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Open Borders: "Border Studies: Past and Present Challenges in the Development of the Field"

Moderator:

- Tony Payan (University of Texas at El Paso, U.S.)

Panelists:

- Liam O'Dowd (Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, United of Kingdom)
- Michel Foucher (Institute for Higher National Defense Studies, France)
- James W. Scott (University of Eastern Finland, Finland)
- Vladimir Kolosov (Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia)
- Kathleen Staudt (University of Texas at El Paso, U.S.)
- Yuzo Yabuno (Kyushu University, Japan)

This moderated round table, with some of the most prominent border scholars from around the world, evaluated one hundred years of border studies with particular emphasis on developments over the last three decades; the state of border studies today; and the steps necessary to take this multidisciplinary field to the next stage. The purpose of the panel is to draw out some of the most important empirical and theoretical lessons from our past and to evaluate the relevancy of the border studies community for understanding a world where borders are being constructed even as globalization proceeds apace. This roundtable explores some of the difficulties that border scholars confront in carrying out empirical research, building theory, and developing relevance in public policy, as well as strategies to move the field forward in relation to the complicated reality of both material and immaterial borders.

Tony Payan:

The purpose of this opening session is to explore the state of border studies today. We are a discipline, constantly evolving and still defining itself. We come from many different disciplines, including: demographers, geographers, political scientists, sociologists, economists, linguists, and so forth. The cradle of border studies is in North America, but now after 20 to 30 years, we have achieved a global presence and an increasing number of young faces, which is very encouraging for border studies.

I am a professor of political sciences at the University of Texas at El Paso. I also work with the students on border issues in a PhD program across the border, so I come and go across the U.S. and Mexico border almost every day. I'm also currently a visiting scholar at the Baker Institute at Reading University working on immigration issues – one of the major border issues between Mexico and the United States but also between Central America and the United States.

This discussion is designed to be a conversation about the state of border studies today with my colleagues. We all come from different disciplines and different parts of the world, and we are trying to explore exactly what it is that we are as a discipline and where we are going from here. So, let me begin here with Dr. Yabuno.

Yuzo Yabuno:

Thank you very much. I am a professor at Kyushu University, the only local here. I am a political scientist and study local-to-local relations. I believe that the global system, or global network consists of many local networks, which add up to the global system. Thus local is very important, and the local-to-local relation is sometimes beyond the border.

Between the borders, two different countries' locales have commerce, communications and various activities. So when we see a border, a border is a rather military or very dangerous idea to keep some security or national identity or some identity. But sometimes a border should be open. The border is also necessary to keep some security. But whether a border is necessary or unnecessary, this is my main question. Anyway, my research is the local-to-local relations in the world. I conduct research in around 50 countries. I would like to go further in knowing how the border is working for local people.

Kathleen Staudt:

I am a political scientist at the University of Texas at El Paso. I was not born at the border, but I am an adopted daughter of the border. And I have lived, taught, and then researched there for 35 years. I specialize in cross-border activism, informal economies at the U.S.-Mexico border, gender, and public schools on both sides of the border.

I teach courses on democracy, public policy, and borders at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level. I also participate as an observer in a variety of civil society organizations at the border. My part of the border is a huge urban metropolitan area of more than 2 million people through which a borderline runs through. We once were able to work in El Paso and then cross the border to eat lunch in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico. But after 9/11, alas, this has no longer become possible.

Vladimir Kolosov:

I am the head of the Centre of Geopolitical Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. We've studied for more than 20 years on identities, borders, territorial conflicts in the former Soviet Union, post-Soviet space, particularly the boundary between Russia and Ukraine, which is one of the longest and one of the most important boundaries in the post-Soviet space. We also participated in a number of European projects coordinated by James Scott. We studied the boundary between Russia and Estonia, Russia and Finland, both boundaries for the regions between post-Soviet countries and the European Union. And also, we studied the boundary between Russia and China. We paid particular attention to unrecognized and partially recognized states like Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. And the emergence of these quasi-states led us to the borders between them and between the legitimate states recognized by the international community.

James W. Scott:

I am presently working at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu campus, at the Karelian Institute since 2008. I somehow got involved in border studies gradually and as a geographer. My main area of study focus used to be, maybe not *used* to be, but was primarily urban development and urban issues. However, I drifted into the political geography corner and I started looking at borders, more or less from an empirical standpoint. When I first looked at borders, I was fascinated by the phenomena; I was fascinated by places like the U.S.-Mexican border, the Tijuana and San Diego metropolitan area and the border fence. The whole experience of crossing the border into a completely different place but geographically speaking very close – not really far at all – was a main motivation to try to understand borders. And the first thing I did in terms of border studies was to look at what was going on in the Regio Basiliensis and the metropolitan region of Basel, which is a kind of tri-national (French, German, Swiss) functional region, a region that has been involved in cross-border cooperation for several decades. Thanks to people such as Hans Briner, who was a policy advocate of cross-border cooperation and head of the Regio Basiliensis, I gradually worked my way into border studies. Concretely, I started to work in Germany on the Polish-German border.

And in those days, I was very much involved in a kind of "objective," empiricist analysis rather than critical research of border regions, accepting borders as they were – as real existing things! Thus I was trying to discover what borders are all about in a normative way, developing cross-border regional development strategies at the behest of my employer and the German government which was very much promoting cross-border cooperation as a political strategy. So I was one of the guilty parties in these normative exercises that basically created a discursive platform for political elites through providing data on cross-border cooperation. Since then I have moved away from a strictly empirical view to a much more theoretically based and rather critical way of looking at borders. That is where I am right now. And I hope to say a little bit more about that later.

Michel Foucher:

I am presently the Director of the Institute for Higher National Defense Studies in Paris. It's a Prime Ministerial office dedicated to training on defense, security and foreign policy, and also research. As a researcher, I am a political geographer. I started working on border issues more or less 30 years ago, especially in critical areas at that time, and still critical today, the Green Line between Israel and something to the east, we don't know the name exactly, whether it is to be Palestine.

Case studies, such as the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Africa and other territorial strategic issues not only political ones. I've worked on more than three books on these issues. My view is really to study especially in Europe, this new fragmentation of Europe, which we started 20 years ago and to look at what is going on in Africa today, you know whether it is a successful cessation, especially in the south of Sudan with western support.

I was dealing also with border issues as a diplomat. I spent five years as a special adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also a policy planning staff after being the French Ambassador to Latvia. And when I was in Latvia, I was also dealing with border issues. So, I have been working as a practitioner and as a diplomat in the Vatican, the Caucasus and some other exotic places. Presently, I am an advisor to the Division of Internal Security of the Commission of the African Union. The Commission of African Union started five years ago with huge problems on border issues in this continent where the situation is becoming very serious.

Liam O'Dowd:

I suppose my initial interest in borders began in the early nineties when we were struggling to understand the conflict in Northern Ireland. And I began to focus on what was then the most contested border in Western Europe, the border between the United of Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. And, of course, we quickly realized that we needed to understand this border in a wider context; it was created in the aftermath of the First World War by some of the same people who laid down the borders in the Middle East and in Eastern Europe that became so problematic again in the late twentieth century. And then as we moved into the 1970s, the border in Ireland became an internal border of the European Union. And I became interested in the whole business of cross-border cooperation in Europe and the development of cross-border regions.

Thereafter and more recently, I have begun to interrogate the historical dimension of border studies and to question the way in which history has been used in what is a space-centred discipline. I am arguing that we must bring history back in new ways into the study of borderlands. And here I think, this involves bringing back the impact, the continuing role of imperialism, nationalism, and cities while focusing on frontiers as distinct from borderlines. And, in fact, my most recent research is in conjunction with colleagues in Cambridge and Exeter. We have been looking at the intersection of cities, states, borders and violent conflicts in cities like Belfast, Jerusalem, Nicosia, Beirut, Kirkuk and others.

Tony Payan:

The very first question that I want for us to explore is the historical development of border studies. When I read *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State*, the book begins with stories from over 100 years ago concerning the development of border studies. Border Studies is not new. It's actually been around since the late 1800s when the first few scholars began to look at border studies. And so the question that I pose to the panel here today is what are the developmental trajectories and the key historical events over the last 100 years that have given shape to border studies over the century? What are the issues, the individuals, the particular historical events that have shaped the discipline itself, and how have we responded to those events? Both temporal, historical moments but also spatial and the shifting territorialization of different phenomena. What is being gained and what is being lost by these changes? What are the particular events, spaces and phenomena that we have responded to over the last 100 years?

Michel Foucher:

If you look only at Europe, in the last century, then I don't see many academic border studies and books on border studies. There are a lot of activities about borders. If I speak of the situation in France, you have a very interesting contradiction. French political geography, and French geopolitics get no official status in the academic sphere. Yet at the same time, some geographers were very involved in border issues. Why? First, after the First World War, with the re-drawing of the border of Europe, the leaders of the French academy and geographers were completely involved in that.

Others, such as Czechoslovakian geographers and Serbian geographers, were also very active. Everybody was coming to Paris to try to convince the international community that this border was their border. It was the right one because you had three villages with an ethnic minority to be protected. So, border studies developed, and at the same time, geographers were very active in practical fields. We had a situation of researchers advising the government during negotiations after the First World War through to the Second.

Kathleen Staudt:

My own pathway in border studies was in graduate school when I minored in African Studies and spent one year in Kenya doing my dissertation research. We studied colonialism and imperialism. We studied the drawing of boundaries, not by Africans or for Africans, but rather the drawing of boundaries in Europe about African countries, not around the ethnic groups but often right through ethnic groups as a part of the deliberate strategy to "divide and rule" and to maximize European national foreign policy interests.

I have been studying borders, as I think many of us have, but under different names. We studied colonialism. We studied nationalism. We studied regional trade. And in the last 20 to 30 years, thanks to leadership such as what has happened for this conference, and also leadership at the U.S.-Mexico border when the Association of Borderlands Studies, ABS, was created, we have scholars from a variety of disciplines who have allowed us to call this border studies and brought on an interdisciplinary field in order to understand these historical forces.

Yuzo Yabuno:

Most of the participants are from Europe or the continental countries but look at Japan; Japan is surrounded by sea. When we Japanese people say border, border means sea lines. And if you look at the South Asian countries – Indonesia, Philippines, or other countries – almost all borders are surrounded by sea. Today, local people in Indonesia, or local people in Malaysia do not identify the border because, as you know, the language of Malaysia and the language of Indonesia are the same Austronesian languages. They share the same culture, same society structures, same daily life, and even commercials as well. Only the border is decided by the government or international societies. Local people do not identify with it, I am Indonesian, I am Malaysian.

Local people are local. They speak the local language.

The idea is quite different from European countries. You experienced two wars, continental wars, the First World War and the Second World War in order to identify the border, which is for the position of people. But Asian countries were colonized, we didn't make our border by ourselves. Foreign countries made the borders in Asia. So the border idea is quite different, I think, between the European countries and many South Asian countries.

The second comment is location. I really hope to ask all of you whether the border is necessary or unnecessary. In Asia, sometimes the border is necessary; sometimes it's unnecessary. So in what situation, is the border necessary? In what situation, is the border unnecessary? This is my deep question.

James W. Scott:

I came prepared still there are a number of hard questions. Let me start from the situation as I see it today. Border studies is a multi- and inter-disciplinary field of research that is not owned by any specific discipline, and it represents the overall situation of the social sciences, humanities today. It is multi-faceted and much different than the way we thought and talked about borders let's say even 25 years ago. So it represents paradigm shifts, paradigm changes in the academic realm, but also in political language. Yes, I will go back to the past and thus make a statement. I am a geographer. I remember that in the 1980s and early 1990s geographers were experimenting with new perspectives in regional and border studies. Believe it or not, we thought that we had to bring space back into the study of the society and social things. But actually, space, geography and history have always been co-constitutional – they have always belonged together.

Nevertheless, if you think about how borders were studied even a few decades ago, they were still very much the product of the thinking of the nineteenth century where borders were seen to be historically necessary and inevitable and thus elements of historical, civilization development. The founders of political geography, such as Friedrich Ratzel, saw borders as progress – and the evolution of the borderland to the borderline as a part of technological civilizational inevitability – and that was basically it. There was the example of the German Empire, which could be understood as a product of a combination of historical processes, which culminated in the ability to create a borderline, which was seen as a feat of high civilization.

If you then think of the counter-examples that were made of Africa, and African borderlands, where one understood borders as border zones, buffer zones, and as a *natural* state of affairs between cultural groups, borders were seen to serve as filters, as communicators and also as a protective skin around the organism of developing states. But in a "civilized" state of affairs, for example, in Europe, it was necessary to draw a line; to have the technology and the power to define the outer elements of the cultural area and then draw a line – and expand it if necessary. This kind of thinking of borders is still with us, and, as such, change and continuity is very much apparent in border studies.

However, if you operate from this civilizational notion of the state and its borders and then think about where we are today, you will see that, in fact, history has played an important role in influencing our thinking. Events such as World War II have shown us how thinking about the historical necessity of borders got us into very disastrous wars and conflicts that had to be solved in different ways. And now we have arrived at a much more critical, much more self-critical ways of looking at borders. Objectivity, the absolute view of borders, of course, is not really possible anymore. That, I think, is all very much documented in the development and evolution of border studies.

Tony Payan:

Think about the business community driving the dismantling of the border between Busan and Fukuoka. Think about the dismantling of borders in Europe in changing the community. And think about 9/11 driving the building of the border between Mexico and Canada and the United States. Are we driving border studies or are the events around us simply determining what we study and how we will relate to public policy in border studies? What exactly is it that we are doing when it comes to history? Do we respond to these events, or is it the other way around that we actually have some autonomy over the discipline.

Liam O'Dowd:

I think border studies is no different from other social sciences in general, in that, they tend to be responsive to the agendas of the most powerful states in the world system. And initially with border studies, it was responsive to the agenda of imperial states. And, of course, many of you would know Lord Curzon's famous 1905 talk where he argued for a science of frontiers. His imperial gaze covered the world. He talked about 21,000 miles of British borders between Canada and the U.S., in Asia, in Africa, and so on. And his reference point was the Roman Empire, and of course, what was happening in America as well at that time, the moving of the border westwards.

We started from the position, at the beginning of the twentieth century, of a rather few states, but big empires, who were setting the agenda for border studies. But, of course, the story of the twentieth century has been the proliferation of national states and the reconfiguration of imperial power. And this has caused a shift in our attention somewhat from the agenda of the people who are the most powerful drivers of borders to the people that are affected in borderlands, by the various decisions that are taken by the powerful states.

James has pointed to the growing multi-dimensionality of borders, and this is how border studies, I think, is developing now. I would add the qualification that we are still responding to the agendas of the most powerful states. And the most powerful states are the U.S. and Europe, which are promoting the spread of neoliberal capitalism, i.e., the arguments that capital should be free to move across borders but not people – that people have to be heavily regulated.

Vladimir Kolosov:

Some years ago, I tried to compile a table, putting in a left column the major events, which shaped border studies – the main ideas, the main causes, the main difficult problems solved by border scholars or by politicians. Of course it was a hard job. Some major events have already been mentioned by my colleagues. I would like only to stress that the European notion of boundaries, as a strict line delimiting spaces of sovereignties, was imposed by European colonial powers on the world. Because the notion of boundary was quite different in other parts of the world, particularly in Arabic countries, in Africa, and our knowledge about the development of boundaries in other parts of the world is quite limited, it will need to be studied. It is very interesting.

For instance, the Caucasus. They have always been separated, fragmented into a number of political units. I would like to note the emergence of international maritime law in the 1970s, which partitioned off very important parts of the ocean, which is particularly important for countries like Japan and Korea, and which stimulates a number of fields in political science and geography that gave rise to a number of important themes. And then the end of the Cold War, the disappearance of boundaries between political ideological systems, the spaces of those systems. And also, of course, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, which raised an interesting problem of the historical development of boundaries. It is not a linear developed concept. It is a very important concept, which has been made from the experiences of last 20 years.

Michel Foucher:

It’s about reality driving border studies. In the last 20 years, it was the so-called representation of a borderless world, which by the way, is an expression manufactured in Tokyo 20 years ago by Kenichi Ohmae looking for one product, one standard everywhere. So, as researchers, we are in the mainstream of global powers and global trends, but at the same time, we can have the distance of critical analysis. So, we discovered that there is no borderless world, or it’s more complex. We are living in a very strange world. When you have at the same time, a very high degree of interdependence, especially in trade, flows of information, selective flows of information and exchange and common interest in economic trends, as well as conflicts on space, territory, and history.

On the train I was reading in a French evening newspaper, *Le Monde,* an article by the Japanese ambassador to France who talked about Senkaku/Diaoyu, and the title was *These Islands are Japanese*. This was a response to an article by the Chinese ambassador in Paris in the same newspaper one week before, and the title was *Diaoyu are Chinese*. And this is today between two countries in the same region, booming Asia, which we are afraid will overtake Europe. Booming Asia – where you have flows of exchange of trillions and billions of dollars every year. Strong common interest, markets, etc., etc. but when it comes to history, when it comes to five small islands with nobody living there...

We are in a situation of classical nineteenth century geopolitics. So, at the same time, we have close collaboration, Busan/Fukuoka, and then we have Dokdo/Takeshima. When it comes to public opinion, what is the choice? Economics or history? You know this is the world in which we are living, so that the borders of this booming Asia today are different from the past because we understand that the driver of our life and our political life is not the economy and trade exchange and big companies. Territory is back – including for economy. We have hundreds of territorial disagreements between countries now, especially in Asia. Why? Because if you want to enter the global game, you need to know where is your border, where is your periphery, where are your oil fields, gas fields located and where are the gas pipes crossing the border between Kazakhstan and China? You need to know all that, so territory is back including for economic reasons.

Tony Payan:

Have we as a field of studies made any progress conceptually and organizationally, and specifically, if we measure ourselves as academics by the impact that we have on public policy? Have we made any progress at all?

Kathleen Staudt:

As I was listening to the other commentators, I was also considering that we shouldn't be treating our field as over-determined by forces outside of our control. But also, we should think about the everyday life of border people, their activities, and how the images of them are influenced by the media, like by the film industry, and then how people at the border often counter those images through the use of social media, and how we in border studies don't quite have a grip on all that is going on with respect to social media and the massive amount of communication and blogging outside of our regular networks.

I often wonder what kind of impact do we have on public policy. I think that academia has to ask itself that question all the time because we are often busy writing our articles and not communicating very well with other people or not even using language or translating our academic language in a way that can be understood by journalists, or by people in public policy.

Nevertheless we have, I think, an obligation to try to relate the everyday life of people at borderlands and the struggles that they undergo to try to make their voices heard amid national policies and national media or international media that doesn't pay much attention to them either. So, there is quite a lot of fragmentation going on, and as academics, we all are able to make some sense of this, but we don't always know how to do that so well.

Tony Payan:

Is there any progress in turning our collective work into public policy or are we simply just responding to these politicians and the agenda of the powerful and their support?

Liam O'Dowd:

The impact of social science researchers on policy is something that preoccupies us greatly in the United Kingdom at the moment. You can have an impact if you are studying things that are perceived to be useful to those people who are driving border agendas, for example, security or the securitization agenda. If you are doing research, which facilitates that agenda, then you are likely to have some kind of impact. This is a political question it seems to me. Also, you may be doing research which challenges what goes on at borderlands. We often put it in a technocratic way and say we can measure impact. However, I think, really there are huge political questions here i.e., questions of power because you cannot separate questions of power from questions of borders. And we have to locate ourselves somewhere within that theme.

Yuzo Yabuno:

Broadly speaking, I think it's better to distinguish border studies into three categories. One is in Europe, as you know the border now is easy and unified so people can move beyond the border. This is one case and the very first case. The second is after the transformation of the Soviet Union, where the border has newly come up as a problem for access to national resources.

The third case is like Takeshima or Senkaku – therefore Japan. In Asia, the Cold War is still alive. As you know, there are four divided countries after the war. The first is Germany, east and west. The second is Vietnam, north and south. The third is China and Taiwan. The fourth is North Korea and South Korea.

Three out of the four are Asian countries and we don't have any conclusion, any peaceful resolution at all yet. So, this region is still now in a cold war situation. A good example is the North Korea problem. And how will Taiwan and China relations be resolved. New cases can be found in Europe in Central Europe and the old-fashioned unsolved cases can be found in Asia. This is my idea that border functions are quite different in these three cases.

Tony Payan:

Are we experiencing the globalization of border studies over the last 15-20 years? ABS in the 1970s was a North American shop and now if we look around today we see a community that has been slowly growing to Europe and now to Asia. Have we made at least organizational progress among ourselves as border scholars, so that we can begin to be above water and not underwater in terms of responding to the events that we talk about?

James W. Scott:

Yes, I would say that we have made progress. Organizationally speaking, absolutely, because we have emerged from a, let's say, locally focused area studies situation into – I don't know if you would call it globalized, but internationally networked community of researchers. We are partly represented by organizations like ABS, which is now international and used to be very strongly focused on the U.S.-Mexican border. So, I think it is on its way to becoming an international organization. We have the African Borderlands Research Network, ABORNE, and other organizations that are developing.

And, we have conferences like today, which did not take place when I started out in borders studies. They very rarely happened or if they happened it was because of a very specific border issue that demanded discussion. We are having an international discussion, which is no longer somehow dominated by Eurocentric or North American perspectives on borders. I think we are not at the endpoint, I don't think there is an endpoint anyway, but I think we've made a lot of progress in this sense.

I do believe in social progress, and I think that we are contributing to that. And we are not totally dependent on the agendas of the state wherever that is. I think *we* are the state as well. Even though we have to be very careful that hegemonic powers very much influence the way we think. But looking at Europe: we love the European Union, but we hate its crises, its contradictions, its fragmentation, its exclusive border policies.

These are topics that are also at the forefront of border studies in Europe, for example: Europe's indeterminacy, its potential for inclusion and exclusion, and what it means for individuals. These are important questions, regardless of whether or not people are listening to this discussion. But that's another question and I am sure we can improve somehow communications.

Tony Payan:

It also seems to me that there are gaps in border studies, for example, we have no border sections in the American Political Science Association. There are border sections in the Latin American Studies Association in the International Studies Association. So it seems to me, that we have a little bit of ways to go to expand not only breadth but also the depth of border studies.

Kathleen Staudt:

I hope that we will have commitment from many people, not only on the panel, but also in the audience to try to do something about the inattention to border studies at the International Studies Association, ISA, and in regional associations, like the Latin American Studies Association, LASA. It's really amazing that ISA does not have a section, and I think that the political struggle to create a section will be a daunting task as there are about 33 other sections. And everybody is fighting over their turf and trying to figure out how they can get more panels and more space on the program. I think also that our governments, at least in the United States, our agencies are not organized very well to respond to a cross-border world or regional cooperation, at least in North America.

In the United States, the agencies that provide the biggest amount of funding are the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, which have a particular view and agenda associated with bordering, not de-bordering, but rather maintaining the border. And so when we in the borderlands try to speak to government representatives, whether they are in a bureaucracy or even a political representation system, it's difficult. We have very few representatives in the U.S. Congress who represent truly border areas. We have one in the El Paso area. There is one in Arizona. There is one in the San Diego area. But they don't really have many alliances that can be made in their own representative bodies, so I think we need to figure out how to mesh better, how to resonate better with major academic associations and also with the government agencies that are not only nationalistic but nationalistic in the sense that they are reinforcing and controlling borderlands.

Vladimir Kolosov:

Border studies is often accused of accumulating lots of case studies. As we see in some books, they represent collections of case studies and maybe one or two theoretical chapters. It reflects on the stage of development of border studies, the stage and recognition of empirical data. But, at the same time, border studies is being fragmented too into separate worlds, separate fields like cross-border cooperation, like border conflicts, like borders and migrations, like historical problems of borders and so on.

It's its nature and we can ask ourselves what should be done to pass through the next stage. In my opinion, we do not have a really global studies of borders. We need more international comparisons. It can only be done, in my opinion, through international projects like the projects supported by the European framework. Indeed we need to create specialized border sections within international academic unions and special commissions on borders at the international geographical union.

Tony Payan:

I think the soul-searching of border studies has much to do with our methodological and theoretical issues. We have been to conferences of so many different disciplines, and even sometimes in certain disciplines such as political science where we debate quantitativeness versus qualitativeness.

The question that I want you to kind of think about is: in building border theory, what is the best route to go from the particular, these case studies that we all do, to the more general and theoretical? Why is border studies mostly confined to these case studies? How can we build a more comprehensive discipline theoretically and methodologically?

Liam O'Dowd:

This is not an easy question. And, I think that in a way, part of the answer lies in the globalization of national states. Now we think that national states are nominal equivalents that they have similar organizational forms. But, of course, they are hugely variable. In terms of what has been called their infrastructural power, and there are different dimensions to infrastructural power: economic, political, cultural and ideological, and military. And states vary considerably in terms of the way that they put those powers together. And this has all kinds of implications for our borders and for how we think about borders, because for small states, for example, borders maybe have a huge cultural significance, a symbolic significance, but they don't have a military capacity to project their power beyond their own borders. Of course, the leading states do have that capacity.

We have to, I think, work with the notion of the variability of power. On the one hand, national states have been globalised as a political form. This makes them nominal equivalents in the kind of dialogue between states in the world. And on the other hand, it must be recognized that there is a huge variability in terms of the capacities of states to control what is within their own borders – never mind their capacities to project their power beyond their borders. And this is, I think, where cities become increasingly important because I think we have to look at cities as integral to the whole business of state formation, as cities are different phenomena to states historically.

And now borderlands are becoming more urbanized, and this has all kinds of implications for how borders are processed. National borders and international borders are processed differently within cities than they are within states. And cities have their own parallel global networks, which are distinct from interstate networks.

Tony Payan:

James, do you think that border cities will reproduce national inclinations or orientations for these borders or do they actually challenge them? Do they simply reproduce these structures that come down from above or do they actually challenge them and kind of invite us to think theoretically differently about borders?

James W. Scott:

They probably do both. I think that's a very good question you just posed because we have seen the U.S.-Mexican and the German-Polish contexts, for example – very enlightening because of their very different cities. In order to get into that question, I would argue that, again, the question of theory must be raised as it tries to homogenize and impose order and suggests convergence or divergence between different cases. They are really the products of contexts. Historical, economic, social, cultural, geopolitical contexts, and it's the reading of those contexts that is the crucial part of understanding the *why* of borders. This is probably the most we can do to help to link the empirical stuff to the more theoretical or general discussion, understanding perhaps why they do similar things in different bordered places. But the emergence, the formation, the construction of borders, the re-emergence of borders, are very much contextual issues, which does not mean that they are limited just to a parochial discussion about a specific place.

I think cities are specific places where the multidimensional aspect of borders comes in, the state border, the economic border, the cultural border, the infrastructural border. And I am reminded in Oscar Martinez's borderland scheme of the very different type of attitudes that you would find in a borderland; for example, from the hyper-nationalisms to the transnationalisms that you would not find in another part of the country, away from the border. The border reinforces nationalism for specific groups and it reinforces the transnationalism of others, who use the borders as a daily resource. It really has a lot to do with the people themselves, how they interact with the border, and their own, let's say, contextual background. Yes, I think cities are definitely an important laboratory of understanding borders. I think a lot of research impetus has come right from them, from border cities, and I think their role could be enhanced still more.

Tony Payan:

Border regions have basic elements – there is population, there is a line around – maybe contested or not – there are cross-border flows. There is sometimes military power on either side. There is trade. There are certainly interactions that look the same. So if we have the basic building blocks, why can't we turn them into a generalizable understanding of borders?

Vladimir Kolosov:

I don't think that it is possible to build a genome theory of boundaries – it's too complicated. But I am not skeptical about the multi-disciplinary nature of our field because this conference shows how important it is. Indeed all the interesting papers in this and the past few years are evidence of multidisciplinary approaches. So, I think it's important to combine all good functional approaches – new post-modern approaches, for instance political geo-politics, and conceptualist approaches. It can give very interesting results through combinations of approaches maybe in history, anthropology, functions, and identities, representations, perceptions of more analytical problems of borders.

I would like also to note that we do not understand yet what are regional border identities because it's an interesting dilemma, identities are identities, the borders are the borders between identities. What is their relation with former borders? So contemporary border identities are as recent as nation states on the one hand, but on the other hand, they represent a legacy of the past. And border identities do not exist everywhere. We can find lots of examples of places where there are no real border identities. It is an interesting question to study to understand, and is important for the development of cross-border co-operation.

Kathleen Staudt:

We have some basic building blocks, but we have so many different disciplines that are working on this issue. And I would hate to see some sort of grid imposed upon us that would reduce the creativity and the insights that we bring to border studies. I think that we need to look at the conceptual machinery that's available in different disciplines and bring that to bear on how we understand borders. For example, when it comes to cities, Saskia Sassen is a sociologist who has written about an exclusive club of "global cities," but I think many of us could look at cities to understand borders and find some of the same elements she finds: the informality that draws migrants to these places, the connections to the larger global economy and so on. And we could enrich and augment Sassen by including transnational border cities. For example, Ciudad Juárez-El Paso (the Paso del Norte Region at the U.S.-Mexico border) is very much a transnational urban global manufacturing site. It's not on Saskia Sassen's screen, not yet anyway! The work of Benedict Anderson who has written about "imagined communities" as a way of thinking about nationalism and how nation-states began, also offers a lot of possibilities for what we can do at borders imagining transnational borderland communities, for example.

And then there is the work of James Scott, not the James Scott at the table here, but the political anthropologist, who has written many very interesting books, giving us conceptual machinery. For example, his book *Weapons of the Weak* can be applied to border people. He offers some very interesting conceptual language for us to examine the so-called official public transcripts that governmental and economic actors impose upon places, but also the so-called hidden transcripts that people are using in areas that defy in both language and in practice of how things operate at the border.

Work like this, I believe, offers extraordinary possibilities for us. And we wouldn't want to exclude the conceptual material that comes from different disciplines and certainly not from anthropology. We don't have an anthropologist at the table here, but once we impose a gridlock on border studies, we will almost by definition be excluding anthropologists.

Michel Foucher:

Coming back to border theories, first, I think, it's very dangerous. We had in Japan border theories, which were used to support imperialist arguments. Russia used to say to make war is to wander its border on others' territories. According to disciplines, you have different definitions. There is an agreement today in international life to accept one united definition provided by lawyers, by international law. There is an agreement with that. It's not theory based. For international law, it's a line between two sovereignties. Full stop. And this is so far accepted by all members of the United Nations. So in that case, you can find theory with specialists of international law.

But what has changed in recent decades, is that the definition of border is changing not only limited between sovereignties but the place of crossings and interaction. You find more and more articles dedicated precisely to a new definition of borders, which is not a place or a line that is closing the territory but this is a place where you cross to the other territory. Another geographer might insist on the importance of scales. There is a lot of confusion on that. You need to make the distinction between the scales, international scales, regional scales, local scales.

Now if you are trying to sketch what is going on today, we can see maybe four or five categories of trends. First, more and more border settlements and agreements, this is very impressive, and has resulted in key bilateral agreements. This is something new. In the last two decades, close to 30,000 kilometers have been agreed by state-to-state settlement and treaties.

Second, new borders, around 26,000 km, especially in Europe, Eurasia, and North Africa, have unsolved issues. Third, there are many security issues and territorial maritime issues. You have around 40 percent of potential maritime borders already defined. It means 60 percent still remain to be defined. It leaves room for contest, discussions and maybe conflicts.

And the last thing is the permanence of classical territorial disputes. You have many unsolved territorial disputes. So, I am in favor of diversity of approaches and really to take into consideration the scale. You can privilege the study of specific border issues but please don't try to define some kind of theory because you will come back to a German geopolitics and it could be a catastrophe.

Tony Payan:

In borders that are more or less settled, forget about the ones that are "*alienated*" borders like North Korea and South Korea, but borders like the Canada-U.S. or the U.S.-Mexico border, which represent some of most successful border management practices. Are we working on border management issues? What is the role that border mapping and phenomenon such as border mapping and strategic barrier building, as we call it essentially walls? Are they manifestations of power or do we need different lenses to interpret different practices at borders?

Are demarcation and limitation used as instruments of inclusion and exclusion, privilege and oppression? What are some of the empirical issues in practices at borders and how we are addressing these specific practices?

Liam O'Dowd:

I think to approach the empirical we have to work with some kind of conceptual language, rather than theory as such. We need some kind of conceptual language about borders because a lot of people think borders are barriers, that they are disabling, that they are negative, and so on. But, of course, they are also bridges and points of contact. They are also resources for people living at borders and they have huge symbolic significance for people as well. They are multidimensional. They are ambiguous. They are equivocal. They are enabling and disabling, and they are good and bad. If you want to approach borders from a management perspective, the best we can do is to zero in on trying to reduce the negative dimensions of borders, i.e., the disabling dimensions of borders.

We can try and build on the enabling aspects by having a rather more complex, more nuanced notion of what borders are, by making distinctions between borders and frontiers, borderlines and frontiers, and borders and borderlands.

Michel Foucher:

I agree. If you look at Niger and Nigeria you have two different currencies, you have a possibility for people in the borderlands to take benefit from in terms of the transit at one specific point or services opportunities. In Western Africa, for example, many states are apparently still looking for custom revenues between 30-70 percent. So it's a place where every time you cross the border, ordinary people – business women for example – face an attitude, harassments, expectations and participation. These border regions are very, active, very busy. But you have state police; you have arbitrary behaviors, and violence.

So really what is required is to improve cross-border interaction to reduce waiting time. For waiting time you have important studies by the World Bank where their last report on Africa had a very interesting title for us – *Defragmenting Africa*. The waiting time is not only the time you have to wait to cross the border, but also the number of papers, multiplied by the number of signatures, as well as corruption. I absolutely agree that the border has to become a collective resource for local and regional people.

Tony Payan:

What about the issue of border mapping? Between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Google accidentally drew the map in one of the disputed areas and then Nicaraguans' leader said, "Google says this is where the border is, so that's it." And of course, the Costa Ricans disagree. What about this?

Vladimir Kolosov:

We can say that it's impossible to erase borders. Google, of course, is not enough to understand the nature of borders, and we really need to make good geographical maps of borders. So we collaborate on a special means of border mapping. Interestingly, border studies scholars recently started talking about maps. These scholars, not only geographers, put the question what is the nature of spaces that are separated by political boundaries. Borders are a resource, like what was said by Michel, because diversity is a very important resource for development. But it's impossible to import the best practices from one region to another. Of course, there are some, so to say, technical approaches which can be applied in moving from one region to another. But cross-border incorporation is really a complex matter. It depends on history, technology, culture, etc., etc.

Yuzo Yabuno:

Tony seemed to be very interested in theoretical ideas about border studies. I think sovereignty and the border are two sides of one coin. When we have sovereignty, the border should come out. So the border does not disappear and there are many borders. We have many borders in our daily life. She is a female, male. This is a gender border. And the other example in Japan, City A, its hierarchy is lower than City B, – city barriers. We have many barriers. But when we say border, naturally, we come out with national borders, sovereignty. This is a very much general idea.

As long as we keep sovereignty, the border will not disappear. This is my opinion. On the other hand, for humankind, we have two kinds of border ideas – economical ones and political ones. For the political one, we try to occupy position. This is our nature. We try to keep more things.

The economic idea of the border is for the market. So sometimes when I have my product, I try to look for the market, even if the country is a rival. If the rival buys my product I sell, we have an economic idea and a political idea. In a global society today, the economic idea is getting stronger on the border than the political idea. For example, this chair is made in China, available in Japan. But this sweater was made in England because this is wool and there are few sheep in Japan. So it was imported from England. And this lamp needed to be imported, for example, from India, then finally we say it is made in Japan. Well, the point is that the final product is made in Japan. Your shoes were perhaps going around 20 or 30 countries. So economically speaking, we are now a global society.

How do we manage borders to make a better society? The situation between North Korea and South Korea, is very difficult because North Korea says they have sovereignty. South Korea says they have sovereignty. But you know commercially, I have one pair of shoes made in North Korea. When North Korea wants to shoot out a missile, I will run away wearing North Korean shoes because of that. If you go around in Fukuoka there are many shops where you can buy shoes made in North Korea. One part of the textiles is made in South Korea. So this is one solution.

The North Korea seaside is still very clean. Their shipping is very good. The seafood is of good quality. So North Korean fisherman take fish and they sell it from North Korea to Japan by dropping it under the ship, then a Japanese ship put their net here and catch the fish from the North Korean ship. They catch the fish but the Japanese ship carries it back to Japan, saying they caught it in Japan. So I think management of borders is very important for a peaceful society.

Kathleen Staudt:

Under border management practices, at the U.S.-Mexico border we have official practices for militarization and then also an emphasis on trading co-operation and reducing the waiting times during border crossing.

It seems to me that in a federal system of government, there ought to be more authority for local officials so they can manage border practices in a better way. I think we have to take into account how at the national level, at least in North America, the border has become a kind of political spectacle and it is being used in an opportunistic way in a highly polarized context where some politicians are talking about securing the border by building walls. We had a major extension of about 800 miles of wall or fence, depending on your vantage point, in a 2,000-mile borderline. And this happened under the previous administration of President Bush. Yet even under the administration of the first term of President Obama, we had more people deported than under Bush: 400,000 people were deported last year.

Both parties in a highly polarized context are trying to make out themselves as creating the most "secure" border. And in the meantime, you have, of course, diverse economic interests, some of them benefiting from cross-border trade, but also other economic interests, profiting from militarizing the border. For example, those industries that sell software and technology and surveillance equipment surely want to perpetuate the sort of militarized border that we have. I think we need to take into account the polarization of the larger political context and ask when can local people at the border, especially in the federal system of government, begin to have a bit more authority over how things work and how to make them flow better.

Tony Payan:

In North America, as soon as something such as the border becomes a federal matter, the local people are not consulted, so the configuration of the borderline, the border defense, the security apparatus and all the rest comes from above, straight out of Washington or Mexico City and the locals are never consulted on any of the configurations of the borders or the fence that affects their lives very deeply. In New Mexico 20 percent of people do not have health insurance. In El Paso, thirty-three percent of people do not have health insurance, and they used to make generous use of the healthcare system in Mexico. And now it is so difficult to cross that it has an actual impact on people's lives and it also raises the question about how to manage borders for the betterment of people's lives – it is a real question that we have to debate at a very practical long-term level.

I feel that in border studies we have territorial conflicts about the borderline itself, unresolved and still to be studied. At another level, in Europe particularly, we are moving towards dismantling borders. So border studies is not only multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary but it's also a discipline of many tracks. Theoretical questions are still unresolved even as we move into other interesting geographical frontiers. So the problem in the discipline is perhaps that it is a multi-track and multi-speed type of discipline.

Vladimir Kolosov:

Today there are a lot of studies and multiple angles towards approaching cross-border issues and international law. International law is becoming a very active field.

Yuzo Yabuno:

I would like to say that in Malaysia or Indonesia, border problems are very difficult and hard to manage.

Kathleen Staudt:

I look forward to the next few days for the conference because we will have the opportunity to look at border regions in other parts of the world, and we can bring some of these issues back to our borders. In the meantime, let's all start advocating and sharing information with each other so that we can collaborate more across borders.

Tony Payan:

I want to thank the panelists very much.

(edited by Paul Richardson and Chierh Cheng)