

Report on fourth Colloquium, '**Borders and migration**', held at University of Bologna, 23-24 April, 2009. Jointly organised by University of Bologna and L'Órientale, University of Naples.

The substantive focus of the colloquium was on borders and migration, but the opportunity was also taken to explore the important question of the neutrality of the application of a topological approach to the study of social and cultural dynamics. This was an issue that had been raised at the very first colloquium, surfacing repeatedly in the others that followed.

The opening lecture, by **Professor Iain Chambers**, focused on the bodily violence that characterizes some experiences of migration. He argued forcefully that topography and topology were implicated in the drawing of borders and boundaries, and argued that such mappings must be understood in terms of the complicity of topography and topology with contemporary forms of power. The lecture that followed – delivered by ATACD partner **Professor Josep Perello** - was deliberately from a discipline that approaches the notion of the border in a very different way. This presentation illuminated the importance of investigating the topological relations between dimensions and boundaries from a physicist's point of view, showing how they may be variously related in different kinds of topological space.

The following lecture was delivered by Gigi Roggero on behalf of the political scientist and ATACD partner **Professor Sandro Mezzadra**, who was unwell. This was a discussion of the border as method. The argument developed here was that one of the key characteristics of current globalization processes lies in the continuous reshaping of different geographical scales such that nations are more open and more closed to flows of capital, commodities and human bodies. Professor Mezzadra and his co-author Brett Neilson suggest that the reshaping of the world is a consequence of the topological operation of the border as a method. One example they give is what is called the body shop system (another example is detention centres), in which labour agencies mobilize specific mechanisms and legislation loopholes in the jurisdictions into which workers travel. Mezzadra and Neilson argue that this and other examples point to complex transformations of border regimes which correspond to the dream of a 'just-in-time' and 'to-the-point' migration that is increasingly shaping migratory policies across diverse geographic scales. Although they suggest that this dream is not fulfilled – and here they pointed to the ongoing but often unreported deaths that occur across borderscapes worldwide - they nevertheless suggest that it is no longer accurate to consider the international division of labour in terms of the drawing of a fixed border around and between discrete territorially bounded labour markets. Mezzadra and Neilson instead conceive the border as a method that both closes a labour market and allows a selective openness, a filtering and selection of labour in ways that facilitate processes of production and labour exploitation in terms of what they call *differential inclusion*. Here the question of the complicity of the application of topological methods is raised acutely, and there was considerable discussion of this point.

The final lecture was by the anthropologist **Professor Penny Harvey**, whose paper developed an understanding of the role of roads in the making of topographic and topological space. Her paper provided powerful examples to show that roads both connect and separate, and that the relations they make possible are multiple. Indeed, she proposed that multiple spaces co-exist in the relations made by roads. Both these last papers raised the question of whether and how topological space may be experienced, thus raising the question of experience for topological understandings of culture. How can experience – and methods that study experience – be made relevant to topological thinking?