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"The Resurrection of Borders inside of the Schengen Area and its Media Representations"

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Introduction

Borders are on the first sight common and sometimes inconspicuous part of the everyday experience of many people. The travelers know them from the transit between countries, some workers commute across them and the borders are also markers of different political and juridical systems. Still, the boundaries between states may become more noticeable in times of international tensions. Concretely in the case of the European Union, the borders in such a situation may transform from an invisible line in a map to the topic of news headlines. The closures of borders and re-introduction of border checks inside of the Schengen Area belong to the set of measures that the sovereign states pursue to control their territory. However, such a step is also rich in symbolic meanings and can become a tool in the nationalistic and xenophobic campaign against foreigners as this study outlines below.

It is therefore important to study how did the debate on borders look like in times when the governments of EU member states realized such a measure. The primary focus of this project is the decade between 2010 and 2020. The question of the resurrection of border checks was typically elicited in the context of immigration into the EU (raised primarily in 2011 and 2015). In the first case, the trigger was the migration from Tunisia in times of the Arab Uprising. At that time, France decided to renew the border checks with Italy for a very limited amount of time (Colombeau, 2019) while four years later, the main migratory route led from Syria and Afghanistan through Greece and the Balkans. In the summer of 2015, the states (mainly in Central Europe) were adopting re-bordering strategies in a domino effect (Kriesi et al., 2021) to prevent migration flow. The third scope of time under scrutiny is spring 2020 when many states adopted protective measures aimed to decelerate the spread of COVID-19 illness (Böhm, 2020; Brunnet-Jailly & Vallet, 2020; Rufí et al. 2020). For the rapid closures of borders in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, Medeiros et al. (2021) introduced the term *covidfencing*. The uniqueness of this trend did not consist only in the rush of nation-states during the reintroduction of border checks but also in the extent of the control. The passage through certain border checks was even

forbidden. The first goal of this study is to inspect more deeply how the context of border debate changed during the decade 2010's.

The special focus will be given on rhetorical justifications of the sudden resurrection of borders inside of the Schengen Area which is known for its borderless character. However, the Schengen Acquis (set of legal norms that codify the principles of the Schengen Agreement) defines the conditions for temporary reintroduction of border controls. Such decisions can be taken in times of serious threats for public policy or internal security (European Commission, 2020) either pre-emptively (e.g., sports championships, global political events) or post-hoc (e.g., as a reaction to the influx of refugees). Such exceptional re-introduction of border checks can be declared for six months and may be prolonged. It is, therefore, important for politicians to explain and justify why their solution was the right one and also the proper one from the jurisdictive point of view.

The third goal of its study is to identify and analyze narratives about borders that are often subliminally present in the news about border measures. The initial point of reflection will be distinguishing between the narrative of integration and the narrative of security (Zhurzenko, 2010). However, in this more detailed study, more narratives will be identified and explored together with the reflection on how they are used during the process of construction of threat.

Literature Review

Various crises very often come as unprecedented geopolitical actors (Casaglia et al., 2020). Defined as a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020), the crises represent a somehow challenging situation that trembles the polity as they were usually not anticipated. Such shocks typically reveal vulnerabilities, risks, or hidden cleavages in societies and may provoke new types of crises (Stavrakakis & Katsampekis, 2020). Due to the possible wide impact of crises, such events are very often attributed to rather high news value (An & Gower, 2009). The journalists, therefore, show high interest in those crises situations and are themselves involved in the construction of crisis (Krzyzanowski, 2019; Kepplinger & Roth, 1979). Term crisis may serve as a catchphrase or self-standing news frame (Vincze, 2014). The construction of crisis is also a prominent characteristic of populist narratives (Stavrakakis et al., 2018; Moffitt, 2015; Pappas & Kriesi, 2015). As can be seen, both news media and politicians use crisis narratives in public discourse and such choice of words may not be without consequences. As Altheide (2018) shows, one of the elicited outcomes of the construction of crisis may be fear.

Crises also have their spatial dimension. They can initiate a debate about nation-state sovereignty over its territory (Brubaker, 2020) or delineation of *Us and Them* (Brambilla & Jones, 2020). In the process of *othering* (Vollmer, 2020), the delimitation of borders plays a crucial role (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002). The experience of crises could spatialize fear (Brubaker, 2020), undermine to some extent a belief in a free movement inside the EU (Newmann, 2003), provoke a defense of thick borders (Haselsberger, 2014), and revive nationalist discourses (Bieber, 2020).

When looking back to the second decade of the 21st century in the European Union, three major phenomena contextualized as crises can be detected (*Global Financial Crisis*, *Refugee Crisis*, and *COVID-19 Crisis*). They all represent a complex set of fears, confusions, and significant disagreements. As such, they raised questions about policy implementation, identity, or further European integration. Also, they co-occurred with re-bordering tendencies inside of the

Schengen Area whose members previously decided to abandon the mutual border controls. However, these crises led to the resurrection of long-time permeable borders and invisible lines in maps that obtained new symbolic and spatial meanings as a result. Therefore, it is a timely question to inspect the possible connections between the crises and the re-bordering tendencies. Wassenberg (2020) labels it the "Schengen Crisis" and indicates the end of the myth of Europe without borders. This project aims to identify the representation of borders both in news media and in political discourse during these crises.

Borders and their discursive representations

The analysis of discourse about borders is of great importance if one wants to explore what borders mean. More precisely, new meanings are ascribed to them through the bordering processes (Scott, 2012). A field of border studies moved from the old geopolitical conception that saw boundaries as a static line on a map to a more constructivist approach (Diener & Hagen, 2012). Paasi (1998) argues that borders should be investigated as the institution that governs the inclusion and exclusion of those who want to cross them.

The process of border construction is continuous and Scott (2012) differentiates among four categories of bordering: discursive (political and social framings), practical (material and substantive areas), perceptual (group/individual), and representational (cultural, media-generated images). The geopolitical discourse is set both by politicians and media (Kolossov, 2005) who not only speak about borders but also create new layers of representations to them which can be emotionally tuned (Zhurzenko, 2010).

Although the practicalities and context of bordering are always time-related, some very general characteristics of borders may be inferred. Regardless of actual justifications, bordering processes have been occurring consecutively throughout human history (Diener & Hagen, 2012; Brown, 2010; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007). The borders stand for spaces where sovereignty reaches its limits and private property owners demarcate their estates. States consolidated their control over territories in material, violent or discursive ways. The so-called Westphalian

international order was reproduced by European colonialists in the Americas, Africa, or Oceania (Zaiotti, 2011).

That means the borders divide or connect at least two entities or communities and states can impose some level of control over these edges of their territories. Nevertheless, no state could ensure perfect surveillance over the edges of their territories and the flow of people before the 20th century (Casaglia et al., 2020; Haselsberger, 2014). Certain hardening of state borders can be traced back only to the age of the rise of nation-states, the invention of passports (Torpey, 2018) and bio-politics, governmentality, and the power of technology (Foucault, 1991).

In the border zones, a violent act of exclusion or mobilizing threat has been often materialized (Brambilla & Jones, 2020). Depending on the current ideological needs, borders may serve in a context of institutional oppression influencing a sense of territoriality – a construction of spatial identity (Bossong et al., 2017). Thus, the meaning of borders is time-related and the definition is influenced by the perceptions and experiences (Leimgruber, 2018). Those *fields of security* (Bigo, 2003) are typically elicited in a context of migration (Vaughan-Williams, 2009), criminality (Havlíček & Klečková, 2018), citizenship (Parker, 2012), or geopolitical distancing (Lindberg & Borrelli, 2019). The borders play an inherent role in a process of self-defining (Paasi, 2001). Specifically, in the context of the European Union, a look into discursive bordering practices performing by European news media may show us which interests are represented in the debate and who is speaking on behalf of EU citizens. It can be expected that politicians will form an important category of sources. Other groups may contain local people living in borderlands, people in motion (e.g., refugees, cross-border commuters,) or experts (social scientists, NGO staff, EU-institutions representation,). The analysis focused on the diffusion of border frames on the EU-level suggested by Casaglia et al. (2020) may shed new light on the meaning of European borders in the 21st century and the impact of bordering processes performed by the EU in the last decade.

EU and competing border narratives

The bordering processes inside of the Schengen Area are traditionally under the scrutiny of border studies scholars (Infantino, 2019; Lamour, 2019; Zaiotti, 2011; Paasi, 2001). The European Union has been repeatedly displayed as a laboratory for a free cross-border movement (Zaiotti, 2011), often with synonyms like *ostensibly borderless area* (Scott, 2012). This so-called *Schengen culture* (Zaiotti, 2011) developed as a result of intensifying cross-border contact and integration between EU-member states.

Free movement of people, capital, goods, and services belong to an accomplishment of the EU-integration goals (Fiala, Krutílek & Pitrová, 2018), even though the Schengen Agreement (1985) was initiated from the state-level and not from the European institutions. However, the Schengen arrangement did not weaken nation-state claims over their territories (Scott, 2012). Such demands have been typically connoted to the security field of migration. Firstly, the Schengen arrangement moved the migration issues to the edges of the Schengen Area which contributed to a myth of "fortress Europe" (Tsianos & Karakayali, 2010). This system on the one hand evoked sheer criticism from human rights advocates; Van Houtum (2010) calls the efforts to control the external Schengen border as *global apartheid of the EU's external border régime*. On the other hand, in the right-wing political discourse, such a solution was perceived as ineffective. They framed the control of nation-state borders as the more efficient mean of protection from external threats.

Why does the narrative about borders matter? As Prokkola (2009) emphasizes, these narratives are codes or tools that shape the citizen's perception of reality. The act of sharing these narratives means an engagement in the process of re-bordering or de-bordering (van Houtum, 2005). These beliefs, attitudes, or frames are constantly evolving, thus, it is important to find the discursive representations of borders in their temporal context.

Two major branches of argumentation about border regime inside of the EU emerge – narrative of integration and narrative of security. These categories were initially defined by

Zhurzenko (2010) in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian border but seem to be working on the EU context as well because they stem from the dual interpretation of borders (either understood as bridge or barrier). In the original context, the integration narrative favors a cooperation between Ukraine and Russia which is natural due to the common bonds from Soviet times. The opposite frame is used often by Ukrainian politicians who criticize the Russian meddling in Ukrainian affairs. The open border is perceived as a danger that could undermine Ukrainian statehood (Zhurzenko, 2010).

In the narrative of integration inside of the EU, themes like cooperation, mutual contact, togetherness, or freedom of movement may be elicited. In this logic, the experience of common life shall be stronger than the temporary crisis. Despite the current restraints, the future of the EU lies in this model. The opposite camp uses the discourse of danger mentioning possible threats that can result from the cross-border flow (e.g., criminality, diseases, illegal migrants,). Those who preach the securitization of EU border regimes contribute to the Us X Them dimension of borders and steadily bring attention to the negative phenomena that can hide behind the border. However, this initial categorization of border narratives needs to be broadened and diversified. The overall picture of borders in media may be much more colorful than just dualistic. Also, both main narratives may acquire different shapes according to the particular crisis.

Methodology and Research Questions

From the literature review, the main research question and sub-questions may be formulated:

RQ: *How was the resurrection of borders in the 2010's inside of the Schengen Area represented in the news media?*

RQ1.1: How did the context of these measures evolve?

RQ1.2: Which border narratives were present in the European news media in the context of reinforcement of controls on borders inside of the Schengen Area?

RQ1.3: Under which justifications have been the border checks re-introducing inside of the Schengen Area between 2010 and 2020?

To answer them, this project will propose a look into the discourses in European media in times of crises related to the borders inside of the Schengen Area (as explained above). That responds to the note made by Scott (2012) that news media play important role in bordering processes. Firstly, the news archive of the French newspaper *Le Monde* was approached to identify the moments of the border's resurrection inside of the Schengen Area between 2010 and 2020. Although the debate about borders was present consecutively in the news reporting (with special emphasis during some election campaigns), three moments of the specific resurrection of borders emerged from the data (in 2011 and 2015 the trigger was migration, in 2020 the re-bordering was related to the covid-19 pandemics).

After the identification of time periods, the data collection started. Regarding the content analysis of media, three countries were selected – France, Austria, and Czechia. Each of them represents another language and another context of adherence to the EU. France belongs to the group of founding members of the EU; Austria entered the European integration path in 1990's while Czechia joined EU together with other post-communist countries during the Eastern Enlargement in 2004. For each country, two newspapers were put under scrutiny. Six selected news titles can be also divided into two categories – more conservative profile (*Le Figaro* for

France, *Die Presse* for Austria, and *Mladá Fronta DNES* for Czechia) and more liberal profile (*Le Monde* for France*, Der Standard* for Austria, and *Hospodářské noviny* for Czechia). This sorting was applied on the ground of Paasi (1998) who considers borders as important markers of identity and may, thus, vary according to the ideological background. The news articles were accessible through media archives (Anopress database for Czechia, WISO-Net for Austria) and personal subscription (www.lemonde.fr, www.lefigaro.fr). In these databases the suitable articles were identified through following filters. Firstly, the date of publishing was considered (March 1st – June 30th, 2011 / September 1st – December 31st, 2015 / March 1st – June 30th, 2020). Secondly, the search query had to contain key words for this study ("borders", "Schengen", "controls", "close") and their combinations. The list of results was then inspected manually to discard non-related articles and articles about borders in different spatial contexts. The aim was to filter out opinion articles, longer news reports, columns, and editorials about border closures inside of the Schengen Area. Therefore, the articles shorter than 200 words were discarded to filter out short notices and briefings. In the end, dozens of articles got through this process and their counts are assigned to the table below according to the period of time.

	2011	2015	2020
Le Monde (FR)	59	46	49
Le Figaro (FR)	47	60	46
Der Standard (AT)	36	50	80
Die Presse (AT)	38	108	89
Mladá fronta DNES (CZ)	8	82	52
Hospodářské noviny (CZ)	6	66	69

This piece aims to analyze shifting meanings of borders, the metaphors, and symbols employed in the discourse about borders. As the timeframe for this study is ten years it is possible to investigate how the sense-making about borders evolves in time. Therefore, the study of context and basic unsaid presumptions are of key importance (Gee, 2010). Applying the tools of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the institutional and sociocultural contexts can be taken into account (Carvalho, 2008).

The context matters because one word may acquire manifold meanings (Gee, 2010). That holds true both for everyday conversation and maybe even more for political, social, or environmental media coverage (Van Dijk, 2006). Each word stems from some meaning resources and has meaning potentials (Gee, 2011). Those who read or hear the news often guess for context as the recipients of content channeled to them (O'Keeffe, 2012). They assign the information to their previous experience and knowledge and as mass media contribute to the construction of reality (Couldry &Hepp, 2018); the audience also may be influenced by the news article in their perception of reality (Gee, 2010).

The fact that meanings are not stable is a basis of the situated-meaning tool. Gee (2010) explains this instrument with the following words: "For any communication, ask of words and phrases that situated meanings they have. And what specific meanings do listeners have to attribute to these words and phrases given the context and how the context is constructed" (Gee, 2010, p. 153).

In this respect, the chapter with findings will be organized into three parts. The first ambition is to see the longitudinal trends in the border debate in news media (mainly in opinion articles). The chapter will summarize where was the focal point of the analytical texts and other relevant articles about the resurrection of borders. The section will offer comparisons between countries, between news titles, and also the findings will be organized in chronological order.

The second part will propose a closer look at the corpus of texts to investigate the symbolic language about borders and the usage of metaphors and other expressions that are being used to justify the surveillance of the border.

Ethics in research

As explained above, this research stands methodologically on qualitative content analysis. Therefore, the information will not be derived from interviews, surveys, focus groups, or observations of human subjects. The project does not involve any contact with vulnerable people. However, my research is guided by the standards of good academic practice (e.g., referencing).

Apart from that, there are ethical aspects that should be considered during research in qualitative social science, such as my relation to the research topic, my background, and my experiences. Researching the field of border studies I am acknowledging the experience of cross-border commuting between Czechia and the University of Vienna. When I was a child, Czechia entered the European Union (2004) and started to enjoy the advantages of the process of European integration. I was 11 years old when Czechia joined Schengen Area (2007) which was a strong symbolic moment for my family. Previous generations of my family lived in an authoritarian state under Communist Party that strictly regulated any border movement. The boundary with Austria and Western Germany was blockaded by a fence with barbed wire and armed guard. Hundreds of people were killed between 1948 and 1989 while trying to flee the country. Thus, deeper integration into European Union was interpreted in my milieu as a great achievement.

Bearing this in mind, I witnessed new re-bordering tendencies inside of the European Union during the following decade. The events investigated in this project from the perspective of communication science made me thinking continuously about what the meaning of borders is and what their function in contemporary Europe is. When I enrolled at the University of Vienna I commuted every week between Czechia and Austria. As governments closed the borders in March 2020, this experience of border-crosser was interrupted. These are the reasons why I decided to focus on such developments more deeply in this project.

However, there are particularly more important aspects of this project than the personal story. The resurrection of borders contradicts the basic idea of European project. When the nation states close the mutual sites of contact instead of opening them, it may mean a symptom of deeper problems. European Union is a political project conceived by people and the closure of borders signifies retrograding step that curbs the integrating efforts made by people. Therefore, the research of media representations of borders may shed a new light on a debate about border regimes and functions of borders in times of crises.

Findings

Situated meaning – comparison in time

Even though the borders inside of the Schengen Area remained fixed and unchanged in their territoriality, the meanings and the debate about borders became dynamic. The look into the data from the news media indicates that throughout the selected time frames, the intensity of communication about borders increased (see the table on page 11).

2011 – Foreplay for the debate

What was the context of the 2011 episode? That depends much on a perspective and on the country where the news media operates. It is of no surprise that the French media were more attentive to the news from the Italian-French border zone than the Austrian and Czech media. The dominant theme behind the scenes of the report is the impact of the financial crisis as the issue of Greek debt and the crisis of Euro currency was omnipresent. The migration from North Africa or the Middle East was debated but as this opinion article from *Le Monde* shows, just as a topic no. 2 after the conflicts about the future of monetary union:

*The second motive of disturbance, the refugee wave from the Arab words, gives place to the questioning of the Schengen Agreement that guarantees a free circulation of people between signatory countries (*Le Monde, May 25, 2011*).*

Schengen had been a symbol and synonym for a successful European project and the quarrel on the Italian-French border pointed to the limits of the setting. What to do when one country gives priority to the short-time political profit of its leaders at the expense of solidarity? That was also one of the headlines in *Le Monde* newspaper: *In Europe, a sad reality of selfish practice* (LM, May 13, 2011). According to the author, a lack of solidarity and common coordinated policies could prove to be urgent in the future.

In total, news articles and opinion columns in *Le Monde* perceived the incident in Ventimiglia from the point of view of European diplomacy, possible reform of Schengen and saw the decision to reintroduce controls as a gesture for domestic voters: "*What is at stake really,*

behind the scene of migration towards Europe is a decline of European idea and construction,
"(LM, May 17, 2011). The same news article prophesizes that migration can become an even more important topic in the future. The borderless character of Schengen is nevertheless not portrayed as a problem.

The readership of *Le Figaro* could see quite a different picture, mainly in the opinion articles. There, illegal immigration is portrayed as a threat, and efforts to control the borders are seen as a constructive way of dealing with the problem:

The minister of interior, learning a lesson from the failure of Schengen, deals as he can with the absurdity of European rules to reintroduce the temporary controls at our borders (...). Would you prefer to open our doors to all the Tunisians...?"(LF, April 14, 2011).

In other words, *Le Figaro* in these moments reused the political argumentation of Nicolas Sarkozy that borders are possible to be controlled and patrolled.

Austria is one of the countries that lie in the middle of the Schengen Area and does not have to guard the common border. However, the issue of the French-Italian dispute was followed in the Austrian news media as well. One of the reasons may be that Austria neighbors Italy and the migration of Tunisians could direct to Austria. Therefore, the temporary stricter controls were set on a border. In the few days after the disruption of railway traffic at the French-Italian border, *Die Presse* started to debate the advantages and inconveniences of the Schengen Agreement. "*The refugee flow challenges Schengen*" (Die Presse, April 13, 2011).

The situation showed that the rules of the Schengen Agreement can be easily derailed by one state that stops fulfilling its responsibility to guard the external Schengen border. At that moment, freedom of movement may become risky, the op-eds in *Die Presse* warned. One month after, the reflection went a step further. The context of the debate ranged from the sheer critique of borderless Europe and discussions about the possible deployment of the army on the borders to the voices that assigned the "border-control" rhetoric to the populist parties that aim to renationalize the EU:

"*Europe in reverse gear to 27 national fortresses: The populists in the EU countries are not concerned with overcoming a refugee crisis, but rather with renationalizing politics*" (DP, May 21, 2011).

Overall, the debate was set for the future as the bigger migration waves were suggested by some: "*The Franco-Italian dispute over 25,000 Tunisian refugees is currently dominating the news. The real problem for the Schengen area is Greece's inability to organize a functioning border protection*" (DP, May 5, 2011).

The context of *border debate* co-created by *Der Standard* journalists was quite different from the approach of *Die Presse*. *Der Standard* did not accept the narrative that reintroduction of border controls can be an effective solution to the problems of the Schengen countries. The re-bordering tendencies were seen as a toolkit that belongs to history and can have unpleasant consequences:

"*Citizens and politicians shout all too quickly: doors and windows are shut, gates close, and borders tight. That is a comprehensible reflex, a seemingly simple one solution. So after the formation of its nation-states, Europe has worked for centuries. Unfortunately, all too often with the fatal endings. As a result, conflicts and border violations were resolved with violence.*" (Der Standard, May 5, 2011).

According to the analytical texts in *Der Standard*, the violation of Schengen rules would mean severe threat for the whole system of mobility inside of the area:

It is clear that after the euro there will be a second, very specific and at the same time highly symbolic EU pillar is shaking: the Freedom of travel for 400 million Europeans (DS, April 27, 2011).

The abolition of border checks was presented as a necessary condition for the common market and these important achievements of European integration were threatened by the voluntarism of politicians: "*just because of the fickleness and inability of a scandal-ridden Italian*

head of government. Are all of these (achievements) no longer worth anything? (DS, May 13, 2011).

In contrast, the interest of Czech media in the issue of the future of Schengen was far weaker and no tribunes in favor of border controls did emerge. At that time, Czechia was still a "young" member of the Schengen Area and mainly enjoyed its benefits. A few articles evoked the migration as a reason why some voters in France or Italy prefer far-right parties.

"Nicolas Sarkozy concerns if the real or alleged problems with immigration can influence his chances to the re-election next year. In France, the support of nationalist National Front and its leader Marine Le Pen increases" (Hospodářské noviny, April 27, 2011). In total, at that time, migration did neither elicit emotions nor cause a debate about borders in the Czech newspapers.

2015 – Borders in the midst of migration wave

Four years later, throughout all selected newspapers, the interest in borders increased. The change was not so dramatic in countries that debated the rules of the Schengen Area in 2011 (France, partly Austria). However, migration and subsequent political reactions caused fever among the Czech public that entered this crisis as a blank sheet. Czechia had not been a typical destination of refugees or migrants from Arab countries and all of a sudden the atmosphere was dominated by the instrumentalization of migration for political purposes and a spiral. The newspaper *Mladá fronta* played a partial role in such development. For example, it brought a report from the Czech border town with the headline "*Guarders of the border*": "*The concerns from refugees are here more significant than in the rest of Czechia. When the inhabitants of Břeclav see someone suspicious, they immediately call the police*" (Mladá fronta, September 4, 2015). The same journalist came with other reports from the borders that emphasized the role of patrols (*Czechia sends riot police to protect its borders*; MF, September 16, 2015) or (*Refugees just behind the line. Cínovec is guarded by the police;* MF, September 11, 2015*)*.

In the opinion articles in *Mladá fronta*, some authors tried time to time calm down the situation but the context was dominantly embedded in nationalist positions; typically targeted against Germany:

"*The Germans have implemented what they blamed Hungary for and put Schengen on ice. The reason: they did not manage the wave of refugees*" (MF, September 14, 2015).

This step – to introduce controls on the German-Austrian border was presented in an opinion article in *Mladá fronta* under the headline "*How the Germans failed*" as "*the end of the summer fairy tale*" (MF, September 15, 2015). In this perspective, the decision to control the borders was portrayed as the late and only right one.

The second chosen Czech news title – *Hospodářské noviny* did not imitate the sharp transformation of *Mladá fronta* from indifference towards migration in 2011 to enthusiasm towards the protection of borders in 2015. Quite on a contrary, *Hospodářské noviny* in the opinion articles presented the reintroduction of border checks as an injury for the European vision and the integration process.

"*All of these transit countries claim that if Germans fence their borders, they would do the same. A barrier moving as a domino to the southeast would emerge. European integration built on an idea of permeability and openness would get a punch. Would it be lethal? Hard to say*" (Hospodářské noviny, October 15, 2015).

The criticism of border management was accompanied in HN with the following reasoning:

"*The freedom of movement is one of the basic pillars of European unity and if the states started one after another closing borders, it would mean great victory for terrorists*" – could the audience read after the terror attack at the Bataclan Club in Paris (HN, November 16, 2015).

The future of Schengen was regarded with high concern also in French news media. Here the debate of 2015 followed up on a thread from 2011. The connection was the person of Nicolas Sarkozy who orchestrated the closure of the border near Ventimiglia in 2011 and the topic of

Schengen reform served as a refrain for his campaign in primaries of the Republican Party (*Les Républicains*) in 2015-2016. The intensive migration wave from Syria and Afghanistan was portrayed by him as proof of the need for the radical change of the Schengen system:

*"Schengen as we wanted and organized it, it's over", (*Le Monde, October 29, 2015*).*

The introduction of border checks was especially in *Le Monde* news reports seen as a tool of nation-states that contradicts the logic of European integration.

"Europe is caught in a disastrous downward spiral, yet the only possible solutions to these immense challenges lie in union, not division. In solidarity, not in a deadly selfishness" (LM, November 15, 2015).

Such viewpoint was evident twice during the analyzed period: firstly in September after the EU experienced the renaissance of border checks and following domino effect when new countries adopted this measure. Secondly, the call against particular national solutions and disintegration was present after the terrorist attacks of November 13, 2015, in Paris.

"Deadly cocktail for free movement in Europe: The Schengen area is doubly threatened. By the terrorism which struck France and by the wave of migrants coming from Syria which travels from Turkey to Northern Europe via the Balkans, and which forces, one after the other, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, and even Germany to reintroduce controls at their borders, or even to close them" (LM, November 20, 2015).

In total, *Le Monde* in its content typically countered the politicians who wanted to tighten the restrictions at the borders and defended the principles of EU integration. The headline of an article issued on November 5, 2015, summarizes it:

"*Schengen is dead? Long live Schengen*!" (LM, November 5, 2015).

Similar to the debate of 2011, *Le Figaro* saw the border issues differently. Although this newspaper did not unilaterally call for the suspension of free movement inside of the Schengen ("*I think that the Schengen area is still relevant, that we cannot live politically or economically in an area constrained by internal borders";* Le Figaro, September 25, 2015), the opinion articles

accepted the measures of the borders with sympathy. Such a step was regarded as a reaction to the chaos and defeat of German chancellor Angela Merkel and EU organs:

Today, the extraordinary bureaucratic lock established by Brussels on the re-establishment of internal border controls has shattered under the pressure of the migrant crisis. (LF, September 16, 2015) or:

"*Since Sunday, unfortunately only behind the scenes, a new praise for borders has appeared: these are naturally necessary for the maintenance of public order, for the consideration of national security.*" (LF, September 14, 2015)

The Austrian media also continued following their patterns from border debate in 2011. Both *Der Standard* and *Die Presse* closely watched the Balkan route of migration into the EU with special attention on Germany and its action. As this migration flow went through Austria, the everyday experience with migrants was also part of news reports. *Der Standard* assessed critically the domino effect of border closures inaugurated to regulate migration and the ambition to construct a 'fortress' from the Schengen Area:

"*The "Fortress Europe" suggests a completely different picture: we build a wall, pull up the drawbridge - and pour down a bucket of the pitch if necessary. No wonder it was the National Socialists who coined this term.*" (Der Standard, October 24, 2015).

A very prominent place in the news has an opinion that the reintroduction of border checks might mean a serious threat for the EU as a whole:

"*Anyone who now begins to pull up fences along the national states is betraying the idea of a European Union and burying a peace project for which the Nobel Prize was awarded a few years ago. "United in diversity" was the EU's motto, but the current outlook is different: separated in envy, fear, and discord.*" (DS, October 29, 2015).

In *Die Presse*, the opinion climate was different. The refugee crisis inside of the Schengen area was portrayed as a "*short summer of European anarchy*" (Die Presse, September 6, 2015),

when the refugees did not experience any limits. In the open apology of borders, the world without them is perceived as chaotic:

"*Everything and every living being are limited by its surface and are only defined in this way in space: every stone, every plant, every animal, and every person. Living beings are even aggregates of borders, in fact mostly billions of them, because each consists of cells, each of which is limited by cell walls and is only viable in this way. So what happens when these boundaries dissolve?*" (DP, September 14, 2015).

Role model for the ideal border management is here Hungarian Prime minister Viktor Orbán (DP, September 24, 2015) and if a call for deeper EU integration appears, it is a vision that all EU decides to tighten the border controls in a coordinated way (DP, September 15, 2015).

2020 – Border as health protection?

Five years later, in early March 2020, the Austrian media and public discussed a possible new migration crisis triggered by Turkey (Der Standard, March 4, 2020). However, after few days, the hurried closure of nation-state borders due to the upsurge of new coronavirus cases moved the attention to another crisis of border management. In the case of *Der Standard*, the reports were from the very beginning focused not only on the government restrictions but also on problems the people in borderlands were facing. Early, the first concerns about the potential misuse of border closures were voiced:

"*One thinks first of the walls behind which the member states of the EU are now entrenched, of the border controls and entry bans, occasionally applied in a way that is inhumane and contradicts all common rules. Such restrictions may currently be necessary to protect the population, but there were and are political forces in Europe for whom the free movement of people has always been a thorn in their side and the admission of refugees has been and is the devil's work on their own people, especially those from certain countries. Who dreams of using guns at the border without seeing it as a nightmare?*" (DS, March 20, 2020).

After the militarization of borders connected with the start of the pandemics, *Der Standard* warned against the side-effects of such steps: "*Fences were built and border bars closed. If states do not quickly dismantle the barriers after the corona crisis has subsided, there is a risk of dangerous alienation*" (DS, May 3, 2020).

The position of *Die Presse* was not much distinct from *Der Standard* which is in contrast to the situation in 2011 and 2015. Despite the initial acknowledgment of the nation-state as the institution that secured its citizens via border closures (This virus "*demonstrates that boundlessness need not always be a value under all circumstances";* Die Presse, March 21, 2020), the newspaper finally started to support the lifting of restrictions to support the economy, tourism and disrupted social networks:

To get the economy going, the first thing that is needed is an opening of borders, a revitalization of the European internal market, and a re-globalization. A country like Austria, whose prosperity depends on 50 percent on exports and foreign tourism, cannot revive its economy in national quarantine, (DP, May 12, 2020) or

"*Open borders mean more: many people have long had an international social network. They want to see their family, relatives, and friends again - or at least have a perspective when it is possible,* (DP, May 23, 2020).

When looking into the French media, the intensity of border debate was different in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*. When writing about borders, *Le Monde* highlighted the shock that the French passport could not suddenly guarantee the same freedoms that were citizens of the EU used to enjoy. Such a situation was seen as a promised land for the far-right politicians:

It's the world upside down! Dozens of countries are banned from them, not only under the pretext of contagion but also because the Covid-19 feeds nationalist and xenophobic demagogy (Le Monde, March 18, 2020). Very soon, the opinion articles started to question the efficacy of border closure: "*Borders, a false remedy for the coronavirus*" (LM, April 10, 2020).

Le Figaro offered to the audience many texts about the border closures but only a few opinion articles that would discuss specifically this issue. The exceptional cases were presenting contradicting opinions. On the one hand, it was a French alt-right activist Éric Zemmour who praised the institutions of a nation-state which are according to them more realistic, strong, and efficient than abstract ideologies of borderless world:

Those infected with the virus have a passport: the Chinese first infected or the Italians infected. But the borderless ideology is stronger than anything (Le Figaro, March 20, 2020). This way of argumentation was pushed forward one month after once again:

After the era of blissful globalization, which was thought to be beneficial to everyone, the notion of borders is gradually being rehabilitated in Europe. Since the early 2000s, the "opening" had already suffered several stab wounds (crisis of terrorism…)" (LF, April 15).

The same day, however – the context of the debate was broadened by a claim that "*borders are made to be crossed"* (LF, April 14, 2020).

From the six news media outlets analyzed in this piece, no newspaper advocated the border restrictions so fiercely as Czech *Mladá Fronta*. The newspaper owned by the close collaborators of the Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, his border policy was met with acclamation. The first voice in this direction came March 13:

"The price for the excessive openness of the world, for the fact that we do not have to show our passport at the borders, is very clear. It is a price for Schengen, for a Europe without borders which some of us have tried to say out loud for many years" (Mladá fronta, March 13, 2020).

The news articles in *Mladá fronta* were permeated by the critique of the European Union ("*Ursula von der Leyen even opposed the closing of borders. To many people, it seemed unbelievable that she was more interested in the alleged violation of European rules than in the rising numbers of those infected"*; MF, March 17, 2020) and the headlines made clear that the threat is behind the borders, in the foreigners who can transmit the deadly virus into Czechia:

"There is another world beyond the border, commuters are a risk (MF, March 21, 2020), *The green border is guarded against the Germans"* (MF, March 25, 2020). The underlying message for the audience was the following: "*Alarm clock for dreamy Europe"* (MF, March 16, 2020), in contrast to naïve Europe, the institutions of the nation-state solved this crisis better.

On the other side, *Hospodářské noviny* were holding the line of *Der Standard* and *Le Monde*. Although the initial border closure could make sense, the long-time effects could be able to harm the whole EU, according to the opinion articles:

"Therefore, when the epidemic is over, we should be careful that the state does not want to retain more control over the people. And that the newly erected borders would not be preserved in the form of a coronavirus curtain, which would appeal to all sorts of authoritarians and nationalists" (Hospodářské noviny, March 18, 2020).

Also, the authors of the comments were concerned about how easily may citizens surrender their freedoms: "*The specificity of the Czechs is that what would harm them the most in the long run, many of them enthusiastically promote as the best possible way out of the current difficult situation caused by the pandemic of the new coronavirus: self-confinement. People would not mind if the borders remained closed for a very long time or if any controls on them worked forever, as a survey for the SEZNAM ZPRÁVY showed"* (HN, April 17, 2020).

Overall comparison of the contexts

As showed above, the context of the border debate moved significantly between 2011 and 2020. If the question of the Schengen reform was after the Euro crisis rather on the periphery of political and media interest with the small exception of election campaigns and the incident at Ventimiglia, the migration into Europe and the coronavirus pandemics represented a game-changer. The gradual renaissance of nation-state institutions was very often portrayed in contrasting ways. As a result, the context of the debate was wider – while more conservative newspapers (*Le Figaro, Die Presse*) did not hesitate to emphasize and defend the protective functions of the state borders, the more liberal news media (*Le Monde, Der Standard,*

Hospodářské noviny) continually advocated the freedoms associated with the Schengen Agreement and revealed the populist motivations of (typically) far-right politicians who were calling for the border controls. The gap between more conservative and more liberal media houses in Austria almost disappeared in 2020, which is partly true as well for the French media (with a few pro-border exceptions on pages of *Le Figaro*).

The interesting case is *Mladá Fronta* that in the decade changed its ideological positions. The nationalist position and support of border protective measures in 2020 do not resemble the reporting from 2011. The migration crisis in 2015 and the change of the owner could have been the turning points in this debate.

Identification of main narratives in border debate

The pre-selection of narratives took place in an evolutionary way which was inspired by the coding process suggested by Mayring (2002). During the data analysis, a special attention was given to the recurrent motives that were reemerging throughout the newspapers and countries as well as the time frame of this study.

From the literature review, two major containers of terms typical for border narratives appeared. In the case of the *narrative of security*, where terms like *protection, threat, obstacle, barrier, restrict and reduce* (cross-border flow) or *danger* were mentioned. Also, more graphical terms like *walls* or *fortress* are present. The opposite *narrative of integration* works with terms like *contact, cooperation, mobility, crossing border*. However, as the news articles from crisis periods were under scrutiny, the narrative of integration was logically less frequent.

These two categories are however not sufficient to embrace the reality of border closures in times of crisis. Thus, closer inspection of documents was needed to find other patterns in language. Apart from the mentioned narratives, a slightly different pair of categories was detected. Both are associated with the Schengen Area and vary in their perception of this agreement. The first one is negative and may be labeled *anti-Schengen narrative*. Its typical forms are sheer criticism of the open border regime inside of the Schengen Area and the key terms are *utopia, suspension of Schengen, end of Schengen*. In contrast, there is also an approach that appreciates the benefits and liberties that stem from the Schengen regime and want to preserve it almost at any price. This can be labeled *pro-Schengen narrative* and characteristic signs are words like *solidarity, liberty, free movement*. It should not be surprising that this duo of the narratives focused on Schengen have much in common with the previous two border narratives. The opponents of the Schengen regime argue with the narrative of security, the advocates of free movements across borders prefer the narrative of integration.

Another set of assumptions about borders may be summarized around the notion of control. In other words, *the narrative of control* focuses on the fact that some state administration

installs the border checks and some officers (police, army) to oversee the situation on the periphery of state. As will be discussed further, the narrative of control often overlaps with the narrative of security. Sometimes the border patrols are a symbol of protection of the country from external threats. If this narrative stands alone without the signs of the narrative of security, it represents an administrative interpretation of borders (similar to the police patrol that checks the speed limit. Typical expressions used also in automated coding are *control, respect* (towards rules, law), and other administrative steps. Very near is also a *narrative of barriers* that materializes the control on borders into physical limits like fences or walls.

There is also a category that takes a critical standpoint towards the politicians enforcing border controls. Such news articles or voices in them present closure of borders as a gesture of populism. The authors or their news sources consider such steps as a strategy how to achieve electoral gains. Such contributions were detected through terms like *populism*, *extremism*, *far-right*. Overall, this argumentation is called the *narrative of populism*.

The last identified narrative emphasizes the temporary character of the border closure. As demonstrated below, politicians use this phrase very often as a mitigating circumstance when they close the border and want to show that they also follow the rules of Schengen Acquis. They present the reintroduction of border controls as an important but interim step. Keywords here are: *temporary, interim, provisional*.

Justifications

The media representations of borders and border closures created by the opinion articles in the news media do not stand isolated from the narratives and discourses that are shared by the politicians. Those who influence the state policies, decide about border management, and use the debate on borders as an opportunity to increase their stakes are also important makers of reality. They are also part of bordering processes (Scott, 2012).

There are four approaches towards the closure of the border articulated by the politicians who reintroduced the border checks on the inner borders in the Schengen Area. The most significant aspect is the symbolic language used by politicians while talking about borders and their functions.

1. ***Fortress Europe***

The first group is composed of the most fervent advocates of the borders and their sense in the contemporary world. Such justifications very often present borders as a site of protection. The borders are seen as a site of sovereignty where the nation-state can guarantee the security of its citizens. Such ability lies in sharp contrast to the international or supranational organizations that are associated with the vision of a borderless and fluid world.

Borders here play a role of a filter installed by the state to decide who has a right to entry and who does not have this privilege. This argumentation prefers order and control to the liberties and the freedom of movement is seen as a luxury for times of "good weather". It is particularly telling that such a conception of strict border controls is pointed to the external threat from outside. In a sometimes xenophobic conflict "Us X Them" the border is believed to be a decisive battlefield. On a symbolic level, terms like "fortress", "citadel" or "wall" are very often evoked. No matter of associations to the Berlin Wall and strict border régime between the Soviet bloc and Western Europe before 1989, border enthusiasts aim to draw a picture of a border that can capture all unwanted influences.

In 2011 this argumentation was the domain of far-right politicians from the National Front in France and the politicians from the center-right stayed immune to this kind of rhetoric when they were calling for a reform of Schengen. However, in 2015 the „fortress Europe" justification gained particular popularity among politicians like Viktor Orbán in Hungary whose action on the border with Serbia against refugees attached attention from the whole of Europe. Also, the Austrian Ministry of Interior Johanna Miki-Leitner spoke about "fortress Europe" in October 2015 when discussing the border measures.

The next logical step is the deployment of the army on the borders which was a demand from Heinz-Christian Strache from Eurosceptic FPÖ. Army, police, and security forces are an inherent part of the fortified strategy which was visible as well in the reaction of Czech governmental politicians during the refugee crisis of 2015. The presence of a police guard on the border is a typical form of *a narrative of security* that evokes the possibility to close the "door" (narrative of barriers) whenever needed. Those who do not follow this strategy of strict border protection are in the eyes of the far-right guilty of letting the criminals in the heart of Europe.

The aim of building the fortress was also evident during the first months of coronavirus pandemics. Sometimes (and most explicitly in the Czech cases), the national border in the symbolic language looked like the protective face mask that might stop the viruses and the inhabitants of the country might stay secured from risk. Such an *anti-Schengen narrative* was repeated by Czech political activist Petr Robejšek who praised the functions of borders in *Mladá fronta* in the following way: „*The looming invasions of the barbarians, as well as the plague, revive the ancient experiences of death threats against which the nation must defend itself and regardless of what the foreigner says. In an emergency, it embraces, restricts, and protects its citizens, and they expect nothing else from it*"(Mladá fronta, March 24, 2020).

In sum, this strategy contributes to the securitization of borders which materializes the fear of external threat which may, in turn, result in electoral gains of those who are "closing" borders

however is this outcome difficult to realize. In terms of narratives, this strategy is a synthesis of *the anti-Schengen narrative* and *narrative of security.*

*2. **Trivialization***

The second family of border measures justifications tries to downplay such steps. The reintroduction of border controls is then portrayed as a technical measure that does not contradict the rules of the Schengen Agreement. The politicians introduce border checks with the claim they want to re-implement standard procedures and the controls will have just a temporary characteristic (narrative of control, narrative of temporality): "*Germany will extend border controls until November 13, German Interior Ministry Thomas de Maizière reported on Wednesday (October 28th). The government has decided "after careful consideration" to once again extend its "temporary border controls" as thousands of refugees continue to flow through Austria* (Le Monde, October 28, 2015)". These justifications are not connected to the metaphorical language or strong symbolic expressions. In other words, they do not represent *the anti-Schengen narrative.*

The step of closing borders and therefore limiting freedoms of movement is therefore considered as a "necessary evil". The decision is also explained as exceptional: *"For a month, we will establish border controls, which is not at all a suspension of Schengen (...) which provides, in one of its articles, the possibility for states to do so in specific circumstances, "* (LM, November 6, 2015) said French minister of interior Bernard Cazeneuve in November 2015. An important precedent for this justification was the behavior of the French government during the Ventimiglia incident in 2011. The action to discontinue the railway service between France and Italy due to the concern for the public order was later assessed by European Commission as appropriate (LM, April 18, 2011). It is, therefore, safe for any Schengen country to use such a policy after complying with formal requirements.

Another way of justifying the controls was used in 2011 by the Danish government. After the decision to control the border crossings with Germany, they explained this step as routine

traffic controls. *Danish integration minister Soeren Pind said it would be "customs measures" to fight crime from eastern countries. It would not be a question "neither of checking the passports nor of closing the borders"* (LM, May 12, 2011).

When reintroducing border controls in this trivializing way, the government wants to satisfy more extreme voices who dream about fortress Europe while at the same time calm down those who have concerns about the future of freedom of movement. However, each closure of the border contributes to the normalization of re-bordering tendencies inside of the Schengen area. Therefore, it is an example of *a narrative of security*, which does not want to question the existence of the Schengen Agreement. Sometimes it can coexist with *the pro-Schengen narrative* because the trivializers of border measures very often claim that things get back to normal in the future. When doing so, the defense of Schengen may include also *the narrative of integration* that emphasizes the mutual bonds between countries and the value of cooperation. However, the previous chapter suggests that the trivialization of border closure contributes to the securitization whichever the motivations are.

3. *Anti-globalization*

The third branch of argumentation has truly minority status in the analyzed cases. For some left-wing politicians, the closure of borders is the right answer to unsustainable globalization. When the state closes the border, the adherents of the "anti-globalization" stream perceive it as a chance how to disentangle from the global structures of capitalism and see a way towards the independent and self-sufficient local economy. Such worldview is represented in the analyzed material by French politicians and anticapitalistic movements:

Borders are seen by these left-wing officials as a protection of the "commons" and the relocation of activities as a way of fighting against "the great relocation of the world". "We are asking for solidarity, ecological and social relocation: otherwise the far right will take up this issue. We are for a free movement of people and knowledge, but a very strong regulation of the movement of goods, services, and capital", says the representative of the radical left movement

association (LM, April 8, 2020). Although this stance is not widespread, it shows that the topic of borders is relevant both for the far right and far left. In terms of narrative terms, group no. 3 represents a very interesting mixture of *pro-Schengen* and *anti-Schengen* narratives. While supporting the free movement of people, the free movement of goods and capital is considered a problem. In contrast to the rest of the groups, the narrative of security is not important for the anti-globalization groups.

4. ***Domino effect***

The last category of justifications occurs in times when the mechanisms of the Schengen Agreement do not work. The Schengen border regime stands upon the solidarity of the member states of the EU. If one cannot exercise its role on the external border of Schengen or if one reintroduces controls in the inner part of Schengen, the situation may escalate into a domino effect when the states just follow the steps of others and introduce border checks in an uncoordinated way.

In September 2015, Germany decided to install border checks between Bavaria and Austria to gain a better overview of the identity of incomers from the refugee wave. This strategy to start with the controls was accompanied by the more or less trivializing justification. The government claimed that the controls were only provisory but needed because the country reached its limit of refugees (Le Monde, September 14, 2015). As a result, other states followed because they did not want to become the only and last possible destination for migrants. This domino effect involved Austria, Czechia, or Slovakia. *"Slovakia has adopted border control measures with Austria and Hungary, fearing an influx of migrants after Germany's border controls tightened, the interior ministry said on Monday"* (LM, September 14, 2015).

In 2020, the main motivation of the hurried closure of the border was primarily not related to solidarity but cautiousness and panic. In an attempt to slow down the spread of the virus, the states initially measured the body temperature of the travelers on the borders and then limited the

mobility to the necessary minimum or completely. It was also the behavior of other nation-states that made the others come up with tighter measures.

During the domino effect, the narrative of security is elicited while the *Schengen narratives* fluctuate because the main motivation is the reaction to the behavior of others. For some, it has also an anti-Schengen connotation, for others, this step does not have any ideological meanings.

Discussion - EU borders always in transition?

As pointed out above, the decision to re-impose the controls on the borders inside of the EU is related to securitization. Consequently, the self-isolation into the nation-state borders is seen as a remedy to the crises that come from the external spheres (Casaglia et al., 2020). This study presents many indications that the temptation to close the border comes as a seemingly easy solution how to solve the crises related to globalization.

In all three cases, the borders became thicker (Haselsberger, 2014) as they attributed new sets of functions. Anyone who claimed the importance of borders inside of the EU, the states who employed the exceptions from Schengen Acquis, or the politicians who arranged the provisional presence of guards on the borders played important role in the process of Schengen bordering as well (Colombeau, 2015; Evrard et al., 2020). During the events of 2015-2016, some member states (e.g., Germany, Denmark, and others) started to extend the exception regularly. As a result of such policies, the threat was normalized in the political discourse (Karamanidou & Kasperek, 2020) which may represent an important precondition for the quick and radical resurrection of borders inside of the EU during the COVID-19 pandemics. The states and their re-bordering steps were inspired by the precedents from 2011 and 2015.

In the decade between 2010 and 2020, the context of border debate transformed significantly. It is possible to state that the fascination from the free space without the border checks vanished and the current form of Schengen Area does not present "end of history". The Schengen arrangement became a subject of criticism (mainly from the right-wing political parties) that challenged the status quo. The borders once again became a site that is possible to be controlled and regulated. The covidfencing measures of 2020 and 2021 crowned this trend of normalization of border controls. After the 35th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement (1985 – 2020), it is evident that the meaning of borders is not fixed and is always situated in the given context. The borders (even those inside of the EU) are always in transition and are continuously

re-narrated and re-shaped. The development analyzed in this study confirms that imaginations, emotions, and symbols are central to the border debate.

The topics of migration or COVID-19 opened new fields of security (Bigo, 2003) that forced people to think in geographical terms. The projection of immigrants or viruses rescaled the perception of the world and some people suddenly experienced the need to protect themselves against new and partly unprecedented phenomena. That is related to the fact that the construction of borders is part of self-defining processes (Paasi, 2001). Some opinion-makers are very capable of capitalizing on this relationship of global crises and individual fears.

The situation in the EU between 2010 and 2020 also showed that the borders can hardly fulfill the expectations. The migration pressure is stronger than physical barriers on borders and the migrants can usually find another way how to bypass the controls. The viruses also do not respect the borders delineated by people. That shows the language and perceptions of borders may be more important than the realized political step. It does not matter much if the EU member states in 2015 constructed barbed wire fences. The fact that this scenario was even mentioned is more important because such a step allowed mere thoughts about such measures. The language has, thus, a prominent role and it is worth analyzing.

The border is often portrayed as a tool that helps against the alleged anarchy of a borderless world. As the globalized world will certainly produce new types of crises and people will experience other upheavals, there will always be some opinion-makers and political actors that want to avail themselves of the situation and come up with re-bordering tendencies. It is, therefore, expectable that the *narrative of security* and *anti-Schengen narrative* will stay in heart of populist discourse in times of crisis.

In the end, it is and it will be the responsibility of journalists and newsrooms whether they will solely be loudspeakers for politicians or try moderating a debate. This project identified that the *narrative of integration* is considerably weak in times of crises and the political actors very often avoid it and use instead trivializing strategies how to justify the controls. The debate in news

may work as a parallel stage introducing other border narratives which are not present in political discourse. It is also a timely question for border scholars to inspect how this transformation of the meaning of borders will continue in the years to come.

Conclusion

The Schengen Agreement brought about a very large transition of the meanings associated with the border inside of the EU (Zaiotti, 2017). However, this project shows that the borders are continually re-narrated. The events of 2011 introduced the topic of Schengen Acquis reform (Dekalchuk, 2015) and the topic of the future of Schengen has stayed relevant for a whole decade. If the reintroduction of border checks in the context of immigration showed that the nation-state borders are still valid identity-makers (Evrard et al., 2020), the development accompanying the COVID-19 crisis rescaled the originally exceptional mechanism to the unprecedented scope. This time, the subject of border checks was not the immigrants from distant countries but everyone, because anyone could have been the bearer of the virus. However, all three crises have in common, that the threat is always external, and the reintroduction of border checks contributed and strengthened the construction of threat.

Primarily, the perspectives are diverging according to the space configuration, year of admission into the Schengen Area, or some country-specific characteristics. States on the external Schengen border (e.g., Greece, Italy, and Hungary) have different sets of responsibilities and tasks in comparison with the states inside of the area (e.g., Czechia, Austria). Also, another possible variance among member states is whether they are a long-term destination for immigration from outside of the EU (e.g., France, Germany, and Italy) or did not have such experience (e.g., Visegrad group, Baltic countries). Also, ideologies have a remarkable role. The newspapers with a more conservative standpoint were more likely to emphasize the role of borders and border checks for the protection of citizens in 2011 and 2015. In contrast, more liberal newspapers almost did not admit any protective role the borders may have in the context of migration. While the conservative media focused on order and security, the liberal media put stress on the liberties and humanitarian aspects. In 2020, the positions of French and Austrian journalists from conservative and liberal camps could have reconciled slightly as both streams emphasized the freedoms associated with the Schengen Agreement. Even if the liberal media were more active in this

debate, the conservative counterparts did not oppose them significantly. In Czechia, however, the gap between liberal and conservative media did not decrease in the COVID-19 crisis.

The media representations of borders are, therefore, context-depended. This project acknowledges the role of context, country of origin, and time in the process of construction of the meaning of the borders. Such meaning is not stable; the perception of borders is constantly transformed by the re-bordering processes. Three crises discussed in this paper added new layers to the complex reality of borders. If state boundaries had memory, all of the talks about them and exceptional measures would mean a precedent for the future.

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Abstract

This project concentrates on the debate about borders in the selected European news media in the decade between 2011 and 2020. In course of this period, three time spans are identified when the nation-states imposed the border checks inside of the ostensibly borderless Schengen Area. The analysis of the news articles from 6 newspapers (*Mladá fronta*, *Hospodářské noviny*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Der Standard*, *Die Presse*) shows how the context of the border debate evolved under the impact of migration crises and coronavirus crisis. These situations have in common that the notion of border protection had a prominent role in the discourses of the far-right. Throughout the decade of the 2010s, this study witnesses the gradual securitization of borders inside of the EU and illustrates how the symbolic language and various narratives contributed to this development. Finally, this thesis analyzes the justifications and rhetoric of those political actors that enthused about the closure of borders. The findings presented in this study summarize how the language and media narratives transform the meanings of borders.

Keywords: borders, Schengen, media representation, European integration, border controls

Abstrakt

Dieses Projekt konzentriert sich auf die Debatte um Grenzen in ausgewählten europäischen Nachrichtenmedien im Jahrzehnt zwischen 2011 und 2020. In diesem Zeitraum werden drei Zeitspannen identifiziert, in denen die Nationalstaaten die Grenzkontrollen innerhalb des vermeintlich grenzenlosen Schengen-Raums verhängten. Die Analyse der Nachrichtenartikel aus 6 Zeitungen (Mladá fronta, Hospodářské noviny, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Der Standard, Die Presse) zeigt, wie sich der Kontext der Grenzdebatte unter den Auswirkungen von Migrationskrisen und Coronavirus-Krise entwickelt hat. Gemeinsam ist diesen Situationen, dass der Begriff des Grenzschutzes in den Diskursen der Rechtsextremen eine herausragende Rolle spielte. Während des Jahrzehnts der 2010er Jahre wird diese Studie Zeuge der allmählichen Versicherheitlichung der Grenzen innerhalb der EU und veranschaulicht, wie die Symbolsprache und verschiedene Narrative zu dieser Entwicklung beigetragen haben. Schließlich analysiert diese Arbeit die Begründungen und die Rhetorik jener politischen Akteure, die von der Schließung von Grenzen begeistert waren. Die in dieser Studie präsentierten Ergebnisse fassen zusammen, wie die Sprach- und Medienerzählungen die Bedeutung von Grenzen verändern.

Stichwörter: Grenze, Schengen, Grenzkontrollen, Mediendarstellungen, Europäische Integration.