



SVENSKA SÄLLSKAPET FÖR ANTROPOLOGI OCH GEOGRAFI
invites to the 2021 VEGA SYMPOSIUM on

Bounded Spaces in Question: X-raying the Persistence of Regions and Territories

Date: Friday 23 April 2021, 13:15–16:45

Venue: Zoom.

Participation requires registration by e-mail to Dr. Jonas Åkerman (jonas.akerman@nateko.lu.se) no later than Tuesday 20 April. Registered participants will be informed of any further corona adaptations of the event.

The 2021 Vega Symposium honours Anssi Paasi, professor at the University of Oulu, recipient of SSAG's Vega Medal 2021, for his profound contributions to human geography, especially political geography. The symposium will explore the conceptual and empirical meanings of territories and regions, and will problematize borders as material and ideological tools, processes and symbols in region/territory and identity building. Speakers will address questions such as: How can we best make sense of the contemporary functions and the perpetual appeal of regions and territories? What will be the future of such units in the ever more dynamic world? How to best theorize territories, borders/bordering, and their contextual character? What can geography do to promote compassion and ethics inside and across borders? The symposium instigates from the fact that the geography of regions and territories is always also political geography. This seems to hold true whether we talk about the conceptualization of regions and regionalism, or the practices of regional planning and policy.

Programme

13:15 *Opening of the Vega Symposium.* Associate Professor Thomas Borén, President SSAG.

13:20 *Introduction.* Associate Professor Madeleine Bonow, Södertörn University, Moderator of the Symposium.

13:30 *Examining the persistence of bounded spaces: Remarks on the progress of border studies and the practices of bordering.* Professor Anssi Paasi, University of Oulu, Finland.

14:15 *Taking territory seriously in a fluid, topologically varied world: Reflections in the wake of the populist turn and the*

Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Alexander B. Murphy, University of Oregon, USA.

14.45 Coffee

15:15 *Borders as time-spaces of authority: The regulation of cross-border movements and rights.* Dr. Linn Axelsson, Stockholm University.

15:45 *For a new new regional geography: Structure, agency, and more-than-relational regionality.* Professor Martin Jones, Staffordshire University, UK.

16.15 Discussion

16:45 Closing of the Symposium

Most Welcome!

www.ssag.se

Synopsis

Bounded Spaces in Question: X-raying the Persistence of Regions and Territories

Regions and territories become institutionalized at various scales as part of wider geohistorical practices and discourses, through which spatial entities accomplish their borders, institutions, and symbolisms, and attain (often contested) identity narratives. Borders are mobilized to organize social spaces and to structure social life at various scales, from local daily life to regions and states, from supra-state units to global geopolitical spaces. Correspondingly, the functions and meanings of borders and bordering vary. Geographers have questioned for decades the self-explanatory nature of regional borders. Doubts were raised in regional geography, in spatial science's interpretations of functional regions as open systems, and more recently in relational thinking on regions. Regional borders are perpetually on the agenda in the debates on spatial governance, planning and hard/soft spaces, for example. Similarly, state borders have been challenged by all kinds of flows and networks, and geographers have criticized the taken-for-granted divide between inside and outside, the territorial trap and methodological nationalism. Yet, state borders have been hardening since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. New technical landscapes of control, associated with security discourses, overlap with symbolic/emotional landscapes of control based on spatial socialization, identities and memory. State borders reverberate today with nationalism, anti-immigration discourses, and racism, features that make evident the violence that is embedded in borders and bordering. Currently expanding critical border studies, reflecting relational and topological thinking, highlight both spatial and temporal dimensions of bordering. Social movements such as Open borders/No borders have raised issues with the ethics of bordering. And yet, the allure of territorial spaces appears to remain, as displayed by the rise of (ethno-)nationalism, autocracy, and the ongoing erection of border walls. Today 6 out of 10 people worldwide live in a state with one of the nearly 80 existing walls.

This symposium will explore the conceptual and empirical meanings of territories and regions, and will problematize borders as material and ideological tools, processes and symbols in region/territory and identity building. Speakers will address questions such as: How can we best make sense of the contemporary functions and the perpetual appeal of regions and territories? What will be the future of such units in the ever more dynamic world? How to best theorize territories, borders/bordering, and their contextual character? What can geography do to promote compassion and ethics inside and across borders? The symposium instigates from the fact that the geography of regions and territories is always also political geography. This seems to hold true whether we talk about the conceptualization of regions and regionalism, or the practices of regional planning and policy.