

From Post-Modern Visions to Multi-Scale Study of Bordering: Recent Trends in European Study of Borders and Border Areas

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Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a remarkable rise in academic research and political discussion on borders and border regions. In broad terms, we can distinguish at least two major traditions which have developed more or less in parallel directions and in increasing interaction with one another. There is the older American tradition of “borderlands studies” that has gained new ground and forms today an established academic institution around the scholarly organization Association of Borderlands Studies (ABS) with its regular conferences and publications, most notably the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (JBS).

In this review I will concentrate on the more novel European based research tradition which has partly gained inspiration from the American scholarly discussion and partly opened new research directions, with certain influence on the broader international research community. This tradition is perhaps best known through the series of Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) conferences and the publications linked to them. Since the first gathering in Berlin in 1994, there have been ten BRIT conferences organized in Finland, the U.S., India, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Canada and Chile. Its activities have gathered together scholars from around the world, from Europe and the Americas as well as from Asian countries. In my analysis on the recent trends in border studies I will concentrate mainly in reflecting on the publications of BRIT conferences.¹

As in the U.S., also the European conference and publication activities have led to more challenging institutional forms. Members of the BRIT network have carried out several national and international research projects including large-scale projects of the European Union Framework program for research such as Lines of Exclusion as Arenas of Co-operation (EXLINEA) and Local Dimensions of a Wider European Neighbourhood (EUDIMENSIONS). In addition, new research units and Centres have been established both in the European Union and outside, e.g. Finland, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada, India, Israel and recently even Japan. A special kind of

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¹ See Paul Gangster, Alan Sweedler, James Scott and Wolf - Dieter Eberwein, *Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America* (San Diego: San Diego State Univ. Press, 1997). Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen, and Jukka Oksa, *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Integration* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). Paul Ganster (ed.), *Cooperation, Environment and Sustainability in Border Regions* (San Diego: IRCS, 2001). Eiki Berg and Henk van Houtum (eds.), *Mapping Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2003). James Scott (ed.), *EU Enlargement, Region Building and Shifting Borders of Inclusion and Exclusion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Donald Alper and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, “Rarely Studied Borders and Borderlands,” Special Issue of *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 23: 3 (2008).

government-driven institutionalization of border studies has intensified above all in the post-9/11 United States. A more academic orientation in research can be recognized in Finland and – as I understand – in Japan where national graduate schools specializing in the study of borders and border regions have been established.

The present situation creates favorable circumstances for developing further cooperation among scholars from different countries and for “bringing together the worldwide community of border studies.” A fundamental precondition for cooperation and working together is knowledge and mutual understanding of the background and present aims of partners involved.

This paper offers some reflections on recent trends in European study of borders and border regions, and some personal observations of the possible new directions and challenges for border research. My analysis is divided in two parts. First, few rough conclusions of current research trends based on the books published in connection to the BRIT conferences will be summarized. In the second part, I venture to envisage some possible new directions and challenges for the study of borders, mainly starting from the idea that the vitality of border research lies much in its capacity to learn and build dialogue with neighbouring fields of research. In my mind, the significance of bringing together the worldwide community of border studies is not only in bridging our mutual cooperation but ultimately in strengthening our capacity to make contributions in broader academic discussions in human and social sciences.

Border Studies in Transition

The rise of border studies in Europe has since the 1990s been closely linked to and theoretically inspired by the emergence of new trends inside wider academic discussion. It is evident that the so-called linguistic turn in the social and cultural sciences has stirred and led to new ideas in European study of borders. From classical geopolitical and functionalist approaches scholars have turned towards a constructivist understanding of borders as constant definition and redefinition of identities and political space. This turn has had a profound effect on the definition of research problems in a number of disciplines. Borders and border areas are no longer being understood merely in terms of boundary lines and institutional practices. Instead, the focus has shifted to the social, political and cultural processes that construct both borders and our conception of the world. In this perspective, borders are seen as much subjects of our conceptions of “the other” and of everyday socialization, as they are products of public political processes at domestic and international levels.

Evidently, this rise of border studies has been inspired by the great political changes of the past couple of decades: European integration, the collapse of communism, the post-9/11 international scene and ultimately globalization, all of which profoundly redefine the nature of our contemporary borders. This tendency could easily be illustrated with references to such ideologically and politically loaded catchwords as “borderless world,” “end of nation-state,” “Europe of regions,” “world of flows” or “global civil society” which all emphasized the changing significance of traditional national borders – often in the broader context of globalization, or the emergence of a new post-modern age.

It is, however, necessary to underline at once that, even though this tendency can be

recognized in research discussions connected to European border studies and BRIT conferences, it is by no means the only or self-evidently dominant theme. There were other starting points where dialogue with the earlier American research tradition was among the most important. In the European context, the collapse of the “Iron Curtain,” the process of European integration and enlargement of the European Union offered concrete objects for research which contributed to the fervour, but also critical examination, of axiomatic theories of post-modern or post-national borders.

This is an evident starting point also for the book based presentations of the first 1994 Berlin BRIT conference, *Borders and Border regions in Europe and North America* (1997). Although the introduction of the book referred to the “global events that were rapidly changing our understanding of international relations,” more emphasis was clearly given to “practical, problem-solving perspective” and the need for comparative studies of border regions and cross-border interaction. The authors of the introduction open with a short discussion on borders in a “globalizing society” but their main focus is placed on regional development and practical problems of trans-boundary cooperation. In sum, the dominant line in the first book is still an institutional, functionalistic approach with certain spice from constructivist and pragmatic discussions of new regionalism “beyond the modernist script.”

The second BRIT conference was organized in Joensuu, Finland in 1997. The presentations were summarized in the volume *Curtains of Iron and Gold. Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction* published in 1999. The book demonstrates a clearly more conscious strive to promote theoretical discussion on borders with articles “setting the scene” of recent discussions. Although inspired by constructivist and post-modern discussion (such as Sergei Medvedev and Pirjo Jukarainen) the general tone was more oriented to carefully scrutinizing recent scholarly development and discussing its conceptual and theoretical underpinnings (such as Josef Langer, and Anssi Paasi). Even if discussions on constructivist approaches had clearly inspired the authors of the volume, the main trend is only in limited degree building on the newly discovered theories of post-modern or post-national identities and “mental borders” but rather on the notion of the persistence of the old national and supra-national divides – and the question posed in the introduction and in many of the articles is the relationship of bordering processes on different territorial scales: regional, national, supra-national (European or global).

This multi-scale setting can be recognized in most of the later volumes of BRIT conferences as well. The publications of conferences organised in North America has in broad terms approached the question on a more practical level of examining border regions, regional development and problems of cross-border interaction. The third book *Cooperation, Environment and Sustainability in Border Regions* (2001) summarized the conference organised in San Diego in 1999. As the title hints emphasis of the volume lies on practical problems of development and interaction but is enriched with a clear strive to a comparative approach. Some of the articles discuss the construction of borders in terms of identity and politics but in these cases, too, the aim seems to be rather a comparative understanding of the specific contexts of supra-national, national and regional identity politics than general conclusions concerning post-modern identities. This practical but theoretically informed comparative perspective seems to be characteristic also to the latest BRIT publication, the special

issue of the *Journal of Borderland Studies*, Fall 2008, which is based on the conference organized in Victoria, Canada and, Bellingham, U.S., in January 2008.

In comparison to the North American ones, it is evident that the BRIT conferences organized in Europe, in Estonia 2001 and in Hungary 2004, have resulted in somewhat more theoretically oriented publications. *Mapping Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (2003) introduces the concepts of bordering and bounding that have been important in later research projects studying the changes on the external borders of the European Union. The introduction focuses on the processes of “de-bordering” and “re-bordering” that are seen as dynamic practices and discourses, as the editors Henk van Houtum and Eiki Berg put it. In this sense, the authors represent a distinctive constructivist approach but by emphasizing the interconnectedness of these processes they disentangle the discussion of bordering from the idea of a grand shift between modern and post-modern periods. The book ends with an article by David Newman with the task to construct a “theory of boundaries and bounding.” In his conclusion, Newman, however, comes to more practical demands of 1) recognizing the interplay of territorial scales in bordering processes, 2) identifying social and other non-spatial processes in organization and partition of territory, and 3) recognizing the multi-disciplinary nature of border studies.

The volume *EU Enlargement, Region Building and Shifting Borders of Inclusion and Exclusion* (2006) of the Hungarian BRIT conference can to a certain degree be seen as a materialization of this programme applied in the study of European integration and the enlargement of the European Union. At the same time, it has been seen to open new directions for the future. As James Sidaway stated: “It is never possible to visit the same border twice; for practices at and the wider meanings of borders are continually changing. Today deepening European integration and Europe’s new and prospective “enlargement” set fresh agendas. This collection charts these and will long be an essential reference point.”

Potential Directions and Challenges of Neighboring Fields

(1) Conceptualizing integration and supra-national change

As said, a strong trend in the European research discussion of the 1990s was the experience of profound change in the nature of borders with nation-states losing their significance and the emergence of new kind of post-national borders. Sometimes this discussion was closely linked with post-modern visions of a brave new borderless world. Scholars engaged in the study of this change of borders often promoted a self-understanding of border research as a separate discipline and strived for elaborating a grand theory of borders. In recent reviews of the development of border studies this strive has been questioned and the challenge has been rather seen as elaborating border research theoretically and conceptually in dialogue with neighbouring fields of study.²

Taking this challenge seriously underlines the need to develop border studies particularly in

² Vladimir Kolosov, “Border Studies: Changing Perspectives and Theoretical Approaches,” *Geopolitics* 10 (2005).

relation with disciplines specialised in the study of bordering in different territorial scales: 1) the supra-national processes of globalization and integration; 2) nation-building and nationalism; and 3) regionalization and (cross-border) region-building. In the following, I will make a brief overview of main lines of discussion in these fields and try to map directions that could promote deeper dialogue for border research.

Without doubt, the process of EU integration and enlargement has deeply affected how borders and boundaries have been perceived, both in the social sciences and in the more everyday realms of public life. People who grew up in strong welfare states know that the state gained maximum control over borders between 1950 and 1980, when its role in political, economic and social spheres was at its zenith. But, as Liam O'Dowd argues, this appears to have been a very special historical event and by no means the rule.³ State borders, at least in Europe, are now consolidating into a new relative permanence, but their traditional barrier function appears to be diminishing remarkably, thanks in great measure to European integration and enlargement. This has opened up considerable room for differentiated interpretations and research perspectives on borders.

Assessing the progress of border studies, especially since 1989, it became clear that this research field can contribute important insights into how historical understandings of territory, identity and citizenship relate to perceptions of Europe. This is an important question in the EU context, where the development of a "post-national" sense of political community is seen to be an overlying goal. It is also important to note that the study of borders has been transformed from a province of political geographers concerned with the bounding of political space to a highly differentiated research field that investigates borders as social constructions.⁴ Evidently, the new directions in border studies could bring an important contribution to the discussion of the nature of the process of European integration.

Still today, public discussion on European integration is often dominated by federalist Euro-histories which describe the process of integration as the advancement of peace and democracy and the fulfilment of the federalist ideas of Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann, who we are gradually learning to know as the "Founding Fathers" of the European Union.⁵ Aside from idealistic federalism a second popular pattern of conceptualizing the integration process can be characterized as economic functionalism or even economic determinism. Starting from the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the institutional development of European integration easily encourages us to think of the process in economic terms. There are the functionalists who see the EU as the logical response to the internationalisation of the economy and the formation of the "European common market." In addition, there are the globalization critics who see the EU as the grand agent of globalizing economy and the highest stage in the development of the faceless capitalist machine.

Alan Milward has shaken these common convictions by claiming that the origins of the

³ Liam O'Dowd, "The Changing Significance of European Borders," *Regional and Federal Studies* 12:4 (2002) pp. 13-36.

⁴ James Scott, "The EU and 'Wider Europe': Toward an Alternative Geopolitics of Regional Cooperation?" *Geopolitics* 10:3 (Autumn, 2005) pp. 429-454.

⁵ John Pinder, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

European Union had little or nothing to do with either the functional imperatives of economic interdependence or the visions of the handful of federalist worthies. According to him, post-war integration of Western Europe was by no means a glide-path towards supra-national sovereignty, but on the contrary, it was a means of reinvigorating national power and, in fact, part of the programme of “rescuing the nation-state.” Milward states that it was in the framework of the nation-state that welfare policies were developed and the legitimacy of power re-established after the disaster of the Second World War. In the first place even the supra-national agreements and institutions were means of promoting the post-war reconstruction of the nation-state. According to Milward, the European Economic Community was essentially born from the autonomous calculations of national states that the prosperity on which their domestic legitimacy rested would be enhanced by a customs union.⁶

The federalist vision tends to promote a top-down approach to the nature of the change on European borders. It emphasizes institutional Europeanization which bypasses the role of domestic political actors. In its view on bordering processes the functionalist views often represent flat economic determinism, which do not leave much room for politics in general and popular politics in particular. Milward’s interpretation stresses the political and the domestic side of the integration process. By so doing, it provides a link to the discussion on the formation and future of national borders while offering at the same time a perspective for the study of the relationship of nationalism and integration not as phenomena of two epochs that follow one another, but as simultaneous processes linked to different territorial scales.

In contemporary scholarly literature on European integration, borders are perhaps most often discussed in terms of identities and the construction of mental borders. One argument is that the weakness of European Union lies most of all in the fact that the Union has not been successful in generating a common European identity. It lacks the symbols, solidarity and devotion which would strengthen Europe as a community of values and encourage people to identify themselves as Europeans. Ethnic origin and nationalism are considered to be a stronger basis for identification - and the main obstacle to deepening integration and future enlargement.⁷

Lately, the view of the opposition between national and European identity has been contested in at least two ways. According to the much discussed scenario of Joseph Weiler deepening integration and future enlargement of the European Union require the construction of a new kind of supra-nationalism. Supra-nationalist thinking subscribes to the idea that nations and nation-states will remain the principal bases of identification and identity construction.⁸ This means a rejection of the idea that European citizenship could be constructed by attempting to create a uniform European identity. According to Weiler, even in the future European citizenship will be based on the diversity of

⁶ Alan S. Milward, “The Social Bases of Monetary Union,” in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.), *The Question of Europe* (London: Verso, 1997). Perry Anderson, “Under the Sign of the Interim,” in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.), *The Question of Europe* (London: Verso, 1997).

⁷ William Wallace, “The Nation-State: Rescue or Retreat?” in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.), *The Question of Europe* (London: Verso, 1997) pp. 45-46.

⁸ Joseph Weiler, *The Constitution of Europe: “Do the New Clothes have an Emperor” and other Essays on European Integration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

national identities. Instead of an alternative European identification, its main essence is to be founded on a commitment to “common European values.” Instead of symbols like flags, anthems and monuments, European citizenship will be built on common values such as human rights, the social ethos that generated the welfare state, tolerance and respect for minorities.⁹

Evidently, supra-nationalism seems to provide a neat solution to the problem of overcoming the contradictions between deepening European integration and the persistent legacies of national identification. It has, however, been noted that the concept of European values is more problematic than assumed in supra-nationalist thinking. European values hardly form a fixed set of ethical norms that would apply to all times and places. On the contrary, the heritage of the European spirit should rather be understood by means of conceptual history as a tradition of constant redefinition, criticism, self-criticism and discussion concerning the adoption, modification and revision of common values to the circumstances at hand.¹⁰ Or as Bo Stråth puts it: “In short, Europe as a set of values, or as a region of shared history, has no clear demarcation. There are many competing claims to constitute its historical core while the values inscribed in the concept are contested and contradictory.”¹¹

Apparently, the idea of a European community of values does not just integrate people into a common European home; it also constructs new mental borders between us, the Europeans, and the others. This mode of thinking encourages theories in which the enlargement of the EU to Eastern Europe is conceptualised as a return to Europe or the west.¹² Obviously, in this discourse belonging and identification are largely based on the exclusion of the other. Belonging to a certain civilization is understood as a given that can scarcely be changed, and consequently the boundaries of Europe are to be accepted as a pre-ordained result of a centuries-old cultural clash between fixed civilisations, Western and Eurasian.¹³

Considering the future of the European Union in terms of identity and values as a struggle between national, European and Eurasian identification unavoidably leads to a more or less pessimistic prognoses concerning the deepening of European integration. Similarly, the idea of Europe as a supra-nationalist community of values seems to lead to pessimistic conclusions about the preconditions for enlargement to the East. The idea of a value community easily becomes a vision of a sharp-edged Europe which looks towards its neighbours through the prism of security risks. The question can, however, be set in another way if ethnicity and nationalism are not taken simply as the remnants of pre-modern evils which stand in the way of progress in the new Europe.¹⁴

⁹ Joseph Weiler, “Demos, Telos, Ethos, and the Maastricht Decision” in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.), *The Question of Europe* (London: Verso, 1997) pp. 279-290.

¹⁰ Juha Sihvola, *Toivon vuosituhat: eurooppalainen ihmiskuva ja suomalaisen yhteiskunnan tulevaisuus* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 1998).

¹¹ Bo Stråth, “EU Efforts at Creating an European Identity: 1973 and Beyond in Historical Light,” Conference paper for the European Forum, Europeanization and Multiple Identities, IDNET Conference (EUR/68. 1999-2000) p. 13.

¹² Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm (eds.), *Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 1997).

¹³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72:2 (1993) pp. 22-28.

¹⁴ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997). Chris Calhoun, *Nations Matter:*

(2) Nation-building, nationalism and European de- and re-bordering

The rise of nationalism in the post-Cold War Eastern Europe has been a constant source of disappointment for the missionaries of European values. Nationalistic movements have been seen to represent archaic and pre-modern “Eastern” traditions which are sharply contrasted with the ideal picture of modern Western society. This model of ideal modernization and its enemies can, however, easily be questioned by means of the notion of the common roots of national movements, modern civil society and mass politics propagated by scholars of the French Revolution.¹⁵ In recent years the analysis of the interconnections of nationalism and modern political culture has become a prominent new orientation in the study of European state-making and nation-building.

As early as the 1960s and 1970s the traditional view of nationalism and nation-states as natural products of history was seriously challenged by the idea that nation-states are not pre-ordained organic entities, but, on the contrary, that states were made and nations built during a specific historical period beginning in the 17th century.¹⁶ Illuminating studies convincingly depict the conscious role of national-minded elites in creating nations in different ethnic and geographical settings.¹⁷

In the canon of border studies notions of nations and nationalism as "imagined communities" and “invented traditions” have become slogans and symbols of the new cultural approach which has championed the ideas of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm to the limit.¹⁸ In sharp contrast to their historical analyses of the social and political background of nationalism, adherents of postmodernism tend to interpret national identities as purely cultural or symbolic products which are either institutionalized from above or freely defined by individuals. In connection with the discussion of European integration this has meant that the constitution of nationality, identity or mental borders has been brutally separated, on the one hand, from their “ethnic origins” and, on the other, from the “social construction” of nationalism.¹⁹

Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁵ Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1984). Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964). Eric Hobsbawm, “Some Reflections on Nationalism,” in Thomas J. Nossiter, Albert H. Hanson and Stein Rockan (eds.), *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972). Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990). Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁸ Anssi Paasi, “The Political Geography of Boundaries at the End of the Millennium: Challenges of the De-territorializing World,” in Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen, and Jukka Oksa (eds.), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) pp.9-22.

¹⁹ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Anssi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1996).

Contrary to this tendency, the British scholar John Breuilly has argued in favour of the view that nationalism should primarily be considered as politics and political modernization. To Breuilly nationalism does not only mean “civic religion” in the sense of legitimating the boundaries and power structures of a certain state. National movements also functioned as opposition forces striving to establish an alternative political community or challenge the dynastic power structures in an existing one.²⁰

In regard to Central and Eastern Europe, the German scholar Otto Dann has maintained that the national movements in the old empires and their successor states cannot simply be understood as an authoritarian counter-tendency to Western “civic nationalism.”²¹ Rather than borrowing the framework of the western model of civil society, the nature of the national movements in the latecomer national states should be analysed as part of a complicated political modernization process. As the basic driving force of 19th century mass mobilization, the national movements entrenched themselves in the political arena formed between the state and civil society and played a crucial role in shaping the boundaries of the political arena.²²

In regard to EU enlargement to the east, we may conclude that if nationalism is understood in terms of political modernization, the major obstacle to deepening European integration is not so much the persistent legacies of national identification and stubborn mental borders. Perhaps more important is the impartial development of EU-level political institutions preventing the formation of a functioning political space which would include rival hegemonic blocs that inspire identification with the European political community. The Finnish experience supports the notion that in regard to European integration the heritage of nationalism does not necessarily imply merely maintaining pre-ordained ethnic and cultural boundaries but, on the contrary, it can also represent a readiness to act politically in an alternative framework and to mobilize in new ways in order to challenge the prevailing power structure.²³

(3) Europeanization and bounding in the regional scale

Since the turn of the new millennium, profound conceptual changes have taken place in the language of EU documents of cross-border cooperation (CBC). The new policy frames picturing “Wider Europe” and European “Neighbourhood” shifted the focus of CBC from the perspective of internal cohesion, regional development and integration of border regions (typical to first Innovation and Environment Regions of Sharing Solutions (INTERREG) programmes) towards external relations and political projects of preparing and accomplishing the enlargement of the European

²⁰ John Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism,” in Goal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso 1996). John Breuilly, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in Johannes U. Müller and Bo Stråth (eds.), *Nationalism and Modernity* (Florence: European University Institute, EUI Working Paper HEC No. 99/1, 1999) pp. 39-67.

²¹ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1945).

²² Otto Dann, “Modernity and the Project of Modern Nation,” in Johannes U. Müller and Bo Stråth (eds.), *Nationalism and Modernity* (Florence: European University Institute, EUI Working Paper HEC No. 99/1, 1999). Otto Dann, “Nationalismus und sozialer Wandel in Deutschland 1806-1850,” in Otto Dann (ed.), *Nationalismus und sozialer Wandel* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1978) pp. 23-39.

²³ *Op.cit.*, Liikanen, as per note 18.

Union and fostering interaction between the EU and its neighbours. Instead of, or alongside with, the language and approaches typical to regional development and regional studies the rhetoric of the new policy documents tended to make use of concepts and approaches of political science, analyses of recent changes in global economy and politics, the end of the Cold War, European integration and ultimately globalization. To some degree this turn has been linked to the recent trends in the study of borders and international relations that have questioned the traditional geopolitical notions of borders as clear-cut territorial lines and arenas of confrontation between national states.²⁴

As part of this conceptual sea-change, the question of the role of regional actors and cross-border region-building became key themes of discussions concerning the EU borders and border regions.²⁵ The new programme documents of cross-border cooperation outlined border-spanning activities that were targeted to lay the ground for a new type of cross-border regionalisation - even on the external borders of the European Union. The role of regional actors and civil society was strongly emphasised. In the European Neighbourhood policy document (2004), in particular, there are clear traces of a new kind of political language that tends to overcome traditional national-state perspective to borders and to promote a gradual Europeanisation of the institutional and discursive practices connected to borders.²⁶ In the academic discussion, this tendency has at times been linked to broader visions of a historical turn towards a new age of post-national borders.²⁷

This conceptual shift was soon reflected in national and regional level discussions about borders and policies of cross-border cooperation. In the case of Finland, this turn happened at the same time with a broader change of political perspectives, and the practices and rhetoric of cross-border cooperation over the Finnish eastern border which experienced exceptionally deep changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In an important sense, we may talk about the Europeanisation of cross-border cooperation especially during the period after Finland had joined the European Union in 1995. Cross-border cooperation programmes and projects that used to be coordinated as part of bilateral foreign politics of the nation-state were streamlined according to the principles defined on different levels of EU administration.

In broad terms, the European Union policy documents on cross-border cooperation tend to link rather directly cross-border region-building with the spreading of supra-national European identity. Evidently, this tendency dates back to the history of INTERREG community initiative as an Interregional Cooperation Programme. Targeted to promote integration and cohesion on the internal boundaries of the EU, the first INTERREG programmes adopted concepts of regionalisation that had their origins in visions of market driven regional development that smoothly connected areas across old national barriers (e.g., the “Blue Banana”). In the second phase preceding Eastern enlargement, this thinking was combined to pre-enlargement policies aimed at lowering the institutional and

²⁴ *Op.cit.*, Houtum, as per note 1.

²⁵ *Op.cit.*, Kolossov, as per note 2.

²⁶ *Op.cit.*, Scott, as per note 4.

²⁷ Mabel Berezin and Martin Schain (eds.), *Europe without Borders: Remapping Territory, Citizenship and Identity in a Transnational Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World* (New York: Harper Business, 1990).

ideological barriers stemming from the communist past of candidate countries. As a result, the rhetoric of Europeanization, i.e. common European values and building a common Europe, was further emphasised in the programme.

In the formulations of the New Neighbourhood policy framework, these elements, which to a high degree rely on ideas of economically propelled smooth cross-border regionalisation and visions of cross-border region-building promoting Europeanization and European identity, are still very much present. They are, however, now coupled with totally different kinds of tasks pertaining to the EU's external relations and in the last instance related to common security and immigration policies. It is not hard to see that especially in cooperation with Russia, finding a balance between these elements will be one of the major challenges of elaborating EU policies of cross-border cooperation.

Expectations of market driven regionalisation and the coupling of cross-border regionalisation with Europeanization is, in general, in line with the broader political goals of the EU. However, one can question if these expectations in fact serve as a sound starting point for understanding the multi-layered territorial conceptualisations of the regional actors.

Results of recent joint European research projects EXLINEA and EUDIMENSIONS tend to imply that the perceptions of local actors involved in cross-border cooperation do not bear witness to the birth or revival of a strong regional cross-border identity. On the contrary, participation in cross-border cooperation seems to be motivated on both sides primarily by reasoning connected to intra-state centre-periphery relations, nation-state bound ideas of sovereignty and citizenship and even to a variety of clashing conceptualisations of broader cultural divides. These are simultaneously present in the regional identification of the actors, and more intensive cross-border cooperation can hardly be seen as proof of new European cross-border regionalism. Rather, the new situation, in which traditional national perceptions and state-bound cross-border relations have been challenged by new supra-national and regional perspectives, should be taken as a starting point for a dialogue between the various conceptualisations of territoriality that stem from different histories, regional, national and European. In this situation there is an obvious need to recognise the interconnections, conflicts and ruptures between the different understandings of the territorial scales involved. Instead of envisioning above-given Europeanness, there is the need to study the political language of cross-border region-building in a comparative perspective and to map and understand the many European ways of combining regional, national and supra-national perspectives in the discussion on European Union policies of cross-border cooperation.

Conclusions: From Post-Modern Visions to Multiplex Territorial Scales of Bordering

In recent scholarly literature, European integration, nationalism and regionalism, the notion of a new emerging "post-national" concept of European identity and citizenship has been severely questioned. It has been pointed out that in a broader European perspective it is both theoretically and empirically problematic to conceptualize European integration as a shift from nationally motivated

identification and bordering towards a new supra-national understanding of Europe and its borders.²⁸ In order to approach this question in more concrete terms there is an obvious need to study in specific historical contexts the extent to which borders are being defined in national terms as demarcations based on ethnicity, language and culture, and to what extent they are understood in broader supra-national/transnational terms. It would, however, be equally one-dimensional to suggest that the alternative to cosmopolitanism is the re-enforcement of national perspectives. As a starting point it is vital that the discussion of today's Europeaness takes into consideration the simultaneity of different visions and understandings of what Europe signifies.²⁹ The challenge, rather, is to recognize the many ways in which European, national and regional elements co-exist in the construction of borders within and between different political cultures and how the dialogue between these images continues to shape theoretical and conceptual approaches within border research.

²⁸ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). Chris Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

²⁹ Mikael Malmberg and Bo Stråth, *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention within and among Nations* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002).