

# EXLINEA State of the Art Report

## Boundaries and the Europeanisation of Space: The EU, Integration and Evolving Theoretical Perspectives on Borders

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EXLINEA



Lines of Exclusion as Arenas of Co-operation:  
Reconfiguring the External Boundaries of Europe  
Policies, Practices and Perceptions

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## **Executive Summary**

The main argument developed in this report is that the process of EU integration and enlargement has affected how borders and boundaries have been perceived, both in the social sciences and in more everyday realms of public life. Of course, human geography, as one of the principal social science disciplines involved in border analysis, has developed from naturalistic and deterministic roots to an integrative and critical discipline. This has contributed to the fact that borders are now largely perceived as multifaceted social institutions. However, I will argue that various geopolitical conceptualisations of "Europe" have been greatly influential to the development to border theory.

The evolution of border theory will thus be related to overlying geopolitical events, reflecting the concerns of the times and the ways in which Europe and its internal and external borders have been perceived. The essay begins with a brief periodisation of European geopolitical contexts (i.e. from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Cold War period) and reflects on the border theories that emerged and/or developed during these periods. The primary focus will be on the post-Maastricht European Union within the context of enlargement and the emergence of new "pan"-European ideas.

The essay will thus trace shifting understandings of borders. 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. Dissatisfaction with the apolitical and "objective" assumptions of empiricism led to the application to a variety of critical approaches, some of them associated with "postmodern" and "poststructuralist" perspectives, that analyse the social construction of borders in terms of discourses and agency (practices). Finally, a pragmatic view focusing on problem-oriented aspects of state borders and cross-border co-operation and with varying degrees of critical inspiration has emerged since the late 1970s.

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. Generally speaking however, I argue that EU integration and enlargement – and the political rationales and discourses they have brought forth – have facilitated the emergence of two broad and often overlapping schools of thought, one pragmatic and the other “critical” in the poststructuralist sense. As a result, much current research on European borders is characterised by problem-oriented but socially critical readings of “bordering” processes within the context of European integration and enlargement. Practical issues of cross-border co-operation are thus interpreted not only in terms of “technical” issues and “structural” constraints but increasingly in terms of the perception of borders as symbols and identity-constructing elements as well.

## **1 Introduction and Overview**

The objective of this essay is twofold.

Related to the overall discussion of the EU's impacts on borders and how they are perceived in general is a discussion of how borders and boundaries, as multifaceted social institutions, have been perceived in the social sciences. The primary focus here is human geography and the development of human geography from its naturalistic and deterministic roots to an integrative and critical discipline. Various stages in the development of human geography will be touched upon as they specifically apply to the study of borders. On the other hand, these lectures will also focus on practical issues related to European integration and enlargement, that is: on the perception of borders as symbols and identity-constructing elements. This last aspect will be discussed in relation to cross-border co-operation projects developing at the EU's external boundaries.

The four sessions will cover scientific discussion of borders in relation to overlying geopolitical events, reflecting the concerns of the time and the ways in which Europe and its internal and external borders have been perceived. Here, three specific periods of European history are highlighted: the advent of continental nation-states in the late 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

Among the authors whose work will be discussed are Friedrich Ratzel, Otto Maull, Karl Haushofer, Richard Hartshorne, Ladis Kristof and Victor Prescott. The topics that will be covered reflect the momentous historical events that shaped understandings of borders and geopolitics. 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, especially in Anglo-American geography, to attempts at “value-free” studies of borders. Hence, political geography between 1940 and (about) 1975 was characterised by empiricism, description and categorisation.

Session 3 is devoted to critical approaches, often associated with “postmodern” perspectives, that analyse the social construction of borders in terms of discourses and agency (practices). 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 Marxist and, later, deconstructivist perspectives on borders and border-defining processes. This latter tradition concerns us here. We will discuss articles written by Anssi Paasi, Henk van Houtum, Gerald Toal and others. Finally, Session 4 will give an overview of more practical (that is, problem-oriented) aspects of geographical research on borders. Here, a possible research programme based on pragmatism will be suggested. The Irish sociologist Liam O’Dowd offers an excellent “pragmatic” and, at the same time, socially critical reading of bordering processes within the context of European integration and enlargement.

Sessions 3 and 4 are not only about “borders” per se but also engage questions of identity. Current issues dealing with national identity and national borders in Central Europe will therefore also be discussed along with the works of key authors.

## **Geographical Perspectives on Borders: Determinism and Imperialist Geopolitics**

*Central concepts: Natural laws as basic theory: biodeterminism, geodeterminism, Space as a Natural Order, the State as “organism”, “organic” notions of border and frontier, the advent of imperialist geopolitics*

Examples of research questions: relationships between border morphology and state development, the geographical development of national spheres of influence (geopolitics)

Friedrich Ratzel (1844 - 1904)

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. Ratzel’s most (in)famous analogy is that of the state as living organism, with internal organs, external protective boundaries and an inherent drive towards expansion. The drive for territorial expansion, understood as a strategy of survival would be subsequently developed by other scholars.

Otto Maull

Maull 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 Maull, 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). Maull 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.

Maull makes the distinction between “Good” and “Bad” borders. This relates to their defensive character and stability. He asks 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?”.<sup>1</sup>

Maull unquestionably sees “anti-structural” borders as “bad” borders. 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. Maull, writing after the Paris Peace decrees of 1919 and despairing over the loss of German territory and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary, saw many of Europe’s new borders as bad borders, where formerly

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<sup>1</sup> Maull’s main concern in German (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?”

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

Karl Haushofer (1869 – 1946)

Karl Haushofer developed Political Geography into an applied science. Inspired by work of Kjellen, Halford 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 demoralising effects of defeat and territorial loss (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 extermination 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.

### **Geographical Perspectives on Borders: "Systematic" and Empiricist Traditions**

*Central concepts: lack of a central "metatheory", functionalism, positivism, uniqueness and "Kantian" space, functional genesis of the state: core areas, centrifugal and centripetal forces, classification and morphologies of states and borders*

Examples of research questions: border functions in terms of state development (e.g. the role of frontiers, corridors, core areas, etc.) the study of border landscapes, border formation as a political process

Richard Hartshorne (1899-1992)

For many years Richard Hartshorne was one of the most influential geographers in the Anglo-American tradition. For him: "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" (1950:128).

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 PG 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. In a short paper written in 1936, Hartshorne suggested that borders and their landscapes could be classified as pioneer, antecedent, subsequent, consequent, superimposed or relic.

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 relate 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: "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“ (p. 192). 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 utilize historical facts of genesis insofar as these aid us in understanding structural features previously determined to be significant.“(p. 193)

The functional tradition in Political Geography produced a number of analytical approaches, some of the more influential scholars who can be associated in a way or another to the functionalist tradition are listed below. Although these authors differ considerably in their outlook they all contribute to a tradition of geographic inquiry in which metatheory and social criticism is eschewed in favour of the development of unifying and integrating concepts. Furthermore, only that which is materially present and observable is counted as relevant to understanding the nature of borders and states.

#### Norman Pounds and Susan Ball

These authors are especially known for their development of the “core region” as a central functional concept in comparative PG. This approach emphasises the historical importance of core regions where state (or national) “ideas” have been able to develop and diffuse spatially. Core regions are centripetal, they are a key factor in establishing national unity

#### Stephen B. Jones

Another prominent American geographer, Jones insisted on the uniqueness of individual borders and the difficulty of making sweeping generalisations about the nature and evolution of borders. He did, however, contribute to Hartshorne’s “project” of conceptualisation; Jones focused research attention on the emergence of borders based on forms of social-political organisation and processes of nation-building.

#### Victor Prescott

Prescott, an Australian geographer, was mainly concerned with identifying spatial relationships between politics and geography and thus focus PG 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

Originally from the Bukovina, Kristof escaped from Romania and emigrated to the United States during the 1940s. His personal experience with borders and border regimes clearly influenced his perceptions as to how these phenomena should be studied. A follower of Hartshorne’s ideas on political geography, Kristof devoted himself to the systematic study of borders and boundaries as aspects of “Realpolitik” and as organising elements of the state. In a famous article published in 1959 (see reference lists), Kristof uses the functional approach to illustrate the differences between frontiers and borders.

For Kristof, the primary function of boundaries as legal institutions is clear: “(...) 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“ (p.220). 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: “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 (p. 220).”

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.

### **Borders and Identities in Central Europe**

Central concepts: Critical theory and postmodernism, multiple interpretations of border significance, borders as socio-cultural constructs, deconstruction of border discourses, neo-liberalisms

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.

#### **Anssi Paasi**

The choice of Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi as a representative of a socially critical school of PG 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 (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" (2001:135). Therefore it is not only the mere function of borders, but also their meanings that are relevant to social sciences: "The challenge for researchers (geographers) is to develop critical approaches to understand the changing meanings of boundaries in the current world" (2001: 141). "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" (ibid).

Paasi defines three primary elements of contemporary bordering processes:

Political boundaries: physical changes of boundaries as demarcation lines

Boundaries of politics: redefinition of the spatial scales of governance in response to globalisation

Politics of boundaries: the production and reproduction of boundaries in response to shifting relations between nation, state, territory and identities

### Gerald Toal

Gerald Toal (known also as Gearóid Ó Tuathail), has developed a deconstructivist perspective to the study of Geopolitics. He shows how the “objectivity” of geopolitical doctrine can be decoded – through the analysis of discourses - as a very subjective form of power politics. Toal’s perspective also allows to see how the idea of “border” can be manipulated in order to achieve specific objectives, including alternative “geopolitics of resistance”.

### Henk van Houtum

Dissatisfied with the empiricism and data accumulation of traditional border studies, the Dutch geographer Henk van Houtum has tried to understand the complex construction of borders from a political, economic, socio-cultural and psychological standpoint. It is the confluence of these different levels of bordering (see Dear and Flusty’s diagram of the “Geographical Puzzle” in the annex) that has increasingly informed van Houtum’s research agenda.

In an important article written in 2002, van Houtum points out that the 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.

### John Agnew

John Agnew is a political geographer at UCLA whose primary focus has been on a critical analysis of state-formation and geopolitics within the capitalist world system. Strictly speaking, his focus is not on borders per se but, rather, on the shifting territorialities of the state system. Conventional PG as well as other disciplines have, according to Agnew and Corbridge (1996), fallen into a “territorial trap” that has reified the concept of nation-state as an exclusive “container” of economic, political, social and cultural space. Contemporary trends, however, indicate that the boundedness of the nation-state (if it every existed in any

absolute manner to begin with) is being worn down by transnational flows and changing social practices.

### **Borders and Cross-border Regionalism on the EU's External Borders**

*Central concepts: Synthesis of critical and empirical traditions, problem-solving orientation, pragmatic and critical philosophies*

Examples of research questions: How are borders changing in an enlarging Europe? What does these changes mean in terms of their societal impacts? In more concrete terms, this could 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, analysis of cross-border co-operation as a governance issue.

This final session is devoted to form of a synthesis of the preceding geographical perspectives on borders. This synthesis informs a border research perspective that is both pragmatic (problem-solving being the main objective) and critical (social equity and the improvement of the quality of life being the basic value). The pragmatic view accepts that definitions of borders and identities are neither fixed nor permanent. Central organising 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".

Liam O’Dowd, an Irish sociologist at Queens University, Belfast, shares the “optimistic scepticism” of the pragmatic view. One of this research goals has been to illustrate how “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. (2002:29).” In addition, states O’Dowd, the “European project” is reconfiguring borders as both barriers and bridges” (2002:32).<sup>2</sup> 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 article quoted here (see references), 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 function as

Barriers

Bridges

Resources

*and*

Symbols of identity

and how these changes 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 (p. 30). 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

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<sup>2</sup> Our 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 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” (O’Dowd 2002).

to justify. “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 (p. 30)” .

### **Fitting EXLINEA into the Picture**

This multilevel approach is captured in Figure 2 and is reflected in current research on cross-border co-operation in Europe. An example of this research is the ongoing EXLINEA project, funded by the EU, in which border scholars such as Heikki Eskelinen, Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramersch, Bela Baranyi and Eiki Berg are participating.

Within the EXLINEA context, discourses and practices concerning cross-border co-operation are seen as constituting “regionalisation” processes. In this case “Regionalisation” refers to the development of institutions and social practices that help create a framework for the solution of common problems and the resolution of conflicts in different regions at the EU’s external boundaries. By focusing on discourses and practices, EXLINEA will attempt to illustrate how, at different phases of EU enlargement, cross-border co-operation has been and continues to be conditioned by overlying geopolitical considerations and national/local development contexts. The following research questions are at the heart of the project:

- *What are the principle socio-economic, political and environmental challenges that require cross-border collective action in contexts of EU enlargement?*
  - *How are policies that regulate the ‘permeability’ of borders compatible with pursuits to promote cross-border co-operation? How do European, national and local policies and*
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*interests coalesce and/or clash with regard to the development of closer cross-border co-operation?*

- *What strategies have been developed by local actors to promote region-building in terms of formal and informal integration processes? What governance functions can be realistically attributed to cross-border co-operation?*
- *What results in terms of perceived added value have been achieved through cross-border co-operation?*
- *Is cross-border region-building (e.g. in the form of Euroregions) helping instil a sense of common interest and European identity?*

Other important representatives of this synthetic approach to borders include David Newman, Ngai-Ling Sum and Markus Perkmann. Their publications (two of which listed in the references) are warmly recommended for the interested student.

	Mauil	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	Relation between	Relation between	Interrelationships

Questions	state viability and border morphology	discourses and the creation of borders	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

### **Synthesis: Cross-border region-building as a European concept**

I suggest that transboundary regionalisation is perhaps best understood in terms of interrelationships between structure and agency. In order to comprehend the complex nature of borders and border-related identity, it is essential that these be understood as social constructs that reflect, for example, “europeanising” and “nationalising” influences upon cross-border interaction as well as opportunity structures providing incentives for transboundary co-operation. Anthony Giddens’s (1984) notion of “regionalisation”, although not originally applied to administratively defined space as such, provides a multidimensional perspective for the conceptualisation of region-building as a permanent process of spatial signification and bounding (boundary-formation). Regionalisation as understood in this abstract fashion is a complex process of space-time zonation that is place and group-specific and that is subject to multilevel influences. Political institutions, governance principles, attitudes, local experiences, and regional identity-formation all contribute to spatial bounding and signification. Whereas internationalising (or rather, europeanising) discourses can promote an “opening” of cross-border interaction spaces, nationalising elements can often provoke “closure” and/or ambivalence to cross-border interaction. Similarly, perceptions of interdependence and complementarity can partially suspend closure and even promote transnational behaviours.

Giddens’ regionalisation theory has gained currency within borderlands studies, thanks largely to scholars such as Anssi Paasi (1999) and Ulf Matthiesen (2001) who have focused on the social practices and discourses involved in boundary formation. However, the difficulties of empirically exploiting Giddens’ constructs are only too clear. In order to reduce the complexity of “regionalisation” in borderlands contexts, a focus on institutions both formal and informal (North 1990) might be of considerable help.

Case studies highlight the selective nature of cross-border region-building. If anything has become clear in comparing ....., it is that cross-border regionalisation is inherently a process of socio-political construction and, in many, ways highly artificial. Cross-border regions do not create “monolithic” communities of interest, where citizens, political actors and the private sector participate equally in promoting co-operation. Instead, regionalisation in this case is a project of linking together actor groups and institutions with a stake in improved co-operation. The simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion, of “opening”

and “closure” and/or “nationalising” and “Europeanising” discourses at the border is a form of almost universal status quo (see Oscar Martinez’s (1994) and Anssi Paasi’s (1999) work for a superb transatlantic sense of “national” versus “international” dynamics as something inherently borderland). These contradictions are the point of departure for any serious contemplation of cross-border region building.

Given the simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion in borderlands contexts, the quality of co-operation will to a great extent depend on the role political elites assume in promoting a regional idea and bridging cultural difference. The quality of the political message, however, is not only a local issue, it is subject to practices and discourses that operate at several different spatial levels and societal realms. In the case of ::::::::::: border regions, for example, a powerful geopolitical rationale is in operation that provides both a discursive platform as well as a series of policy-centred practices that promote cross-border region-building.

Figure 1: Three Perspectives on Borders

	Mauil	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

Figure 2: A Multilevel and Pragmatic Approach to "Bordering"??

Level of Analysis	A Policies	B Perceptions	C Practices
1 Supra-national	Formal directives and institutions; Programmes, policies and strategies targeted at regions under scrutiny	EU geopolitical and geoeconomic discourse with regard to region's significance	Quality of relations between EU and involved countries;  Transnational state and non-state actors' regional activities
2 National	Directives, Institutions, Policies affecting/addressing the border regions	Europeanising and Nationalising discourse and strategies;  Prevailing perceptions of the regions and their significance	National cross-border activities in the region;  Constellation of national actors involved;  Co-operation strategies and initiatives
3 Local and Regional	Local policies and formal institutions (regional associations)	Europeanising and Nationalising discourse and strategies;  Prevailing perceptions of the regions and their significance	Regional/local actor groups (public agencies, civil society, economic agents)  Co-operation strategies and initiatives

Julian Minghi's overview and review of boundaries studies in political geography of 1963 and Victor Prescott's work on the geography of frontiers and boundaries published in 1965, in order to write this commentary in the rubric "the classics revisited", gave me a lot of enjoyment. It was an inspiring experience to be reminded again of the early insights of what could be considered two of the fundamental founding-persons in boundary and border studies. It was for instance pleasantly narcissistic and flattering for a boundary/border scholar to be reminded again by Minghi that boundaries touch the heart of the political geographical discipline: boundaries... "are perhaps the most palpable political geographic phenomena" (Minghi, 1963; p. 407). I could not agree more. Re-reading these two classics particularly reminded me as well of how embedded the past (as well as current) boundary and border paradigms and themes have been and are in the dominant academic thinking of the various times. We are children of our time. In the beginning of the twentieth century, different themes were debated, different approaches were popular and different views were held on how to approach and study the boundary/border. Where in the early sixties the field of border studies was pre-dominantly focused on the study of the demarcation of boundaries, the lines, now the field of boundaries and border studies has arguably shifted from boundary studies to border studies (Newman, 2001). Put differently, the attention has moved away from the study of the evolution and changes of the territorial line to the border, more complexly understood as a site at and through which socio-spatial differences are communicated. Confusingly, in anthropology, the definition is usually precisely 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).

When looking at the current debate in geographical border studies, it can be argued that the dominant voice is now notably postmodern and/or critical. Some voices are more critical than others, some even claim to be radical, some are more postmodern than others, some are even claiming that they have never been modern, but by and large seen on a broader time-horizon these are merely nuances, relevant and immensely fascinating to study as they may be. Environmental determinists or geopolitiker in the classic German style as you would find in the WWI and WWII period are hard to find these days. Most current political geographical papers that wish to understand the relationships between territory, sovereignty and identity, which use the lens of borders to do so are anti-deterministic, anti-essentialistic and not focused on the line per se. Instead, borders are now pre-dominantly critically investigated as differentiators of socially constructed mindscapes and

meaning. The return to geopolitics in the guise of critical geopolitics is telling in this respect (see e.g. Dodds and Sidaway, 1994; Ó Tuathail 1996; Newman, 2001). It seems that border scholars took the advice of Minghi seriously, as given in the conclusion of his 1963 paper, that is “The study of international boundaries in political geography, however, must also take the view that boundaries, as political dividers, separate peoples of different nationalities and, therefore, presumably of different iconographic makeup”. Consequently, the political geographer “...must undertake investigations in the sociological field, as well as in the cultural and economic areas, for the spatial patterns of social behavior can be even more important than other patterns in determining the impact of a boundary and its viability as a national separator.” (Minghi, 1963, p. 428).

That this was the conclusion of Minghi’s overview of 1963, says a lot about the time in which it was written and the state of the art of the border studies then. As these two classic pieces in boundary/border studies are also children of their milieu, it is not surprising then that both begin their overviews on border studies in political geography with the texts of Friedrich Ratzel and his view of the borders of nation-states. To be more precise, in their approach border studies are equaled with the studies of the territorial limits of states. But by making Ratzel the founding father of political geographical border studies, one could argue that they are bordering and limiting the fascinating width and range of border studies. They fall in, what John Agnew later called, the territorial trap of the state (Agnew, 1994). Needless to say, there were territorial and political borders before states and hence, there were interesting authors writing on these borders before Ratzel (see e.g. Altink and Gemie, in press). And what is more, there were and are interesting disciplines outside political geography/geopolitics which have interesting things to say about borders. Is this any different from today’s approach? Have we in the meantime learned to bypass or avoid falling into the state border trap? To some extent we have, I would argue. One of the key merits of the past few decades certainly have been the widening of the ontology and epistemology of borders. In a way, what we have seen in political geography and geopolitics the last few decades is a turn from a focus on boundaries, as political limits of states, to borders as socio-territorial constructs. The interest for studies of the border, in the meaning of the construction and representation of difference, could be considered as the off-spring of the postmodern turn in social sciences. It has been put forward in this debate that borders are the product of our knowledge and interpretation and that they as such produce a disciplining lens through which we perceive and imagine the world. As a consequence, it has been claimed that the difference between the ontology of borders, the study of what borders are, and the epistemology of borders, the study of what and how we know what borders are, has

decreased if not disappeared. The insight that the making of borders is the product of our own social practices and habitus has led to the study of borders beyond merely states or nations. As this insight also applies to other territories than states, such as (macro-)regions, cities or neighbourhoods, a border has become less automatically connected to states alone, making the claim of a territorial trap in the present studies in theory less applicable. Having said this, what can be witnessed in practice however, is that state borders still inspire most of the works in border studies. Still, almost routinely, the field of border studies is related to state borders and the adjacent borderlanders. This is with good grounds, as the states still are important territorial dividers in our daily world, but still, in my view the concept of borders is broader than the markers of states only and the dividers of borderlanders. I would argue that the philosophy and practices of b/ordering and othering, of fixing of territorial (id)entities, of purification of access as well as of scale transgressions need not be restricted to the entity of states alone, but are valuable for theorizing and studying in their own right (Van Houtum et al., 2005).

Another crucial element in both classic works is the distinction made between natural and non-natural borders. This distinction has become classic. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this distinction was closely connected to that other classic distinction, namely that between good and bad borders. There were exceptions to the rule, but the overall view was that "good" were generally those borders that were seen as natural, that is, made by nature in terms of its physiographic variation (seas, mountains, deserts) and borders were generally seen as "bad" when they were human-made, "artificial" (Minghi, p. 407). These two now classic distinctions are arguably a sign of the times as well. Both studies, that of Minghi and Prescott, appeared in the early sixties, only fifteen years after the dramatic first half of the century in which WWI and WWII had such tremendous impact on the study of borders. During this first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a large part of border studies was concentrated on the nature of borders in terms of their being good or bad from a military point of view (Minghi, 1963). According to Minghi this led to an overemphasis on disputes on and changes in boundaries, in terms of physical demarcations, in these times of war and military occupation and an underemphasis for an interest in borders during "normal" (Minghi, 1963, p. 406) times. It is understandable that since we have learned what horrific consequences an extreme politicization of the naturalistic and/or organic view on borders can have on humanity, border scholars in the present debate have radically turned away from describing borders as natural. The overviews of the field of border studies in political geography (Newman and Paasi, 1998) and of regional and economic geography (Van Houtum, 2000) have made this clear. In the present debate, at least in the

constructivistic, dominant wing of the debate, the argument is made that all political borders are human-made products. Since from this point of view there are no natural borders, the term artificial is not in use anymore either. Although I would agree with the denial that there are natural borders, I feel that the present total neglect for a discussion on the nature of borders is a shame really. I regret this for two reasons.

One, by claiming that all borders are human-made the present debate logically focuses on the construction of borders, in other words, how borders are made in terms of its symbols, signs, identifications, representations, performances and stories. This has had a tremendous effect on border studies and possibly is, in our time of postmodernisation of science, one of the explanations of the mushrooming of study centers, conferences and articles on borders. Hence, what we have seen the last decade or so, is an immense growth of the focus of the representation of borders and national identities in the field of border studies. As is explainable when basing oneself on postmodernism, much emphasis has been put on the form and the story by which borders are represented and symbolised. It has led to a bordering script, by which I mean that the construction, the making of borders by now is almost turned into a template, largely based on the works of multi-cited post-structuralists like Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu and De Certeau, for studying the everyday social construction of border X in case Y. Despite the intrinsic value of each and every study copying this template for a specific case or adding an interesting insight on another performance outlet of the construction of borders, I believe the present debate is somewhat out of balance. Maybe in this sense there is a similarity here with the debate in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the debate was perhaps leaning too much towards the demarcation of the boundary, the where and the changes in the where, and there was too little attention on the social formation and socio-spatial manifestations of borders and identities. Now arguably the balance is leaning too much towards this latter, postmodern (how) perspective on borders. By claiming that all borders are human-made, and by denying that there are natural borders, just as I find this claim, the current debate thereby risks throwing away the baby with the bathwater, as it is overlooking the underlying question that has led to the distinction between natural and non-natural in the first place. That is the question of the why of borders. Why are there borders in the first place? Have we become afraid to be named an essentialist or determinist when we dare to raise this question of the why? We should not be. Asking a why question does not mean that you cannot at the same time gaze through a critical or radical lens on society. Moreover, it may be an indication of the times we are living in that *Antipode*, the journal of radical geography, is one of the best cited journals now in the field of human geography, in other

words, the anti-essentialist, anti-determinist (and anti-neo-liberal) approach has become mainstream. Hence, I am confident in taking that risk and going back to that important and thought-provoking question of the why. Why does humankind produce borders? Is the the b/ordering of space in any way intrinsic from a biological point of view or it is merely a strategic choice than can be put on and off? What precisely drives the seemingly persistent human motivation to call a territory one's or our own, to demarcate property, to make an ours here and theirs there, and to shield it off against the socio-spatially constructed and constitutive Them, the Others (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002). Is the desire for the construction of a socio-spatial (id)entity - not the form, the configuration, as this is always contextual, but I mean the construction per se - necessary or avoidable for humankind? In what way does this self-fulfilling geometrical fantasy of drawing lines in spaces contribute to the Self and the Us in daily life? And what explains the unwillingness to give up power of privilege? What are we protecting? What is precisely the *raison d'être* of borders (Van Houtum, 2002)? Answering this question might reveal to us, why the b/ordering of space, in whatever form or shape, seems such a persistent constitutive power for humankind. In gaining insight into the immanent powers of the b/ordering of space we might learn to be more perceptive and sensitive for each other's yearnings for the construction of territorial demarcation and difference. Thereby we could perhaps unlearn to see borders as fixed, linear or stable and instead constitute a more open perspective on territoriality in which the gained insight on the deconstructed Self - the insight that the Self is not a stand-alone entity, detached from territory or society, but a socio-spatially constructed and hence always dynamic configuration of personalized social relations and networks - coincides with the territorial borders and markers that the dynamic Self constructs via social relations and networks. Hence, I would like to make a plea to return, with the theoretical confidence and the genealogical knowledge of the social constructions of borders in our rucksack, to that leading and challenging question that was sought to answer in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century of political geography. In my view, there are some new promising researches that have recently been started up in geography that could be of value to answering this question of the why. I am particularly pointing to the psycho-analytical turn of human geography, including a fundamental theorization of desire, as notably is laid out by geographers that adopt the approaches of Lacan and Deleuze and Guattari and their followers. Possibly and hopefully this new leaf in the geographical tree, together with perhaps philosophical studies of humankind and evolutionary sciences, such as evolutionary psychology and environmental psychology, could re-open up the debate on the why of borders in geopolitics and political geography.

The second reason why I think it is a shame that we are not discussing the nature of borders in the current debate anymore is because of the neglect of a debate on good and bad borders, in other words, the ethics of socio-spatial borders. Again, this discussion would have to be updated to the present time and knowledge, but the question itself, is a border justified, is very timely I believe. Hence, in contrast to the earlier boundary studies of the first half century I would then not so much be interested in the goodness or badness of the line itself, the fit, for I believe then one engages oneself with the slippery path of an essentialistic justification of natural or military lines in space. Rather, I would welcome very much a more lively and engaged discussion on the justification of our borderings per se. I believe, the present debate and field of border studies would be enriched if it would embark on the discussion of the morality and immorality of borders. (State) borders are too much taken for granted. In political philosophy some interesting new insights are being given with regard to this matter. Walzer (1983), for instance, provocatively states that communities should not be allowed to make a claim of territorial jurisdiction and rule over the people with whom they share a territory. He argues that, although admission and exclusion are at the core of communal independence, the rule of citizens over non-citizens and members over strangers is 'an act of tyranny'. Seyla Benhabib, following Kant's essay on eternal peace and Derrida's essay on hospitality, also critically looks at the justification of borders (Benhabib, 1996). She ponders the question what is the ethical difference between the right to leave a democratic country, since in democratic societies citizens are not prisoners, and the right for others to enter? In a similar critical vein, philosopher Will Kymlicka (2001) argues that borders are "a source of embarrassment for liberals of all stripes". For liberals, he argues, it is not clear how the existence of territorial boundaries can be justified at all, "at least if these boundaries prevent individuals from moving freely, and living, working and voting in whatever part of the globe they see fit" (p. 249, 2001). "Any political theory", he goes on to say, "which has nothing to say about these questions is seriously flawed. Moreover, the result, intentional or unintentional, is to tacitly support the conservative view that existing boundaries and restrictive membership are sacrosanct" (p. 253, 2001). In the present debate, it is tacitly assumed that (state) borders are here and here to stay and the only thing that can be critically engaged with is the way borders are being produced and reproduced. Although I would agree that the focus on the how is a crucial and meaningful focus in border studies that needs continuation, I believe that this lens could be widened to open up for a debate on alternative ways to produce territories and spatialise our social lives. If indeed we accept the view that borders are human-made, it would be needed to not only ask the question why humans are producing and reproducing borders, but also what moral

consequences do the (re)produced borders, are they justified and are there socio-spatial alternatives that could be produced?

There is a final interesting issue that the re-reading of these classic works has made clear to me. The overviews of Minghi and Prescott clearly paid significant, if not primary, attention to the question of the where. Where is the border located, how did it come about, evolve, change over time, became the topic of (military) disputes and what are the political consequences of its (changes in) location. These were the central questions of the debate in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and hence of their overview. As argued above, the balance in the present boundary/border studies, is now leaning towards border studies. More precisely, boundary studies and border studies have in fact grown apart, have become detached from each other to become separate subfields. Both subfields have their own institutional expertise centres, their own journals and their own leading figures. There is hardly, and much to my regret, any overlap between the two subfields anymore. Re-reading Minghi and Prescott's works, I believe, it would be a shame, if the many possible synergies that could emerge from an open discussion between the two subfields, were not sought after more. The knowledge of both subfields is needed to understand the historical context and critical evolution as well as conflict management of a border, the societal structural and (im)moral consequences and representations of that border, and a possible (land-artistic) re-visioning of the border(land). The synergy could also inspire the ontological and epistemological discussions on borders and boundaries. It could lead to fresh debates on what lines in spaces mean for human beings, and how we attach to, and can break away from geometry and it could invoke what is often lacking in the current border debates, that is, an alternative vision on the b/ordering of space.

Re-reading the classic works of Minghi and Prescott has once again made clear to me that the field of border studies is a flourishing field with a fertile past and an appealing future.

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