UAM deportation corridor proved far too superficial to counter the pervasive critique. And varying, and sometimes conflicting, European interpretations of the deportation corridor served to undermine child agency, otherwise heralded in policy documents. The specter of the universal family, abstracted from the real and messy reality of child displacement and migration, was used to foster visions of malleable and irrational child subjectivities, at odds with the experience of continuous resistance and contestation strategies expressed children within European deportation corridor politics. Faced with these challenges, the actors behind the deportation drive changed the humanitarian discourse.

Paradoxes and Inconsistencies in Humanitarian Scripts for Child Deportations

In the later stages of the pilot, ERPUM officials and participating governments assumed a more pro-active attitude to humanitarian scripts, explicitly taking over the language of not only humanitarian organizations but also of child protection actors, explicitly referencing the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For instance, ERPUM (2014, 14) stated that "The collaboration in ERPUM between Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom together, promotes child rights dialogue in the EU," adding that the "multilateral cooperation undertaken by ERPUM with the involved governments, international organizations and NGOs in Afghanistan, Iraq and Morocco, is a vital pillar for the protection of minors." This happened alongside the continuation of the script of the universal (extended) family, such as when ERPUM noted that "the broken and lost ties with the family and other relatives are a major cause of emotional ailment ... For that reason different stakeholders should do their utmost to find out about the family of the minor" (ERPUM 2014, 20). Once more, then, this led to the framing of family tracing as a "key element to ensure family reunification and unity" (ERPUM 2014, 19).

Such assumptions about the humanitarian, child-friendly promise of ERPUM can be analyzed as normative arguments for deportations (Lemberg-Pedersen 2018a). From the core argument that swift deportations, even if forced, represents the most humane policy option for rejected asylum seeking UAMs, several variants discernable in Northern European political discourses include the child's right-argument, the family unity-argument and the

benevolent deterrence-argument (Lemberg-Pedersen 2018a, 54–5). Children's rights discourses are therefore placed in the service of the ERPUM countries' domestic asylum priorities, and used to argue that any critique of the deportation policy amounts to denying emotionally suffering children the chance to be reunited with their families.

These arguments, however, continue the rift between child empowerment, generalized humanitarianism, and European containment priorities. They blatantly disregard the agency, strategy and reasons given by children for migration and re-migration. However, the criticism of these arguments by child rights organizations also illustrate that Rosen's juxtaposition of realistic, anthropological on the one hand, and reductive, humanitarian and legally based understandings of childhood is too crude, at least when it comes to the European deportation drive targeting Afghan UAMs. For here, several humanitarian criticisms have appealed to §§6 and 12 of the CRC, emphasizing, respectively, the child's right to life and development, and to express its own views in all matters affecting the child, and for those views to be accorded due weight (cf. UNICEF 2012, 41; Stern 2013, 16; Stern 2017).

Moreover, reflecting the controversy of simply assuming the ERPUM plans to have generic beneficial consequences, the core humanitarian claim, as well as each of its normative variants, face devastating structural, institutional and political challenges. The discourse on universal family/family unity can be seen as ERPUMs attempt to appeal to the Convention on the Rights of the Child §§9–10, stating that "a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will." However, the CRC paragraphs do not grant family reunification the overriding significance assumed in the ERPUM discourse. Thus, in General Comment 6, §§81–3, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005) underscores that family reunification in the country of origin is not in the child's best interests if it risks abuse or neglect by the parents or legal guardians or if there is a "reasonable risk" that a return will violate the child's fundamental human rights.

The inconsistencies in ERPUMs humanitarian appeals to child protection are caused by selective argumentation combined with a range of unrealistic and infeasible empirical assumptions. These include the necessity of poor conditions for UAMs within European asylum systems, the likelihood of successful family tracing in Afghanistan, and the general security conditions in the country. At the core of this critique is the problem that the humanitarian discourses depict European speculation in deterrence politics as objectively necessary, and thus beyond rational political contestation. This undermines the views of the children themselves and delimits the humanitarian potentiality of care and compassion to remain within a frame of nationalistic immigration politics, including when this frame has the rollback of universal human and child rights as a normative ambition (Lemberg-Pedersen 2018a).

Despite occupying a central role, the project's reliance on deportation reception facilities was gradually downplayed during ERPUMs lifespan. From being referenced both in the pilot, the Commission's 2010 Action Plan for Unaccompanied Minors, and some of the legal reforms enacted by ERPUM countries like Norway and Denmark, the ERPUM-discourses evolved into the claim that such facilities would probably not be used. If they were, it was said, they would merely function as temporary shelters, where unaccompanied minors could be placed for very short periods of time until their families were found. This framing, of course, simply reverted to the assumption of successful tracing, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, even from ERPUMs own tracing efforts. Thus, whenever tracing was not possible (represented by more than

three-quarters of ERPUM's own test cases), the facilities would turn into controversial quasi-permanent detention centers where unaccompanied minors would be housed only until they become adults.

Other components of the projects seemed to turn paradoxical seen in light of the strengthened humanitarian, child-friendly scripts used to describe them. One example is the attempts to give "regular and persistent encouragement" to unaccompanied minors, in order that they "make the right choice" and leave Europe (ERPUM 2014, 38). This includes hiring "return counselors" in reception centers, in order to "motivate" unaccompanied minors to accept assisted voluntarily return. A similar tool used by Norwegian and Swedish immigration officials was dubbed "Motivational Interviewing" (MI), and it emphasizes how caseworkers should make children "realize" that remaining in the ERPUM country is not an option, that tracing is in his/her best interest, and that the negative implications of non-compliance with the authorities should be made clear. The roll-out of MI, however, merely reproduced the similar struggle between child displacees hoping to form a life in European countries, and national governments eager to make them leave.

In its 2014 evaluation of the whole project, ERPUM recognized the ongoing struggle against minors' negative perceptions of return counselors. Tellingly, it noted that it was "unavoidable," given the pilot's fundamental goal of enforcing effective immigration controls (ERPUM 2014). But this did not give rise to further reflection about the commitment to humanitarianism and the rights of children expressed in the same report. Worse still, the humanitarian scripts invoked to justify the ERPUM project were not only paradoxical but, at times, also directly inconsistent. In fact, the participating countries seemed to be invoking a range of different scripts, striking sometimes incompatible balances between the registers of care and control, and their impact on categories of childhood.

Different interpretations of the crucial role by extra-territorial deportation camps in Afghanistan were offered: while officials and ministers from the ERPUM countries repeatedly emphasized the importance of reception facilities, in 2012 an ERPUM spokeswoman assured British media that "We are not discussing care centers" and that unaccompanied minors would only be sent back if "a welcoming family" could be traced (Brothers 2012). While that might have seemed a clear answer, only 11 months later, during a parliamentary consultation about ERPUM, the Danish Minister of Justice, Morten Bødskov, gave the clear impression that reception facilities were still being pursued, and even indicated that Denmark was considering sending children back to them, even if tracing efforts had not been concluded, thus severing the link between the facilities and the universal family-script. The confusion was not resolved when the Swedish Migration Agency issued a Circular Letter in December 2013, stating: "During the examination of reception conditions [in the country of origin], the possibility of institutional placement [of the child], must not be addressed until the option of tracing the child's parents have been exhausted" (The Migration Agency 2013, 2, author's translation). Yet, not requiring that tracing had to be *successfully* exhausted, the Migration Agency's 2013-stance seemed to differ both from the Danish line, but also from the previous ERPUM-assurances that returns would require "a welcoming family." These incompatibilities both meant further arbitrariness and insecurity for unaccompanied minors, but within this arbitrary landscape, the divergence in European intentions and commitments also allowed them to continuously try to fashion paths to safety and a future life in Europe.

Conclusion

The ways in which deportation politics targeting UAMs have been humanitarianized is a neglected area. This article has analyzed Northern European attempts to construct a deportation corridor for unaccompanied Afghan minors, and argued that it represents a concrete case of how border operations are framed as humanitarian interventions allows actors to invoke normative grammars of rescue, care and universal rights. Actors often invoke the non-autonomous characteristics of children when trying to reconfigure themselves and their goals as humanitarian. This is illustrated by the framing of deportation as empowering child displacees and their families. This policy drive continues both to face a series of crucial criticisms, and to give rise to struggles for alternative identities and hope on the part of children.

The European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors (ERPUM), between 2011 and 2014, is ripe with examples of the multidimensionality of deportation politics. Coordinated by Sweden, and with participation from Norway, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, the pilot is interesting to study, among other reasons because of its failure to deport any children to Afghanistan. ERPUM illustrates how borders are always under construction and re-construction, are shaped by different actors and interests, and can be analyzed from the level of legal reform, political discourse, and diplomatic action, but also from the level of child subjectivity, agency and struggle in time and space. The evolution of ERPUM also furthers an understanding that humanitarian scripts may be part of complex and multileveled strategies and venue-shopping by states and other actors involved in deportation politics.

As the critique expanded of ERPUM and its explicit ambitions to motivate children to leave protection systems and to deter others from coming and to contain child refugees in their regions of origin, so did ERPUM officials' and governments' appeals to child-specific, humanitarian values. Observing the evolution of these appeals offer interesting insights into how child-focused humanitarian scripts focusing on family unity and the rights of children, were deployed.

This article's particular focus on child-specific discourses within systems of humanitarianized border control constitutes a novel contribution to border studies. However, while there has been an observable shift towards rolling out such scripts in the ERPUM project, this does not mean that the entanglement of humanitarian and political goals is a new phenomenon. Specifically, the appeal to children as totemic subjects justifying Western intervention is steeped in postcolonial trajectories. The case of UAM deportation corridors illustrates how this has transformative implications for the social construction of childhood in these discourses as well as for the imaginary of humanitarian practice. The core of these problems resides in the fact that these scripts are delimiting and instrumentalizing the humanitarian potentiality of care and compassion from within a frame of nationalistic geopolitical goals for immigration politics paradoxically framed through universal scales of human and child rights.

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Mental Mapping as a Method for Studying Borders and Bordering in Young People's Territorial Identifications

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes and compares two mental mapping studies – one with young people (aged 16–19) in Finland and one with Finnish and Russian young people (aged 9–15) in the Finnish-Russian borderland. These studies show that mental mapping is a valuable method which can illuminate crucial aspects of how borders and bordering are related to young people's territorial identifications. We argue that it is important to pay special attention to the research methodology, including the mapping scale and the complementary data collection methods, as these determine what aspects of borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications can be discovered, and how profoundly identification processes can be studied with mental maps. This paper contributes to the theoretical discussion on borders and territorial identity by visualizing the complexity of how borders and territorial identifications are intertwined, and how young people engage in the social, cultural and mental construction of borders and the negotiation of territorial identities. The paper enriches the mental mapping methodology by demonstrating two different ways mental maps can be used for studying young people's territorial identifications.

Introduction

It has been well established in border studies literature that borders play a crucial role in people's territorial identities (see Donnan and Wilson 1999; Newman 2003; Kolosov 2005). Political borders shape the organization of human life, become an intrinsic part of people's mindscapes and can act as markers of identity by indicating where "our" territory ends, and "their" territory begins (Paasi 1996; Prokkola 2009). Some scholars have pointed out that the relationship between borders and identity is not as simplistic as is often presented. For instance, the understanding of state borders as exclusive markers of identity is problematic because people often attach different meanings to the border and can choose positions between different collective identities (Vila 2005; Prokkola 2009).

While identity processes related to borders have been well studied among adults, the study of borders in children's and young people's territorial identification processes is

only beginning to develop. This is related to the growth of childhood and youth studies during the last three decades and the rise of the new social studies of childhood that highlight children and young people as active and important agents in their social and cultural environments (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Spyrou and Christou 2014). The study of children's and young people's engagement with borders and the social, cultural and mental construction of borders (addressed here as "bordering"), accordingly, is evolving and has the potential to enrich the understanding of borders in general (Spyrou and Christou 2014). Existing studies on children and borders have focused on two areas: the impact of border crossing on children's and young people's lives (approaching borders mainly as physical and political elements); and on children and young people living in different border areas of the world and being actively engaged in the everyday life of these spaces and in the construction and negotiation of borders and identities (Spyrou and Christou 2015). Studies within the latter group have found that young people are similar to adults in that they also construct their identities relationally and their identities reflect the historical, political and social contexts in which they live. As they occupy different social and power positions from adults, young people can be either more restricted by the power that borders have over them or they can challenge borders and construct border-crossing identities in ways that are impossible for adults (Aitken and Plows 2010; Spyrou and Christou 2015).

The aim of this paper is to examine mental mapping as a method for studying borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications. We understand territorial identifications as "the act of relating to territories of various scales" and thereby acknowledge the active role that young people play in identifying with different territories rather than being passive objects of "spatial socialization" (see Paasi 1996, 2016 and below). Mental mapping has been found to be a fruitful method for working with young people and capturing their spatial knowledge, perceptions and preferences (see Saarinen 1973; Gould and White 1974; Gillespie 2010; Reynolds and Vinterek 2016). This paper analyzes and compares two studies that collected mental maps from young people (defined here as aged 9–19) in Finland and in the Finnish-Russian borderland. The first study (from now on the "borderline study") explored how young people in Finland (aged 16–19) relate to Finland's borders and territorial shape, and how they understand and represent via map drawing the changes to Finland's borders which occurred as a result of World War II (WWII). The second study (from now on the "borderland study") examined Finnish and Russian young people's (aged 9–15) perceptions of the Finnish-Russian border and the borderland, and their territorial identifications in the borderland (see Kaisto and Brednikova 2019). Both studies addressed borders as physical and political borderlines and as borderings; as social, cultural and mental constructions (see van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005; Scott 2015).

The paper begins with an introduction to the mental mapping method, followed by a theoretical discussion about borders and territorial identities and young people's territorial identifications. We then give a brief account of changes to and meanings attached to Finland's borders, and describe the studies conducted by us with young people in Finland and the Finnish-Russian borderland. We continue with a discussion about the findings of these studies and end with conclusions about mental mapping as a method for studying borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications.

Mental mapping with young people

Hopkins (2010) identifies visual methods as one of the most commonly applied research methods used with young people to explore their understandings of place and identity, alongside verbal, textual, observational, participatory, and survey approaches. Mapping is one of the visual methods that has been gaining popularity. Mental mapping (also known as sketch mapping, cognitive mapping, mental sketch mapping and freehand mapping) can be an especially insightful method when studying young people's "subjective relationships (e.g. perceptions, attitudes and experiences) towards the objective spatial world(s) they inhabit, and which shape their behavior" (White and Green 2012, 60). Mental mapping is a method during which research participants are asked to draw what they think about a particular place or space. In the process, a person creates a mental map – a tangible version of their "map in the mind." Mental maps can include the information, emotions and ideas that people hold about a certain place or space, whether these are real and/or imagined (Giesecking 2013).

One of the greatest strengths of mental mapping with young people is that it allows participants to be creative and present visually what could be difficult to express verbally (Trell and van Hoven 2010). In our studies, mental mapping allowed us to study borders and bordering in ways which would not have been possible via verbal or textual methods, or via other visual approaches such as photography or video. Mapping was a natural method for revealing understandings of Finland's borders and territorial shape because these are in general presented on maps and learned from maps. In the "borderland study," the young people could freely evoke their associations related to the Finnish-Russian border and the borderland, and fix these associations and images on a map depicting the borderland.

It might also be easier to get young people involved in research when using creative and innovative methods such as mental mapping (Trell and van Hoven 2010). Yet for some young people drawing can be a challenging task. Mental mapping is often criticized for depending heavily on the participants' drawing skills and ability to transfer their cognitive map onto a piece of paper (Gillespie 2010). However, such criticism is seldom given to verbal methods, even if people's ability to verbally express themselves also varies, and young people in particular can find it uncomfortable expressing their views and opinions verbally in individual and group settings (Hopkins 2010; Giesecking 2013).

The mental mapping method was originally developed in the 1950s and 1960s, and young people have been the focus of mental mapping studies from very early on. Among the classic studies with young people are Gould and White's (1974) study of university students' regional images and perceptions of residential desirability in the United States, Europe and Africa, and Saarinen's (1973) research on young people's world images. These studies together with later mental mapping research with children and young people (see e.g. Gillespie 2010; Reynolds and Vinterek 2016) have shown that a person's place of residence and national and cultural background influence how they perceive a certain place or area. Therefore, mental maps reflect our collective identities and can be analyzed as mirrors of both individual and collective worldviews, as the "borderline" and "borderland" studies below illustrate. Even though mental mapping can be used as a standalone method (as in the "borderland study" discussed below), it is often combined with other methods to give it more explanatory power (White and Green

2012). For instance, mental mapping accompanied by interviewing can provide greater understanding of the reasoning behind the drawers' choices (Trell and van Hoven 2010; see also the "borderline study" discussed below).

Few mental mapping studies have focused on borders or borderlands prior to our studies. Scholz (2011) examined young people's perceptions of the cross-border Euroregion of Saar-Lor-Lux using mental maps. She discovered that participants used borders together with other elements such as place names, attractions, and culinary treats as ways to order and structure the cross-border space. Sandberg (2016) combined mental mapping with walking conversations to discover how German and Polish young people use and imagine the twin cities of Görlitz and Zgorzelec on the German-Polish border. Artistic sketch maps composed by asylum seekers of their migration routes across borders are another example of mental maps with a cross-border approach (Mekdjian and Moreau 2016), supporting the view that borders and bordering are closely linked to territorial identities.

Borders and territorial identities: from logo-maps to processes of bordering

The relationship between borders and identity has been one of the key areas of border studies since the 1990s. Scholars have been especially interested in the roles borders play in people's social consciousness and self-identification with territories at various scales (countries, regions, localities) (Kolossoff 2005). Territorial identities are among the most salient affiliations that people have (Kaplan and Herb 1999), and borders have been discovered to be one of the major elements of these identities (Kolossoff 2005).

Borders and the territory they enclose are said to form a nation's "body" or "geo-body" (Winichakul 1994). This corporeal existence of nations is widely used in popular and scientific texts, and within this discourse territorial losses can be imagined as "violent assaults on the physical body" of the nation-state (Billé 2014, 168). Nations' "bodies" are made visible on maps, to the extent that nations come to be imagined as emblematic icons or logos. These "logo-maps" play a key role in the inculcation of national identity and in defining boundaries between "us" and "them" (Billé 2014; Valenius 2004). Billé (2014, 170) has argued that these seemingly fixed logo-maps can and do change and "continual re-imprinting of the new national logo-map eventually [leads] to a cognitive remapping of the national contours." Over time attachments to territories now outside the borders of the nation-state fade away and earlier logo-maps fall into oblivion (Billé 2014).

These ideas are especially relevant to the "borderline study" discussed in this paper. The outlined map of Finland has played an important role in Finland's nation-state building process, and Finland's territorial shape is still a popular symbol of Finland (Kosonen 2008). Finland's territorial shape has taken on a corporeal existence, having been anthropomorphized as a young woman with a head, body and arm(s) dressed in a traditional Finnish costume. Via various representations of the "Finnish Maiden" (Fin. *Suomi-neito*), Finnish territory has been embodied in a tangible and visible form, and the territorial losses that Finland suffered after WWII, including the loss of Petsamo, Finland's "other arm" (see Figure 1), have been imagined as physical assaults on the Maiden's body (Kosonen 2008). The "borderline" maps provide a particularly interesting insight into how young people perceive Finland and the changes to its borders and "body."



Figure 1. The Territories Finland Ceded to the Soviet Union as a Result of World War II were (from North to South): Petsamo, Salla, Karelia and a Group of Islands in the Gulf of Finland. Porkkala, which is Located 30 km West of Helsinki, was Leased to the Soviet Union as a Naval Base from 1944–1956. Map Credit: Wikicommons, Used Under Creative Commons License.

The “borderland study” addresses another central question concerning the relationship between borders and identity. This is the consideration of borderlands as central sites for exploring the processes of bordering and the construction of national and other collective identities (Donnan and Wilson 1999). Borderlands are meeting places between two or more national territories and societies. Depending on the openness of the border, people living in borderlands are exposed to transnational flows and the “other” culture and society in their everyday lives (Martinez 1994; Newman 2003). This creates a situation where identities constructed in borderlands differ from identities constructed elsewhere in the state. Borderland inhabitants are, among other things, more prone to mirror

themselves against the “other” people and their nation against the “other” nation. For some, the presence of the “other” might reinforce the experienced differences between nations and national cultures, while some may display a weak identification with their “own” nation state or create “border crossing identities” (Martinez 1994; Donnan and Wilson 1999).

Scholars exploring people’s territorial identities in different borderlands have been able to show that, in the border setting, construction of territorial (national, local, etc.) identities is intertwined with the construction of ethnic, class, gender, religious, age, and other identities (Vila 2005; Prokkola 2009; Aitken and Plows 2010). The “borderland study” is illustrative of the possibilities and limitations that mental mapping (as a standalone method) has for examining territorial identifications in borderlands. It also shows how borders are inherent to identities through processes of “bordering” – the everyday construction of borders among communities and groups, through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and agency (Scott 2015).

Young people’s territorial identifications and spatial socialization

Studies concerning children’s and young people’s spatial and territorial identities have often focused on the local level, assuming that, in comparison to adults, children and young people are more limited in their mobility and spend more time in local places (Scourfield et al. 2006). Lately there has been a growing interest in the relationship between children, nations and national identity (Scourfield et al. 2006; Barrett 2007). Scholars have discovered that children’s emerging relationship with their nation is intertwined with their local experience and develops with age (Scourfield et al. 2006). This is explained by the fact that children are immersed in environments where national distinctions are very much on display and, from very early on, children are inducted into particular cultural practices and cognitive representations of their own nation and state (Scourfield et al. 2006; Barrett 2007).

Paasi (1996, 2016) has introduced the concept of “spatial socialization” for understanding and analyzing the process of socialization of an individual specifically to a territorially bounded spatial entity (such as a state). According to Paasi, people become identified with territorial entities through institutional and mundane practices including governance, politics, education, media, literature, and places of memory (for example, memorials and museums), and through internalizing collective territorial narratives and shared traditions. For many people, state borders function as one of the most important identity frameworks (in relation to which Paasi talks about “national socialization”). The state is, however, not the only spatial scale that people identify with; people can relate to several territorial communities at the same time (Paasi 1996).

Kallio (2014) has, in line with the new social studies of childhood (see Holloway and Valentine 2000), introduced to the concept of spatial socialization the idea that children and young people are active social agents. She also highlights how processes of spatial socialization produce “related yet unique people”: even if children growing up in the same community oftentimes share the same education, institutional practices, and media coverage, they do not turn into identical like-minded subjects (Kallio 2014, 215). This results from the fact that worldviews form in an interplay between acquired knowledge, socially shared understandings, and personal experiences (Rinne and Kallio 2017). If

we accept the above arguments we can see children and young people not as mere objects of the institutional and mental power that borders have over them, but rather as active participants in (de)constructing borders (see Spyrou and Christou 2014).

The Finnish context

Finland is bordered by Norway to the north, Estonia (across the Gulf of Finland) to the south, Sweden to the west and Russia to the east. In total Finland has 2,700 km of land border and 1,250 km of shoreline border. Finland's borders with Sweden and Norway have been peaceful and open for most of their history. The Finnish-Estonian border is a relatively new boundary as it was established in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and became an internal EU border when Estonia joined the EU in 2004 (before 1991, the border existed for a short period between WWI and WWII). The Finnish-Russian border has a traumatic history and, owing to wars and treaties, the borderline has moved several times throughout the centuries. The last changes to the borderline were ratified in 1947 after WWII when Finland ceded the Soviet Union roughly 10% of its territory (see Figure 1).

The largest ceded territory was in Karelia, an area which was and is central to Finnish myth-making and national-territorial understandings (Laine and van der Velde 2017). Approximately 407,000 people (c. 10% of Finland's population at that time) moved from ceded Karelia into the Finnish interior and resettled there (Karjalan Liitto 2019). Smaller numbers moved from the other ceded areas of Petsamo and Salla (around 5,000 people from each area based on 1939 population figures, Statistics Finland 2005) and temporarily from Porkkala, when it was leased to the Soviet Union as a naval base from 1944–1956. Today it is fairly common for a Finn to have a family tie to ceded Karelia and there are many organizations in Finland which aim at keeping alive the memory of life in the ceded territory (see e.g. Karjalan Liitto 2019) and some fringe organizations who campaign for a return of ceded Karelia to Finland. Laine and van der Velde (2017) argue that this possible return, the “Karelian Question,” keeps Karelia to the fore in discussion of the ceded territories.

Owing to its history, the Finnish-Soviet/Russian border has been at the core of Finnish nation building and the Finnish state as a national “we” has typically been constructed in relation to the Soviet Union/Russia (Paasi 1996, 2016). The border also continues to hold special meaning for many Finns' sense of national identity. At the same time, images of the border have multiplied and changed both in Finland and Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent easing of the border regime. The number of travelers crossing the border has increased from approximately four million in 1997 to around ten million a year (Kaisto and Brednikova 2019, 2). The border is now subject to different representations within economic, political, military and cultural discourses (Paasi 1996; Laube and Roos 2010).

Children's and young people's images of Finland's borders have remained largely unstudied. Jukarainen (2002) found that, in the late 1990s, young people at both Finland's highly permeable border with Sweden and on the Finnish–Russian border made clear cultural and linguistic distinctions between either side of the border. At the Finnish–Swedish border she found only “mild” nationalist sentiments regarding the “other” national group, while both Finnish and Russian youth, especially those living in border areas, showed

highly prejudiced and reserved attitudes towards their neighbors. Our work with Finnish and Russian young people (see Kaisto and Brednikova 2019) and the findings represented in other studies (see Laine 2015) suggest that these perceptions are changing.

The “borderline study”: mental maps of Finland “before” and “after” World War II

The “borderline study” examined how Finnish high school students (aged 16–19) imagine, narrate and depict on paper the borderline and territorial shape of Finland and the changes which occurred to the borderline as a result of WWII. The study was conducted in 2017 as part of the data collection for Wells’ PhD research project on the Finnish post-memory of the city of Vyborg, which became part of the Soviet Union after the Finnish-Russian borderline moved as a result of WWII. High school students were chosen as participants as this group were judged to be old enough and educated enough, having studied Finland’s WWII history at school, to be able to productively discuss the research topic. This group are the “third generation” in relation to those who lived through WWII and Finland’s border change, and the knowledge and postmemories of this generation have not been previously researched. Within the mixed method research design, the mental mapping task was an “ice breaker” exercise for focus group discussions (for another example of mental mapping used in this way, see Trelle and van Hoven 2010) and served to get the participants expressing their thoughts about the changes to Finland’s borders as a result of WWII.

Participants were asked to draw two maps of Finland: one before WWII and one afterwards. The young people were encouraged to talk to each other during the task about their maps. The idea was that they would interact with each other to co-construct knowledge and ideas. The participants’ talk during the task, which was audio recorded and these recordings transcribed, gave an extra dimension to the map data, adding to understandings of the knowledge and processes used by the participants to arrive at their completed maps, and how they found the task.

A total of 315 “before” and “after” mental map pairs from 11 different cities throughout Finland were analyzed. These cities were Helsinki ($n = 19$) and Vantaa (11) in Southern Finland in the capital region, Lahti (36) in Southern Finland, Turku (56) in South-Western Finland, Vaasa (39) in Western Finland, Jyväskylä (31) in Central Finland, Imatra (22) and Lappeenranta (15) in South Karelia on the Finnish-Russian border, Joensuu (25) in North Karelia close to the Finnish-Russian border, Oulu (29) in Northern Finland, and Rovaniemi (32) in Finnish Lapland. Alongside the mental maps, transcripts from the 38 focus groups which took place in the 11 cities, and feedback forms filled out by the focus group participants were analyzed thematically. The map pairs were first analyzed for representations of the borderline and changes to it between the “before” and “after” maps. After that, other visual and/or textual elements of the maps were noted and analyzed. This part of the analysis was mainly quantitative grouping, but included also qualitative interpretation of the map elements.

The first theme that emerged from the analysis was that the participants had difficulties drawing Finland’s borderline. Similar to previous mental mapping studies where the outline shapes of countries were often crudely rendered (Saarinen 1973; Saarinen and MacCabe 1989; Ben-Ze’ev 2015), the participants felt that they did not have the skills to

draw the maps: "I'm not good at drawing maps, although I know what they should look like" (anonymous participant feedback from a female participant (FP), focus group (FG) 3 in Oulu (O)). The transcribed comments made by the participants during the map drawing task aided the interpretation of these maps; the participants could express verbally things about their maps they felt they were not able to adequately convey via their drawing. The following excerpt illustrates this:

FG3O FP2: This [map] is not really super accurate [...] oh God, this is off to a bad start [...] Oh God ah! This [map] looks like a ghost! I can't!

FG3O FP4: I just wanna explain that the size of this isn't smaller, the drawing is just worse here.

FG3O Moderator: Sorry?

FG3O FP4: The size of Finland isn't smaller here, it was just-

FG3O Moderator: Oh ok, it's supposed to be the same?

FG3O FP4: Yeah, we [referring to Finnish people] just don't have this bit [points to Petsamo ("the arm")].

FG3O FP2: It's a really bad drawing so sorry [...] [sings] I'm so bad at this.

FG3O FP3: You're not the only one.

Because of the comments by FP4 above it was not assumed that a larger pre-WWII and a smaller or "slimmer" post-WWII map equaled an awareness of lost territory (her map is shown on the left in Figure 2). As a result, for a map to have been coded as indicating lost Karelian territory the right-hand side borderline had to clearly be a different shape on the

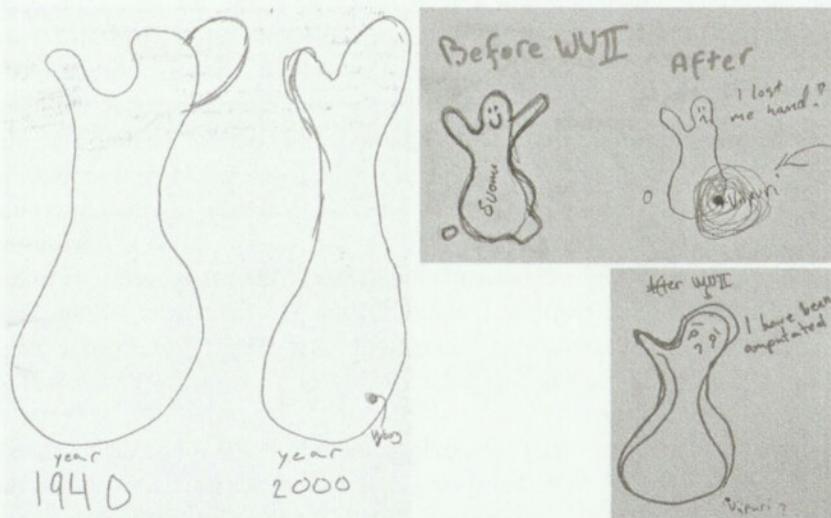


Figure 2. Outline Maps of Finland "Before" and "After" World War II Drawn by High School Students in Oulu, Northern Finland. These Maps Lack Accuracy and Detail and Serve as an Example of "Logo Maps" of Finland. The Maps on the Right Show Anthropomorphic Understandings of the Finnish Nation-state.

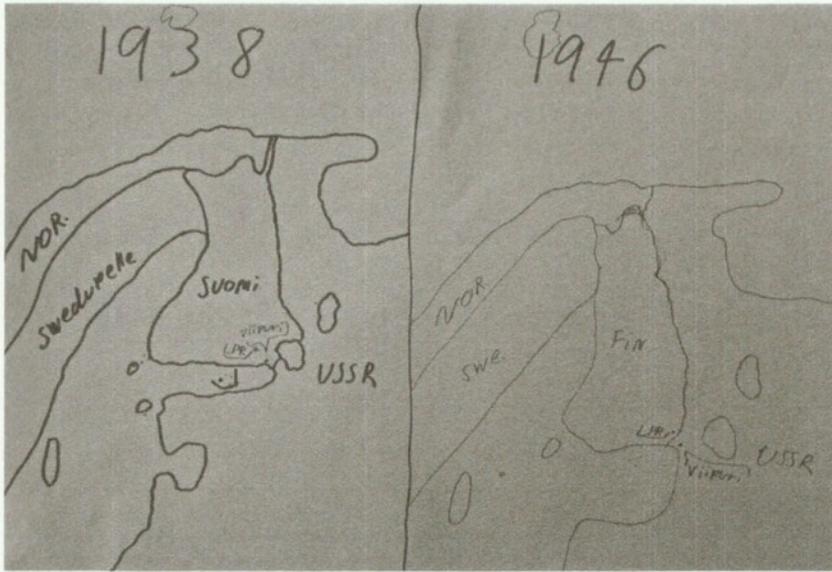


Figure 3. A Map Pair Drawn by a High School Student in Lappeenranta, on the Finnish-Russian Border, which also Depicts Finland's Neighbors and Thereby Places Finland in a Wider Geopolitical Context.

"after" map, or the lost territory marked out and/or labeled in some way on the maps (see map top right in Figure 2 and Figure 3 for examples).

Some participants could not recall how the outline of Finland looks now and/or how it looked before WWII, despite having been taught this knowledge: "I actually have a history course just now about these things and I still don't remember [laughs]" (FG30 FP2). One participant spontaneously started commenting on the difficulty of representing her country's territory on paper and on her lack of a cognitive map, concluding that it "feels bad" and "quite sad" to not remember or be able to draw the outline of Finland (FG30 FP2). It could be that she felt this way not (only) because she felt she was bad at drawing, but because she thought that she should know and be able to draw the outline of her own country. Billé has argued (2014, 167) how maps play an important part in the inculcation of national identity; knowing the shape of Finland can be part of feeling "Finnish."

The analysis also showed that maps created by the participants represented Finland's borderline, but lacked in detail (see Figure 2). Thus, the maps did not match standard cartographic representations, a finding also made by Ben-Ze'ev (2015) of mental maps of Israel/Palestine drawn by high school students. Instead, the maps were creative, artistic representations of the "logo map" of Finland. Of the 315 map pairs all but 25 showed Finland as a free-floating "island," the majority of map pairs (92%) did not include the neighboring territories of Russia, Sweden, Norway or (across the Baltic Sea) Estonia (see Figure 3 as an exception).

The analysis further found that all the map pairs indicated a difference in the shape of Finland "before" and "after" WWII showing that the participants were aware that Finland's borderline was altered as a result of WWII. Of the map pairs 89% showed the loss of the Petsamo area ("the missing arm") and 66% indicated the ceded Karelian territory (see Figure 1). The ceded territory of Salla, the ceded islands in the Gulf of Finland, and the leased military base of Porkkala (see Figure 1) were indicated on only a very few

maps (Salla was included on 8% of the maps, the Gulf of Finland islands on 2% and Porkkala on 2%).

The fact that Petsamo and Karelia are the lost territories which the young people recalled during discussions and marked on their maps echoes national discourses where Karelia and Petsamo dominate memorializations of Finland's lost territories and is a sign that the young people have been spatially socialized into "remembering" some lost territories and "forgetting" others (see Paasi 1996). The fact that the loss of Petsamo was remembered and represented by the participants more often than Karelia suggests the power of map-like images of nations and the relationship between national identification and the corporeal image of a country, the "body" or "geo-body" of Finland (see Winichakul 1994; Billé 2014). If Finland is imagined as a corporeal being, then its post-WWII "lost limb" is visually striking and memorable and so may be more easily recalled and represented than the hazy (non)place of ceded Karelia. An early study of global sketch maps by Saarinen (1973, 155–6) found what he called the "factor of shape" influenced map drawers: the edges of continents and memorable country shapes (such as Italy, "the boot") were more often depicted on maps.

Spatial socialization in terms of the local context and proximity to the "lost" territories seems also to play a part here, however. In Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland, 94% of participants represented Finland's "missing arm" and only 16% marked ceded Karelia. Clearly the geographic location of the participants matters here, as Rovaniemi is the city closest to the lost territory of Petsamo and furthest away from the lost territory of Karelia. This difference could also be explained by the young people's family histories, as the Karelian evacuees often settled in Southern Finland (for example in Lahti and Helsinki). Surprisingly, however, participants in Southern and Western Finland more often indicated the lost Karelian territory on their maps than participants living in Finnish Karelia, where many Karelian evacuees also settled, in close proximity to this lost area. This could be explained simply by the fact that participants in Southern and Western Finland had better knowledge of Finland's WWII-era border change and had perhaps studied it more recently at school, and retained this information. This explanation is supported by the fact that participants in Helsinki were most familiar with the changes in Finland's borderline (they all marked the loss of Petsamo area and 95% of the participants noted the loss of Karelia on their map pairs) and they are students at a prestigious school which requires a very high grade point average of its incoming students. Overall, this conundrum illustrates that mental mapping, even when combined with focus group conversations and feedback forms is sometimes not enough to explain the results of the mapping. There is a need for complementary methods such as background information in the form of a questionnaire or personal interviews. Another possibility would be to collect a larger number of maps that would allow a more advanced statistical analysis of the results.

A small number of the map pairs ($n = 16$, 5%) were anthropomorphic; these map drawings represented Finland as a corporeal entity. Eight of these map pairs gave Finland a "voice" by having their maps "speak" (see Figure 2). The focus group discussions also provided examples of participants anthropomorphizing Finland. In Oulu (FG10) there was the following exchange between two male participants when drawing their maps:

FG10 MP1: [whispers] I can't draw these Finland maps.

FG10 MP2: [quietly] You draw the mitten there and then the head and then the other hand. What does the other hand even look like? I don't remember.

The second participant quoted above visualizes the shape of Finland as a human figure with hands and a head. He uses this visualization as a strategy for remembering how the map should look and transferring this to paper, although he is not able to fully remember the shape of Finland using this method. These results, showing anthropomorphic understandings of Finland, add weight to the argument that people identify with their national territory via imagining the "national body" (Billé 2014).

In some cases, the maps explicitly indicated that Petsamo was felt to be Finland's "lost arm." The participants' maps "spoke," with one saying, "I lost me hand!" and the other, "I have been amputated" (see Figure 2). Another map had an arrow to Petsamo with the caption "lost the right 'hand'." In the group discussions which accompanied the map drawing, Petsamo was also sometimes imagined as Finland's "lost arm," which had been violently severed from the national "body": "After the Second World War the arm was pulled off" (FG2 Lappeenranta MP1). This phenomenon of borderlines being imagined as "slicing off" previous national territory and thus causing physical damage and pain to the "body" of the nation has also occurred in other mental mapping contexts: mental maps of Cyprus drawn by Greek Cypriot children showed the island "bleeding" and "crying" as a result of the "Green Line" which divides it (Christou and Spyrou 2014). One participant in Imatra described his map of Finland as "a skirt-wearing woman who has her hands up" (FG1 Imatra MP1). This refers to the popular and important representation of Finland's territory as a "Maiden" (see Valenius 2004; Kosonen 2008). Thus, the participant's comment refers to a collective narrative related to Finland's shape and can be tied to national level spatial socialization processes (see Paasi 1996).

The "borderland study": mental maps of the Finnish-Russian borderland

The aim of the "borderland study" was to examine Finnish and Russian young people's perceptions of the Finnish-Russian border and the borderland, and their territorial identifications in the borderland. The study was based on 263 mental maps collected between 2013 and 2017 in three schools in Lappeenranta (Finland), one school in Vyborg (Russia) and one school in Pervomayskoe (Russia). Lappeenranta and Vyborg are both situated within 40 km of the Finnish-Russian border and are the largest cities of their respective administrative regions. Both cities are popular tourist and shopping destinations for people from the other side of the border, and the second busiest border crossing point along the Finnish-Russian border, Nuijamaa/Brusnichnoe, is located between the cities. Pervomayskoe provided a comparative angle to the material as it is a smaller settlement located just over 100 km from the border, between the cities of Vyborg and Saint Petersburg. The study was carried out in comprehensive schools, and two age groups were selected to compare differences in perceptions between younger and older participants. It was assumed that participants in the 4th and 5th grades, aged 9–11, would be mature enough to complete the mapping task. The older participants were aged 13–15 and represented the last two grades of Finnish comprehensive school, the 8th and 9th grades.

The mental maps served as the only research data for this study. During the mapping, short interviews were conducted with some of the participants. These were not continued

comparisons between the Finnish and Russian sides. Yet the comparisons resulted in a rich insight into how the participants perceive their own and the other side of the border.

At the beginning of the mapping sessions, the participants were asked to draw and write on the base maps what they thought about the Finnish-Russian borderland; what is on the Finnish and Russian sides and what it is like to live in the area. They were also asked to draw and write what the border between Finland and Russia is like. In case participants were having difficulties with the exercise, they were asked to draw and write what they think about Finland and Russia – what these countries are like in their minds (without asking them to compare the countries). During mapping the participants were allowed to talk to their classmates, even if they had been asked to work alone. The maps were analyzed with content analysis and by making use of quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine both collective and individual perceptions of the borderland (for a full description of the method of analysis, see Kaisto and Brednikova 2019). At times it was challenging to interpret the participants' drawings and texts without supporting verbal material. The maps alone also did not allow us to analyze why the participants included certain elements on their maps or what they felt about the elements and about the territories they described (see also Gillespie 2010).

The analysis revealed that the participants most frequently represented the Finnish-Russian border as a place for border crossings, indicating that the more open border regime and increased mobility across the border had impacted the participants' perceptions of the border. The participants placed considerably fewer elements on the border and its near vicinity than on the Finnish and Russian sides of the border. This showed that the border played a less significant role for the participants as a physical borderline than as a tool for bordering in terms of constructing socio-spatial distinctions between the Finnish and Russian sides of the borderland (see van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005; Scott 2015). As detailed visual representations, the maps illustrated how complex and nuanced these processes of bordering are. Participants described the Finnish and Russian sides of the border and constructed the differences and similarities between the sides by using a wide range of elements from small food items to symbols and characterizations of societies and cultures (see Figures 4 and 5). The elements were based on personal knowledge, experiences, feelings and ideas, and socially shared understandings that participants attached to Finland, Russia and to their localities (see Gieseke 2013; Rinne and Kallio 2017).

The participants' perceptions and the processes of bordering were intertwined with the social and spatial contexts in which they live (see Saarinen 1973; Gould and White 1974; Gillespie 2010; Reynolds and Vinterek 2016). The results suggest national socialization (Paasi 1996) and the importance of the national context, as the Finnish and Russian participants differed in their perceptions of the borderland and the way in which they constructed differences and similarities in it. The Finnish participants constructed more differences than similarities between the Finnish and Russian sides of the border and considered the Russian side to be more urban and less attractive than the Finnish side. The Russian participants pictured the Russian side similar to the Finnish side, especially in terms of the natural environment. They contrasted the two sides of the border using traditional symbols and references to Russian classical culture on the Russian side and by drawing shops and modern Finnish trademarks on the Finnish side of the borderland (see Figure 4). These descriptions reflected collective images of Russia in Finland and Finland in Russia.

monuments etc.) and elements of the natural environment on their maps, the participants highlighted specificities of their national territory and referred to collective narratives that are important for feeling a part of a nation (Kaplan and Herb 1999; Scourfield et al. 2006). The analysis of the maps also showed that the way the participants identified with their nation was closely intertwined with how they identified with their locality (see Scourfield et al. 2006). Thus, it was argued that local border-related phenomena and young people's border-crossing experiences are increasingly relevant for their national and local identification processes in the Finnish–Russian borderland.

Discussion: comparing the methodologies of the “borderline” and “borderland” studies

Comparing the “borderline” and “borderland” studies shows that the mental mapping method can be used in varying ways and as a part of different research methodologies. The chosen methodologies demonstrate different aspects of how borders and bordering are related to territorial identifications. While the “borderline study” shed light primarily on the role and significance of a nation's borders and shape in territorial identifications (see Billé 2014), the “borderland study” made visible processes of bordering (see van Houtum, Kramsch, and Zierhofer 2005; Scott 2015) that young people in the increasingly transnational Finnish-Russian borderland participate in. Both studies visualize the operation of national and local level spatial socialization (see Paasi 1996) in terms of how the participants perceived Finland's borderline and the Finnish-Russian borderland, and the active engagement of young people in processes of spatial socialization (see Kallio 2014) and, thereby, in the act of relating to their nations and localities.

Several practical methodological choices influenced the findings of the two studies. First, the research aims of the “borderline” and “borderland” studies defined the scale at which mental mapping occurred (on the national or regional levels) and whether the focus of the mapping was on the borderline or rather on perceptions of territories. Both approaches have been at the core of mental mapping research with young people (see e.g. Saarinen 1973; Gould and White 1974; Scholz 2011; Reynolds and Vinterek 2016) and illustrate different aspects of the relationship between borders and territorial identifications. The “borderland” scale maps allowed more detailed illustrations (see Figures), which was also connected to the fact that a special base map with a lot of space for drawing and writing was developed for the study and that mapping was the sole activity.

The second fundamental difference between the two studies was the choice of having mental mapping as a standalone method or complementing it with other methods. Our research supports the view that mental mapping works best in combination with other methods such as interviews if the goal is to add deeper layers to the analysis of territorial identities (see Trell and van Hoven 2010; White and Green 2012; Gieseck 2013). In the “borderline study” the transcribed conversations that the participants had during the map drawing task and the feedback forms gathered at the end of the groups provided additional information about the participants' understandings of Finland's borders and territorial shape, and assisted the researcher in the analysis of the maps. If the aim in the “borderland study” had been an in-depth examination of the young people's identity construction, mapping should have been combined with interviews or other qualitative or quantitative methods of inquiry. In both studies, complementary data such as participants' background

information (social background, language skills, traveling experiences, use of media, etc.) and their quantitative analysis together with the map data would have allowed us to explore the likely sources of young people's knowledge and perceptions (see Rinne and Kallio 2017).

In both studies, the mental mapping method allowed us to include a large number of participants to discover patterns and gain a general understanding of young people's identification processes. A smaller number may be preferable for those aiming for a more individual approach to the data collection and a more detailed analysis (see e.g. Trell and van Hoven 2010), while an even larger number would allow for more advanced statistical analysis of the results. By including participants of different ages, the "borderland study" was able to show that age is an important factor when it comes to perceptions of and identifications with places and nations (see Nugent 1994; Barrett 2007), as the older participants were more objective in their perceptions and included more criticism on their maps than the younger participants. The "borderland study" was also transnational, including participants from both sides of the Finnish-Russian border whose mental maps could then be productively compared. The "borderline study" included only participants from Finland and only one age group and therefore results could be compared between different places in Finland but not between different age groups or places outside Finland. As the aim of both studies was to explore young people's perceptions of the border and the borderland, we did not include adults in our studies. Yet, we believe that our mental mapping exercises would also have been suitable for them, as mental mapping has also been widely used with adults (see for example Gould and White 1974; Gieseking 2013; Mekdjian and Moreau 2016). Had we chosen to collect maps from adults, these would have enabled us to deepen our understanding of what is specific to young people's knowledge and perceptions.

Lastly, both the "borderline" and "borderland" studies highlighted the importance of analyzing mental maps as both individual and collective representations (see also White and Green 2012). The combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques in both studies led to an understanding that the young people had both socially shared and individual ways of relating to and mapping national borders and borderlands (see Kallio 2014). This was connected to the methodological choice in both studies to allow participants to interact with each other while sketching their individual maps and thereby co-construct knowledge and ideas. The studies also illustrated that, as the visual map data at times leaves room for further interpretation, the analysis of the maps should be sensitive to the reasons behind the drawers' choices and the participants' drawing abilities as these can influence the interpretation of the maps (see also Trell and van Hoven 2010).

When reflected against other popular methods in youth research such as interviewing (Hopkins 2010), mental mapping was a method well-suited to the particular topics of our studies, even if the participants sometimes experienced difficulties in drawing borderlines and producing visual images. As reported by previous studies (see e.g. White and Green 2012), the most significant advantage of the mental mapping was its highly visual nature. In both studies the maps provided a rich visual gallery which revealed the complexity of young people's relationships with their nation and its territory and borders.

Conclusions

Mental mapping is a creative and innovative visual method that has rarely been applied to the study of borders and borderlands. This paper has examined mental mapping as a method for studying borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications. We placed under scrutiny two research projects, the "borderline study" and the "borderland study," that collected and analyzed mental maps from young people in Finland and the Finnish-Russian borderland. The studies illuminate crucial aspects of how borders and bordering are related to young people's territorial identifications. The comparison of the studies demonstrates our argument that the research methodology determines what aspects of borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications can be discovered, and how profoundly the identification processes can be studied with mental maps.

The mental mapping methodology in the discussed studies visualizes the complexity of how borders and territorial identifications are intertwined. Our findings support the view that the relationship between borders and identity is not simplistic (see Vila 2005; Prokkola 2009) and thereby aid theory-building in border studies in moving away from an understanding of borders as absolute defining lines in terms of territorial identity construction. Our findings also underline the role of young people as active participants in (re)creating their social and cultural environments (see Holloway and Valentine 2000; Spyrou and Christou 2014) and encourage the involvement of young people in the study of borders and borderlands to enrich the understanding of borders in general. Finally, the paper contributes to the mental mapping methodology by contrasting two different ways to gain understandings of young people's perceptions of borderlines and borderlands and their territorial identifications.

In future, the methodologies and findings outlined in this paper could be further tested and developed via the collection of mental mapping data which would allow us to observe, among other things, temporal and generational differences in the perceptions of, in this case, Finland's borders and the Finnish-Russian borderland. The ability to collect similar data in other national and borderland contexts would also enrich our understanding of borders and bordering in young people's territorial identifications and the study of these with mental maps.

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Creating Change in Higher Education Through Transfronterixx Student-led Grassroots Initiatives in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this participatory action research study was to ignite change in higher education institutions through grassroots student-led initiatives focused on creating inclusive campus environments for Transfronterixx college students at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. A total of 15 stakeholders participated in this study, 11 Transfronterixx college students, and four faculty and higher education professional allies. The data of this participatory action research study was collected through a cyclical approach in five different phases consisting of one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The process of implementing institutional change in higher education through student-led initiatives is illustrated in the findings of this study that parallel Elliot's ([1991]. *Action Research for Educational Change*. McGraw-Hill Education.) five phases of participatory action research: (a) Identifying and clarifying the general idea; (b) Reconnaissance; (c) Constructing the general plan; (d) Developing the next action steps; and (e) Implementing the next action steps. This study led to the inception of the Transfronterixx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU), a grassroots student-led movement dedicated to fostering the success of Transfronterixx college students at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. These findings are further illustrated through the thoughts, feelings and experiences that participants shared about creating institutional change in higher education.

Introduction

This study is focused on college students who live a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. The international border between the cities of San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico is the most frequently crossed border in the world, with approximately 70,000 northbound vehicle crossings and 20,000 northbound pedestrian crossings each day (San Ysidro Land Port of Entry Project Facts 2019). Transborder interactions are prevalent among individuals who live in the San Diego-Tijuana border region as they keep social, cultural and political ties in both nations (Iglesias-Prieto 2014). Part of the San Diego-Tijuana transborder phenomenon are college students who live and

commute between both sides of the international border while attending higher education institutions in San Diego, CA (Falcón Orta, Harris III, Leal and Vasquez 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). In a quantitative study of college students who engaged in transborder interactions at a higher education institution in San Diego, CA; 100 participants, self identified as crossing the border three to seven days a week (Falcón Orta in press). However, currently, there is no published peer-reviewed literature on the number of college students who live a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

Transfronterix college students' ties to both nations and their transborder interactions are significant experiences that contribute to their cultural identity and academic involvement (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). Few scholars have published peer-reviewed findings focused on Transfronterix college students (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007), and little is known in higher education institutions about their transborder lifestyle and holistic development as students. This study serves as a bridge between border studies and the field of student development in higher education by addressing the needs of Transfronterix students in higher education institutions at the San Diego-Tijuana border region.

The paucity of research on Transfronterix college students is reflected in the absence of programs and services focused on fostering the development of this student population in higher education institutions. The lack of inclusive spaces for Transfronterix students in higher education institutions perpetuates the invisibility and marginalization of this student population in colleges and universities along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this participatory action research study was to ignite change in higher education institutions through grassroots student-led initiatives focused on creating inclusive campus environments for Transfronterix college students at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. As such, this study led to the inception of the Transfronterix Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at San Diego State University (SDSU), a grassroots student-led movement dedicated to fostering the success of Transfronterix college students at the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Young people have the power to influence borders and borderlands through their agency and interactions (Brambilla 2015; Spyrou and Christou 2014; Venken 2017). Since the beginning of this study, Transfronterix youth have significantly influenced SDSU and neighboring higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region by creating inclusive campus environments for Transfronterix college students.

The US-Mexico Border Region as a Transborder Context

Transborder contexts are created by the social interactions of people between two nations that are divided by an international border (Ojeda 2005, 2009). International borders around the world are different, and transborder contexts around the world are unique to the regional characteristics of the international borders that divide each nation (Martinez 1994). Particularly, the U.S.-Mexico International Border is an *interdependent border* where transborder collaboration between economic and human resources is encouraged by both nations (Martinez 1994). Simultaneously, the U.S.-Mexico international border

is also highly monitored by central governments and is kept open only to serve “national agendas” (p. 9).

The characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border also influence the experiences of people who cross the border and live near the region (Martinez 1994). Martinez studied people who lived near the U.S.-Mexico border region in order to gain an understanding about the borderland. His findings revealed four characteristics of the borderland context that shape the culture and sociological experiences of people who live near the borderlands and called these characteristics “the borderlands milieu” (p.10). While all residents of the U.S.-Mexico border region are exposed to different levels of the neighboring country, most individuals experience, to some degree, “transnational interaction, international conflict and accommodation, ethnic conflict and accommodation, and separateness” (Martinez 1994, 10). The characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border shape the social cultural trajectories of people living in the borderlands and the on-campus and off-campus experiences of Transfronterizx college students.

Despite the physical and political obstacles of the U.S.-Mexico international border, transborder interactions are a way of life for many borderlanders who reside near the U.S.-Mexico border region (Martinez 1994; Ojeda 2005, 2009; Vélez-Ibáñez 2010). Research on transborder families from the U.S.-Mexico border region emphasize that the experiences of these individuals are conditioned by the unique characteristics of the border and borderlands. Both Ojeda (2005, 2009) and Martinez (1994) highlight that borderlanders and people who frequently cross the U.S.-Mexico border are significant actors who create the transborder context. Additionally, the characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico border also influence the experiences of Transfronterizx people and their identities (Iglesias-Prieto 2011, 2014; Velasco Ortiz and Contreras 2014). Particularly, Transfronterizx college students experience the elements of the transborder milieu more intensely due to their frequent transborder interactions; and the highly policed and militarized context of the border influences the most prevalent challenges faced by Transfronterizx college students in their daily transborder trajectories.

Transfronterizx College Students from the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Scholars who have studied students that live a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region have identified the student group as Transfronterizx [Transborder] as a result of their transborder ties to both nations – Mexico and the United States (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). Transfronterizx college students are a heterogeneous population; however, most students are U.S.-citizens and keep ties to both nations as a result of social and academic experiences (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). Some students have a stable residency in San Diego and cross the border frequently to visit friends and family in Tijuana (Falcón Orta in press). Other students have stable residencies in both, San Diego and Tijuana, and they cross the border two to six times a week for social and academic interactions in both nations. Yet other students forced by sociocultural factors, such as poverty and/or parents that resume their lives in Mexico, have a stable residency in Tijuana and cross the border frequently to continue their education in San Diego, CA (Falcón Orta in press).

Transfronterizx students' ties to both nations – Mexico and the United States – significantly influence their identities through code switching and translanguaging practices. Individuals who cross borders frequently engage in cultural code switching, due to their deep understanding of the language and cultural norms of the nations that they are frequently engaged in (Valenzuela Arce 2014). Translanguaging is the involvement of bilingual speakers' use of their multiple languages as a resource to employ a collective cultural communication system (García and Wei 2014). In linguistics, code switching occurs when speakers alternated between two or more languages within a single conversation. Zentella (2007) conducted a qualitative study of 40 transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region and found that participants often engaged in linguistic code switching between English and Spanish, without noticing, due to their capital of both languages. Similar to Zentella's finding, Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón (2018) found that Transfronterizx college students engaged in linguistic code switching, however, their employment of linguistic code switching between English and Spanish was intentional in order to avoid exclusion, discrimination and racism in both nations. Zentella's (2016) qualitative research on the linguistic practices of Transfronterizx high school students from the San Diego-Tijuana border region illustrate how participants employ translanguaging by interchangeably using both English and Spanish among peers. In Zentella's (2016) study, Transfronterizx high school students' translanguaging practices were a form cultural identification by "recognizing their allegiance to two nations, languages, and cultures" (p.336).

Some of the most prevalent challenges faced by Transfronterizx college students are due to characteristics of the U.S.-Mexico transborder context, as this is an environment that they are exposed to daily. Many students face intense policing, racism and a culture of impunity at the border. In a qualitative study, Benjarano (2010) explored the social-cultural and academic experiences of Transfronterizx college students from the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region and the study revealed the intense policing that students faced daily in their transborder interactions. Benjarano used the term *ritualized violence* to describe the "checkpoint interrogations, citizenship probing questions, vehicle and document inspections, merchandise checks by federal agents, and ID background checks by scanning passports and processing drivers' licenses" (p. 395) that Transfronterizx students faced in their daily transborder commutes from home to school. Similar encounters have been disclosed in qualitative studies on Transfronterizx college students from the San Diego-Tijuana border (Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). Additionally, a challenge that is congruent in most literature on transfronterizx college students is the long border wait times that students face during their transborder commutes, due to the intense surveillance that each vehicle and pedestrian is subject to through the U.S.-Mexico border ports of entry (Bejarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Relaño Pastor 2007). The long border wait time is a challenge that directly hinders Transfronterizx students' on-campus engagement and academic success in higher education. Crossing the border is a stressful experience overall, however, for Transfronterizx students it is significantly more stressful because the border is an environment that they are engaged in daily and these challenges intersect with their academic trajectories.

Transfronterizx college students from the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region and San the Diego-Tijuana border region have also disclosed discrimination and criminalization by U.S.-customs agents and law officials, both inside and outside the

international border (Benjarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018). For example, in the Palomas, Mexico-Columbus, New Mexico border region, Transfronterix college students described being profiled with more scrutiny by U.S.-customs agents by being targeted as drug mules and human traffickers due to heightened xenophobia (Benjarano 2010). In a study on Transfronterizo men in a community college in the San Diego-Tijuana border region, participants disclosed being profiled as criminals by authorities on both sides of the border and accounted being stereotyped because of their gender as men and Mexican-American ethnicity (Falcón Orta et al. 2018).

The transgressions that Transfronterix college students faced at the U.S.-Mexico international border also intersected with their on-campus experiences in higher education. For example, in the study by Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón (2018) a participant explained how the daily harassment and secondary inspections by U.S.-customs agents prevented him from being able to arrive to class on time and directly hindered his academic success in the community college. Microaggressions and racism were not only perpetuated by U.S.-customs agents at the U.S.-Mexico international ports of entry, but also by university officials in higher education institutions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Benjarano (2010) used the term *institutional violence* to describe the daunting microaggressions and racism perpetuated by faculty and staff at a higher education institution in Columbus, New Mexico, who questioned Transfronterix students U.S.-citizenship and higher education legitimacy. Similarly, in a quantitative study of 100 Transfronterix students in a higher education institution in the San Diego, CA border town, findings revealed that students reported experiencing moderately high levels of racial and ethnic tensions on-campus (Falcón Orta in press). The challenges that Transfronterix students face due to the highly policed and militarize nature of the U.S.-Mexico border, coupled by ethnic tensions and racism in higher education institutions in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Benjarano, 2010; Falcón Orta in press; Falcón Orta et al. 2018), reveal the urgency to address needs of this student population by educators and policy makers in both the U.S. and Mexico.

Guiding Conceptual framework for Grassroots Change in Higher Education

This study is guided by the following three concepts: (1) campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen 1999), (2) inclusive campus environment (Rendon, Garcia and Person 2004; Strayhorn 2012), and (3) grassroots change in higher education (Kezar 2013). These three concepts provide an interrelated lens to understanding the significance of fostering an inclusive campus climate for Transfronterix college students through student-led grassroots change in higher education.

Campus climate is defined in this study as college students' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors about issues relating to diversity in their campus communities (Hurtado et al. 1999). Hurtado and others (1999) explain that in higher education institutions, four specific institutional dimensions shape the campus climate experienced by students of color: (1) structural diversity, (2) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, (3) psychological climate and (4) behavioral climate. Evident in the literature, are Transfronterix college students' experiences of microaggressions and discrimination in higher education institutions in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Benjarano 2010; Falcón Orta et al. 2018; Falcón Orta in press).

Hurtado and others (1999) state that an institutional response to reports of discrimination and students' perceptions of a hostile environment are key to providing a welcoming environment for students. Yet, the lack of programs and services focused on fostering the academic support of Transfronterix students in higher education institutions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands reveal the absence of institutional responsibility for creating a welcoming environment for this student population.

An *inclusive campus environment* is defined by students' perceived sense of belonging (Strayhorn 2012) and validation (Rendon, Garcia and Person 2004) on-campus. More specifically, an inclusive campus environment is defined by students' "sense of belonging" through "perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared for, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus" (Strayhorn 2012, 3). Efforts to create an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterix college students in higher education institutions in San Diego, CA have yet to be implemented from a top-down leadership approach from higher education leaders. However, significant strides have been implemented in higher education institutions in the U.S. towards creating inclusive spaces for diverse student populations through student-led grassroots change initiatives (Rhoads, Buenavista and Maldonado 2004), and similar efforts can be implemented by Transfronterix student leaders to create grassroots change in higher education.

Kezar (2013) draws from political theories of change (Morgan 1986; Van de Ven and Poole 1995) to understand the various strategies grassroots leaders use to implement change in higher education. Political theorists illustrate how change occurs in tense environments where values and norms clash, making it difficult to implement new organizational ideologies and social movements (Morgan 1986; Van de Ven and Poole 1995). As a result, grassroots leaders must implement strategic practices to create institutional change. Particularly in higher education, successful grassroots change leaders have aligned their initiatives with the value of student learning and missions of higher education institutions (Kezar 2013). Similarly, the purpose of this study to create an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterix college students through student-led grassroots initiatives was aligned with the values of community, equity and justice in the field of student affairs in higher education (Young 2003).

Participatory Action Research Methodology

Participatory action research is focused on engaging stakeholders in examining their knowledge in order to discover solutions to their problems and take action (Elliot 1991; Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon 2013; Stringer 2014). Participatory action research is "a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems" (Stringer 2014, 8). The methodology of this study consisted of a participatory action research design that was cyclical in nature (Stringer 2014). Through a participatory action research methodology approach, the participants and the first author of this study, the researcher, focused on creating an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterix college students at San Diego State University.

In order to meet the purpose of this study, the following four objectives were implemented: (1) Identify the challenges that Transfronterix college students experience in their efforts to achieve student success; (2) Identify specific programs and services that

would support Transfronterix college students in facing the challenges they experience; (3) Identify recommendations from higher education allies on how to implement programs and services focusing on the success of Transfronterix college students; and (4) Engage Transfronterix college students in the beginning process of implementing institutional change towards on-campus inclusion for the Transfronterix student population through student-led grassroots initiatives. The objectives of this study were implemented through participatory action research methodology.

In participatory action research, the researcher is significantly involved in the change making process. As such, the first author of this study was engaged in all activities that were focused on creating an inclusive environment for Transfronterix students at SDSU. It is also noteworthy to mention that the first author is a Transfronteriza doctoral candidate. She was born in Los Angeles, CA and has lived a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region most of her life. Her transborder background has significantly influenced her research and practice to foster the equity and inclusion of Transfronterix students in higher education institutions. Since the beginning of this study, as president of the student organization founded through this research, she has been intensely invested in organizing grassroots student-led change initiatives to create inclusive campus environments for Transfronterix students in higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. A participatory action research methodology has been instrumental in the change process for inclusive campus environments by creating initiatives, programs and services for Transfronterix college students lead by Transfronterix college students.

This study was conducted at San Diego State University (SDSU). This higher education institution was selected due to its close proximity to the San Diego-Tijuana international border. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, they were either assigned or chose pseudonyms in order to remain anonymous. A total of 15 stakeholders participated in this study: 11 Transfronterix college students (7 male, 4 female), 18 to 32 years of age, and four faculty and higher education professional allies participated in this study. Nine participants were undergraduates, one participant was a masters student and another participant was a doctoral student. All participants self-identified as U.S.-citizens, 10 participants identified as Mexican-American and one participant identified as White. The 10 participants who identified as Mexican-American were proficient in both English and Spanish and the one participant who identified, as White was proficient in English and beginner in Spanish. All of the participants lived a transborder lifestyle in the San Diego-Tijuana border region and crossed the international border approximately three to seven days per week. Additionally, a total of four university faculty members and one university professional staff member participated in this study through one-on-one interviews. The student participants of this study identified the faculty and staff members as allies. Students identified the faculty and staff members as allies based on their understanding and empathy about their experiences as Transfronterix students. It is noteworthy to mention that three of the allies also identified culturally as Transfronterix.

The data of this participatory action research study was collected through a cyclical approach in five different phases consisting of one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The data collection and analysis followed Elliott's (1991) scheme of an action research spiral and Padilla et al. (1996) unfolding matrix dialogical qualitative data acquisition

and analysis technique. The purpose of Padilla's et al. (1996) unfolding matrix is to uncover the barriers students of color face in their journey to achieve academic success in higher education, by beginning a focus group with an empty data collection matrix that is filled out collectively by the researcher and participants. This technique was used to create a conceptual model that illustrated the challenges Transfronterix college students faced and the strategies and techniques that they identified as needed to create an inclusive campus environment for this student population. The conceptual model that was created through the unfolding matrix was used to analyze the transcribed focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The first author of this study analyzed the interviews and focus groups through inductive coding (Thomas 2006) by using the conceptual model created by the students, that emerged from the focused groups and one-on-one interviews as the themes of this study.

Elliot's (1991) scheme of action research was used throughout this study as a guideline for data collection, analysis and collectively implementing institutional change at SDSU. The themes developed through inductive coding were analyzed further through the following five phases of action research (Elliot 1991): (1) Identifying and clarifying the general idea; (2) Reconnaissance; (3) Constructing the general plan; (4) Developing the next action steps and (5) Implementing the next action steps. Across the five research phases, the following themes were revealed based upon the inductive codes identified by the participants and researchers: (1) Challenges Faced by Transfronterix College Students, (2) On-Campus and Off-campus Strategies Used by Students to Overcome Challenges, (3) Students' Advice to Campus Leaders, (4) Faculty and Education Professionals as Transfronterix Student Allies, (5) Change Through Student-Led Grassroots Efforts, (6) Moving Forward With the Vision of Creating a Transfronterix Student Organization, and (7) Establishing a Transfronterix Student Organization. The data collection, analysis and findings of this study are laid out in more detail through the following themes and subthemes in the section below.

The following five participatory action research phases illustrate a two-year trajectory towards implementing an inclusive campus environment through Transfronterix student-led grassroots initiatives. Data collection for phases one through four took place in 2015 and data collection for phase five took place in 2017. The change making process began in April 2015 and participants of this study achieved institutional change in February 2017 through the implementation of the Transfronterix Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at SDSU. The findings are further illustrated in the following sections through the voices of the participants.

Findings

Identifying Challenges Faced by Transfronterix College Students and Clarifying the General Idea

Elliott (1991) refers to the "general idea" (p.81) as stakeholders' current state of affairs or situation they wish to improve or change. In order to create an understanding about on-campus and off-campus experiences of Transfronterix students, during the first phase of data collection, participants reflected on the challenges they encountered and the on-campus and off-campus resources that could help overcome the challenges they faced.

Exploring the challenges they have experienced allowed them to reflect on the conditions that need to be improved at SDSU in order to create an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterizx students. The student participants identified various significant on-campus and off-campus challenges that informed the overall action plan. Additionally, identifying potential on-campus and off-campus resources that they could utilize to overcome the challenges they faced allowed participants to brainstorm solutions that also informed the overall action plan.

The first challenge identified by the participants was the on-campus residency requirements not acknowledging their transborder interactions, culture and identities. Students explained that a major factor that created an unwelcoming campus environment for Transfronterizx students was the lack of acknowledgment of their transborder experiences in higher education institutions' residency policy requirements in California. A common question in the California residency requirements is, "What do you regard as your permanent home?" This a simple question for non-Transfronterizx students, however, for Transfronterizx students who live in both cities, states and nations – The U.S. and Mexico – this is complicated question to answer that excludes their transborder interactions, ties, culture and identity. Not meeting the simple requirement for this question, that is to only have a permanent home in California, categorizes student as non-residents. Participants explained that higher education policies on residency requirements only acknowledged the experiences of students who have one primary residency and that their transborder experiences did not fit that description because they lived in two locations – San Diego and Tijuana. Student's stated that oftentimes they were seen as foreign students due to higher education residency policy requirements, despite being U.S.-citizens. The following focus group participant illustrated how his transborder living arrangements set him and other students in a state of limbo when trying to follow higher education residency policy requirements.

Ok, we are U.S.-citizens, we stay here for 12 h, we go back to Mexico, sleep and eat and then we come back. We are living here part-time or almost full-time, and then, over there [Mexico] part-time, and just because I do this, it doesn't mean that I am foreign and that I come from a different country. I am still a U.S.-citizen, but they will not see it like that.
–Mike, Focus group # 1

All focus group participants agreed that, as a result of residency policy requirements, not acknowledging students' transborder experiences triggered many other on-campus challenges for them. For example, students explained that, because residency policies were incongruent with their transborder lifestyle, students were afraid to speak openly on campus about their transborder culture and identity. During the focus group, participants explained the significance of implementing policies and practices that reflected their experiences at higher education institutions near the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Similar to their perceptions on how their experiences were not reflected in higher education residency policies, students also stated that there were no programs or services that focused on their experiences as *Transfronterizx* college students on-campus. Some students further elaborated on how they perceived a tense campus climate towards *Transfronterizx* students and how this negatively influenced their ability to interact with others like them on-campus. During a one-on-one interview, Kevin explained:

I know other students who are Transfronterixs, but we don't really talk about it much. I feel like it has this negative connotation, just because of the fact that it implies politics, policy and many more issues. But I feel that this is good, this is something that affects me deeply; this is something that has a great impact on our personality, the way we think. -Kevin, one-on-one interview

Kevin's thoughts further illustrate the significance that his transborder interactions had on his development. His thoughts emphasize how the institution's policies do not acknowledge Transfronterix students' as belonging to both nations – the United States and Mexico. This invisibility marginalized and excluded them from being able to be open about their identity at the university. Kevin's thoughts shed light to how this form of marginalization negatively affected his relationship with his Transfronterix peers on campus and his interpersonal development in higher education.

The participants mentioned one possibility to discuss their Transfronterix experiences and identity within the university institution. These were the courses offered in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. Participants discussed how the lack of recognition of the transborder culture and experiences was also reflected in the courses that were offered in their Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, and they stated their frustration as they explained that the only few courses that were offered about the U.S.-Mexico transborder phenomenon were the first courses to be eliminated when the institution experienced budget cuts. Luis explained how these courses were significant in fostering a positive cultural identity development in relation to his daily transborder experiences and he voiced frustration about the courses being cut due to budget cuts.

Thanks to education, I was able to understand the transborder phenomena ... you become aware of where you are and why you're here ... You're building your own definition about yourself. Right now, I'm not as conflicted as I was when I was like 12 or 15 years old, or even 18 years old. Now, it's more like I know my place in the global and local community and what I'm going to do right now ... But, at the same time, courses on transborder studies, when there are budget cuts, the administration just shuts them down instead of just encouraging them with economic support ... -Luis, focus group #1

From among the focus group participants, Luis was the only student who had taken a transborder studies course at SDSU. Another focus group participant stated: "I wish I had known about that class," and the rest of the participants felt the same way. Overall, these findings emphasize the need to validate students' ethnic and cultural identities in higher education institutions in order to create a positive on-campus sense of belonging and inclusive campus environments for students (Hurtado et al. 1999; Rendon, Garcia, and Person 2004; Strayhorn 2012). Moreover, the findings reveal the need for courses relevant to Transfronterix students' identity, culture and diverse transborder interactions.

Another significant challenge students identified was lack of time to respond to all of the demands required of them commuting back and forth across the U.S.-Mexican border. Students encountered long wait times spent at both the U.S.-Mexico international border and the time they spent commuting to and from San Diego and Tijuana. Melissa described her typical transborder commute, "back and forth that is four hours every day. If I do the math, in a year it's more than three weeks." Most participants agreed that this was a typical experience for students who lived a transborder lifestyle. They explained that lack of time negatively affected many areas of their lives, such as feeling "fatigued" most of the time and their ability to spend time to achieve their academic success. Luis explained how

it was difficult for him to get involved in leadership opportunities at SDSU due to the lack of sufficient time he experienced as a result of the transborder commute:

During college I wanted to do more stuff, I wanted to do something other than just go to school and work, my last year I was working and going to school, but I wanted to join clubs or something ... I wanted to expand my resume, but it was not possible for me to just add, because most of my time was spent crossing the border ... -Luis, focus group #1

Luis's reflection also highlights the need for resources and space relevant at SDSU for Transfronterix students. Prior to the establishment of the student organization that was founded through this study at SDSU, there were no programs focused on the experiences of Transfronterix students. Student involvement in higher education institutions through programs relevant to their demographics, backgrounds and experiences is directly related to their academic success (Astin 1985).

The challenges participants identified were issues they would like to change at SDSU to improve the college experiences of Transfronterix students' on-campus. The participants in the study were asked about on-campus and off-campus resources that could help them overcome the challenges they identified. This reflection allowed students to explore the current resources available to them to implement change at SDSU. Students identified the following resources: (a) Transfronterix students' have faculty allies, (b) there is untapped peer-support, and (c) there are underused online social media resources.

Getting Reconnaissance and Planning Action Steps

Elliott (1991) explains that in the reconnaissance phase of action research, stakeholders need to "describe as fully as possible the nature of the situation" they want to improve or change (p.82). To engage Transfronterix students in reconnaissance they were asked: *What advice would you give campus leaders in order to help other students who live a transborder lifestyle overcome these challenges?* Participants identified eight programs, services and policies that they would like to see created and/or changed in order to create an inclusive campus environment at SDSU for Transfronterix students: (a) Revision of the university residency requirement policy to include students transborder experiences; (b) Transfronterix student awareness on-campus; (c) Shuttle transportation and carpooling services; (d) More online classes, programs and services; (e) Creating a student organization; (f) Creating a virtual network of allies; (g) Peer-mentor program and (j) Cultural competency trainings for faculty and staff. Students explained that these services would improve the campus climate for Transfronterix students by educating the campus community and implementing programs and policies focused on their unique experiences.

Elliott (1991) explains that the reconnaissance phase of action research is also a time of "critical analysis of the context in which" (p. 82) the issues that stakeholders are trying to change arise through brainstorming and hypothesis testing. In an effort to brainstorm and test the advice students gave to campus leaders, faculty and education professionals whom students identified as allies during their first focus group were interviewed. These faculty allies received important information from the student participants and generously donated their time to engage with the needs of the Transfronterix students. The allies who participated in this study were not compensated for their time. All four allies

interviewed were aware of the Transborder culture, understood the challenges that students faced and served as advocates for students. Additionally, the allies were aware of the context that students encountered in SDSU and, as a result, they were able to share insight with students on how they could strategically engage in the change process on-campus. Not all of the advice that allies elaborated on was implemented in the action phase of this study. However, their insight significantly fostered students' decisions to implement change through student-led grassroots initiatives.

Creating a General Plan

The third phase of this study was focused on creating a general action plan to initiate change at SDSU in order to create an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterix students. We developed a general action plan through a third phase of data collection consisting of a Transfronterix student focus group and one-on-one interviews. According to Elliott (1991), a "general plan of action should contain a statement of the factors one is going to change or modify in order to improve the situation, and the actions that one will undertake in this direction" (p.84). To generate the action plan, the participants and first author of this study reviewed the findings from phases one and two.

The most significant insights the students learned from reflecting on the findings from phases one and two were the allies' recommendations to students on implementing change through student-led grassroots efforts by creating a Facebook social media page, initiating conferences focused on the experiences of transborder students, and creating a visible network of allies online. Students were asked to reflect further on the general planning process by discussing the following question: *If you could implement one or two of the recommendations and advice given by you and the professionals, which programs or services would you implement and what would they look like?* Informed by their new understanding of creating change through student-led grassroots efforts students collectively agreed that the most effective way to create change on campus was through a Transfronterix student organization.

Developing the Next Action Steps

In this phase of action research, students demonstrated a sense of empowerment and critical consciousness (Freire 1970), by demonstrating a sense of duty towards implementing institutional change at SDSU. They emphasized an awareness that, "revolutionary leaders cannot think without the people, nor for the people, but only with the people" (Freire 1970, 128). The Transfronterix students came to believe that change for creating an inclusive campus environment at SDSU for Transfronterix students could only be implemented by themselves. In a second student focus group, Luis further described this sense of critical consciousness: "The cultural competency of politicians and policy makers needs to change in order for the big ideas to happen. But if not, then, it has to be the students that take action like organizing carpooling and Facebook ..." Students envisioned creating a student organization where they could implement the practices, programs and resources that they identified in the previous phases of this study. During a one-on-one interview Mike explained: "The cultural competence could occur in a club ... Once

those clubs are formed, you could have those mentors collaborate amongst each other and set up cultural competence training for faculty and staff.”

Elliott (1991, 85) explains that in the process of “developing next action steps,” stakeholders decide exactly what courses of action outlined in the general plan they are going to take next. Once students identified that a student organization would be the best approach to implement change towards creating an inclusive campus environment through a focus group and one-on-one interviews, the participants began to brainstorm ideas on how to implement the programs and services that they identified in the previous phases. Padilla’s et al. (1996) unfolding matrix was used to guide the students to identify which programs, policies and practices they could implement through the student organization. The participants identified the following guidelines, programs and practices for their student organization: (a) inclusive student organization, (b) sensitivity about students coming out as Transfronterizx, (c) educate the campus community about the transborder culture, (d) cultural competency trainings, (e) a place where students can express their feelings about living a transborder lifestyle, (f) opportunities for students to meet and socialize, and (g) student, faculty and staff ally initiatives. Participants explained that the student organization would be a place of resources that students could obtain in order to “survive” the college experience focused on their unique experiences as Transfronterizx students.

Implementing the Action Steps and Establishing a Transfronterizx Students Organization

Elliott (1991, 76) explains that, “it may take some time to succeed in course of action” and the process might take a “change in the behavior of all stakeholders.” The length of time was a significant factor in the implementation process. Implementation took place across three timelines. First, a Facebook group dedicated to Transfronterizx college students was created during the second data collection phase in 2015. The purpose statement of the Facebook group read as follows: “The purpose of this group is to create a virtual community among Transfronterizx college students, recent graduates and allies by making relevant topics significant to the Transfronterizx community in the San Diego-Tijuana border region.” The Facebook group page served two objectives: The participants of this study and other Transfronterizx college students were able to provide resources online to one another by sharing events, books and scholarships focused on U.S.-Mexico transborder communities. The Transfronterizx Facebook group page also served as a key resource for recruiting members for the student organization.

During 2016 Jesus Ortiz, a participant from this study, and Vanessa Falcón Orta, the first author of this study focused on recruiting members for the student organization and in 2017, they implemented the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) at SDSU. Vanessa served as Founding President and Jesus served as Collaborative Founding Member for TASO. The Transfronterizx students who participated in the first phases of this action research study graduated in 2017. However, the insights they shared served as key objectives towards establishing a student organization focused on creating an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterizx college students. The mission of TASO was developed with the participants of this study and it reads as following:

The mission of the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) is to create an inclusive campus environment for SDSU students who live a transborder lifestyle in the U.S.-Mexico border region. TASO is focused on providing validating experiences to SDSU students who live a transborder lifestyle by implementing activities, services and programs relevant to their transborder experiences, identity and culture. TASO is a culturally based student organization designed to build community among SDSU students who live a transborder lifestyle in the U.S.-Mexico border region and allies.

Since 2017, TASO has been an officially approved and recognized student organization at SDSU dedicated to its mission of creating an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterizx students at SDSU and neighboring higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Through TASO's mission, Transfronterizx students have implemented all of the programs, services and practices that they identified in phase four of this study.

Currently, a total of 30 Transfronterizx college students, including the first author of this study, have participated as members and associated members of TASO and most members have served in leadership roles in the student organization. During meetings language inclusiveness is welcomed and members are encouraged to speak in the language that they feel most comfortable with; as a result, meetings are conducted in English, Spanish and Spanglish. TASO meetings and events take place on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico Border – San Diego and Tijuana, as well as virtually. TASO members have temporary reserved spaces for meetings and events at SDSU. TASO members do not have a designated space in Tijuana, however, they host their meetings and events in public spaces, such as cafes and community centers. Data collection in this phase took place soon after TASO was founded between February and March, 2017. Five members of TASO agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews and they shared insights about their experiences in the student organization. Some of the most prevalent themes they shared from their experiences in the student organization were having a safe space, a sense of validation and a sense of community on-campus.

Having a safe space to meet other Transfronterizx students and socialize with them was very timely, as the Transfronterizx Alliance Student Organization (TASO) was implemented in February 2017; coincidentally, just a few weeks after the 2017 presidential inauguration of Donald Trump. During the one-on-one interviews, the participants discussed challenges they experienced as a result of the climate they faced under the Trump era and how TASO provided a safe space to "heal" from those challenges. Kevin explained, "There are people in our political climate that I feel are hurtful. There are people who have a negative idea of people like me, of what we represent." Kevin further discussed the significance of having a space where he could talk with other Transfronterizx students about the challenges they experienced under the Trump era.

... Healing souls ... at least let's talk about it and heal each other. Just talk about it amongst ourselves, those of us that are living it ... If we can just come together and come to the meetings, that's a huge thing for me. Like the healing of souls, every one, like coming out. Just the notion of borders has a negative connotation. There are just so many negative attributes to the border issue. The Trump era, it's just very bad.

Alejandro discussed why TASO served as a safe space for Transfronterizx students: "Creating that space for me is really important. Creating that space of trust, just a space of healing, that safe space where you can come in and basically talk freely without

being judged, or looked at differently. That space has just been so crucial.” Similar to Kevin, Alejandro also described TASO as a safe space for healing from the perpetuation of stereotypes that he and other transborder students face during the current Trump era.

I feel like sometimes, through rhetoric, through myths, and through actions that society has implemented or said, there is a certain kind of oppression or certain kind of stereotype, and what comes with a stereotype? There comes a lot of oppression, there comes a lot of unjust labels, so I feel like healing this is more of a process, an internal process to get rid of those labels, those comments that you hear from society, and just being able to acknowledge them, understand them, where they come from, and be okay with them, and change the whole thing.

Alejandro’s insightful thoughts and feelings demonstrate how damaging stereotypes are and the significance of having a safe space where to begin challenging these stereotypes and negative rhetoric that is all pervasive in the political landscape in the U.S. Participants also described the importance of officially establishing a student organization for Transfronterix students at this point in history in order to challenge the negative climate that Transfronterix students are experiencing under the Trump era. Students also explained that the “officiality” of the student organization provided them with a space where they felt “validated” on-campus. Participants described TASO as a place on campus where they felt validated as Transfronterix students for the first time. They also illustrated an awareness of the political challenges of initiating a student organization focused on Transfronterix students and how TASO mirrored past grassroots movements of students of color in U.S. higher education history. For example, Mar described how being part of TASO was similar to Chicano and Chicana students’ efforts to create a sense of validation in higher education institutions in the U.S.

Every time that I walk into the meeting, or I know that I’m part of this organization, I feel like this is how our Chicano identity came out, like how it was finally validated. You had a movement like Chicanismo and Chicano studies. So why can’t there be transborder studies? Why can’t we not have a transborder movement? I see a parallel between them and how we are moving forward ... I took Chicano studies and I feel very passionate about the topics, but I didn’t feel like they were speaking about me, until these things, like the organization ...

Participants described the importance of creating TASO in order to validate Transfronterix students’ identities on-campus, while also being mindful of the climate that Transfronterix students faced. For example, Kevin’s reflection illustrated the juxtaposition between feeling joyful about initiating an organization focused on Transfronterix students, while also being aware that being open about being a Transfronterix student through TASO might expose him and his peers to racism. Kevin explained how he felt about TASO:

Joyful! I’m so happy. There was nothing before, now there is something. That brings great joy to me. Obviously, I feel the conscious part of me telling myself that I have to be aware ... I know there are people out there that really have harsh feelings against me, just because of this experience, just because I cross the border, just because I’m Mexican, just because I’m brown. I’m aware of that. I recognize it. In a sense, I’m very happy it’s out there, but I know I have to act aware, not only for me, but for other people too.

Kevin's reflection also illustrated how TASO provided him with a sense of validation on-campus that he had not experienced before its establishment. Alejandro further illustrated the significance of validating students' transborder identity on-campus:

... I feel that with the space and with the club, if we validated those students' experiences, they are going to be more comfortable in school and they're going to be able to perform better. Because they are going to feel like someone validated their experience, someone said, "You know what? Being Transfronterix is awesome." So they are going to feel proud of being validated here on campus.

Alejandro's thoughts reveal how he believed that a sense of validation could empower transborder students to embrace their identity. Moreover, he believed that through validation, students could be empowered and overcome stigma they might face. Participants were also able to create a sense of community among each other through TASO. The connections and community that they built with one another also enriched their student experiences on campus and helped them face on-campus and off-campus challenges.

Similar to how participants expressed experiencing a sense of validation through TASO on campus for the first time, they also expressed having the opportunity to build a sense of community among Transfronterix students through TASO for the first time as well. Some participants expressed "lacking a sense of community" prior to their experiences at TASO. Mar recalled,

I felt like I was lacking a sense of community within the school, so I think TASO has really served that purpose ... I feel that it has a very special element which is that it's Transfronterix. I mean, the fact that we meet in Tijuana and we meet here is like, "Oh, my God! This just fits perfectly with my lifestyle, because I'm in both places." I've never been able to be part of a community that really goes well with my way of how I go about every day, so I think it has been very, very positive in that sense.

Participants explained that the sense of community they established through TASO helped them to build a network of support that they could rely on to face challenges they experienced as Transfronterix students. For some participants, having a community on-campus of Transfronterix students who were understanding of the challenges they faced made the obstacles they encountered as Transfronterix students more bearable. Sandra reflected on this idea, "Being transborder isn't easy. It's pretty exhausting ... So to have TASO, to be able to wave to other people on campus who know the feeling is really cool: the connection, the network, the community."

Similar to Sandra, most participants found the transborder commute to be challenging. As a result, some participants relied on the community network that they built in TASO to support each other through the transborder commute. Logan explained, "In the club we all help each other. Like in my case, Sandra gives me a ride to TJ [Tijuana], so I think that's pretty awesome." Logan further explained how he was able to dedicate more time to his studies as a result of saving time by carpooling with Sandra.

Directly relating to their academic success, some participants were able to identify role models and mentors within the student organization that positively influenced their academic aspirations. For example, Logan explained:

Now I met people who are going through the same things that I'm going through. For example Alejandro, I never thought that he was like a Transfronterix student or person who goes to TJ and comes back to school and who is also working in school. I think he's

a master's student, right? So that's an example of like in my case. So if he can do it, I can do it too. I want to be just like that, being a master's student and also like commute, being able to go to TJ and school the same day. I think it's pretty awesome to hang out with people who are just like me ...

Logan further elaborated on how TASO members "inspired" him to persist through the challenges he faced as a Transfronterizx student and to graduate with a bachelor's degree and pursue graduate studies. TASO members and associated members ranged from community college students to doctoral students; although they were academically diverse they shared a deep bond as Transfronterizx people. As a result, they understood each other's virtues and challenges as Transfronterizx students and mentored, supported and encouraged each other through their higher education journeys. TASO's Transfronterizx Student Peer Mentor Program helped facilitate mentorship between Transfronterizx students and provided a structured setting for students to build community amongst each other.

As TASO's founding president, the first author and researcher of this study served a significant role in establishing a safe space, a sense of validation and a sense of community in this student organization. Transfronteriza from the San Diego-Tijuana border region, she was in tune with the challenges Transfronterizx students faced and possessed the linguistic and cultural skills to facilitate strategies that worked for students in order to create an inclusive and equitable space for them at TASO. For example, she was a native speaker in English, Spanish and Spanglish and socially and culturally navigated with frequency between San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. As a result, she successfully organized meetings and events on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, and encouraged students to serve in leadership roles. Likewise, she promoted language inclusiveness by facilitating meetings in English, Spanish and Spanglish and encouraged students to speak in the languages that they felt most comfortable with. Consequently, translanguaging was a common practice during TASO meetings.

Another common practice was the use of digital technology during TASO meetings and events, which allowed students to attend meetings and engage in events virtually. Vanessa explained, "Through the use of digital technology, we are virtually eliminating the challenges experienced through the transborder commute and the U.S.-Mexico border by providing students who cannot physically attend meetings the opportunity to engage online." Part of TASO's organizational culture was to host meetings and events on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, the use of Google Hangout and the translanguaging between English, Spanish and Spanglish. These organizational norms were essential towards establishing a safe space, a sense of validation and a sense of community among Transfronterizx students in TASO.

Conclusions

The data collection and publication of this study took place during a hostile political time at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands when the U.S. presidency of Donald Trump called for the construction of a larger wall between the U.S. and Mexico. At a time when the U.S. presidency is focused on creating a larger barrier between the U.S. and Mexico, Transfronterizx youth are dedicated to building bridges between both nations through unity and solidarity amongst one-another and marginalized communities in the U.S.-Mexico

borderlands. Since the inception of this study and establishment of TASO, Transfronterix students have made significant strides towards creating an inclusive campus environment for Transfronterix students at SDSU. Beyond a student organization, TASO is a student-led grassroots movement for the visibility, equity and inclusion of Transfronterix students in higher education institutions in San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. Through the methodology of participatory action research, the participants of this study and other Transfronterix college students have reshaped the transborder context in the San Diego-Tijuana border region and have made systematic institutional changes at SDSU and neighboring higher education institutions in the region.

Significant changes towards creating inclusive campus environments for diverse student populations in higher education institutions in the U.S. have been implemented through grassroots student-led movements (Rhoads, Buenavista, and Maldonado 2004). Similarly, through student-led grassroots initiatives, TASO has changed and reshaped the campus climate at SDSU for Transfronterix students by creating awareness, inclusion, validation, safe spaces and community for this student population. Initiatives that TASO implemented at SDSU are the Transborder Studies Lecture Series, the Transfronterix Student Peer Mentor Program, the Transborder Student Ally Program, and solidarity support efforts with refugees and asylum seekers living in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. These initiatives are based at SDSU, however, they have also served Transfronterix students in neighboring higher education institutions in San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. Particularly, the Transborder Student Ally Program (TSAP) was first piloted through TASO in the spring of 2018 and became a funded program at SDSU in the spring of 2019. TSAP is focused on creating a visible network of culturally competent allies in higher education institutions, high schools and communities in the San Diego-Tijuana border region by educating faculty, staff, teachers, students and community leaders about the Transfronterix student population. More than a student organization, through participatory action research, this study has ignited a grassroots student-led movement for the social justice of Transfronterix students in higher education institutions in the San Diego-Tijuana border region, reshaping the U.S.-Mexico transborder context.

Young people have the power to shape borders and borderlands through their agency and interactions (Brambilla 2015; Spyrou and Christou 2014; Venken 2017). This study has thereby demonstrated that young people have the power to shape the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Transfronterix people are significant actors in the creation of the U.S.-Mexico transborder context (Ojeda 2005, 2009; Martinez 1994). Evident in the findings of this study, are Transfronterix college students' power to reshape the U.S.-Mexico transborder context by changing higher education institutions to become more inclusive and equitable spaces for the Transfronterix student population in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. Significant institutional changes have been made through Transfronterix student-led grassroots initiatives that have positively influenced the lives of college students in the San Diego-Tijuana border region. In future years to come, the sustainability of TASO is at risk as students graduate. As a result, to advance the success of this student population at SDSU, faculty and student affairs educators should support the vitality of this student organization.

Overall, Similar efforts need to be implemented through top-down leadership initiatives by formal leaders throughout the P- 12, postsecondary and higher education pipeline in education institutions along the U.S.-Mexico border regions to foster the learning and

development of Transfronterix students from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In this process, educators should create leadership initiatives that afford students with opportunities to apply their skills as Transfronterix people and provide support for the challenges students face through the ever-changing political climate at the U.S.-Mexico transborder context. Transfronterix youth are an immense asset for the improvement of communities and institutions along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands; as a result, it is paramount for our future that policy makers and education leaders at the U.S.-Mexico border regions create policies and practices focused on fostering the learning and development of this student population.

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