

Call for Papers ETNOFOOR Borders Issue 26/1

The forthcoming issue of ETNOFOOR will tackle the idea of borders from a number of distinct angles, focusing on the material, social and symbolic aspects of physical borders. Conceptually, borders have been a traditional anthropological topic, playing a central role in distinctions between self and other (or purity and danger) and in processes of inclusion and exclusion within or between groups. Not surprisingly, socio-cultural bordering and its impacts have been receiving significant attention within recent anthropological work (see e.g. Fassin, 2011; Green, 2013; Wilson and Donnan, 2012). In addition to socio-cultural borders and processes, however, physical borders play a highly important part in reflecting and reproducing geographies of inclusion and exclusion. In this issue, we seek to focus on processes of difference-making at and within the physical borders they relate to. We invite submissions from authors interested in exploring how physical borders are delineated and constructed, and how various groups of people design, rearrange, transgress and destroy them.

From the time of Durkheim and Weber, a common distinction has been made between 'borders' and 'boundaries' (Fassin, 2011). The concept of borders was seen to represent actual physical borders, while boundaries were taken to be those social and symbolic barriers at work in society (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002). However, as Fassin (2011) argues, a combined approach that focuses simultaneously on physical, social and symbolic barriers is necessary in truly understanding what borders do to societies and, for example, migrants who pass them. Such an approach can show, for example, how migrants experience borders and the policies that accompany their regulation. As Alvarez (1995) argues in his work on the Mexican-US border, understanding the meaning of political-legal borders necessitates transcending the division between 'real' borders and more symbolic and ideological notions of boundaries.

Following from this point of departure, a first line of analysis in researching borders focuses on physical borders at different levels of scale: borders between continents, nation-states or even between different parts of cities and public and private spaces (see e.g. Demetriou, 2007; Flynn 1997; Hocking, 2012; Lentz, 2003). The present moment is characterized by a world-wide mushrooming of comparable barriers – ‘security fences’, ‘apartheid walls’ and ‘anti-terrorist fences’ – by which states, gated communities, neighborhoods, and even luxury resorts attempt to guarantee their sovereignty and (economic, political or existential) security. Examples include the infamous Israeli-built wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory or the ‘Peace Walls’ in Belfast. How do these ‘real’ physical borders at different levels of scale express and influence processes of territorial inclusion and exclusion? How do they contribute to the shaping of political subjectivities within as well as beyond the borders of the nation-state?

A second, related approach focuses on economic inequality and profit. While it is often implied that economic boundaries are increasingly flexible – the EU continues to expand as it accepts new members, economic relationships are strengthened between many different regions around the world – the globalized freedom of movement of certain categories of people and products are beyond the reach of many. Considerable effort is invested in maintaining this inequality, as the increased militarization of international as well as intra-urban borders indicates. A focus on material borders at these scales entails exploring the processes of social, political and economic exclusion that work through them. In our time of neo-liberal globalization, who do physical borders exclude, and to whose benefit? (see e.g. Galemba, 2012). Supported by what could be termed a ‘security ideology’, many people not considered part of the privileged West, or of national elites, are being restrained by such borders (see e.g. Barbero 2012 on migration regimes; Feldman 2011 on the migration apparatus). While for some, international borders – at airports, at highway checkpoints or on trains or boats – indicate and symbolize security against the foreign other, for others they represent the main obstacle to a dignified life. At the same time, borders and securitization more broadly present opportunities for economic gain. Which individuals and groups profit from strictly

maintained borders? In addition to political actors, private security companies literally profit from ideas about who is in and who should be outside of specific political-economic territories. On a more mundane level, borders allow low-paid guards, immigration officers and other civil servants to earn an income and often to exercise inordinate power over others. Elsewhere, smugglers and human traffickers make a living from circumventing or manipulating borders. How can we understand the economies produced by borders and the meanings they take on for participants?

A third line of analysis, taking a more aesthetic, performative approach, might ask how these material borders are able to *do* something to people living around them or to those who cross them. What impact do different kinds of borders have on people, how does their physical form create new spaces and new social realities on the ground? Borders can be seen as disciplining entities that produce both mobility and immobility, regulating steady flows of people but also facilitating the detention and persecution of people. What is the role of design in these processes, and how might a study of the phenomenology of borders help us understand their embodied effects? Specific border designs and materialities – concrete walls, metal gates, glass windows, barbed wire, security cameras, cheerful posters, sober uniforms, guard dogs, high-tech biometric equipment – enable distinct sensorial experiences in terms of sight, smell, sound or touch. What do these different forms of borders mean for people longing to cross them? What are the differences between ‘old fashioned’ border crossings that involve face-to-face interactions with border patrol officers and crossings typified by indirect communication and de-personalized procedures? Is a border more meaningful when it is visible than when it is an imagined line? Studies show that even the absence of borders, walls and fences *after* they have been taken down has an effect on social reality; fear may increase and the invisible wall that replaces the visible border may seem even higher than the latter (Donnan, 2010).

A final focus might be on the permeability and opacity of borders, as well as their temporalities. Increasingly, anthropologists are studying the legitimacy and permanence of borders in specific areas (Wilson and Donnan, 2012). As Mary Douglas noted early on, borders and boundaries often

serve to create order in a chaotic, complicated world. However, wherever there are borders there are mechanisms to cross them illegally, by crawling through holes in fences, jumping over walls, or digging tunnels under the ground. People engage in these various forms of 'messing' with the border for political, economic or personal reasons. Anthropologists are perhaps best equipped to go beyond dichotomies of order and chaos and to examine the real consequences of borders on the ground – how they limit and frustrate social life but also how people continue to subvert them in spite of concerted attempts to solidify them.

The editors of ETNOFOOR invite all those who wish to reflect upon these or related issues to send an abstract of no more than 150 words to editors@etnofoor.nl before **December 15, 2013**. The deadline for authors of accepted abstracts to submit their full paper for consideration is February 28th 2014. We would like to remind potential contributors that ETNOFOOR offers an experimental and creative space to those who want to free themselves from conventional scientific representations and that ETNOFOOR greatly encourages contributors who seek to innovate in style, image, and layout.

References:

Alvarez, Robert R. Jr.

2005 The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 447-470.

Barbero, Iker

2012 Orientalising Citizenship: the Legitimation of Immigration Regimes in the European Union. *Citizenship Studies* 16 (5-6): 751-768.

Demetriou, Olga

2007 To cross or not to cross? Subjectivization and the absent state in Cyprus. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(4): 987-1006.

Donnan, Hastings

2010 Cold War along the Emerald Curtain: rural Boundaries in a Contested Border Zone. *Social Anthropology* 18 (3): 253-266.

Fassin, Didier

2011 Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries: the Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 213-226.

Feldman, Gregory

2011 *The Migration Apparatus: Security, Labor and policymaking in the European Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Flynn, Donna K.

1997 "We Are the Border": Identity, Exchange, and the State along the Bénin-Nigeria Border. *American Ethnologist* 24(2): 311-330.

Galemba, Rebecca B.

2012 "Corn is food, not contraband": The right to "free trade" at Mexico-Guatemala border. *American ethnologist* 39(4): 716-734.

Green, Sarah

2013 Borders and the Relocation of Europe. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42: 345-361.

Hocking, Bryanna T.

2012 Beautiful Barriers: Art and Identity along a Belfast 'Peace' Wall. *Anthropology Matters* 14(1): 1-12.

Lentz, Carola

2003 "This is Ghanaian Territory!": Land Conflicts on a West African Border. *American Ethnologist* 30(2): 273-289.

Wilson, Thomas M. and Hastings Donnan

2012 Borders and Border Studies. In: T.M. Wilson and H. Donnan (eds.), *A Companion to Border Studies*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Yuval-Davis Nira and Marcel Stoetzler

2002 Imagined Boundaries and Borders: a Gendered Gaze. *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9 (3): 329-344.