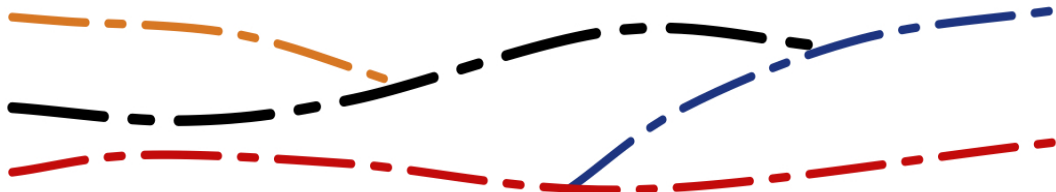EUBORDERSCAPES

Working Paper 4

Selected Conceptual Issues in Border Studies

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Abstract

The growing interdisciplinarity of border studies has moved discussion away from an exclusive concern with geographical, physical and tangible borders. Instead, contemporary research appears to privilege cultural, social, economic, religious and other borders that, while often invisible, have major impacts on the way in which human society is (re)ordered and compartmentalized. Similarly, the traditional dividing lines between the domestic and the international and between what it is "inside" and "outside" specific socio-spatial realms have been blurred. This has given way to understandings of borders embedded in new spatialities that challenge dichotomies typical to the territorial world of nation-states. Contemporary borders are *mobile*: they can be created, shifted, and deconstructed by a range of actors.

With this essay the authors engage a central question that characterises contemporary debate, namely: how are formal (e.g. state) and informal (social) processes of border-making related to each other? Borders are constantly reproduced as a part of shifting space-society relationships and the bordering processes they entail. Two aspects of these will be dealt with here: 1) the evolving process of reconfiguring state borders in terms of territorial control, security and sovereignty and 2) the nexus between everyday life-worlds, power relations and constructions of social borders. Both of these processes reflect change and continuity in thinking about borders and they also raise a number of ethical questions that will be briefly discussed as well.

Introduction

Borders are both a philosophical category as well fundamental social phenomena. To paraphrase Hegel's *Science of Logic*, borders can be understood to comprise a contradiction, a paradox of continuity and discreteness. Discreteness supposes that borders really exist, that they mark and structure space, and separate different phenomena from each other. The continuity of borders denies at the same time their objective existence and gives rise to the problem of their identification. The study of borders in society has progressed remarkably since its geographically bounded beginnings in the nineteenth century. Border studies today therefore reflect continuity and change in scientific thought and are also a result of innumerable contributions to the conceptualization of social space and its workings. Through the investigation of borders we realize that there can be no hegemonic dominance of any specific social theory, whether critical or not, in the understanding of space and its social significance. And whereas space is abstract and absolute, we now understand that it

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is borders that "fix" space and make space concrete as lived and comprehensible social places.

Consequently, the study of borders has moved from a dominant concern with formal state frontiers and ethno-cultural areas to the study of borders at diverse socio-spatial and geographical scales, ranging from the local and the municipal, to the global, regional and supra-state level. Border studies have also become a research field that encompasses a wide range of disciplines: political science, sociology, anthropology, history, international law and, more recently, the humanities - notably art, media studies, philosophy and ethics. Arguably, this disciplinary wealth of borders studies has rendered exclusive fixations with geographical, physical and tangible borders obsolete; equally important are cultural, social, economic and religious borders that even though often invisible have major impacts on the way in which human society is ordered organized and compartmentalized. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the current period in the development of border studies is marked by a proliferation of research centres, study groups and international conferences as well as the publication of numerous books and atlases. At the same time, this research field is also building up institutional structures at the international level that include the *Journal of Border Studies*, the now Finland-based Association of Borderlands Studies (ABS) and informal groups such as the *Border Regions in Transition network (BRIT)*, which has already held 12 international conferences, and large projects such as those supported by European Framework Programmes.

The renaissance of border studies we are now witnessing can partially be attributed to the emergence of counter-narratives to globalization discourses of the late 1980's and early 1990's. For a rather short but influential period, prophesies of "borderless worlds" abounded in which global technologies, cyberspace, capital flows, East-West political convergence and interstate integration would make political borders obsolete. However, perhaps ironically, globalization has instead contributed to research perspectives in which borders have become ubiquitous - not always visible, but always with clear social impacts. This paper is based on first results of the EUBORDERSCAPES project. EUBORDERSCAPES revisits themes and concepts that have been important for the development of border studies as well as investigates emerging research perspectives that appear to be important drivers of conceptual change. The present state of debate indicated that the field of border studies has opened up possibilities for questioning the rationales behind everyday border-making by understanding borders as institutions, processes and symbols. Borders are thus not given, they emerge through socio-political processes of border-making or *bordering* that take place within society.

With this essay the authors engage a central question that characterises contemporary debate, namely: how are formal (e.g. state) and informal (social) processes of border-making related to each other? Borders are constantly reproduced as a part of shifting space-society relationships and the bordering processes they entail. Two aspects of these will be dealt with here: 1) the evolving process of reconfiguring state borders in terms of territorial control, security and sovereignty and 2) the nexus between everyday life-worlds, power relations and constructions of social borders. Both of these processes reflect change and continuity in thinking about borders and they also raise a number of ethical questions that will be briefly discussed as well.

These themes do in fact largely represent human geography perspectives and as such a limited spectrum of contemporary border studies. The authors therefore do not aim at total comprehensiveness or completeness - the field is much too broad and variegated for any single or totalizing attempt at documentation. However, while there is no single border theory, nor is there likely to be such a theory, the authors hope that this contribution might help in the development of common and transdisciplinary conceptual frameworks.

Bordering as a Perspective

Traditional border studies have been characterized by a fixation with states and territories and the notion that borders are physical outcomes of political, social and/or economic processes. The world seen in this way is compartmentalized into state shapes and territories which are fixed, lacking internal fluidity. Accordingly, international relations take place between sovereign governments as determined by Westphalian norms. Contemporary border research debate clearly reflects more general shifts away from spatial fixity. According to this way of thinking borders are connected and/or divided by transitional spaces where a *perceived* set of unifying attributes and features is gradually replaced by another one. Natural borders are a result of humans characterising spaces as natural areas. Furthermore, political boundaries rarely match ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this way, the world political map showing lines separating "container boxes" is largely a representation of political elites, because many people do not recognize or associate themselves with such ossified and fixed divisions (van Houtum 2005).

Theories of the social construction of space have more generally contributed to a deep transformation of analytical approaches in human geography, including the emergence of the so-called critical geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 1996, 2003, 2006; Dalby and Ó Tuathail 1998; Mamadouh and Dijkink 2006). As something contrived by society rather given by nature or natural laws, borders can be broadly defined as categories of difference that create socio-spatial distinctions between places, individuals and groups. Furthermore, as part of this constructivist "turn" the notion of *bordering* has emerged as a general context for comprehending borders as something continually "being made" (See Van Houtum and Naerssen 2002, Newman, Scott 2011). With bordering, a conceptual transition has also taken place from seeing the border as a physical and often static geographic outcome of socio-spatial dynamics, to a context in which the borders are themselves understood as dynamic functional processes. At its most basic, the process of bordering can be defined as the everyday construction of borders, for example through political discourses and institutions, media representations, school textbooks, stereotypes and everyday forms of transnationalism. There are (at least) two broad and interlinked ways of how bordering can be understood: one *pragmatic* (deriving generalizable knowledge from practices of border creation, confirmation and transcendence) and the other *critical* (theorizing, questioning and contesting the conditions that give rise to border-generating categories). The notion of "bordering" suggests that borders are not only semi-permanent institutions but are also non-finalizable processes. With this perspective, diverse types of borders can be brought within a single but broad frame of analysis for scholars interested in understanding how borders are made and what they mean in concrete social terms (Scott 2012).

General consequences of the bordering perspective include a highly critical re-evaluation of the relationship between states, societies and the borders they create. Furthermore, the bordering perspective also recognizes the profound psychological significance of formal and informal boundaries. As the much-emulated Henri Lefebvre (1972) has shown, the social role, perception and use of space are ineluctably linked to social relationships which are inherently political and constantly in flux. Bordering, as a socio-spatial practice plays an important role in shaping human territoriality and political maps - every social and regional group has an image of its own territory and boundaries.

Borders and Socio-Spatial Territorialities: Evolving Contexts of Nationhood and Statehood

One central aspect of the bordering perspective is the question of state territoriality, its constitution and its contestation. In the past, borders and identities were rarely defined in terms of allegiances to territories, but rather to rulers and religions (the church). The sustained focus of border studies on nation-states as a point of reference is therefore a legacy of the extraordinary impact state-building and state consolidation have exercised on our understandings of history – Western history in particular. For better or for worse, the situation before the Treaty of Westphalia has generally tended to be downplayed as a subject of study - except perhaps in the case of analytically anticipating the emergence of modern states, as the classic study of historical national core regions by Pounds and Ball (1964) demonstrates. It is also useful to remember that border studies (basically invented by Ratzel in his 1897 book *Politische Geographie*) had its origins in historicist and cultural determinist traditions inspired by specific interpretations of Herder, Hegel, Darwin, Fichte and others in which the emergence of nation states and their borders was understood as an expression of historical necessity and/or "God's will".

Even without Hegelian undertones, modern nation-states continue to be understood as the highest form of effective social organization within the world system and remain major sources of political, cultural and social identity. In many ways and for good reasons, the state-centred tradition in border studies continues as a result of historical experience that has been reinforced by current events. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of Post-Cold War Europe – one which coincided with the proliferation of discourses of "borderlessness" and nation-state decline – has been the drive for national self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe. This drive for de-facto and/or re-asserted sovereignty has created new borders and dealt a fatal blow to multinational federations such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, brought with it destructive wars and brutal episodes of ethnic cleansing. Although interdependence and processes of globalization have complicated the picture, the continuous (re)construction of borders based on forms of social-political organization and processes of nation-building remains a central problem in border studies. As Paasi argues (2012: 2307) understanding borders is inherently an issue of understanding how states function and thus: "(…) how borders can be exploited to both mobilize and fix territory, security, identities, emotions and memories, and various forms of national socialization".

In more traditional understandings, borders exert power as markers of sovereignty and thus as institutions that make it possible for states to use and to manage their human, economic, natural and other resources and claim exclusive rights to territorial authority (Murphy 2010). Major classic studies by scholars such as Ratzel (ibid), Hartshorne (1933, 1937), Ladis Kristof (1959) and Julian Minghi (1963) highlighted the co-evolution of borders and states as well as the consolidation of state sovereignty as an historical process. However, it is clear that relationships between borders and national sovereignty remain important to research debate as these are at the heart of contemporary geopolitical orders. Sovereignty presumes and justifies an alignment between territory, identity, and political community, whereas discourses on sovereignty, security and identity are at the basis of the territorial state (Agnew 2001, Ilyin and Kudryashova 2010, Murphy 2010, Sebentsov and Kolossov 2012).

In the above quote, Anssi Paasi indicates that there is a powerful nexus between state and social borders. Sovereignty is not exclusively an issue of statecraft, the legal status and functions of borders are also a product of power relations operating within any given society and, in turn, affect almost all aspects of life (Gilles et.al. 2013). Traditional border-making processes (e.g. delimitation, demarcation, management, control) are largely functions of state power, while the concomitant power to sort people according to the degree of their belonging to certain ethnic, cultural, political, and social groups is embedded within society itself. As a result, the power to determine the criteria or the categories through which borders are demarcated socio-spatially is a major factor in the ordering of society. The permeability, as well as the physical and symbolic meaning of borders is thus different for different people. Power elites decide when, and in whose interest it is, to construct and constitute borders, and they also decide when and how to open and remove borders. Power elites also determine how stringent the management and the crossing of borders will be, what documents are necessary for the crossing process to take place – be it a passport or visa. No study of borders, at the local or state level, or of the visible or the invisible type, is without a power component, and this provides an overarching framework of analysis for research into borders at all levels.

The nexus between state and social borders is also clearly evident in many situations where borders, both in a territorial and a symbolic sense, are an object of conflicting claims. In a great number of cases, also in Europe, divergent views on the emergence and the delimitation of boundaries are at least a serious obstacle to cooperation and cross-border movement. Border conflicts are related to competing interpretations of common history and the commemorations of old victories, defeats, real or imagined injuries and injustice[2]. To paraphrase Oren Yiftachel (1999: 287), borderlands can be sites of "homeland ethnicities" in which regions historically shared by two or more ethnic or cultural groups - and considered by all of them as the cradle of their identities – are the locus of persistent territorial conflict. In such cases, borders can catalyze violence because of their emotionally charged nature and the sense of victimization that each group harbours. Border conflicts as identity politics are reproduced in historical narratives and art perpetuated by political leaders

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[2] See the website of the National Borders Identities Conflict project which presents several case studies of ongoing border strife: http://nbiconflict.web.unc.edu/. Last access 24 August 2013.

and "ethnic entrepreneurs". Martyrs from past conflicts are "reanimated" at appropriate times as a strategy of social mobilization against threatening others.

As a result, contested border regions often become "memory landscapes" with abundant monuments, museums and historical sites; they become sacred spaces of national or ethnic memory. In some cases, border regions can take on a dramatic theatrical character in which specific national interpretations of past conflict and the culpability of the other side are carefully staged. This is particularly the case of the South Korean side of the demilitarized zone, of Cyprus, the border between Turkey and Armenia, and of borders between Bosnia and other former Yugoslavian republics. Here, borders are used to represent the opposite side as a constant threat and thus as a key ideological driver of conflict over territory (Bechev and Nicolaidis 2010, McCall 2013).

De-Bordering and Re-Bordering Beyond the State - Territoriality in Flux?

Most contemporary border scholars do not suggest an immutability of state borders nor an "end of history" mindset with regard to the state-system. Furthermore, border studies debates seldom suggest that state sovereignty is *absolute* but rather conditional upon many factors (see Flint and Taylor 2007, Held et.al. 1999, Agnew 2009, Smith 2001). Indeed, a major source of conceptual development in border studies is the shifting character of state borders themselves. One major and familiar narrative along these lines is the idea that political boundaries are being eroded by crises of state sovereignty and that new forms of "globalized political authority" and the networked nature of the world system indicate a relative shift of political power away from the State.

One argument that challenges the primacy of state territoriality in border studies holds that the Westphalian model of territorial (state) sovereignty and discrete boundaries is at odds with many aspects of the "real world". While state-centredness remains an important way of conceptualizing borders and their significance, many scholars argue that the world is increasingly composed of relational networks rather than only fixed spaces (.....). Socio-spatial dynamics are thus determined by continuous fluidity which allows for the connection between nodes and places. Such fluidity of movement along global networks, takes little account of fixed borders if, and when, the network requires greater (or lower) intensity of movement in any particular direction. Urry's (1999) call for a sociological shift from the study of societies to the study of mobilities and Wellman's (2001) idea of "networked individualism" have all helped to advance this agenda. But the most known in this field are the works of Manuel Castells (1994) which promote the notion of a world composed of (networked) places and flows as replacing the world of spaces.

> In this view, the national border is to an increasing extent no longer only a line delimiting the territory of a state and its territorial waters. The development of communications and international trade generates borders inside state territory: at international airports, in transportation nodes, around special custom areas, and free economic zones. In many countries police can check the papers of supposed illegal migrants anytime and in any geographical point of a country. As a result of these processes, border spaces are no longer exclusively at physical limits of the state. In terms of transformations of state

sovereignty, it is possible also to distinguish between different degrees and types of territorial control that do not necessarily conform to traditional stateness. For example, territorial control can be of very different types (coercive, political, ideological and economic - legal or criminal), patterns (full or sporadic control, by clusters or networks) and temporalities (continuing, temporary, seasonal, etc.). Territorial control can be exercised in scattered pockets connected by space-spanning networks (Popescu 2011). Power can, furthermore, be generated through association and affiliation while local elites can wrest control from established states or create new state-like areas with or without external support.

Arguably, the world economic system depends on the division of space between states, and to the increasing extent, between regions and cities, because capital can circulate only between competing legal spaces created within the states and/or regions and with the support of their guarantees. In addition, the world economic order not only engenders but requires asymmetries and social inequalities and thus the political borders which perpetuate them. These borders, in turn, are inconceivable without specific identities legitimizing them (Kolossov and O'Loughlin 1998). Nevertheless, the significance of state sovereignty and borders has been transformed with regard to specific groups. As Balibar (1998) has suggested satte borders now take many different forms and have become so diffuse that whole countries can now be borderlands: once countries had borders, now they *are* borders. For example, political boundaries have become quite transparent for large transnational firms for whom the transaction costs of border crossing have become negligible if not non-existent. However, the same borders can be an important obstacle for individuals or for medium and small local businesses. Arguably, globalization has provoked a transition from one general and strictly fixed border line to multiple lines created for different actors.

Territorial Sovereignty Beyond Traditional States

Territorial sovereignty can be exercised by regions of transitional or conditional statehood and de-facto states; while the former exhibit all necessary attributes of a 'normal' state and are in full control of their territories, the latter can, in Pål Kolstø's (2006) terms, be considered to be 'quasi-states'. Indeed, crises of state sovereignty are reflected in the protracted existence of uncontrolled territories in many parts of the world. Dozens of states - Thailand, Burma, Somalia, Colombia and Moldova are just a few examples - have not exercised full control over their territory for years or even decades. While in the Westphalian model the state behaves as a single entity in external relations exercising its "normative control", "guerilla republics" or unrecognized states have become relevant international actors and give clear evidence of state de-territorialization and re-bordering.

The distinction between legitimate and unrecognized states is vague and ill-defined. Very often institutionalized but unrecognized republics (e.g. Abkhazia and Transnistria) match most traditional criteria of sovereignty better than legitimate states (Kolossov and O'Loughlin 1999, 2011). Usually these actors maintain symbiotic relations with their legitimate central governments and/or with neighbouring sovereign states, supra-national and international organizations. The contemporary scene is thus characterized by the interpenetration of controlled and

"uncontrolled" areas, legitimate and non-legitimate political units. The boundaries and the circulation of people, goods and capital between them can be quite fluid. Such flexible, vague and loose boundaries blur the very notion of the state border; archipelago-like regions of "sovereign" control are divided by a number of boundaries delineating "sovereignty" in different domains. In yet other cases the boundaries between areas under and beyond state control are completely locked front lines, "borders of fear" which are much more important than formal state borders.

Some de-facto states can be classified as "partly recognized": they have established diplomatic relations with one or several countries and participate in the activities of international organizations in some fashion (Kosovo, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia). However, the status of an unrecognized state means that such a state is deeply involved in an unresolved conflict and can potentially become the arena of a war. Usually, unrecognized states are situated in the poorest regions of the world or/and in areas that are in the throes of difficult transitions and at the zones of contact between large cultural regions ("civilizations") with mixed populations having complicated, hierarchically-organized identities, at the edges of disintegrated empires, like all four unrecognized republics in the post-Soviet space (Kolossov and O'Loughlin 1999).

The continuing existence and even the multiplication of uncontrolled territories can be considered as a sign of the further fragmentation of "legitimate" states. Though the states remain by far the main actors at the international political scene, this perspective raises the question whether the state is the final step in the evolution of the modern political order and whether there is a limit of the proliferation of de-jure independent states and, respectively, political borders, considering that sovereignty is the ultimate goal of hundreds of secessionist movements all over the world (Popov 2011). Borders around uncontrolled territories remain a source of tension, and there is an extensive literature which seeks to establish criteria which can be used by the international community for at least recognizing de-facto states and thus contributing to the solution of dangerous conflicts (see, for instance, Berg and Toomla 2009 and Berg 2012).

Borders, Territorial Identity and Everyday Lifeworlds

The nexus between social and state borders is perhaps most evident in the study of everyday processes of border-making and local negotiations of political and cultural boundaries, Olivier Kramsch (2010) has been an open critic of state-centredness in border studies. He has argued that understandings of borders exclusively in terms of the historical emergence of states negates the importance of temporal specificity and everyday mentalities in creating border categories. Kramsch suggests in fact, by going back to the roots of geographical thought, for example to the geographical possibilism of Paul Vidal de la Blanche (....) as well as the work of Ernest Renan (1887) and Jacques Ancel (1938), we can refocus on the development of social and territorial identities. According to Kramsch, it is understanding the emergence of a sense of locality at bordered spaces, rather than a priori "state-determination" of local identities that provides a way forward in border studies. Kramsch thus suggests that we should avoid seeing borders primarily as social mechanisms of nationalization or as reflections of the territorial and social consolidation of state

spaces. And indeed, to paraphrase Renan and Ancel, neither nature nor society knows rigid lines separating one part from another.

Perspectives derived from the study of local societies living at borders have helped attenuate the state-centred perspective; the main concern here is to better understand relationships between state borders, local communities and practices of everyday life. As a result, no suggestion is made of a unilateral dependence of borderlands development upon the characteristics of state borders. Indeed, any temptation of deterministic explanation is avoided. The processes that contribute to borderland "formation" operate at different levels and involve a dialectic relationship between local societies and territorial spaces defined by borders. Borderlands can thus been seen as formed through processes of cross-border regionalization at different levels and in different realms of agency: cross-border co-operation, political projects of "place-making" as well as everyday economic, social, family and cultural practices that incorporate the border. The focus on borders and borderlands as lived spaces has also emerged as an important area of border studies research. The everyday can be understood as a reflection of larger processes of social transformation, but arguably with greater relevance to social realities "on the ground". Major work along these lines has been performed in communities in US-Mexican (Martinez 1994), Latvian-Estonian-Russian (Assmuth 2003), German-Polish (Bürkner and Mathiessen 2002) and Russian-Ukrainian border regions (Zhurzhenko 2011, Kolossov and Vendina 2011).

Three important strands of research in this area are: 1) the analysis of borders as markers of historical memory and local identity, 2) the analysis of borders as conditioners of local milieu and everyday attitudes and 3) the analysis of community routines that develop around borders or that are disrupted by border (in)security. Border regions (or "Borderlands") reflect all of these aspects as they are themselves defined by historical memories of life at borders as well as how by the active engagement of borderlanders with changing border symbolisms and functions. Although formal state boundaries often serve as a reference point in discussions of territory, identity and Europe, it is not just the physical border itself but its various representations that are at issue. Ulrike Meinhof (2002) has documented how borders are "narrated" and influence collective memories in border regions that have undergone significant political changes. Thus, the trauma of cold war separation and fortification of borders continues to affect the action spaces and perceptions of the "other side", for example, in Austrian-Hungarian border regions, even years after the fall of state socialism

A similar approach to understanding everyday lives and geographies at borders is embodied by the hermeneutic and "bottom-up" perspective which seeks to derive grounded knowledge (i.e. grounded theory) from participant observation in border regions (Matthiesen and Bürkner 2001, 2002). Research in this field seeks to understand how everyday lifeworlds are constructed around borders and – perhaps more significantly – how socio-political transformations and the dis-embedding and re-embedding of social relations that they entail are reflected in perceptions of borders and neighbouring "others". This is essentially about a form of bordering that is primarily social in nature but that can have political consequences through the transcendence, confirmation or re-configuration of social borders (Bürkner 2006).

In her study on Ukraine's Post-Soviet transformations since 1991, Tatiana Zhurzhenko (2010) provides a detailed analysis of local processes of state border formation between Ukraine and Russia. Zhurzhenko demonstrates how states, language, ethnicity and regional-local identity interact in complex ways within the context of Ukrainian nation-building. Based on several local examples of Russian speaking settlements near the Ukrainian border with Russia, Zhurzhenko highlights the effects of borders as a political tool of "nationalization" and as a mechanism of restructuring everyday social spaces. She also investigates processes of border construction; these clearly show that a priori attempts to define foundationalist conditions of national belonging have in the case of Ukraine collided with emerging local identities. Russian speaking Ukrainians in the new borderlands are not a fifth column, they do not oppose "Ukrainianization" but also do not understand their Russianness as oppositional to Ukrainian citizenship. "Russianness" continues to be an element of distinction and a strategy for strengthening local identities.

Symbolic Bordering and World Geopolitical Visions

In border research discussion, everyday borders are also seen to prove a link to geopolitical thinking (rather than ten objectivization of geographical knowledge by so-called elites) The everyday of border-making is also tied to geopolitical processes. State symbols, signs, narratives are extremely important in bordering. In many regions of the world the situation in border areas is determined by the geopolitics of memory. Cultivating certain representations they distinguish key periods of common history with neighbouring countries or regions. A negative interpretation of such periods helps to oppose an identity under construction to the identity dominating on another side of the boundary, to deepen a new cleavage, while a positive attitude forges feelings of solidarity or reconciliation with the neighbour. Geopolitics of memory can include what can be seen in museums, the erection or the destruction of monuments and the renaming of streets or even towns.

These conceptualisations of symbolic bordering are closely linked to critical geopolitics. As one example of this, the *world geopolitical vision* can be defined as a normative mental political map of the world or of a region in combination with the representations about political actors, elements of political space, national security, the advantages and the shortcomings of different strategies in foreign policy (Dijkink 1996, 1998). The world geopolitical vision also includes the representations about the territory and the boundaries of the state and/or an ethnic group, the best political regimes and the models of the state, external and internal forces contributing to or hindering from their realization.The world geopolitical vision is shaped under the impact of family traditions, education, personal experience, advertising, literature and art, cinema and especially mass media creating and diffusing a set of myths and stereotyped representations about national history and territory (Sharp 2000, Ó Tuathail 2006, Dodds 2008). These representations are diffused in the process of political discourse summarizing some information on international affairs or political situation attached to a territory.

The key idea of critical geopolitics is in the need to study the interaction between "high" and "low" geopolitics. The first one is shaped by political leaders, academics, journalists and other professionals dealing with international relations. The second one represents a set of social representations about the place of a country in the

world, the principles and the orientation of its foreign policy, potential allies and external threats to its security, symbols and images. In a modern democratic society "high" and "low" geopolitics are inseparable: though they may develop autonomously, they complement and feed each other. "Low" geopolitics is based on national geopolitical culture, is an intrinsic element of national identity (Archer, Shelley and Leib 1997, Brewer et al. 2004). Answering to the question "*Where, in which country and locality do I live?"*, the individual unavoidably answers to the question "*Who am I?", "What are my ideals and values*?". The world geopolitical vision involves a comparison of the situation in the country with which an individual associates himself and in other countries, particularly the neighbours: here and there, good and bad.

Naturally, these answers change with time. The geopolitical situation of a country is changing under the impact of various global and other external processes but also because people revisit their attitude to different levels of power. Therefore, the discourse about state boundaries is a basis of state-building. The state creates its iconography - the system of symbols, images, national holidays, regular parades, festivals, public ceremonies, traditions, and manifestations - of all which can help to cement national solidarity The world geopolitical vision involves a comparison of the situation in the country with which an individual associates himself and in other countries, particularly the neighbours on different sides of a state boundary (Paasi 1996). It is known that nationalism looks inwards in order to unify the nation and its constituent territory and outwards to divide one nation and territory from another (Anderson 1983). National stereotypes necessarily include images of space: regions incorporated into the state territory by the national consciousness get their codes, and many of them became national symbols (like Kosovo for Serbia).

Securitisation and Ethical Issues

Finally, the wide field of borders and the everyday also includes analyses of security-related impacts of borders. This is an important and developing area of border studies given the increasing number of border area issues elicited, among others, by migration, border management policies, ethnic tensions, trade (both licit and illicit), the global war on drugs and regional wars against "insurgents" (see Ayrón 2009, Hampton 2010, Ramsbotham and Zartman 2011). Contemporary border studies focus both on border management (as control and confirmation) and border crossing (as contestation and transcendence) as parallel and simultaneous processes. The crossing and control of borders compete with each other for hegemony: open and more flexible borders are vital for economic reasons, while tighter and more closed borders are seen as important security measures. It is a delicate balance which, in recent years, has swayed towards the securitization proponents because of its emphasis on issues such as personal and physical safety against threats from "across the border".

Boundary security is an important social and psychological need but also one that is highly manipulable. The September 11 attacks against American cities not only accelerated but helped orchestrate a process of "re-bordering" on a global scale. This process has elicited much research attention; first in North America (e.g. Andreas & Biersteker 2003, Salter 2004, Brunet-Jailly 2007) and later in Europe (e.g. Foucher 2007, Rosière 2012). Public opinion has an intrinsic tendency to irrationally perceive political boundaries as the major barrier to any undesirable influence from

the outside world. Globalization, economic instability and the increasing speed of social transformations put securitization of boundaries and control over migrations in the focus of public debates in most countries. In spite of the dreams of the beginning of the Post Cold War era, the contemporary world is involved in a large process of securitization linked to global threats and "risks" (Beck 1998).

As has been mentioned above, the securitization of borders (i.e. the simultaneous erection of administrative and physical obstacles to control migrations) is not an attempt to close space and territories (which is in vain) but to filter transnational flows and to sort them (between legal/illegal, welcome/ unwanted). Paradoxically, flows are the main feature of globalization and at the same time they are the major cause of insecurity and instability. This has brought borders studies into close contact with governmental agencies involved in "homeland security" and with the hard sciences which are responsible for the development of sophisticated technological surveillance techniques along the lengths of borders and their adjacent regions, and has widened even further the inter-disciplinary range of borders studies beyond the social sciences and the humanities.

Securitization discourses have been accompanied by the construction of physical barriers to movement of people and goods which can take a form of concrete walls, barbed wires, virtual fences or even mined fields. The securitization discourse has also been used as a means of re-closing borders, which had become more porous in the previous two decades, against flows of illegal immigrants from poorer to richer countries, seeking better work opportunities and improved quality of life conditions. The total length of existing border barriers was estimated in about 22,000 km, about 13,000 km were under construction which approximately makes up 16% of world's land borders. Paradoxically, only 16.4% of existing border barriers emerged as a result of conflict as front or cease-fire lines like between India and Pakistan in Kashmir, DMZ in Korea, between Abkhazia and Georgia. Most barriers were erected along peaceful boundaries like between the US and Mexico or between "Schengen countries" and their neighbours (Jones 2012, Rosière 2012). To reconcile the increasing need in circulation and securitization, the model of "smart borders" based on the use of advanced technologies was proposed in the US (Andreas and Bierstaker 2003, Salter 2004, Kolossov and Borodulina 2009).

The growing use of military equipment and technologies (such as cameras, sensors, radars) is a quickly developing tendency in fencing the borders (Andreas 2003: 91). Biometric control is combined with the creation of huge databases. According to Roger Clarke (1988) "dataveillance" is the systematic monitoring of an individual's personal data through the application of information technologies and the logic of the "security continuum" which erases the distinction between domestic and external security, territory and borders. Fighting against criminal networks implies control and networking of the entire territory, not only the borders. So that control and boundaries become "reticular". They call reticular the borders (checkpoints and communications' hubs) connected with various networks (police or private surveillance) and databases. These systems contribute to the ubiquity or mobility of contemporary borders. Mobility is limited by enclosure (or what Ballif and Rosière 2009 called teichopolitics) and the development of a «gated globe» (Cunningham 2004). Even a successful crossing of a border may result in the erection of new borders as an individual can become a member of a discriminated minority who has no access to

social services and welfare benefits. Dataveillance and the search for security generate the risk on fundamental rights abuses and put various political and moral problems (van Houtum and Boedeltje, 2009, Rosière and Reece 2012).

Ethical Issues in Border Studies

Finally, most of the issues discussed above either directly or indirectly involve ethical issues. Indeed, the resurgence of ethical issues in more contemporary border studies is characteristic of the critical turn in the social sciences since the 1980s. The contemporary ethical focus in border studies challenges the militarization and securitization of everyday life as a result of increasing disparities between cultures and societies but also of ideological cleavages. In addition, discriminatory and often even racist exploitations of the border through official border regimes, visa regulations, immigration policies and treatment of asylum seekers are investigated. As such contemporary research demonstrates how borders lend themselves symbolically and physically (in the form of barriers and controls) to xenophobic exploitation of fear and the reproduction of negative cultural stereotypes (Gallardo 2008). This is particularly evident in the European context where the political concept of "open borders" has been decoded as a partial policy of exclusion that emphasizes border management and that has submitted state boundaries within Europe to general policing and security policies (Bigo and Guild 2005; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2009).

Examples of of ethical perspectives in border studies are:
- a focus on state violence and its consequences for groups and individuals (Elden 2009, Jones 2012, Jones and Rosière 2012)
- interrogating potentials for a democratic governance of borders (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2003)
- exclusion and discrimination (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007, van Houtum and Boedeltje 2009)

Border securitization directly affects individual rights, privacy and confidentiality. The sharing of information by intelligence agencies and links between different control networks or databases easily elude democratic control; in Europe the Schengen Information System (SIS), has been criticized for its "democratic unaccountability" (Parkin 2011). Borders also receive critical scrutiny as they are unevenly permeable for different groups depending on origin, citizenship, material situations and socio-professional background; borders are thus inevitably related with discrimination and social injustice. For instance, the growing closure of EU external borders is compared with legalized apartheid: "the law of birth" determines the people's mobility across the world.

Conclusion

Even a brief and incomplete outlook on the most important concepts in border studies shows, firstly, their diversity, thematic and disciplinary dispersion and differentiation (Newman 2009, 2011). Secondly, it demonstrates two impressive paradigmatic shifts: from drawing an optimistic perspective of a "borderless world" (or the "europeanisation" of national borders) to a focus on re-bordering, fencing and increasing securitization which risks to be perpetuated by the growing security-

industrial complex and its powerful lobbies and even more by the crisis and the reconfiguration of territorial identities provoked by globalization. New technologies marked the transition in the bordering logics from securing territories and properly borders to securing and filtrating flows. These technologies are erasing the difference between borders and internal regions and are transforming all state territory in a "reticular" borderland. Paradoxically, technological progress did not facilitate human mobility but created new obstacles for it and, moreover, generated new risks on human rights abuse and new moral and ethical problems. The 1990s fad of a "borderless world" was short-lived; on the contrary, and as Raffestin (1993) has claimed, political boundaries are a bio-ethno-social constant of the human society's life, because without membranes, it is impossible to regulate the exchange between the ethnic and/or the state territory and the outer world, protecting this territory from the chaos and the waste of human and material resources.

The present state of border studies indicates that recent developments have deeply changed the "power" of borders; they have modified the dialectical relation between their fixed nature and constantly changing, fluid regime and framed the impact of borders on human activities in a new way. Borders not only have a different meaning for different actors but are a manifestation of power relations in society at different scales. In particular, they reflect the normative power of international organizations, including the EU and the power asymmetry between states in different fields. A review of recent publications shows the lack of comparative and quantitative approaches in border studies. At the same time, border studies open practical ways to the transformation of disputed sections of borders into "borders of peace" (Newman 2012). Borders are a crucial condition for openness and cooperation. But these can be achieved only through multilevel, multi-sectoral and long-term approaches that involve transformation at the international, national and local levels. This, in turn, demand cultural changes and new kinds of thinking on both sides of any given border.

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