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Robert Schuman Centre
for advanced studies

Jean-Pierre Cassarino

***Approaching Borders and Frontiers:
Notions and Implications***

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE
ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Approaching Borders and Frontiers: Notions and Implications

JEAN-PIERRE CASSARINO

CARIM

Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International
Migration

Research Report, CARIM–RR 2006/03

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CARIM

The Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

In November 1995, the European and Mediterranean Ministries of Foreign Affairs met in Barcelona in order to establish the basis of a new partnership, which is described in the Barcelona Declaration. The main goal is to transform the Mediterranean region in a peaceful and prosperous area, and to progressively establish a Euro-Mediterranean free-market zone. In order to promote dialogue, stability and good governance values in the Region, as envisaged by the Barcelona process, the Valencia Ministerial Meeting in April 2002 outlined a regional cooperation programme on justice, police and migration issues, which was adopted by the European Commission in December 2002.

The present report is produced in the framework of the “Cooperation project on the social integration of immigrants, migration and the movement of persons” (EuroMed Migration), which is a MEDA regional initiative launched by the European Commission (EuropeAid Cooperation Office) in February 2004 as part of the above programme. It aims at creating an instrument for observing, analysing and forecasting the migratory movements, their causes and their impact, in the EU and in the Mediterranean partners Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestinian Territories, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

The Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) has been set up in order to implement the EuroMed Migration project. The Consortium is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute (Florence), and a network of thirty scientific correspondents based in Mediterranean partner countries. External experts from the north and the south also contribute to its activities. CARIM carries out the following activities: setting up and updating of a Mediterranean migration database, studies and research training.

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Abstract

Never as much as today has a multidisciplinary approach to borders been necessary, given the growing attention paid by the EU Member States to migration and border management, particularly regarding the fight against illegal migration and the reinforced control of the external borders of the EU. By drawing on the insights of various disciplinary approaches to borders and frontiers, this overview sets out to analyse the manifold implications that reinforced border management and controls may have on state-to-state relations, territorial integrity and sovereignty, cross-border mobility, society and 'borderlanders'.

Introduction*

The stronger the barrier function of the border, the more powerful the imagined, the more abstract the narrative of what is perceived as lying on the other side. (David Newman, 2003: 20)

David Newman's assertion should not be dismissed offhand. His assertion aptly raises issues related to the significance and perceptions of borders as well as to the manifold impacts that borders may have on power relations, territorial demarcation, socialization processes, mobility, identities, citizenship, and social interaction. At the same time, it refers to the existence of various levels of border functionalities that may vary with time and space.

Over the past decades, border studies have been legion. Scholarly approaches, from various disciplines, to borders, frontiers, borderlands, boundaries—to mention just a few notions—have evolved quite concomitantly from the late 1980s onwards. Actually, the manifold implications stemming from the re- and de-bordering processes that took place in various regions and sub-regions of the world have been subject to numerous analytical studies which stressed the multi-level impacts of the institutionalisation of borders. These scholarly approaches have in turn been conducive to various disciplinary lexicons and analytical frameworks which stressed the *complex* nature of the border and, hence, the need to find *complex* notions aimed at reflecting their various implications and consequences on cross-border mobility. It is the argument of this short analytical overview that the understanding of such implications demands a combination of analytical methods. In other words, various disciplinary approaches need to be taken into consideration in order to grasp the significance of the border.

Never as much as today has this multidisciplinary approach to borders been necessary, given the growing attention paid by European Union member States to migration and border management, particularly regarding the fight against illegal migration and the reinforced control of the external borders of the EU. The need to intensify cooperation with migrants' countries of origin and transit, through capacity-building, training, and technical assistance, has gained momentum in migration talks. Moreover, there is now growing awareness that the effective control of the EU external borders, particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean area, should also be accompanied by measures aimed at helping Mediterranean third countries in dealing with their southern borders. Countries in the direct neighbourhood of the European Union, particularly North African countries, have been called to strengthen their border control capacity with a view to limiting migration flows transiting through their territories en route to the EU.¹

The mobilisation of Mediterranean third countries in the fight against illegal migration, together with the EU call for the reinforcement of their southern borders, have had several implications, some of which are already perceptible, regarding:

- the relations between the EU and some Mediterranean Third, owing to the emergence of new patterns of interconnectedness (see below);
- the relations between some Mediterranean third countries and their direct Southern neighbours
- the relationships between third countries' states and their (mobile) society;

* This text was prepared in December 2005.

1 In its recent communication entitled 'EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa's development', dated 12 October 2005, the Commission proposed to 'support [through the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI)] cooperation between the countries of North Africa and their Sub-Saharan neighbours on issues of common concern, including migration.' (COM (2005) 489 Final), p. 37.

- the demarcation of third countries' territorial limits;
- the perception of borders and border regions.

The thorough analysis of these implications goes beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, their corollaries will be highlighted in this overview while referring to various analytical frameworks pertaining, among others, to anthropology, political science and international relations, geography, and history. As a prerequisite to exploring how border issues have been addressed by scholars from various disciplines, it is important to stress that the analytical frameworks presented below offer valuable interpretations and levels of analysis (e.g., top-down and bottom-up approaches) of the border that turn out to be at once complementary and interrelated, for they all are reflective of the various challenges linked to border management.

1. Geography and borders

Given their interest in the spatial definitions of national territories, geographers have been perhaps the most prolific in border studies. Their studies have traditionally assimilated borders to the limits of a territory; a kind of physical demarcation allowing territorial divisions to be secured and marked on a map. Malcolm Anderson (1996) identified various types of bordering processes which took place in Africa and Asia, having a certain bearing on the administrative organisation and control of the areas delimited by the former colonial powers. Whether the bordering process of a given area was driven by topographic characteristics (i.e., rivers and relief features) or by geometric lines drawn on a map, it paid little attention to the pre-colonial social and political organisation. To give an example, boundary-making in Africa often cut through pre-colonial tribal territories, owing to a misperception of the topographic border shaped by a European colonial prejudice, as Anderson explains:

In many places [on the African continent], ill-defined African watersheds serve as centres of population rather than, as in Europe, clearly dividing populations. African rivers have attracted settlements, with the same ethnic group settling on both banks, particularly in semi-arid areas where flood-plains are suitable for agricultural use. (Anderson 1996: 79)

Michel Foucher (1988) somewhat qualifies Anderson's assertion while arguing that, in some (limited) areas of the African continent, the colonial powers took into consideration the pre-colonial 'ethnic configuration' that applied to specific territorial entities. In his opinion, the colonial powers had to take into account the existence of 'proto-frontiers' and pre-colonial local realities that characterised such entities. This concern was driven by the need to 'rationalise the administrative and police control operations [of the colonial power]' (Foucher 1988: 164) with a view to securing a modicum of stability and colonial management of the territories.

It comes as no surprise that, following their independence, the territorial limits of most former colonies were turned into state boundaries, hence changing the very function of the border. To grasp the implications of the changing function of the border and of its practical impact on cross-border mobility, political geographers started to design analytical notions which could shed light on border dynamics and relative territorial stability in newly independent countries.

The reference to geopolitics, over the last two decades, has been critical to approach the 'multi-dimensional function of boundaries' (Newman 2003: 139) as well as the ways in which they are managed by national governments and understood by local populations, particularly by *borderlanders* (see below). This need to address the multi-dimensional function of boundaries was also an attempt to come to terms with the resilient border and demarcation disputes, as well as with the secessionist crises, which have marked various regions of the world, including the African and Asian continents, since the 1960s onwards.

Clearly, the usage of sophisticated notions pertaining to borders was illustrative of the geographers' desire to catch up with the significant change that the function and practice of borders have undergone. Beyond the basic demarcating function of the border, several notions need to be mentioned as they

turn out to illustrate additional and perhaps less explored functions related to border issues. Such notions pertain, among others, to:

- **Boundary:** Just like the border, the boundary demarcates the territorial sovereignty of the state and allows its internal and external security to be secured. The function of the boundary evolves with neighbouring states' relations. It is the expression of an area which can be spatially limited by topography or by geometric lines drawn on a map. Boundaries may be open or closed to the movement of capital, goods, and people. They may also act as barriers, i.e., when both sides of the boundary view it as an 'interface of military confrontation' (Newman 2003: 143), separating two distinct areas (e.g., the former Berlin wall). Anthropologists refer to boundaries in an attempt to highlight its symbolic dimension, as applied to individuals and group identity.
- **Frontier:** An area or zone, not necessarily delimited from a geographical point of view, which covers either side of the boundary. It is often presented as an area of interaction across the border. However, political scientists often refer to the frontier as a synonym of the border or the boundary.
- **Borderland:** A wider area than the frontier, viewed as a transition zone within which the boundary lies. Geographers, historians, political scientists and anthropologists refer to the local populations living in the borderland as 'borderlanders'.
- **Border region:** A region close to the boundary, whose characteristics, whether economic, social and cultural are shaped by the dynamics of the boundary. Anthropologists refer to the 'hybridity' (Flynn 1997) of local populations living in border regions.
- **Border landscapes:** Landscapes that are moulded by the human and physical environment.
- **Barrier:** The barrier differs from the boundary in that it demarcates an area which is unilaterally set by a state, for national security or military reasons. It may be assimilated to a fence.

The terminological sophistication of the border lexicon has been a prerequisite to going beyond the mere descriptive observation of the border, viewed as a basic demarcating line between two given areas. The point is to better delve into the complex implications of the border while questioning its taken-for-granted demarcating functionality by focusing, among others, on patterns of border-crossings, on the relationships between territory, boundaries and identities, on the shifting perceptions and significance of the boundary, and finally on the institutionalisation of the border viewed or justified as a social, historical and political construct.

It is perhaps through the adoption of a sophisticated lexicon that the investigative expansion of border research could take place. As shown in the subsequent chapters, this may have in turn allowed scholars from various disciplines to further refine the border terminology while broadening its analytical spectrum.

2. History and borders

Etienne Balibar points out in his insightful analysis on borders that 'borders have a history; the very notion of border has a history. And it is not the same everywhere and at every level' (2002: 77). Historians view frontiers as changing historical phenomena subjected to endogenous and exogenous forces. States' responsiveness to such forces turns out to be reflective of the multifarious relationships between the territory, state legitimacy and nation-building.

Historians look at the ways in which borders have been administered and legitimised by the central power in order to secure territorial integrity. The issue lies not so much in understanding whether the dominant discourse related to border legitimacy is accurate or historically founded. Rather, the point is to highlight the principles that have been used by states in order to configure the changing function of their borders through time and space. Such principles, having a historical background, may explain the closure and openness of borders or even the existence of both types of borders at the same time. In this

respect, the case of the EU, having internal open borders ('soft borders') combined with external closed borders ('hard borders'), is quite emblematic (DeBardeleben 2005).

Other principles have also been used, in other regional settings, to account for the clear territorial demarcation of the former colonies, rather than for the closed or open character of their borders. To give an example, Algeria's territorial integrity is based on the principle of the intangibility of colonial frontiers which states that, for the sake of regional stability, there cannot be territorial claims and that newly independent states in Africa should comply with their frontiers inherited from the colonial past, i.e., the international law principle of *uti possidetis ita possideatis* ('that which you possess, you shall continue to possess', see Anderson 1996: 82). This principle was stipulated in a 1964 resolution of the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and was aimed at settling, not always successfully, border disputes among African neighbouring states (e.g., Libya/Chad, Algeria/Morocco, Algeria/Libya, Senegal/Mauritania, Sudan/Egypt, to mention just a few).

However, another principle—somehow contrasting with the preceding one—was also considered by some states with a view to claiming their historical rights on some territorial areas (Foucher 1988: 182) which they lost as a result of colonialism.

Historians could not limit their discipline to the analysis of the principles which shape territorial claims. Faced with the resilience of unsettled border disputes and with the resurgence of borderlands, some historians started 'to eschew the traditional view of borders as seen from the centre in favour of a new view of borders from the perspectives of a state's periphery [...] [In other words, they tried] to discover which social forces originate in borderlands along with the effects they have had both locally and beyond the borderlands' (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 50). The new historical focus on borderlands was not only aimed at highlighting the cultural and exchange dynamics inherent in borderlands, but also in showing that, despite the action of hegemonic state-centred structures, borderlands could be reflective of specific patterns of interaction between people living in both sides of the boundary and sharing a distinctive identity and culture explaining, at least to some extent, how borderlanders negotiate or deal with the regulating and controlling function of the border. Various levels of borderlands interaction may be identified. In fact, Martinez (1994) makes a distinction between various levels of interaction taking place in borderlands:

- 'Alienated borderlands': interaction is nonexistent, if not prevented, owing to severe tensions between the adjacent states and/or border populations. Borderlands can hardly emerge as a place of interaction owing to resilient border crises and conflict. Any kind of exchange or interaction beyond the boundary would be viewed suspiciously (Shamir 2005) by the respective authorities (e.g., Israel-Lebanon border, South Korea-North Korea border).
- 'Coexistent borderlands': modest or regulated interaction takes place in the borderland, for tensions have been reduced to a manageable level. This type of borderland interaction may take place following the resolution of a dispute or a status quo situation (e.g., Morocco-Algeria border).
- 'Interdependent borderlands': a 'symbiotic relationship' (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 51) between the border regions takes place. A distinctive cultural, economic, social system emerges in the borderland. Border cities benefit from border differentials (e.g., the US-Mexico border, Libya-Tunisia border). Despite (or because of) the existence of the boundary, exchanges between border populations contribute with time to the coherence of a specific social, cultural, linguistic and economic reality (Bensaad, 2005) which may contrast with the dominant ethno-national conception of nation-building, as the Hatay region, located on the Turkey-Syria border, shows (Stokes 1999).
- 'Integrated borderlands': involve no barriers and no impediment at all to the flows of goods and people. They may be present when the state authorities are unable or too weak to control such flows effectively, leading to the uncontrolled porosity of borders as well as to the emergence of local power structures (Mbembe, 1999) and 'transborder territories' in central Africa (Bennafla

2002: 140) which might jeopardise state-building, under some circumstances. Conversely, integrated borderlands may also take place as a logical result of the optimal consolidation of a regional bloc including various member states (e.g., EU member states part of the Schengen area, NAFTA).

Martinez's typology of borderlands, reported by Donnan & Wilson (1999: 50), allows the historical approach to borders and borderlands to be better grasped, for it emphasises that borders have a historical background which may eventually impact on the social economic and political realities of borderlands and determine various levels of interaction between border people. Furthermore, by combining a bottom-up approach with a top-down one, it also shows that the forms of interactions that may be observable in borderlands, on the one hand, and state-to-state relations, on the other, may differ from one another. Finally, it demonstrates that a thorough study of the history of borders, in a given area or region, cannot limit itself to the diachronic processes of territorial demarcation and legitimisation. Rather, it should also, and more often than not, take into account the ways in which borderlanders negotiate the border and live with it. As anthropologists stress, borders are not only a matter of territorial demarcation dictated by state-to-state relations. Actually, they are also a matter of territorial identity and representation having a socio-historical background (Friedman 2004) that needs to be investigated with a view to understanding the border life. Understanding how people lived and live the bordered territory in practice, listening to their narrative of the border, is also part of the historian's task.

3. Anthropology and borders (or boundaries)

The anthropological approach to borders, viewed as material limits between two areas, constitutes just one aspect of its analytical contribution to the field. Actually, anthropologists have also been concerned with the metaphorical or symbolic terminology of the border, while referring more often than not to social and cultural borders or boundaries. Both terms have been used interchangeably in the literature with a view to analysing how individuals 'strategically manipulate their cultural identity by emphasising or underplaying it according to context [...] Cultural emblems and differences are thus significant only in so far as they are socially effective, as an organisational device for articulating social relations' Donnan & Wilson (1999: 21).

The boundary is then used as a demarcating identifier between the in-group and the out-group, but also between the individual's subjectivised self-ascription and the group. Consequently, the boundary has a significance which results from the interaction between two social systems or between an individual and a group. Importantly, boundaries change through time and as a result of the context.

This metaphorical usage of the boundary is of paramount importance because it shows that 'all borders, including state borders, carry a heavy weight of symbolism' (O'Dowd 2003: 27) which impacts on the ways in which the individual lives the border, as well as the entry and exit of the bordered area, whether it is metaphorically or materially defined. The most important analytical breakthrough may lie in understanding the subjective meaning that is attached to the boundary and whether it coincides with the material border that is designed by the state. The point is to analyse how different groups come into contact and whether this contact generates patterns of interaction which may question not only the dividing function of the border but also the relationship between the individual and the state.

Moreover, the subjective dimension inherent in boundaries is conducive to a sense of difference and distinctiveness which may in turn reinforce the subjective feeling of belonging to an entity, i.e., Weber's *Zusammengehörigkeit* (1994: 16). Importantly, this sense of difference and distinctiveness, whether ostensibly expressed or not, contributes to explaining the various patterns of cross-border interactions taking place in borderlands as well as their dynamics. Moreover, the persistence of cross-border interaction may stem from different experiences of border formation; these need to be stressed and contextualised historically and sociologically.

From an anthropological point of view, what do the metaphorical/symbolic and material dimensions of boundaries imply respectively? They acknowledge the complexity of processes of 'identity construction and renegotiation' (Salih 2000: 330) which take place not only between an individual and a group but also between groups themselves. Focusing on the symbolic dimension of boundaries allows group identifiers, processes of self-ascription and ascription (Urciuoli 1995), social categorisation, and Self-Other perceptions to be better grasped.

As far as material borders are concerned, anthropologists teach us that they can no longer be viewed as delimiting a territory and a citizenry, as a functionalist state-centred approach would have it. They too convey symbols, referents and meanings that make sense to the wider society, including borderlanders. Of course, such signs and symbols may be meaningful to some and imperceptible, if not ignored, by others. Such signs and symbols may also change through time depending on how the border is used and instated.

It is precisely the study of such contrasts that contributes to the understanding of the reality of the borderland, viewed as a system of closure and openness, as an area whose inherent border can sometimes hardly fulfil its demarcating function, owing to the existence of cross-border relations and interactions, which once established and institutionalised can hardly be interrupted from the top, even if it may produce a 'temporary feeling of security' (Groenendijk 2004, p. 170).

Again, as mentioned above, the anthropological approach to boundaries and borders, whether symbolic or material, is a timely one in view of the recent developments regarding the top-down abolition of the EU internal borders and the reinforcement of its external borders. These shifts may convey a redefinition of collective and individual identities which may in turn lead to the emergence and consolidation of mutual adaptation processes as well as to changes in the perception of the 'Other'.

Changes in the perception of the 'Other' may also coexist and contrast with dominant social prejudice embedded in the collective memory of a population. To give an example, Ali Bensaad (2005) observes that through the dynamics of trans-Saharan migratory flows in the Southern region of Algeria, local populations are facing the emergence of a new Otherness. Mixed marriages between Algerian women in the Southern city of Tamanrasset and Sub-Saharan immigrants are part and parcel of this change. However, Bensaad stresses that this phenomenon coexists together with strong xenophobic representations from the local population towards Sub-Saharan immigrants. Social discrimination finds its roots not only in the historical past of this border region, which shapes the perception of the local population towards the 'other', but also in the gradual formation of a 'bottom-up cosmopolitanism', characterised by the encounter of various languages, religions, values and cultures in the borderland, having various effects. In fact, it gradually questions the top-down homogeneous socio-cultural identity of Algerian society itself, and disturbs the 'sense of boundedness' of the host society (Heisler 2001: 229). Finally, it shows that, despite—or because of—the permeability of the border, the host society needs to respond to the 'Other's' visibility by constructing and reinventing new boundaries of difference and distinctiveness turning the porosity of the border into a manageable one.

4. Political science and borders

While anthropologists have demonstrated that there exists an interrelationship between symbolic boundaries and the function of state borders, political scientists and international relations (IR) scholars have primarily focused on two interrelated analytical fields pertaining to the state-territory-society nexus, on the one hand, and to border implications on state-to-state relations, on the other.

To do so, frontiers or borders—both notions being more often than not used interchangeably by political scientists—are viewed as institutions and processes. Malcolm Anderson (1996) explains that, as institutions, borders organise political and public life and define the territorial limits of state sovereignty, as well as the identity of citizens.

As processes, borders have four different dimensions:

- a *power dimension* in that they constitute an instrument of state policy allowing laws and rules to be applied over a delimited territory. However, such top-down legal provisions cannot always be implemented all over the national territory by the national authorities;
- a *control dimension* insofar as they can select the goods, the people and the information that can cross the limits of the national territory. There exist various levels of controls of the frontier which impact on its power dimension. This dimension is being questioned by such phenomena as the arrival of undocumented migrants, cross-national organised crimes, cyberspace communications and so forth;
- an *identity dimension* which rests on a taken-for-granted national unity, above all, in times of war, crises and territorial claims. They are markers of identity and convey emotions which may translate themselves into nationalistic behaviours. They may also foster the building of a nation-state which is presented as being homogeneous either culturally, linguistically or ethnically. Border controls are presented as a necessary action to be undertaken in order to protect citizens from disruptive factors existing beyond the border and potentially jeopardising the social economic and political stability of the nation-state.
- a *meaningful dimension* which may vary substantially with time and space. For example, the meaning that borderlanders attach to the frontier may compete with the one that is reified by the central authorities of their respective states (Friedman 2004).

Given the variety of regional trading blocs and integration frameworks (e.g., the EU, NAFTA, the ECOWAS, the African Economic Community, the African Union formerly the OAU, the ASEAN) existing around the world, there is no question that such dimensions have undergone significant change over the last decades. Often, the emergence of these regional blocs has been justified and legitimised by a fundamental historical and geographical coherence, whether real of (re-)constructed. Moreover, it has been driven by a common project aimed at facilitating the circulation of goods, capital and persons with a view to consolidating an area of stability and exchange. Beyond their various levels of integration, regional blocs generate a regulatory framework which gradually, but not always wholly, supports free circulation either by lowering national borders or by favouring preferential free-visa regimes between member states. Facilitating the circulation of goods and people across the internal borders of the regional bloc is viewed as being conducive, through time and practice, to a new sense of belonging which may potentially, albeit not necessarily, reconfigure state-society relationships and provide another significance to the border (O'Dowd, 2003).

In fact, as Neuwahl argues, 'although [internal] physical frontiers have disappeared, the concept of the territorial state has not' (2005: 24), because there still exist administrative and legal rules which differentiate national 'territorial offers' (Bartolini, 2000: 30) and also because, despite the drive to regional integration, states may also continue to retain the possibility to appear as the legitimate protectors of their citizens against external threats and as the best representatives of their interests and concerns. This may be observed at the level of the European Union where member states may, in accordance with Article 2(2) of the Schengen Implementation Agreement, reinstate border checks, on a temporary basis, if 'public policy or national security so require' (Groenendijk, 2004: 154).² In other regional settings, for example in the ECOWAS region, security reasons have also been invoked by African national authorities, in times of crisis, to put a break on cross-border labour mobility, reflecting the predominance of 'national political exigencies over Community interests' (Adepoju, 2005: 11) and shaking the foundations of the ECOWAS regional trading bloc.

2 According to Groenendijk (2004), Article 2(2) of the SIA was invoked 33 times by EU member states, from January 2000 to November 2003, with a peak in 2002 resulting from the 'first reaction of authorities to the large scale and partially violent demonstrations at the occasion of the European Council in Gotenburg and the G-8 meeting in Genoa in the Summer of 2001 and to increased attention for terrorist activities after 11 September 2001' (Groenendijk, 2004: 159).

If the fluidity of internal borders occurs as a result of the major regional integration process involving a given number of countries, the reinforcement of the control on the external borders of a regional bloc is a prerequisite to locating the multi-level patterns of exchanges, sustained by the regionalisation process, within a delimited space.

However, reinforcing controls on the external borders of a regional bloc has various implications.

Firstly, the strengthening of controls on external borders inevitably impacts on the relations between the bordering country, located within the regional bloc, and its non-member neighbour, as well as between the regional bloc itself and the non-member neighbour. The EU enlargement towards central and eastern European countries emblematically illustrates how Poland's accession to the EU—and the ensuing tightening of its visa regime—has engendered a 'border crisis' with Russia. Poland's accession, and its need to meet EU requirements, disrupted the economy of the Poland-Russia borderland, given its dependence on petty cross-border trade (Potemkina, 2005: 168-169).

Secondly, reinforced border controls on external borders bring about a reformulation of the relations with non-member countries. The latter may view suspiciously the growing and expanding dynamics inherent in the regional bloc. Such spill-over effects may be dealt with by adopting compensatory measures securing stable relations with the neighbour as well as its cooperation on border controls. However, such a cooperation makes sense when common challenges/threats (e.g., illegal migration, human trafficking, terrorism) and shared priorities are identified (or constructed) by the parties involved. The issue at stake lies not only in finding an incentive to cooperate on tackling issues that transcend territorial borders. It also lies in reframing the relations with the neighbour with a view to turning the cooperation into a credible option.

Thirdly, the aforementioned possibility to cooperate with the neighbour on the reinforced control of the external borders of the regional bloc may be conducive to new patterns of interconnectedness (Cassarino, 2005) which then empower the neighbouring country and enhance its geo-strategic position. At this point, the main issue lies in securing that this empowerment does not jeopardise the achievement of the objective of the cooperation. Conditionalities may allow to exercise a form of control over the neighbouring country's cooperative action. However, such conditionalities have to be defined on an *ad hoc* basis and have to meet, at least to some extent, the expected benefits formulated, either explicitly or implicitly, by the empowered neighbour, lest the cooperation ends.

Fourthly, and finally, the policies aimed at reinforcing controls on external borders often overlook what political geographers, anthropologists and historians have for long demonstrated and observed, i.e., 'borders are simultaneously structures and processes, things and relationships, histories and events' (Donnan & Wilson 1999: 62). This multi-dimensional perspective is crucial to understand that reinforcing the border from the top may lead to the fragmentation of an area that already possesses a grass-roots social and historical coherence in other regional settings. For example, the recognition of the integrating function of borderlands in some African regional groupings is now gaining momentum (Diarrah, 2003, Bennafla 2002). By disregarding the Western vision according to which regional integration processes should be characterised by clear-cut bordered areas having internal and external borders, some African scholars are currently advocating that borderlands should be better considered in the grassroots integration processes inherent in the current regional groupings in Africa. The exchanges and patterns of cross-border interaction taking place in borderlands are not viewed as being antithetical to processes of regional integration. On the contrary, because borderlands span two or more neighbouring state territories, their intrinsic cross-border dynamics should not be disrupted. Borderlands should rather be viewed as places of cross-border exchanges that could be jointly administered by the neighbouring state authorities (i.e., a kind of administrative special status), and not as dividing zones.

This non-Western vision of borderlands and of their contribution to regional integration processes is perhaps a first step towards a better understanding of the implications of border controls in other regional settings. It also induces us to question the taken-for-granted cause-and-effect relationship that

is pervading political discourses arguing that a better control of migration flows is dependent on a better control of borders.

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