TRACES

The second year of TRACES Journal will explore how heritages in/from the margins—be them cultural, social, economic, religious, physical, visible or invisible, real or imagined, locational or relational—can contribute to European integration and cultural cohesion, nurturing a reflexive Europeanisation as a bedrock for a democratic and enlightened public imagination of a European identity.

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Are all border-crossings actually 'ruins in reverse' that, according to Robert Smithson, 'rise into ruin before they are built' because borders themselves are political spaces which are not fixed, but await their inevitable changing or abandoning? This and many other similar questions and issues related to the socio-political and visual aspects of borders and check-points are addressed by both Cristina F. Colombo and Ignacio Evangelista in this issue, entirely dedicated to Evangelista's photographic project *After Schengen*.

Colombo's essay reflects on the complex political poetics of Evangelista's work accompanied by a statement. The journal features a photographic essay pondering the phenomenon of borders in the light of the instable European socio-political and cultural landscape after the Schengen Treaty.

Evangelista and Colombo invest their theoretical and artistic efforts in deconstructing the dichotomic pair control/mobility of movement across borders, while looking at the potentiality for the production of architectural, urbanistic and historic knowledge that could stem from these emptied thresholds. The texts and images included in this issue are a sort of intense conversation on the learning and unlearning from the politically charged 'desiring machines' (Deleuze/Guattari). Once mechanisms to control cross-national movements and intersection of different political systems, with time borders showed their limitations, inevitable contentiousness and obsolescence due to the fast developments of human geogra-

{ foreword }

phy and socio-political and cultural transformations across them. The Schengen Treaty has become a poor and counter-productive metaphor of the impossibility of fixing stable borderlines and preserving strict divisions between nation-states.

What is visually missing in the photographs and was somehow suppressed in the deep memory 'storage' are the long cues, the residency permits, passports, visas, citizenship and refusal stamps. However these and other issues related to the bureaucratic procedures of legal border crossing are still implied and easily imaginable as inevitable psycho-geographies of desired European citizenship and belonging.

Both Evangelista's imagery and Colombo's theoretical reflections aim to reveal and re-enact the invisible patterns which enabled or prevented intersections, criss-crossing, and eventual erasures of borders. The abandoned check-points are thus only silent witnesses: memorials and monuments of national divisions. As with other monuments, however, the mnemonic structure of these spaces is always contentious and manifold: the architectural and other perceivable remnants of the past remind us of the failed policies and promises of free movement and of the attempts to overcome the obstacles and their transience.

— Suzana Milevska

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TRACES #04 — Articles collected through open call for papers and selected with peer review are available at www.traces.polimi.it/journal

Portalet E-F 2011 (cover photo)

Feldkirch-Schellenberg A-FL 2017

He was only five years old when he crossed his first border, the border between France and Switzerland, and he was astonished not to see the red and lilac line that appears on maps.

——**Enrique Vila-Matas**[1]

After Schengen

by Ignacio Evangelista (Artist's Statement)

The *After Schengen* photography series portrays old border crossing points between different States in Europe. After the Schengen Agreement, most checkpoints remain abandoned and out of service. They allow us to gaze at the past and raise questions today that the EU project is being severely challenged.

Prior the Schengen Treaty, these places delimited territories where travellers had to stop and show their documents. Now they appear as abandoned places, suspended in a limbo, out of use, lacking the purpose for which they were established, as the EU States have removed their borders and allow the free movement of people. To observe these places today offers the possibility of reviewing some recent episodes, whose traces and history are marked in the landscape. These quasi-archaeological ruins have become part of the current landscape; they constitute a presence of the past which lies dormant in the present.

Every time I arrive at a border crossing to take pictures, I am confronted with all types of signs (stop, *Achtung*, arrows...) and barriers which in the past regulated movements, itineraries and behaviours and now appear nonsense and out of context. My mind then goes back to personal memories, experiences, readings that hint the arbitrariness of control systems, about their pure artifice, their alienating character and the great lack of balance between the power of the States and their relationship with the individuals.

Border crossings function as geographical boundaries and play a coercive role as they prevent the free passage of people between one State and another. Therefore, they are places that, along with a cartographic dimension, encompass historical, economic and political reminiscences.

These old border crossing points are slowly disappearing. Some are renovated and reconverted to new uses, some are destroyed by vandals, and some are just falling apart. Eventually, in few years it will no longer be possible to look at these significant signs and symbols of the recent European history.

All photos by Ignacio Evangelista.
After Schengen, **lambda print, 145x125 cm.**
More at www.ignacioevangelista.com

National Borders as Contact Zones Questioning a European Cohesion

by Cristina F. Colombo

After the Schengen Agreement entered into force in 1995, most of the old internal checkpoints, in particular the peripheral ones, remained abandoned and out of service. Still their presence allows viewers and occasional passers-by to find significant traces of a recent history of political, economic, and social fragmentation. The series of photographs *After Schengen* moves from a very personal experience to show this reality.

Prior to the ratification of the Schengen Treaty, these sites where the thresholds between delimited and closed territories, symbols of separation and sovereignty, places where the expectations, hopes and fears of the travellers could come true or be disappointed. People had to stop there and wait for a verdict. These feelings are familiar to Ignacio Evangelista, who belongs to a generation that was born under the shadow of the Cold War, lived the division between Western and Eastern Europe, and later the progressive dissolution of the barriers.

Do the new generations sense the real meaning of these architectures?

'In Europe 40 million people died. However, thanks to the convenience of crossing borders without papers we have forgotten all that.'[2] The genesis of the project lies in this discrepancy. Deprived of their coercive role and often abandoned to the action of vandals and natural elements, the dismantled

structures have lost their aura of authority. Their emotional impact has been neutralised by the ease of mobility and communication and their current desolation.

The checkpoints portrayed in Evangelista's photos rarely have an architectural significance, nevertheless they are the memento of an era of political divisions. The large buildings in Rattersdorf-Köszegcs or Klingenbach-Sopron (Austria and Hungary), Fratres-Slavonice or Drasenhofen-Mikulov (Austria and The Czech Republic), Portalet or Somport (Spain and France), as well as small posts like Eisenberg-Vaskeresztes or Mörbisch am See-Fertörákos (Austria and Hungary), Ždarky-Pstrazna (Czech Republic and Poland), Coll de Belitres (Spain and France), Lindoso-Aceredo (Portugal and Spain), are the last vestige of old geographical boundaries, places that epitomise the cartographic dimension of nations, providing historical, political, social, and sometimes ideological recollections.

Cross borders that could have barely been considered a physical barrier are also powerful vehicles for memories. O.v Orl. Horách-D.Zdrój or Ždarky-Pstrazna (Czech Republic and Poland) are noticeable examples: no guards control frontiers whose evidence lies in few lines drawn on the ground and in old, often rickety signposts. The sense of loneliness that pervades them is eloquent.

Crossing points are expressions of power, but also contact zones. After Schengen, the internal posts turned into ideal thresholds, places where citizens could relate with the 'outer than self', with what once was foreign, distant, forbidden.

Ždarky-Pstrazna CZ-PL 2012

Nickelsdorf-Hegyeshalom A-H 2012

Ignacio Evangelista, BA in Psychology, is a Spanish photographer based in Madrid. His photographic series investigate the relationship, sometimes contradictory, between nature and the artificial. He focuses on places and situations where things seem not to be correctly located in space and/or time. His works have been exhibited in the United States, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Canada and the United Kingdom, and have been presented in numerous international magazines and publications.

Thresholds in architecture are transition areas open to inclusivity, crossable or negotiable limits. In an essay on interior architecture, Agostino Bossi wrote that thresholds reveal knowledge horizons, whose nature is to offer a possible alternative to the status quo, a passage leading to a contiguous, significant reality[3]. His words echo Martin Heidegger's statement: 'a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greek recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*.'[4] But the concepts of 'threshold' and 'door' entail a further symbolic value, subtly stressed by George Simmel: 'By virtue of the fact that the door forms, as it were, a linkage between the space of human beings and everything that remains outside it, it transcends the separation between the inner and the outer. Precisely because it can also be opened, its closure provides the feeling of a stronger isolation against everything outside this space than the mere unstructured wall'.[5]

Thresholds create the conditions for a potential passage, that could occur or be denied. Crossing a border, as well as entering a home, implies a pause. Stopping at a frontier used to be an act which was militarily imposed and now lingers as a spontaneous impulse. It is the transition to a somehow different reality. Moreover, crossing a threshold requires to be ready to meet others and dialogue. Broadening the view, it is possible to consider Schengen

area's internal borders like junctions between regions that share economic interests, but first and foremost have strong bonds of amity and officially recognise to have common cultural roots.

There is something magical about that line. […] Being born one meter to the right or to the left of this artificial line determines us. It is so bizarre to think that one kilometer can change your life.

——Ignacio Evangelista[6]

In the eyes of a European citizen, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the adoption of the Schengen Agreement, the world seemed to move towards a progressive opening to free mobility, accompanied and emphasised by the increasing ease of travelling and availability of information. As populisms are growing stronger however, the emerging of protectionist policies in many countries is currently limiting those opportunities. The construction of new barriers to reinforce some national borders is the most eloquent manifestation of these political phenomena. Borders are usually imaginary lines that materialise in specific crossing points. Where a physical barrier objectifies a political boundary, it marks a rigid separation that strongly interferes with the cultural identity-making process, expressing a rejection and a stigmatisation of what is perceived as the 'other'. A paradigmatic example is the concrete wall erected to separate Israel and the Palestinian-controlled West Bank, which constitutes also a visually imposing and intimidating limit. Equally divisive is the fence that runs between Mexico and the United States, the core theme of another photographic project by Evangelista, *The Line on the Map*. In that area, the wall cuts through the landscape permitting an eye contact with what lies beyond the line, changing form and appearing, now and then, towering or derelict. Though it is not insurmountable, it is first and foremost a metaphorical limit, still parting the destinies of the inhabitants of the continent like an opening fault line. The miles of razor wire that Hungary set along the lines with Serbia and Croatia or the troops deployed alongside Brenner Pass or Ventimiglia, more than sepa-

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rating neighbouring territories, all aim at restraining the desperate migrants who come to seek better opportunities in Europe. These measures have been taken in the name of the protection of an alleged cultural purity. Nonetheless, the groundlessness of similar positions is evident in the light of the anthropological researches on diasporic cultures, where the concept of 'routes' has replaced 'roots' as the ground of belonging, as stated by Ullrich Kockel.[7] Critical reflections therefore arouse on the different political attitudes within the European Community, in a complex scenario where multiple ideas of Europe concur.

Lindoso-Aceredo P-E 2011   Somport E-F 2014

The re-introduction of defensive barriers in Europe, which pretends to be united, discloses the weakness of the accords and the prevailing of divisive thrusts over the desire to promote a European cultural cohesion. A boost for the preservation of local identities has been emerging instead, strengthened by a growing inter-mobility, the flows of migrations from other continents and the consequent cultural hybridisation. The plural nature of societies, whose peculiarities actually lie in the variety of local material and intangible heritages, is built on the contribution of minorities and larger communities.[8] Moreover, Sharon Macdonald observed that different ways of doing and experiencing the past coexist in Europe.[9] They are dynamic phenomena concurring to determine what she calls 'the memory-heritage-identity complex', 'an assemblage of practices, affects and physical things, which includes

Which countries are part of the Schengen agreement?

- Schengen countries
- Schengen countries not part of EU
- Non Schengen EU countries

such parts as memorial services, nostalgia and historical artefacts.'[10] Moving from this evolutionary and broad perspective, which heritages—and identities—could the re-introduction of national borders defend?

Claudio Magris and Angelo Ara wrote that, 'a frontier is a strip which divides and links, a sour gash like a wound which heals with difficulty.'[11] Borders separate homogeneous landscapes, introduce unnatural fractures to mark domains, create antagonisms and hostilities that sharpen right along the territorial margins. Checkpoints are guarded thresholds, points of contact, transit, exchange. However, human actions are totally absent in Evangelista's photographs, while frontier architectures are crystallised in a timeless suspension. The *After Schengen* series raises many questions, especially now that the future of the European Union is being seriously challenged. The solitude of the posts portrayed by Evangelista symbolises the political attainments of the Schengen Agreement and the historical importance of opening national borders to the free circulation of people. Nevertheless, this achievement should not be taken for granted.

These quasi-archaeological ruins have become part of the current landscape.

——Ignacio Evangelista

Evangelista remarks that these ruins emerge from the landscape as relics of 'a past that lies dormant in the present.' Even the smallest or ruined border crossings hold a strong power of agency, by virtue of their capacity of conveying such a political message over time. The photographs of Ignacio Evangelista have a documentary relevance while they raise controversial questions.

1. Enrique Vila-Matas, *Historia abreviada de la literatura portátil* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1985). Eng. trans. *A Brief History of Portable Literature* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2015).

2. Umberto Eco, "La cultura no está en crisis; es crisis," interview by María Antonia Sánchez-Vallejo, *El País*, May 23, 2013. Available https://elpais.com/cultura/2013/05/23/actualidad/1369333134_264650.html [Accessed July 4, 2017]

3. Agostino Bossi, "La Soglia," in *La qualità oikogena dell'architettura: Lo spazio della soglia*, eds. Ludovico Maria Fusco and Viviana Saitto (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2016), 11.

4. Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Günther Neske Pfullingen, 1954). Emg. trans. "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 152.

5. Georg Simmel, "Brücke und Tür" (1909). Eng. trans. "Bridge and Door," in *Theory Culture Society* (London: SAGE, 1994), 7. See also Marco Biraghi, "Il problema della Porta," in *Porta Multifrons* (Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 1992), 17-25.

6. Ignacio Evangelista, "Borders Are a Way to Show Power" (conversation by Lars Mensel with Ignacio Evangelista), *The European*, July 9, 2015. Available http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/ignacio-evangelista--2/10379-the-disappearing-borders-inside-europe [Accessed July 4, 2017]

7. Ullrich Kockel, "Re-Placing Europe: An Ethnological Perspective on Frontiers and Migrants," in *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People, Places and Identities*, eds. Christopher Whitehead, Katherine Lloyds, Susannah Eckersley, and Rhiannon Mason (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 86.

8. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

9. Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

10. Ibid., 5.

11. Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, *Trieste: Un'identità di frontiera* (Turin: Einaudi 1982), 192.

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