Situated Bordering: Developing Border Complexities From a Praxeological Research Perspective

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Abstract

The contribution develops the idea of border complexities with theoretical and methodological thinking of sociological practice theories. It gives an overview on praxeological thinking and connects it to ideas from border research. The goal is the development of concepts and methodological tools for guiding research on border complexities from a praxeological perspective. The contribution highlights the concept of situated bordering for thinking complexity.

Keywords: Practice Theories, Bordering Practices, Situated Bordering, Border Praxeology

1. Introduction

The notion of complexity is rather young within border studies. Gerst et al. (2018) provide an idea of complexity for studying territorial borders. In their vision, complexity sensitizes for the multiple linkages that create borders: They state that "the fact that a border appears as a clear demarcation is therefore not self-evident. It needs numerous specific links for a border to become effective in its specific form" (2018, 6; translated by UC). Complexity, then, is a particular perspective on borders that might contrast with an everyday perception. While borders as lines on maps, for example, can be read as supposedly clear political instructions for order, the proposed interpretation aims in the opposite direction. Here, borders are only clearly identifiable phenomena at first glance, for when viewed from a different angle they reveal themselves to be complex.

Within border research, Wille (2021) provides an additional perspective on the question on complexity. In his view, the term marks a theoretical shift in border studies that frame borders as "*complex formations*" (2021, 117; translated by UC). Following the *practice turn* (Schatzki et al. 2001) in social sciences and cultural studies as one of the influential shifts, border thinking has transformed profoundly in recent decades (Connor 2021, 2023). Starting from a "*processual shift*" (Brambilla et al. 2015, 1; Wille 2021, 109), in which borders are conceived as constructed phenomena with dynamic properties, border studies is moving towards a "*multiplicity shift*"

(2021, 112). Multiplicity emphasizes that borders are produced by different (institutional or everyday) actors and that they are locally dispersed. The "*complexity shift*" (2021) follows on from these shifts and highlights de- and re-bordering processes as specific combinations and constellations. "This approach attempts to think together the elements effective for border(de)stabilizations into a complex formation and to make it describable as a socially, materially, spatially, and temporally determinable fabric." (2021, 113; translated by UC) Complexity, therefore, becomes a guiding concept for studying borders, addressing several theoretical trends in the research field. However, as Wille (2021, 117) states, the definition or conceptualization of complex bordering practices remains rather undeveloped in most of the studies.

The contribution presented here addresses complexity of bordering on a conceptual and methodological level. In the perspective that follows, complexity is not primarily considered as an ontological property of borders. Rather, their complexity must be developed and made visible in investigations by means of an appropriate theory and methodology. Therefore, the question pursued in the following is: How can borders be understood as both theoretically and methodologically complex in scientific studies? The present contribution tries to answer this question with the help of sociological practice theories. Conceptualizing borders as practices is therefore presented as a way of thinking and developing bordering as complex within research. The above-described thinking in processuality and multiplicity already points toward possible analytical directions for a practice-oriented understanding of borders. The idea here is to use these two research directions within a praxeological approach for studying borders. Thus, from a sociological practice perspective, complexities of bordering can be developed when focusing on dynamics and multiple linkages of elements of practice. Additionally to these two analytic directions, further praxeological ideas will serve to extend a practice-oriented approach to study borders by the idea of "situated bordering" (Yuval-Davis 2013, 11; also Andersen/Sandberg 2012, 6; Connor 2023, 98). Situated bordering is presented in the following as a central research concept, which integrates different theoretical ideas to unfold borders in research as complex phenomena.

For this purpose, the first part of the contribution will give an overview of practice theories and ideas that are useful to elaborate social phenomena as dynamic, multiple, and situated practices. The second part of the contribution will connect practice-theoretical thinking to ideas in border studies and propose conceptual and methodological guidance for praxeologically

studying borders. The conclusion illustrates how these developed ideas are helpful when thinking about border complexities from a praxeological perspective.

2. Praxeological Thinking I: Practices and Their Situatedness

The term sociological practice theories summarizes a broad field of heterogeneous approaches and provides ideas to discuss them with regard to common basic assumptions (e.g. Reckwitz 2003). In the current discourse, the field of practice-theoretical approaches comprises a collection of works of central references from sociology, ethnomethodology or philosophy as well as science studies, cultural studies or gender studies (2003; Hillebrandt 2014). Studies considered praxeological are, for example, work by Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman, Bruno Latour, Judith Butler, or Theodore R. Schatzki. In addition, there are a number of recent studies that discuss these earlier approaches and develop them (Reckwitz 2003; Wenger 2008; Nicolini 2012; Schmidt 2012; Shove et al. 2012; Schäfer 2013; Hillebrandt 2014; Schatzki 2016).

Despite their heterogeneity, there are also commonalities between the approaches mentioned above. Thus, it has been emphasized that practice theories develop in critical distance to different theoretical threads such as functionalism, structuralism, systems theory or (rationalist) action theory (Reckwitz 2003, 283; Stäheli 2004, 155; Hirschauer 2016, 45). Praxeological studies discuss traditional ideas from social theory and problematize their shortcomings. At the same time, praxeological approaches offer alternatives to these ideas—for example, to overcome theoretical dichotomies such as micro/macro, subjectivism/objectivism, action/structure, etc. (Nicolini 2012, 2; Schatzki 2016, 31; Spaargaren et al. 2016, 6; Brockmeyer et al. 2018, 7). Practice theories, as Reckwitz (2016) summarizes it, are associated with the intention of "casting a different perspective on the social as well as on human action" (2016, 163; translated by UC; also Nicolini 2012, 8). They seek to lead a productive discourse for the development of new perspectives for the study of social phenomena.

In the following, the idea of practices and its related thinking tools is the key to develop borders as complex phenomena. To gain a better understanding of practices from the perspective of praxeological approaches, the term is examined in more detail along three focal points below.

First, practices in the context of practice theories points to the thinking of sociality as dynamic and processual. Here, the idea of practices as situated dynamics stands in relation to the idea of a relationality and repetition of practical phenomena. Secondly, praxeological approaches provide ideas of a multiplicity of practices, which highlights the elements, such as bodies or materiality. Third, it is crucial to point out that practice theories do not focus solely on the development of theoretical ideas. Rather, their concern is to develop theoretical orientations and to implement them in empirical research within a praxeological framework. Therefore, the dynamic and situatedness of practices is a methodological challenge for praxeological approaches when studying social phenomena such as borders. For the present contribution and the thinking of complexity, these ideas deliver helpful concepts and directions for research. As researchers follow the different connections of practices to other practices as well as their changing network of elements that condition their being, they can develop their objects as complex during the research process. In other words, they can make the heterogeneous elements and various linkages as well as the ambiguous transformations of border practices visible.

2.1 Practices as Situated Dynamics

Developing practices in their complex formation from the perspective of praxeological thinking means observing their ongoing unfolding and their changing connections or interlinking to other practices. Sociological theories of practice provide a theoretical set of ideas about the social as dynamic processes in research. In fact, as Nicolini (2012) points out, "practice approaches are fundamentally processual and tend to see the world as an ongoing routinized and recurrent accomplishment" (2012, 3). In this sense, Hillebrandt (2014) for example speaks of a "*process of formation of practices*" that occur "in constant dynamics" (2014, 103; translated by UC). Practice-theoretical approaches focus on this dynamic and try to explain how practices appear, develop, and disappear (Shove et al. 2012, 14–15). In the various approaches in the field of praxeological designs, there are various propositions of how to think these dynamics of practices. Furthermore, practice theories contribute different ideas about how practices are situational and at the same time interlinked and continuous. The thinking in terms of relationality, repetition, and situativity or situatedness of social

practice are central to many approaches and will be considered in the following to gain insights in how to think of practices as situated dynamics.

One of the central analytical viewpoints of praxeological approaches is the relational understanding of social phenomena. Practices in this understanding do not occur isolated from one another; they exist embedded in and in relation to other practices (Schäfer 2013, 369–370). Shove et al. (2012) suggest, as an example, how relationality and dynamics are part of practices. The authors develop practices as an ongoing performance along situationally established connections between elements in "*processes of integration*" (2012, 43). These processes can connect elements but also separate them. Thus, this perspective is about the relationships of elements of practices to each other and their complex (dis)connections. Accordingly, Shove et al. (2012) also formulate their notion of a dynamic understanding: "practices emerge, persist, shift and disappear when *connections* between elements [...] are made, sustained or broken" (2012, 14–15).

Besides relationality, the idea of repetition is also important in practice-theoretical approaches. Schäfer points out that sociologies of practice consider the social as both stable and unstable (Schäfer 2013, 311). In this view, social phenomena do not simply repeat themselves in an identical way. Rather, repetition is a theoretical concept that sensitizes for the shifting forms of practices when practices are taken up and changed (2013, 321). Practices as processes, in practice theory, means that there is an (often simultaneous) production and reproduction. Social phenomena are produced in open and contingent practices as "doings and sayings" (Schatzki 2002, 72) or "arrays of activity" (Schatzki 2001, 11). At the same time, practices also reproduce their stabilizing preconditions. Social norms or structures can thus be understood as (unstable) stabilizing practices that become visible as repetitive elements or relations. Schäfer (2013) indicates that practices, however, always remain necessarily "fuzzy" (2013, 371; translated by UC) in terms of their ordering structures. Practices do not follow priori fixed or determinable plans that could be laid down in theoretical models.

At this point, the notion of situatedness or situativity becomes interesting in practice-theoretical thinking. This becomes particularly evident in a more ethnomethodologically oriented approach to practices. In terms of stability and the social order addressed by it in everyday life, Lynch (2001) points out that "what is at stake is not the theoretical problem of order, but the substantive *production* of order on singular occasions" (2001, 140). From this point of view, the question of social order is thus

not a purely theoretical question of social science. What authors from ethnomethodology show is that social order is a problem of everyday life, when participants organize their situations and interactions. In this perspective, practices do not consist first and foremost of repetition and relations; rather, they are preceded by the productive achievements of participants or the effects of these achievements. In Garfinkel's view, situated practical work is central because "practices consist of an endless, ongoing, contingent accomplishment" (Garfinkel 2016, 1) that produces a shared and ordered world. Against this background, Garfinkel offers a way to think about social stability or continuity in practices. Rawls (2008) demonstrates this aspect of Garfinkel's thinking with the example of working groups:

> Garfinkel argues that the contingencies of local orders are too complex and changeable to be handled by any standardized unit, and that would include habits and routines, in addition to rules, definitions, symbols, etc. In fact, it is his position that all such 'units', like any social 'object' or 'thing', only come to have recognizable and shared meaning (or appearance) to a working group when they are made using shared methods to create a situated order against which social 'things' can be seen in common. [...] It is the constantly kaleidoscoping order properties with which objects are rendered mutually intelligible which provide a constant. (2008, 705)

Garfinkel offers the idea that participants use ordering practices in situations to participate together in social life. Continuity thus relies on orders that are situationally produced and made meaningful by participants. Practices in this perspective are open and indeterminate as well as ordered at the same time.

These ideas put the question of meaning and knowledge in a specific light. Repeating and relating practices are therefore local ordering practices that not only produce phenomena situationally but also the shared meanings of their participants. As a result, meaning is not something that comes from an external context of the situation. From the perspective of the approaches presented here, meaning is created through the joint production of connectivity of practices in situations. Ordering features of situations are therefore practical invitations for members to continue with what they do, for example, or to stop and discuss the next steps. Members produce, as Schatzki (2002) puts it, a "practical intelligibility" (2002, 75) for their everyday life and interactions. Practices thus provide orientation for "what makes sense to a person to do" (2002, 75). This includes a collective "*doing*

knowledge" (Hörning 2004, 36) in situations, when participants mutually indicate to each other what the object of interaction is and what this object is about. What researchers can learn here is how actors produce social activities that are plausible to them and how they mutually make themselves knowable and understandable as such (Meyer 2015, 97).

2.2 Elements of Practice

When talking about the complex connection, integration, or disconnection of practices in dynamic and contingent processes, the question of what is connected or disconnected as practice inevitably arises. Praxeological approaches offer different answers to this question. These are, for example, the above-mentioned "doings and sayings" proposed by Schatzki (2002). In addition, Shove et al. (2012) speak of "*materials*", "*competences*" and "*meanings*" (2012, 14) when it comes to the theoretical development of practice integrations. Furthermore, Reckwitz (2002) highlights practices as "forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (2002, 250). Since materiality and corporeality have attracted renewed interest and increased attention within discussions of practice theories, both will be considered here in more detail. Paying attention to the different elements of practices is, together with the focus on dynamic situatedness, a useful research tool to follow the complex ways in which practices evolve.

The assumption of a corporeality of practices implies that practices are tied to the locality of its bodies. At the same time, the assumption highlights that practice-oriented approaches ascribe a central role in practices to human bodies. The understanding of practices in some approaches therefore stresses the idea of participating bodies, such as when Schatzki (2002) refers to "doings and sayings" as "bodily":

> I label them "bodily" to emphasize that they are things people do with their bodies, including whatever prosthetic parts and extensions (e.g., canes) bodies possess. Waving, running, pouring, throwing, uttering, and so on are things people directly do with their arms, legs, mouths, and the like. (2002, 72)

In this perspective, bodies are producers of practice. Moreover, they are a source of dynamics and indeterminacy when they repeatedly produce

practices anew with reflexive and creative turns or unexpected consequences (Giddens 1984, 5; Hörning 2004, 33).

Furthermore, in other praxeological approaches the body is located more on the side of a reproduction of practices. Following Bourdieu, for example, the corporeality of practices explains why certain social phenomena (e.g., social inequality) show themselves to be relatively stable over time. Bourdieu (1992) is interested in the internalization of social structures, which are reproduced by subjects in the form of practiced perceptual or behavioral schemata (1992, 144). Socialization processes, in which bodily competencies are acquired, are here in the focus of praxeological thinking. However, as Lave/Wenger (2006) show, learning processes do not only take place in specialized contexts (such as school). Rather, the authors speak of "situated learning," which can be regarded as an "integral aspect of practice" (2006, 34–35). In this perspective, all social situations are possible occasions to learn and transmit practical knowledge and skills without being necessarily the explicit objective of the participants (Schmidt 2012, 204).

Another focus of praxeological approaches is the materiality of social practices. Praxeological approaches ask how objects in social situations can be described as members of practices. That objects are receiving increased attention is partly due to the popularity of actor-network theories and especially Latour's work. Latour (2010) offers a particular approach to materiality when he ascribes activity to objects in studies. From his perspective, objects are actors that can change and influence situations (2010, 123). Thus, the development of a network in scientific description consists in tracing the connections between different practical participants in situations (2010, 223). Material objects will not be considered a priori as supposedly passive components of practices but will establish connections just as human participants do. With this descriptive technique, things, tools, or spatial settings become visible as part of practices in scientific inquiry.

However, the thesis of a special activity of objects in social situations has also been partially relativized in other praxeological approaches (e.g. Schatzki 2002, 200; Shove et al. 2012, 10; Spaargaren et al. 2016, 9). Shove et al. (2012) suggest instead "that aspects of human and non-human relations can be *better* understood when located in terms of a more encompassing, but suitably materialized, theory of practice" (2012, 10). From this perspective, objects are not acting agents in practices, but play specific "*roles*" (Shove 2017, 156):

> Some things are necessary for the conduct of a practice, but are not engaged with directly. I suggest these have an 'infrastructural relation' to practice. A second category includes things that are directly mobilised and actively manipulated. I count these as 'devices'. Third, there are things which are used up or radically transformed in the course of practice and that figure as 'resources'. (2017, 156)

In this view, practices are always connected to and emerge from the local materialities of the social setting. Just like bodies, they produce specific combinations of elements in situations and thereby produce practices in its typical forms. Corporeality and materiality are therefore reasons why practices never appear in identical ways but instead develop complex forms. Small shifts in the bodily-material setting can lead to practices being (re)produced or interrupted in different ways causing unintended and surprising effects and consequences.

2.3 Dynamic and Situated Practices as a Methodological Challenge for Praxeology

Up to this point, theories of practice have been presented in the form of an open vocabulary of ideas and concepts. In some cases, their concepts seem rather underdeveloped and raise questions about concretization. Interestingly, the development of such loose sets of theorizations is quite in line with praxeological approaches. Reckwitz (2016) writes in this regard on sociological practice theories:

> It is not about a new "theory system praxis theory" as an end in itself, about a competing enterprise to the theory architectures à la Parsons or Luhmann, but about social theory understood as a heuristic stimulating empiricism, a conceptual network that makes certain phenomena and contexts first and foremost visible and stimulates their empirical exploration. (2016, 164; translated by UC)

From this perspective, the theoretical ideas developed above are in fact research tools for an investigation of practices. Accordingly, approaches from the sociology of practice offer "procedures of praxeologizing" (Schmidt 2012, 51; translated by UC) rather than the development of theoretical conceptual systems. Thinking practices in terms of elements or as dynamics is therefore less an ontological assumption than a set of thinking tools in

the form of analytic orientations. The main principles of praxeologizing will be explained in more detail below.

In the perspective of practice-theoretical thinking addressed here, the development of such open heuristics is one of the consequences of the specific theorization of practice. Since praxeological approaches insist on the openness, contingency, dynamics, and situatedness of practices, they formulate a particular methodological challenge for themselves. The question, therefore, is how can practice be researched and described as situated and dynamic? The answer of practice-sociological approaches to this question is to give empirical research a central place in the study of practices. The idea is that practices, their multiplicity, situatedness and dynamics, cannot be grasped in an adequate way by theory alone. Researching practices means for these approaches to consider specific practices in the research field and to use them as guidance when it comes to the production of scientific knowledge.

More precisely, praxeological approaches position their research processes between empirical work and theory. As Schmidt (2012) points out, praxeological strategies are concerned with establishing a particular mediation or interweaving of the two in investigations (2012, 31). While the open theoretical concepts provide orientation for data collection, the empirical data about practice serve for the development of these theoretical ideas. Theory is therefore necessarily flexible: "it should be constructed in such a way that it allows itself to be continuously unsettled, irritated, and revised by the empirical" (2012, 31; translated by UC). Theory, by its openness, gives space to the different dynamics of the practices under study, as well as to its unexpected effects and consequences. It can also give guidance to describe situations and their local and contingent orders without prescribing them as structures in advance.

However, this approach raises questions about data collection methods. Here, too, the assumed multiplicity, situatedness, and dynamics of practices pose special challenges. Parallel to open theoretical sets, praxeological approaches argue against "any methodological constraint" (Schäfer/Daniel 2015, 42; translated by UC) and emphasize the importance of an open and research object-oriented choice of methods. This demand for open research designs can be situated particularly well within the qualitative spectrum of research methods (Przyborski/Wohlrab-Sahr 2014, 34). Qualitative approaches are conceived as "field research" (2014, 39; translated by UC) and developed along the characteristics of the field dynamics. Furthermore, they offer strategies on how the sociology of practice's demand for an

interweaving of empirical and theoretical work can succeed in the course of the research process. In qualitative research projects, empirical data is connected to theoretical ideas in the form of a "dialogue" (Strübing et al. 2018, 88; translated by UC). The research process itself thus becomes dynamic and takes the form of a movement that circles between empirical data and theoretical ideas (2018, 85).

Despite the idea of a diversity of methods, there are methodological preferences in praxeological approaches. In recent years, ethnographic procedures have established themselves as a kind of "house method" (Schäfer/Daniel 2015, 40; translated by UC). In this context, a particular compatibility of praxeological ideas of a dynamic, multiple, and situational practice with the procedures in ethnography is often emphasized. Schmidt (2012) writes that ethnographic strategies "are a methodological key to empirically and analytically unlocking those bodily-practical, everyday, and ubiquitous processes of structural mediation" (2012, 225; translated by UC). A situatedness and situativity of practices seems to be particularly central for these methods. Ethnographic approaches place the researchers in the events of practices and bring them close to the observed processes (Breidenstein et al. 2015, 41). Thinking in terms of situatedness and dealing with situativity is thus a particular focus of ethnographic approaches. Ethnography can therefore complete the special methodology of praxeological approaches as a suitable "package of theories and methods" (Nicolini 2012, 217) for the investigation of social practices.

In summary, praxeological studies provide a way to think of social phenomena as complex practices. As dynamics, they are unpredictable (even for those involved) and cannot be defined a priori in theory. The perspective on the situatedness and situativity of practice demonstrates that the problem of social order in social contexts is not only a theoretical question but also arises the participants. From this perspective, practices can be understood as ordering methods by which participants respond to complexity in practices. At the same time, the vocabulary of practice theories provides suggestions for thinking about practices as complex entities. Approaches from the sociology of practice develop alternative ways of looking at the social and pay attention to dimensions (such as the body, materiality) that often go unnoticed in everyday life. Thus, the practices themselves become describable as divers and manifold. Their complexity can be unfolded and developed as the changing multiple, contingent connections and interrelations between heterogeneous elements in investigations. How to deal with an assumed situativity in such investigations is a methodological challenge.

Here, praxeological approaches emphasize the utility of qualitative and especially ethnographic research designs to grasp the unfolding practices as situated dynamics.

3. Praxeological Thinking II: Situated Bordering

As shown above, sociological theories of practice offer a wide range of ideas and methodological strategies for thinking social phenomena as practices. With their foci on the multiple and dynamic ways in which practices evolve situationally, they give space and guidance for researching them as complex phenomena. Thus, their research strategies do not aim at reducing complexity—on the contrary, they make the complexity of social phenomena visible. This leads now to the question of how these praxeological ideas can contribute to the development of an analytical understanding of border complexities. The contribution develops central concepts and ideas that guide research from a praxeological view when studying borders as complex entities. To this end, we can relate the theorizations of practices elaborated above to the analytical trends in border studies. For example, border studies offers ideas on how to describe borders as processes, or in their multiplicity. Together with the ideas of practice theories, these understandings are expanded in the following. The outlined ideas below serve as an open set of assumptions and research strategies, which depict borders as practices and sensitize for their complexity. Here, complexity is developed through the concept of situated bordering, its dynamics and multiplicity, and complemented by methodological questions and directions on how situated bordering can be researched.

3.1 Situated Bordering and its Dynamics

From the perspective of a large part of recent border studies, territorial borders are conceived as an "ongoing process" (Wilson/Donnan 2016, 17). Authors emphasize the dynamics of bordering and develop borders as a form of acting in global contexts (van Houtum 2005, 672). Van Houtum/van Naerssen (2002) state that "bordering processes do not begin or stop at demarcation lines in space. Borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time, rather they symbolise a social practice of spatial differentiation" (2022, 126). In some studies, the notion of practice links the question of

territorial borders to the focus on the productive dimensions when it comes to bordering. In this view, Parker/Adler-Nissen (2012) employ a practice-oriented research perspective to ask for the "practices which 'constitute, sustain or modify borders'" (2012, 776–777). Thus, the authors shift the analytical viewpoint from the border to bordering as practical achievement.

Bordering processes are not characterized only by their transformative or productive effects. With the help of the praxeological concepts developed above, the idea of processuality can theoretically be extended. A relational understanding of bordering practices can be addressed with Schäfer (2013). In this understanding, territorial bordering practices are not isolated in social contexts; they relate to other practices and are co-produced and/or interrupted by them (2013, 369–370). Thus, relationality can serve as a useful research concept to identify the empirical processes in the research field by studying how practices or their elements relate to each other. This could mean asking for the special knowledge that actors make relevant when it comes to bordering practices and how they contextualize what they are doing (e.g., references to traditions, legal documents or political decisions). This could also mean focusing on the spatial arrangements of objects, things, and bodies in border situations such as airports or border crossing points. What kind of connections within the material, bodily, or spatial setting constitute, negotiate or prevent border situations?

According to Schäfer (2013), another praxeological idea that follows the assumption of processuality is thinking of practices as repetitions. When border studies point to continuous, albeit dynamic, global border-drawing practices, they highlight the persistence of border-drawing. Repetition is an analytical concept that focuses on these forms of bordering practices, even if the forms are never identical (2013, 321). The point is to clarify how practices empirically produce borders in such a way that they can be taken up by actors and exist as traditionalized border realities. Therefore, empirical studies would not only highlight the question of how bordering practices connect to following practices, but also how they stabilize and thus reproduce territorial bordering. This implies asking for power relations and their resources. Furthermore, the question of how actors make meaning of border practices is important here, as well as preceding socialization, routinization, or simultaneous learning processes that teach what a border is or how it should be viewed and enacted.

Developing borders in research as complex phenomena draws on the border dynamics, the relations, and repetitions of practices, but also highlights the specific acts and places of border production. This latter dimen-

sion can be further developed with the concept of situated bordering. The concept is connected to the idea of processual bordering and adds at the same time a specific focus. Situated bordering points to the locality of practices and develops them as observable occurrences, settings, and positions in the social context. Bordering practices are not only dynamic but, following practice-theoretical ideas, are primarily situated and situational activities. Praxeology as a research orientation implies that social phenomena as well as social order are achieved in situations. Social order is therefore the result and effect of practices, which are themselves not necessarily stable in their occurrence. Accordingly to Lave/Wenger (2006) and the concept of "situated learning" (2006, 34) it is therefore useful to think of bordering practices as "situated bordering" (Yuval-Davis 2013, 11):

> Borders are thereby conceptualized as practices that are situated and constituted in the specificity of political negotiations as well as the everyday life performance of them, being shifting and contested between individual and groupings as well as in the constructions of individual subjectivities. (2013, 15)

Bordering practices can take place in any situation, time, and context, but they are always specific and, in some way, local practices. The empirical questions are thus: How do actors make borders relevant in situations, and by what means, objects or methods? The special arrangements of border settings reveal the heterogeneous range of border producing practices and their evolving logic in space and time.

The notion of a situatedness or situativity of bordering practices makes yet another basic assumption in border studies particularly plausible. This is the insight that bordering practices often occur in forms of "b/*ordering* practices" (van Houtum et al. 2005, 2). The idea of b/ordering practices emphasizes that border drawing processes intervene in an ordering way in the social setting when they assign spatial or social places to things, people, or ideas. However, from a practice-theoretical and ethnomethodologically-inspired perspective as developed above, social order is a feature of all practices and not just when it comes to bordering. Thus, b/ordering should be developed as a specific form of practical ordering in social situations. Therefore, when thinking about the problem of social order starting from situations, praxeological approaches provide an analytical perspective. Against this background, b/ordering is to be understood as a set of specific methods used by participants to make their practices meaningful and connectable to other following or related practices. Territorial borders are

practical ordering achievements that produce a meaningful world to which members can mutually refer during their interactions (which can also be the negotiation of or fight against borders). At the same time, the idea of situativity of bordering activities suggests that orders can occur in very heterogeneous forms. This is what Sandberg (2012) points to with the concept of "modes of ordering":

> The notion of modes of ordering can introduce the idea and grasp that there are always more than one mode of ordering at stake when analysing how borders are formed in practice. Borders are thus conceived as the practical effects or products of the ongoing work of contingent and recursive modes of ordering. (2012, 119–120)

Based on the idea of a situatedness of border drawing practices, the contingency of these processes becomes particularly visible. Situativity emphasizes that borders as social objects are produced, confirmed, negotiated, and questioned anew in consecutive situations. Situated bordering is therefore a concept that helps us to analytically grasp the instability of borders, their fragility or their failure, as well as the modes of stabilizing and protection of territorial borders in practices. Bordering practices transform and evolve in the tension of stability and instability that characterize border situations.

3.2 Multiplicity of Situated Bordering

In some studies, border research has already highlighted analytical aspects of bordering practices that refer to their multiple elements. For example, different studies examine territorial borders as "spatial practices" (van Houtum et al. 2005, 3; Hafeda 2016, 398) or as "material practices" (Donnan/Wilson 1999, 58; Paasi 2011, 15) or "bodily practices" (Kleinmann/Peselmann 2021, 57). These perspectives are relevant when developing bordering practices from a praxeological standpoint and focusing on situatedness. When speaking of a connectivity or interlinking of practices, the question arises regarding what the object of practical linking performances is. Praxeological approaches offer different analytical foci to describe practices as multifaceted and multidimensional objects in investigations. They are focused on the material elements or bodily aspects of practices as well as their situational relations. Praxeological research highlights the typical dynamics of linking or unlinking of practices and their elements.

As a result, bordering practices are, by definition, ongoing, situational achievements of (re)producing, linking, or transforming territorial borders in their state of becoming. Following this argument, the linking of elements is now presented from a situationally rooted perspective. This situated linking as an analytical research orientation provides further guidance when understanding border phenomena as complex.

As developed above, because of the situational and thus contingent linking performances, bordering practices are not identical across different spatial and temporal settings. Territorial borders are produced or negotiated differently as objects in a variety of heterogeneous situations. The border is therefore not a one-dimensional object in research, but a "multiple border, where multiplicity is understood as heterogeneous practices and patterns of absences and presences that constitute the border" (Sandberg 2009, 107). Thus, multiplicity emerges in the perspective represented here from two analytical directions. On the one hand, the focus is on the different settings of border practices and their particularities. On the other hand, the focus is on the elements or aspects involved in the process, from which bordering practices compose territorial borders. From this perspective, bordering practices remain unpredictable in empirical research due to their multiple ways of unfolding in situations.

Focusing on the two aspects of materiality and corporeality, borders can nevertheless be ascribed typical properties from a praxeological perspective when examined across situations. The interplay of border fences and the actors monitoring them or the spatial divisions in refugee camps as well as the drawing of lines on national maps bring to light specific aspects of bordering practices and their consequences. The concept of multiplicity highlights the different practical functions and roles that materiality plays in border situations (e.g., arms, fences, roads, documents, maps). It also provides a perspective on the bodily involvement of actors when they internalize and perform borders. The research direction proposed here asks for the multiple uses of materiality and corporeality to investigate the various resources of bordering practices. To this end, it is useful to decompose practices into their multiple elements and trace their interconnectedness through studies to make the complexity of their interplay visible.

3.3 Researching Situated Bordering

Following the methodological principles of sociological practice theories, the research of borders from a praxeological perspective can be developed as a "border praxeology" (Gerst/Krämer 2017, 3; translated by UC). As described above, theoretical ideas do not stand alone at the center of praxeological approaches. Rather, they develop their concepts as part of a methodology that aims at making adequate empirical research of practices accessible. When it comes to the question of how territorial borders can be studied as situated practices, praxeological border studies faces methodological challenges. Due to their dynamic and situational conceptualization, borders are "never simply 'present', nor fully established, nor obviously accessible" (Parker/Vaughan-Williams 2012, 728). In this sense, territorial borders do not simply exist but are only traceable as changing and transformative processes of emergence (Schiffauer et al. 2018, 13). This leads to two methodological questions: first, where and how can bordering practices take place and thus can be observed, and second, how can researchers adequately collect data that show bordering practices as situated?

Borders as theorized in their ambiguous state of becoming provide a challenge to researchers when they search for an entry point in the investigation. Situated bordering practices can take place anywhere, by any actor, in different times and spaces and heterogeneous forms (Andersen 2012, 145). Therefore, Gerst/Krämer (2017, 3) propose the identification of situations of bordering starting from everyday, global understandings of bordering locations, and positioning the researcher accordingly. In the view of Gerst/Krämer (2017), these situations may be border crossing points, or the borders produced by customs when identifying dutiable goods and their owners. Nevertheless, this initial, everyday-world identification of situations of the border can only be an entry point into the analysis. The authors explain:

> We propose to make these situations of border drawing the starting point of a border analysis, but not to stop at these places, times or at these group divisions, but to follow the border trajectories further. That means to further accompany the person, goods, or ideas that are in situations of border drawing, and to further observe the effects of border crossing. (2017, 3; translated by UC)

With this approach, the researcher first narrows their focus on the ongoing bordering processes by concentrating on specific situations. The researcher

then follows elements of these observed practices—their movements and transformations—and links them to other practices and situations to gain further insight in the processes.

To study bordering practices, then, is to count on a special proximity of researcher and empirical field. Inevitably, the praxeological perspective proposed here thus follows an "empirical imperative" (Côté-Boucher et al. 2014, 197). Regarding border studies, this means basing the studies in the "research interaction with those who enforce borders" (2014, 197) or with those who experience or negotiate them. Although sociological approaches to practices postulate openness in the choices of methods in the research process, this refers to a limitation of approaches. From the perspective of praxeology, there are special requirements for data collection and evaluation procedures. The researcher should observe or participate in practices to survey the dynamics as well as their involved elements. At the same time, the empirical research should serve to develop the theory or conceptual framework, which requires a dynamic and flexible research process that relates empirical findings and theoretical ideas. Both requirements point to qualitative research methods, as highlighted above. Qualitative and especially ethnographic methods can serve to take up the challenges of a praxeological approach to study borders. However, border research is not limited to this set of methods and is challenged to develop methodological access within the research process, which means adapting to the studied border situations.

4. Conclusion: Border Complexities Through the Situated Bordering Lens

In this contribution, the aim was to conceptualize selected ideas from the repertoire of sociological theories of practice and praxeology for thinking about border complexities. To this end, reflections on dynamics, situativity and multiplicity as well as methodological challenges of practice theory were examined in more detail to relate them to border research. One of the crucial insights was that from a praxeological perspective, the complexity of borders is not primarily developed on the ontological level, but rather on the level of methodology and theorization. Sociological theories of practice provide ideas for studying and describing borders as complex social phenomena; they are less useful to determine what borders are from a purely theoretical standpoint. However, being mindful of the concept of situated bordering as well as the related ideas of processuality and multiplicity

could guide the theoretical entry into empirical research. These concepts provide orientation when studying bordering practices empirically and are therefore part of the proposed border praxeology.

With the border praxeology pursued here, the complexity of border practices can now be addressed on two levels. The first level develops border complexities in a theoretical-conceptual way. Accordingly, borders are conceptualized as dynamic practices whose complexity arises from their contingency and eventfulness. Here, situated bordering can serve as a central concept to avoid conceiving of borders as stable entities in investigations, helping instead to recognize the stabilizing performances and practical routinizations and their contingencies as situationally produced practices. The fact that border practices can be (un)connected to subsequent practices, that they endure historically and are transformed in various ways, can be traced back to the local and ongoing achievements of social order. Furthermore, from a praxeological perspective, bordering practices and their unfolding can be developed not only as situationally complex, but also as specifically multiple forms. Border complexities result from the assumption that borders can be described as specific and singular linkages of practice elements such as bodies and objects. They are related to other elements and practices; are linked, gathered, or separated. Border complexity is therefore a theoretical idea that connects descriptively to the thinking of situational and multiple practices of bordering.

The second level on which complexity can be addressed with a praxeological approach is the methodological approach. From a praxeological perspective, an adequate investigation of border practices connects to empirical research. It is precisely the idea of situatedness that supports the assumption that bordering practices must be studied through an empirical approach. Here, praxeological ideas provide guidance on how to deal with complexity in inquiry. The question is how to develop border complexities within empirical work and thus make it visible. One of the central ideas in praxeological research is that researchers need to expose themselves to border situations and make them the object of investigation on the ground. The methods used are oriented not to reduce complexity in investigations. In the understanding of praxeological approaches, the research process adapts to the object of study and follows its heterogeneous unfolding. Thus, border complexity is methodologically produced by an appropriate access to the empirical field and at the same time theoretically and conceptually developed based on empirical findings.

The ideas developed here provide a suggestion for thinking and addressing border complexities in investigations. In doing so, the contribution remains within the framework of a purely methodological-theoretical thinking, which necessarily finds its limits within a praxeological approach when it comes to producing knowledge about complex bordering practices. For the next step, therefore, the exchange with empirical data would have to be sought. The empirical work can serve a further development of a border praxeology and its conceptual ideas. This would also challenge the idea of border complexities itself—for its usefulness and meaningfulness is ultimately not only a theoretical question, but also an empirical one.

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