

How the „Zillertaler Trachtenwelt“ became a border MATERIALIZATION OF BORDER PROCESSES AT THE BRENNER IN TYROL

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Recent research in the „Border Studies“ focuses on social theories dealing with the boundlessness of borders. A focus away from geographically fixed „borderlands“ and issues on bounded communities direct the attention towards limited access to state resources (cf. Bendixsen 2016, Ticktin 2011, Fassin 2005). Some approaches take a closer look towards the workings of the border in terms of its materiality (McGuire 2013), its eventness (Kaiser 2012) or its localization (Navaro- Yashin 2012). Schatzki formulates a critique concerning several social theories, which „do not take materiality into account“ (2010: X). Based on an observation, I made during my field research in the Austrian-Italian border region Brenner/Brennero, I tackle this issue raised by Schatzki. A common theme during my stay was the notion of local actors, that the border is not existent. This is due to its physical connotations that do not consider practices as part of an infrastructure limiting undocumented access into the country (Austria). By taking ‚infrastructure‘ as a model of analysis I am focusing on border as a „praxis-arrangement nexus“ (Schatzki 2010). This includes materiality and practices, as well as the surrounding geography. My argument unfolds upon an observation at the dividing state line in the town Brenner/Brennero, where a black, young man tried to get south. He was stopped by Italian soldiers and later on arrested by the Austrian police. The situation offers a thorough perspective on the embeddedness of border within space and time, and the interplay of materiality, surroundings and practices.

Marlene Persch is a MA student in social anthropology at the university of Vienna. In Summer 2017 she did some research in the border region between Austria and Italy, in Brenner/Brennero. She is currently working on her master thesis which is dealing with resocialisation and reintegration practices in the Maximum Security Prison Nsawam in Ghana. Her main interest lies in an Anthropology of the state from a relational perspective. State institutions such as border control or state actors in the prison allow for an analysis „at the heart of the state“ (Fassin 2015).

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