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Call for papers: before July 1st, 2012



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The objective of this coming issue of *La Revue de Géographie Alpine / The Journal of Alpine Research* is to come back over the link between mountains and borders, in a context where the traditional representation of borders seen as the ground for categorization and delimitation is now questioned by multiple flows processes and dynamics. Different trends are at work: the material spatial inscription of borders and their uncertain visibility appear more and more difficult to define, as these become more fluid, open or fuzzy. This contradiction constitute the central issue of this publication, justifies questioning the possible adaption of the idea of “mobile borders” (Amilhat Szary & Giraut, 2011) to and within mountain territories.

If the link between border and mountain is not new, it has generally been mobilized in narratives which rationality was based on the fixity induced by topographical barriers. It is this very same stability which has notably justified the long-lasting idea of the “natural border” : modern states have were keen to base their territorial constructs on the natural order since the latter was supposed to reflect a divine will. The ideal of the topographical border was a key element to the constitution of a political order which relied on a sovereign rule issued by divine law (Debarbieux, 1997). At times when nature is more often mobilized to build cross-border relations, notably through numerous environmental conservation projects (Fourny, 2005), contemporary borders undergo a permanent process of *de-territorialisation / re-territorialisation* but do not disappear, as had been predicted by some in the early 1990's. But their very location is more and more open to question.

In mountain environments, the questioning of the fixity of the border can first rely on the analysis of apparent evidences. Firstly, the classical *significance* of fixed borders can be subject to a very real mobility when the natural discontinuities that ground it changes. The position of thalwegs, for instance, may evolve with the displacement of rivers bed. Climate change may also be responsible for topographical change, inducing for example the thaw of glaciers used to delimit boundaries, requiring a *renegotiation* based on the location of a summit point, a pass or a watershed. For example, the top of a ski lift has very recently brought up unexpected border negotiations within the European Union: if the border is to remain defined by the glacier line, the top of the lift

will change of country... There is no literature on this type of link between geopolitics and environment, and we hope to gather some papers on these topics within this issue.

But the notion of mobile border embodies a larger dimension when considering the evolution of border functions the location of which is no longer constrained to the limits of national sovereignty areas, but on the contrary tend to be pushed back and forth, projected, multiplied and diffused. The control function can notably be disseminated within a national territory, and no longer fixed at its entry point. Biometric, numeric, or smart borders illustrate that tendency. Borders are more and more organised as networks, therefore promoting the idea of reticular borders located within communication hubs. Whether in airports or train stations, of following mobile teams of customs officers, migrations and transactions are now controlled through “mobile borders”. How does the mountain context influence the exercise of delocalized border functions? Does the history of both formal (seasonal migrations) and informal (smuggling) complex mobility systems provide for interesting explanations of mountains to security driven globalisation processes? Do larger (not only cross-border but also transnational) cooperation projects modify the conditions of governance in the mountain ranges that are crossed by borders?

If the *Revue de Géographie Alpine / Journal of Alpine Research* wishes to dedicate more space to a political analysis on the status undertaken by mountain territories in multiscalar power strategies, we do not want this issue to appear as a mere « mountains geopolitics » collection of texts (cf. *Hérodote* 2002). We would rather try to relay and update a reflection on the specificities of mountain borders (*Le Globe* 1997 & 2005, *RGA* 2003, *Cahiers de Géographie* 2004), without necessarily limiting ourselves to international political borders. The papers gathered under the theme of the “mobile border” are not to consider mountains as only the setting for power relations, but rather to question the way in which mountains can continue to work as a back-up to building up the relation to the other, to otherness, in a world of flows. And this appears to be interesting only when considering that mountain as fluid places, from the point of view of human mobilities as well as from that of the physical transformations induced by the recent climate changes.... By testing its applicability to mountain spaces, our aim is indeed to further question the idea of mobile border, its eventual assessments allowing for its conceptual evolution.

The final publication being scheduled in March 2013, proposals are expected before May 15th, 2012, (500 words abstract) and final papers should be handed out before July 1st, 2012 (25 000 signs max., spaces included – bibliography is limited to 25 titles: see Rules for publication).

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