

BRIT XI Mobile borders | Abstracts. Friday 9 September, Grenoble

Session 39. Border Theory, Security, and the Changing Borderlines and Borderlands of North America /

Sécurité et théorie des frontières en Amérique du Nord (2 - Changing Borderlines And Borderlands Of North America)

Victor KONRAD, Carleton University: Impacts of Security Primacy on the Geography of the Canada-United States Borderlands.

The infusion of greater security to make the border between the U.S. and Canada more definitive and incisive has in fact created a broader borderland of border-related interaction, most of it aligned with and impacted by enhanced security. This condition of security primacy has had spillover effects in the borderlands where spatial and temporal concentration of security has constructed new landscapes, complications, security zones, 'breaking points' in borderland functions, and essentially a new geography of the Canada-U.S. borderlands. Six related impacts on territory, environment and community are discussed in this paper. First, and most apparent, is the spatial re-ordering resulting from paramount security: a more sharply defined and altered hierarchy of border crossing points, a stretched securitized zone between and beyond these points, expedited corridors funneled through the security zone, and differentiated extension of the security zone through the borderlands. Another impact of heightened security is the spatially focused and detrimental effect on the environment. Also, the social fabric of the borderlands is being stretched and torn with barriers, regulation changes, wait times, and restrictions of the heightened security border. Communities near the border are impacted socially and economically with enhanced security, whereas communities across the border are strained severely to the point of dissolution. A heightened sense of uncertainty prevails in these communities, and among the business, cultural and social groups who live there. Security primacy impacts most activity in the borderlands and it does so in unpredictable ways. Finally, pervasive security polarizes secured and non-secured spaces, places and people to create a segregated spatial dynamic in the borderlands that rivals the division enforced by the border itself. This paper explores the aforementioned impacts, and then suggests the dimensions of affirmation of borderlands community, place and culture that are necessary to realign the operational space that security primacy has appropriated.

Randy William WIDDIS, University of Regina, Department of Geography: Negotiating the Evolution of Canadian Borders and Canadian-American Borderlands: An Historical Approach.

In recent years, the study of borders has been preoccupied with a number of themes, including: the simultaneity of globalization and regionalization processes, the liminal nature of border regions, and the debordering/rebordering paradox. Together, these concerns along with others have led many to rethink the nature and role of borders in what is viewed to be a period of exceptional change. The borderless world hypothesis has been rejected as theorists have come to view borders and mobilities as complimentary rather than antithetical concepts. Contemporary borders are more differentiated than ever and the current phase of globalization is characterized by unprecedented flows and mobilities that transcend but do not eradicate borders. Today's borders are fluid, constantly remade by technology, new laws and institutions, security requirements and the realities of international commerce.

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Yet while borders continue to exist and are arguably more fluid and dynamic than ever before, this doesn't mean that borders prior to the current phase of globalization (1945 onwards) were relatively static and stable. Borders and borderlands are historically constructed, and therefore the meanings connected to them are constantly changing along with political, economic and social developments taking place both externally between and internally within states. As borders and borderlands change, so do their capacity to reterritorialize and rescale place and identity. Because nation-states are constructed and reconstructed to adapt to changing contexts, borders are, by necessity, malleable. What is constant is the fact that borders are always in a state of becoming, albeit at different rates and in different ways.

This paper contends that a more insightful understanding of the fluid and mobile nature of contemporary borders is afforded by an historical perspective that recognizes elements of the past in the present and views such boundaries as "the results of social action taking place in various institutional practices and on various historical and spatial scales" (Paasi, n.d.). Historical research in turn can benefit from the study of contemporary border and borderlands because researchers engaged in the latter have been generally more active and successful in conceptualizing and theorizing borders and borderlands than those engaged in the former (Wynn, 2006; Konrad and Nicol, 2008). In particular, a postmodern approach opens new routes of inquiry into the history of borders, boundaries and borderlands. This argument is developed with reference to Canadian borders, both internal and external, as they have evolved over time.

Evelyn MAYER, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (FTSK Germersheim): Bodies, Buds, and Birding in Jim Lynch's *Border Songs* (2009): Questions of Power, Permeability, and Mobility along the Canada-U.S. Border.

This presentation discusses power, culture and identity within a border studies framework focusing on Jim Lynch's *Border Songs*, a novel set in the Pacific Northwest. The Peace Arch Park, featured prominently, is a symbol of mutual understanding and straddles the international boundary. There, people can walk from the United States to Canada and vice versa. Nevertheless, this historically grown interaction in the borderlands becomes increasingly difficult. Permeability of and mobility across the border is compromised. With the thickening of the Canada-U.S. border after 9/11, due to increased securitization and new documentation requirements for travelers (Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, 2009), local communities all along the 49th Parallel are at a crossroads.

Jim Lynch explores the struggle for power at and control of America's Northern border by creating a most unusual Border Patrol agent in his novel. Protagonist Brandon Vanderkool's striking physique, six-eight and "232 pounds of meat and bone stacked vertically beneath a lopsided smile" (4) is a reminder that he literally embodies Lynch's humorous and subversive approach to power relations and the questioning of recent changes along the Line. The dyslexic Border Patrol agent sees things other people do not see, epitomized in his obsessive love and extraordinary skill for birding. While birding on the job, the rookie agent Brandon makes numerous busts of "buds and bodies" (63) alike and thus quickly turns into a "shit magnet" (65) in the eyes of the other less successful and unmotivated senior agents. By literary means, Lynch highlights and critiques the current transformations in the Canada-U.S. borderlands in terms of power, permeability, and mobility.