

scientists and scholars are called on to reflect on the nature, typology and origin of the borders as well as on their past, present and future effects¹.

For several years, interdisciplinary research - "border regions and areas of interference" - has been carried out at the Faculty of Arts of the University of the Saarland on questions of the typology and development of borders as well as on the interplay of "natural", political, cultural and linguistic borders, the effect of borders on reality, identity and social and political consciousness in border regions. This group of geographers, historians, and specialists in the history of Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages and literatures concentrate paradigmatically on the Saar-Lor-Lux region, the area between France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany, though related aspects of the confrontation and interference zones of the Alps, the Germano-Slavic and the English-Scottish border areas are being increasingly taken into account.

This type of research must cross borderlines itself, borderlines between disciplines and nations. This is why numerous scholars from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Austria, Poland and Germany took part in the symposium "Grenzen und Grenzregionen - Frontières et régions frontalières - Borders and Border Regions", held from May 2nd till May 4th, 1991 in the border town of Saarbrücken. The symposium was subsidized by the Volkswagen Foundation and the Wissenschaftsministerium of the Saarland, to both of which we hereby wish to express our thanks. Most of the papers given on the occasion of this conference are published in this volume.

The first group of lectures dealt with the present-day and historical forms, the functions and the terminology of political borders. In his contribution, "The border as a legal issue", Wilfried Fiedler (Saarbrücken) discussed the basic functions of a border (as distinguished from the national territory of states), the methods of its protection and the chances of abolishing it. Thus he was able, right at the beginning, to point out clearly a major theme of the symposium, the analysis of characteristics of the type of border that divides regions with the same legal, economic and political system, yet which is in permanent tension with phenomena that have different orders and borders, such as language, religion, ethnic group and culture, this tension causing people to become aware of the border as a historical and individual phenomenon. Thus, from the point of view of the philologist, Max Pfister (Saarbrücken), in his lecture "The designations of the border and its markings in some Romance languages" was able to demonstrate clearly the

¹ With respect to the current discussion on borders - from the point of view of different disciplines compare: A. Demandt (ed.), *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte*, München 1990; *Siedlungsforschung*, 9 (1991), focusing on "Der Einfluß politischer Grenzen auf die Siedlungs- und Kulturlandschaftsentwicklung" with articles by - among others - the following authors: Franz Irsigler, Helmut Bender, Vladimir Nekuda, Hans Jürgen Nitz, Winfried Schich, Johann-Bernhard Haversath and Klaus Fehn; *LiLi. Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, H. 83: Sprachgrenzen (1991), ed. by W. Haubrichs with articles by - among others - Stefan Sonderegger, Ingo Reiffenstein, Ernst Eichler, Wolfgang Bufe and André Weckmann.