

## **BORDER TEMPORALITIES AT THE FRENCH-GERMAN BORDER (1871-1914)**

### **A LABORATORY FOR EXPERIMENTING WITH BORDER REGIMES**

Between 1871 and 1914, the border between France and Germany crystallized so many questions of identity, sovereignty, and geopolitical tensions that Richard Hartshorne considered it the most important boundary in the history of international relations in the Western state system<sup>1</sup>. This border has also served as a laboratory for experimenting with successive border regimes that do not follow the simple pattern of an increasingly tightened border policy. Furthermore, these border regimes have been extended to all Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In many respects, it sowed the seeds of the profound transformations that the European border regimes underwent after the First World War.

In this paper, I want to highlight the different border regimes that succeeded each other on the French-German border at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the study of border practices, discourses and everyday life. For this purpose, I will mobilize the *border1871* database<sup>2</sup>, which records French-German border incidents between 1871 and 1914 mentioned in the archives, and which documents the daily life of inhabitants.

I will focus on the closure policy implemented at the French-German border between 1887 and 1905. Indeed, although the obligation to cross the border with a passport and a visa, as required by the German government – a measure unheard of in nineteenth-century Europe –, and the increase in border controls proved to be a failure, it prefigured a border regime that became common in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I will also pay attention to the concrete application depending on a variety of individual situations, because the regime of nationals was not the same as that of foreigners, and neither was the regime of men as that of women, or the regime of humans as that of non-humans.

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More informations on [www.border1871.eu](http://www.border1871.eu)

Main research topics:

- borders and borderlands (19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries)
- France and Germanic spaces (19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries)
- history of state-building and sovereignty
- history of nation, nationalities and nationalism

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hartshorne, “The Franco-German boundary of 1871”, *World Politics*, 2-2, 1950, p. 209-250.

<sup>2</sup> <https://border1871.eu/database>