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Imaginaries ready for use: Framings of the bordered intersectionalised everyday provided by the EU's sectoral policies

Hans-Joachim Bürkner

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space, Flakenstr. 29–31, 15537 Erkner, Germany

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1. Introduction

Everyday bordering practices have rarely been addressed by sectoral policies of the European Union. To many EU citizens, this appears to be natural. Brussels is supposed to deliver policies based on ultimate values, norms and a sense of common wealth, while the small lives unfolding at local levels remain detached from this political superstructure. Even the recent refugee & immigration crisis seems to relate more to top-down political decisions, rather than citizens' involvement. Meanwhile political declarations and media representations of sectoral EU and national policies have reached a temporary peak of aloofness (Boswell, 2015). By default they are garnished with citations of human rights, freedom of speech, the right to free mobility, tolerance, peace, democracy, and other desirable ideals. Big imaginaries prevail while references to the everyday are in the retreat.

However, a closer look at recent media coverage of topical policy issues, such as contested European borders, immediately relativizes this impression. It reveals that European policies do intervene and shape everyday lives to an extent which, however, has hardly been recognised by a larger public. In particular this applies to mobile borders that migrants and other people virtually carry around with them, waiting to be activated through surveillance, proliferating occasions for personal identity checks, or the random grip of authorities and private firms on personal data (see the account of expanding everyday surveillance in the UK given by Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, & Cassidy, 2017; also: Amilhat-Szary & Giraut, 2015; Häkli, 2015). It also pertains to urban social boundaries shaped by residents' different legal status, citizenship, socio-economic disparities, ethnicity, race, gender and age. Manifold overlays and intersections of these dimensions of inequality do not just emerge by chance. They are co-created by social practices and policies at national and EU levels which in one way or another refer to borders, thereby defining important aspects of the social inclusion or exclusion of EU residents. These policies may have intended, as well as unintended, effects on the social positioning of individuals.

Against this backdrop the initial impression that everyday life, operational policies and general declarations of philosophical truisms might not interact, is certainly superficial. While it is difficult to prove empirically that normative presets affect the everyday it is nevertheless unlikely that the massive normative backlog produced by EU bodies and politicians would remain without any echo in local policy-making and social practice. The assumption which informs this paper is that they have a potential framing function for everyday life which, however, is not ostensible. It has to be extracted from political texts and the particular rhetorics they establish. Such framing, and the potentialities it creates, will be addressed in the following discussion by introducing an analytical focus on social and spatial imaginaries. These imaginaries are understood here as important elements of political communication which exemplify and legitimize political aims and recommendations. They are elementary parts of underlying messages sent from speakers of the EU's political class to a wider European audience. Once received by its addressees, they may unfold in a life of their own, triggering consent, contestation or indifference among the local agents involved.

The point of analytical interest which this paper addresses is not about the concrete linkages which might be traced between policies and the everyday, nor does it offer a methodology that is able to empirically grasp if and how political framings inform practices. Instead, the paper focuses on the kind of guidance for everyday practice given by the EU's political agenda. More specifically, it raises the question of how EU policies reveal basic orientations and guidelines which may potentially inform everyday intersectional practices of bordering. Drawing upon close readings of basic documents of relevant sectoral EU policies, in particular gender, migration and security policies, the paper analyzes the imaginaries inherent to relevant framings. Understanding and reflecting the

E-mail address: hans-joachim.buerkner@leibniz-irs.de.

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imaginaries tied to political frames will reveal the particular quality of the EU's conceptual referencing of the everyday and the assumed modes of intersectionality it entails. In this respect this paper contributes to the further elaboration of the theoretical approach of situated intersectionality (Yuval-Davis, 2014). It seeks to enhance the scope of this approach by adding some considerations about the significance of normative, institutionalised and authoritative presets that potentially inform local practice.

In the following sections the theoretical implications of the terms "intersectionality", "imaginaries" and "framing" will be discussed. The subsequent empirical part aims to identify dominant imaginaries within EU-level policy discourse, as represented in a selection of policy documents of different sectoral origin. Extracted from focal documents of gender policy, migration/asylum policy, and security policy, these imaginaries will be scrutinised for their inherent logics and the political guidance they are supposed to provide. It will be shown in which way imaginaries interact with particular frames when related to bordering and intersectionality.

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1. Situated intersectionality and bordering

Over the past 15 years intersectionality has become the key concept in gender studies (Anthias, 2013; Hancock, 2007). It has been responsible for a widening debate on the political relevance of gender-related identity politics and the future significance of multidimensional manifestations of inequality. A general understanding of intersectionality as a heterogeneous array of overlaying dimensions of inequality has also inspired scholars in other fields of social studies to revise traditional concepts of social inequality (Bürkner, 2012; Davis, 2008a; Yuval-Davis, 2006). It offers enhanced readings of well-established subjects of social inquiry, such as migration, the inclusion/exclusion of minorities or social identity building. This opening up has been contested, as the identity turn in gender studies implied the gradual marginalization of what Leslie McCall named inter-categorical approaches (McCall, 2005). These had originally been based on the idea that pre-established social categories, such as class, race, and gender, produce a limited and relatively stable variety of axes of inequality which shape subjective experience (see Kimberlé Crenshaw's pioneering concept; Crenshaw, 1989). According to McCall's differentiation, identity issues and a growing political awareness of the emergence of heterogeneous forms of intersectionality now require intra-categorical approaches to cope with increasing social complexity. These approaches address the social construction of difference as occurring within the range of flexible categories (Davis, 2008b; McCall, 2005) or also outside any concept of categories (Knapp, 2005).

Meanwhile the juxtaposition between inter-categorical and intra-categorical approaches has been criticised as being artificial and obnoxious of their complementarity (Yuval-Davis, 2015: 640). Hence there have been endeavours to reconcile both perspectives. For one, there has been a notable proposal to launch a 'social return' (Winker & Degele, 2009). It opts for the rehabilitation of pre-established social categories and axes, along with a loose focus on inequality created in- and outside of categories, as if occurring 'on the fly'. For another, there is a decided attempt at establishing the notion of situated intersectionality (Yuval-Davis, 2014). It incorporates a socio-spatial dimension, as well as a reconciliation of inter- and intra-categorical gazes, mainly by addressing various positionings which agents experience along socio-economic grids of power and, at the same time, along different "political projects of belonging", such as citizenship, nationalism, religion or cosmopolitanism (Yuval-Davis, 2015: 641).

In this perspective intersectionality is subject to varied, often unpredictable social evaluation, negotiation, bargaining and revision. It comes as part of a dialogical epistemology that fosters analytical thinking in terms of social positioning via social practices, and also of standpoints as generated by situated knowledge (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). Intersectionality thus implies the standpoint-dependent creation, revision and readjustment of difference. This relational view on intersectionality allows for a differentiated analysis of the interaction of the various propositions for dealing with social inequality made by institutional and everyday agents. Moreover it implies a fresh gaze on borders and processes of bordering, understood as the continual social construction of borders by heterogeneous agents (Newman, 2006; van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). On the one hand, it reconceptualizes borders as potential drivers of intersectionality, as evident by the confrontation of inter- and transnational migrants with the control of citizenship, legal status, work permits, etc., at their place of residence or when moving across minor distances (Yuval-Davis, 2014). Bordering obviously triggers the differential legal and political treatment of gender groups, ethnic minorities, age groups (e.g. unaccompanied travelling youth) and groups defined via particular types of migration (labour, flight, displacement, asylum, roving). These divisions interact and intersect with other dimensions of social positioning, as well as with standpoints that the social subjects involved develop through various social practices. Hence there is no room for determinism when reflecting about practices of 'taking the border around'. Although social practice is imbued with the individual and collective 'heritage' of border-crossing (Johnson, 2012; Popescu, 2015), only standpoint and positioning produce fragmented meanings that individually and collectively give variable, context-dependent relevance to such heritage.

Valued against the state of the art in border studies, this approach at first sight seems to reiterate the general statement that "borders are everywhere" (Paasi, 2011, p. 22). However in closer inspection it presents a broader, and at the same time more differentiated, vision of vernacular practices of bordering than initially conceived by mainstream scholars of bordering. In fact, this perspective on situated intersectionality relates to several conceptual approaches which recently contributed to an enhanced understanding of borders: i.e. the concept of borderscapes which focuses on the complexity and multidimensionality of borders, the fluidity of borders beyond territorially fixed 'lines in the sand', and the shifting configurations of heterogeneous social, cultural, political, economic and spatial elements brought together by variable practices of bordering (Brambilla, 2015, p. 3; Brambilla, Laine, Scott, & Bocchi, 2015; Walther & Retaillé, 2015). Moreover it contributes to the concept of the 'vernacularisation' of borders, implying borders as lived experience (Cooper, Perkins, & Rumford, 2014); and to systematic accounts of the continual in-the-becoming of borders within the flux of social practice as given by Johnson and Jones (2014).

2.2. Imaginaries, policy and everyday bordering

The origins of imaginaries have been ascribed to political discourse although they often transcend the field of policy making, referring to broader world views, ideologies and the taken-for-granted of everyday life. One approach to imaginaries has been suggested by Bob Jessop when theorising semiosis occurring within political and economic fields. His approach towards 'cultural political economy' (CPE) (Jessop, 2013; Jessop & Oosterlynck, 2008; Jessop & Sum, 2010; Sum & Jessop, 2013) refers to instituted economic and political relations, and their social embeddings, as the breeding grounds of imaginaries. Basically social imaginaries are

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