

Research Note:

Border Studies as an “Evolutionary” Research Field

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Introduction

The study of borders reflects continuity and change in scientific thought and thus innumerable contributions to the conceptualization of social space and its workings. What we generally identify as border studies is the result of decades of work accomplished by scholars pursuing specific discipline-bound perspectives and it is from this multitude of partial understandings that we have come to comprehend borders as social phenomena that are as much structure as agency. While border studies have traditionally been dominated by political geography since the formative writings of Friedrich Ratzel, interdisciplinary approaches have made considerable headway in the study of borders and their societal significance. As I argue here, the term ‘border studies’ itself suggests an interdisciplinary area of research that reflects the centrality of borders and border-making in the organization of everyday life.

To begin discussion a clarification is in order: to pursue border studies implies that borders, and not states, regions or territories, are at the center of attention. Since the seminal work of Brambilla (2010?), Newman (2006), Rumford (2008), van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002), and other scholars, understandings of how borders are constituted are informed, at least in an interdisciplinary sense, by the notion that borders are not ‘given’ but are constantly made and re-made by a variety of actors operating at different scales. Consequently, the paradigm of ‘bordering’, i.e. socio-political, cultural and other forms of border-making within societies, has come to characterize what can be considered the state of the art in the research field. Material borders, for example, are not interpreted exclusively as products of wars, international agreement or high politics but are understood to be made and maintained by cultural, economic, political and social interaction. Moreover, bordering encompasses formal as well as everyday forms of border construction and is accomplished with the help of ideology, discursive and performative practices and different forms of agency (dell’Agnese and Amilhat Szary 2015, Kolossov and Scott 2013). Applying the bordering paradigm inherently tends to blur some of the boundaries that exist between disciplinary approaches and indeed it reflects the strong influence of anthropological perspectives on territorial understandings of borders. This situation is exemplified by major collections and compendia of border studies research that have appeared in the last two decades (see, for example, Donnan and Wilson 2012, Andersen et. al. 2012, Brambilla et. al. 2015). As a result, border studies have integrated, or at least brought closer together, various perspectives from anthropology, ethnography, economics, geography, legal studies, political science, sociology and other disciplines. However, the interdisciplinary potential of border studies is not exhausted by a focus on ‘bordering’. A further contemporary paradigm, the ‘borderscapes’ approach, extends the range of border-making practices to include experiential and performative aspects of negotiating

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This research note suggests that the development of border studies can be interpreted in terms of an evolutionary process of conceptual change. One major characteristic of this process has been a shift from seeing borders as territorial fixations to understanding them as fluid sense-making processes that provide meaning to individual and collective experience. Sense-making elements of the everyday are expressed, for example, in the form of narratives, images and art, giving rise to productive dialogues between the humanities and social sciences. Specifically, concepts such as ‘border-crossing’ and ‘border-thinking’ as well narrative approaches to understanding how borders are created in everyday contexts help reveal the interrelated nature of, and tensions between ontological, territorial and social place-making. Recent events have reminded us of the close relationships between cultural environments, social backgrounds and political beliefs in constructing socio-political categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Political and cultural cognition as well as attempts to minimize disruptive cognitive dissonance help explain, among others, seemingly irrational voting patterns (Bornschler et al. 2021, Jenke and Huettel 2016). To a great extent, these processes are very much about the construction of socio-cultural borders that are politically salient.

This contribution to Cross Border Review also suggests that interdisciplinary approaches exemplify the evolutionary character of border studies, this is particularly evident as the field has advanced through a process of continuously expanding (not only disciplinary) boundaries of knowledge. As a result, a greater appreciation of the complexity of borders has emerged that enriches our understanding of space-society relations, cutting through ‘crusts of convention’ theoretically, conceptually and empirically. In this case, interdisciplinary approaches are best thought of as tools that link territorial, social and affective understandings of borders. In other words, it is about the interrelated nature of ontological, territorial and political borders. Moving beyond, but without leaving behind, the traditional focus on state borders, border studies can reveal everyday mechanisms through which borders, understood in a holistic manner, are constantly created, confirmed and transcended. The discussion that follows begins with a brief review of the present state of the art in border studies as reflected in the ‘bordering’ and ‘borderscapes’ approaches; then some of the major questions that emerge from these approaches will be addressed as well as important tensions in the interpretation of borders and their significance. Discussion continues with cognitive aspects of border-making and in the latter part of this discussion paper, concrete examples of thus use of cognitive approaches as part of interdisciplinarity in border studies will be presented.

Bordering and Borderscapes

The study of borders has undergone a dramatic transformation over the past decades, the most significant aspect of which has been to broaden understandings of where borders are found, how they are made, what purposes they serve and why they function as powerful cultural artefacts. No longer limited, for example, to the analysis of state formations or case studies of ethno-territoriality, border studies reflect the centrality of borders and border-making to everyday life. Border studies has, moreover, developed out of necessity into an interdisciplinary research field – a fact that must be conceded by even the most defensive proponents of political geography, anthropological or sociological approaches. Admittedly, moving from a focus on state emergence to the present condition of socio-spatial complexity entails a jump of more than a century of paradigmatic change. However, there is no space here for a detailed discussion of the historical evolution of

border studies and, indeed, this has been well documented in previous work by several key scholars (see Wilson and Donnan 2012).

The central objective of this paper is, rather, to exemplify interdisciplinarity in contemporary border studies by focusing on specific paradigms and approaches that, as indicated above, link political understandings of borders to socio-cultural processes, discourses and practices (Brambilla 2010). The first major interdisciplinary paradigm in the research field to be discussed here is that of *bordering*, or the more fundamental process of creating socio-spatial distinctions at various scales by multiple actors. Research on bordering is significant in an interdisciplinary sense in at least two ways: promoting a ‘post-disciplinary’ focus on border-related problems facing society, and by encouraging greater interaction and exchange between individual disciplines themselves. The bordering paradigm reflects profound transformations of social, political and territorial relationships since the end of the Cold War as well as the often disruptive impacts of globalization on national societies. The work of Ulrike Meinhof, Doris Wastl-Walter and other scholars (see Meinhof 2002) who investigated communities at the EU’s enlarging and expanding borders during the 1990s, was a clear inspiration for linking, for example, anthropological, geographical and historical approaches in order to understand the significance of living at changing state borders. In developing these perspectives Henk van Houtum and Ton van Naerssen specifically elaborated bordering as a research paradigm in a seminal 2002 paper in which the scientific consequences of a processual understandings of border-making approach were outlined. According to this perspective, to study border-making is to investigate the everyday construction of borders, among others through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes, etc. While both geographers, van Houtum and van Naerssen made no secret of their debt to Michel de Certeau’s (1980) work on everyday practices and ‘arts of doing’, which combined social science methods with historical, psychoanalytical and philosophical insights. In their 2002 essay, for example, von Houtum and van Naerssen employ de Certeau’s notion of spatial strategy as an example of place-bounding and a process of comparing and contrasting ‘one’s own space’ with that of others. Within this context, these authors also discuss bordering as a fluid re-inscription of identity, for example in the case of transnational immigrants who adapt to new urban situations, often maintaining close personal, economic and sentimental ties to places left behind.

The bordering paradigm, which has since been widely developed (see Kireev and Yachin 2019), brings diverse forms of social, cultural and economic life into more holistic frames of analysis, indicating that while borders can be semi-permanent and formal in nature, they are also products of continuous, non-finalizable practices. Building on the bordering paradigm, the *borderscapes approach* has introduced a notion of borders as multilocal socio-political arenas that emerge around border-making contexts and are diffused beyond the physical border. Among others, Brambilla (2015) and Nyman (2018) argue that borderscapes are contexts where cultural appropriations and social contestations become visible via a broad repertory of communicative means and strategies. With a borderscapes approach, the realm of high politics is connected to with that of communities and individuals who are affected by and negotiate borders as part of everyday life and hence it represents a highly promising tool for ‘re-assembling’ border complexity. Krichker (2020) has pointed to the vagueness of the borderscapes concept as a resource, allowing for disciplinary fluidity in strengthening the phenomenological dimension of border studies, in this way ‘humanizing’ borders and focusing on the experiences of those who either willingly or forcibly negotiate borders in everyday contexts.

Similarly to van Houtum and van Naerssen, Chiara Brambilla (2015) appropriates de Certeau's conceptualizations of everyday practices in her elaboration of the borderscapes perspective. In her work she indicates how everyday citizens bound and create their own spaces, often subverting the panoptic rationality of powerful institutions or mainstream social norms. This involves an examination of the ways in which people continuously re-appropriate material and symbolic elements of their environments as a part of the construction of their everyday lifeworlds. Moreover, the term borderscape also puts emphasis on representations of borders as well as individual and collective practices of border-making which shape political subjectivities in specific situations. Epistemologically, Brambilla and others have employed the borderscapes approach | to connect border experiences and border-making practices in an anthropological sense that incorporates, for example, geographies of mobility and migration and cultural expression.

Two examples from the literature demonstrate, in contrasting ways, how migration, the situations of refugees and different political and socio-cultural border representations are linked: Punta Tarifa (Spain) and the Island of Lampedusa (Italy). In the case of Punta Tarifa, migrant presence and all references to the area's Islamic past are made invisible as means to highlight 'Europeanness' (Ferrer-Gallardo, Abet-Mas and Espiñeira 2015). The LampedusaInFestival (Brambilla 2015) achieved the opposite, if only temporarily, namely a space for making migrant presence visible through performative action and cultural expression.

Tsoni's (2019) work on *affective borderscapes* provides a further example of the blurring of rigid disciplinary boundaries of social science inquiry and the humanities. Here, the specific context is that of Syrian refugees in Athens and their negotiation of highly subtle and often precarious borders in creating a sense of place within an often-hostile environment. Her border studies approach takes inspiration from affective geographies of place attachment, anthropologies of migrant liminality and the critical study of human mobilities. Similar to the work of Chiara Brambilla and Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary (2012), Tsoni's work represents a nexus between human geography, sociology, anthropology and graphic arts in order to enhance understanding of border-making processes and their impacts. According to Tsoni (2019 p. v): "... borderscapes represent liminal, overlapping landscapes which function as contact zones and as charged fields of interaction and affective transmission between shifting configurations of animate and inanimate actors and the powers, politics and imaginaries that permeate them".

Border-Crossing and Border-Thinking as Expressions of Conceptual Change

As the above discussion suggests, interdisciplinarity in border studies has opened up spaces for alternative understandings of border-making practices that transcend the confines of state territoriality. The borderscape concept has shown a way forward, making social complexity more legible through an inclusive perspective on border-making as a product of individual and collective imaginations but also reflecting political contestations and the salience of physical borders as sites of struggle (Brambilla and Jones 2020). We find considerable investment in creating alternative border knowledges that reflect experiences of border negotiation and border-crossing. We are not limited to mere deconstruction and questionings of borders as expressions of exclusion or mechanisms of governmentality but can also study how and why borders serve as resources for

dialogue, cultural expression and political empowerment (McCall 2014, Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Progress in the development of interdisciplinary border studies is also revealed in a concern with cognitive processes. While the cognitive sciences are a vast field of research and involve many theoretical and empirical aspects that are rather distant from the social sciences and humanities, there is nonetheless a clear connection between cognition and ‘meaning-making’ and the ways in which borders are constructed, perceived and transcended (see Tateo and Marsico 2019). Echoing the bordering and borderscapes paradigms, but from a biologist’s perspective on the bases of cognition, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980, xxii) focused on the human propensity and need to *create categories of distinction* and relationality between spaces. They argued that: “The fundamental cognitive operation that an observer performs is the operation of distinction. By means of this operation the observer specifies a unity as an entity distinct from a background and a background as the domain in which an entity is distinguished.” At the same time Maturana and Varela eschewed an exclusively mechanistic understanding of such operations, arguing that the establishment of borders is also an affective process. The central borders-related premise of cognition is that without borders, relational thinking about the world and the development of meaningful agency in the world would be hardly possible. Boundedness is hence an essential element of space-society relationships and is central to stabilizing ways of knowing the world.

Here, admittedly, the notion of border is stretched to limits that might not resonate with many border scholars; nevertheless, while cognitive borders can be highly abstract in physical terms, they are rather concrete in terms of categories of distinction and difference that inform identity constructions. Moreover, focusing on cognition and meaning-making does not suggest an abandonment of critical perspectives on borders. Border-making is an intersubjective process embedded within specific social relations and socio-cultural contexts and is therefore a cognitive process that is ontological, political, as well as emotional. Furthermore, there is an increasing recognition of the profound psychological significance of socio-spatial borders. As Marsico and Varzi (2016, 327) argue, “psychological phenomena take place at the border between person and environment.” Scholarship in the area of political psychology has for quite some time emphasized the significance of place and place boundaries as markers of politically salient identities (see Hopkins and Dixon 2006). Indeed, the recent surge in electoral support for right-wing parties in several countries remind us of the close relationships between cultural environments, social backgrounds and political beliefs; political and cultural cognition as well as attempts to minimize disruptive cognitive dissonance help explain, among others, seemingly irrational voting patterns (see Bornschier et. al 2021). In terms of political psychology, social, and to a significant extent, territorial boundedness is also expressed in phenomena such as ‘enclave deliberation’ (Sunstein 2002), or group polarization leading to more extreme political views. This self-referential bounding can both produce political ‘Balkanization’ or the empowerment of marginalized groups who through enclave deliberation succeed in achieving greater visibility (Gronland, Herne, Setala 2015).

The bordering salience of political psychology is not only registered by scholars within mainstream academia, the use of borders as a mobilization of existential (in)securities has received considerable media attention. Amanda Taub (2022) has written in the New York Times of border politics as a subtle psychological manipulation of popular fears of ‘losing control’: “For a large portion of the

public in a lot of the countries I've written about, 'border crossings' are a terrifying phenomenon, even if the absolute numbers involved are very small. But to many of those people, 'immigration', even if it involves far more people, and even if many of them are still refugees and economic migrants, is a totally different and far less threatening concept."

Cultural psychology is no less important to the evolution of border studies as a cross-cutting research field. Español, Marsico and Tateo (2019, 123) write:

"From a cultural psychological standpoint, borders are conceived as a way of creating distinctions in the fluid flow of events, and therefore, as a psychological tool for structuring personal relationships with the environment. (...) The richness of the concept resides in this characteristic. The inherent ambivalence of the border creates a space for negotiation and dialogue, but also it creates a space where misunderstanding and possible confusion may arise."

Anne-Laure Amilhat and Victor Konrad, both geographers, take inspiration from cultural psychology and its appropriations of borderlands as fluid cultural spaces, in elaborating their analysis of borders and culture. In a forthcoming book (2022) they offer a 'post-disciplinary' perspective on border-related issues facing society that brings diverse forms of social, cultural and political life into more holistic frames of analysis, indicating that while borders can be semi-permanent and formal in nature, they are also products of continuous socio-cultural practices. These practices are made visible and legible through different forms of cultural appropriation and social contestation. Amilhat and Konrad provide a rich cross-section of culture at borders. Among the examples developed in the book are those of border cultures expressed by place-making practices of Lhotsampa refugees in Halifax, Canada, separations and intersections of Afghanistan's many ethno-linguistic areas, cultural expression and art at border cities, mental maps of borderlanders, the performance of border guards at the Wagah border where India and Pakistan meet, and the complex border- transcending geographies of the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory.

Elements of cultural and political psychology coalesce in the concept of ontological security, another promising contribution to interdisciplinary border studies. The ontological security perspective provides a vital link between the political, cultural and psychological in the study of borders and their impacts. Ontological security involves the stability of ideas, values and points of common reference that create a sense of group belonging (Mitzen 2006). Catarina Kinnvall (2018), among others, has demonstrated how a focus on ontological security reveals ways in which subjective feelings of wellbeing and/or a lack thereof, as well as emotional reactions to perceived threats are major shapers of policy discourse and practice. More than merely an abstract concept, ontological security is observable in concrete situations such as in the self-referential nature of securitization and threat perception (Palonen 2018). Cervi and Tejedor (2022) have used discourse analysis to link right-wing narrations of migrant difference to the framing of borders as the ultimate defense of national identity and the ontological securities of Italy and Spain. Similarly, but at the level of individual experience, Vaughan-Williams and Pisani (2020) have employed the concept of ontological security to investigate everyday geographies of the EU's external border (here, in Malta) and from the perspective of refugees who struggle for recognition and voice against restrictive border security practices. Linking ontological security to the meaning-making significance of borders is not limited to border politics. The centrality of the built environment, and thus of place, to feelings of well-being is, moreover, captured by the concept of ontological security in the form

of habits, routines and environments that stabilize a sense of self and group identity through different forms of boundary-making (Kent 2015, Jabareen, Eizenberg & Zilberman 2017).

In order to highlight the relevance of cognition to interdisciplinarity in border studies, three partly interlinked areas of research will be briefly discussed below. One of these, a focus on urban borders, deals with concrete situations of urban neighbourhood change and border-making as an urban development strategy. 'Border crossing' and 'border thinking', on the other hand, are rather metaphorical concepts that relate the everyday negotiation of borders processes of cultural change and contestation. With these two broadly defined concepts the realms of narrative and intersubjective meaning-making are connected to cultural and political geographies of borders.

Border-making and (urban) places

Cities are complex bordered spaces that make evident the significance of place and the processes by which cities and their neighbourhoods are continuously appropriated and re-appropriated in social, cultural and political terms. Interdisciplinarity is evidenced in the study of border-making within cities, for example by gleaning insights from a number of seemingly eclectic sources, such as architecture, planning, literary studies and, as mentioned above, cultural and political psychology. This perspective helps understand the significance of place and why cities and their neighborhoods are continuously appropriated and re-appropriated in social, cultural and political terms. Precedents for this line of investigation have been established by architects such as Harry Francis Mallgrave (2015) who suggest that built environments are not simply architectural products or aesthetic artefacts but are part of affective social relationships and embodied cognition. In other words, border-making and place-making are closely linked, they create relational knowledges of place that serve to distinguish places from each other, thus producing a sense of orientation and belonging.

Border-making as place-making is also revealed as an intersubjective creation of meaning in the guise of social imaginaries and in more concrete everyday terms as socially communicated narratives of place distinction (Scott 2021). Stories of urban place symbolize, in their own individual ways, shifting socio-cultural geographies and the differentiation of inner-city spaces, expressing, for example, spaces of cultural possibility and lifestyle alternatives as well as political contestation. Such stories often involve instrumental uses of borders for achieving political objectives and economic advantage. In his study of the Dutch city of Nijmegen, Spierings (2012) links border-making practices to urban redevelopment strategies in which physical and perceptual borders are manipulated in order to 'open up' inner city spaces for consumption and investment purposes. Other researchers indicate how the meaning-making power of borders is exploited in create distinctions between 'good' and 'undesirable' citizens, Yardımcı (2022) indicates how (Turkish) state-led urban interventions are mobilized in order promote official citizenship agendas. Karaman and Islam (2012) have studied Istanbul's intra-urban borders within the context Roma segregation, demonstrating the community-building character of visible territorial demarcations as well as their exacerbation of social discrimination.

In another example of how cognition and border-making are related, Scott and Sohn (2018) have investigated urban places and their boundedness as products of socially mediated ideas and practices. In some cases, this can involve the intersubjective invention of entirely new, and often informal place names. Salient examples of neighbourhood rebordering are provided by such as

Berlin where iconic neighbourhoods, including Kreuzberg as well as other inner-city districts, have become models of sorts for diversity, social innovation and cultural accommodation. Moreover, these neighbourhoods are no longer peripheral or 'liminal' spaces within the city but have achieved a significant degree of cultural and social centrality, despite the fact that many communities with foreign roots still struggle for recognition. Place narratives of Berlin's Wedding district combine both an emphasis of diversity and a sense of authenticity. The area has acquired a place identity as an exceptional area in that it represents both socio-economic and socio-ethnic continuity and change.

Border crossing

As used in the field of border studies, the term border crossing means much more than an act of transcending a physical border, it is an experience through which different spatialities, histories and emotions are narrated. Velasco Ortiz and Contreras (2014) have, for example, showcased the US-Mexican border as a 'life experience' in which border crossing is revealed as interactions between personal biographies and structuring elements of the physical (political) border. The interdisciplinary significance of the concept lies primarily in close collaboration, and in some cases integration, of cultural studies, literary studies and more 'mainstream' social sciences approaches to border studies. This point has been stressed by Schimanski and Wolfe (2007) who argue that every border crossing narrative can be read as a performative renegotiation of the border. As Schimanski (2015, 107) writes.

Border crossing involves interpretation or reading. Reading can be envisaged as movement through space, involving border crossings both along and into the text. This makes it possible for reading and crossing (of national borders) to feed off one another, through allegorical figurations. Our ways of reading and crossing are formed by experience; they are based on concepts which undergo historical transformations.

Zaporozhets and Stodolinska (2021) analyze literary border crossings as interactions between territorial and metaphorical borders. They apply cognitive linguistics to cultural studies and a borderscapes inspired approach in the examination of how verbalizations of feelings and emotions are reflected in border crossings as narrated in children's books. In Weaks-Baxter's (2019, 17) interpretation, border crossing is a transformative process in which hybrid identities are created in and by border crossing narratives as a site of confrontation and struggle: "examining border crossing narratives places a lens on the complex layers of [United States] Southernness and the ways in which those texts construct Southern identity and Otherness, create codes of reference that include and exclude border crossers, and negotiate the borders and liminal spaces that border crossers pass through." In a recent volume edited by Johan Schimanski and Jopi Nyman (2021), border-crossing is elaborated as cultural encounter and cultural change while analytical emphasis is placed on borderscapes as images and cultural representation. With this book, Schimanski and Nyman propose a methodological renewal of border studies through incorporating narrative methods, visual artefacts and images in the analysis of formal (e.g. state) borders and their everyday impacts. Again, the idea of everyday border negotiation is taken up as a research focus in order to identify how different top-down and bottom-up discourses interact and in the process open up spaces for the voices of minority and marginalized groups to be heard.

These perspectives on border crossing resonate with the contexts of urban change and place-making discussed above. Deljana Iossifova (2013) suggests that urban borders represent much more than fragmented, ‘enclave’ geographies and in fact provide means to establish common ground and dialogue between highly diverse communities and interests. In Iossifova’s (2019) reading, urban borders are as much about place as about border crossings – i.e. creating interfaces of interaction and exchange. Iossifova notes that urban coexistence can involve recognition, tolerance or in some cases conflict. The most positive scenario is one of gradual recognition between neighbourhoods through everyday interaction, even giving rise to shared urban cultures despite economic and political forces that promote social fragmentation.

Border Thinking

Border research has also invested considerable effort in developing a further metaphorical and complementary category of meaning-making that is intrinsically interdisciplinary, that of ‘border thinking’. This is a way of seeing the world and social reality from the vantage point of being at and amidst social, cultural and political borders. It is a situation in which diversity, the co-existence of many different social worlds and the daily negotiation of border-crossing rituals are the norm. The concept of border thinking, or *el pensamiento fronterizo*, emerged in scholarly debate as a response to fundamentalism and xenophobia; it is often associated with Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) iconic exploration into Mexican-American/Chicana identity. Admittedly, border thinking is not new to border studies as the enduring resonance of Anzaldúa’s vision of a New Mestiza identity indicates. In the work of Anzaldúa, *pensamiento fronterizo* emerges as an open challenge to foundationalist border narratives and the enduring colonialization of the spirit by the powerful and vindictive. Anzaldúa’s vision is a decolonial alternative, informed by personal experience of racism, homophobia, macho culture and intolerance while growing up in South Texas. In this way, Anzaldúa’s ‘new mestiza consciousness’ inspires us to think of border-making as a form of disobedient, perhaps radical, freedom and liberation. At the same time, the borderlands is a space that generates hybridity and indeterminacy. As Anzaldúa’s own biography reveals, border identities emerge not as binary oppositions but rather as multiple subjectivities that interact in very dynamic spaces. This sentiment is echoed by Lugonés (1992, 3-4) who argues that border thinking is expressed in subjectivities characterized by “a tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity, (...) transgression of rigid conceptual boundaries, and by the creative breaking of the new unitary aspects of new and old paradigms.”

Border thinking is an idea that is not limited to a specific geographic context nor to a specific set of social relations. This vision also has a wider appeal as the idea of a *pensamiento fronterizo* suggests a deeply reflective and thus cognitive approach to life that emerges from being at the border. Being at the border can also mean of having very different places simultaneously as central reference points in everyday life. Alternatively, border thinking promotes an understanding of social borders as central to ‘being in the world’ and the fact that we are all creating and crossing borders in one way or another. This counters the fiction of immutable border realities, meanings, and identities that is a source of misunderstandings of borders but also populist appropriations of them as ‘taking back control’, evoking the ‘hyperreal’ of borders as Paul Richardson (2019) argues. Defined in these terms, border thinking completely breaks with monological obsessions and suggests that we can undertake a move from a thought-stopping to a thought-propelling consideration of borders as spaces of possibility. Wright (2019) has explicitly used the concept of

border thinking in describing the emergence of a powerful coalition against President Trump's border wall project, resisting a nativist urge to further divide and securitize the US-Mexico borderlands. Society is of course bordered by state territoriality, among other things, but borders *in* society are very much about embodied experience, intersubjective meaning-making and socially transmitted knowledge about the world.

The universal nature and core message of border thinking can be summed up in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (1965/1984: 287), who observed that society "(...) is wholly and always on the border (...). Culture does not possess inner territory: it is wholly located on borders, boundaries route everywhere." In Bakhtin's understanding we become who we are through discursive exchanges and within a dialogic tension between the centripetal pull of monologic, authoritative discourses and countervailing heteroglossia. Border thinking can thus be tied to concepts such as situated cosmopolitanism (Healy 2011), conceived as ways of life that exist within what Anna Tsing (2005, 4) describes as 'friction': the continuous co-production of cultures through interaction and "(...) the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference (...)." What might be some consequences of border thinking in terms of research and uncovering examples in the field? Border thinking helps us link socio-cultural borders and border-making processes to the construction of everyday lived space. In a critical understanding, the strength of border thinking lies in turning the objectivization of border knowledge on its head. Thinking about borders in a reflexive and critical manner requires us to ponder the consequences of living with borders; it also encourages us to reflect on the borders we cross every day and to better understand the borders within us. Most importantly, we realize that borders are not only imposed on us but emerge through our own different and situated border-making practices: uses of space, narrations of place, senses of border-crossing, political practices.

Conclusion

This discussion paper has presented the argument that border studies represents an evolutionary field of research that links the social sciences and humanities. In this sense, border studies is post-disciplinary in terms of the questions it raises. Certainly, disciplinary approaches to the study of borders continue to be important and necessary in order to develop a plurality of research options. No suggestion is made here to downplay the foundational disciplinary contributions to the field, for example, those of anthropology, ethnography and human geography. However, in the case of border studies at least, disciplinary commitments need not stand in the way of an evolutionary broadening of scientific horizons. Interdisciplinarity in the field of border studies has emerged as a means to address the complexity of the contemporary world. Despite potential drawbacks, the conceptual fuzziness of borderscapes, border thinking and other analytical approaches has generated a disciplinary and epistemological fluidity that is promising.

Understanding, for example, the connections between cognition and borders is an area that deserves greater attention, and this for both academic and practical reasons. Given the uncertainties that characterize the present global situation, we need tools that help us comprehend the workings of borders that are around us, within us and that we constantly make. Such knowledge might help us break with monological obsessions with identity and consider borders not only as barriers but as spaces of opportunity. Identities emerge on and at borders not as binary oppositions but rather as multiple subjectivities that interact in very dynamic spaces. This is

privileged thinking because despite the vulnerability and struggles that underpin being ‘at the border’, it is way of thinking that provides a space for both self-creation and, more broadly, the disruption of simplistic narratives of difference. Thinking about and reflecting upon the fact that border crossing is a central aspect of our lives could be a powerful resource for awareness, learning, greater tolerance and understanding of complex social realities. It entails the prospect of expanding our own borders to encompass new ideas, experiences and possibilities.

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