

Post-modern Metamorphosis of Limological Discourses: From “Natural” Borders to Borderscapes

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Abstract

The expanding pace of border studies which began nearly thirty years ago has not lost its momentum, given the continuum of various research and theoretical frameworks/trajectories aimed at a further elaboration of the border phenomenon. These include concepts like “borderscape”, “borderity”, “border aesthetics”, “border as assemblage”, “border as method”, “cosmopolitan borders” or “generalized biopolitical border”. Moving away from the over-glorified platform of the “borderless world”, new trends cover those perspectives/dimensions in the comprehension of borders that, instead of focusing on static border lines and regimes/ arrangements of state power/territoriality/sovereignty, address the dispersion, proliferation and representation of border modalities, functions, roles and consequences within different contextual/situational positions and through various social, cultural and political activities and agendas, or bordering practices. This article, by means of specific conceptual/methodological triangulation, seeks to synthetically/eclectically identify major characteristics and courses of changed ontology and epistemology or the meaning and technology of the new post-modern understanding of borders.

Keywords: border, bordering, borderscapes, borderity, border practices, generalized biopolitical border, border as assemblage, border as method,

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cosmopolitan borders, border spectacle.

“Identity, however, is not thinkable without the permeable border, or else without the possibility of relinquishing a boundary. In the first case, one fears invasion, encroachment, and impingement, and makes a territorial claim in the name of self-defense. But in the other case, a boundary is given up or overcome precisely in order to establish a certain connection beyond the claims of territory.”

Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? Judith Butler²⁾

“The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it.”

Simulations, Jean Baudrillard³⁾

Introduction

Borders are among those rarely uttered and commonly implied notions, phenomena, symbols, images, constructs, discourses, narratives, institutions, processes or activities which, more or less, are possible to identify within a full spectrum of different individual and societal practices marked by differently declared interests, preferences and, progressive or regressive, aims, as well as by a variety of structures, histories, contexts, situations and actors. In fact, borders completely colonize our lives. Simultaneously, to begin with a tentative digression: the trope of the “border-wall” is perhaps the most radical form of objectivization, reduction, fixation and passivization of the border imaginariums.⁴⁾ Wall, as a “universalized” border simulation of controlled confluence with Nature, the process of “pseudo-geomorphologization” of space/territory: it stops being an artefact, a cultural algorithm/code/text/matrix and is treated as a natural fact (barrier similar to an untraversable mountain or canyon). If we leave aside the fact

2) Butler, J. (2009) *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, pp. 43-44.

3) Baudrillard, J. (1983) *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext[e], p. 2.

4) Therefore, the trope “wall” implies all border barriers or immobilia, barriers fixed by construction, fortifications or wall-like objects: walls made of any kind of material, bulwarks, embankments, palisades, barricades, blocks, wire fences and the like.

that the wall has gates (just as mountains may have tunnels and canyons bridges),⁵⁾ it becomes subject the natural order and natural laws, pre-given, reified and *a priori*.

The metonymic/methaphorical/alegoric⁶⁾ meaning dimension of the wall is so distinct and transparent that, regardless of its materiality or imaginarity, it can be interpreted and is often used as a visualisation/emblem of borders, usually in the sense of a “three-dimensional” linear icon of separation (with hidden/obscured, but inherent, connotations/capacities of bonding).⁷⁾ The physical, holographic, phantasmagoric or virtual/cyber “wall” is the border, while physical, holographic, phantasmagoric or virtual/cyber border is the “wall”. Perhaps the most critically effective analytical position is not being on either side of the border-wall, but contemplating and pondering from the perspective of the border-wall itself: being the Border, not the State. The tenacity of such ideas/philosophemes, or the lack of it, will be addressed later. It is noteworthy, as Wendy Brown (2010) observes, that walls need not always be an index of state power and potential, but a symbol, last remainder of the successively disappearing system of territorially bounded sovereignty.⁸⁾

Anyhow, border-walls are not an obsolete phenomenon, nor are they the

5) As noted by Georg Simmel (1997 [1909]: 171): “In the immediate as well as the symbolic sense, in the physical as well as the intellectual sense, we are at any moment those who separate the connected or connect the separate”.

6) According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980: 156) metaphors, metonymies or personifications, as well as allegories and synecdoches, in a broader sense: referring to one system of meaning in order to explain or clarify another system of meaning, are not mere verbal or written “vignettes” of authenticity/originality of some specific modes of speech, but fundamental traits of human communication and potential creators/innovators/benchmarks of social and political reality and mobilisation.

7) For example, in support of this, we can say that the bulk of books dealing with borders on their covers have some kind of wall or other above-mentioned forms of border barriers, or, that aside from being a more or less mythological construct, the only man-made structure visible, according to one version, from the Moon or even from Mars according to another- the Great Wall of China (Waldron 1990: 214, 220), is nothing but a visualised meandering line. Also, by 2011, around 20 000 km of world borders were walls and fences (Diener and Hagen 2012: 9).

8) We should also add a range of distinguished authors, such as Didier Bigo (2001), Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (2007), Holger Pötzsch (2010), Mark Salter (2012), Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013), Chris Rumford (2014) or Mireille Rosello and Stephen Wolfe (2017), who implicitly or explicitly position the trope of wall not just as inadequate/faulty, but also as wrong/retrograde/harmful.

ultimate stage/instance in a civilization/culture, an end-point where nothing begins (Sterling 2009; Brown 2010; Vallet and David 2012; Baschlin and Sidati 2011; Pusterla and Piccin 2012; Nail 2013). Proclaimed that: “A nation without borders is not a nation. Beginning today, the United States of America gets back control of its borders, gets back its borders (Smith 2017)”, the forty-fifth US President Donald Trump on January 21st, 2017 signed a directive for the construction of a 3220-kilometer-long wall on the border with Mexico. By doing so, viewed from the diachronic (“vertical”) perspective, in addition to the walls of the first Sumerian cities, the Long Walls of Athens, the Great Wall of Gorgan (Alexander’s Wall), Hadrian’s Wall (Vallum Hadriani) and Antonine Wall (Vallum Antonini), Ishitsuji (石築地) or Genko Borui (元寇防壘) Wall, Great Wall of China, Berlin Wall, and, I would say, the Maginot and Siegfried lines, as well as the Atlantic Wall, another symbolic instance was attached to the discourse/narrative on the naturalization of political borders. If, in parallel, we add the synchronic (“horizontal”) perspective, such as the Moroccan Wall or the Israeli Wall, or border walls between Serbia and Hungary, India and Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma), North Korea and China, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, South Africa and Zimbabwe, then borders impose themselves as a topic of major importance and persistence in international relations and political science/theory *in genere*.

Indeed, by representing an inherent component of human life and an important factor in the production and reproduction of the relations between the individual and society, as well as between individuals as such and between different political entities, or groups, nations, societies and states, borders rank among such social and theoretical phenomena, concepts, constructs, texts, discourses, narratives or simulacrum that constitute a specific academic (“ontological-epistemological”) constant in several social science and humanities disciplines and subdisciplines. If to the aforementioned we add the permanent migrant crisis in Southeast Asia, or the great European migration crisis triggered by the war in Syria, the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union (Brexit) or the persistent border disputes in Africa, the Middle East or South and Southeast Asia, then the research of borders is an activity of the highest scientific and social importance. It makes no

difference whether such research is the engaged post-positivistic- discursive, narratological, phenomenological, hermeneutical, constructivist, performative, or positivistic- (neo)functionalistic, (neo)institutionalistic, (neo)realistic, deterministic or rational choice interpretation of space and borders.

However, not only by their obvious, geographic and physical (“palpable”) being, but also in their sociological, political, culturological, legal, economic, anthropological, psychological or philosophical perspective, borders, as a science topic, contradictory to their substantial dimension as one of the constitutive concepts of societies as such (namely of individuals and states), have long been absurdly marginalised, taken “for granted”, overlooked, suppressed, declared epiphenomenal or absolutely disregarded and neglected. Although Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) contended that time was a category privileged by dialectics, as exclusive and subordinating where space is tolerant and coordinating (Ross 1988: 8), it is only in the last twenty-five years, definitely not a long period of time, that there has been a renaissance/proliferation/mushrooming of research dealing with the diverse forms and categories⁹⁾ of spatialisation. This constellation is associated with the protracted process of reassertion of space, compared to the time-stamped, despatialized and monosemic conscience of the modern man in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, with the distancing from the prevalent and privileged historically based linear sequencing of the past and evolution towards the re-evaluation of a position, situation or context (Foucault 2008 [1967]; Soja 1993, 2009; Cosgrove 1999; Warf and Arias 2009). The key characteristic of that era was an overwhelming, perhaps not victory, but definitely domination of Time over Space.

At the beginning of 1990’s, post-modernism gave rise to the relevant paradigmatic transformations in social and human sciences, manifested in various turns: from the interpretative and deconstructivist, via cultural and semiotic, up to the performative and digital versions, to name just a few (Susen 2015: 34). In that

9) In doing so, the author where aware that dealing with categories is, in itself, aporetic/contradictory. They are means both of the manifestation/exercise of power and of the formulation/establishment of order, as well as the inevitable elements in understanding the world in its full richness and diversity: proportionally to the opening and expanding of our horizons, categories close and narrow them (Jones 2009: 179).

context, the “spatial turn” played one of the major and most influential roles (Bourdieu 1989; Soja 1989; Harvey 1990, 1990a; Gregory 1994; Massey 1994; Featherstone and Lash, 1995; Robertson 1995). The respatialized academic scene discards the conceptualisation of Space as secondary or subsidiary, socially accidental, compared to the idea of Time, and does not treat it as an unproblematic, static container of social relations/powers, processes, flows and causality. Not only did Space gain an equal footing with Time, but it was given advantage as a precursor/precondition for diverse socio-politically profiled, historically ranked occurrences. It ceased to be social “planimetry” and instead became social “stereometry”, no longer a sheer social reflection, it gained social depth and scope. The post-modern time-space compression (Harvey 1990: 284-308; Stein 2001; Warf 2008) acquired its most authentic and explicit, but also critical expression in power-geometry (Massey 1994: 146-157), a concept that we will revert to later.

Ten years later, elaborating space as a social construct/product and recognising the above-implied, interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary impetus in its investigation, another turn was proposed: the “b/ordering turn” (Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005: 4-5). We will say at the beginning that a clear distinction was made with regard to the concept of centered, essentialized, invariable and homogeneous borders, by placing emphasis on multiplied practices generated by several different arenas and actors, from highly formalized political border engagements/discourses to the everyday routines/narratives of individuals, which, in the final outcome, (re)formulate what appears as a decentered, de-essentialized, variable and heterogeneous perception of borders that we would initially call their processual/constructivist conception. The promotion of the b/ordering turn is not just a result derived from scientific/theoretical “laboratories”, it does not relate to some purely academic evolution of related disciplines, but is also associated with the disputations that refer to the transformations/re-mapping of the post-Cold War world order and plural trajectories of the world society developments *in toto*.

In any case, borders do not arise from nothing, they are not a pre-defined personification of some Truth greater than themselves, but are created, artifacts

arising from the competitive forces/practices of a multitude of actors/discourses. When they acquire the status of "petrified", "refractory" physical fact, it is the result of some specific discourse that transposes them into such a state. Their genuine discourses/narratives/perspectives, usually organized as clusters of "pro-border" normative/linguistic/symbolic formations extracted from different discourses/narratives, are underpinned by the idea that borders result from socio-spatial, but also identity criteria for encoding, identification, verification and reproduction: us and them, proximity and difference, inclusion and exclusion, order and dis-order (chaos/anarchy) or even, what is and what is possible from what isn't and is not possible. They do not arise only from a set of circumstances determining the situation and status of a state, nor are they just management-organizational requirements for functional perfecting, or just a reflection of rigid/rigorous political decisions.

Borders are, intrinsically, "transgressed and transgressional" lines, functioning as separating and qualifying criteria, narrative plots, arenas, constructs, spectacles, mechanisms, dispositifs/apparatuses, simulacra, or assemblages for the projection of coordinates or locating people and objects in today's destabilized, fluid, ethereal, liquid or decentralized spaces that they themselves constitute and re-constitute (Bauman 2000; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012; Bauman and Lyon 2013). This process does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of borders, but even when grow stronger, understanding of their underlying power is of a different nature than its traditional equivalent. At the same time, there is a constant risk from the process of border definition/determination running into a logical anomaly of the "vicious circle" (*circulus vitiosus*), as their representation is a prerequisite for their definition/determination (Balibar 2002: 76). Namely, borders are an expression of some political/cultural/social content or entity that owes its identity exclusively to specified borders. Broadly speaking, it is a dialectical interfacing, but also distinction, of the border and the bordered. The question is: Do spaces/territories belong to borders or do borders belong to spaces/territories and therefore, are there borders without space/territory or spaces/territories without borders? Finally, are there borders that are not political/geographic entities or are all spaces necessarily political/geographic realities? The answer only appears

simple and obvious, but what makes it “dramatic” for research is not in “space borders” but in “border spaces” (cf. Abbott 1995: 857).

When we refer to the state of border research, or limological studies, in political theory and in theory of international relations, we actually imply four possible criteria/options of its evaluation: (1) as a “minimalist” parenthetical reasoning that considers borders as epiphenomena/corollaries/concomitances of some more comprehensive notion incorporated in the political theory or theory of international relations, such as state/sovereignty, governance, space/spatiality, territory/territoriality, ideology, identity or nation; (2) as one of the disciplinary valences/vantage points within their already specified inter-, multi- or trans-disciplinary study, where the act of participation is more important than the scaling of contribution; (3) through the optics of an “isolated”, implicit but not derived, “camouflaged/masked” border status in the sense of an “exclusive” field/category of political theory and theory of international relations; and (4) as a “maximalist” reasoning whereby any examination of borders is a strategy to gain, maintain and preserve power and thus automatically the matter/constant of political theory or theory of international relations.

If we leave aside the maximalist approach as a potentially separate paradigmatic point of view, akin to post-modernism, post-structuralism and neo-Gramscianism, none of the proposed evaluation frameworks reached a reasonably respectable qualitative-quantitative level of consideration in political science. Political theory and theory of international relations seem to “spontaneously” bypass the substantive spatial-limological “focalisation”. In line with this, we can note a few interesting points (cf. Brown 2001; Ferguson and Jones 2002): (1) the dissonance of global politics and economy with the Westphalian imperative of state borders, ever more prominent processes of “de-territorialisation” (not negating the opposite trend of “re-territorialisation”); (2) the study of the border phenomenon has been left to international law and global bureaucracy, leading to their simplistic/one-dimensional understanding as mere demarcation lines, where the key issue appears to be their location and distribution, while some fundamental concepts, such as, for example, identity and culture, remain in the background.; (3) the paradoxical contradiction between the cosmopolitan liberal theory in which the importance of

borders is underrated, and the anti-cosmopolitan liberal practice in which they appear and essential condition in identity preservation (today, the issue is not that any identity position is also a cultural stance, but that that cultural stance can not be universal); and (4) the erosion of the capacity of communitarian perspective to preserve the relevant position of the state, self-sufficient community and borders, under the “tsunami” of global social, political and economic transformations. Consequently, the authors would like to emphasise that, without getting into a further and broader elaboration, a new discipline (or sub-discipline) dedicated exclusively to border studies should be established within the corpus of political science, to be possibly named Political Limology.

Having in mind all of the above and making use of the methodological triangulation and meta-analysis, as well as genealogy/archaeology of the Foucauldian type, while respecting the inter-disciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity of the subject of research, this monographic study will trace the discursive/narrative transformation or evolution of the idea of predefined/ineradicable borders towards the concept of bordering: the processual-relationist construction/generation of borders (also comprising the format of rebordering and the format of debordering). The consensus has not yet been achieved, since wider acceptance of this metamorphosis on the academic stage is only a few years old. On the other hand, the analytical focus will also be on the characteristics of the “radically” post-modernized explanatory strategies, such as borderscape or, on the concepts “inaugurated” here- border spectacle and hyper-border culture. To achieve that, it is necessary to demonstrate some terminological and categorial remarks concerning the reading of space, place, territory, territoriality or mapping policy, but also other concepts that are more or less inevitable for the adequate border perception/definition.

Encompassing both ontology and epistemology, the study will be structured in relation to the clusters of attributes of the different approaches to the comprehension and imagination of borders (understood as “naturalized matrices”, “processual constructs”, or narrated/poeticized “communities of sentiment” embodied in the concept of borderscapes). The lexical/orthographic dimension of this work will be consistent with their kaleidoscopic notional-terminological

extent.¹⁰⁾ The only “postulates” underlying this structure of the study are the full acceptance, extended to the context of borders, of Henri Lefebvre’s aphorism that the politics of space (or borders) exists because space (together with borders) is inherently political (cf. Lefebvre 1976b: 31, 33) and George Simmel’s “embryonic” dictum that borders are not spatial facts with social effects, but sociological facts with a spatial dimension as a constitutive element (cf. Simmel 1997 [1903]: 143).¹¹⁾

In this respect, the principal research intentions of this text are to: (1) synchronically detect, compare and critically examine the main guidelines and potentials of different approaches/perspectives/paradigms in the elaboration of the notions of borders, or meanings attached to them; (2) to the extent possible, deconstruct the imperative of (state) territory in pro-Westphalian meta-narratives of political borders through the deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation-“trans-territorialisation”/trans-nationalism triad; (3) articulate the idea of “border spectacle” and “hyper-border” culture, which implies the reintensification of the importance of identity and historically contingent-contextual interpretations, the “re-establishment” of the idea of spectacle/simulacrum (but not “degradation” present in the Foucauldian interpretation of archaeology/genealogy) and, finally, the examination of the relationally understood space for the analogous relational perception of borders; and (4) to academically signal the need for the final revision/inversion of the political imaginariums based on the “apodicticity”, “nomotheticity” and “inertia” of borders as facts with those based on the “hypothetical”, “idiographic” and “kinetic” of the constructivist or post-modernist and post-structural analytical strategies that treat borders as artefacts.

Summa summarum, despite the considerable flourishing in the

10) In line with that, and concerning punctuation, as the reader may already have noticed, the slash sign will be used relatively copiously for data or notions that are of the same value and whose relationship is either complementary, synonymous (for understanding useful tautologies) or antonymous. In our opinion this will not complicate but rather enhance capacity for a “profound” intelligibility and scope of the study, preventing the far more detrimental oversimplification or reduction.

11) Of course, Simmel’s position was later modified, refined and chiseled, but it is still, in the author’s opinion, the most open platform for the original cogitative/notional/terminological situation of borders and their primarily social-constructivist nature.

conceptualization/theorisation of borders that has virtually inundated all social sciences, the need for their research remains unabated. Conversely, the impetus comes from various quarters: (1) the radical compounding of the ongoing globalisation process and its attendant multiplication and differentiation of borders and their practices, meanings and forms; (2) the parallel existence, validity and influence of several different, sometimes diametrically opposed, approaches to the understanding of borders; (3) the inadequate development, inventiveness and originality in the comprehension of border, or opening of space for alternative modalities of their treatment; (4) the need for study of the multifaceted, multilevel and multidimensional relationship between borders and society; (5) the accelerated change of the cultural, political, economic, historical and social context in which borders emerge and disappear (corroded idea of a “borderless world”, although this phrase/cliché does not necessarily imply a united world); (6) the monolithic apprehension of border praxis either as empirically “transitory” or “intransitory”, without leaving the possibility for the ambivalent simultaneity of both these states/mechanisms or, inadequate treatment of the study of border performability; (7) insufficient capacity, definitely sizeable, of the idea of bordering in responding to new mega and micro “plots” in the domain of the spatialisation of politics; and (8) the perpetuated shifting, evasiveness, recomposition and multipolarity of border studies (Bucken-Knapp, Schack and Houtum 2001; Rumford 2006; Vaughan-Williams 2009; Jones 2009; Johnson *et al.* 2011; Paasi 2011; Megoran 2012; Brambilla *et al.* 2015a; Newman 2011, 2015; Sohn 2015; Novak 2016; Jones *et al.* 2017).

Ergo, research questioning, without losing its crucial status in just pro-theoretical consideration of border issues, still implies doubts such as: whose borders, what/how borders, where and in what way borders become borders. This does not mean that we are propounding some comprehensive border theory, since such a theory is not only unnecessary but also, by and large, even impossible. With respect to the fact that the border “sfumato” by no means stands for border disappearance, this essay thus primarily focuses on their “allotropic” modifications, in attempt to capture not only institutional, structural and, of course, political level, but also the cultural-symbolic, representational sphere that concerns border images, imaginations and imaginariums.

1. Dramatic Turn: Borders as the Bordering/Debordering/Rebordering Processes

Contemporary literature on borders from different academic disciplines/angles identifies four major conceptual/analytical points (Newman and Paasi 1998: 191): (1) the thesis on the gradual disappearance of borders; (2) the role of borders in the construction of socio-spatial identities; (3) border discourse/narratives; and (4) different spatial scaling in the construction of borders. Just as the perception of borders may be the geographical/territorial/spatial materialisation of the farthest reaches of particular political processes, they are also competitive autonomous discursive clusters, but, as already highlighted, segments of some more “ambitiously”/ broadly profiled social, cultural, historical, economic, legal, religious or political discourse, too. The constructs of borderlines, borders or borderlands have a strong symbolic, ritual, axiological, iconic and ceremonial meaning, that not only is defined by the “mainstream” identity-political discourse, but that also defines the identity-political mainstream, they are simultaneously the source of stability and instability of a political community/entity. Borders can quite reasonably be explored as texts or narratives, but they are definitely also border practices stemming from or grounded in them, i.e. technologies/dispositives or rhizomes/assemblages.

Aside from their completely intrinsic material aspect, borders are among the socially (re)produced, but also highly aestheticized, phenomena/denominators/descriptors, or more specifically: activities with a culture of their own, an almost “oneiric”, (topo)poetics/(topo)symbolics which, to make use of Max Weber’s (1946 [1919], 1946a [1915]) parables, are in a never-ending circular process of enchantment, disenchantment and re-enchantment (cf. Jenkins 2000; Rosello and Wolfe 2017; Schimanski and Wolfe 2017). In so doing, borders tend to occupy a central position in the (re)formulation of territoriality and in the foundational cultural-national-identity narratives. Virtually, all border interpretations/imaginaries, but also physical/visual contacts with them, resemble aestheticized/poeticized encounters both with the *simulacra imperii*, images of power, and the *arcana imperii*, secrets of power. In this context, *simulacra imperii* imply *arcana*

imperii, the images of power are inextricable from or rest on the secrets of power. The case of the Indian exclave Balapara Khagrabari surrounding the Bangladeshi enclave of Upanchowki Bhajni, which, in turn, surrounds the Indian enclave of Dahala Khagrabari best attests to this. It is one of the 198 “enigmatic/mysterious” enclaves along the northern border between India and Bangladesh, an enclave within an enclave, so that it takes crossing the Indian/Bangladeshi border abstractly/fictively three times to reach it from India. More or less, this poetic/aristic illustration also covers meanings that emanate from the artistic representation of the particular perspective of the venue and meanings associated with the aesthetics of creative collective engagements/practices in border-making (Olwig 2008: 83-84).

So, whether the previous example is approached as an “idyllic-romantic” iconography of the identity/historical narrative, as a political construct of incongruence of the feudal-mogul patronage system and sovereignty system brought by the British Empire, as being within the domain of pure realistically perceived national/state power derived from border negotiations/disputes between India, Pakistan and later Bangladesh, or perhaps as a hegemonistic post-colonial cynicism that frames them as tragicomic (quasi-)legends about maharajas’ gambling debts, it would be wrong to think that their cultural-aesthetic-poetic-symbolic substrate, their “border magic” has a happy/positive outcome (Schendel 2002; Jones 2010). By contrast, they are extremely neglected, marginalized, underdeveloped, administrated areas/peripheries, without any, even elementary infrastructure: law, police, schools, roads, shops, healthcare institutions, telephone, electricity, water supply or structured borders. And, while it is possible to register a booming trend of one-way trans-territorial nationalism from home countries into the enclaves, the forgotten local population expresses its distancing from the home country through a cultural/identity self-encoding, or paradoxically, the state-produced effect of the social “wasteland”: statelessness, perhaps best articulated in the isolationist syntagm *chitmahal bashi*, enclave people (Jones 2010: 17) that, in turn, implies another paradox: an implosion/rejection of the national identity or nationlessness (Schendel 2002: 145). The policy of (re)mapping/reinforcement of the national borders is a process/practice which need not necessarily lead to the symbolic (re)mapping/reinforcement of the national identity. In other words,

borders are autonomous up to a point, insofar as they can not only support/reinforce the symbolic of distinction they emerged and were derived from, but can also modify/devastate it.

In any case, the word border denotes different diachronic/synchronic culturally profiled meanings and etymological dimensions for different people/vocabularies/lexeis.¹²⁾ The English terms: “border”, “boundary” and “frontier” are often used synonymously, but also metaphorically, and such an absence of consensus tends to generate considerable terminological confusion. However, each of these terms has its particular/denotive meaning (Kristof 1959: 269-274; Baud and Schendel 1997: 213-216; Newman and Paasi 1998: 186-190; Anderson and O’Dowd 1999: 594-596, 603, fn. 1; Newman 2003: 17-19; Parker 2006: 78-80; Konrad and Nicol 2008: 21-38; Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012: 776-780; Haselsberger 2014: 508-510). As a linear restrictive factor/element derived from different aspects of separation, the centripetal term: boundary, generically defined as bounds or limits of something, tends to be more comprehensive than the more specific terms border (all borders are boundaries, while the opposite is not always true) and frontier, and occurs as a geo-political, socio-cultural, economic or bio-physical “boundary set”. It captures both borders and frontiers through a continuum where, in its extreme version, borders, as solid/static/rigid/restrictive legal lines related to the division into various political and administrative entities are on one pole, while on the other are centrifugal frontiers, the soft/porous/fluid/spectral zones of mutual penetration of distanced/demarcated/delimited entities featuring overlapping political, cultural, social or economic boundaries. Frontiers are transposed from neutral political areas between empires/states or unpopulated/underpopulated pioneer areas on the edges of empires/states with fuzzy geographical/cultural borders into border areas/regions, or borderlands, geopolitical spheres/spaces under the direct influence of the presence of borders which are, in fact, their extension. Two adjacent opposite border regions together make a cross-border region/trans-boundary region and open a space for hybrid processes of mutual

12) Thus, for example while in German there is only one word indicating different semiotic instances of bordering: *Grenze*, there are three in Spanish: *frontera*, *marca* i *limite*, and four in French: *frontiere*, *front*, *limite* i *marche* (Anderson and O’Dowd 1999: 603).

functional attunement. Border zones are a kind of buffer zones, narrow spatial belts, controlled by border patrols or by means of some advanced technology (like drones), in which extreme regimes or prohibitions apply -of movement, of ownership or construction, whose purpose is to prevent illegal entries or exits from contiguous territories.

The *differentia specifica* of natural borders, compared to the artificial ones, rests on the idea that not all borders that are “created” in natural ways (if they do not follow or coincide with the trajectories of some hydrographic or geomorphological phenomenon: sea, river, mountain etc.), but are a result/product of human intervention, they are classified/categorised as artificial/denaturalised borders (artificial barriers and geometric lines). Unlike turbulent medieval times and fragmented feudal territories, with their idiosyncratic multiple and overlapping autonomous levels of power, when borders were neutral belts/zones of separation, but also interaction and assimilation of people with different cultural identities, borderlines of modern nation states, as continual structures fully enclosing some particular and sovereign political entity, are the result of a lengthy and gradual process of political homogenisation/integration (Sahlins 1991: 6; Foucher 1998: 238). The nationalisation of borders has been predominantly associated with the nineteenth century imaginary of their primordial historical entrenchment. Due to that, artificial/constructed national borders were automatically subjected to (re) naturalisation for the verification of sacrosanctity, authenticity, compactness and security of the nation. Not only was the geographic environment harmonised/identified with national border narratives/myths, but border artefacts also came to be treated as corrected/finalised nature.

Symbolic/conceptual borders, on the other hand, imply the diversification of social actors geared at the sorting of objects, people, practices, time and space, they are an instrument and/or medium through which individuals and groups struggle, compete and agree on defining reality, or through which they gain status and monopolise resources, while social/objectified borders manifest objectified modalities of social inequalities in access to and distribution of material and non-material resources and social opportunities (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168-169). In both cases borders are real, symbolic on the intersubjective and social on the

inter-group level, while the former is a necessary but not sufficient condition for noting/detection of the latter. It should be added that bordering practices can be defined as a set of intentional and unintentional and, depending on the perspective, more or less successful activities undertaken by citizens themselves and by non-state and state actors, aimed at the constitution, sustenance and transformation of borders, engagements that address the issues of “bordering”, “debordering” and “rebordering” (Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012: 776-777). Concentration on border practices also entails a state of permanent agency, performance, bordering by means of various rituals/ceremonies/protocols (e.g. passport control) and thus, border practices of bordering/re-bordering/de-bordering manifest their performative potentials both concerning some specific social/economic/political realities and some specific individual position (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012: 729-730). Borders are not only an integral part in the identity articulation of different political communities/entities (e.g. state, region, province, etc.), but every individual is also “bordered”/marked by different digital/biometric techniques and technologies (biometric passports, personal identity cards etc.).

In addition to the above, one of the topics that is still enjoys respect in the traditionalist approaches to border studies is the phenomenon of “phantom borders” (Kolossoff 2015: 36-37). Phantom borders refer to the political and cultural borders that have in part or completely lost or altered their functions or symbolic value, but are still recognizable or influential in different modes of cultural, social or economic activities. The borders of this rank, those that initiate and occupy cultural life by evoking the lost territories, often give rise to the creation of influential social movements, whose mission is to proclaim the restoration of the previous border setup. The focal topics in the research of phantom borders usually revolve around (*ibidem*: 37): (1) discrepancies in the identity of populations on both sides of the phantom border; (2) inclusion into the current administrative-territorial division; (3) impacts on demographic and electoral behavior; (4) the presence in the cultural and symbolic landscapes; and (5) the role in cross-border cooperation and interaction.

However, from the dialectic point of view, the inadequate scientific elaborations of borders have been generated, but have also generated specific inertia in

addressing the issue: an isomorphic perspective in understanding space, nations/ identities and states. There was a tendency to deal with borders as naturalized, nature-given social coordinates or formations, paradoxically regulated by natural laws, as strong, change-resistant, extremely fixed socio-politico-cultural axioms. This analytical preoccupation with intransigent political “geo-geometry/geo-planimetry”: the immobilized, naturalized and hierarchical position and distribution of states or state territories, with very little room for maneuver for transformation and fluctuability, is the *differentia specifica* of the traditional or classical border discourse (Newman and Paasi 1998; Busch and Kelly-Holmes 2004; Kolossov 2005; Brunet-Jailly 2005; Newman, 2006). States are perceived as ultra-static givens or “natural”, geographically defined and indisputably consistent entities, whereas borders are postulated as the resultant from the realistically positioned, political, economic and military balance/disbalance of power with neighboring states.

The early academic scene in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries, therefore, constructed borders upon the deterministic implications of the notion of the “natural border” and was more descriptive-observational than pro-theoretical, focused on delimitation and demarcation processes and the relationship between borders and their natural environment. The traditional theoretical approach denotes (Kolossov 2005: 607-612): (1) the historical mapping of the border evolution, their geo-morphological characteristics and borderland analyses; (2) the typology of borders, their classification by different criteria, their spatial structure, natural features and genesis, the historical causes of some allocation or delimitation, and by functions; (3) the functional “scanning” of borders and of the political and territorial factors that determine them, resulting in placing an emphasis on inter-border cooperation and the management of social processes in borderlands; and (4) political methods, where ad-hoc attention is paid to border issues, depending on some paradigm in International Relations.

Thus, the founder of political geography, Friedrich Ratzel, at the end of the nineteenth century used untested/pseudo-scientific, but not *a priori* worthless and ideologized hypotheses, to initiate a “positivist-Darwinist” bio-political semantics of the national passion for space. Namely, according to him, borders are a reality

and borderlines their abstraction, while ascending/declining state is none other than a living organism that is difficult to frame by petrified/invariable borders (Ó Tuathail 1996; Dijk 1999; Prescott and Triggs 2008; Abrahamsson 2013; Bellezza 2013). Moreover, every state is bound to enter into conflict with other states since, in order to survive, it must expand its living space (*Lebensraum*) - a synthesis of biological, geographic and anthropological traits of its respective environment. Every struggle for life is a struggle for space, while borders are the “skin”/ peripheral organ tuned to the rhythm of metamorphoses of state organism/body. State borders and *Lebensraum* are proportional to the size and metabolic needs/ demands of a specific population. The creator of the neologism “geopolitics” and the organic theory of state based on Ratzel’s ideas, Rudolf Kjellén, argued at the beginning of the twentieth century that struggle for space manifests the striving of states to become organic territories, geographical individuals characterised by natural outwards borders and harmonious inwards context of natural territory (Abrahamsson 2013: 42). He deems it quite indicative that, in their endeavour to reach an utmost degree of autarky, states can render their land more “natural” than it originally was by engagement of labour potentials (*loc. cit.*).

On the eve of World War II, Jacques Ancel, however, believed that borders were constantly evolving political isobars that palliatively balance the persistent pressure of expansionist-minded masses and forces, manifested in military clashes and territorial conquests (Mamadouh 2005: 31). It should be added that one of the most frequently referenced traditional classifications, Richard Hartshorne’s (1936: 56-57), divides borders into: (1) the antecedent type - which can be further subdivided into: (1.1) the pioneering sub-type, totally antecedent borders that had existed before an area was populated, before the development of the cultural landscape, and (1.2) the relic sub-type, antecedent borders abandoned for political reasons but still existing in the cultural landscape; (2) subsequent type-borders congruent with the extant ethno-territorial schemes of settlement of an area; (3) superimposed type – borders imposed by the external colonial authority that usually disregard previous ethnic patterns, but which over time, if rather hard, could become part of the area’s cultural structure; and (4) natural type – borders attuned to the physical features of the specific landscape.

The traditionalist/classical discursive reading of borders hinges on their elaboration as petrified/inerted/stabilised/fixed outcomes or consequences of the politically strictly defined decision-making process on the one hand, and on their treatment through the state of continual (re)territorialisation, with the mobility/changes corresponding to the imminent, historically (re)appraised, alternation of macro-cycles of war, negotiations and peace on the other (Newman 2006: 174-176). Such an apprehension of borders matrix implies a positivistic perception of space by understanding it as an autonomous and holistic object which (re)shapes social phenomena through a system of deterministically profiled one-way causal relations (the existence of the strict, rigid limological dichotomy of external, international state borders and internal administrative area borders). The post-modern concept of spatio-social relations, or of the spatial perspective of society includes (Delanty and Rumford 2005: 122-123): (1) the disharmony between the composition of new social and political spaces and old territorial arrangements; (2) non-transparency and reduction in the significance of the internal vs. external dichotomy; (3) the incongruence of empirical space experience with the spatial dimension of nation-states; and (4) the need to reconstitute the relations between the individual, society and the world.

The functionalist approach to borders is basically directed towards their degree of openness, i.e. the forms of interaction between border zones, understood as spatially adjacent to borders themselves. Borders are treated as irrefutable facts, and their study includes different kinds of border activities and their influence on society *in toto*. Thus, they serve to the separation of people by specifying their “own” regions, on the one hand, and prevention, control and interaction between them, on the other. In this sense, the four models of borders or borders areas/regions can be distinguished (Martinez 1994: 5-10; Kolossov 2015: 38-39): (1) the alienating model- which points to the impermeability, rigidity or militarization of relations between bordering states, to radicalized frictions or collisions such as: an armed or political conflict; a nationalist, ideological or religious animosity; a cultural disparity or an ethnic rivalry; (2) the coexistent model- as the most frequent one at the moment, this model reflects the mitigation and pacification of a border tension to a manageable level or their reduction to the intensity that

provides the minimal border stability and, hence, the minimal border co-efficiency, too; (3) the interdependency model- which is characteristic of the countries that reached a high degree of political cordiality, cooperability, mutuality, partnership and coordination (a loose visa regime, the demilitarization of border zones, intense cooperation between their business segments and civil society spheres etc.); and (4) the integrated model- which manifests the obliteration of all major obstacles to interstate cooperation, or namely open borders of politically stable, militarily secure and economically powerful states.

The contemporary definition of borders primarily designates them as barriers to both inward and outward mobility, or as barriers designed to eliminate the undesirable or odious “concrete, objectivized content” (people or goods) as the carriers of the “abstract, conceptual content” (notional or symbolic codes). They are the “asymmetric membranes” (Hedetoft 2003: 152), or so to speak the “semi-permeable membranes”, that are both the determinants and the resultants of the selective basis of the national, state or cultural border osmosis: namely, someone or something passes and the rest or others do not, partly due to some specific narrative/discursive (re)positioning and/or (re)interpreting. The conceptualizing of borders should comprise the presumption of shared, integrative spaces and multiple identities and additionally review the possibility of differentiating the concepts of a nationality and citizenship, on the one hand, and the functional territorial arrangements implying several distinctive formulas of delineation, on the other (Gottlieb 1993: 42-47).

Borders are extremely complex notions that are simultaneously the determinants of distinction and socially fabricated institutions, constructed structure of bordering practice. As disjunctive determinants, they are some sort of socio-spatial “*jalon/piquet*”, or markers, that relationally trace and express the territorial scope of *de jure/de facto* proclaimed sovereignty. Respecting different ontological stances and approaches in the sphere of territorology, from extremely soft to extremely rigid, about the essence and mutual relation of territory and territoriality, borders largely remain their constituent, fundamental or generic attribute. In fact, political borders spatially incrust the prevalently state-afferent order both materially, discursively/narratively and through vertical and horizontal

hierarchies of classification/categorisation practices. Hence, they are not solely passive/static partial result of matrix of interaction, but an active/dynamic factor in the ordering of space. Territories, projected through borders, can not be defined as compact/hermetically occluded entities, their finality is defied by different levels of scales applied, as well as by scales of non-state origin. This means that, when it comes to their territoriality project/programme/platform, rather than dilution or concentration, or some form of adjustment, there is constant disassembling, assembling or reassembling of policentric/multiscalar norms, values and symbols (cf. Novak 2011: 743).

In other words, borders are not pre-given or, let's say, "anaesthetised/vegetating" phenomena encasing/modelling social components and occurrences, they are situationally/contextually profiled processes/activities of bordering. Transposition of the focus of analysis from the notion of borders to the notion of bordering represents a "processual shift" in border studies (Brambilla 2015: 15). Borders are debated as dynamic/flexible/motile processes and practices of spatial stratification/differentiation that can be registered at different social instances and not only on the edges of sovereign nation-states. They are not only allocated/dislocated/relocated, but also exponentially multiplied in different cultural/social/political arenas with the consequent broad range of border formats, functions and practices. *Ergo*, borders can be treated as social institutions with historical trajectories of their own, oriented at maintaining spatial fragmentations and discrepancies (Popescu 2012: 24-25). As such, they are installed in a plethora of social practices, with explicit or implicit norms, conventions and values, they formalize the criteria of social exclusion and inclusion, they are liable to change and manifest a multi-scalar hierarchy (from local to state level).

Current planetary mapping, spatial scripting/incrustation of borders tends to rest on their comprehension, by analogy to identities they define, as nonlinear, dynamic and mutable entities generated according to social forces, social practices and social relations, while their comprehension can be presented through three paradigmatic perspectives: constructivist, marxist and the post-colonial one (Novak 2016: 4-6). The constructivist optics projects them as historically contingent, multilayered and multiple-perspective products absorbing myriad

divergent social processes that materialise, dematerialise and re-materialise, depending on the genuine cultures, experiences and engagements of the vernacular border population and those who cross it. The marxist optics “de-cultivates”/“de-fetishises” borders by foregrounding capitalist social relations as agents of space production and reproduction for the purpose of accumulation of surplus value, while borders considerably facilitate the control of the world’s workforce and fabricate/forged rifts within it. The post-colonial optics of border perception views them as fictional and imposed, as monovalent mythemes of more largely constructed myth on the Euro-American cultural, scientific and political centrality/dominance, a hegemonising myth directly involved in prolonging the colonial status/horizon to the present. In this vein, and aside from all spatial forms being distributed (from quark all the way to the state), the non-existence of a single form of space and its constant motion/circulation, borders do not exist at all, since space is “diatomaceous”, porous and osmotic (Thrift 2006: 140-141).

2. Janus-faced nature of borders

When Henk van Houtum refers to the “Janus syndrome”¹³⁾ in the conceptualization of borders, he actually refers to the interpretive continuum between the engagement of their centrifugal and centripetal dimension/perspective in search for the answer to the question what they are (Houtum 2010, 2011: 58-59). Abstracting the ideas of Thirdspace (Soja 1996) and heterotopia (Foucault 2008 [1967]) as different concepts, we can say that this is a “pro-ontologising” dual intertwining and concurrence of the internal horizon of trust and security of the “state utopia” and the external horizon of mistrust and insecurity of the “trans-state dystopia”, tangentiality of politics/world of order and politics/world of non-order, manifested in the territorial-strategic ordering, bordering and othering processes (Houtum and Naerssen 2002). Like a kind of “orderly chaos”, this non-

13) Janus is a two-headed Roman deity facing two opposite sides simultaneously, symbolizing both entry and transition from one into another fragment of time and/or space. Hence, the attribute “Janus-faced” metaphorically suggests the coexistence of ambivalent qualities in an entity.

order, as a heterogeneous political space, is not conceived as mere absence of order/world but the other way around: as a axiologically projected position relative to some other order/world, as a potential map or reflection of the space-producing, conceiving or fabricating policy.

Ergo, the term “b/ordering” (Houtum *et al.* 2005) suggests the mutuality/interaction between the framing of an order and border creation, beyond the “rooted” tradition, armed confrontation and “fables/plots” of high politics, it implies a full range of broadest cultural, political, social and economic agents, norms and engagements whose participants are liable to manipulation and metamorphoses. Any border cartography represents an outline of rifts between the entities, concepts and individuals involved, as a production and reproduction of some (external and internal) hegemony instilled by carto-politics (Houtum 2011: 52). By and large, to the extent that they enclose, borders also open. They keep reposing the question about the relations between, on the one hand, certainty of socio-cultural-identity practices of inclusion and recognition and on the other, a desire to, if not abolish, then replace these practices by activating some other discursive/narrative border code. Haven't we all at some point wished to emancipate ourselves from our own borders by consuming some other spaces, either as tourists or other kinds of immigrants/emigrants? The possibility to be a temporary or permanent spatial foreigner, not only to others but also to one's “spatial Self”, is an inherent (contextual) property of borders: rather than just barriers, closures or endings, they are also cracks, openings and beginnings, allowing a constant floating between the autochthonous and allochthonous poles of our lives. Potentially, their fluid/spectral and decentered nature is profiled by hybrid liminal combining of different juxtaposed/simultaneous semantic strategies, in ranges from attraction to repulsion, objectification to de-objectification and transparency to obscurity. It seems that borders both are and are not, or they are where they are not and *vice versa*, while the emphasis is not on binary semantic antipodes but on the semantic range/nuance or visibility/camouflage.

Thus, borders are in the process of constantly active/performative defining and redefining of their own meanings and representations by individuals/groups and other stakeholders in the regulation/objectification of the range and configuration

In his highly inspirational research opus for the understanding of space, territory/territoriality and borders, Andrea Mubi Brighenti (2006, 2007, 2010, 2010a) offers the possibility for their relatively new reading, leaving/opening a space for different (meta-)narrative/ontological/epistemic/axiological postulates and interventions. Notably, it interprets social visibility in a way that it should be distinguished from visibility, particularly from visions, but also, I would add, social distinction from cultural recognition, as well as the contextually/situationally “balanced social recognition” from the linear “cognitive-social recognisability”. It is at a cross-section between the sphere of the aesthetic – the relation of perception, and the sphere of the political – the relation of power, mediated by the symbolic, a metaphor of knowledge that is not an image, but a social process/regime subject to different socio-politico-technical arrangements, of the social as an expression of the stratum of visible or transparent/hyaloid, but also omnipresent, unobjectified stratum of the invisible, where it is possible to observe asymmetry, but also tendency to reciprocity, the state of being seen and watching (Brighenti 2007: 324, 325; 2010a: 3, 4). Thus we can identify three codes of processual social visibility or visibility fields: (1) social algorithm- referring to the act of recognition, as an essential/starting social “constitutive” installation of both objects and subjects, that must be adequately socially dosed so as not to become defective/deviant: hyper-visibility can have the same effects as hypo-visibility, the warping of social visibility initiates an aberration of social representation (e.g. moral panic and moral euphoria; (2) media algorithm- refers to the instantaneity and durability of the visible and implies incoherence of subjects with their autochthonous context and transmission into some other allochthonous context with its own rules and logic (e.g. case of tourists); and (3) control algorithm- where remodelling of visibility into a strategic source of regulation, selection and striation/fragmentation occurs (e.g. close circuit video surveillance systems or biometric passports).

Brighenti (2010: 56-60) starting points are: (1) that the understanding of territory should be de-objectivised, de-essentialised and heterogeneous, as debated in the introduction, and that territory is not space-defined, but space-defining through the relational/interactional patterns implying the relations of power but

not as a sterile reflection/projection of their structure; (2) that territory is an imagined but not imaginary/illusional entity, where nations territorialise their members through place-oriented myths and narratives, while territorial practice manifests the imaginative procedure of distinction between the indigenous and peregrinous; (3) that territory consolidates the expressive-semiotic and functional-operative elements. The composing/framing/tracing of borders is a subsumed constitutive component of the process of territorialisation: territories presuppose borders, borders instate territories. *Ergo*, territories and borders are less phenomenological states and more two dimensions of one and the same operation/activity/practice rendering possible the management of distances. Likewise, the relations between borders as such and transversals of border flows or transgressions is more complemetary than antithetical and therefore enabling in terms of visibility and social importance of the latter. Border crossing is an existentially calculated element/factor of borders themselves.

Recognising the above, the mechanism for the articulation of territories/borders includes answering four questions (*ibidem*: 61-62): (1) Who creates them?; (2) How are they created?; (3) What type of borders are created?; and (4) Why are they created? Borders and territories cannot be discussed outside a set of relations established with individual or collective agents/actors/subjects engaged in their creation/formulation, where political borders, beyond doubt the most consistent and balanced ones are, as a rule, connected with collective territories. The selection of some specific type of border markers, technology of their realisation/materialisation does not only depend on the type of projected area, region or surface, but markers as such have some specific traits that are more or less distinct depending on the the authentic set of circumstances. Borders are commonly oriented at a set of preset functions that follow the logic of constitution of diverse territories, consistent with their application or structural category/domain of practice. So, the acceptance of different border classes implies the rejection of the possibility of their traditionalist/classicall/conservatively claimed coincidence. Each territory/border is installed with various practices and semiotically grounded, hegemonically positioned projects, platforms, programmes or plans for the purpose of control over some resources, attaching to them a

teleological perspective.

The idea that borders do not emerge *ex nihilo*, or from some kind of social vacuum, must be joined with the idea that they don't exist *per se*, solely for themselves- borders do not bound borders, they are not a self-bounding social principle, but rather the constituent and creation of the territory/territoriality that attaches their meanings. Borders are not their own social substance. Hence, aside from being heterogeneous, borders are also heteronomous. A full spectrum of incalculable multiperspectival meanings/relations/activities socially construct/generate and transform/vary borders, irrespective of their morphology, role and functions, by particular /divergent actors, objects, practices, performances and representations. In so doing, the multiplicity of borders cannot be equated with the presence/absence of juxtaposed meanings that denote/define it, but with their mutual relations, making some justified/desirable/relevant, and others arbitrary/undesirable/subalternate (Sohn 2015: 5).

According to Brighenti (2010: 62), notwithstanding that the transferrable/modular territory is a reflection of accidental interaction of agents/actors/entities towards the formulation of borders for the realisation of intentions/interests in some relevant segment of practice, they are not reduced to arbitrary construction. Namely, once initially established, borders become the object of permanent/routine reinforcement or negation, negotiation and interpretation, they are relational/processual positions of the heterogeneously/processually perceived territory. Every border creation, or global "carving" of space, even the nation-state one, is supported/dependent on some technology promoting an entirely original type of sign emission and "software" for their processing. Thus, borders exist in a semiosphere and are exposed to the process of semiosis. By the same token, they represent a formula for the rhythm of border circulations, oscillating rates of entry and exit into a territory. By and large, for Brighenti (*ibidem*: 65-68), although territories/borders cannot be completely separated/abstracted from the physical stratum/dimension/perspective imbuing their traditional/classical conception, they are produced/triggered by imagination, an extension of the material with the non-material. Territories/borders are not only reflexive/rational mechanisms, exclusively serving to monopolise specific resources, but they are also affective/

emotional mechanisms, resources for the shaping of identity. They are primarily oriented at the promotion/outreach of a specific type/regime of supremacy relations, and not at the availability of things and objects and, in this respect, they require some kind of consensus on their social relevance.

For Liam O'Dowd (2010: 1035-1036), state borders are only formally similar to all other borders in the sense of their Janus-faced nature, the manifestations/potentials for different modalities and proportions of fusion and/or division, and constructions of identity, distinction to "us" and "them", but they are conceptually elastic and physically specified, cognitive-emotional markers in conceptualising and communicating the world. State borders are defined as an outcome of perpetuated attempts at expressing, controlling and developing the relations between the economic, political-legal, ideological-cultural and military-police dimension of infrastructural power, distinct for every state unit. Aside from the existence of different spatial networks that somewhat transgress and temporarily suspend them, they are still the prevalent global border form, as well as sites where social conflicts crystallise or the agents of dynamic of the planetary order and disorder (Anderson *et al.* 2003: 7). O'Dowd (2010: 1038, 1040) maintains that social processes are path-dependent and consequently, pleads for the rehabilitation of history in border studies, criticising the prevalent definition of borders: (1) due to the abundance of border metaphors/tropes or their semantic dilatation, e.g. to the field of control functions and effects, leading to ahistoricism in their interpretation; (2) cultural approach, or constructivism, for its overlooking the fact that some interpretative perspectives of borders are far more influential than others; and (3) process approach, since it carries the risk of dismantling structure into process and agency characterised by the multiplicity and floating nature of the borders of destabilised states. Thus, the historical dimension of understanding the imperial and nation-state through the notion of power infrastructure is of great importance in the study of borders, as it lends itself to the research of the equilibrium between structure and process, as well as the analysis of an interpretative framework. In this vein, the formulation of modern borders has been framed not only by the nineteenth century processes of the "nationalisation" of state or „etatisation“ of nation, leaning towards the control over territory, conflicts,

antagonisms and wars and changes in the balance of power formula of the inter-state system, but also by the imperial legacy of controlling people and coding of that system and its hierarchy by arbitrary imperial power and terror: modern borders, as an ambivalent phenomenon, result from a set of current relations between imperialism and nationalism (O'Dowd 2010: 1044, 1045, 1047).

3. In the Heart of Politics: The Omnipresent Borders Thesis

Now we can focus on Etienne Balibar's (2002, 2002a, 2004, 2009) thesis on the extension/diffusion of borders over the entire area of a country wherever selective control can be registered, on the actual translation of these countries into borderlands, or its corresponding thesis put forward by Chris Rumford (2006, 2014) on the multi-perspective comprehension of borders, overcoming the monoperspectivism of the privileged nation-state border platform/angle and favouring dissensus in their exploration, of the need of detecting/indicating the outer and inner unnoticed/invisible borders or those that exist for some while do not for others. The issue is not the extension of "travestied" national/state "low intensity" borders, or attendant bordering practices, over the whole of a state/national territory, but the configuration/calibration of different types of borders with differently attached individual and group meanings, impacts and effects, along with a multitude of dispersive coordinates inside and outside some political/state/national territory or space. Today's borders have become discriminatorily asymmetrical since for some, they are an "unnecessary waste of time", whereas for others, they are unsurmountable obstacles. All this is rendered even more complex when it comes to arbitrary strategic planning of what are relevant, as opposed to minor borders, when some borders are visible and exist only for some.

Balibar (2002: 78-84) identifies these three main aspects of border equivocation: (1) "overdetermination" - an intrinsic quality of multiplying/transcending the simple border tracing/marketing of a territory in a specific location, as opposed to the proces of "underdetermination" where borders are reduced to the demarcation of two states/two territorial entities, as a semantic relativisation by different geopolitical, contingent divisions/strategies, the transgression of meaning

by some higher symbolic-simulacral instance, such as borders between two ideologically opposed worlds or political alliances; (2) polysemiotic nature- as a discrepancy/disparity of their modality of being for members of various social groups, there is a whole range of borders comprising our living environment we are unaware of until we become the recipients, consumers or targets of the bordering process; and (3) heterogeneity- as a simultaneous exercise of several demarcation and territorialisation functions, borders occupy those positions of some social space where arbitrary and selective control or power can be registered. Semantically astatic, local and global, borders configure the world and that is the *condicio sine qua non* of their tenacity, while the modern state meta-narrative, demanding the coincidence of political, cultural and economic borders, is no longer “operable”.

Borders are vibrant/ambiguous/elusive/vacillating both in terms of their format/arrangement and their functions, implying that the prevalent understanding of borders has also become inadequate (Balibar 2002a: 88). This, again, does not mean that borders have disappeared and that we live in a borderless world: they are both multiplied and reduced, rarefied and doubled and, just as in the case of zones, regions and the whole states, borders are no longer on the outer edges/peripheries of politics, but within politics itself (*ibidem*: 92), they are (re)produced at multifarious and numerous social instances/levels. This does not suggest some liminal position in which the individual, group or a political entity would be exposed to both centrifugal and centripetal border forces, but a far more complicated imaginary of being a border, reasoning from the border position. In addition, state borders, perceived as both cultural and identity borders, do not only distinguish or set apart an entity, but they also historically reconfigure the world as such by projecting what is convergent and divergent or compatible and incompatible. This is not only the matter of a certain distribution/balance of power, but also a symbolic question *par excellence*. Borders are not exclusively attached to some singular cultural context/division/code, but are always an emanation of overlapping cultural/identity factors and qualities. By and large, according to Balibar (*ibidem*: 89), the issue of border presence/absence finds its resolution in a total dissociation from the modern geopolitical imaginary; they are

no longer on the institutionally promoted and materialised borders/lines, where one field of sovereign power declines and ends and another begins and gains momentum. The repercussions of this view has a significant bearing on the understanding of border practices and importantly, they tectonically reformulate what we imply by the culture of borders.

Overdetermination, e.g. borders between East and West Germany during the Cold War was not just national but also symbolic border between the Eastern and Western blocs which, in Rumford's cosmopolitan view (2014: 45-50), signals/ indicates that borders are not only denoters of divergence (by their roles/functions/ identity traits), but also of convergence of opposing sides in terms of recognition and need for their existence, such logic of consensus is the key obstacle to the further evolution of a multiperspective approach to borders. The same qualification applies to bordering processes/practices. Overcoming the logic of consensus also incorporates the dissociation from the post-colonial project of "border thinking" or border epistemology, as a metamorphosis of the hegemonic imaginary from the perspective of marginalised/exiled/excluded people (Mignolo 2000), since this approach also implies bi-vectoral/two-way view on borders and the promotion of unbundling, genuinely panoramic, perigonal view from the mutable location of the border itself, the 360-degree border perspective. Since discourses/narratives dictating that borders are pre-given no longer predominate and that nation-state borders must share their exclusive category status, post-modernity has destabilised the unanimity on what constitutes borders, where they are located and how their relevance is graded.

If we accept Balibar's idea that borders may become so diffuse that entire countries can mutate into borderlands, then, consistent with the contemporary context, it is possible to distinguish two (Paasi and Prokkola 2008) manifestations/ actualizations of this concept: (1) technical landscapes of control- an ensemble of new technologies and surveillance infrastructures caused by fear from the increasingly offensive and aggressive terrorism and the exponential increase in human and commodity flows (e.g. shifting of borders to airports and streets); and (2) emotional landscapes of social power- a segment of the discursive landscapes of social power which, drawing on the symbolic and physical violence associated

with social spatialisation, through media and education, teaches the individual what national borders are, prescribing, by historically traced iconography and rituals/ceremonies, their semantic ranges (borders are a permanent nation-building and specific national practice-building process). We should add four important factors in favor of the cosmopolitan interpretation of borders (Rumford 2014: 89-91): (1) borderwork, a set of activities in the construction, modification and dismantling of borders is largely a matter concerning ordinary people, vernacularization weakens the association between borders and state; (2) multiperspectivism indicates that not all borders are seen by all as such; (3) unfixity of borders does not only imply incoherence/destabilisation of some borders, but also the idea that some borders were initially created with unfixity as a precondition of their efficacy; and (4) borders can serve as a propulsion of social/political connectivity.

Critically observed, the hypostasis of globalization implies the absolute validity of neither the “borderless world” principle nor its opposite principle of border multiplication/proliferation. The concept “borders are everywhere” should be corrected by linkages with different modalities of authentic individual/singular experience, selectivity and particularity of borders (Rumford 2014: 54), as most accurately expressed by Mark B. Salter’s (2012: 750) idea that “the border is not everywhere for everyone”. In this vein, the common denominator of uniqueness/apartness of state borders as opposed to all other formats is the possibility of appeal to the law, placing citizens/emigrants/migrants in direct relation to the arbitrariness of the sovereign’s decision. Borders represent integrating sutures/disintegrating scars, suggesting the process of knitting which always refers to another community, by marking both tentative separation and incomplete unification of the world itself and of individual subjects with a world full of borders. (*ibidem*: 736, 747). The metaphor of border as a line has been replaced by emphasis on the ethereal processes/policies/populations/networks that define and transgress it. They have become the premises of sovereignty itself in disguising and intensifying the decision that each border-crosser must make, making the acceptance of the protocol of submission delayable. We should add that Salter (Johnson *et al.* 2011: 66) deems that the performativity of borders is manifested at

three levels: (1) formal performances include the description and defence of specific territorial borders; (2) practical performances imply the policies of border filtering/osmosis, or admission/expulsion; and (3) mass performances involve public and political competency related to the meaning of borders.

Theoretical perspective/idea of border performativity, according to Nancy Wonders (2006: 65-66), is an analytical tool in the research of borders and the manner of their construction, based on the assumption that, aside from the tendency of the state to stage/direct the border *mise en scène*, or to design border policies, such inclinations/engagements have little point or sense until the moment they are “performed/enacted” by state agents, or bureaucratic formations and by those crossing a border. State actors are the key protagonists in the selection of venue, manner and body of border performances, which are not “reserved” solely for areas surrounding the geographically/physically defined state borders, but which also unfold in locations with entirely different coordinates (potentially in every spatial point of some territory or institutional hierarchy). The very nature of border practices is not an exclusive manifestation of identity constructs of border/state agents and those crossing the border, but also of the cultural/economic characteristics and positions of different groups within some specific country. Since, depending on the type of border fluxes and/or their actors, emphasis is on the relational and performative attributes of mutable border control strategies, the concept of border performativity is useful in exploring the platforms of border reconstruction (*ibidem*: 83). In that sense, two significant control platforms for the further promotion of global inequalities are detected: the social (re)articulation of the term “illegal” and the (re)securitisation of borders with the implied technological development of border control industry.

4. New ontological border perspectives: Generalized Biopolitical Border, Bordered, Border as Assemblage, and Border as Method

An important prerequisite for the creation of new border ontology is the paradigmatic detachment from territorial imperatives of the Western ultra-

modernist discourse on order, based primarily on the glorification and petrification of state (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009). It means an analytical distance from the meta-narrative of fixed univocal/monosemous state compartmentalization of space with firmly installed, essentialized, monovalent, objectivized, pre-extant/predetermined, monolithic or naturalized borders, or the decentering of borders (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012: 728). Hence, the formulation of the new border ontology certainly implies the de-racking/dismantling of the epistemic mutuality of differently programmed practices of inclusion/exclusion policies or acceptance/non-acceptance and cultural patterns of their justification, in a situation of perpetual construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of borders with all their hard to capture locations, forms, roles and functions. It implies the ontological refutation of the realistic paradigm, aberration from the pre-configured/pre-traced borders, or pre-given, naturalized or sacralized/deified, and the justification for active human interference/engagement, understanding and practice-dependent, in the construction of reality (cf. Brambilla 2015: 26). It is a complex processual/relational ontology, or ontogenetic nature of borders and reality, or being through the process of perpetual becoming, the substitution of focus on how things are by how they become: being means becoming (Kitchin and Dodge 2007: 335). This implies that borders are the ontologically multidimensional entities, their new symbolic-material texture and socio-political and cultural configuration, as a consequence of the mutual proliferation, dispersion and stratification of borders and different modalities and intensities of transnational circulation, expressed by the new spatial designing (neither are borders only barriers to transnational fluctuation, nor do transnational fluctuations result solely in the diminution of state sovereignty).

Referring in particular to Etienne Balibar and drawing upon Giorgio Agamben's discourse, in response to the pluralisation and radicalisation of the contemporary (re)location and definition of borders, Nick Vaughan-Williams (2008, 2009, 2009a; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009, 2012) pleads for a quantum leap in the way of contemplating borders, offering an alternative border imaginary entitled generalised biopolitical border. Initially, by noting the ancient Hellenic (Aristotle's) distinction of biological life (*zoe*) and political life (*bios*) and

Foucault's concept of bio-politics: the incorporation of zoe into bios, or positioning of life as a reference object of politics, Vaughan-Williams (2009: 97-100; 2009a: 733-735) adheres to Agamben's thesis that the political sphere is immanently, originally bio-political, where a private body is indivisible from our body politic and where sovereign power is the capacity of deciding if some form of life is worthwhile, producing for itself, for sovereign power, bare life as a notion that cannot be equated with zoe and bios, which in this state are blurry and subject to the optics/practices of a state of exception.

Accordingly, the conventional apprehension of borders associated with the modern geopolitical imaginary rests on the passivity/invariability/pregiveness of the legal-political structure, which in the case of generalised biopolitical border is transformed into the border performance, a contingent bio-political narrative, or the process of (re)formulation/(re)articulation, perpetually reproducing bare life by not recognising certain forms of life within the legal-political system of the community. Contrary to individuals/bodies who encounter preformed/preconfigured/predetermined borders as unchangeable ontological meta-barriers, borders now become mobile and inscribed to individuals/bodies that can be assessed as risky, categorised and treated on the move and on the scale of "geography"/cartography" of everyday activities (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 133-134). The engagement of this approach dissociates the sovereign power from territorial imperatives/restrictions of state and opens space for the recontextualisation on the global biopolitical scale which annuls the focal binom of the conventional geopolitical paradigm: outer/inner, or the bifurcation to domestic and international space. All that results in the planetary biopolitical dispersion in generating sovereign borders.

We should now mention Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary's and Frédéric Giraut's (2015) theoretical innovation/derivation, the neologism of "borderity", which, stemming from and expanding on Foucault's notion of governmentality, can be defined as the governmentality of territorial limits, like any other power technology of socio-spatial partition/compartmentalization/division. First, they view the contemporary study of borders, on the one hand, as a paradigm for the processual analysis of the phenomenon of open and closed borders, or as a fact

that one and the same border can be addressed through both states (consequently, analytical emphasis is on the border dynamics of parallel processes of disordering and reordering). On the other hand, there is the much more important paradigm based on the non-coincidence of material spatial border expressions/characteristics/formats with its “cemented” functions of division, regulation and control, or namely, borders are no longer integrated/“frozen”/fixed in space and time, while their mobility/topology is not virtualised, borders are still mainly material sensations. Drawing on Foucault’s concepts of dispositive, technology and biopolitics, the notion of borderity renders it possible to avoid the tautological relation between the notions of state, territory and border, where the defining of each is contingent on the extancy of the other two, or to critically demask the ideological “substrate” obscured by the narratives of border efficiency and competitiveness (*ibidem*: 3, 7). The importance of border does not derive from the fact of delimiting/demarcation or encircling/bounding of territory, but from its political status, just as the distinction between the symbolic power, position and role of borders in relation to the symbolic power, position and role of state is evident. Referring to Foucault (2009: 108), they construe borderity as a set of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics that, aimed at a particular population, facilitate the accomplishment of the specific and complex disciplining power.

However, Amilhat-Szary and Giraut (2015: 9) in their conception of borderity extend Foucault’s disciplining society with the concept of controlling society elaborated by Gilles Deleuze, that will be further discussed later. This implies both the transformation of the prevalent mechanisms and perceptions of social order and subject of power and a shift in spatial power from institutional sites of confinement towards open power networks, with significant implications regarding the displacement and delocalisation of borders, which appear in multiple concepts, arrangements, combinations or configurations (Walters 2006: 191). Also, borderity can appear as a distinguished social/political quality, analogous to territoriality, where, through the individual as well as the collective dimension, it refers to what functionally and symbolically configures/makes a border within some specific space (including not only borderlands and the intersection of

multifarious networks of flow, but also sites such as airports, hotels or university campuses). This approach can reveal the presence/enablement or absence/disablement of a particular political subject, or that borders can be the sites of acquiring, sustaining and increasing power, but also sites of resistance, destabilisation and fight against it.

Unlike Foucault, Gilles Deleuze (1992: 5), argues that the new social script-writing resides in the inversion of the logic of omnipresent panopticism of social disciplining by the logic of omnipresent mechanism of social control, on the inversion of disciplinary society with society of control. Standardised organisational routines of the (modernist-enlightenment) factories are transposed into the meta-stable organisational schemes of the (post-modernist) corporation, individuals into dividuals (us as a separate I are no longer indivisible and self-identical), and the slogans of mass affirmation or resistance into electronic passwords of a dismantled individual. The point is that the emphasis has been shifted from trailing/locating people and information in different categories of flows, to codes, enabling the access of specific subjects to specific spaces/zones. Specific information about us can be recombined without our review, control or participation, challenging any discussion of individual as an irreducible and autonomous agency (Williams 2005). In light of that, Gilles Deleuze i Félix Guattari (2005 [1980]) inaugurate the descriptor/concept of assemblage as an analytical instrument in understanding of entities, underpinned by the ontological grammar of multiplicity, polyvalence, “molecularity” and multidimensionality of the heterogeneous, non-finalized, open and processual interaction of diverse material units and semiotic elements bound in contingent, palliative, “inorganic”, heteronymous and incoherent wholes, hyper-mutable forms of form and structure, with different actors and resources, or meaningful, rhetorical or symbolic expressions (Bonta and Protevi 2006; DeLanda 2006; Bennett 2010; Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Anderson *et al.* 2012). So, unlike Foucault’s concepts of regimes, apparatuses/diapositives or governmental technology, an assemblage is an articulating/emerging, rather than articulated/emerged formation.

Consequently, if the focus is on border assemblage, as noted by Christophe Sohn (2015: 6; 2016: 185), it is a combination of the following material and non-

material components (with possibility of their overlapping) and not solely along the demarcation lines but in all locales where border practices are performed and materialise: physical and transport infrastructures; different resources; policing procedures and tools; surveillance technologies; narratives on border taxonomies and categorisations; specific legislations defining a border regime; ceremonies and rituals expressing solidarity and legitimacy; and symbols constitutive of a territorial identity. Or even more currently, the deployment of digital/biometric border technologies (e-Passports, “Smart Borders”, Radio Frequency Identification etc.) and border drones suggests two interesting and important issues. By not only validating but also constituting someone’s identity, border registration/recording by use of biometric technology becomes a precondition of belonging to a specific society or lifestyle, human bodies become mobile “organic transmitters” of multiply coded borders, a nontransparent identity algorithms of decomposing/recomposing, depending on the particular data bases spread across different spatial points (Amoore 2006; Popescu 2012: 108-120, 2015, 2017: 458-471). Drones, again, are systems that considerably increase operative flexibility of surveillance, making it fluid, more mobile and particularly oriented which, among other, leads to the re-formulation of border space by control/monitoring no longer restricted to borders and borderlands but extended to the totality of a territory/society (Pedrozo 2017). Generally, this constellation has four important outcomes (Jones *et al.* 2017: 4-5): (1) mobile and portable borders render the whole planetary space conducive to potential bordering processes; (2) there is an increase in border instances, since people encounter different borders at different locations/levels/sub-levels; (3) the character of individual encounter with borders has been changed, since it is mediated by various digital devices and led/controlled by private actors; and (4) border control has become extremely, digitally microcoded, continuous and referred to the human body.

Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari (2000 [1972]), 2005 [1980]) argue that the act of leaving a specific territory/assemblage that makes them visible and recognizable, is followed by the act of creating another territory/assemblage: permanent de-territorializing/decoding is followed by permanent re-territorializing/re-coding, and this simultaneously destabilizes the implied inertia

of territory and initiates the mobility of the instance of territorializing/coding, that predominantly refers to the temporal identity (re)affirmation and internal relational-institutional equilibrium of territory/assemblage. In this manner, despite the territorial institutionalisation and permanence of specific types of practices, borders can be perceived as something that is in a state a perpetual creation, in unfinalised emergence or never-ending morphogenesis. In so doing, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the primacy of metaphor over the materiality of borders must be rejected, their understanding of space is resolutely material (Woodward and Jones 2005: 237-238). In short, questioning what borders are by their functions, roles and characteristics, should be overlooked and the focus should be on the tracing and retracing of uneven ephemeral modes of connection, interconnection, disconnection and reconnection of different practices within the iterative dynamics of their emergence.

Borders are, on the one hand, historically contingent assemblages that, through interaction with other entities, have temporarily stabilised particular features, but, on the other, also capacities, an irreducible ensemble of potentials, a “space of possibilities” that can never be completely predicted in the sense of new symbolic and other resources that borders may possess or produce (DeLand 2006: 28-29). What borders are can be expanded or narrowed, but also completely changed. If we focus on power, then the assemblage may refer neither to the singular / monolithic/centralised governing power, nor to the evenly/uniquely balanced and distributed power, but to an excentric/transormative/instrumental/plural apprehension of power: it is therefore not “power over” actors, but “power to”, or the actors’ potentials to influence or realise specific outcomes (Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 125; Sohn 2015: 8). In this vein, the existence of convergent/divergent meanings attached to borders by different actors, should not only be considered by their role or function, or by belonging to some compact social formation (class/political entity, ethnicity, confession/denomination or gender), but by position/capacities, outside the institutionalised hierarchy, in the competitive field of cooperation/confrontation for semantic/semiotic/symbolic resources. Thus, a border dispute may be a site of both contestation and affirmation by a single actor, just as an alliance of actors with completely different

views on the same border issue is possible, while both these situations may be part of a single border assemblage (e.g. a whole array of border issues marking the relations among the Southeast Balkan states).

Using the renaissance syntagm *fabrica mundi*, or the fabrication of worlds, Sandro Mezzadra i Brett Neilson (2012: 64-67; 2013: 18, 30, 36), ontologically analyse the world created by borders, that are less an object of their research and more their epistemological stance/method (of cognition of the world but also for action). They are simultaneously a method of capital, site of resistance/confrontation with the currently reformulated relations of deprivation/exploitation, but also an attempt to open the space for multiple imaginations and alternative platforms of production of the world (its partitions, arrangements and appropriations). It is an attempt to find new paradigms that depart from the elaboration of borders based on separate case studies with clear situational outlines, as a metaphor of wall and leitmotif of security, since they obscure borders as the connecting tissue of accumulation and exploitation (Kurtz 2013). Differentially inclusive borders, whose proliferation represents the specificum of contemporary globalisation, do more than generate a mere distinction to outer and inner, they selectively percolate, channel and reorient migrant movement not only towards the economic-market sphere, but also toward exploitative relations. In that sense, they abberate from the classical concept in which they predominantly function for the sake of exclusion and become forms of hierarchical/differentiated/selective inclusion. Border conflicts and migrants become the central protagonists of the degrading world matrix that enables the booming of capitalism and cyclical crises, while common social practices and policies characterising them cannot be derived from the ideas of borderless world and just borders, so they must be used on all scales: from local, through regional to the global level (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 59, 281). Such conceptual perspective treats borders, quite reasonably in our view, as a cardinal notion for the decoding of global processes, but also for the understanding of the composition of contemporary capitalist society. Consequently, borders as a method of capital can also be perceived as a method for a spatial resistance to capital (Brambilla 2015b).

5. Alternative Border Imaginarium: Borderscapes

Social imaginaries and images of borders, or border discourses and narratives, are intrinsically elusive, mutable and consequently, often ultra-ephemeral/transitory/episodic. In part, this is due to the fact that borders, as already noted, are spatial/territorial manifestations generated from the interaction of a great number of social actors, activities and formal/informal institutions, while their design/creation is a strategy that is hegemonic to the realization of domination aimed at control/definition of space by perpetuated emphasis on the practices of distinction/dissimilation. The contextuality of borders is extensive/dispersive as it does not stop on the borders themselves, or in borderlands, but spans broader socio-spatial practices, social consciousness, culture and social rhetoric/symbolic. In this sense, discourses/narratives play an important part in the production, reproduction and representation of territories and their borders, and in the comparing of relations between “large-scale” national discourses and “small-scale” narratives of everyday life at or about borders. Hence, the semiotic triangulation of narratives and discourses transpires as highly desirable and necessary. The narrative, as an intimate/personalized form *par excellence* would be positioned as critical for understanding of the vernaculizing ways in the production and reproduction of various socio-cultural meanings “bottom-up”, while the semiotic form of discourse would be employed to question the consequences of these meanings with regard to institutionalization of everyday life practices and the “top-down” influence of institutional discourses on the semantic profile of borders (Strüver 2005: 52-53).

On the epistemological scale, the new type/optics in examining borders can be defined as kaleidoscopic and double (Brambilla 2015: 25). The kaleidoscopic level suggests their temporal and spatial irreducibility, variation/oscillation within the frame of some specific social, cultural, political, economic, historical and legal field/agenda/concept through negotiations among different state and non-state actors, while the double level renders possible the simultaneous polyphonic perception of borders as global meta-narratives and “minor”/ordinary/small narratives of living borders, or awareness of transparent/latent/disguised border

interactions of not only territorial, but also cultural, social, economic or ethnic border positions. Along this line, the concept of borderscapes can be defined as an alternative modality/paradigm in the understanding of de-essentialized, hyper-mobile borders, treated as crucial factors in the production of (post-) modern political subjectivities/imaginaries abstracted from rigid territorial restrictions in the sense of (re)configuration of space for new political and social aspects of organizing, as well as respect for the multifariousness of symbolic and material ties and relations inside/outside/at the borders (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Perera 2007; Brambilla 2015, 2015a; Dell’Agnese and Amilhat-Szary 2015; Houtum and Eker 2015).

First of all, the concept of the landscape “pro-ontologically” integrates both the natural features of an area and its cultural attributes, as a purely symbolic horizon: hence, it is not only a visual composition, but also a presentational-perceptual interpretation. The landscape is not a pre-set and objectivized body of pictorial-social forms, but it is symbolically perceived or differently understood by every individual, it is an expression of the genuine angle/perspective of presentation or symbolism of some local/particular world view. In their narrower and broader sense, they are genealogically formatted discourses/narratives, in the genres of atlases, maps, different kinds of texts or photographs or pictures, used by an individual in order to represent, to himself and to others, the world he/she belongs to and his/her attitude towards it, which serve to actively interpellate, rather than passively reflect him/her in social relations by techniques of expression and operationalization, congruent with those from other forms of cultural practices (Cosgrove 1998: xiv, 1).

Landscapes are the “linguistic control points” of a certain narrative output or a format (maps, texts, photographs etc.), the meeting point of utopias, dystopias and heterotopias, a cultural vernacularity and diverse symbolic practices, which is not a passive perusal, but engaged reinterpretation. They are cultural shows, staged on the post-modern possibility of programming and reprogramming meanings, or signs and symbols, on their persistent combining in different contextual profiles, always with the newly-formulated reference networks. The current landscapes are all but susceptible to some ideological or theoretical corrective engineering of the meaning

set in stone; instead, they appear to be “evasive” electronic texts in a virtualized space, whose “cinematographic” cyber-meaning allows for intervention at “the tap of a keyboard or a remote control” (cf. Daniels and Cosgrove 1988: 1-11).

In an attempt to overcome the “conflict syndrome” the research of borders, reflected in analytically simplified typologies, border landscapes were introduced at the beginning of the 1990’s, as harmonious and pacified outcomes/assemblages of spatial intertwining, not only of nature and artefacts/manufacts, but also cultural, social, economic and political processes/meanings, as an attempt at multidisciplinary articulation of the full complexity/“capillarity” of the physical and human environment that create them and are in turn created by them, as well as to overcome the centre-periphery binom in the scholarly border “vivisection” (cf. Rumley and Minghi 1991: 4-6; Wilson and Donnan 2012: 8, 9). Border landscapes are inescapably associated with power, too, they structure the ordinary/ everyday life and the grasp of borders and borderlands, as an expression of some formal/official status of domination, usually covered by a particular hegemonic set of relations as “naturalised” and “common sense” (Winchester *et al.*2003: 66-68). By and large, border landscape can be said to be a trans-scalar, spatially and symbolically defined field in which the perception of borders materialises through various cultural, social, economic and political codes/texts/matrices/concepts that are mutually (re-)modelled with borders.

Derived from border landscapes, the conceptualisation of borderscapes represents the need to express spatial and conceptual complexity of visible/ invisible borders understood as dynamic, fluid, non-consensual and polymorphous spaces, defined and, simultaneously contested by a host of discourses/narratives, practices, formal and informal institutions, rituals, roles, actors and relations in search for a “proper” (re)interpretation of the concepts of internal/external, citizens/aliens, autochthonous/allochthonous, while respecting/contesting the state, regional, ethnic or some other overlapping symbolic and concrete demarcation (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xv; Perera 2007: 206-207, 223-224). This implies the distinguishing: (1) hegemonic borderscapes – a discursive apology of univocally postulated ethical-legal-empirical argumentation aimed at the affirmation of some specific border policy regime; from (2) counter-

hegemonic borderscapes – a cluster of different platforms/strategies aimed at resistance to hegemonic discourses and control practices based on them (Brambilla 2015: 20).

In general, suffix *scape*¹⁴⁾ denotes the culturally conceived framing of the position/dimension/perspective of the transnational imaginary of unstable and ephemeral global flows/processes: in play are the newly emerged globalising and global “stages/sceneries” (like: Technoscapes, Mediascapes, Ideoscapes etc.) that facilitate the “communities of sentiment”, based on the identical imagining and feeling for things (Appadurai 1996: 8, 27-48). These transnational formative blocs also serve as components for designing the imagined, plural worlds, globally established through historically situated imaginaries of individuals and groups. The concept suggests that people live in imaginary communities, (cf. Anderson 1991) as much as in imaginary worlds and thus implies transcendence of the prevalent perspective of coherent nation-state, where territory, citizenship and identity are amalgamated with nationality.

Evidently, exploring borderscapes is not about being focused on border regions or borderlands: material landscapes distinguished by the presence of borders, spaces where state sovereignty is deformed by the organisation of its physical governance, or border *paysages* as some reified “geodetic” sum/proportion, measurement or structuring of terrain directly influenced by the presence of international borders (Dell’Agnese and Amilhat-Szary 2015: 6-7), whether they fully or partially correspond to the national imaginary. Borderscapes therefore manifest not only the spatio-normative dimension of the sedimentation/coagulation of highly formalised political stances and ideas arising from both natural and human delimitation; different “objective” planning systems of two or more countries; landscape patterns or statistical irregularities (Harbers 2003: 143); they are foremost the field constructed/deconstructed/reconstructed in some transnational key/context, a system of polyvocal inscription whose meanings are

14) Etymologically, the term derives from an old German verb meaning “to create” that entered English lexis at the end of the sixteenth century through the old Dutch term “*schap*” in compounds like “*landschap*” meaning region, but to denote a painting genre - landscape painting (Brambilla and Potsch 2017: 68-69).

mainly articulated/re-articulated or designed/redesigned by the individual perception/interpretation. Plasticity of borderscape always refers to borderscaping or mental structuring/figuration of borders which premised on some specific socio-political and cultural practice as a means for the imagined borders to be constituted/established and experienced as real (Strüver 2005: 170). However, besides being deployed for the processual production/reproduction, inscription of borders, by topologically capturing space, time and human thinking, borderscapes are also a field open to various interventions in the reprogramming/redesigning of borderlands, for the symbolic-cultural and productional-political design/imagining of the non-consensual, polyphonic and multiperspectival borderscape variations.

Borderscapes are rather an expression of the vitality, kinetic and energetic potentials of and on the borders themselves, of borders taken as narrative allegories/metaphors and borders as particular material practices, the possibility to interpret them as multiform, unstable, perspectivist and relational situations/contexts (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: x). They express the specific conceptual intercession to the rigid manipulation of territory by the nation-state, resistance to hegemonic practices, performances/ceremonies, meta-narratives and discourses tending to the instrumentalisation and petrification of the dominance of some specific algorithm of spatiality, temporality and political activism. Borderscapes, as multilevel and decentered zones, cultural arenas and networks, represent the most adequate cognitive-descriptive/epistemological-ontological format for the diffuse and variable character of borders in a post-modern world, or for their mutable arrangements, regulatory mechanisms and assemblages of semantics, practices, objects, texts, images and discourses diverging from the inflexible spatial paradigm and prevailing landscape of nation-state power, opening the possibility for an alternative, non-standard performativity-based projection of spatiality and community. Borderscape is concept which makes it possible to „scan“ a complex of geopolitical relations of attraction and repulsion between divergent border regimes/platforms, heterogeneous cultural or social formations/groups and individual identity strategies/tactics).

We should add attempts to redefine borders in the key of post-international theory/environment/politics, or in antithesis to state-centric projections of realistic

and neo-realistic postulates of world order (Ferguson and Mansbach 2007). In that vein, Noel Parker (2009), by proposing the inversion of the notion of border by the notion of margin and drawing on Gilles Deleuze's philosophy, promotes the ontological perspective valid for entities (e.g. institutions, associations or even sovereign states) that are in a perpetual relational process of change and emergence in the context of relational change and emergence of other entities, or general situation of globalization and transnational fluctuation, where the genesis, extinction and palingenesia of borders are viewed from the perspective of ostensibly identical, but actually different location, format and efficiency. Although in certain historical epochs/conjunctures they served to identify sovereign entities (states), but primarily due to the contingent, epoch-infused constitution of the international order, post-international relations deny the meaning of borders as direct, static and straightforward lines of determination of players in international relations and promote them as kinetic spatial factors for the complex formulation of external and internal social relations (*ibidem*: 18-19). In post-international politics, borders hypo-function as identity indices. Individual identities have become the matter of individual selection and culturally profiled identities integrate or reciprocally affect each other so that the state either rejects or is unable to build a reliable/stable framework for collective entities arising from such broad identity amplitudes.

Thus, assuming that entity identities did not arise from some transcendental source, but that they are immanently extracted: a matter of mobile framing within and among identities themselves, or rhizomatically defined, decentered and multi-oriented, open-ended entities, Parker defines margins as minimal determinate ground between indeterminate identities, as their meeting space (*ibidem*: 26-29). Borders are an overly rigorous concept/criterion for discriminating identities so conceived, since they suggest manifest distinction, sovereign separation/incompatibility, minutial control and sometimes also antithetical nature of what they separate. Hence, margins are not necessarily territorial and conflicting spatial product of the relational, competitive/disputative and open understanding of loose/unstable/vacillating identity qualities that may or may not be manifested as borders (*ibidem*: 30). In that sense, antagonism as the implied attribute of the

international context, is just one of the possible versions of formulating margins, ranging between mutuality and recognition among different identities to hierarchy and armed collision. The repercussion of this constellation is that the categories of actors in the post-international environment have changed dramatically (such as the European Union or international terrorist organisations), while the political process has become an effort geared at managing the margins between actors whose identities, exposed both to themselves and others, depend upon or result from shifting entity attributes.

6. Border Culture *versus* Cultures of Borders

It is worth noting that the concept of culture, after the lengthy academic discreditation and “persecution” from the sphere of Political Science and International Relations influenced by positivistic instructions on what political science should be, returned to the academic stage through the analytical framework asserting its ideational and collective characteristics and the importance of practice as specific balancing of relations between cognitive and social structures that the cultural approach undoubtedly refers to (Zaiotti 2011: 22, 23). Culture consolidates the relatively stable conjuncture of background assumptions, as an identity frame for interpretation and its compatible/consequent engagement, as well as its corresponding verbal and non-verbal practices that make it spatially and historically visible/recognizable in some specific state of everyday life. Leaving the possibility for the individual to act or not based on his interpretation of an event goes to show that the intersubjective meaning is not of deterministic, but of pseudo-causal provenance (Yee 1996: 97). Culture thus manifests a network/matrix of meanings, but also artefacts, events, practices and institutions that are not isolated/autonomous notions and elements, but are triangulated, cognizable/defined through a plethora of links/relations and modulated according to the perspective/angle of approach, it is common and ordinary, network and medium (through which we become cultured), as well as field/whole but also interval/interstitium between us and other people, or between us and the world we are in, or more loosely: to which we belong or which belongs

to us (Norton 2004: 1-2).

Departing from the premise that the concepts of ethnicity and national identity manifest basic power discernible at all borders, as a platform for a manifold social, political and economic activities, and defining nation as a community of people linked/coded by a common culture and aimed at the realisation of political autonomy/autarchy through the profound, substantial or vertical relation to the historically recognized, “concrete” and patriated territory or state, Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999: 5-6) note the lack of such clear cultural matrix/perspective in defining international borders. They define borderlands as sites and symbols of power and identify the following three elements as important to the study of ties between culture and borders (*ibidem*: 1, 11-12): (1) the fact that culture can be the determining/decisive factor in diplomatic arrangements establishing a border; (2) the fact that local and regional cultures in border areas are not only reactive/passive agents, but also proactive/dynamic actors that bear not only upon policy articulation but also upon its representation and reception; and (3) the fact that all border communities and broader economic and political entities they belong to have cultural frontiers that are in constant negotiation/harmonization by engaging different network formats and standards. Border cultures allow individuals and groups in border areas to be connected with others inside and outside their own country.

For general understanding of borders, the notion of trans-culturalism is also important (Welsch 2009). Trans-culturalism is a concept transgressing the contrasts between the indigenous (“usness”) and the xenogenous (“foreignness”). By asserting the pluralistic cultural model of cross-cutting and interlacing as suited to the complexity of modern cultures and the amorphousness of the present times, trans-culturalism breaks away from the standard binomials: the center/the periphery, national culture/local culture or strong nations/weak nations. In a decentralized world, trans-culturalism combines the notion of the “osmosis” of cultures, their external networking, with the focus on the similarities and the consequent insistence on connecting people and cultures, regardless of their intrinsic differences.

Moreover, Donnan and Wilson (1999: 64) treat borders as spaces of cultural

production: of the formulation and reformulation of meaning, or simultaneous activation and deactivation of specific social and political status and role, as well as structure and meaning, through the rigorous configuration of the full spectrum of our identities. This particularly applies to the discrepancy between the ways of national/ethnic identity articulation at the borders and in a state's metropolis. Symbols form the basis of the common culture which, in the sphere of social and political systems, together with rituals, enables both their structuring and expression, as well as their grammar and textuality. It could thus be argued that politics, like culture, articulates and rearticulates symbols/rituals, but is also a symbol/ritual itself. Steven Lukes (1975: 301) understands rituals as rule-governed activities of a symbolic character which orient their participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of extraordinary significance, while the symbolism of political rituals, consolidating the levels of past, present and future, represents a specific paradigm of society and its functioning. The symbolic script of rituals is not written by fixed/occlusive/dictated messages as each of its constituent symbols accumulates different meanings and can be interpreted in different ways. We should also add that the narrative nucleus of nearly all political rituals is mythopoetic representation and its central iconography which evokes some political myth. (Flood 2002: 182).

Ergo, cultural coding, de-coding and re-coding of borderscape implies the processual dynamic of both institutional, elite-driven top-down generation/enforcement of the centripetal meta-narrative on border formations, namely the one-dimensional perspective of the hegemonic border culture, as well as bottom-up generation/negotiation of "small", ordinary and day-to-day border formation narratives and therefore, a multidimensional perspective of the cultures of borders. Cultures of borders are diffuse, polymorphous, centrifugal, counter-hegemonic, mobile and polyvalent strategies of meaning in perpetual creation and parallel existence in various forms and with different contents. Assuming a multitude of kaleidoscopic, both individual and collective projections, imaginaria and visions, borderscapes are actually spaces of reaffirmation or negation of pre-existing narrative patterns, or re-contemplation, re-formulation, re-configuration and envisioning of new border landscapes).

Conclusion

The intended analytic trajectory of this paper is the assumption that limological studies can principally be classified as politically fabled reflections/reasonings, as a political-ideological-national projection/geometry of space of more or less variable, particular degree of importance, rather than a generalized, binding, objectified, naturalized or fixed geo-geometry of border constants. In so doing, the semiotic-symbolic-textual designing/redesigning, as well as inscription/generation of borders, their openness for creative discursive/narrative semantic coding, certainly does not make them less real/concrete and more speculative/fictitious concepts or positions. Contemporary post-modern study of borders is a highly complex interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or even transdisciplinary conceptual-methodological triangulation, deeply installed in some context, and thus incompatible with some universal theory, unless discussed within some broader socio-cultural paradigm. Constructed/deconstructed/reconstructed, fluid, hypothetical and accidental, borders always concern the substratum/essence/technology of power or are themselves the substratum/essence/technology of power, no matter which political/bio-political and thus also cultural-identity matrix underlies the grammar of their historical justification, or the politics of recollection. Aside from that, it should be taken into account that the discursive/narrative algorithm of borders relies not only on delimitation and demarcation, but also on connection, whether it is the “connection of the inconnectable” or the “confluence of identical”, a physical point, tangent of materialized pseudo-mythic constructs of the alleged “irreconcilable difference” or “total similarity”. In either case we can speak about the regimes of “border osmosis”, about borders as semi-permeable socio-cultural-political membranes.

Today, the relational/polyvocal/multiform borders are in a state of semantic unfixity, decenteredness, fluctuation and destabilization. Although seemingly absurd, the current limological imaginary does not place borders on borderlines, borders have become invisible, extensive and dispersive, they are no longer institutionalized “cartographic positions” where sovereignty simultaneously begins and ends, but rhizomic institutions/constructs/simulacrum connecting different

but always individualized realities, characterized by different scales of validity or invalidity. The issue of defining borders has become the nucleus of politics. Respecting border experiences and its attendant representation, the political dimension of borders can today be viewed also through the post-modern prism of the prevalence of aesthetic/poetic imperatives. This has been partly generated by the situation in which territory/territoriality no longer precedes cartography, but maps and borders, corresponding to the still *sine qua non* metaphor of the nation-state, precede territory/territoriality, thus generating hyper-real territory/territoriality. Borders and their cartographic aesthetics/poetics – simulacrum maps have occupied space and somewhat paradoxically, given their theatrical charge, are positioned as a totalizing, objectified and meta-final geo-choreography/*geomise-en-scene*, albeit more of a phantasmagory given the dynamic multitude of cultural-political texts of their own dramaturgy (cf. Baudrillard 1983: 1-2).

Still, for all their fluidness and porousness, it is possible to register only interpretative polymorphism of the notion of borders and not their complete disappearance, as borders have become a distinctly equivocal term. It is important to note that the aesthetics/poetics of the border polyptych is not the inversion of the aestheticized substratum of the politics of real borders by borders as artefacts or imaginaries and stories, but the affirmation of the inevitable aestheticism of borders, derived from the aesthetic attributes of society and politics, rendering possible to examine how certain kinds of border practice become or remain visible/legitimate/acceptable (cf. Rosello and Wolfe 2017: 3-12). Consequently, in an age when technology of body control becomes the technology border control, too, ontologically critical analytical topic is not how something is but how it becomes a border, as an inversion of the politics of being by the politics of becoming a border.

Borderscapes can be interpreted as multi-perspectival, multi-scalar and ever changing post-foundationally grounded horizon of the formulation/reformulation of texts, grammars, symbols, icons, rituals and practices and their attendant material artefacts/objects which vernacularly, on the scale of “everyday life of an ordinary man”, semantically code/decode/recode borders, whose agents are genuine policies/cultures of inclusion and exclusion. In argumentative and

explanatory terms, this is the most deployable postmodern discursive format/genre which reveals the intensive, persistent and disguised ideological projections of the state in formulating borders as objectified/reified/naturalized lines of hegemony. In so doing, it simultaneously becomes the discourse/narrative of new transformative options and/or counter-hegemony. We live in the times where “border discretuum in the spatial continuum” has been replaced by the simulacral “spatial discretuum in the border continuum”, since borders no longer necessitate an objectified, real reference/infrastructural space but the policy of “unlocated” but equally real metaphor of reference/infrastructural space (cf. Baudrillard 2007 [1977]: 117). In other words, although constantly present, the projected reality of state is no longer an exclusive standing point from which borders are just observed, but also seen (cf. Stojanovic 2017).

Mindful of this process of post-modern reinvention of borders, we can register two additional points important in their deconstruction. First, it is the possibility of omnipotent border coding/assemblage of a society/state, where borders grow into a semantic index (“meta-plot”) of the identity narrative, they implode in the national identity syntax: borders have their state, and not the other way around. It is therefore not inconceivable for a political community to interpret itself as fully/exclusive border society (case of Serbia and Belarus), with all its discursive implications, and in relation to the manipulative symbolic-factual distribution of power fabricated by the national elites (cf. Savchenko 2009). We will qualify this as the meta-narrative of “border culture”, or paroxysm of “cartographic anxiety” (Krishna 1994; Painter 2008), as distinct from the parallel narratives of the “cultures of borders”. Second, it is the possibility of the “border spectacle” concept (cf. Debord 1990, 2002 [1967]; Kellner 2003: 1-34; De Genova 2013), the abstracting of any grounding of borders, except the ultra-aestheticized projection/improvisation/fabrication of some individually formulated position, status or instance. For some part, it is the “simulacrum hyper-culture” that acquires its meaning not on some profound level of contemplation of the functioning of society, but on the superficial understanding of equally valued, non-hierarchic events, phenomena, concepts, processes and institutions. In that respect, both “border culture” and “cultures of borders” are foremost cultures of the “border spectacle”.

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