

# Borders and Bordering

## Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue

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### **Abstract**

The renaissance of border studies during the past decade has been characterized by a crossing of disciplinary borders, bringing together geographers, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, legal experts, along with border practitioners engaged in the practical aspects of boundary demarcation, delimitation and management. This growth in border studies runs contrary to much of the globalization discourse which was prevalent during the late 1980s and early 1990s, positing a new 'borderless' world, in which the barrier impact of borders became insignificant. The article points to the common use of terminology which can create a shared border discourse among a diverse group of scholars, such as boundary demarcation, the nature of frontiers, borderlands and transition zones, and the ways in which borders are crossed. The article also discusses the reclosing of borders which is taking place as a result of 9/11 as part of the stated war against global terror.

### **Key words**

■ borderlands and transition zones ■ borders ■ boundary reclosing ■ demarcation ■ inter-disciplinarity

### **Border Studies Renaissance**

The study of borders has undergone a renaissance during the past decade (Newman, 2006; Newman and Paasi, 1998). This is reflected in the numerous conferences and workshops that have taken place during this period, together with a long list of publications in the form of conference proceedings, edited books and papers in scholarly journals (Berg and Van Houtum, 2004; Eskelinen et al., 1999; Ganster and Lorey, 2005; Ganster et al., 1997; Kaplan and Hakli, 2001; Nicol and Townsend-Gault, 2005; Pavlakovich-Kochi et al., 2004; Van Houtum et al., 2005). Much of this renaissance has been characterized by a crossing of disciplinary borders, bringing together geographers, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, legal experts, along with border practitioners engaged in the practical aspects of boundary

demarcation, delimitation and management. This growth in border studies runs contrary to much of the globalization discourse which was prevalent during the late 1980s and early 1990s, positing a new 'borderless' world, in which the barrier impact of borders became insignificant (Ohmae, 1990; Shapiro and Alker, 1996). Faced with the onslaught of cyber and satellite technology, as well as the free unimpeded flow of global capital, borders would – so the globalization purists argued – gradually open until they disappeared altogether. This was, they further argued, particularly relevant in Western Europe where, as a result of the ever-expanding European Union, the inter-State borders became irrelevant as inhabitants of the EU freely crossed these former lines of separation.

In the face of this borderless world discourse and, some would argue, precisely because of the borderless world discourse, the study of borders has become reinvigorated (Brunet-Jailly, 2004, 2005; Hudson, 1998; Kolossov, 2005; Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 1998; Newman, 2002, 2006; Newman and Paasi, 1998; Paasi, 1996, 1998, 2005; Yeung, 1998). We woke up to our borderless world only to find that each and every one of us, individuals as well as groups or States with which we share affiliation, live in a world of borders which give order to our lives. We discovered that these borders are not confined to the realm of inter-state divisions, nor do they have to be physical and geographical constructs. Many of the borders which order our lives are invisible to the human eye but they nevertheless impact strongly on our daily life practices. They determine the extent to which we are included, or excluded, from membership in groups, they reflect the existence of inter-group and inter-societal difference with the 'us' and the 'here' being located inside the border while the 'other' and the 'there' is everything beyond the border. The practices through which borders are demarcated and delimited reflect the way in which borders are managed and self-perpetuated to the benefit of political and economic elites, but to the detriment of many others. The management of the border regime determines the relative ease or difficulty with which borders are crossed, or alternately the extent to which the borders still constitutes a barrier to movement of people, goods and ideas.

For the traditionalists among border scholars, those whose understanding of borders is synonymous with the physical lines of separation between the States and countries of the international system, these more abstract notions of borders appear incomprehensible, written in a foreign language which the crossing of the disciplinary boundaries has not helped to alleviate. They point to the contemporary ethno-territorial and associated border conflicts as evidence to the fact that it is the hard geographical boundaries in places such as Israel/Palestine, the Balkans and Cyprus (to name but a few) which continue to be of relevance to the re-ordering and re-territorialization of the world political map (Blake, 2000a; Newman, 2004; Ratner, 1996; Schofield, 1994; Waterman, 1994). While this is partially true, the number of hard core inter-State territorial and border disputes has decreased substantially in the past decades. The interest in contemporary borders has experienced rescaling with a focus on the local and micro scales of spatial activity. It is the inherent dynamics of the bordering process which has replaced previous interest in the static nature of border lines as the main area of

inquiry among border scholars. Today, we are more interested in the way that borders are socially constructed (demarcated in the traditional jargon), managed (delimited) and impact our daily life practices in the newly created transition spaces and borderlands (frontier zones) which are in a constant state of flux.

This article will attempt to bring the different strands of contemporary thinking and research on borders together. In doing so, it assumes a cross-disciplinary perspective in which the borders and boundaries separating the academic disciplines are crossed as a new transition space of inter-disciplinary hybridity and sharing of border narratives emerges. The article also raises the misunderstandings which emerge within this inter-disciplinary meeting place as a result of the inability, perhaps continued unwillingness, to learn the language of the 'other'. In particular, it will discuss the various border terminologies which are in vogue in different social science disciplines and examine the extent to which they can become meaningful to the disciplinary 'other'.

### **Transforming Border Terminologies**

Crossing borders between countries is often difficult because of the language problem, even where the physical crossing is undertaken with ease and the newcomer is welcome in the new space/group in which he/she has arrived. The same is true of crossing the disciplinary borders, even when it is into a common space where everybody is interested in exploring the same phenomenon. Such has been the case with border studies during the past decade. Interdisciplinary workshops, seminars and conferences have created a common space for the discussion and analysis of borders, but the terminology and semantics used by the diverse group of scholars and practitioners remain incomprehensible to some. Sociologists do not always understand why geographers continue to focus on the physical territorial lines of separation and the way in which these lines have been demarcated and delimited as part of the physical landscape. For their part, many geographers have difficulty coming to grips with some of the more abstract, intangible, notions of bordering and the binary distinctions which are posited as part of the identity discourse. One only has to look at the border writings of geographers, sociologists or political scientists to see that they largely remain territorially fixed within their own disciplinary compartment, rarely crossing the boundary to take on or to cite the relevant literature of the 'other'.

In the remainder of the article, I will look at some of the common border terminologies which have been used in different disciplinary contexts and attempt to demonstrate how these terminologies can be relevant for the disciplinary 'other'. I will also argue that terminologies which have been used by a past generation of scholars and which are considered by some, even from within the same discipline, as being 'out of date', can be transformed into relevant constructs as part of the contemporary discourse on borders and bordering.

### The Demarcation Process

The traditional geographical discourse on borders was taken up with the categorization and typologization of border types. In the period immediately following World War I, geographers and statesmen were occupied with describing the changing geopolitical map of Europe and the many new borders which were constructed during this period (Brigham, 1919; Fawcett, 1918; Holdich, 1916a, 1916b; Jones, 1943). The processes thus described constitute an important source of empirical data concerning the contemporary political map of Europe, given the return to many of these same borders following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in the past fifteen years. A later school of political geographers, from the late 1920s through until the 1960s, categorized the world's borders into typologies which reflected the way they had been demarcated and delimited and, to a lesser extent, the nature of the borders as 'open' or 'closed', reflecting the nature of political relations between neighbouring countries (Boggs, 1940; Jones, 1959; Minghi, 1963; Prescott, 1965).

One of the better-known typologies was posited by American geographer, Richard Hartshorne (1933, 1936). Borrowing his terminologies from fluvial geomorphology, Hartshorne described the process of border demarcation in terms of 'antecedent', 'subsequent', 'superimposed' and 'natural' borders. *Antecedent* borders were those which had been delimited prior to the settlement of the area in question in what was perceived as constituting virgin or unsettled land. As such, the border determined *ipso facto* the creation of separate societies and, in current terminology, difference, between later settlers in the region, contingent upon the side of the border which they chose as their place of residence. *Subsequent* boundaries were those which were demarcated according to the existing settlement patterns and difference, supposedly reflecting the ethno-territorial patterns of the region. *Superimposed* borders were those which were imposed by an outside (normally colonial) power on a region under their control, often with scant regard to the existing tribal and ethnic settlement patterns. The result of such superimposed boundaries were the division of tribal and ethnic territories between more than one State, or the inclusion of numerous ethnic groups in a single territory, giving rise to much of the ethnic strife that has plagued Africa and parts of Asia until today. On maps, the superimposed boundaries are automatically recognizable as the straight geometric lines running through Africa, Asia and parts of Latin America, paying little attention to either the ethnic or geographic realities of the region. Geographers and political scientists of the 1930s and 1940s also wrote about the existence of '*natural*' borders, aligned with the physical features of the landscape, such as rivers, mountain ridges, oceans, deserts and other recognizable features. This deterministic approach was gradually dismissed as social scientists accepted the essential nature of borders as social constructions, inasmuch as all borders were, and continue to be, formed by people – normally governments, diplomats and politicians – using natural features as convenient points of demarcation where it served their purposes, but avoiding such features as and where political or economic preferences dictated.

Essentially, the border scholars of the first half of the twentieth century saw borders as constituting no more than the physical and static outcome of a political decision-making process. Borders were the lines drawn on political maps and, to the extent to which they displayed any dynamic characteristics, their location underwent change as a result of the constant re-territorialization which took place through continual war, peace and negotiations. Borders were there to be described and categorized. At a later stage it was recognized that some borders were easier to cross than others and that this was largely contingent upon the nature of political and military relations between neighbouring countries. Border studies in the early 1960s, at a period when geopolitical analyses of political change remained passé because of the association with the then discredited discipline of geopolitics, began to focus on the functional characteristics of the borders and the ease with which they could be crossed enabling trans-boundary contact to take place, or barriers to such movement, while in extreme cases of trans-boundary animosity and tensions, to be sealed altogether.

To use the terminologies of demarcation and delimitation today is to be branded, at best, a traditionalist or, at worst, a determinist. And yet, many of these same terminologies could quite easily be transposed to the contemporary border discourse which focuses on issues of identity, border management and the understanding of border as process (as contrasted with the more static notion of border as pattern). Clearly identities are closely linked with the formation and existence of borders (Wilson and Donnan, 1998). The existence of many borders presupposes identity and affiliation with specific groups demarcating their borders as part of a bottom-up process reflecting difference as it exists in reality – the functional equivalent to a subsequent boundary. Other categories, especially within the socio-economic realm, are pre-defined and demarcated by policy-makers and administrators as a means of imposing order and administrative efficiency and, as such, create the separate categories and their limits where none previously existed. Many of these same borders are imposed, top-down, upon a public who are not always aware of the immediate implications and significance of this form of societal compartmentalization. Like the superimposed territorial boundaries of the colonial era, they often cut across real functional categories, excluding some who should be included and including others who, according to the demarcation criteria, should be excluded.

In both past and present border demarcations, it is the nature of the power relations that remains a key factor (Newman, 2003). The criteria determining where and how the border is to be constructed in society and/or space, are drawn up by the societal managers, usually acting in their own political, economic or institutional interests. The idea that the transition from a bordered to a borderless (*sic*) world is indicative of a transfer of power from one interest group to another, is mistaken. The removal, or opening, of borders, usually serves the interests of the same power elites who were intent on constructing the closed borders of the past. This is particularly the case concerning economic activity, where the past interest in retaining exclusive national markets has, in many places, been replaced by the economic interest favouring customs-free spaces and

a global market. Those who superimposed the territorially fixed borders in Africa and Asia during the past century are the same power elites who now determine that the world should become borderless. This is no less a neo-colonial form of boundary removal superimposition in the same areas which were negatively impacted by the previous superimposition of territorial borders. And the North American power elites who, during the 1990s promoted the opening of boundaries to further the economic interests of NAFTA, are the same power elites who, in the post-9/11 era, are doing their utmost to, once again, close down and seal the borders in the face of what they perceive as a security threat (Andreas, 2003; Andreas and Biersteker, 2003; Olmeda and Soden, 2005). Border demarcation and management, past and present, cannot be understood without recourse to the question of power relations and an analysis of whose interests the opening or closing of borders serve.

### *Binary Distinctions or Networks?*

If tangible demarcation criteria characterized much of the traditionalist geographic border discourse, it is the more abstract notions relating to difference and 'othering' that characterize much of the contemporary border discourse (Van Houtum, 2002; Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002). The sociological categorization of borders is expressed through a series of binary distinctions which highlight the border as constituting a sharp edge and a clear line of separation between two distinct entities, or opposites. These have been expressed in a number of ways, such as:

Here–There  
 Us–Them  
 Include–Exclude  
 Self–Other  
 Inside–Outside

all reflecting the idea that borders exist in almost every aspect of society, categorizing humanity into those who belong to the group (compartment) and those who do not. The border demarcation consists of precise criteria for determining on what side of the border you are located. These are social categories and as such, bear no relation to territorial or spatial location, although in many cases social class and economic distinctions are exacerbated through spatial patterns of residential segregation. The territorial borders of urban neighbourhoods will never coincide totally with the socio-economic categories, just as the borders of the so-called nation-state will never coincide totally with the spatial distribution of the 'homeland' population, but there can be relatively high degrees of congruence between the two. The managerialist thesis of urban sociologists has shown how ethnic and socio-economic borders are maintained and perpetuated by housing agents and realtors as a means of controlling the housing market for their own political and economic interests. This is based on the fear of living with the 'other', of wanting the self to be here, and the other to be there,

with a clear border separating the activity and interaction spaces of the two. Such a border does not necessarily exist in the form of a fence or a wall, but it can be as sealed as the strongest of inter-State borders separating two belligerent countries from each other.

At first glance, these binary distinctions contrast with the globalization thesis which views borders as networks, experiencing contact, movement, or fluidity. The notion of world society, where common belonging transcends the notion of a world which is highly compartmentalized and categorized is central to the social theory discourse of the past decade (Castells, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). Networking of groups and of cities requires fluidity and continual mobility, as contrasted with rigid categories and compartments. But even networked society requires borders that determine just who is a member of the new categories thus constructed. Not everyone has equal or free access to a cyber group – they require the necessary computer skills, the resources to purchase and operate a computer, access to electricity and communication systems. Large areas of the world do not possess these facilities and as such they are excluded from the networked group. The concept of cross-border networking and almost free mobility is limited to certain societies and specific places. Admittedly, these borders are more elastic than the highly rigid borders of the past and the potential for an ‘outsider’ to cross the border, by virtue of him/her gaining the necessary skills, learning the necessary jargon or hooking into a newly constructed electricity or telephone grid, is greater than in the past. As such, networks reflect the elasticity of borders as well as the fact that they are no longer location specific. Borders move continuously through society and space as part of the rebordering process (Rumford, 2006). Society undergoes its own internal socio-economic changes, with a growing number of people gaining access to the specific groups or networks from which they were previously excluded.

The ‘here–there’ and ‘us–them’ cut-off points are not always played out through the construction of physical and visible walls and fences. They may be as invisible as they are tangible and, equally, as perceived as they are real. I define you as belonging to a different social, ethnic, economic or religious group and, as such, I have created a border separating the self from the other. The extent to which I am prepared to overcome my feelings of exclusivity will determine the extent to which I am prepared to permit you to cross the border and to interact with me. The reason for creating the border may be simply that I don’t like anything which is different – I am comfortable with ‘my own type’. Alternately, I may be prepared to interact with you but I feel threatened by your presence and therefore I prefer to construct a wall, be it an imaginary wall or a concrete wall of separation such as has recently been constructed between Israel and the West Bank, to ensure that we do not come into contact with each other. Fear of the other, the desire to defend oneself from the threat (regardless of whether the threat is real or perceived) is scale inclusive. It is as relevant to the individual who fears his/her neighbour, to the social group who fears the ‘influx’ of those with different economic status or skin colour, to the religious group which fears the influence of other religious beliefs, and to the State which fears any threat to its

territorial integrity or sovereignty. This is the true essence of borders, past and present, territorial or aspatial.

### *Crossing the Border*

If a border exists, there is always someone who wants to cross it to get to the other side. Border management is all about the procedures by which the crossing of borders is eased or becomes more restrictive. For some, the crossing of the border is an option, while for others it is an existential issue. It is often the latter, those that must find a way across the border if they are to survive, who find it the hardest to cross, if only because they are deemed undesirable by the border gatekeepers who maintain control over entry and exit.

Physically crossing a border remains difficult for those lacking the necessary documentation, such as work permits, passports or visas. Crossing the borders between cultural or religious groups is infinitely more difficult than crossing the physical border between States. The border managers, in the guise of religious leaders or government bureaucrats, demarcate the border in such a way that it is almost impossible to cross. Strict conversion regulations are an indication that those already included within the specific religious grouping, practise exclusion vis-à-vis those who wish to cross into the same cultural space. The demarcation criteria and the management of the border regime separating the people professing an 'other' religious identity make this type of border impassable.

Crossing borders can also occur when no human movement as such takes place, but the border itself is relocated. There are numerous stories of residents of villages in central and Eastern Europe during the twentieth century who tell their grandchildren of the many countries they have resided in during the course of their life. When asked to explain why they moved so much, they replied that they had never left the village in which they were born and grew up as children. But as a result of continuous war and conflict, the border was continually moved around them, so that they became citizens of new countries without even requesting to cross a boundary. The same is true of people who move from one social or religious category into another, if only because government officials or clergy have decided to change the ground rules (demarcating the border) so that someone who was excluded yesterday suddenly finds themselves included. There is perhaps nothing in the study of borders which emphasizes the nature of borders as social constructs more than this example of re-categorization (re-territorialization) to include those who had previously been excluded, and to exclude those who had previously been included, without those people undergoing any significant change in their personal situations or location.

Nor does crossing the border necessarily take place at the 'edge' of the space, the place where the border is expected to be found. For many travellers, the border crossing point is located at the check-in counters at the airports in their home countries. It may be the airline officials who undertake the task or, as is increasingly the case in Canada and some other western countries, the creation of a micro piece of ex-territory under US jurisdiction in the foreign airport territory. The

‘undesirables’ are filtered out long before they ever reach the actual destination, where they may have been turned back if they lacked the appropriate documentation or credentials.

But, in retrospect, physically crossing the border often turns out to be the easy part of the crossing process. Just because a migrant worker from the Third World succeeds in making it to the land of their perceived dreams does not mean that they will feel comfortable living and working in their new places of residence. While they may have been allowed to legally cross the line of separation, they now find themselves culturally and linguistically excluded as part of a minority. They have exchanged one form of inclusion for another form of exclusion and have discovered, like so many migrants before them, that not all of the grass on the other side of the fence is as green as they had originally imagined prior to their crossing. One border (the physical) has been crossed while a new one (cultural) presents itself which may never be crossed successfully in their lifetime. The notion of multiculturalism is, for some, the ability of States to successfully cope with difference within their midst while, for others, it reflects the failure of the border crossing process beyond the relatively superficial level of physical entry into a new geo-political space. Where migrants create their own ethnic ghettos, whether they are voluntary because of their desire to maintain their specific cultural, religious and linguistics characteristics separate from the host population, or whether they are forced upon them because of the unwillingness on the part of the host population to enable full integration or assimilation, the borders of the compartmentalized society simply become transformed from the realm of the State in its entirety to the more localized scale of the inner city or residential neighbourhood, within which strongly segregated and separate group identities are maintained. It remains for the second or third generation descendants of the original border crossers to feel at home within the new society, to feel included within the cultural and linguistic borders that define the ‘self’ entity vis-à-vis the ‘other’. This is not to pass judgement on the contemporary notion of multiculturalism. Rather, it serves to throw up the complexity of what it means to cross a border, over and beyond the simple entry to, or exit from, the political category known as the State, bringing together social, political, economic and spatial notions of what border crossing means to both the individual and the group.

### *Frontiers, Borderlands and Transition Zones*

The distinction between the border as a line, and the frontier as the area in close proximity to the border, within which patterns of development can only be explained by recourse to the existence of the border, is to be found in much of the classic geographic literature dealing with boundaries. It was a political geographer at Oxford, John House, who developed a theoretical frame for understanding the functional dynamics of the political frontier region (House, 1980). In particular, House brought the geographic, social, political and economic discourses together by developing the notion of ‘double peripherality’, namely an

area located in the geographic periphery of the country, in close proximity to the border, within which the residents of the region suffer from economic, social and political peripherality in terms of their economic status or their access to the power elites and decision-makers. Such regions would, by definition, suffer from underdevelopment due to their distance from the spatial and social cores of society.

Much of the functional literature dealing with borders along the 'closed–open' continuum automatically assumed that the nature of the border would have an impact on the 'borderland' (Blake, 2000b; Rumley and Minghi, 1991). The specific borderland characteristics will vary contingent upon the degree of openness or closedness of the border, enabling or preventing contact and interaction. Borderlands may undergo differential development on each side of the border, dependent on the respective policies exercised by the authorities on each side. This is particularly significant in the case of closed or sealed borders, where one State may turn the whole frontier region into a military zone of activity, while the neighbouring State may go out of their way to invest in, and develop, the civilian settlement patterns and infrastructure in the borderland as a means of visibly demonstrating their political presence in a region of conflict. Based on his work on the USA–Mexico border, Oskar Martinez developed a much-cited four-phased typology of borderlands, ranging from 'alienated' to 'integrated', reflecting the nature of the political and physical interaction between the governments and peoples on each side of the border (Martinez, 1994). There is an obvious correlation between closed borders, political tensions and alienated borderlands, on the one hand, and open borders, political cooperation and integrated borderlands, on the other. Where the border is more open than closed, the borderland region can be transformed into a zone of interaction where peoples meet, rather than a barrier where peoples are separated from each other, and this has emerged as a strong theme in much of the recent border literature (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999; Anderson and Wever, 2003).

It is not difficult to transform these notions of geographical borderlands to the frontier zones which separate groups and other cultural entities, as they attempt to completely exclude the other through processes of exclusion and alienation, of not letting them into the club, as contrasted with a desire to reach out and to include the other by allowing them to cross the border as freely as possible. Equally, as people succeed in moving from one category to another, they may experience a period of transitional hybridity, adopting new customs from the other side, while retaining, at one and the same time, many of their customs from the place of origin.

Within the EU, trans-boundary interaction zones have been actively encouraged as a means of bringing peoples together prior to the ultimate opening and removal of the inter-state borders. The EU has invested a great deal of resources into the creation of trans-boundary activity spaces, creating frontier zones of interaction where they were sealed in the past (Rumford, 2006; Scott, 1999, 2000; Zielonka, 2002). This is reflected in the EXLINEA project which examines opportunities and constraints to local/regional cross-border co-operation in Europe (in which) cross-border region building is conceptualized as a process of

formal and informal integration, ([www.exlinea.org](http://www.exlinea.org)), and through the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) which aims to 'safeguard cross-border cooperation as one of the priorities of European cohesion and regional policy' as well as being responsible for the drawing up of the Charter of the European Border and Cross-Border Regions ([www.aebr.net](http://www.aebr.net)).

And yet there is also something artificial and superimposed about the forced opening of borders and the creation of integrative borderland landscapes (much in the same way that the creation of borders in the first place is often artificial and superimposed upon a geographical or social landscape) where, in some instances, the peoples on either side of the borders are not interested in interacting with the other side. The notion that good fences make good neighbours often accurately reflects the disposition of peoples who wish to maintain and perpetuate their difference, even where this is not necessarily accompanied by animosity or outright political exclusion. Not every trans-border region results in the meeting of minds, nor do they necessarily being about a form of transitional hybridity consisting of a mix of characteristics from each side of the border. Not all peripheral regions can, or want to be, transformed into transition zones. This is particularly the case where long-rooted tensions and conflict have existed in a region or between particular groups. In other words, the globalization impact on borders is as geographically and socially differentiated as most other social phenomena – in some places, it results in the opening of borders and the associated creation of transition zone borderlands, while, in others, the borderland remains a frontier in which mutual suspicions, mistrust of the other and a desire to maintain group or national exclusivity remain in place. This is perhaps why the opening and removal of borders in parts of Western Europe (such as between France and Germany) are all the more remarkable, given the historical realities of these conflictual and war-filled regions.

### **Concluding Comment I: The Globalization Turnaround: Reclosing the Borders**

While the 'borderless' world thesis is *passé* inasmuch as it relates to the total disappearance of borders, we cannot be dismissive of the fact that the impact of globalization on the one hand, and political change and rapprochement in parts of the world, on the other, have brought about a gradual opening of many of the world's political borders. The bulk of border study research during the past decade has focused on the dynamics and characteristics of the 'opening' process, through which borders have become more permeable. In times and regions of political stability, it is the economic discourse favouring global markets and the unimpeded dissemination of information and knowledge, which has had a powerful impact on the changing functional characteristics of the world's borders. However, in the wake of the events of 9/11 and the more recent acts of terrorism in Bali, Madrid and London, governments have begun to reassess their border-opening policies. The securitization discourse has, once again, become prominent as governments

move towards re-closing their borders and making them more difficult to cross in the face of the perceived security threat (Andreas, 2003). Nowhere is this more blatant than in the USA, where the crossing of borders, even between two of the world's most friendly countries – the USA and Canada – has become more difficult in the post-9/11 era (Ackleson, 2004; Olmedo and Soden, 2005). American citizens are now required, for the first time, to have full passports when crossing into Mexico and Canada, when previously a local driving licence was sufficient. The previous system of checks on people and vehicles crossing into the USA, which were limited to a search for illegal immigrants or drugs, now focuses on the search for suspected terrorists and weapons. Whereas, in the past, much of the border-related research was funded by organizations associated with NAFTA and seeking ways of making the borders even easier to cross, this has undergone a significant change with much of the current border-related research being funded by organizations and public agencies associated with the Department of Homeland Security who are seeking ways to make the country's borders ever more sealed and secure. The establishment of the private citizen 'minutemen' patrols along the USA–Mexico border, ostensibly to prevent the further influx of illegal immigrants seeking employment from Mexico, has been accepted far more readily by the general public than would have been the case in the past, because of the public perception that sealing the borders constitutes a magic panacea to the prevention of fundamentalist-inspired global terror. Thus, the illegal immigrant who, at the worst, is 'taking a job from an unemployed American citizen' (*sic*), has now become transformed into a potential terrorist and constitutes an automatic threat to public safety and security.

Ironically, it is the globalization of terrorism which has brought about this move towards a reclosing of the borders. Just as the forces of economic and information globalization were the main factors responsible for the opening and elastication of borders, so too it is the forces of fundamentalism and militancy on a global scale which are now bringing about the reversal of the trend among Western governments. It is a battle of globalization versus globalization, as those forces which have made borders more permeable and easier to cross are now manipulated by new forces which threaten the physical safety of innocent citizens. Unlike the past, however, it is much more difficult, almost impossible, to close borders hermetically given the greater ease of travel, mobility and access. The trans-boundary cyber-dissemination of information among groups supporting the political cause of global terrorism, enables inhabitants of a country to operate inside the country of their own citizenship without the need to physically cross the border and gain entry, as was the case with the suicide bombers in London in August 2005. Moreover, re-closing the borders too strongly will result in a direct confrontation between the two major State discourses – the securitization and the economic – with the latter suffering as a result of increased difficulties involved in the transportation of goods and other economic activities (Coleman, 2004). Normally, it is the securitization discourse which will win out in such a confrontation, but it remains to be seen just how far the re-closing of borders can go without causing structural economic damage to these societies.

## Conclusion II: Inter-Disciplinary Understandings of Borders

In this article, I have argued that a contemporary understanding of borders and the bordering process can be multi-disciplinary, with diverse border practitioners and scholars being able to use the terminologies and semantics of the 'other' for their own understanding of the reshaping of world society and the way in which it is compartmentalized through the agency of groups and territories. But this is contingent upon one important mutual assumption, namely that geographers, political scientists and associated disciplines accept the notion that borders do not need to be territorial constructs for them to constitute borders, while sociologists, anthropologists and proponents of globalization networking theory equally need to accept the fact that territory and re-territorialization, at a variety of spatial scales, remain a major form of societal organization and ordering. We live in a world of compartments and borders which may be more fluid and elastic, easier to cross, than in the past, but they are out there all the same, impacting upon the minutiae of our daily life practices, identities and affiliations. Political events of the past few years would indicate that many borders are being reclosed rather than opened, although this also hides the fact that many borders have never experienced the opening process. One of the challenges for border scholars and practitioners is to acquire, and actively promote, an understanding of the processes through which all types of borders can be opened even further and how they can be crossed with greater ease. It is by no means a given and it requires a mutual willingness to cross the disciplinary divide and to learn each other's border language, if we are to move beyond the common, but not necessarily shared, discourse interaction space which has been created during the past decade by border scholars.

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