

Introduction*

Jan Wielgohs and Arnaud Lechevalier

Border studies involve scientific research on the creation, perception, destabilization, relocation, transgression, opening, or dissolution of borders. Since the 1980s, they have advanced to prominence within many academic disciplines and in a broad variety of interdisciplinary endeavors. The rise of border studies during the last twenty to thirty years can be attributed mostly to the acceleration of globalization processes since the 1980s and the end of the Cold War in 1990 (see Sendhardt in this volume). Conventionally, we think of borders as territorial borders between nation states or state-like political entities such as the European Union. However, globalization has made these kinds of borders increasingly permeable for people, goods, capital, social practices, ideas, symbols etc. On the one hand, territorial borders have lost some of their salience as separators and dividers because new spaces for economic, political, administrative, and cultural cooperation have been created (see Albert/Brock 2001: 33). On the other hand, because the increasing permeability of territorial borders has been accompanied by uncertainty about the perceived and real destabilizing effects of economic competition, migration, and multiculturalism, there has been a reactivation of “national ‘policies’ as well as processes of exclusion based on culture, nation, or ethnicity” (EUV 2012: 9). These ambiguous and puzzling effects of globalization lay behind the current burgeoning of contemporary border studies, first in the USA, where the new

* The editors wish to thank the *Deutsch-Französische Hochschule – Université franco-allemande* for its support of the project on French-German cooperation, on which the present volume is based, as well as the *Centre Marc Bloch*, Berlin, for promoting this publication. Our special thanks go also to Scott Stock Gissendanner for his work in proofreading and editing the manuscripts.

dynamics of the US-Mexican border attracted the attention of social scientists and cultural anthropologists. In this context, new conceptual and analytical perspectives on borders were developed and authors eventually went beyond the traditional, static understanding of territorial borders as separators to pay more attention to the social practices that continually create and recreate symbolic borders or the varied spatial dimensions of physical borders (ibid: 10).

The end of the Cold War unexpectedly opened new opportunities for overcoming the territorial borders that separated east from west. These borders insulated Eastern European societies from global developments and clove the European continent. But the borders that had served as barriers before 1989 changed thereafter into zones of contact in which new opportunities for cross-border mobility and cooperation emerged. At the same time, the collapse of the imperial power structure of the Cold War left some geopolitical disorder in the region, which gave rise to “spontaneous” processes of territorial restructuring in Europe as national borders were redrawn either by negotiation as in Czechoslovakia or by violence as in Yugoslavia and some of the post-Soviet territories. The eastern enlargement of the EU (2004/7) and the European Neighborhood Policy (launched in 2004), despite having been driven also by the internal logic of European integration (Vobruba 2008), can be understood as part of a strategy to reduce the disorder and uncertainty created by the end of the old east-west conflict. These policies of integration and stabilization were inevitably accompanied by significant “rebordering” processes as the EU’s external border rolled eastward. Moreover, The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 as well as the lingering conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, and Nagorno Karabakh clearly indicate that territorial restructuring in the wider European context is nowhere near to completion. The belief that a “borderless world” will emerge in the 21st century was widely held just after the end of the Cold War but since proved to be illusory. Border conflicts have in fact increased worldwide during the previous two decades, accompanied by the construction of new border fences and walls (see Falke in this volume).

In the context of globalization, accelerated European integration, and the ongoing territorial and political restructuring of the European continent, border regions have become subject to intense multidisciplinary research by European scholars, too, in recent years. What makes these

regions interesting is that they are emerging, dynamic social spaces. Newly created border regimes define the new opportunity structures framing cross-border cooperation, and residents and their representatives decide continually anew how to react to them. In this volume, the problems of different types of European border regions are analyzed. The opening of the internal borders within the EU and within the Schengen space have set off a new dynamism in economic and cultural cross-border cooperation. But a reluctance to fully use the newly available opportunities also has been revealed. This reluctance is perhaps rooted in inherited stereotypes, institutional inertia, or structural legacies. As a result, the EU is experiencing new challenges. In the aftermath of the recent extension of its external borders to the east and southeast, the EU is struggling to balance its internal security needs, economic growth targets, and normative power ambitions. The limited usefulness of its traditional “soft power” approach now seems to have become quite obvious at its periphery.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BORDERS

In the first section of this volume, theoretical approaches commonly used in border studies are discussed. *Bastian Sendhardt* introduces the concept of Debordering/Rebordering. Based on modern systems theory, it has had increasing influence within border studies since the end of the 1990s. The major advantage of this constructivist approach, he argues, is that it helps us to grasp the constantly changing interplay between territorial, functional, and symbolic borders with a single, internally consistent theoretical framework. It helps us interpret the apparent contradictions in the EU’s attempts to both tighten its external borders and promote cooperation across them. The same contradictions are also evident in the policies of those member states situated at the external EU border toward their non-EU neighbors.

Interested in the intellectual benefits that could accrue to border studies from the sociology of space, *Sabrina Ellebrecht* experiments with using Georg Simmel’s concept of *qualities of space* for analyzing the EU border regime in the Mediterranean Sea. This way of linking border processes to their spatial fulcra, she argues, could help to highlight the particular logics by which border regimes function and by which borderlands develop. Examples include the way in which persons are enabled or allowed to

cross the EU border into the protected internal space of EU territory, the diversification of bordering processes, the geographic transfer and externalization of border control functions to third countries, and the asymmetric distribution of resources for moving across borders. The later is, according to Bauman (1998: 86), “the key variable to stratify societies in a globalising world.”

BORDERS AS “LABORATORIES” OF TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

The second part of the book is concerned with recent developments between and within border regions as they emerged after the external EU border was moved eastward amidst much public debate. In this context, Euroregions were created and promoted through European Regional Policy programs. These were intended to enhance economic, cultural, and political cross-border cooperation, to gradually reduce economic gaps among the border regions along which old and new EU member states are adjoined, and to counterbalance the negative effects of restrictive protection measures at the EU’s new eastern border. *Barbara Despiney-Zochowska* compares the development of two Euroregions with Polish involvement: the Neisse Euroregion in the Czech-German-Polish triangle and the Carpathian Euroregion, which includes local communities in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Returning to the concept of the “industrial district” developed by Alfred Marshall (1920), she explores prospects for cross-border economic cluster building through the revitalization of local productive systems. For this purpose, the creation of networks of small and medium-sized companies, supported by cross-border cooperation between local administrative authorities, is thought to be crucial. She identifies some important barriers to the proliferation of clusters in the investigated regions, including local governments that do not appreciate the role they could be playing in economic development and the absence of a tradition of cooperation among competing companies. Her analysis shows that socio-economic structures inherited from the past largely determine the sectoral mix of clusters and their chances of success in any given region. Another approach to cross-border regional cooperation is presented by *Roswitha Ruidisch*, who discusses the concepts of “territorial cohesion” and “territorial capital,” both of which are key con-

cepts in recent European Regional Policy. EU documents contain no clear definition of “territorial cohesion,” she argues. Using the example of the Czech-German border region, she shows that EU measures to increase territorial cohesion are swayed by competing interests and that these interests are not always compatible with the goal of reducing regional disparities.

THE AMBIGUOUS WORK OF STEREOTYPES

If national borders within the EU are losing relevance for the everyday life of borderland inhabitants, and if prospects for socio-economic development in such areas increasingly depend on cross-border cooperation, the construction of collective identities there will inevitably be affected. The social environment for identity-building is thus becoming more dynamic and more complex and, despite persisting traditional categories of collective identity such as nation, ethnicity, and language, the emergence of multidimensional identities is becoming more likely. In this context, stereotypes, understood as positive or negative images of “the other,” play a major but ambivalent role. Stereotypes can, as *Antje Schönwald* argues, enhance cross-border cooperation in that they systemize and simplify complex information and thus help residents deal with cultural boundaries. Using the example of the “Greater Region,” comprised of Saarland, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and Wallonia, Schönwald examines factors that encourage the emergence of multidimensional and patchwork identities and presents a typology of sub-identities in this region.

Stereotypes can, of course, impede integration and cooperation, as they block receptiveness to change in the social environment and promote negative discrimination. A case in which stereotypes had rather negative effects is the subject of the analysis of French, German, and Polish media debates on the Schengen agreement presented by *Angela Siebold*. The Schengen Treaty was signed in 1985, long before the fall of the Iron Curtain. When it was implemented in 1995, the circumstances had changed radically. The major reason for the protracted implementation of the treaty, in fact, was the fear of mass immigration from Eastern Europe after German Unification. Thus, the central topic in the French and German

print media was the issue of effectively protecting and consolidating the German-Polish border, i.e. the new external border of the EU. Here, it was said, “the poor and the rich part of Europe” meet (Siebold). In Siebold’s interesting observation, in the run-up to Poland’s accession to the Schengen agreement in 2007, the same fears were raised in regard to the new external border of the EU where Poland meets Ukraine, White Russia, and Russia. In both cases, fears centered on migration and insecurity. She writes that in media assessments, “persistence of Western stereotypes and of the idea of a divided Europe” was manifest. Before 1989, the Schengen project seemed to interest technocrats only. It lacked public resonance. This changed when the new internal EU border was opened in 2007. Reporting became loaded with symbols of the bright future of a united and prosperous Europe. At the same time, however, the print media raised again concerns about mass migration and crime from the East, whereas in Poland unlimited drug trafficking from the Netherlands as well as an expected loss of general national sovereignty became important Schengen issues. These triggered long debates on identity and security.

Stereotypes can persist and reproduce themselves over generations, even long after national territorial borders disappear. From the perspective of the “Third East German Generation,” born between 1975 and 1985 and socialized in the 1990s, *Jaqueline Flack* analyzes the emergence and articulation of a common self-perception among this group of young adults as they respond to the images of East Germans constructed by West Germans in the mass media. Whereas the collective identity of young adults from the former East Germany is mainly shaped by the rapid and all-encompassing changes they experienced during the transformation of East German politics, economics, administration, education, and daily life after German unification, the image publicly ascribed to them is largely a reproduction of old West German stereotypes of GDR citizens. These differences and ongoing processes of mutual cultural contra-distinction create a cultural boundary that will continue to impair the formation of a common national identity, at least among this generation.

VIEWS ON THE HISTORY OF POLISH-GERMAN BORDER REGIONS

The ongoing dynamics characteristic of the EU's newly configured border regions cannot be fully grasped without exploring the history of the regions involved. Using the example of the region around Szczecin/Stettin, *Agata Ładykowska* and *Paweł Ładykowski* describe the beginnings of a transnational space in which cultural, political, and economic identities not only co-exist but fuse. In contrast to the usual image of the Polish-German border as a persisting “welfare borderline between the poor and the rich part of Europe,” streams of mobility in both directions can be observed here. Whereas the rather underdeveloped counties on the German side have become an attractive destination for Poles looking for new housing, unemployed Germans have started to search for new job opportunities on the Polish side. The authors suggest that this specific development has been spurred by resources rooted in the region's post-war history. They reconstruct mobility patterns across the Oder-Neisse border during different periods of regional history between 1945 and 1989 and describe social processes and practices that made the politically demarcated borderline relatively porous. Especially striking is their argument that the new post-war border, which created arbitrary divisions in cities and spaces that had grown “naturally,” forced the new settlers (refugees and expelled Germans as well as Poles) to cooperate informally and formally across the border despite all resentments and mutual unfamiliarity. Cooperation was necessary simply in order to survive economically, they write.

Another experience is described by *Bianca Szytniewski*. The author examines the particular effects of unfamiliarity and familiarity with the “other” side in different historical border situations. In the immediate post-war era, after the redrawing of the Polish-German border along the Oder and Neisse rivers, differences between Poles and Germans were amplified, partly due to the fact that both sides of the new border were settled largely by forced emigrants from the former eastern territories of Poland and Germany, and partly as a result of the Polish government's efforts of nationalizing the new Polish territory. The contrast, however, between the official propaganda of friendship among the two “socialist nations” beginning in 1950 and the fact that the border remained physically closed for another 20 years produced interesting patterns of unfamiliarity that became quite relevant during subsequent open-border periods.

After 1970, Szytniewski argues, unfamiliarity triggered curiosity, which was an important factor motivating cross-border mobility. This, however, ended in feelings of resentment because of shortages in basic goods and inadequate tourism infrastructure. When the border was re-opened in 1990, new opportunities for cooperation were only partially used. In the situation of economic decline and transformation in those years, both borderland Poles and Germans looked westward. European enlargement and cross-border cooperation turned out to be mainly top-down political projects. Among residents, the unfamiliarity inherited from the past manifested itself in a widespread indifference that was especially pronounced on the German side.

However, as we learn from *Thomas Serrier*, it would be superficial and perhaps misleading to look only at the post-war history of the Oder-Neisse region in order to understand current developments. Borders between Poland and Germany had been re-drawn several times during the last two centuries, and this happened in different regions. In his case studies, Serrier presents Eastern Prussia, Danzig, Greater Poland, and Silesia as “geographic systems of historically evolved relations,” the social appropriation of which is a multi-state process involving different levels of memory that are at best partially shared by contemporary inhabitants and can display disintegrative effects in times of tension. He thus shifts our attention to the fact that all contemporary advocates of “multicultural” identities in the new Polish-German borderlands should respect the historical experience of destroyed multiculturalism. Thus, despite all institutional validation, cross-border cooperation, including intense de-bordering processes as achieved in recent decades, is vulnerable to unexpected external change. Even from a neo-realistic view point, territorial borders between national states can change their functions within international relations regimes, as *Eloi Piet* illustrates in his analysis of the changing view of French diplomacy on the redrawing of the German-Polish border between 1940 and 1950.

CROSS-BORDER INTERACTION IN EUROPE’S NEIGHBOURHOOD

As mentioned above, the opening of internal borders and the consolidation of external ones are only two of several factors influencing further integration and the development of the EU’s external relations. Securi-

ty and prosperity are also affected by border dynamics in the European neighborhood. As commonly known, the outer periphery of the EU is burdened by frozen or latent territorial conflicts and contested borders. Two such situations are the ongoing Kosovo and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, and many others haunt the post-Soviet space. “Stability” in such regions – a major concern of EU policies since the end of the Cold War (Lippert 2004) – requires that at least a modicum of “normal life” among the local population be established. Otherwise, mass migration, trafficking in persons, and organized crime will get out of control. All of these problems are perceived by the EU as major security issues. In this context, the permeability of disputed borders or frozen ceasefire lines allow for regional mobility and trade, and they are thus of crucial importance. In her analysis of the political economy of borders and borderlands, *Giulia Prelz Oltramonti* explains the opportunities for residents, private businesses, and political administrations inherent to the logic of such contested borders. Using the example of the post-Soviet de facto states South Ossetia and Abkhazia, she demonstrates how the interplay of actors hardens and softens borders. This process was undertaken by various actors in the interwar period between 1992/1994 and 2008, when the areas oscillated between periods of “normal life” and times of open violence. Whereas the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia were “re-frozen” at a different level as the result of the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, the territorial conflict between Israel and Palestine promises to be much more protracted and much less predictable, as *Simon Falke* suggests in his analysis of the separation fence Israel has been maintaining since 2002 on the borderline to the West Bank. As this line was never an official territorial border, it is also not accepted as a possible future national border by the majority of Jewish Israeli citizens. Thus the fence, although justified by security concerns, functions first and foremost as a symbolic boundary. As Falke argues, it promoted the process of national unity building in the (Jewish) Israeli society and made Israelis focus for the first time on “normal” internal social conflicts. But it also symbolizes the exclusion of Palestinian Israelis from the rest of Israeli society. As the first real physical and visible demarcation line, the separation fence could, according to Falke, inspire both Israelis and Palestinians to envisage at least the need for a territorial border. How to get to that place from the current starting position in which the borderline between the two societies is represented not by a territorial border but by “the settler” remains, however, vague.

REFERENCES

- Albert, Mathias/Brock, Lothar (2001): "What Keeps Westphalia Together? Normative Differentiation in the Modern System of States", in: Mathias Albert/David Jacobson/Yosef Lapid (eds.), *Identities, borders, orders. Rethinking international relations theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 29-49.
- Baumann, Zygmunt (1998): *Globalization. The human consequences*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- EUV (European University Viadrina) (2012): *B/Orders in Motion. Initial Proposal for a Cluster of Excellence*, Coordinated by Werner Schiffauer, Frankfurt (Oder): EUV.
- Lippert, Barbara (2004): "Sternstunde oder Stolperstein? Erweiterung und europäische Integration", in: *Osteuropa* 54 (5-6), pp. 47-60.
- Vorbuba, Georg (2008): "Expansion und Integration nach der Osterweiterung", in: Frank Bönker/Jan Wielgoths (eds.), *Postsozialistische Transformation und europäische (Des-)Integration*, Marburg: Metro-polis, pp. 219-230.