



Theorizing Borders in a 'Borderless World': Globalization, Territory and Identity

Alexander C. Diener^{1*} and Joshua Hagen²

¹*Pepperdine University*

²*Marshall University*

Abstract

Although declarations or predictions of a borderless world have become somewhat ubiquitous over the last twenty years, state borders remain one of the most basic and visible features of the international system. While it is true that a range of issues, like environmental change, migration, or international trade, highlight the growing interaction and interdependence between different places around the world, borders continue to play a central role in shaping, dividing, and uniting the world's societies, economies, and ecosystems. Reflecting their significance for scholars across the social sciences, a growing body of multidisciplinary research has investigated the continuing power of borders in our supposedly borderless world. This article examines some of the main lines of inquiry, research, and theory in this emerging field of border studies.

The early 1990s marked a period of extraordinary geopolitical change. The Cold War ended, the Soviet Union collapsed, and an American-led coalition backed by a United Nations mandate expelled Iraqi military forces from Kuwait. The Berlin Wall, arguably the most (in)famous border of the twentieth century, lost its practical and symbolic relevance as an international demarcation as well as much of its physical substance seemingly overnight. Once the line separating the sovereign territories of the East and West German states, the Berlin Wall seemed the ultimate symbol of the rigidity and permanency of international borders and the bipolar international structure of the Cold War era. Yet within one year, the two Germanys had reunited, the East–West German border had disappeared, and the Berlin Wall was almost entirely demolished. This dramatic reversal seemed to herald the prospect of a new, more flexible international system.

It was against this backdrop that President George H. W. Bush spoke of 'a new world order' of international cooperation based on shared values of freedom, justice, and peace before a joint session of Congress on September 11, 1990. While the details of Bush's speech were greeted with a great deal of skepticism, leading figures in government, academia, and business from around the world seemed to agree that the international

system was entering a period of profound change. Although a variety of predictions emerged, most assumed that the importance of states (i.e. countries) and international borders would be greatly diminished. Reflecting excitement in the business community that advances in free trade, transportation, and communication, commonly lumped together under the rubric of globalization, would generate unparalleled economic prosperity, Kenichi Ohmae (1995, 11) asserted that 'nation states have *already* lost their role as meaningful units of participation in the global economy of today's borderless world.' But not all shared this relatively optimistic vision. Robert Kaplan (1994), for example, believed that overpopulation, environmental degradation, and competition for natural resources would lead to a general breakdown of state control around the world. Although offering quite different visions of the future, both saw states and by extension international borders as becoming increasingly porous, permeable, and irrelevant in the face of global flows of trade, finance, and information (Ohmae) or waves of refugees, disease, and ethnic violence (Kaplan).

While discussions concerning a major spatial reorganization of the world's political territories garnered much attention, it is clear in hindsight that predictions of the imminent demise of international borders were overstated. Indeed, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, exactly 11 years after President Bush articulated his vision of a new world order, seemed to initiate a period of renewed determination by many states around the world and their citizens to assert greater control over their external borders. Since then, the USA and many other countries have stiffened visa requirements and immigration procedures to better regulate the international movement of people. Even the European Union, often cited as a harbinger of a borderless world, has made a concerted effort to strengthen its borders with Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, as well as along the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

The desire to control cross-border flows of people has extended beyond more intensive document examinations to include a spate of new border walls. The US government has commenced the construction of hundreds of miles of fencing along its border with Mexico. India has launched ambitious efforts to strengthen its borders on two fronts. In the east, India has worked to fence its nearly 4100 kilometer (2500 mile) border with Bangladesh and its 1500 kilometer (950 mile) border with Myanmar, while simultaneously extending the barriers along its 2900 kilometer (1800 mile) western border with Pakistan. Although critical of India's expanded border fencing, Pakistan recently began to fence and mine significant sections of its own border with Afghanistan. In the Middle East, Israel's new 700 kilometer (430 mile) security barrier around many of the Palestinian areas in the West Bank is nearing completion. The government of Saudi Arabia has announced the creation of a new border fence, which will include old fashioned razor wire bolstered by high-tech

detection equipment, along its 800 kilometer (500 mile) border with Iraq. It is reportedly the first step in fencing all of the kingdom's land borders (4400 kilometers or 2750 miles). Botswana, Brazil, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Spain, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and the United Arab Emirates have all launched new fence construction projects, while dozens of other countries have bolstered their existing border barriers.

Since international borders will clearly remain important components of the international system for the foreseeable future, it is imperative to understand how they figure in contemporary economic, environmental, cultural, and geopolitical debates. Borders (or more specifically a state's external terrestrial boundaries) have evolved in meaning throughout history but have been traditionally defined as 'the physical and highly visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces' (Newman 2006, 144). Only recently, however, scholars have turned their attention to the process of 'bordering' and its influence on people's daily lives. From the global and the national, to the local and micro-scales of socio-spatial activity, borders are now understood as formal and informal institutions of spatial and social practice, as well as physical and symbolic markers of difference (Newman and Passi 1998; Van Houtum et al. 2005).

Not all borders possess such storied or contentious resumes as the Berlin Wall or the other examples noted above, but the multifaceted impact of borders on the communities they bound is undeniable. It is also important to realize that borders not only affect people but are products of the groups they bound. As noted by James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd (1999, 594), 'territorial borders both shape and are shaped by what they contain, and what crosses or is prevented from crossing them.' It is for this reason that borders are such an important topic of study in a world filled with asymmetries of power and wealth. This article offers an entry point for students and scholars seeking a wide-ranging understanding of the main lines of debate in what David Newman (2006, 143) called a 'renaissance' in border studies over the last 20 years and emerging perspectives on border theory in the twenty-first century.

A Renaissance in Border Theory

The First and Second World Wars and the wave of decolonization that followed led to some of the first attempts to study borders systematically. Some geographers worked to develop a common terminology for describing, locating, and classifying borders (see Boggs 1940; Hartshorne 1936; Jones 1943). Others focused on producing empirical research, especially before-and-after case studies of the territorial realignments following the World Wars in Europe or the independence of former colonies in Africa and Asia (see Alexander 1953; Hartshorne 1933; Prescott 1959; Spate 1948; Weigend 1950). Despite the differences in time and place, scholars generally

presumed that borders functioned as passive lines demarcating spaces of territorial sovereignty in the modern state system (Taylor 1994).

Border research gradually drifted into relative obscurity by the 1970s. There are a variety of reasons for the declining interest in border studies, but perhaps the most significant was the almost singular focus on the state and its institutions. 'The phenomenon called the "state"', one geographer proclaimed, 'has been accepted by geographers generally as the formal or central subject matter of political geography' (Jackson 1958, 178). Although geographers remained interested in international trade and investment, for example, they tended to study these topics from the point of view of central governments. Borders were relevant to this line of inquiry only to the extent that they separated one government's economic policies from those of neighboring states. 'Whether we like it or not, boundary disputes, so dominant in international politics a generation ago, are fading away from diplomatic agenda,' one geographer claimed (Kristof 1959, 278; see also Minghi 1963; Pounds 1963; Prescott 1965). Many scholars had become caught in what has been termed a 'territorial trap' that limited their research, and by extension their understanding of the world, to the nation state scale (Agnew 1994). This myopic focus on the state scale obscured the insight that could be gained from an awareness of the sub-national, trans-national, and global perspectives.

Starting in 1989, a number of border barriers came down or were made more porous. The collapse of the Soviet Union, German reunification, and the advent of new communication and transportation technologies seemed to signal a transformation of the state system and the broader global socio-spatial order. For many scholars, the prospect of a borderless world was far less abstract than at any time in history (Castells 1997; Giddens 1999; Robertson 1992). The bipolar geopolitical structure of the Cold War seemed to give way to a western, if not American, hegemony in which advanced neo-liberal capitalism and trans-border flows of people, materials, information, and technology would establish a radically new paradigm of global socio-spatial organization that transcended traditional state borders and sovereignty.

Ironically, these declarations of an emerging 'borderless world' served as a primary catalyst for the rejuvenation of border studies. Yet, it is important to note at the outset that in contrast to previous, more descriptive approaches to border studies, a new overtly interdisciplinary field of 'border theory' has emerged since the late 1980s. This approach extended scholarly attention beyond borders as spatial dividers to include the process of bordering and its capacity to shape socio-political reality in both immediately contiguous territories, as well as state centers. Borders are no longer seen as passive things to be described, mapped, and categorized but rather as active forces and processes impacting a wide array of domestic and international concerns. Conceptualized as the 'most active sites of territorial complexes' (Delaney 2005, 64), borders now constitute the physical

and institutional forefront of a dismantling of the territorial trap that will allow a more nuanced and complex understanding of the negotiation of new socio-spatial realities at sub-national, national, trans-national, and global scales.

Drawing from a variety of academic fields employing distinct approaches and methods, this new interdisciplinary perspective on border studies, like much of social science research in general, was influenced by broad ranging advances in social theory. These included (1) World Systems Theory, postulating the interdependence and connectivity of spatial places and scales; (2) Structuration Theory, with its emphasis on the freedom of action (agency) within structures; and (3) the Post-Modernist notions of discursive reality and the implied social construction of space (see Kolossov 2005, 613). In combination, these theories revitalized interest in borders as part of socio-spatial systems in which new possibilities of de- and re-territorialization present new potentials for conflict and peace, as well as alternative expressions and agents of power.

Ranging from typological and functional approaches, to world systems and geopolitical analysis, to post-modern and eco-political perspectives, the evolution of border studies (or limology) has contributed profoundly to our understanding of the international system. Yet this evolution of thought is not marked by clean breaks from one stage or perspective to the next but rather demonstrates a pattern of overlapping, accretion, and exchange (see Morehouse 2004; Paasi 2005; Van Houtum 2005). Vladimir Kolossov (2005, 607) notes that with each step in the development of border studies 'new approaches are applied together with, and not instead of, traditional, well developed ones, which are not superseded and do not lose their value.' Nevertheless, it is clear that since the 1980s and the rise of post-modern social theory, a greater variety of approaches and methods for border studies has emerged within a far wider array of disciplines. Indeed, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, international law experts, and historians around the world have established new border research centers, institutions, and associations (Newman 2006, 157). It is for this reason that many believe the field of border studies has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years. The remainder of this article explores some of the main lines of debate and inquiry that have emerged in this rejuvenated field of border research.

Borders, Globalization, and Sovereignty

Few would dispute that the complex processes of trans-national integration and interconnectivity known as globalization are having and will continue to have profound implications for international borders and notions of state sovereignty. Yet there are widely divergent views on how state borders may evolve. The crux of the disagreement rests with the exercise of territorial sovereignty, that is, will states continue to act as the dominate

actors on the international stage or will displace international and sub-national actors gradually displace state power. This has obvious implications for state borders. As noted above, some argue that borders will eventually lose their relevance, if they have not already. Couched within this discourse of 'endism' (e.g. the end of history, the end of geography) is a process of de-territorialization projected to collapse the nation state system and the significance of borders (see Caney 2005; Fukayama 1991; Kuper 2004; O'Brien 1992; Ohmae 1990, 1995). This approach can be termed 'strong globalization'. Its most fervent proponents are usually economists, information scientists (cyber scholars), business leaders, and journalists, like Thomas Friedman (2005) who has famously proclaimed that 'the world is flat'.

Geographers, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and international lawyers generally foresee a weaker form of globalization. The 'weak globalization' approach leaves room for long-term variance and reversal in border regimes. Some will remain barriers, while others will transform into permeable sites of interaction or bridge-borders (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999, 599; Newman 2006, 146). According to this approach, the compulsion to expand or secure territory has yet to and may never fully abate. Harm De Blij (2009), for example, notes that the power of borders is manifest in unequal access to education, health care, or economic opportunity across the globe. For this reason, the desire to maintain territorial control remains prominent, even as new and varied modes of border crossing abound.

According to Bernard Oxman (2006), this compulsion to secure land or the 'territorial temptation' is grounded in the fact that territory remains a zero sum scenario. Following the division of the entire world's land area into sovereign states, any territorial gain by one state logically means a territorial loss for some other state. Since this would almost invariably lead to conflict, international law strongly favors the status quo regarding international borders. The primacy of a state's territorial integrity is explicitly codified by most international organizations, with the United Nations Charter (Article 2, Paragraph 4) holding that 'all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.' Other examples include the founding charters of the Arab League (1945), the Organization of Arab States (1948), the Organization of African Unity (1963), the African Union (2000), and the Helsinki Final Act (1975). NATO and the EU actually require states seeking membership to settle their external borders before joining (Elden 2006, 11–12). Despite broadening support for intervention from both the political 'left' (human rights enforcement) and 'right' (W.M.D. proliferation prevention), along with emergent forms of contingent or earned sovereignties already in practice (e.g. the Road Map in the Middle East, the Good Friday

Agreement, the Naivasha Agreement for Sudan, the Baker Peace Accords for Bosnia, UNSC Resolution 1272 for East Timor, and the Comprehensive Agreement for Bougainville – see Elden 2006, 14–21, Ehrman 2007; Williams and Pecci 2004), a patently new system of global socio-spatial organization has yet to solidify.

Because many natural resources remain inescapably linked to territory, the prospect of power completely disassociating from control of land area is unlikely. While it may be true that internal European Union borders are increasingly permeable, Japan, though small, is also a global economic powerhouse, and the US–Canadian border is largely open, the recent rejection of the EU Constitution, Japan's increased military expenditures, and new passport requirements for Americans and Canadians speak to a continued interest in retaining and securing a measure of sovereignty. Such a trend implicitly reifies the significance of state borders. Indeed as noted at the beginning of this article, recent years have witnessed the construction or strengthening of as many barrier-borders as bridge-borders. While some of these barrier-borders predate the events of September 11, 2001, one may safely say that the global security landscape was altered dramatically on that fateful day. Although relatively few new borders have moved or manifest since 2001 (some exceptions being the emergence of an independent Kosovo and Russian incursions into Georgia), all borders are being transformed in meaning and function by the combination of dichotomous pressures of global economic exchange (integrationism) and fears created by global security issues, especially terrorism (neo-isolationism).

Expanding upon this latter theme, it may be argued that global terrorism is at least in part propelled by the notion that contemporary geopolitical and economic asymmetries result from the historical processes of post-colonial territorialization. The states in which Islamic Radicalism, in particular, are most broadly propagated formed under rather undemocratic circumstances following World War One. Given this reality, one might extend this argument to suggest that broader tensions in the international system are partially attributable to the undemocratic formation of most borders (Muldoon 2008).

In what W. E. Connelly (1991) refers to as the 'paradox of origins' or the 'politics of forgetting,' borders demarcated to allow the eventual democratic formation of civic nations are rarely the product of democratic processes. Therefore, a measure of 'forgetting' is needed in order for legitimacy to emerge. The paradox relates to the idea that democratic politics must emerge from democratic institutions but there cannot be democracy until democratic institutions are established. Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, 596) note that this paradox may be applied to the delimitation and institutionalization of territorial borders. Whether involving the acceptance of existing territorial entities, the carving out of new territories, or the imposition of a boundary by an external power, it is a basic truth that all borders reflect and cross a variety of social boundaries.

Tension within the international system has long derived from the lack of congruence between state borders and the national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities that overlap them. Border studies therefore expose misleading concepts of state-society congruence but also the pervasiveness and implied superiority of the borderless or trans-national/hybrid experience.

Like the Janus-faced nationalisms with which they are intimately associated in the so-called sovereign 'nation-state', borders look inwards and outwards: they simultaneously unify and divide, include and exclude. They are coercive, disabling and limiting, including and excluding many people against their will; but they are also benign and enabling, providing the basis for security, dominant forms of identity and conventional representative democracy. 'Prison' or 'refuge', they can facilitate oppression or provide an escape from it (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999, 596).

This legacy of undemocratic origins and the violence that too often accompanies international territorial demarcation skews socio-political development long after the border is set. While it is clear that many states have responded to the emergence of global issues like terrorism or immigration by hardening their borders in an effort to reassert territorial sovereignty, some scholars have suggested that states will have to adopt more internationalist and de-territorialized strategies, such as ceding greater authority to inter-governmental organizations, to meet these challenges effectively (Behr 2008; Eudaily and Smith 2008).

The notion of 'graduated sovereignty' profoundly influences this literature by positing new relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and territoriality and identity (see Park 2005, 852; Ong 1999, 2006). Defined as a state's differential treatment of the population based on ethno-cultural differences and the dictates of developmental programs, graduated sovereignty constitutes a re-engineering of political spaces and populations. Aihwa Ong (2000), for example, described how the Malaysian government implemented policies that allowed wide-ranging privileges, like special tax breaks, for its entrepreneurial class and foreign investors in an effort to stimulate economic development. But to maximize returns, the government simultaneously limited the ability of laborers to unionize and allowed bonded labor in export-orientated industries. In effect, the Malaysian government created a multi-tiered system that exerted stricter control over manual laborers but minimal regulation over businesses and investors. Other governments have asserted their right of territorial sovereignty to block foreign efforts to stop human rights abuses. The international community's recognition of the Sudanese government's territorial sovereignty, for example, has thwarted efforts to halt that government's campaign of ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region. This and other instances of state-sponsored abuses against segments of their domestic populations have driven attempts to detach sovereignty from the state. In

this view, sovereignty rests with the people and the state's territorial integrity must only be respected so long as the state protects the basic rights of its people (El Ouali 2006).

These varied debates demonstrate a clear advance from traditional approaches to limology that often accepted borders as either naturally or historically 'given' and their function as passive spatial markers. As noted by Jevgenia Viktorova (2003), rather than stabilizing into rigid and legitimated spatial dividers, borders invite transgression, as well as communication and mediation. They are essentially 'unfinalizable' because they remain subject to change based on contingent events, such as evolving neo-liberal economic practices, new asymmetrical security threats, or revived national and sub-national identities. Together they catalyze the formation of new 'sovereignscapes'. Defined by James Sidaway (2003, 158), this term suggests 'a way of seeing (and as an element or form of expression of what Foucault called "governmentality"), [that] offers a productive subversion of the understanding of states as "containers"'. This adds to the literature seeking to problematize the distinctions between ideological processes functioning 'inside' and 'outside' the state. In doing so, the national and the 'inter'- or 'trans'-national are critically reconsidered. These theorizations of new, more flexible conceptions of sovereignty illustrate the increasingly powerful discourse of borders as 'process'. Drawing from world systems and structuration theories, these process-orientated approaches point to the complex networks linking local, regional, national, macro-regional, and global scales of place and power.

Borders, Territory, and Scale

Geographers have led the way in taking 'a critical stance toward scale, recognizing the historicity of scales and resisting the reification of the national scale so present in most social sciences' (Sassen 2005, 528). In other words, geographers are at the forefront of breaking the territorial trap by utilizing the concepts of scale and place as lens through which one may understand the changing meaning of borders and bordering. Key assumptions of the territorial trap are shattered as current scholarship reveals how global processes take place at sub-national levels as well as beyond the limits of state authority. In doing so, they disrupt the notion of mutually exclusive domains for the national and global.

Saskia Sassen (2005, 524) notes how scholars have focused largely on the loss of functions by states to supranational, global, and private entities, while much less attention is given to 'the proliferation of subnational scalings of global processes and institutions.' This process represents a major shift in the meaning of borders as: (1) partial or specialized denationalization of specific components of the state economy, society, and polity occur; (2) global processes enter the national institutional space and geographic territory; (3) and novel borderings inside national territory

begin to function within the looser structure of the geographic demarcation of state territories (see Sassen 2006; Weiss 2005). Having dealt with partial or specialized de-nationalization in the previous section, the latter two processes shall be explored below as perspectives on the growing incongruence of power and rigidly territorialized state authority.

An example of novel borderings that are contributing to advances in limology relate to the reconfiguration of state spatiality as it pertains to minorities and indigenous peoples. The concept of indigenous sovereignty borrows from Raymond Williams (1990) and Patricia Monture-Angus' (2000) questioning of the epistemological basis of Western law and its application to minority and indigenous rights. They, along with other scholars (see Behrendt 2003; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Reynolds 1996), identify racisms embedded in the historical, political, and legal treatment of minority and indigenous sovereignty and call for reconceptualizations of power both within and outside a law, right, and sovereignty paradigm. In essence, validation is sought for spatial conceptions beyond the nation-state's proliferation of *uti possedetis* (as you possess, so you may possess) and Western legal notions of property and ownership.

This approach compels a questioning of Western *a priori* ideals of space and boundary by invoking pre-modern notions of overlapping polities, pre-modern power structures, and frontiers. Some work has already been done on this including Robert Sack's (1986) discussion of the interface between European abstract notions of space and Native American societal conceptions of space, as well as Thongchai Winichakul's (1994) portrayal of the confrontation between colonial powers and the Court of Siam regarding political ideas about space and border. Emerging from social constructivist theories, these studies reveal that the expansion of European spatiality and the logics of the territorial state did not eradicate alternative visions of boundary and spatial order but were negotiated into complex hybrid borderscapes (see Donnan and Wilson 1999; Joffe 1993; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Wilson and Donnan 1998).

As noted above, new borderscapes are also emerging in relation to global or transnational incursions upon national space. The proliferation of these sub-national border sites is a prime topic within the literature and a fertile field for theoretical advancement. Bae-Gyoon Park (2005), for example, has characterized the creation of special economic zones by the South Korean government as a response to the emergence of neo-liberal global economic practices. By exempting these zones from much state regulation and oversight, the South Korean government hoped to create spaces that would attract foreign investment. The spread of these neo-liberal spaces (free trade zones, export processing zones, economic free zones, maquiladoras, etc.) around the world are obvious examples of global economic processes manifesting themselves on the sub-national scale.

Among the most unique venues of recent research are extra-territorial sites such as transit portals in airports, embassies, consulates, and ships at sea.

Each represents unique territorially detached expressions of sovereignty and bordering that are increasingly prevalent amid ascending global mobility. Along with immigrant and refugee centers and extra-territorial detention facilities (e.g. Guantanamo Bay), these settings constitute venues of political contestation rich with questions of justice and its spatial underpinnings (see Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007).

New dynamics of corporeal mobility and communication suggest a new reality of borders in the twenty-first century. Today the tensions of a distant border may be reproduced in the urban environs of global cities like London or New York (Samers 2003). The next section explores how, in such cases, new urban or sub-state borders obtain their significance from the identities carried within individuals and groups, thus evoking important questions pertaining to identity, belonging, and the possibilities of a new socio-spatial order.

Borders, Identity, and Belonging

Across disciplines, borders are regarded as strongly influencing belonging, affiliation, and membership through symbolic processes of inclusion and exclusion (Ackleson 1999; Albert et al. 2001; Berdahl 1997; Brown 2001; Donnan and Wilson 1999; Falah and Newman 1995; Hagen 2003; Kaplan and Hakli 2002; Leimgruber 1991; Meinhof 2002; Migdal 2004; Paasi 1996; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Wastl-Walter et al. 2002; Wilson and Donnan 1998). It is also commonly accepted that borders may reflect existing differences or engender new 'others'. The means by which this occurs is, however, sparsely understood, though it has come to be intimately linked with the concepts of trans-nationalism and hybridity, and represents the cutting edge of border theory.

Borderlands, trans-national social fields, cross-border regions, and diasporic spaces are just some of the terms emerging in reference to areas in which shared identities relate directly and indirectly to dynamics of daily practice affected by the very presence of a common border (Chen 2005; Cold-Rauvkilde et al. 2004; Dobell and Neufeld 1994; Thelan 1999). These spaces may serve as transitional zones, wherein gradual movement from one cultural norm to another occurs. Evidence suggests that such circumstances can enable a breakdown of traditional barriers of national suspicion and animosity based often on ignorance of the 'other' (Kolossoff 2005, 219). Integration of Turkic Muslim Kazakhs occupying the westernmost province of Mongolia into the Mongolian civic nation represents a clear case of overcoming cultural barriers in a borderzone. Years of coexistence have led most of Mongolia's citizens to focus on the ethnic groups' shared nomadic heritage rather than their cultural and linguistic differences (Diener 2009).

Unfortunately, contact within such zones may also accentuate difference by constituting a 'place of one-upmanship' and site of mutual antagonism,

no longer based on ignorance but feelings of superiority or inferiority (see Minghi 1991). Even for those possessing respect for the 'other' and shared ideals relating to the border setting, such 'hybridity' is not always a comfortable state of being. Often portrayed in the positive light of cosmopolitanism, borderland populations can exist at both the physical and social margins of their national society. Not all states are secure enough in their legitimacy to encourage or even tolerate hybrid members at their edge (Hutnyk 2005). China's 'develop the west' program not only advances industry and infrastructure in its Xinjiang province but also demographically dilutes the predominant Turkic Muslim population by transferring Han Chinese into the region (Gladney 2004). David Newman (2006, 150) suggests that the 'traditional function of borders has been to create barriers to movement rather than bridges enabling contact. . . . While the opening of boundaries is seen as a positive factor, pointing to good neighborliness between territorial and social entities, recent years have shown just how easily these bridges can be destroyed and the barriers reconstructed.'

Scholars probing this rich field depict borders as reflections of particular modes of governmentality (most often that of the sovereign state). Through the nation-state's teleological bonding of sovereignty and territory, this governmentality establishes the border as a mechanism for the production of exclusions and hierarchies. Considered a by-product of reductionist notions of belonging and non-belonging, a multiplicity of boundary practices discursively formulates the functional role of the border. It thereby manifests as more than a line on a map or location in a landscape, but a relational practice for the production of 'otherness' (Soguk 2007, 286). Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo's (2008) research on the Spanish-Moroccan border provides one recent example. Here the Spanish and EU governments fortified the border as part of a broader campaign to restrict African emigration to Europe. Beyond the actual functional and material aspects of new border barriers and enforcement, the process of hardening the border has also been intertwined with the symbolic negotiation of a Spanish/European identity contrasted with other Moroccan/African identities.

According to Kolossov (2005, 619), 'isolation gives rise to ignorance, ignorance to fear and mistrust, and such perception of the neighbour becomes the strongest obstacle for reconciliation and a real and long-term resolution of a conflict.' Yet post-modern recommendations for interstate fluidity and openness are often impeded by the inertia of traditional geopolitical practices and perspectives (particularly with the emergence of unique threat matrices in the twenty-first century). Nationalism, it should also be noted, is not an anachronistic concept, nor are the symbolic boundaries it creates likely to fall into abeyance. Although international law clearly emphasizes the state's right to territorial integrity and sovereignty, numerous groups challenge the legitimacy of borders as institutional

demarcations of political and cultural belonging (Brunet-Jailly 2005, 238). Examples include stateless nations divided by an international border (e.g. Kurds, Basques, Baluchi, or Ossetians) as well as communities largely residing within an existing state (e.g. Scots, Quebecois, Karen, or Uyghurs).

Reflecting the structurational theory of Giddens (see also Agnew 1987) and the shift in understanding borders from specific and locational to relative and processional (see Brunet-Jailly 2005; Kolossov 2005), a new emphasis on borders as sites of active contestation has emerged. From this perspective, those excluded retain a measure of agency and reproduce the border in their own image. The meaning of the border and its daily function are mutable and must therefore be studied relative to the group imagining it, including international organizations, state officials, aid volunteers, border control agents, tourists, migrants, refugees, or smugglers.

While it may be tempting to offer overarching recommendations for mitigating border tensions and encouraging understanding between diverse cultural groups, the highly variable nature of international borders makes it unlikely that a single approach exists applicable to all borders. Rather than focusing on positing some single ideal border situation, a variety of approaches to structuring cross-border interaction may prove more fruitful. This would require a concerted effort to find the delicate balance (differing in accordance with the unique circumstances across the political map) between 'the needs of border security, the development of cross-boundary cooperation and the interests of central governments and border regions' (Kolossov 2005, 622). In some cases, a relatively hard border with strict regulation of cross-border movement may actually offer a better chance of realizing the interests of long term peace, while open border policies may function best in other contexts. This variability highlights the challenges and potential for future border research, which is especially evident in research on migration.

Borders, Migrants, and Trans-National Identities

Common to the broad scope of post-modern border theory is the idea that there is a proliferation of processes remaking the social and the citizen subjects. The cross-border dynamics of globalization call for those aspiring to transcend limitations of rigid socio-spatial systems to be free, self-managing, and self-enterprising individuals in different spheres of everyday life (Ong 2006, 14). Where Euripides's play *Hippolytus* portrayed Theseus's exile from his native land as a fate worse than death, border-crossing in the post-modern era is seen in far more varied terms. The negative terms of exile, expatriate, and refugee now compete with positive images of cosmopolitans, third space occupants, and global citizens. Beyond this value laden terminology, it is clear that communities are manifesting in relation to the crossings of borders and the new spaces of interaction and connectivity they form.

Clearly, allegiance is not so simple or easily equated with categories of insider or outsider, belonging or not. In its most fervent form, this approach views the human body as a border site. Diplomatic immunity, tourist/work visas, immigration documentation, and even credit cards constitute mobile manifestations of national identity and corporeal vectors of sovereign space (Sparke 2004). According to Sassen (2005, 230), 'It is the body of the immigrant herself which is both carrier of much of the (border) regime and the crucial site for enforcement: and in the case of an unauthorized immigrant, it is, again, the body of the immigrant that is the carrier of the violation of the law and of the corresponding punishment (such as detention or expulsion).' A focus on the body in border studies compels consideration of ethics in the process of bordering (Buchanan and Moore 2003).

Migration trends are also acknowledged as increasingly circular in nature, where return migration or seasonal movement between states constitutes a growing norm (Trager 2005). While monodirectional movements of people and settlement in new venues of permanent residence may have been overstated in the past, it is clear that new opportunities for crossing borders have emerged in recent decades (Foner 1997). It should be noted, nevertheless, that these opportunities are not equally accessible to all. Those with specialized skills often find borders more porous, while those without confront greater resistance to their migration efforts (see Markowitz and Stefansson 2004; Münz and Ohliger 2003).

Immigrant rights activists have long lamented that border barriers do little to address the causes of human traffic across them. With migrant deaths running into the thousands and costs escalating in relation to boundary enforcement, new policies are emerging to target economic desperation or human rights issues that serve as migration catalysts (e.g. neo-interventionism for human rights, maquiladoras, and micro-lending institutions). Without question, borders are sites of vulnerability to those traversing them. Obviously, illegal immigrants face extreme risks, and many border crossings across the globe function as venues for extortion and abuse. This had led some to question the ethical nature of borders. Martha Scarpellino (2007), for example, has argued the rigorous enforcement of stringent immigration policies violates human rights and is therefore unethical.

Collective action on the part of spatially dispersed groups can have profound cross-border impacts. Work by Linda Basch (et al. 1994), Patricia Ehrkamp (2005; Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006), Helga Leitner and Ehrkamp (2006), Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick-Schiller (2004) point to the growing phenomenon of trans-national social fields. Such fields can link diasporic communities and their historic homeland populations with often striking effects on both (see Anderson 1992; Astoruián 2005; Danforth 1995; Demmers 2005; Diener 2007, 2009; Ishkanian 2005). For example, Gabriel Popescu (2005) investigated efforts by Romanian-Americans to convince the American

government to support Romania's bid for NATO membership. Although separated by great distances and various international borders, this case highlighted the increasing ability of diasporic communities to mobilize to influence issues concerning their ethnic homelands. With diasporas able to involve themselves in the domestic struggles of their homelands and homeland-elites capable of mobilizing diasporas to a greater degree than at any point in history, the concept of sovereignty will be profoundly tested.

Even within the generally inclusive domain of cyber space (welcoming to those with access to and knowledge of computers but exclusive to those without), new communities are being formed around shared fields of interests. Like all identities, even these cyber groups simultaneously foment exclusions and hierarchical structures that can transcend space but nevertheless cast the individual in a territorial light. As the internet makes clear, sovereignty and jurisdiction are increasingly separated from rigid territorial links and spatial limits. Where the Voice of America/Radio Free Europe once beamed its radio waves unilaterally to the east, the internet enables the exchange of ideas and information as never before. Al Qaeda and other nefarious groups reach across borders to promote their activities just as Amnesty International and other human rights groups use the 'web' to promote justice and hope among the oppressed.

More benign but nonetheless impacting effects of trans-national communities on territory can be found in the realms of environmentalism and tourism (see Van Amerom 2002; Wachowiak 2006; Yang 2003). Trans-national/trans-'frontier' parks and preserves exist on almost every continent and draw support from international and non-governmental organizations (Kilot 2002). These organizations are linked to a global community of environmental activists, which is among the most active tourist populations in the world. Whether toting the banner of preservation/conservation or simply cultural curiosity, travelers cross borders, cosmopolize specific areas, and compel continued consideration of the possibility of a broad reaching, interdisciplinary model for border studies.

Conclusion

Human Geography is profoundly concerned with the idea of place as a process of bounding space to achieve a particular purpose. This bounding of space, according to Robert Sack (1986, 1997), is an innate feature of human existence. We are essentially place makers, creating order by utilizing our capacity to physically and mentally demarcate difference between social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental entities, processes, and institutions. One of the chief uses of these boundaries is to set limits of power. Humans live within a world crisscrossed with lines marking varied jurisdictions of authority and opportunity. With power so often directly linked to the principle of ownership, it is essential to understand how ownership relies on a clear territorial demarcation of its limits.

Borders, or more specifically, international or external state borders, and the regions they adjoin constitute rich sites for research into the changing nature of human social organization and capacities for action amidst the dynamics of globalization.

This article has surveyed contemporary literature in which scholars analyze the changing role of borders in the post-modern world. Recent debates have engendered new insights into the processes of bordering and the institutions relating to borders. For some, borders are increasingly irrelevant since 'the world is flat,' meaning a borderless world seems imminent; while others argue that the processes of trans-nationalism and trans-migration, as well as terms such as trans-border and trans-state, are significant only to the extent that something remains to 'trans' (i.e. cross, breach, or span). In short, borders still matter and will continue to play a powerful role in global political, economic, cultural, and environmental issues.

With the dismantling of the territorial trap, some scholars questioned if a new 'medieval' socio-spatial order is emerging characterized by overlapping, opaque, and flexible hierarchies of political power (see Anderson 1996; Friedrichs 2001; Winn 2004). The growing size and influence of international corporations like Wal-Mart, intergovernmental organizations like the World Trade Organization, and non-governmental organizations like Doctors Without Borders, as well as efforts by sub-national groups like municipal governments, indigenous peoples, or diasporic communities to act internationally, all challenge the notion of absolute state territorial sovereignty. Combined with the state's own implementation of graduated sovereignty/citizenship and the proliferation of neo-liberal economic spaces, this could harbingers the emergence of neo-feudal social structures where certain classes and institutions garner broad privileges while others face discrimination and regulation. Alternatively, some hope these alternative modes of governance will draw upon the theory of 'democratic peace' to create a more cooperative international system. In such a system, borders are projected by some to be more hindrance than help.

Nevertheless, the process of bordering may be inevitable. Just as new siege technologies and paradigms of socio-political organization rendered walled cities obsolete, new territorial formations eventually formed around larger scale sovereignties. Such a process is likely to occur in relation to the socio-spatial patterns of post-modernity. Though differing in form and scale from that which preceded it, re-territorialization will likely follow any de-territorialization. Territoriality remains a force in human action and organization, and as such the prospect of a perpetual de-territorialization is remote. Rather, the period of transition between paradigms represents a complex renegotiation of spatiality.

We see today, and are likely to continue to witness, contradictory processes pertaining to borders (see Bufon 2006; Pratt and Yeoh 2003). Instances of barrier removal in the interest of promoting trans-state trade will be coupled with the creation of new barriers and documentation

requirements in the post 9/11 security environment. Instantaneous contact through cyber space will continue to enable access to the diversity of world cultures but will also serve as an outlet for propaganda and a forum for various types of oppression. Possibilities for unprecedented emancipation of thought remain but will coexist with purveyors of xenophobia and isolationism. During this stage of shifting spatiality, borders conspicuously embody such contradictory and multifaceted roles. Perhaps more prevalent today than at any point in history, we are confronted with the challenge of understanding the transportable and multi-scalar nature of territory, belonging, and governance.

Short Biographies

Alexander C. Diener is an Associate Professor of Geography at Pepperdine University. He is the author of *One Homeland or Two?: Nationalization and Transnationalization of Mongolia's Kazakhs* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2009) and *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans* (Mellen Press, 2004). Diener is the co-editor of the volume *Border Lines: The History and Politics of Odd International Boundaries* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming). His area studies specialty is Central Eurasia and his research and teaching interests include borders, migration, nationalism, transnationalism, and the moral consequences of territorialization.

Joshua Hagen is an Associate Professor of Geography at Marshall University. He is co-editor of *Border Lines: The History and Politics of Odd International Boundaries* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming) and author of *Preservation, Tourism and Nationalism: The Jewel of the German Past* (Ashgate Publishing, 2006). His current research and teaching interests cover a range of topics largely focusing on Europe and Russia, including the history of geopolitical thought; contemporary geographies of national identity and territoriality; and the cultural politics of architecture and urban planning.

Note

* Correspondence address: Alexander C. Diener, Associate Professor of Geography, Social Science Division, Pepperdine University, 24255 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu, CA 90263. E-mail: alexander.diener@pepperdine.edu. Joshua Hagen, Department of Geography, One John Marshall Drive, Marshall University, Huntington, WV 25755-2664.

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