

EU's Zoned Borderscapes

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The central political, economic and social space of the European Union is based on the concept of an “area of freedom, security and justice”, which is defined in opposition to what lies outside of it, and what could endanger it. The physical borders of that area become a place for the spectacularization of this antagonistic relationship, while the repression against everyday human mobility from the outside is transformed into the primary civil securitarian technique for the production of belonging and autolegitimization of the right to control entry and residence. In principle, membership in the area of freedom, security and justice is not final: if a country accepts the required principles, amends its legislation and introduces appropriate institutional practices, it can become a member, if the current members give their approval. Sectors in which changes need to be made are sorted into chapters and sections, and a detailed evaluation is carried out, both at regular intervals as well as in certain key phases. A positive evaluation usually entails new opportunities for economic and political cooperation. This process appears to be technocratic, objective and rational. It is presented as a road that an interested country must undergo in order to enter the area of freedom, security and justice. Therefore, people (goods, money, information, etc.) are not the only objects whose movement is controlled, but, in a figurative sense, countries are also moving towards the EU.

The borderscape of the EU composed of concentric circles was explicitly formulated in 1998, during the Austrian presidency of the Council of the European Union, when the draft strategy on immigration and asylum policy was presented. This document (Strategy 1998) establishes an image of the world in which more than half of the Earth is divided into concentric regions with different operational roles in the control of borders and migration movements towards the EU. Without hesitation, the EU should use all available means, political and economic pressure, to influence countries to implement migration control. Or, as stated in the document:

60. Here, a model of concentric circles of migration policy could replace that of “fortress Europe”. For obvious reasons, the Schengen States currently lay down highly intensive control measures. Their neighbours (essentially the associated States and perhaps also the Mediterranean area) should gradually be linked into a similar system which should be brought increasingly in line with the first circle's standards, particularly with regard to visa, border control and readmission policies. A third circle of States (CIS area, Turkey and North Africa) will then concentrate primarily on transit checks and combating facilitator networks, and a fourth circle (Middle East, China, black Africa) on eliminating push factors.

61. In the system as a whole, meeting the obligations arising in each respective role should have positive consequences, just as failure to meet them should have negative consequences for the country concerned: for example, the second circle must meet Schengen standards as a precondition for EU membership; for the third circle, intensified economic cooperation is linked to the fulfilment of their obligations; and for the fourth circle, the extent of development aid granted can be assessed on that basis (Strategy 1998).

The peripheries, which gradually spread out from the center, become so-called buffer zones, or, more precisely, **tampon zones** (cf. Stojić Mitrović 2021).

The complex dynamics of absorbing states into the European border regime through processes of **externalization** result in the creation of differential, hierarchical, non-spatial zones which reflect asymmetric political relations. From a Eurocentric perspective, a zoned world enables not only the technical outsourcing of movement control and removes unwanted people on the move from services, administration, and ultimately the streets, but also creates an image in which borderscapes outside the EU are transformed into tampon zones in which different governing rules are possible: unlimited administrative detention, violence, deportations and various other practices that are interpreted, like the borderscapes themselves, through their property of liminality. These spaces are usually the scenes of practices whose creation and implementation are actively or tacitly endorsed by the EU, for which the EU denies any responsibility: these practices are associated with nation states, not the EU. At the same time, borderscapes cut through the borders and territories of real nation-states, and do not cover a defined space.

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Literature

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