

Of being stuck or moving on: border temporalities along the EU's external border in the Western Balkans

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Geopolitical borders have multiple temporal dimensions: Not only do they change over time, they also affect the perception of time of those who live along the border or attempt to cross it. Borders often establish a relational temporal taxonomy according to which those who live across the border are seen as more or less advanced or backward. In their function of control, the temporal dimension of borders is even more obvious: For those trying to cross them, the border can stop, slow down, or even speed up their movements, or keep them in a circular motion. This may simultaneously also affect the self-perception of border crossers and those living in the region.

Using the case study of the EU external border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, this lecture will address the different temporal dimensions of borders and their effects on the self-perceptions of migrants and local inhabitants in an entangled perspective. I argue that it is not only migrants who get stranded due to the securitization of the border and often develop a sense of living in a loop or in a liminal timespace. Also parts of the local population feel stuck, which is related to the impossibility to envision a future, to move forward in life. The relation of feeling stuck in life and being able to move is however not clear-cut. For some local inhabitants, the feeling of being stuck is strengthened by the movements of others leaving or crossing the region, a state which became symptomatic for the Western Balkan border regions, while some migrants who are stopped at the borders and who are physically stuck do not lose their hope, but continue to envision a future somewhere else.

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