EUBORDERSCAPES Newsletter

Protesters at the Ceuta border with Morocco in February 2015 (© Mireia Garcia).

Introduction: Some salient insights from a 4-year project

by JAMES SCOTT
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EUBORDERSCAPES is an international research project funded through the EU's FP7 Programme. Since 2012, the project has explored conceptual change in relation to the fundamental social, economic, cultural and geopolitical transformations that have taken place in relation to borders and bordering in and around the EU. This has been a large-scale project with a 22-partner consortium from 17 different countries. In May of this year, EUBORDER-SCAPES comes to an end.

This final project newsletter provides the reader with socially and policy relevant insights that EUBORDER-SCAPES has generated. One major theme that emerges is that of *everyday bordering* and the realisation that borders are both instruments and practices. They are central to the positioning and sense of being of individuals and communities. Borders, furthermore, connect the local with wider societal processes at many levels (regional, national, global) and relational contexts (e.g. culture, values, ethnicity, citizenship). Understood in these terms, borders are essentially resources that make social life possible. As practices, however, border-making raises a number of ethical questions directly related to issues of exclusion, stigmatisation, marginalisation, racialisation and racism. Media transmitted scenes of border drama, 'refugee crisis' and external threat serve to confirm a political shift to security and migration control. Securitised mindsets and the populism that is parasitic upon them are generating everyday bordering practices – including citizen policing – that challenge European ide-

als, generate fear and distrust and, as Nira Yuval-Davis and her colleagues comment below, threaten traditions of multicultural conviviality.

Other contributions to this final newsletter develop the concept of *borderscape* in different ways. One further conceptual innovation of our project is the idea that borders give rise to overlapping narratives of social-cultural encounter and conflict (see the research briefings from Chiara Brambilla, Xavi Ferrer-Gallardo and Johan Schimanski). These are often reflected in images, media reporting, literary writings and other forms of cultural production.

Even though EUBORDERSCAPES is now completed as a project, the website will be maintained, and updated and will serve as a platform for future discussion of borders and conceptual change. In addition, we expect that many of the research strands pursued in our project will continue to be developed in upcoming events, publications and projects.

Commentary
Changing the racialized 'common sense' of everyday bordering[1]

by Nira Yuval-Davis, Georgie Wemyss & Kathryn Cassidy

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The out-sourcing of border-guarding is not (just) going to paid expert agencies but is imposed as part of the unpaid daily citizenship duties of untrained people in Britain. Last week, a meeting took place in the British House of Commons which sought to highlight some of the less discussed aspects of the UK's 2014 Immigration Act and the 2015-16 Immigration Bill. One of the speakers on the panel[2], the long-serving Liberal Democrat peer, Baroness Sally Hamwee, described the latter as 'the nastiest bill I've ever come across'.

Indeed, the Bill creates a new offence of illegal working and gives immigration officials wide-ranging powers to seize property and earnings, to close down businesses and to enter and search properties. Its impact will be felt widely on small businesses such as late-night takeaways and off licences, which may be less able than larger organisations to deal with the additional burden of carrying out and recording frequent and complex immigration checks. The Bill makes it a criminal offence to be found working without the right papers, punishable by a prison sentence of up to 12 months and an unlimited fine. It also withdraws support from failed asylum seekers with

children who currently get £5 per day and accommodation. Campaigners warn the Bill will lead to discrimination against minorities, encourage exploitation of migrant workers by removing safeguards and help create an underclass of people removed from the protection of the law.

One of the most controversial aspects of the legislation is the obligation placed on landlords to verify the immigration status of tenants. Landlords across the country will be liable for a fine or imprisonment for up to five years if they let out a property to a migrant without the 'right to rent', instead of just a fine as set out in the 2014 Immigration Act. In some circumstances, landlords will be guilty of an offence even if that migrant is not the tenant named on the lease but someone staying in the property. There is already evidence that in order to avoid risk of prosecution, landlords are discriminating against tenants who appear 'foreign'.

However, this is just one aspect of the social and political processes that these bills embody and which are threatening to transform British society. This will become a society in which virtually everyone is required to become (untrained and unpaid) border-guards while large sections of the population (especially BAME) are suspected of being illegal (or, at least, illegitimate) border-crossers. This applies to virtually all spheres of social life,

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[1] Published in OpenDemocracy, 17 February 2016.
[2] The meeting was organised by the BORDERSCAPES team at the research centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) of the University of East London. Welcomed by Nira Yuval-Davis, team director, it was chaired by Labour MP Meg Hillier and other speakers included SNP MP Stuart C. McDonald, Lucy Jones (Doctors of the World) and Rachel Robinson (Liberty). During the first part of the meeting, the film *Everyday Borders* was shown. The film, directed by Orson Nava and produced by Georgie Wemyss is a result of cooperation between the University of East London team, Migrants' Rights' Network, Southall Black Sisters and the Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL).

not just housing: employment, education, health, banking – even driving. And although the UK is at the forefront of these developments, this is a phenomenon which is spreading all over Europe and globally.

Out-sourcing the external border

In this commentary, we argue that rather than reinforcing citizens' security, everyday bordering has become the major mechanism of controlling diversity and ('common sense' populist) discourses on diversity. We also link this directly to neo-liberal out-sourcing of external and internal borders.

Academics, including Ruben Andersson, activists such as Don Flynn and our own research in London, Dover and Calais all testify to how the multi-scalar out-sourcing of border-making and border control to private businesses and ordinary citizens is a practice that links both external and internal border regimes. Andersson has referred to the boom this has created for private sector firms as an illegality industry', in which public funds are ploughed into developing further means by which to strengthen external borders.

The £830 million spent by the UK Home Office on the failing e-borders scheme meant to collect and analyse data on everyone travelling to and from the UK is just one British example. Furthermore, out-sourcing often involves partnerships with regimes whose treatment of their own citizens falls well below that which we might expect of partner states. Over the last two decades there have been clear shifts in policy, as European nations and the EU itself have attempted to foist the job of securing their borders onto neighbours. Out-sourcing territorial borders involves the transfer of funds and when faced with challenges from neighbouring states about the impact of maintaining such border regimes, those states respond by allocating more resources or funds to the existing arrangement.

The detail of each border differs but our research at the juxtaposed border controls in Calais, and the experience of humanitarian organizations such as Doctors of the World demonstrate the failure of the out-sourcing of the UK border to France. The placing and strengthening of the UK border in France, has resulted in thousands of increasingly desperate people existing in a 'camp' that had it been anywhere else in the world, as Leigh Dayton said, would have led to televised fundraising appeals.

Out-sourcing the internal border

At the same time as we have seen the burgeoning of 'outsourced' border-making on external borders, we have seen the emergence of 'everyday border-guards' as the administration of the internal borders is made the responsibility of ordinary citizens.

These processes of internalisation reflect an acceptance that territorial border securitisation is an impossibility for any modern state. As Don Flynn from Migrant Right's Network argues, this approach began in the 1990s in the UK, but has undergone a process of intensification since the 2014 Immigration Act. Under this legislation and the 2015–16 Immigration Bill, the UK government has sought to extend the 'hostile environment' which will make life in the UK for undocumented migrants and those without the right to work untenable. It criminalises the everyday life of unauthorised workers by creating offences for 'illegal working', 'driving when unlawfully present in the UK' and depriving them of the 'right to rent'.

Its impacts are wide-ranging and stretch far beyond the lives of undocumented migrants, as in spite of new resources given to Home Office Immigration Enforcement teams, the main burden for administering the new legislation falls on people across the UK. Landlords, employers, bank employees, education and health care professionals have become responsible for checking the immigration status of their tenants, employees, students and patients. The 2015–16 Immigration Bill proposes larger fines and up to 5-year prison terms for employers and landlords who do not comply with their border-guard roles. Activists from housing, health and migrant support organisations have demonstrated how these internal bordering regimes that encourage suspicion within communities and are supported by fears of prosecution are already leading to increasing everyday racism through landlords and health workers refusing to rent to, employ or treat people with complex immigration status or who they perceive as 'foreign'.

Unless we return the border to the margins of our society and lives rather than allowing it to become a more and more dominant feature of our everyday, our lives will become more precarious, more conflictual and more vulnerable to extremist ideologies of all sides. Neo-liberal ideologies demand the minimisation of the state and the privatisation of more and more agencies of what used to be the welfare state. However, in the case of the 2014 Immigration Act and 2015–2016 Bill, the out-sourcing of border-guarding is not (just) going to paid expert agencies but are imposed as part of the unpaid daily citizenship duties of people in Britain.

When (usually male) citizens of a state are required to serve in their country's militaries as part of their citizenship duties they are given professional training and are not criminalised for failing to hit the enemy unless proven to be doing so wilfully. The new immigration legislation imposes border-guard duties with no such training and with no regard to ability or motivation of those who fail in their duties.

Concluding remarks

As was pointed out to us in the parliamentary meeting, it's most probably too late now to mobilise opposition to the current Immigration Bill, although hopefully some campaigning organisations will mount some legal challenges to the more draconian aspects of the Act as it is rolled out. However, our task is much more pervasive and

long term. It is to deconstruct the 'naturalised' common sense that legitimises such legislation and practices and which are threatening to undermine not just the civil liberties of all the people living in Britain but also the convivial multi-ethnic multi-cultural society which has been one of the best aspects of life in the UK, especially in its metropolitan centres.

We hope that many among you reading this commentary will join us in our campaign. Together with the other organisations which sponsored our film we're touring the country, showing the film and discussing its implications. The MRN has organised a steering group which is coordinating all aspects of resistance to 'everyday bordering'. As many have pointed out, we first need to imagine and then create alternatives to this current 'common sense' rhetoric, to enable and support a strong challenge to it.

Research Briefings
Ceuta and Melilla as a Euro-African Borderscape

by Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo & Lorenzo Gabrielli
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The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are emblematic monuments to bordering. They have received much attention in critical political geography as prime examples of frontiers, borderlands and outposts epitomising the spatial imaginary of Fortress Europe. More recently, these two cities have gained widespread media attention as a frontline in the attempt to secure Europe's borders from unwanted migration and terrorist threat. These characterisations highlight the fact that the two cities, and Ceuta in particular, are important sites of competing visualisations of the Mediterranean neighbourhood and are thus highly illustrative of EU-Mediterranean borderscapes. The borderscapes approach allows us to interlink various interpretations of Ceuta's and Melilla's political geographies within a wider regional context. In both cities we find 1) permanent states of exception, 2) elements of an enforcement archipelago and Agambean camp, but also 3) sites of resistance to security practises and abuses and 4) spaces that make visible political and socio-economic interdependencies between Spain and Morocco.

A two-fold and deeply rooted socio-spatial process of 'permanent exceptionality' pervades in the EU-African border territories of Ceuta and Melilla. The first of these processes emerges from the distinctive status given to the territories of Ceuta and Melilla within the Spanish State's juridical-political architecture as well as within the EU-Schengen apparatus (see Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008, 2011). The deployment of exceptional border/migration control practices transform these cities into spaces outside normal juridical orders. As a result of this unique status, these EU-African cities represent 'exceptions of the State' that resonate with unresolved (post)colonial territorial disputes and give rise to acrobatic practices of cross-border dialogue between the EU and Morocco, one of its so-called privileged neighbours. The second manifestation of socio-spatial exceptionality derives from the role that Ceuta and Melilla play within global enforcement dynamics of border/migration control – often characterized by tensions between security needs and human rights protection.

In this light, Ceuta and Melilla can be also read within the context of the impact of the changing political geographies of migration and its regulation. Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas (2013) have argued that these North-African cities under Spanish sovereignty have become limbo-like landscapes or limboscapes between two different borders where migrants' northward trajectories are spatially and temporally suspended. In order to complement the notion of limboscape and in order to excavate further into the spatial dynamics of these two EU territories in Africa, Agamben's (1998) notion of the camp appears highly salient. As Martin (2015 p. 10) reminds us: 'the camp has become the "hidden matrix" of the modern political space and the technique of government to exclude, enclose and/or even eliminate those who threaten the security of the state.'

The cases of Ceuta and Melilla furthermore exemplify the rhetoric of 'emergency' that informs the management of irregular migration flows towards the European Union. The arrival of migrants in Ceuta or Melilla is often constructed by the Spanish authorities as an unpredictable phenomenon which falls into the 'crisis' category. However, the word 'crisis' refers to a break from the status quo, a crucial and decisive point, a climax. A brief chronology of irregular migration at the Spanish border in the past two decades clearly shows the structural nature of this phenomenon (Gabrielli 2016). It is hence clear that the arrival of migrants to Ceuta and Melilla is by no means exceptional. Nevertheless, treating the structural phenomenon of irregular migration as an emergency constitutes an essential element of the Spanish immigration and border policy which directs media and policy attention to specific fragments of the border, trapped in webs of perpetual emergency. As explained by Paolo Cuttitta (2012, p. 20), the emergency has to be considered as 'an essential characteristic of the current migration regime, an essential part of the border spectacle'. Similar to Cuttitta's characterisation of Lampedusa, the borders of Ceuta and Melilla also repre-

sent symbolic scenarios, or theatres where the fiction of the efficient response to the unexpected migration crisis is represented. Exceptionality also applies to the Spanish government's actions concerning its legal obligations, both international and national, regarding the respect of refugee and potential asylum seeker rights. Immediate and indiscriminate push-backs *(devoluciones en caliente)* documented in Ceuta and Melilla are a clear violation of the 1951 Refugees' Convention. This produces a situation in which refugees entering informally through the Spanish borders are thus in a zone of rights exclusion, in legal black holes, in real 'areas of pure sovereign power'.

Emergency and exceptionality become, on the one hand, permanent, as do the reassertion of state power, backed by violence and extra-legality. However, permanently exceptional management of migration by Spanish governments, implemented in close cooperation with Morocco, hides other fundamental constituents of the bordering process. For one, we can see a broader picture of EU-Mediterranean Neighbourhood as a patchwork of arrangements and relationships upon which the EU has been desperate to impose a sense of coherence. Some of these exceptional practices have been ongoing in Ceuta and Melilla for more than two decades now, in step with the securitisation of the land borders with Morocco. And since the 1990s these two territories have been investigated as icons of so-called Fortress Europe and hence as crucial (symbolic and functional) spots where an essential part of the EU project is socio-spatially fabricated.

Protest against border management practices at the Ceuta border (taken during EUBORDERSCAPES fieldwork by Mireia Garcia, 7 February 2015).

However, this focus on the excesses of border management has perhaps eclipsed the importance of other fields of political agency and socio-cultural practice which are also an integral part of Ceuta-Melilla borderscape and thus of the EU external bordering process. The EU is not alone in the attempts to shape its external border regime. The somewhat eurocentric lens through which Ceuta and Melilla border dynamics are often scrutinised tends to neglect Morocco's political agency and its crucial ability and capacity to set the agenda of border/migration control. This in turn overshadows an important paradox. The fortification of the land borders between the EU and Morocco (non-officially recognised borders by Morocco) is not strengthening the EU-Morocco geopolitical divide. Instead, Morocco's active participation in the configuration of the EU external border regime is actually bringing Morocco geopolitically closer to the EU. Border cooperation is reinforcing the so-called privileged character of its partnership relationships within the ENP framework (incarnated by the Advanced Status granted in 2008).

So far, scholarly attention has been perhaps too focused on only one side of the border spectacle. Ceuta and Melilla, are in fact gradually evolving as part of interdependent socio-economic spaces between Morocco and Spain that involve, among others, trade, work, housing markets and civil society interaction. The transcultural dimension is also shifting as increasing numbers of Sub-Saharan migrants seek permanent Moroccan residence. This, in concluding, draws attention to another dimension of the borderscape that requires attention: that of the agency of migrants and activists. In Ceuta and Melilla organisations such as Prodein, Caminando Fronteras and Gadem use social networks to trigger the viralisation and spectacularisation of protest and resistance to the EU border regime. This reminds us that despite dramatic scenes of violence the EU's external border is also constructed through counter-narratives of those waiting, observing, writing, governing and bordering beyond EU spaces and EU imaginaries. Over the last years, a joint EU-Spanish-Moroccan political strategy has paved the way to controversial practices of border management on Ceuta and Melilla. The increasingly intensive monitoring of these border management practices by activists, journalists and critical scholars has unveiled the existing juridical void surrounding migration/border control dynamics – such as those related to the irregular push-backs of sub-Saharan migrants and the refusal of entry to Syrian refugees. Interestingly, the visibilisation of this practices and the multiplication of expressions of resistance to official understandings of the EU southern border has shed valuable light on the logic of permanent exceptionality that governs the land borders of the EU in Africa. This counter-politics of visibility should be understood as an inextricable constituent of the border.

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Bordering or Borderscapes? New Migrant Agencies

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While writing this my mind went immediately back to Giaccaria and Minca's article entitled 'The Mediterranean Alternative' (2010: 346) where they offer us an interesting reflection on the Mediterranean as 'fertile ground' for the exploration of alternative spatial imaginaries to modern geopolitical thinking. In this light, the Mediterranean speaks directly to some of the key preoccupations of critical border studies that concern a need to critically revisit its now standard conceptual and methodological toolbox in order to grasp the shifting nature of bordering processes 'beyond the line'. Specifically, this intervention explores the critical potential of what I term the *borderscaping* approach to investigate contemporary Mediterranean neighbourhood imaginaries and the complexity of the border-migration nexus from the geopolitical level to the level of social practices and cultural production (Brambilla, Laine, Scott and Bocchi 2015).

Installation – World map made with migrants' clothes, Porto M – a permanent exposition of migrants' objects collected by the collective Askavusa in Lampedusa.
ⓒChiara Brambilla, Lampedusa, 2014.

The shift towards conceptualising borders as processes (e.g. of bordering) has encouraged a significant turning point in the reflection on borders. And yet, I would suggest that the bordering perspective now in wide use appears too narrow to truly capture the many implications that constantly changing historical, political, and social Mediterranean contexts imply. Given the backdrop of fluctuating and often dramatic scenarios of what has been labelled the 'refugee/migration crisis' this is not merely an academic question. The critical potential of borderscaping can be seen in the contribution that the notion gives to developing a broader understanding of the contemporary spatiality of politics in the Mediterranean, thereby elaborating alternative geopolitical imaginations, social and spatial imaginaries, cultural images and practical strategies to pursue them. This contribution is not only due to the fact that the borderscaping approach allows for the modern, state-centric geopolitical order to be called into question, which the concept of bordering does as well. Beyond this, however, borderscaping also provides a political insight into border studies that encourages a better understanding of the multidimensional epistemic, spatial, and temporal complexity of borders thereby showing borders as a resource in terms of the construction of alternative Mediterranean imaginaries. I would argue that borderscaping fosters a productive understanding of Mediterranean neighbourhood imaginaries by highlighting three aspects that the bordering perspective neglects: 1) the politics-aesthetics nexus, 2) the 'time-print' of borders and 3) borderscaping as an inherently political method.

The interaction between politics and aesthetics is at the heart of borderscaping's etymology. The borderscaping notion is not only concerned with an artistic representation, reducing the borderscape to a 'visible place' which refers to its modern aesthetic image; it is also concerned with the sense of creative work – shaping and carving, thus arising from and being part of a political project of 'making'. This double etymology allows border representations and practices to be redirected through the connections between aesthetics and politics, in which borderscapes originate (Brambilla 2015a). By bringing the interactions between the political and the aesthetical implications of the border/migration nexus in the Mediterranean to foreground, borderscaping counterpoints spatio-temporal topologies of the modern ter-

ritorial imaginary and its Euclidean geometry whereas (re)affirming the *link between a multi-dimensional territoriality of borders* (based on an interpretation of them as constructed, experienced, interpreted, and contested by human beings) *and politicalness*. As has been documented elsewhere in the case of the *LampedusaInFestival* (Brambilla 2015b), by bringing the politics-aesthetics nexus as articulated through borderscapes to foreground, it is possible to understand the all-present tension in the border between the exercise of the modern state sovereignty and its claimed exclusive authority and new possibilities for thinking about territoriality and identity in alternative ways. Accordingly, the borderscaping lens allows the Mediterranean space to gain novel political sense opening up the way for encouraging *new conditions of possibility for agency*. Indeed, the politics-aesthetics nexus raises a relevant argument that is often under-theorized in the bordering perspective: that political implications of border imaginaries are closely interweaved with aesthetic activity; constructing the world is always an aesthetic activity.

Installaton – Migrants' personal objects and holy books, Porto M – a permanent exposition of migrants' objects collected by the collective Askavusa in Lampedusa.
ⒸChiara Brambilla, Lampedusa, 2015.

Aesthetic languages assume a crucial position in the articulation and transformation of spatial imaginaries, which, in their turn, translate into beliefs, rules, policies, and practices. The aesthetic undertakes a crucial, often disquieting role in constructing and 'staging' representations of dramatic scenarios of refugee crises, migrant deaths, but also terrorism, migration pressures and religious conflict, imposing them on public opinion as common knowledge disguised as 'spectacle' (De Genova, 2013). *Deterministic borderscapes* based on conflict across the Mediterranean give expression to a stabilising politics of exclusion, given that they serve as a political tool for ordering reality based on modern territorial thinking. However, hegemonic ways of conceptualising Mediterranean neighbourhood based on a deterministic under-

standing of borders and essentialised narratives of difference are challenged by counter-hegemonic views. In fact, counter-hegemonic borderscapes have been emerging from a context in which political and aesthetic discourses and practices of 'dissensus' (Rancière, 2010) can originate and through which it is possible to think about alternatives to the static exclusivity of borderscapes of the dominant power(s).

Hence, taking borderscaping as an analytical angle highlights the plurality of social and political imaginaries that co-constitute the Mediterranean neighbourhood, providing glimpses of crossing points that highlight the role of borders as 'sites of struggle' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), where the tension between institutional and non-formal modes of agency can be understood. Despite continuous attempts at hegemonic b/ordering that prevent migrants from having an active, publicly visible, part to play in the political process, what emerges is the chance to overcome the border and migration imaginary that informs the EU's dubious policies. The borderscaping approach fosters a critical rethinking of the links between processes of in/visibility, power, lived experience, and territoriality. In this way, it helps grasp the complex interactions between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic configurations of Mediterranean borderscapes, thereby encouraging a move from a disempowering pole of visibility as control to an empowering pole of *visibility as recognition* that is as a first way to access the public sphere, the precondition for active political participation (Arendt 1958).

This helps bring attention to the need for a genealogical outlook to foster innovative Mediterranean neighbourhood imaginaries. Giving visibility to the 'time-print' of borders allows us to historicise the border-migration nexus and to avoid the ahistorical bias, which besets much of the discourse on the present political and sociocultural Mediterranean challenges. This means rethinking Europe as an ambiguous space that reflects its colonial and post-colonial experiences, also understanding 'the ambiguity that marks the EU's engagement with its various neighbourhoods' (Bialasiewicz et. al. 2009: 79). In this way, the borderscaping approach widens the bordering viewpoint by providing a multi-sited rendering of the Mediterranean neighbourhood not only in space but also encompassing the tensions between different actors, time locations, and modalities that are involved in the Mediterranean border making. This leads us to consider the relevant implications of borderscaping not only as a concept but also as a method. I would argue that we should deserve attention to the political dimension of this methodological approach. Taking up what Mezzadra and Neilson (2013: 17) have pointed out, 'the question of border as method is something more than methodological. It is above all a question of politics (...) method is as much about acting on the world as it is about knowing it'. Through the borderscaping lens it seems possible to rethink Mediterranean neighbourhood imaginaries thereby practicing what Herzfeld (2001) has defined 'militant

middle ground', that is a in-between fertile field of connections and intersections that cut across academic theory and applied practice, global designs, regional and local histories, political and territorial borders and boundaries as internal social categorisations.

Finally, it is worth considering that the drive to build alternative Mediterranean geopolitical imaginations and practical strategies to pursue them can be probably achieved only by moving beyond the fabricated rhetoric of refugee/migration crisis (Rajaram 2015). Reading the border-migration nexus in the Mediterranean through the crisis lens determines a constant production and reproduction of a contingent division between what is politically relevant and irrelevant, what is grievable and (following Judith Butler) ungrievable, echoing the colonial distinction between Europe and the others across the Mediterranean. What emerges is the chance for an *effective re-reading of the conflict-based determinacy of Mediterranean borders*, grasping their potential for highlighting the Mediterranean neighbourhood's character of place of identification (belonging) and transformation (becoming) for those who imagine, materially establish, experience, inhabit as well as cross, traverse but also challenge and resist it. Overcoming the crisis narrative, it would be possible to reconceive the Mediterranean as a field of multiple frictions where constant processes of contingent negotiations and renegotiations replace the reified idea of neatly bounded socio-political entities. This entails a space of possibilities for welcoming new political agencies and subjectivities into the constantly evolving real of the social – beyond the line – and not to continue to deny, exclude or exclude-by-including them.

These negotiations and renegotiations involve ambiguous strategies at the intersection between belonging and becoming that express a form of everyday resistance to dominant, essentialised Mediterranean spatial imaginaries and cultural images. This resistance is not necessarily enacted through organised movements but rather through a political presence in everyday Mediterranean contexts. It is a resistance that 'acts on' Mediterranean borderscapes through imagining, experiencing, and performing the Mediterranean neighbourhood. The aim is not to establish a utopian order of ultimate inclusion in the Mediterranean, denying that borders create inequalities. The aim is, rather, to shape an alternative spatiality of politics that addresses the indeterminacy and contingency of any in/exclusion regime and open up new possibilities for rethinking (state) territoriality, political space, and identity beyond the binary logic of geopolitical orders and the essentialisation of borders as lines on modern maps. In calling for practical nonviolent strategies to realise such transformations, we would interrogate the ways in which imaginaries contribute to the political and socio-cultural framing of Mediterranean geopolitical contexts as well as our 'positionality' as scholars studying the border-migration nexus in the Mediterranean and beyond. Indeed, navigating Mediterranean neighbourhood imaginaries through the borderscaping lens also reveals that the ways in which we theorise the Mediterranean neighbourhood have a very real implication for the neighbourhood(s) we experience and practise.

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What is a Border Figure?[3]

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My research task in the EUBORDERSCAPES project has been to investigate how novels and autobiographies by immigrants may confirm or change our ideas about what borders are. One of the most useful concepts in this work has been that of the *border figure*. But what is a border figure? Let me first break things down: *border + figure*. Both these words can mean different things, but what do they mean specifically when we're talking about border figures?

Borders

The *border* can be so many different things. The simplest way of thinking about the border is to think of it as a line dividing two different territories. But does the border have to divide between two nation-states? Of course not. We can also talk about provincial borders or the borders between different neighbourhoods in the city. Or borders on a much smaller scale, for example borders between the inside and outside of a house (walls, doors, thresholds, windows), between the pavement and the street (the kerb), or between the inside and the outside of the body (skin).

We can talk about symbolic borders, for example the invisible lines which may be crossed (or not crossed) between different communities and identities. In the English language we can talk about borders as frontiers, limits, boundaries etc. The border does not have to be a line or a barrier: it can also be a zone and a place of crossing. To find out how border concepts are changing, we need to be aware that borders are part of our lives in many different ways. The main aim of the EUBORDERSCAPES project is to discuss exactly different variants of the border concept and why they might be useful in different situations.

Figures

But how do we conceive of borders? My answer would be: with words, images, hands-on experiences, stories, treaties, etc. And indeed: *figures*. This is another word with a multiplicity of meanings. In English, a 'figure' can be a number, or a person. Borders can of course be enumerated and quantified, i.e. expressed in numbers (e.g. the number of people who cross the border between Turkey and Greece illegally, and the number of people who have died in the event). And there are various people associated with borders, for example migrants, refugees, border guards, smugglers, borderland dwellers etc.

Here however I am most interested in a more technical use of the word, the one used mainly by literary researchers or sometimes in daily life, when we talk about the 'figural' meaning of a word (rather than its 'literal' meaning). This is what we are referring to when we talk about 'figures of speech' or 'rhetorical figures'. For us literary researchers, a *figure* is a way of using language to say something indirectly. This is something which we all do – especially when we are talking about borders – and which authors and poets do, often in a very advanced ways to express things which are difficult understand concretely, such as borders and border-crossings.

Border figures

For borders, precisely because they can be so many things, and because they ultimately are rather abstract phenomena (even when they lead to segregation, violence and death), are difficult to describe and conceptualise directly. Take the word *borderscape*, now very popular in border studies, and for good reasons. The *borderscape* is a border figure, since it makes the claim that the border is something like, or part of something which is like, a landscape. In a literary text, the border and border-crossings can be expressed through more concrete figures, such a pane of glass, or a mirror, or a kite, or a contrast between green and yellow grass (I am taking my examples from novels and autobiographies by Carlos Fuentes, Amal Aden, Romeo Gill, and Maria Amelie).

Sometimes border figures are metaphors, but the more complex configurations of space and time we meet in stories of border-crossings can also be border figures. A story can convey the way a border creates spaces of disorientation, waiting, in-betweenness, doubleness, etc. through its plot, without actually naming these spaces directly. Border figures do not have to expressed in words, they can also be images (the term used above, 'figures of speech' is misleading) and even things, such as a border fence. A border fence both enforces and figures a border.

All such border figures imply different things in different situations, and it is our job to find out what – if we are to understand how we conceive of borders.

Further Reading

Theory
Schimanski, Johan (2006) 'Crossing and Reading: Notes towards a Theory and a Method', *Nordlit*, 19: 41–63.

Novels
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Maria, Amelie (2014) *Takk*, Oslo: Pax.

Fuentes, Carlos (1996) *La frontera de cristal: Una novela en nueve cuentos*, México, D.F.: Alfaguara (English translation: (1999) *The Crystal Frontier*, London: Bloomsbury).

Gill, Romeo (2008) *Harjeet: Roman*, Oslo: Oktober.

Gill, Romeo (2011) *Ung mann i nytt land: Roman*, Oslo: Oktober.

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[3]Adapted from a blog post on the Border Culture blog of EUBORDERSCAPES.

Project Events

EUBORDERSCAPES Seminar on Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership at the Turkish Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, 23 October 2015

by Theodore Boyle
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A central concern of the EUBORDRSCAPES project has been to document and analyse shifts in the political language of bordering that has occurred between the EU and its neighbours. The role of the EU as an international actor has been conditioned by the manner in which such borders have been expressed and actualised, and the invocation of borders has been crucial to its efforts to promote the emergence of a Neighbourhood of regional cooperation on the basis of its Eastern Partnership Initiative. Having appeared to have successfully integrated its new members for the majority of this century's first decade, more recently a growing sense of economic malaise has been exacerbated through various issues stemming from the ongoing turmoil within much of the Middle East and Maghreb and the more recent geopolitical drama within the Neighbourhood itself. The EU's awareness of the need to ameliorate the current situation is visible in the urgency with which it is trying to reset both its Neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership policies. In such a context, a greater effort on the part of both the EU itself and scholars concerned with such issues needs to be made in understanding how such bordering on the part of the EU is perceived by those with whom it engages.

Georgia, which in recent years has been the most enthusiastic of the Eastern Partners, is a particularly crucial node for our comprehension of the challenges faced by the EU, both in terms of its engagement with these states and with regards to the wider regional context. Clearly, the geopolitical situation serves as a key explanation for Georgia's notable enthusiasm for EU integration, but this backdrop of encouragement for EU integration has inevitably not remained a static background atop which ties between the EU and Georgia have developed and strengthened. It is important, especially in light of the softening of support for the EU that has recently been voiced within Georgia, to seek to account for how the EU is viewed within countries like Georgia that the EU is seeking to 'partner' and by what means the EU can both attempt to ameliorate the borders that exist between the EU and its partner states and make such borders that exist less absolute. It was to this end that members of the EUBORDERSCAPES project met in Tbilisi on October 23, 2015 in order to discuss these issues with a number of Georgian and foreign experts.

The presence of the project's Turkish partners, and the holding of the session in the Turkish Embassy in Tbilisi, guaranteed a particularly nuanced understanding of the issue, given the manner in which the borders between the EU and Turkey, which at one time appeared to be disappearing, have re-emerged with a vengeance. Indeed, both sides appear to have come to see them as something of an absolute civilisational divide, rather than a border that should and will be overcome. This is partly a result of the fact that, as Professor Ayşe Ayata of METU noted, in Turkey's case the state had stopped talking about EU aspirations. Whether it necessarily follows, as she contended, that support for the EU is only possible with the support of the state is an issue that should be seen as one with important corollaries for the current project. Undoubtedly, there has been a transformation in the attitude of the Turkish state which has affected EU support in that country. And yet it is important to remember that this transformation did not occur in a vacuum, but as a result of the EU's failure to overcome the political language of its own member states, which placed Turkey as unmistakably beyond the borders of the EU project (for all that it officially remains a candidate country). The result was that Turkey was left questioning what its aspirations towards the EU were likely to result in.

Seminar in Tbilisi with representatives of Georgian and international civil society organisations.

The Turkish Ambassador, Zeki Levent Gümrükçü, noted in his remarks which opened the conference that Georgia too seems to be experiencing a disconnect between what Georgians wants from the EU and what they feel they are going to get. It is therefore crucial that the EU is able to strategically communicate not only what the role of Georgia is within the Eastern Partnership and Neighbourhood polities, but what is the role of the EU within Georgia. The Ambassador noted that the priority must be a more strategic mode of communication, one

which emphasises that the EU does not only possess an economic dimension, but plays a crucial role in such central political issues such as democratisation. While all of the participants were in agreement with this, the central question of how such communication was to be achieved was returned to again and again.

Two things in particular were able to be drawn from the event. The first was that, particularly in the light of a 'return to geopolitics' and associated challenges, the values and interests held by the EU are by no means guaranteed to be in alignment. Indeed, the EU's interests, in a narrow, geostrategic sense, are perhaps better served when its values exist as aspirations, rather than actual political programs to be implemented. However, the second crucial thing to emerge is the importance of communication. As Ayata noted, in Turkey the popularity of the EU hit the buffers when the state stopped aspiring for entry and ceased discussing it. Arguably, Georgia is on the same path, aided by the EU's seeming inability to communicate outside a narrow elite. As everyone noted, the EU is extremely bad at highlighting what it already does, with indicators of USAID and other instruments of American interest far more prominently displayed around the country than those of the EU. At a minimum, the EU needs to make the general population aware of the work that it is already doing in supporting the development of Georgia into a stable prosperous nation. Were the EU's role in this ongoing process better publicised, it might be that the appeal of its values in breaking down the political, social and economic borders existing between the EU and its neighbours be better understood, and consequently the values and interests of a putative EU foreign and development policy come to be more in line with one another. This will only happen, though, through expanding the EU's ability to communicate with a wider constituency in its Neighbourhood than it does at present.

Policy and Impact Conference 'Borders and Everyday Bordering in Contemporary Europe', Dockland Campus, University of East London, 10–12 November 2015

by THEODORE BOYLE
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Funded through the EU's Framework Programme, EU-BORDERSCAPES has a strong policy orientation. The purpose of this conference was to disseminate the major research findings of the project to EU and other European policy-makers, activist groups, academics and other interested parties whilst at the same time providing a space for engaged discussion on the themes arising from the project. Various leading representatives of these groups spoke at the conference on a range of topics that included: The Reconfiguration of Post Soviet Borders and Conceptual Change; Borders and Critical Geographies of Neighbourhoods; Post Colonial Bordering and Euro-African Borderscapes and Borders, Intersectionality and the Everyday. There will also be a film festival that exhibits films based on ethnographic work conducted by different project partners, drama-based workshops exploring the conference themes and guided walks around London's borderscapes.

The conference, Borderscapes: Borders and Bordering in Contemporary Europe offered an opportunity for policy-makers, academics and activists to discuss the policy implications of 'citizen border guards'. It brought together experts to debate this issue alongside six key subject areas:

- immigration legislation;

- the entry of border regimes into everyday life;

- the role of the Mediterranean in European borderscapes;

- cross-border peace building;

- border crossing and its cultural effects; and

- Europeanisation versus Euroscepticism.

Among the invited speakers were: Paolo Salieri (European Commission, DG Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship), Maria Giovanna Manieri (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants), Don Flynn (Migrants' Rights Network), Mirjam Karoly (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), Rita Chadha (Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAM-FEL) and Leigh Daynes (Doctors of the World).

THINKING/ACTING/INHABITING THE BORDERLAND 'BETWEEN' ITALY AND TUNISIA. Policies, Practices, Experiences and Representations of a Mediterranean Borderscape, Garibaldi Theatre, Mazara del Vallo (Sicily), 16 April 2016

by Chiara Brambilla
University of Bergamo

The Centre for Research on Complexity (Ce.R.Co.) of the University of Bergamo (UNIBG) in collaboration with the Euro-Arab Institute of Mazara del Vallo and under the auspices of the Municipality of Mazara del Vallo organised a EUBORDERSCAPES dissemination seminar. Adopting the borderscape notion as a key conceptual and methodological angle of inquiry, the seminar aimed to present the main results of the qualitative social research on/in the Italian/Tunisian borderland conducted by the team of the University of Bergamo within the EUBORDERSCAPES project.

A moment from the Mazara session with Chiara Brambilla and other participants.

The Italian/Tunisian borderland – with a focus on the genealogy of the relationship between the urban borderscape of Mazara del Vallo (Province of Trapani, Sicily), in Italy and Mahdia, in Tunisia – is a case study for Bergamo research activities in WP 5 'Post-colonial Bordering and Euro-African Borderscapes' and WP 6 'Borders and Critical Geopolitics of Neighbourhood'.

The seminar was held in Italian in order to make the outcomes of UNIBG research activities within the EUBORDERSCAPES project accessible to different actors (local and supra-local institutions, third sector organisations, local cultural organisations and local schools, civil society, stakeholders) who are thinking, acting or inhabiting the Italian/Tunisian borderland and to gain significant insights through discussion.

The seminar offered an opportunity for people to come together and share their experiences of the borderscape they inhabit. The event also provided important insights into what it would be advisable to do in terms of border policies. The discussion during the seminar called for European and national institutions to be more attentive to the specific contextual conditions and to promote regulations in line with their specificities and their problems. Not only should European and national institutions be more attentive to the specific contextual and historical conditions of contemporary borderlands, but it would also be important to start broadening the spectrum of actors involved in border policies. In the light of this, it would be important to advance border policies based on complementary perspectives capable of grasping the dialogic nature of bordering processes and imaginaries, as well as the tension between institutional modes of political agency and social non-formal modes of agency that co-constitute contemporary borderscapes.

The documentary film 'Houdoud al bahr | The Mediterranean Frontiers: Mazara-Mahdia' (WP 5 – RT 4 'Video Documentation'), based on UNIBG conceptual reflection and ethnographic research within EUBORDERSCAPES, was shown during the seminar.