

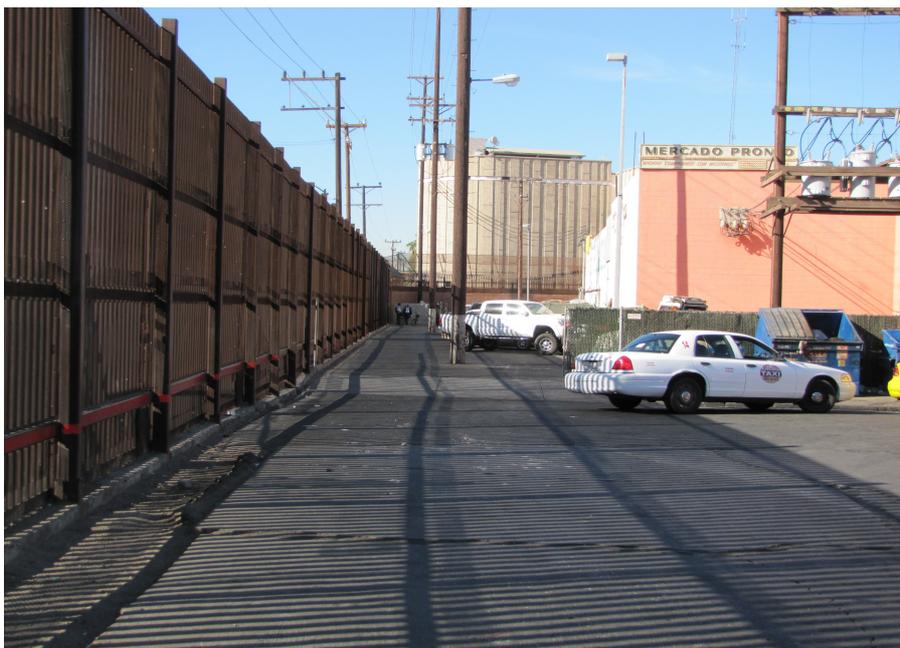
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Local Dimensions of a Wider European Neighbourhood
EUDIMENSIONS

CRN Working Paper 01 / 02 / 2008
Borders, Border Studies and EU Enlargement

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Borders, Border Studies and EU Enlargement¹

Keywords: Political Geography, Border Studies, European Union, ENP, Europe

Abstract

This essay will explore shifts in border-oriented practices and discourses within the European Union as a result of the enlargement process. As a theoretical perspective, I will use the concept of “bordering” in order to interpret the geopolitical significance of regional development and crossborder cooperation policies operating within the EU. Different phases of enlargement will be compared with regard to cooperation objectives and to the framing of border-related issues. Most recent developments, coinciding with the inauguration of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy, provide a stark contrast to the situation before the 1995 enlargement. Particular attention will be paid to the situation on the EU’s external borders (for example with Ukraine and Moldova); these borders highlight a ‘schizophrenic’ situation. Cooperation between the EU and non-EU neighbours is heralded as an important historical step towards the consolidation of a European political community. At the same time, the EU’s external borders have become formidable barriers and symbolise a civilisational gap between East and West.

Introduction

The study of state boundaries and their general societal significance has become a truly international phenomenon. Furthermore, the study of borders is developing both quantitatively in terms of the amount of research being undertaken and qualitatively in terms of new interdisciplinary approaches. However, it is in Europe that border studies appear to have expanded most rapidly. This is no coincidence as borders have posed a central problem to the emergence of a transnational political community within Europe. The state of the art in border studies can indeed be related to overlying geopolitical events, reflecting the concerns of the times. This, of course, also includes the ways in which Europe and its internal and external borders have been perceived.

¹ This essay is based on research carried out within the scope of the project EUDIMENSIONS (contract: CIT-CT-2005-028804), financed by the European Union’s Sixth Framework Programme for Research (see: www.eudimensions.eu) and EXLINEA: Lines of Exclusion as Arenas of Co-operation: Reconfiguring the External Boundaries of Europe – Policies, Practices, and Perceptions, (contract HPSE-CT-2002-00141), funded through the Community Research Fifth Framework Programme of the EU (see www.exlinea.org).

Various geopolitical conceptualisations of “Europe” have been and remain greatly influential to the development to border theory. As I will argue, processes of EU integration and enlargement have affected perceptions of borders and boundaries – both in the social sciences and in more everyday realms of public life.² The state of the art in border studies is therefore about tracing different, often conflicting, understandings of state boundaries. A re-reading of classic border studies, for example, reminds us how embedded in wider academic discourses past and present “border paradigms” have been (and remain). At least three specific periods of European history can be highlighted in this respect: the advent of continental nation-states in the late 19th century, the post-Paris Peace Treaty Europe of newly created and recently fragmented states and the post-Maastricht European Union within the context of enlargement and the emergence of a new “pan”-European idea. These historical periods also correspond to overall scientific paradigms as they have shifted with time. The determinism that, among others, helped provide the “theoretical” foundation for imperialist geopolitics and national-socialist ideology would be replaced after World War II by a generally positivist drive for objective facts, scientific rigour and “value-free” studies of borders. The complexities of globalisation and, finally, the post Cold War “disorder”, revealed in turn the deficiencies of empiricism, description and categorisation. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the apolitical and “objective” assumptions of empiricism have led to the application of a variety of critical approaches that characterise contemporary debate.

What does all this signify for the study of borders per se? Whereas until the early sixties the field was pre-dominantly focused on the study of the demarcation of boundaries (thus of lines and limes), the field of boundaries and border studies has arguably shifted from boundary studies to border studies (Newman 2001). Put differently, attention has moved away from the evolution and transformation of the territorial confines of the state to the more general social production of borders, complexly understood as sites at and through which socio-spatial differences are communicated.³ However, this notion of “border” only really takes on

² In terms of disciplinary contributions it also seems clear that human geography has been at the forefront of the social science disciplines contributing to a broader understanding of the significance of borders. Having developed from naturalistic and deterministic roots in the 19th Century to an integrative and critical discipline, geography has contributed to the fact that borders are now largely perceived as multifaceted social institutions.

³ Confusingly, in anthropology, the definition can be quite the opposite, here a boundary generally means the socio-spatially constructed differences between cultures/categories and a border generally stands for a line demarcated in space (Barth, 1969; Donnan and Wilson, 1999).

meaning when understood as a product of “bordering” processes (Van Houtum and Naerssen 2002).

European integration and the emergence of the EU as a geopolitical actor reflect the multifarious nature of bordering processes. This paper will hence interpret changes in the research focus of border studies within a wider European context. The author makes absolutely no claim to exhaustive inclusiveness and will focus instead on a limited set of research perspectives that have characterised the development of border studies. The work of important scholars within the field will also be discussed. Presently, there is no single theory, concept or discourse on borders that enjoys predominance within the context of European integration and enlargement. On the contrary, many different strands of thought are contributing to the EU’s policy-driven approach to borders that has emerged since 1989.

This essay begins with a short historical overview of different scientific paradigms that have influenced border studies and the ways in which borders have been perceived in the European context. Discussion then focuses on more contemporary events: subsequent phases of EU integration, enlargement and post-enlargement – as well as the political rationales and discourses they have brought forth – have facilitated the emergence of at least two broad and often overlapping schools of thought, one pragmatic and the other “critical” in the poststructuralist sense. In addition, I suggest that a critical and pragmatic theoretical approach can help interpret the complex post-enlargement context of shifting border-related policies and discourses. The present situation provides, for example, a stark contrast to the situation before the 1995 enlargement when discourses of “border transcending” enjoyed substantial currency. While cooperation between the EU and non-EU neighbours is presently heralded as an important historical step towards the consolidation of a European political community, the EU’s external borders have become formidable barriers that symbolise a civilisational gap between “East” and “West”.

European Perspectives on Borders 1: Determinism and Imperialist Geopolitics

Before World War I, Europe was largely characterised by competing empires and would-be nations struggling for autonomy. At heart was the notion of the absolute sovereignty of nation-states, fed by cultural particularisms that justified “special roles” for Europe’s most powerful countries. Borders in Europe were seen to consolidate the nation-state and a sense of

national identity. Among the scholars who can be discussed in this context are Friedrich Ratzel, Otto Maull and Karl Haushofer – German pioneers of political geography and border studies. Research questions that they saw as scientifically relevant dealt with the relationships between border morphology and nation-state development and the geographical development of national spheres of influence (geopolitics). As such, central concepts that informed this perspective included the belief that natural and deterministic laws formed a basic logic for the organisation of human societies in space. Specifically, concepts emerged in this context that were informed by a decidedly geodeterminist ideas with often spurious analogies with the natural sciences (e.g. the State as “organism” and borders and frontiers as protective “organs” of the State). Ultimately, the belief that states were locked in a Darwinistic struggle for survival and that only strong states with “good” and/or “strong “ borders could persevere provided a scientific rationale for the imperialist geopolitics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Friedrich Ratzel (1903/1923) is regarded as the “father” of human and political geography (he, in fact, coined the phrase *Anthropogeographie*). His primary goal was to establish geography as a holistic discipline that integrated physical and human elements (e.g. in terms of *Länderkunde*) and that was scientifically grounded in “Darwinian” laws of natural selection and evolution. The theoretical basis was one of geodeterminism, although interrelationships between human settlements and physical environments were also emphasised. As far as political geography is concerned, one of the main consequences of this scientific position is the notion of an objective evolutionary basis for the emergence, rise and fall of nation-states. As mentioned above Ratzel’s most (in)famous analogies is that of the state as living organism, with internal organs, external protective boundaries and a inherent drive towards expansion. The drive for territorial expansion, understood as a strategy of survival would be subsequently developed by other scholars.

Otto Maul (1925) was a student of Ratzel. His contribution to political geography was a systematisation of Ratzel's concepts and the application of biodeterminist and geodeterminist principles to the study of European state development. His goal was to advance Political Geography, not only as a subdiscipline of Anthropogeographie but also as a stand-alone science, by giving it a firm empirical and theoretical basis. For Maul, natural determination was the central element influencing the "Society-Environment-System (Mensch-Umwelt-System), but he also emphasised the importance of the "willful political act" to establish states and boundaries. He elaborated on Ratzel's analogy of that state; it is not an "organism" in a biological sense but an "organisation" created by human societies to secure the survival and viability of cultural groups (Völker). He focused much attention, much more than Ratzel, on border morphologies and their relationships to political conditions of nation-states. In his scientific vocabulary we find words such as: frontier or border zone (Grenzsaum), borderlines (Grenzlinien), separating borders (Trennungsgrenzen), structural borders (Strukturgrenzen) and anti-structural borders (strukturwidrige Grenzen). Maul was also interested in such things as relating total lengths of state borders to territorial area as a measure of "border-orientation" of European states.

Importantly for our discussion of border studies, Maul made a distinction between "good" and "bad" borders. This related to their defensive character and stability. He asked the questions: "Do political borders coincide with natural barriers (mountains, rivers, waterways) and/or socio-ethnic borders (language areas, cultural areas)?" "do borders represent an abstraction of the frontier, in which a transition between state-cultural areas is possible, or are borders sharp dividing lines that truncate such areas?"⁴ Maul unquestionably saw "anti-structural" borders as "bad" borders. In his view, these do not correspond to physical conditions of the earth's surface nor to the distribution patterns of socio-cultural areas. They do not have a true frontier where the state border can act both as a bridge and a filter, protecting the state organisation at the same time that it allows interstate interaction and trade to flourish. Typical of such borders are those established after wars by victorious powers or by colonial powers outside Europe. Maul, writing after the Paris Peace decrees of 1919 and despairing over the loss of German territory and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, saw

⁴ To quote Maul (1923:143): "Die geographische Frage bei allen Untersuchungen politischer Grenzen ist die: hat der politische Willensakt des Staates zur Anlehnung an geographischen Grenzen (Strukturgrenzen) geführt? Ist die politische Grenze dank dieser Anlehnung gleichsam der Natur entlehnt? Ist dabei die beste Strukturgrenze gewählt worden? Welches sind die anderen Möglichkeiten? Oder aber: hat keinerlei Anpassung stattgefunden?"

many of Europe's new borders as bad borders, where formerly internal areas without borderland experiences or histories of suddenly became peripheral organs of the states. These bad borders, having violated "natural laws" of border-formation, would, in Maull's opinion, be the source of instability and conflict between states

Karl Haushofer (1928) developed political geography into an applied science. Inspired by work of Kjellen, Mackinder and others, Haushofer saw a validation of the Ratzel school of Anthropogeographie in the systematic study of geopolitics. More concretely, Haushofer was interested in borders as delimiters of territorial control and ideology. His basic assumption was that of a natural will of cultures and states toward expansion as a strategy of survival. Through the analysis of interrelationships between physical geography, border delimitations, conflicts, imperial expansion, etc. Haushofer attempted to assess the vulnerability of states within the world system. This knowledge could then be applied politically in order to avoid future conflict or prevent a subsequent loss of territory, influence and, as a consequence, state/cultural viability (i.e. that of Germany and its Volk).

The demoralizing effects of defeat and territorial losses (both of Germany's colonial empire and "traditional" cultural areas in Silesia, Posen, Pomerania, Elsass-Lorraine) after WWI were essential to the development of Haushofer's geopolitics. He argued that the neglect of the scientific basis for strategic thinking had cost Germany dear and must never be repeated. Unfortunately for Haushofer and geopolitics in general, National-Socialism appropriated many of these concepts in order to legitimise a cultural "struggle" for domination and subjugation of "inferior" and/or "dangerous" cultures. Nazi ideology and its interpretations of geopolitics went far beyond the military-strategic balance that Haushofer (naively!) was hoping to achieve.

Perspectives on Borders 2: "Systematics", Functionalism and Empiricism

The determinism that, among others, helped provide the "theoretical" foundation for imperialist geopolitics and national-socialist ideology would be replaced after World War II by a positivist drive for objective facts and scientific rigour. As a result, the determinism of Ratzel and Haushofer would give way, both in Anglo-American and European geography, to attempts at "value-free" studies of borders. Hence, the scientific tradition (e.g. in political

geography) that emerged between 1940 and (about) 1975 was largely characterised by a lack of a central “metatheory”. Instead, functionalism, positivism, and a focus on uniqueness and “Kantian” space prevailed. An important scientific issue in this context was the functional genesis of the nation-state. Border studies thus focused not only on the description, classification and morphologies of state borders but were concerned as well with the emergence of “core areas” of nation-state formation and the “centrifugal” and “centripetal” forces that influenced the growth and development of states. Concrete examples of research questions pursued in this conjunction dealt with border functions in terms of state development (e.g. the role of frontiers, corridors, core areas, etc.) the study of border landscapes, and the analysis of border formation as a political process.

Richard Hartshorne was for many years one of the most influential geographers in the Anglo-American tradition. In Hartshorne’s view (1950:128) “Geography is the study of areal differentiation. Areal differentiation is both most marked and most important in respect to units of land at the level of state-areas”. Hartshorne understood that biodeterminism and the German tradition of Anthropographie established by Ratzel had, in fact, served to discredit Political Geography. Attacking this tradition as pseudo-scientific (allusions to the state as “organism” appeared particularly offensive after the excesses of WWII and the Nazi regime), Hartshorne argued that a systematic methodology based on objectively confirmable “fact” was necessary in order to put political geography back on track. One of Hartshorne’s research approaches to borders was the (by then) well-established study of border landscapes; he suggested that the interaction between political borders and cultural landscapes were an important source of spatial differentiation. More importantly, however, Hartshorne suggested that the analysis of function and, more expressly, the functioning of the state, would provide a meaningful context for scientific rigour. In this functionalist perspective, relevant research questions related to the various elements that determine the integrity of the state: centrifugal (i.e. fragmenting) and centripetal (i.e. integrating) forces that over time have defined its physical contours, internal political organisation and external connections. To quote Hartshorne (1950: 192): “State areas are important, both in the practical and academic sense, primarily in terms of their functions; namely what the state-area as a whole means to its parts and its relations as a whole with outside areas“. Consequently, we conclude that the rational, scientifically reliable and realistic approach to the study of state-areas is to start with the phenomena with which we are most concerned, the functions of the state-area, to determine

how these have been affected by the character of the area itself, its structure and contents, and to utilise historical facts of genesis insofar as these aid us in understanding structural features previously determined to be significant” (ibid: 193).

Two prominent scholars of the functionalist school whose works continue to have considerable bearing on border studies are Victor Prescott and Ladis Kristof and Julian Minghi. These authors focused research attention on the emergence of borders based on forms of social-political organisation and processes of nation-building. Victor Prescott (1965), an Australian geographer, was mainly concerned with identifying spatial relationships between politics and geography and thus to focus political geography towards “relevant” areas of inquiry. He saw the exercise of political sovereignty, of which borders are the formal delimiters, as an important source of morphological and functional variation of space. Ladis Kristof, a follower of Hartshorne’s ideas on political geography, similarly devoted himself to the systematic study of borders and boundaries as aspects of “Realpolitik” and as organizing elements of the state.

In a famous article published in 1959, Kristof used the functional approach to illustrate the differences between frontiers and borders. For Kristof, the primary function of boundaries as legal institutions is clear (1959:220): “(...) in order to have some stability in the political structure, both on the national and international level, a clear distinction between the spheres of foreign and domestic politics is necessary. The boundary helps to maintain this distinction“. Kristof also states that while frontiers and boundaries are important elements of state formation, their relationship to the centres of state power are quite different (ibid): “Both frontiers and boundaries are manifestations of socio-political forces and as such are subjective, not objective. But while the former are the result of rather spontaneous, or at least ad hoc solutions and movements, the latter are fixed and enforced through a more rational and centrally co-ordinated effort after a conscious choice is made among the several preferences and opportunities at hand”. In Kristof’s conceptualisation, borders are inwardly oriented to the state, they divide and separate, strengthening the territorial integrity of the state and are thus *centripetal* in their function. Frontiers in contrast, are outwardly oriented, integrate different ecumenes and challenge the control functions of the state. Frontiers, according to Kristof, are therefore *centrifugal* in character. This is a geopolitical vision of Europeanisation – a de-bordering discourse based on ideational projection of power and the notion of “privileged

partnership” – that is, of a special, multifaceted and mutually beneficial relationship with the EU, in some cases in place of concrete perspectives of EU membership.

In terms of European perspectives on borders that coincided with functionalism we can detect a clear Cold-War era reification of the nation-state, despite the fact that attempts to create political and economic institutions in Europe began shortly after 1945. Almost sacrosanct was the principal of national sovereignty as a source of geopolitical stability; a stability that national borders could (and should) provide by serving as effective containers of state power. In all fairness, however, functionalist views on borders did imply a certain questioning of the assumptions of border “objectivity” by exploring the social-political contexts that influence border formation (Guichonnet and Raffestin 1974, Raffestin 1990). As such, with the functionalist perceptions of borders were also influenced by the notion of “permeability”. By no means a new concept, permeability reemerged as a elementary border function in academic discussion due, in great part, to the increasing interdependence of border cities such as Geneva and Basel and the momentum of EU integration processes (see Guichonnet and Raffestin 1974). Differing degrees of permeability were thus seen to reflect the differential momentum of interstate cooperation and alliances – in other words, interstate cooperation (e.g. the European Economic Community, NATO, BeNeLux, etc.) was seen to provide frameworks that allowed sovereignty to be shared with other countries in order to achieve strategic balance, militarily as well as economically. On the other hand, permeability implied a dual border function as “bridge” and “barrier” that exerted powerful structuring influences on the cultural landscape.

Perspectives on Borders 3: Critical European Studies on Borders and Identities

For much of the Cold War period, the notion of strategic balance and alliances held sway in political geography and in border studies. Of course, critical social sciences and scholars and international political economy actively criticised the “absolutisation” of states and borders long before the end of the Cold War. Wallerstein’s interpretations of the world system focused quite centrally on mechanisms of centre-periphery relationships and the exploitation of weak countries by powerful states. However, the momentous political events of 1989/1990 and their aftermath comprehensively challenged many of the comforting paradigmatic assumptions that had been held in relation to the importance of strategic balance, Western solidarity and political unity. The ideological confrontation that had sublimated more subtle

but increasing fragmentation within the world system and national societies ended abruptly, forcing the field of border studies to go beyond more traditional state-centred approaches.

Border studies were thus not immune to the “cultural turn” in the humanities and social sciences that had already begun to take hold in North American and European universities. This was evidenced by a questioning of the “essence” and the assumed immutability of national identities as well as by challenges to the notion that nation-states might be – out of some civilisational necessity – a permanent feature of the world system. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the apolitical and “objective” assumptions of empiricism, especially in the light of increasing international conflict and development inequalities, led to the application of critical political economy, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist perspectives on borders and border-defining processes.

Presently, critical approaches to the study of borders are often associated with “postmodern” perspectives that analyse the social construction of borders in terms of discourses and agency (practices). European examples of authors working in this tradition include Anssi Paasi, Gerald Toal, John Agnew and others. Concepts central to the “critical” perspective are multiple interpretations of border significance, borders as socio-cultural constructs, deconstruction of border discourses, analysis of neo-liberalism and its effect on nation-states. Examples of research questions: Border-related elements of identity-formation, socio-cultural and experiential basis for border-defining processes, power relations in society and geopolitical orders, critical analysis of geopolitical discourses.

The choice of Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi (1991, 1998, 2001) as a representative of a socially critical school of Political Geography is not arbitrary. Indeed, he has pioneered work on borders and frontiers based on a rejection of positivism and a criticism of the concepts and empirical frameworks developed since the beginning of the twentieth century. While it would be unfair to label Paasi a “postmodernist” (the term itself is not a hard and fast “category” but rather a term that helps us comprehend paradigm shifts), he shares the notion that there is no central “essence” to borders, frontiers, regions and even nation-states, but that these are socio-cultural constructs constantly subject to change. Identity and ideas are central factors within Paasi’s Society-Environment scheme. He develops the notion that regional spaces are created through a process of “Institutionalisation” involving boundaries, symbols and the institutions

that maintain them (1991). In many ways, this notion of region and boundary as a social construct is related to the idea of Imagined communities as postulated by Benedict Anderson (1991). In other words, according to Paasi (2001:143): “attention should be paid not only to how ideas on a territory and its boundaries shape society’s spatial imaginations (...) but also to analysing how these ideas gain significance as far as the spatial identity of territorial entities and the people living in them is concerned”.

How then does Paasi define borders? They are symbols, discourses and institutions that interpenetrate all realms of society and that exist everywhere in society, not only at the formal boundary of national sovereignty. “Boundaries can be understood as part of the process by which territories and their identities and meanings are formed and renewed” (ibid:135). Therefore it is not only the mere function of borders, but also their meanings that are relevant to social sciences (ibid: 141): “The challenge for researchers (geographers) is to develop critical approaches to understand the changing meanings of boundaries in the current world”. “One should not try to focus attention simply on the economic, political or psychological processes occurring in border areas, but rather one should attempt to deconstruct the meanings of boundaries in connection with territorial symbolism and the creation of institutions”. Furthermore, Paasi defines three primary elements of contemporary bordering processes as those involving: 1) *political boundaries* where physical changes of boundaries as demarcation lines take place, 2) *boundaries of politics* in which spatial scales of governance are redefined in response to globalisation and 3) *politics of boundaries* in which boundaries are produced and reproduced in response to shifting relations between nation, state, territory and identities.

European Perspectives on Borders 4: Borders and Dynamics of Cross-Border Cooperation

Finally, I argue that a critical yet realist strand of border research has emerged since 1990 that merits mention. This strand informs a border research perspective that is both pragmatic (problem-solving being the main objective) and critical (with social equity, cultural inclusion and the improvement of the quality of life being the basic values). Pragmatic approaches are not only about “borders” per se but, similar to the cultural criticism of so-called postmodernists, also engage questions of national identity and national borders in Europe. Furthermore, pragmatism offers an important philosophical insight into the social sciences,

and one that it is particularly suited to an interdisciplinary understanding of borders. Pragmatism emphasises the centrality of *social practices* – rather than predefined *theory* – in addressing problems facing society. At the same time, social practice is not a question of insular, group-specific hermeneutics but conditioned by influences operating at all levels – inside the community, outside the community, within the region or state and in virtual space. Social practice is thereby subject to constraints and empowering forces that, in turn, social practice produces, modifies and mediates. Furthermore, a research perspective based on pragmatics situates values, power and knowledge at the centre of societal development (Flyvbjerg 2001).⁵ This perspective can be seen to be as a synthesis of sorts of the preceding geographical perspectives on borders. The pragmatic view accepts that definitions of borders and identities are neither fixed nor permanent. Central organizing principals such as those proposed by conventional geography are viewed with scepticism. However, pragmatists believe in the possibility of positive social action within a perceived “working reality”.

Examples of research questions elaborated within this perspective are: How are borders changing in an enlarging Europe? What do these changes mean in terms of their societal impacts? In more concrete terms, this could, for example, involve the analysis of cross-border co-operation patterns, pragmatic interpretations of border-related discourses, contextual analysis of discourses and social practice in boundary formation, and the analysis of cross-border co-operation as a governance issue. Liam O’Dowd (2002), a sociologist at Queens University, Belfast, offers an excellent “pragmatic” and, at the same time, socially critical reading of the significance of borders within the context of European integration and enlargement. O’Dowd shares the “optimistic scepticism” of the pragmatic view. Among his research goals has been to illustrate how (2002:29): “one of the key lessons to be drawn from the history of state formation in Europe is that the structure, functions and meanings of state borders seldom remain fixed or stable for long periods.” In addition, states O’Dowd (2002:32), the “European project” is reconfiguring borders as both barriers and bridges”.⁶

⁵ With pragmatism, experiences of cross-border co-operation become more than mere “empirical anecdotes” but a central element in bordering processes. Practical knowledge is thus comprehended both as a social resource and scientific key to understanding the workings of society. Epistemic knowledge (derived strictly through “scientific” method and theory) and technical knowledge (techme) are not given a privileged role. Similarly, structure and agency are seen as a unity. Dualisms are eschewed and disciplinary boundaries transcended: “Actors and their practices are analyzed in relation to structures and structures in terms of agency, not so that the two stand in an external relations to each other, but so that structures are found as part of actors and actors as part of structures” (Flyvbjerg *ibid*, p. 137.)

⁶ O’Dowd (2002:32) corroborates the notion that perceptions of border significance are very much informed by our own past experiences: “Those who grew up in strong welfare states will know that the State gained

However, O’Dowd also admits that the existence of territorial state borders have been a *sine qua non* for the development of representative democracy. In his overview article quoted here, O’Dowd discusses the development of cross-border co-operation in Europe in terms of historical state formations and changing border regimes. Using a rather uncomplicated terminology, O’Dowd attempts to show how European borders are presently being reconfigured in terms of their (often conflicting) significance as Barriers, Bridges, Resources *and* Symbols of Identity and how these reconfigurations relate to the project of European integration and enlargement. European integration is seen in this view as progress in the sense that a more “democratic regulation” of borders has emerged. The question that arises with globalisation and the new permeability of borders is how borders in Europe can continue to be regulated democratically. O’Dowd is also concerned with whether political regionalisation at the borders can contribute to their democratic regulation. Finally, O’Dowd acknowledges the multilevel contingency of cross-border interaction; heterogeneity is the rule and generalisations about cross-border practices are often difficult to justify (*ibid.*: 30): “Heterogeneity arises from different experiences of border formation, and formal and informal cross-border relationships, along with the relative economic and political power of contiguous states and the role, if any, played by external powers or regional ethnic and national questions. Moreover, the EU’s stress on market integration and economic competitiveness impacts in differential ways on pre-existing border heterogeneity”.

Bordering and The Post-Enlargement Environment

Figure 1 summarises three general socio-spatial perspectives on borders as represented by the work of three authors discussed in this text. These different perspectives have emerged within the context of co-operation and conflict between European states and it is evident that border formation is a complex societal process that takes place in many settings, not just at the site of state borders. In this last section, I suggest that all three strands of border research contribute – in their own ways – to a critical interpretation of more recent events and their impacts on border-related discourses and practices. Within the setting of the last phase of EU Enlargement and the emergence of European “neighbourhood” policies, borders have become

maximum control over borders between 1950 and 1980 when the state role in political, economic and social spheres was at its zenith. But this appears to have been a very special historical event and by no means the rule. State borders, at least in Europe, are now consolidating into a new relative permanence, but their barrier function has diminished remarkably due to a number of reasons”.

conditional and arbitrary – seen as necessary for the consolidation of a quasi neo-national space and a powerful resource with which to expediently structure relations with third countries.

Figure 1: State of the Art: Three Traditions of Border Studies

Authors	Maull	Paasi	O’Dowd
Ideological Basis	Determinism Geodeterminism Positivism	Relativism, Critical Analysis (deconstruction)	Pragmatism, Possibilism
Scientific Objectives	Systematisation of political Geography, uncovering objective laws behind Bordering processes	Questioning of Bordering categories, uncovering power relations and interests behind Bordering processes	Solution of societal problems through reflective learning processes
Definition of Borders	“peripheral organs” of the State	socio-cultural constructs	political and social institutions
Central Questions	Relation between state viability and border morphology	Relation between discourses and the creation of borders	Interrelationships between functional transformations of borders and societal transformation
The Border Problem	Tension between border zones and borderlines: the will to “perfect” structural borders	Exclusion and conflict: the strengthening of power relationships	Barriers to co-operation, socio-economic discrimination
European Identity	Identity defined through the struggle of cultures and nations to create viable states, equilibrium obtainable via “perfect” borders	European identity not predetermined but constantly redefined	European identity as a project of co-operation and the creation of democratic border regimes

In order to relate such disparate epistemic positions to one another it is, however, necessary to elaborate on the notion of “bordering”. In contemporary debate, boundary-making or “bordering”, is about the everyday construction of borders through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and agency (Scott and Matzeit 2006, Van Houtum 2002). Bordering is, by nature, a multilevel process of re-territorialisation. It takes place at the level of high politics and is manifested by physical borders and visa regimes. Bordering is also reflected in media debates over national identity, legal and illegal immigration and language rights. Within this context, borders can be read in terms of 1) a politics of identity (who is “in”, who is “out”), 2) a regionalisation of difference (defining who is a neighbour, a partner, a friend or rival) and 3) a politics of “interests” (in which issues of economic self-interest, political stability and security play a prominent role).

The 2004 enlargement of the EU can be seen a high water mark in the political attempt to extend the 1980s and 1990s momentum of “de-bordering” beyond the territory of “Core Europe”. Since 2004, borders in Europe have re-emerged in practical and discursive terms as markers of sharp – to an extent civilisational – difference. European border studies have been quick to react to this change in perspective: its social, political and cultural contradictions are only too evident (see, for example, van Houtum and Pijpers 2006 and Popescu 2006). Scholars see, for example, an obvious discrepancy between discourses of security and selectivity that affect more general perceptions of borders. In this respect, it is often difficult to separate supranational EU policies from national policies; while the EU, for instance, has required new member states to introduce visas for citizens of neighbouring states, national governments are negotiating the particulars of new visa regimes. Conversely, national governments are establishing policies affecting the status of migrants (and thus border regimes) and subsequently appeal for EU support. In the meantime, local institutions in border regions, though generally less powerful, are anything but passive: they are part of “multiscalar politics” and are reacting to national and supranational policies affecting them. This multilevel interaction generates a complex political-territorial environment in which cross-border cooperation must operate.

Europeanisation and Consolidation as Bordering Concepts

Contemporary European border studies focus much attention on the European Union and its attempts to create a coherent political, social and economic space within a clearly defined multinational community (see Aalto 2006, Moisio 2007, Scott 2005). A central aspect of this re-territorialisation process is the definition of rules, norms and practices that aim to “Europeanise” national spaces; from this derive the objectives and values that create a “common” set of discourses in which various policy issues can be negotiated (Clark and Jones 2008). Europeanisation is expressed, on the one hand, by core documents, such as treaties and agendas, which spell out the EU’s various societal and political values. Furthermore, regional development and spatial planning policies as well as research funding schemes aim at the production of “new knowledges of Europe” that go beyond strictly national orientations (see Jensen and Richardson 2004). Europeanisation is thus also evident in crossborder situations. Crossborder cooperation is seen to provide ideational foundations for a networked Europe through symbolic representations of European space and its future development perspectives. More importantly, the practice of establishing Euroregions has been understood in terms of an active re-constitution of borders. Euroregions, local and/or regional government associations devoted to cross-border co-operation, have spread throughout the EU, on its external borders and beyond. Consequently, the Euroregion concept has proved a powerful tool with which to transport European values and objectives (Perkmann 2002, Popescu 2006).

Paradoxically perhaps, Europeanisation does not only imply “transcending” national spaces per se. It also serves to confirm state sovereignty. In effect, while the space within the EU is being gradually “integrated”, a border is being drawn around the EU-27 in order to consolidate it as a political community and thus manage regional heterogeneity, core-periphery contradictions and political-organisational flux. This also involves an attempt to structure EU-European space through, for example, central political agendas, structural policies, spatial planning strategies and research-funding programmes. In effect, EU-European space is being differentiated from the rest of the world by a set of geopolitical discourses and practices that extol the EU’s core values. Consolidation, and the border confirming practices it entails, is seen as a mode of establishing state-like territorial integrity for the EU and thereby also strengthening its (in part contested) image as a guarantor of internal security.

However, the enforcement of exclusionary borders is a challenge to the identity of the EU as a supranational “force for good in the world” that transcends national and socio-cultural divisions (see Barbé and Nogue 2008). Because of geographical proximity, long-standing (e.g. post-colonial) economic, social and political interrelationships and deepening mutual interdependencies, the EU is keen to assume a “stabilizing” role in Post-Soviet, Eurasian and Mediterranean regional contexts. The very norms, values and “acquis” that define EU-Europe (e.g. the virtues of co-operation, democratic “ownership”, social capital and general values such as sustainability, solidarity and cohesion) are thus being also projected upon the wider regional “Neighbourhood” in order to provide a sense of orientation and purpose to third states. This is a geopolitical vision of Europeanisation – a de-bordering discourse based an ideational projection of power and the notion of “privileged partnership” – that is, of a special, multifaceted and mutually beneficial relationship with the EU, in some cases in place of concrete perspectives of EU membership.

The European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) is the most explicit form of geopolitical integration between the EU and its immediate region. It is a policy framework that aims to structure relations between the EU and its neighbours according to criteria ostensibly set by both the EU and its “partners”. The countries involved are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.⁷ As such, the geographical reach of the ENPI – and hence of the concept of neighbourhood – is considerable. Two major neighbouring countries, Russia and Turkey, are not included within the ENPI but have concluded special agreements with the EU; membership negotiations, although controversial and troubled, have been initiated in the case of Turkey. As has been documented elsewhere, the ENPI is a means by which to maintain the momentum of europeanisation and promulgate the values of the EU without actually offering direct membership to third states (Commission of the European Communities, 2004a; Wallace, 2003). Ultimately, the central objective of the ENPI is to create a wider security community in Europe; illegal immigration, human trafficking, terrorism and cross-border organised crime remain issues that will require an especially intensified co-ordination between the EU and its neighbours. However, the ENPI’s scope is complex and multilayered (Scott 2005). This is primarily due to the EU’s broad definition of security as being environmental, economic and social (and not only military) in

⁷ While formally included in the ENPI, no agreements have been established with Belarus and Syria.

nature as well as a realisation (not always translated into practice) that security concerns must be shared rather than imposed externally.⁸

As a result, the EU suggests that cultural understanding and the recognition of mutual interdependence are means with which to establishing a common political dialogue. Furthermore, it is not only the enhancement of the EU's international influence that is at stake but also the strengthening of its identity as a stabilizing element in the world system with "exportable" (i.e. universal) democratic values. With its notion of partnership, the EU pursues the objective of achieving community through "shared" values (such as human and gender rights, commitment to an open market economy, democratic participation, etc.), common goals and intensive cooperation on a broad range of EU internal policies.⁹ In the words of the EU Commission (2003:3):

"Interdependence – political and economic – with the Union's neighbourhood is already a reality. The emergence of the euro as a significant international currency has created new opportunities for intensified economic relations. Closer geographical proximity means the enlarged EU and the new neighbourhood will have an equal stake in furthering efforts to promote trans-national flows of trade and investment as well as even more important shared interests in working together to tackle transboundary threats - from terrorism to air-borne pollution. The neighbouring countries are the EU's essential partners: to increase our mutual production, economic growth and external trade, to create an enlarged area of political stability and functioning rule of law, and to foster the mutual exchange of human capital, ideas, knowledge and culture."

The central quandary of this geopolitical project lies in an attempt to reduce ambiguities associated with the EU and its future political, economic and social role. However, the EU's geopolitical bordering practises contribute to post-Cold War divisions by creating a spatial "other" (the Neighbourhood) where the "positive" and "shared" values of the EU are both measured and applied. With the demise of ideological bordering after the end of the Cold War, EU-Europe is engaged in a struggle for political and social recognition, often pitting the EU not only against its neighbours but also its own member states. Opposition to the EU's attempts at consolidation – and the persistent failure to ratify constitutional frameworks since

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The EU's security policies with regard to the Neighbourhood are targeted at enhancing public security through combating environmental hazards, terrorism, organised crime, smuggling and other illegal activities. (Vitorino, 2004). At the same time, peace and stability are to be achieved through closer economic cooperation and the avoidance of divisive gaps in living standards.

⁹ As defined in Commission of the European Communities (2004a, pp. 11-12)

2005 in particular – as well as a persistent lack of unity in issues such as immigration, foreign policy, citizenship and minority rights point to the complexity of building a supranational political community. However, while the EU’s geopolitical project of reordering Europe and its regional neighbourhood is – at best – incomplete, it remains highly influential and thus deserves critical investigation. Zaki Laidi (1998) has attempted to come to terms with the EU’s fragmented and contradictory nature by focusing on its attempts to establish coherence within a complex global context. As Laidi maintains, one vital element in the post-Cold War reorganisation of the world system is the construction of macroregional *spaces of meaning*, in which the “deepening” and “widening” of European Union has played a pivotal role. As a “space of meaning”, Europe is defining itself both externally (as a “regional and global player”) and internally (as a political community) in terms of a distinctive set of values and a sense of purpose (Scott, 2005).¹⁰

Conclusions

Various geopolitical conceptualisations of “Europe” as well as important geopolitical events have been greatly influential to the development of border theory. These have also reflected the concerns of the times and the ways in which Europe and its internal and external borders have been perceived. The primary focus of this discussion has been on the post-Maastricht European Union within the context of enlargement and the re-emergence of “pan”-European ideas. It has been the author’s intention to show that the various (i.e. political, economic, social and cultural) ramifications of Europe’s consolidation and co-operation projects necessitate a multidisciplinary analysis of borders. At the same time, and on a critical note, it appears that notions of a post-westphalian and postmodern “de-territorialisation” of state borders overshoot the mark. Despite a tendency to downplay the societal significance of borders – either for political or ethical reasons – Ratzel’s and Maull’s determinism (and the fear of “bad borders” they have engendered) is still present in current day European geopolitics. The harsh reality of militarised and separating borders has disappeared from many parts of post-Cold War Europe. However, borders in Europe are also being reconfigured by geopolitical events, by local patterns of cross-border interaction, by a renewed European identity politics and ambiguous discourses of inclusion and exclusion.

¹⁰ Admittedly (perhaps somewhat ironically in this case) the geopolitical concept of Europe as a “pan-Idea” is not new, Karl Haushofer’s (1928) depiction of a European geopolitics saw a continent unified by history and a colonial empire pitted against “Pan-Slavic”, “Pan-American” and British imperial spaces.

Borders at the EU's outer frontiers are again becoming formidable barriers and border regions risk becoming permanent peripheries.

For this reason, I argue that EU geopolitics can be interpreted in terms of contested projects of re-territorialisation and bordering. This involves, on the one hand, the consolidation of an economic, social and political European space, partly through the flexible construction of Europe within a context of a composite polity. On the other hand, with its Neighbourhood policy the EU pursues a role of stabiliser and promoter of greater cooperation. This rather “messy” and contradictory panorama of bordering practices indicates a course of development informed by discourses of civilisational differentiation, core-periphery dynamics (both within the EU and with regard to the rest of Europe) and struggles over “core values” – but also by processes of gradual accommodation. What consequences might the emergence of messy EU geopolitics imply? Perhaps the main regional concern that emerges from this multilevel complexity (and from the ambiguities embedded in EU policies) is the possible exacerbation of *socio-economic inequalities and cultural difference through exclusionary practices*. On the one hand, the tightening of the border regime at the EU's eastern borders threatens to reinforce social inequalities in the borderlands and could lead to a widening of the development gap between the EU and its eastern neighbours. On the other hand, if one follows national debates about immigration policies, the integration of foreign-born citizens, a possible Turkish accession to the EU, or about perceptions of intractable cultural antagonisms, especially between Christianity and Islam, EU-Europe also seems to signify closure, with identity politics played out in both public and private arenas.

To conclude, borders are multifaceted social institutions. Borders exert an ideational power that not only helps individuals and societies form identities but also exerts a sense of security and comfort. Even within our so-called borderless Europe, national borders are still seen as central to the organisation of economic activities and the protection of economic interests. At another level, borders continue to influence socio-spatial behaviours and attitudes. For example, border-related policies, perceptions of “neighbours” across borders and co-operation practices as central elements for the development of a sense of crossborder region. For us border “theorists”, the challenge lies, on the one hand, in understanding the multilevel contingency of bordering; i.e. the complex construction of borders from a political, economic, socio-cultural and psychological standpoint. As Liam O'Dowd has argued, (2002: 30) “Heterogeneity arises from different experiences of border formation, and formal and

informal cross-border relationships, along with the relative economic and political power of contiguous states and the role, if any, played by external powers or regional ethnic and national questions. Moreover, the EU's stress on market integration and economic competitiveness impacts in differential ways on pre-existing border heterogeneity". On the other hand, there are no neat models of EU geopolitics and the EU's attempts to influence societal development within Europe and the wider Neighbourhood are hard to map. It might well be that we need new approaches to not only track and critically evaluate "non-scripted" geopolitical discourses and representations of the EU but to also provide concrete alternatives to its border constructions, and thus its exclusionary representations.

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