

## 2 Rethinking borders

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### Introduction

In the scholarship on borders, organizations and institutions are key societal elements in drawing and enforcing borders. This is especially apparent in sociology, political science, geography, and planning. Organizations and institutions also impose significant borders and boundaries of their own. Yet discussions of institutions and their roles vis-à-vis borders tend to be – inexplicably – muted, with significant exceptions, some noted here. This chapter analyses some key aspects of the border-institution nexus.

Borders are ever present. So much so that spatial planners and policy makers tend to take boundary implications for granted, unless they are dealing explicitly with cross-border issues. Think of ‘not in my back yard’ or a **classing** zoning dispute. By borders in this context, I refer to spatial-territorial borders, particularly those demarcated by political jurisdictions from municipality to nation, as well as other borders administered by planners such as land use zones. Yet border lines, whether on maps or organization charts, always and insistently shape the arenas of action and circumscribe forums of debate. The first thing that any citizen looks for on a plan or zoning map is the location of their property – in which area or zone circumscribed by a border. Borders condition possibilities and set limits. They include as much as exclude.

Borders are always dynamic, ever shifting. Borders are human constructs enshrined in laws, treaties, regulations, strategies, policies, plans, regulations, and so on. We draft them, modify them and erase them at our will. We create and recreate them, and cannot escape them. This chapter concerns the institutional implications of and on borders. Which factors regarding borders are at play when considering their institutional characteristics and implications?

The chapter begins with preliminary remarks on borders in general, and their effects in the popular imagination. The remarks touch their history, their ephemeral and transitory nature, that they are socially and politically constituted, always contested, fluid and porous, and how they overlap to form border fields. It proceeds with reflections on their institutional implications, necessarily addressing politics and power. Finally, it concludes with a rethinking of borders in the face of flows, globalization, network society and its governance.



### Since when did human beings need passports?

Yes, we may ask, since when did human beings need passports? That question has an empirical answer, in fifteenth-century Europe. Henry V of England issued them to travellers, providing identification and membership of the realm. The term comes from France, where at least since the sixteenth century, they were issued to citizens of a polis to request safe passage through the city gates – *passer portes*.<sup>1</sup> As a rhetorical question, and more importantly as a question reflecting the state of affairs among nations, it is precautionary and illuminary at the same time. Precautionary in that provides security of identity and nationality. Illuminary, in that it reflects our complex human condition of wanting to belong, yet wanting to be free, to move, to travel, to express at the same time. Why do we humans need a piece of paper to travel across our planet to be with loved ones, get a job, see the world?

Borders thus possess and embody a dialectic – some may say dichotomy, others paradox – whose enantidroma spans fixed and fluid. This paradox has yet to be resolved, judging from the importance they play in our lives and the conflicts that they have engendered throughout history. In fact, the border dialectic can be interpreted as an animating element of humanity and thus of human history.

In the urban realm, we can turn to Graham and Marvin's observation of 'splintering urbanism' (Graham and Marvin 2001). They critically identified the role of infrastructures in 'splintering' cities by dividing, separating, segregating spaces, peoples, and activities; in contradistinction to the usual role assigned to infrastructure networks as connecting and bringing together (access). That is, infrastructures can become de facto borders, in spite of their intention to connect.

Like infrastructures, borders unite and bring together as well as divide. As Jean Hillier observes in this volume, borders 'are lines between communities and places, not around them'. At the US-Mexican border, for instance, the population of towns on either side of the border, where border towns straddle it in pairs, has exploded since NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1994. For example, in 1990, the census population of all twelve Texas border counties totalled 1,474,873, and in 2010 this total reached 2,369,471.

In the five largest counties alone, the 2010 total was 2,286,198, an increase of 63 per cent in twenty years. On the Mexican side, populations grew along the border at a rate far greater than on the United States side, due to the pull of family and opportunity from the north, and the push back of the national border.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite free trade fact and rhetoric, the reality of the border is quite different. It is nearly as long, and in many places taller, wider and more fortified, than the Iron Curtain that divided Eastern and Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

### Borders are hard, yet can be ephemeral

However, as an indication of the temporary nature of even the hardest borders, the former Iron Curtain has been transformed to the 'Iron Curtain Trail', a European

Union project that traces the former division on a 6,800 kilometre bicycle path from the Barents through the Baltic to the Black Seas. Former border gates, like Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, have become tourist attractions, serving as constant reminders of the often contradictory character of borders based on ideology.

What if anything dissolves borders? If there is anything that dissolves borders, history shows that it is not war, it is not treaties, nor diplomacy nor trade. Wars and resulting treaties tend to fortify existing borders and (re)draw new ones in the interests of the victors. Even the network society in a global world reinforces borders in some ways as it dissolves them in others. NAFTA and other so-called 'free' trade agreements provide examples of the dual nature of borders that restrict and otherwise regulate human flows, while enabling the flows of goods, finance capital and ideas. Nonetheless, people always find ways to go around, under, over, and through borders, or otherwise circumvent them if enough is at stake, and enough time, resources, and ingenuity are brought to bear.

What can transcend a border? Music, love, cuisine, sport, and the entire range of human endeavour. However, in all of these realms, due to trade and copyright laws, among other constraints, borders still assert their constricting grip. This is palpably demonstrated by the fanatic flag waving during the Olympics, World Cup, World Championships, and so on. Our very essence, our humanness is the only thing that routinely surmounts any border placed in its path. Whether political or economic refugee, artist or athlete, brother, mother or lover; we always find a way to live freely according to our will, needs and desires, as does any species. Only *homo sapiens* draws 'artificial' borders, that is, borders that are social constructs encoded in institutions and their rules and laws.

### **Borders are always constituted**

As Wendy Steele and co-authors bring to our attention the words of David Newman in their chapter 'Planning with borders', 'Borders are social and political constructions. Someone creates them and, once created, manages them in such a way as to serve the interests of those same power elites' (Newman 2011: 35). These someones can be sovereign nation-states, corporations, municipal and other jurisdictions, and legal-juridical associations. Their constitutions define the borders, which are encoded and enforced in international treaties, corporate laws and bylaws, local regulations, and so on.

It is useful in this regard to distinguish in the context of the nation-state, as Sassen does in her article 'When territory deborders territoriality', between the category of territory and the assertion of control over territory by a spatial regime, what Raustiala calls 'legal spatiality' (Sassen 2013). 'The scope and reach of the law is connected to territory, and therefore spatial location determines the operative legal regime' (Raustiala 2005: 2506). This can be seen most clearly in the overriding of borders by cross-border flows and the concomitant erosion of state authority.

For example, Andreas Faludi suggests, in the context of the late twentieth-century process of constructing the European Union, that Europeanization is a

learning process (2013). It is continuous, not fixed; dynamic not static. Since the fall of empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and increasingly since, the continent of Europe has struggled to construct a common identity through the establishment of common markets, common university requirements, and free movement amongst EU passport holders, among many other initiatives. Over time, these have become increasingly institutionalized, with a large bureaucracy in Brussels and elsewhere.

Yet in recognition of the complexities derived from the long span of history and borders, efforts to adopt a European Constitution have failed, or at least stalled, due to a panoply of interests that all swirl around issues related to borders. The end result of the current Europeanization process is unknown, as it is a singular social and political experiment. It has its antecedents before World War I, precipitated by the fall of empires, and has been accelerating since. This process of Europeanization has progressed, albeit unevenly, because it has generally served the interests of all Europeans, and those linked to Europe, such as North America. This trajectory towards Europeanization is being severely tested by the single currency (the euro) in the current financial, economic, and political crises affecting Europe. Interests are a key element of border construction and border lowering and removing. Whose interests are served to exclude and include are at the heart of border delineation and control (Paasi 2011).

Borders, however, not always correspond to marks on maps. Borders permeate consciousness and conscience, and draw cognitive and affective lines between categories of people. This can easily be found in the enduring question of race. 'In an 1897 essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, 'Strivings of the Negro People', Du Bois first outlined his concept of blacks' 'double consciousness' – the tricky balancing act of reconciling the pursuit of assimilation into the American mainstream with the maintenance of pride in one's black identity. That essay became the basis for his most enduring book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a collection of penetrating essays on African American culture, religion, history, and politics. It was there that Du Bois wrote the statement for which he is probably most famous: 'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea'" (Dreier 2013). This 'color line' was encoded in the United States Constitution, and incrementally abolished, at least in legal terms, by several amendments to the constitution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Notably, a border called the Mason-Dixon line divided the North and South of the United States, setting the battle line over which race and states' rights were fought in the American Civil War.

Charles Tilly captures this sense of social boundaries that are constructed by groups and institutions with power to establish such social categories and the laws to enforce them. We create using language 'shared stories and categories' by which to distinguish us versus them, and to construct identity and solidarity. These become part of a culture and thus perpetuated (Tilly 2002). Moreover, he posits that these stories and categories that define social groups play a key role in determining group boundaries, including any territorial boundaries that they

may imply or demarcate in fact. Furthermore, the durability of differences among groups is encoded in organizations' and institutions' formal rules, laws, structures and processes (Tilly 1999).<sup>3</sup> Thus borders of all kinds are constituted, by both cognition through language and stories, and by constitution via laws and customs.

### **Borders are always contested**

Borders are not just geopolitical lines that cross landscapes. They are first and foremost social constructs that have been institutionalized via a complex set of laws, treaties, often not of our own contemporary making.

Again, we can rely on the example of the contested US-Mexican national border. The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement division contracts out security along the north side of the 2,000 mile long US-Mexico border to private companies. One such contract is with the Corrections Corporation of America, which provides jail services to the 33,400 non-legal immigrant inmates needing to be incarcerated by the Homeland Security 2009 spending law (raised to 34,000 in the 2011 spending bill). This number by law is a minimum number. According to US Representative Ted Deutch, 'No other law enforcement agencies [in the US] have a quota for the number of people that they must keep in jail'. Moreover, 'the US spends \$2 billion a year to meet the detention quota set by Congress for illegal immigrants' (Selway and Newkirk 2013: 36, 37).

What is more, in 2013 the US Congress proposed an additional 20,000 border patrol agents, on top of the 1,000 currently employed, plus the expenditure of billions of dollars to consolidate the Mexican-American border along its length. How much has been spent on the Mexican-American border and its operational defence since NAFTA?

This indicator of contestation – of Mexican citizens seeking work in the United States, and seeking to reunite with family and friends who have already migrated there – contrasted with this level of surveillance and incarceration, which comes at great public expense to the American citizenry – places in relief the deep social fissures that borders can cause. The deeper the contestation, the greater the degree of control over it. Consider Israel and Palestine, or North and South Korea. This is control that requires policing and therefore inevitable violence. According to Noam Chomsky, 'The US-Mexican border, like most borders, was established by violence – and its architecture is the architecture of violence' (Chomsky 2013).

There is an abundant literature on this particular border. Michael Dear's monograph on why border walls do not work exemplifies the rationale behind fortified borders, and how, at least in this case, they are counter-productive to all the political treaties and rhetoric serving unity, freedom, trade, and peaceful neighbourly relations (2013). This border, like so many others, encapsulates the territorial dimension of us versus them. Keep out – you are not us.

## Borders are fluid and porous

Borders shape-shift over time. The zone around the border line is in reality a 'border field' that expands and contracts like an accordion or Pufferfish. Like a dynamic force field, a border field's energy expands and contracts. The border field exerts influence on the flows passing through it, and on the attention placed on it from near and far. Border fields have political ebbs and flows just like any political issue. Immigration comes and goes as an issue, often in response to events. Laws, treaties, traditions and events that demand attention are what endow the border field with energy. Otherwise, people, like air and water, information and currency, would flow across without impediment.

Thus, a valid question to ask is why on the one hand do trade treaties and networked ICT technologies facilitate the flows of money, ideas, information, and goods; while on the other hand other treaties and laws restrict the movement of humans? Besides marking an explicit value on the freedom and principles of human life compared to material and ephemeral goods, it is counter to the natural and recent historical tendencies towards mobility and freedom. Why are humans valued less than their own ideas and currencies? Human freedom, including freedom of movement across borders, is now increasingly monitored and restricted, in spite of globalization and the openings afforded by the internet and related social media.

As a result, a border is a fluid phenomenon, not fixed. When more properly understood in its dynamic complexity as a border field, this definition conveys more accurately the complexity, fluidity, and change inherent in activities that occur near and because of a border. A border is not a mere 'line in the sand' which a seemingly steadfast and resolute leader or institution can insist is inviolate. Instead, a border field is like an ecotone. Like ecotones, border fields tend to be more diverse and more fragile/sensitive than the two territories that come together to form it.

Moreover, borders cause many people and organizations to work at counter purposes, in that humans who construct and control borders that restrict certain categories of other *humans* (always 'other' – different, often lesser) simultaneously permit and enhance the movement across these same borders of *things*. The resultant truth is that this perceived control is largely an illusion, given the porosity of borders in fact. The ingenious means and the persistent powers that people apply enables them to always find a way to the other side. This has implications for the use, management, and governance of borders. That is to say, implications for the institutions that presume that they can in fact manage borders.

This thinking has parallels in the urban realm. In his book *Porous City*, about Rio de Janeiro, Bruno Carvalho rethinks the typical images of Rio, that along with São Paulo and so many other rapidly growing megacities in rapidly developing nations, which paint portraits of extreme poverty and misery teeming in favelas that sit cheek by jowl with extreme wealth, as if the two existed in complete isolation to each other (2013). In contrast, a porous city such as Rio is one in which the fluidity of cultures, exhibited by the constant remaking of



identity (individual and community) flows seamlessly across putative boundaries. In this way, borders are transgressed with ease, a far cry from the 'enter here at your own risk' mentality preferred by most media, including such landmark works of art as the film *City of God*.

### **Borders always overlap, creating zones or fields instead of lines**

Borders always harbour social if not biological ecotones. Ecotones are the most fertile and diverse of ecosystems because they host three types of species, effectively tripling diversity. There are the species endemic to each of the two bordering ecosystems, plus those species specific to their overlap, the ecotone itself. Moreover, ecotones are the most productive and the most fragile ecosystems in addition to being the most diverse (Attrill and Rundle 2002). National and regional borders share these same characteristics in the social realm, which we can attest to by reflecting on contemporary conditions at national borders.

This border 'ecotone' I call the border field. Creativity and productivity, if allowed to flourish in the border field, can also be higher than in consolidated, non-border areas. Border fields, like certain cities such as New York, London, and Istanbul that have historically served similar roles because of their frontier location between two or more regions, are melting pots – cultural crucibles where the mixing of languages, cuisines, music, crafts, and virtually every endeavour of cultural activity takes place. Crossroads cities and islands like Hawaii, Hong Kong and Singapore serve the same purposes.

These rich zones have global and virtual counterparts. Global trade and social media enable rich mixing, blending, sampling and mashing to occur irrespective of national borders. New institutions and new media have been established to enable these activities, such as the WTO (World Trade Organization), the United Nations, the World Bank, Facebook, Twitter, and so on. Borders in these realms are being dismantled, while at the same time creating new *de facto* borders that separate the rich and the poor, those with access and those without. These new borders, disconnected from territory, are nonetheless shaping events and the course of humankind as much if not more than territorial borders ever did.

Sassen, among others, calls this phenomenon of the erosion of the nation-state's authority over its sovereign territory 'debordering'. This phenomenon of debordering has to do with recognizing 'emergent jurisdictions and orderings that override the state's territoriality. The most familiar instances are those of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the United Nations' humanitarian system. ... I use the fact of such jurisdictions and orderings to argue that they enable the making of new transversally bordered spaces that not only cut across national borders but also generate new types of formal and informal jurisdictions, or structural holes, deep inside the tissue of national sovereign territory' (Sassen 2013: 23).

While much academic debate has justly centred on national borders in the context of globalization, there is a strong local dimension to this debate of inter-

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est to urban planners, among others. A good example is the US-Mexican border cities of Tijuana and San Diego.<sup>4</sup> In the 1990s they decided to collaborate in cross-border spatial planning and strategy, especially for infrastructure, after the two metro areas, about 2.5 million persons each, effectively merged into one with tens of thousands of persons flowing across the border on a daily basis.

Similar cross-border initiatives have occurred and are taking place around the world, for example Copenhagen-Malmö, London-Paris, the reincorporation of Hong Kong into China, and on a completely different scale that reflects rapidly emerging twenty-first-century realities, the BeSoTo corridor – Beijing Seoul Tokyo, which houses approximately 80 million merely two hours from each other by plane.

Likewise, colossal city regions such as Hong Kong-Guangzhou in the Pearl River Delta (population 65 million), and in the Yangtze River Delta (95 million) require completely different thinking, planning, and governing than what is taught and practised currently. A generation ago these two new jumbos scarcely existed as they do today. They redefine even the most recent jargon, the mega-city region, analysed in Neuman and Hull (2011).

These realities, each operating at different spatial scales and each crossing multiple spatial scales, render older notions of national borders on an inferior plane compared to even the recent past.

These instances begin to beg the questions, what is a border in the global age, the network society, the internet galaxy, where virtual reality has become a 'real virtuality' (Castells 2000)? What purpose does a territorial border serve?

Nevertheless, a counter example to this cooperative stance across borders in San Diego-Tijuana and elsewhere is the Arizona-Sonora border, under increasing military surveillance (Cadava 2013). Higher walls, more border patrol persons, tighter video and flight surveillance, stricter immigration laws, and social unease that is heightened by these policing tactics, intensifies the division brought by the border. However, as Cadava argues, this current division belies centuries of free movement, cooperation amongst peoples, and even a flourishing mid-twentieth century cross-border tourist and commercial trade.

A not dissimilar phenomenon occurs within the borders of a nation. An example is in Israel, where Palestinians, Bedouins, and other ethnicities cross borders between their homes in fortified settlements constructed without their consent and places of employment, shopping, and so on in Israeli territory (Yiftachel 2006). Here, another counter example to cross-border cooperation and debordering, city walls and identity cards are borders that mark certain ethnicities as the other, and confine them to isolated and segregated pockets within territories. Here again, borders overlap, creating border fields between and within territories.

In these cases as well as many others, the processes of globalization and their outcomes are serving to privilege specific places most connected to those flows as well as marginalize those places less connected. In cities, one consequence of these processes is that they are taking common and public places and spaces away from ordinary (and especially poor and disadvantaged) citizens and redeveloping them into privatized spaces of consumption and entertainment (Sorkin 1992).

Place as human settlement (settled place) stands in opposition to the space of flows of globalization. Globalization thus devalues many places of their history, their culture, and their local meaning in important respects.

In practice, we observe opposing phenomena, where border lines are riven with conflict and border fields are fertile for culture and where borders seed strife and stimulate cooperation. These oppositions pose problems for policy makers and planners who try to make sense of these shifting realities and malleable concepts. Moreover, planners' and policy makers' practices occur in institutional settings and multi-institutional fields, many of which themselves cross multiple jurisdictional borders. The next sections seek to address selected aspects of this problematic, in an attempt to clarify a few key concepts that planners and policy makers must contend with in order to more effectively work with and in border situations.

### Political representation and territory

Historically, political representation has been institutionalized through territorial constructs. The notion of sovereignty and rights, for example, are fundamental aspects of territorial jurisdictions at all scales. In recognition of these and related border issues, the new field of scholarship 'border studies' underscores the salience of the topic, replete with degree programs, conferences, journals, and so on.

Hannah Pitkin articulates the problem of representation, in this case, political representation, in philosophical terms in her tour du force *On Representation*, (1967). As Andreas Faludi indicates, leading thinkers elide territorial representation altogether, assuming the nexus of sovereignty and dominion (territory), thus leaving spatial representation aside (2013). Planning theorists have taken up this terrain in general terms, where citizens are conferred ambiguous standing in planning and regulatory processes as participants and stakeholders, holding aside for the moment where they have official legal standing as respondents in development proposal applications, zoning and development control amendments, and the like. The standing of stakeholders and participants is muddled because they are not conferred explicit rights (territorially bound and legitimated – that is, institutionalized). Moreover, their territorial status can be fuzzy, in that they may be from anywhere, not just the jurisdiction in which the planning activity takes place. This is exactly the proposition posed by Fedeli for the case of the urban region of Milan (2011).<sup>5</sup>

At the local level, in cities and communities, citizenship is shaped by belonging, by discourse, by action accreting day to day in the very formation of community and citizen alike, a rich and reciprocal relation. Citizenship shaped by belonging, if restricted to officially (legally) sanctioned citizenship, is also a form of exclusion of non-citizens, who nevertheless may be long-term residents who contribute substantially to the community, perhaps more than many legal citizens. This restriction can lead to invisibility, marginality, and thus diminishing the potential for active contribution and participation.

This phenomenon is multiplying as globalization and migration increase,

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affecting most vibrant cities and towns, where significant influxes of guest workers and migrant labourers exist. Civic impoverishment takes place alongside economic and affective impoverishment, another consequence of borders. This condition, when contrasted to the stakeholder status circumstance in the paragraph above, forms a further indication of the contradictory and conflicting effects that borders impose.

### **Bashing borders, or cooperative crossing?**

Tomasello argues that throughout the millions of years of evolution of humans and our prehuman ancestors, competition has given way to cooperation in order to ease adaptation for survival and prosperity as societies have become more complex (2013). He goes as far as to suggest that cooperation is the source of human cognitive uniqueness. The take-away for borders, institutions, and their governance is related to Tomasello's concept of 'shared intentionality hypothesis', which posits that social recursive interaction and communication is a basis for more complex thinking. A question we can pose for fixed territorial borders is the extent to which these borders preclude cooperation among states and other jurisdictions, even as they catalyse formal and informal cooperation among non-governmental actors. That is, to what extent do borders do harm to the shared intentionality hypothesis? Especially when national borders are fortified by passports, languages, constitutions, armies, anthems, rivalries, currencies, and the like.

As we traverse uncertain and complex times, which are likely to get more uncertain and more complex in the future, it is wise to recall that certainty is a good thing, that most entities, like most people, especially governments and property developers engaged in urban planning and development, seek certainty. The more uncertain that conditions become, the greater the retreat to certainty, especially amongst the conservative sectors of populations. Extreme cases of this phenomenon, which underscore it, include Russia since the fall of Communism and Germany's National Socialist movement during the Great Depression of the twentieth century.

### **Cities, planners and borders**

Certainty soothes, and borders of all kinds are part of that certainty. As Robert Frost avers in his poem 'The Mending Wall', 'good fences make good neighbors'. As such they should not be dismissed, but recognized for what they are and what they provide, in addition to what they limit and constrain. The challenge for planners, designers, developers and policy makers is to seek a balanced and nuanced understanding of borders. As with any other aspect of planning, this comes about in the education of communities and constituents in all the stakeholder processes in which planners engage.

Of the many types of borders in urban planning and design, we can think of one that historians consider one of the first modern urban planning codes, the

regulation of façades and cornice lines in Paris in the eighteenth century (Choay 1969). Walking the streets of Paris and other European cities that adopted such controls, one can enjoy the regularity and comfort in the uniformity, which when accompanied by human scale, quality design and materials, along with ample public spaces teeming with activity; offer urban delight that is world renowned. This is a physical border on the visible tops of buildings on an urban street that is encoded – institutionalized – both in law and in custom in the production of urban space (Lefebvre 1991).

While much maligned in recent generations, starting with the attacks of Lewis Mumford (1960) and Jane Jacobs (1961) on segregating uses and activities in cities by zoning, and sharpened by Leon Krier and his new urbanist followers, zoning borders in cities are wholly antithetical to the nature of cities, which is to bring people together in concentrated settlements for social and economic intercourse. One urban and planning theorist went as far as to call cities ‘transaction maximizing systems’ (Meier 1968). How can we maximize, or even optimize, if we separate peoples and their activities through single-use zoning, still prevalent despite advances including mixed-use zoning?

Accessibility, or lack thereof, whether physical accessibility provided by transport or socio-economic provided by education, also imposes limits/borders to daily possibilities. Ask a poor single parent without a car and reliant on public transport, who works three part-time low or minimum wage jobs just to make end meet, if his or her life is not bordered spatially because of the low quality of public transport. Similarly we can talk about food deserts, credit deserts, and other community spaces that are hemmed in due to planning and zoning policies and regulations, and the locational decisions and practices of banks and food markets (‘redlining’). They limit the daily spatial horizons, activities, and opportunities of less advantaged citizens. Borders are not restricted to lines on maps or organizational charts. They appear in the mind and in culture, sometimes a more effective straitjacket than any government regulation.

These psychological borders are all too real. They are abetted by and can be direct outcomes of institutionalized practices. There is beginning to be a sea change in some of these practices, in part brought about by sensitive planners’ attention.

### Lines and other institutional tools

The mind is our most important tool. It is meta-tool, as we create all other tools with it. Before we can change tools we must change our mind, and our collective ‘mind’. This is a pragmatic question, whose epistemic foundation is put by Heidegger in his seminal essay ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1977). Tools mediate the relation between humans and things and places. Yet tools’ role in mediating goes beyond the mere distancing of people from place, a disconnectedness that has shown to have critical consequences for our planet and the possible practices of sustainable ways of living. Tools – technology, according to Heidegger – exert their greatest influence on human behaviour not on what they

act upon, but the way they convert what they act upon into a ‘standing reserve’, always at the service of humans. This subjugation of everything on the planet as a resource subject to human exploitation is at the heart of the question of sustainability. His technologies include institutions, large scale control technologies that may be the greatest mediators of all.

Control is a tool. Lines on maps are a quintessential control tool employed by governing institutions and their agents, including planners. The use of borders as tools of control, and their dire consequences, is exposed in a paper by Halawani and Lo Piccolo (2013). They identify ‘landscapes of exception’ that lose their vitality, continuity and identity due to borders and walls imposed by occupying powers, building on the work of Agamben (2005) and Weizman (2007). Significantly, ‘domination, control, and surveillance produced by an ordered process of planning which is mostly in the hand of the hegemonic power’ shows the complicity of planning in the exercise of this control (Halawani and Lo Piccolo 2013: 1).

Planners, like all professionals, cannot act without tools, regardless of their nature. However, tools have a two-sided nature, the other side being a crutch. We employ tools as an afterthought in many instances, without thinking of the implications of using the tool, not only in terms of impacts on the ground, but how they can stultify our thinking, and therefore planning practices. Invoking Heidegger, how do they mediate planning’s reality by distancing the planners and their constituents from the daily realities on the ground? Tools today are getting more complex, requiring lots of data (‘big data’), lots of time, lots of energy. How sustainable are these tools? How do they enable us to be close to the ground, close to the people and places that we plan for/with? What is the distance between the people and the place that tools bring to planning?

What does this mean for planners and planning today in these times of multiple crises, that have been accentuated post-2008? We cannot merely flip a switch and have the magic result of simplicity. We cannot undo many generations of becoming more complex, a route taken by all societies, perhaps since the dawn of civilization. Let me address only one aspect, lines (borders) on maps (tools).

### **Afraid of lines?**

One of the complexities perplexing planners is the multi-scalar nature of city regions and their spatial planning. Planners are taught to see the intricacies and interactions among phenomena, as well as their impacts and resolutions over time and across space. These phenomena transgress lines of all kinds – lines that have become a sediment in the works of legal apparati, in institutional practices, and in the collective consciousness.

Yet throughout history, as events repeat and become institutionalized, these lines, boundaries and borders mark any institution that uses them. Lines mark out in space, time, and society the **institutions** norms, images and metaphors; its structures, processes, and agency. Institutions that matter draw lines. Whether on maps or organizations, in our cities or in our lives, a clearly demarcated line is



what sets a consequential institution apart. An example from history regards the settling of the American West, a transcendent occurrence in American history, owing its transcendence to the institutionalization of the conquests over lands and the tribes that populated them. Conquest came not only through the gun and the drink. It was made permanent through law and property, enshrined by lines on maps and deeds.

For example, American settlers

thought that simply because they had stolen something, no one should be allowed to steal it from them. But of course that was what people [in general] thought: that whatever they had taken, they should be allowed to keep it forever. He [Mexican protagonist of the book being cited] was no better. His people had stolen the land from the Indians, and yet he did not think of that even for an instant – he thought only of the Texans who had stolen it from his people. And the Indians from whom his people had stolen the land had stolen it from other Indians.’<sup>6</sup>

When coupled with American settlement by 40-acre parcels and land-grant universities and the granting of statehood, American federal and state law and their institutions and their jurisdictional lines created a completely new history, a new order, out of chaos. In settling the frontier of the American West, community builders wherever and whenever they appeared, brought ‘law and order’ to the land through institutions and lines.

Yet these lines complicate in a serious way the tasks of planners in taking actions and making decisions in a global, networked society in which the space of places is being overtaken by the space of flows, and the power of flows is superseding the flows of power (to paraphrase Castells, 2000). Flows and processes shape our cities far more than zoning and plans, whose lines cannot contain or manage them. How long will planners cling to lines on maps? Can these maps, lines, and tools be redesigned to fit new and future realities? What new tools can manage future change?

### **Is it time for planners to draw a collective line in the sand that stakes out new ways to manage territory?**

One if by land, two if by sea, three if by clock.<sup>7</sup>

An extension of this argument can be taken into maritime borders that extend into the sea. Increases in national control over ever-expanding territorial waters have been governed by the Law of the Sea (1982). Susan Kidd and David Shaw point out that the sea space near a national coastline is also governed (dominion) by the nation-state. This maritime space is increasingly contested due to the conflicts of interests among nations in these aquatic border fields. Drawing on Brenner’s notion of ‘scalar flux’ in territoriality and governance (1999), as well as Sassen, they posit that ‘scalar flux’ or ‘scalar complexity’, which emanates from a new



relational geography, rather than place-based conception of space, sees new scales of formal and informal policy interventions constantly being reworked' (Kidd and Shaw 2013: 184).

Whether terrestrial riverine, intermediate estuarine, or marine ecosystems; environmental and maritime treaties and laws based on border lines are dissolving rapidly, struggling to serve their purposes that their terrestrial counterparts formerly served well. In a completely different context, this conundrum was foreseen at a geopolitical level over a century ago by Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose classic *The Influence of Sea Power on History* shaped naval and military strategy among world powers (Mahan 1890). He argued for projection of sea power irrespective of territorial borders, and that wars and diplomacy on land would be won at sea.

It should be noted that taken for granted in this exposition is the expression of borders as spatial and territorial, visible on the ground or in a representation such as a map. Also discussed are organizational and institutional lines and borders. Not covered are other types of borders such as temporal, cognitive, and cultural. While these and other types of borders are correlated to territorial ones, they have largely fallen outside the scope of this analysis.

In the end, urban planning and allied disciplines are about making places better for all. This 'all' should include residents and non-residents, citizens and non-citizens. We should be mindful that the lines we draw and the borders we impose have consequences big and small, pervasive and ephemeral, across space, time, psyche and community. These lines sear their marks indelibly. Will those marks cut **deep** and leave scars, or shape strongly and form badges of pride? Or will there be lines at all?



## Notes

- 1 Benedictus, L. (2006) 'A brief history of the passport: from a royal letter to a microchip'. *The Guardian*, Friday 17 November 2006.
- 2 See <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/popcnty1.html> for 1990 Texas data and <https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/popcnty12010.html> for 2010 Texas data, from US Bureau of the Census, US Census of Population and Housing, 1990 and American Fact Finder, 2010; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexico) census data for border states Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas 1990, 2010, retrieved 12 October 2013 from [www3.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/mexicocifras/default.aspx?e=2#T](http://www3.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/mexicocifras/default.aspx?e=2#T)
- 3 The analysis in this paragraph is, in part, derived from Manuel Delanda (2006, 57–67).
- 4 Before the annexation of California by the United States from Mexico, there was one large California under Mexican jurisdiction, which was separated into California (USA) and Baja California (Mexico).
- 5 See also Hillier, this volume, who summarizes the Milan 'City of Cities' case from a border problematic perspective.
- 6 Lionel Shriver, *Financial Times*, 14 July 2013, p. 12. 'Review of Phillip Meyer; (2013) *The Son*. New York: HarperCollins.
- 7 'One if by land, two if by sea' is from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem 'Paul Revere's Ride', referring to the number of lantern signals used to indicate the means of arrival of British troops during the American Revolution.

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