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Border Lines: Globalisation, De-territorialisation and the Reconfiguring of National Boundaries

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Abstract

The significance of national borders has been called into question by the corrosive consequence of accelerated globalisation. Many commentators have assumed that intensified worldwide inter-connections and time-space compression entail a decline in state capacities and an increased permeability of their borders. Trans-national flows of capital, commodities, information and people, so the argument runs, have undermined the ability of states to regulate activities within and across their borders. In short, a ‘de-territorialised’, ‘borderless’ world is invoked which, it is claimed, fundamentally transforms economic, political and cultural realities. This paper critically examines this thesis, rejects its strongest version and goes on to argue for the continued relevance of national borders - as demarcating *de jure* sovereignty, as regulators of movement, as markers of citizenship rights, and as instruments for the classification of populations and the reproduction of identities. It claims that borders have been reconfigured rather than uniformly eroded, that their permeability is highly differentiated, and that this permeability reflects and reinforces the power relations of uneven globalisation.

Introduction

Three years ago I had the edifying experience of visiting an office of the Australian Department of Immigration. My partner was applying for permanent residency, on the basis of her attachment to me, a verifiable, passport carrying, birth certificate wielding Australian citizen. As we waited for our number to be called - loaded down with police clearances, character references, medical certificates and our cheque for \$1750 - I had the feeling that I was being watched. I was, and not just by the video surveillance. A Saddam-sized, Orwellian poster of the then immigration minister, Phillip Ruddock, was scoping out the waiting room. The text beneath Ruddock threatened that illegal immigrants would be captured, processed, punished and ejected, or words to that affect, and that they should therefore give themselves up now. In itself, that would have afforded sufficient sociological interest to keep me occupied for the empty hour or two waiting for our interview. But the poster next to Ruddock’s amplified my interest. This one was in flashy colours that contrasted starkly with the grey and serious hues of the Ruddock visage. It informed anyone who needed to know that ‘Australia welcomes business migrants’, and that those

interested should ring this phone number to find out more. The significance of the juxtaposition was self-evident, though no less striking for all of its obviousness: Australia had, and has, a differential immigration regime for different classes of potential immigrants, both in the classificatory and socio-economic senses of the word 'class'. The implication is that the Australian border - and the myriad of 'micro-borders' (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p. 3) that substantiate it, including immigration offices, passport control points, consulates and embassies - functions very differently, depending upon where one is socially and geographically located. It also has a different 'meaning' for different people. Moreover, it functions very differently with respect to the movement of people and labour, on the one hand, and the movement of money, capital and commodities, on the other.

On the face of it, this observation seems obvious. It would barely rate a mention were it not for one fact of recent intellectual production: namely, that so much ink has been expended claiming that national borders are in an advanced state of decomposition; that they are becoming more permeable, less hard-edged and materially substantial. Ruddock's border protection injunctions seem to fly in the face of much cutting-edge social theory organised around the motifs of border-subverting flows, networks, connectivity and time-space compression, all central to what Featherstone and Lash (1995) have referred to as "the spatialization of social theory" (p. 1). Even for many who do not buy into the over-inflated notion of a 'borderless world', as first popularised by management guru Konichi Ohmae (1990), there is still a propensity to underestimate the continued salience of national borders, and to speak of their erosion in overly abstract and uniform terms. And herein lays the main axis around which the present argument turns. In the first part of the paper, I outline the border-erosion, de-territorialisation thesis. In the second part of the paper, I develop a critique of this position, and discuss in a more positive fashion the contemporary relevance of national borders.¹ I end by trying to crystallise some of the ways in which national borders are being reconfigured, with schizophrenic consequences.

The border-erosion, de-territorialisation thesis²

Before outlining and evaluating the border-erosion, de-territorialisation thesis, it is expedient to first distil a number of ideal-typical functions that national borders serve, so that we might be able to examine the extent to which they have been undermined or otherwise transformed. Drawing upon what is now a large and sophisticated literature on border and boundary research, we can identify at least four ideal functions of national borders (Kearney, 2004 and 1991; Donnan and Wilson, 1999; Wilson and Donnan, 1998; Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999). First, they demarcate the territorial limits of a state's jurisdiction and authority, which is another way of saying the limits of its *de jure sovereignty*. Notwithstanding frequent violations in practice, legitimate political authority has, in Europe since at least the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, been routinely defined by clearly demarcated, mutually agreed borders, beyond which a state does not have any jurisdiction or rights of interference. The *quid pro quo* of this limitation is the right of non-interference by other states into a state's own territory (Krasner, 1999; Shinoda, 2000). As such, borders are also powerful symbols of state power (Kearney, 2004). Whether the border is visibly inscribed in the landscape, as with the Berlin Wall or the 'fence' separating Mexico from the United States, or simply a line on a map punctuated by prescribed points of entry and exit, borders symbolically denote the spatial reach of a state's legitimate authority and right to exercise

coercion. Second, borders *regulate* the movement of people, commodities, capital and information between state territories. In so doing, they simultaneously function as barriers to and conduits of movement (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p. 22). They are barriers insofar as they impede, slow or otherwise disrupt mobility between one jurisdiction and another. Duties, tariffs, import taxes and the right of refusing entry are just some of the ways that borders restrict movement. But they are also conduits in that they serve as channels for entry into different institutional, political and legal domains. Third, borders demarcate the spatial reach of a given cluster of *citizenship* rights and duties. Those born within the borders of a particular state, or granted citizenship by that state, are presumed to be equal before the law and, within democracies, to have the right to collectively decide who governs the state. In return, they have an obligation to abide by the laws of that state, contribute to its revenues through taxation, and support it in times of war. Finally, borders are instruments for *classifying* populations, providing a mental map of the geographical distribution of named peoples who are defined in particular ways. They are institutions determining inclusion and exclusion, which sort people according to abstract, categorically equivalent national identities that obscure cultural and socio-economic differentiation within named populations (Calhoun, 1997). Thus they profoundly influence the production and reception of cultural identity, frequently forming the ‘container’ within which or against which national imaginaries are formed (Castoriadis, 1987). To sum up, modern borders have traditionally functioned to demarcate *sovereignty*, to *regulate* movement, to delimit *citizenship* and to *classify* populations according to abstract identities. I will abbreviate these functions as SRCC. The crux of the border-erosion, de-territorialization thesis is that SRCC is breaking down under the impact of ‘globalisation’.³

For many scholars, the erosion of borders, and the imputed decline in the significance of territorial forms of organisation, is constitutive of the very definition of globalisation. James Rosenau (1997), for example, argues that what distinguishes globalising processes “is that they are not hindered or prevented by territorial or jurisdictional barriers” (p. 80). Manuel Castells (1996 and 2001) suggests that globalisation involves a usurpation of the ‘space of places’ by the ‘space of flows’. Similarly, Ankie Hoogvelt (1997) defines globalisation as a set of transformations that herald “a new architecture of cross-border interactions” (p. 67). Malcolm Waters (1995) takes this theme further, defining globalisation as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (p. 3). Jan Aart Scholte (2000 and 1996) takes this position to its logical conclusion, insisting that globalisation entails a tendency to dissolve territoriality as a dimension of social relations, even though he acknowledges the persistence of territorial relations in some spheres. Territorialized relations are to be distinguished from global relations, which are *trans*-border and *supra*-territorial. Hence globalisation refers to “the emergence and spread of a supraterritorial dimension of social relations.” These relations are unconstrained by distance and location: “Global relations are not links at a distance across territory but circumstances without distance and relatively disconnected from particular locations” (Scholte, 1996, p. 49). Such relations are typically viewed as manifestations of the seismic transformations that have occurred in the global cultural and political economy since the 1970s.

Central to these changes have been technological developments in transport and communication. These have compressed time and space on a planetary scale, and stretched social relations across geographical and political boundaries. Social relations are stretched to the extent that their effects are extended in space and time, being dis-embedded from, or lifted out of, local

contexts and re-articulated “across indefinite tracts of time-space” (Giddens, 1991, p. 18). As a result, there is an increasing spatial and temporal disjuncture between social causes and effects, and between human decisions and their consequences, which transcend national borders. The emblematic example is the global environment. Notwithstanding the many scientific controversies that surround the issue, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that trans-border pollution, continental deforestation, global warming and ozone depletion are all on the increase, and that they degrade the planetary biosphere in ways that are totally indifferent to political borders (Goldblatt, 1997, pp. 78-90). Acid rain, nuclear fall-out and rising sea levels have no respect for the boundaries that humans construct.

These developments have paralleled economic, cultural and political changes that are also frequently brought under the rubric of globalisation. Economically, increases in the scale and reach of multinational corporations and foreign direct investment, the growth of global commodity chains across multiple national jurisdictions, and the explosion of trans-border financial networks and transactions, are all said to have registered a border-subverting global turnover during the past three decades. In the words of one commentator, this heralds the ‘end of geography’ (O’Brien, 1992). Culturally, the diffusion of standardised brands and commodities on a world-wide scale, the growth of global media conglomerates and the proliferation of tourism and internet users are viewed as severing, or at least attenuating, the connection between culture and locality (Tomlinson, 1999; Garcia Canclini, 1995; Appadurai, 1996). People continue to live in particular places, but mediated experience of distant events and processes intrude into their lives as never before. Thus most people’s mundane, day-to-day lived experience includes encounters with culture-laden images, messages and artefacts from distant locations. These transmit the ‘world’ into their most intimate spaces, collapsing or blurring the boundary between internal and external political spheres, and fostering consciousness of the world as a single place (Robertson, 1992). Politically, the dramatic increase in the number and importance of supra-state institutions, trans-national political connections and global security concerns, when combined with the developments outlined above, are presumed to have undermined state capacities and fractured national identities. In John Ruggie’s (1993) much-quoted idiom, globalisation has allegedly led to the ‘unbundling’ of the relationship between states, territoriality, sovereignty and, we could add, identity.

These changes raise multiple challenges to the SRCC functions of borders. Adherents of a strong globalisation position have interpreted these changes as both signalling and contributing to the demise of state borders and territoriality.

With respect to the sovereignty-demarcating functions of national borders, it is frequently suggested that globalisation undermines the capacities of states, and mitigates, if not effaces, their *de facto* sovereignty, rendering borders largely superfluous. The assumption is that the strength of state sovereignty and state borders vary in direct proportion; as globalisation dilutes sovereignty, the integrity of borders also declines. Amongst those who articulate variations of this position, there are celebratory and condemnatory voices in equal measure. For the former, trans-national production and consumption patterns, coupled with global financial and currency markets integrated in real time, act as powerful disciplining forces on states whose role are, and should be, increasingly residual (Ali Kahn, 1996; Ohmae, 1995). In this view, political borders that impede the flow of trade and capital are anachronisms from an outmoded era, the dismantling of which is a measure of global progress. For the latter, globalisation has similarly undermined the capacities of states, though this is seen as cause for regret rather than celebration. For these radical globalisation theorists, capitalism is viewed as having entered into a new stage

of development that transcends the confining boundaries of nation-states (Sklair, 2001; Castells, 1996; Gill, 1995). Large capitalist firms are no longer tied to home bases and national markets, but utilise the entire planet as their sphere of operation. For the first time in human history, a truly global space for production and consumption has emerged, confirming Marx's nineteenth-century predictions about the globalising logic of capitalist production and the world market. In this global space, the increased mobility afforded to capitalist firms - by both technological advances and the erosion of political barriers to the movement of capital - has engendered a dramatic shift in the balance of power between capital and the state. Capital can deploy its increased mobility as a lever against the territorially-rooted state in order to realise conditions most conducive to profitability, thus undermining the *de facto* sovereignty of states.

Similar points can be made about the functions of borders in regulating the flow of capital, commodities, information and people. As a general trend, the barriers are, we are told, coming down. Trans-national markets are displacing the conduit function of borders. Indices showing an acceleration of cross-border flows are not difficult to find, and indeed statistics have been piled up as irrefutable proof of key border-erosion, de-territorialisation propositions. Foreign direct investment, for example, grew by an average annual rate of 34% in the 1980s and early 1990s (OECD, 1992, p. 12). This trend continued throughout the 1990s, facilitated by the pervasive tendency towards the removal of barriers to capital flows. Of the 599 changes in nation-state FDI regulation around the world between 1991 and 1996, 95% were in the direction of greater liberalisation. 1,513 bilateral investment treaties, involving 162 countries, reinforced this tendency, which portends even greater FDI in the future (UNCTAD, 1997, pp. 10-11). Similarly, the deregulation of financial and currency markets has removed most barriers to the movement of liquid capital. According to the Bank of International Settlement, foreign exchange trading topped US \$1 trillion per day in 1994, ten times what it had been in 1973 and 54 times the volume of daily merchandise trade (Held, 1995, p. 130). The growth of global trade, the explosion of relatively unregulated cross-border information flows, and the expansion of global tourism and migration are likewise invoked as evidence of the decline of borders as barriers.

Globalisation has also problematised the function of borders as demarcating the spatial parameters in which citizenship rights and duties are exercised (Linklater, 1998). The democratic principles assuming that citizens participate in the decisions which affect their lives, and that governments are accountable to those they govern, are increasingly difficult to sustain in circumstances where so many decisions affecting a state and its population occur beyond its borders (Held *et al*, 1999). The conditionality attached to IMF structural adjustment programmes is but one obvious example of policies within the borders of a state being decisively influenced by an outside agency, over which citizens have no rights or recourse. The increased internationalisation of political decision-making in supra-national forums only magnifies this *de facto* loss of citizenship rights, creating a sharp disjuncture between the principles and practices of democratic, state-based citizenship.

Related to this, many have viewed the universalising discourse on human rights, and the interventionist practices that it licences, as signalling both the denouement of sovereignty as an absolute and indivisible condition, and the simultaneous emergence of 'global' or 'cosmopolitan' citizenship, or at least the birth of a project to hasten their realisation (Urry, 2000; Archibugi, 1998). In this view, states do not, or should not, monopolise power over the populations residing within 'their' territory. Rather, they are, or should be, subject to the maintenance of universal principles of human rights, encoded in binding international laws that sanction the use of force to protect these rights, which constitute the minimum content of all models of trans-state

citizenship. While such principles have been very unevenly applied, many would see the armed interventions by international forces into Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Sierra Leone, East Timor and elsewhere, ostensibly to protect human rights, as dramatising the defence of an embryonic cosmopolitan citizenship.

Finally, the imputed decline of state sovereignty, border regulation and national citizenship, is also associated with an alleged attenuation of national identity, or a claim that it has been decoupled from national territory. If not already indicating a post-national present (Habermas, 2001), it is suggested that this anticipates a post-national future. The supposed weakening of national identification is usually attached to the cultural convergence or homogenisation thesis, according to which globalisation is reducing cultural differentiation by exposing diverse populations to a unifying cultural logic that is driven by capitalist consumerism and trans-national flows of information. States are increasingly unable to regulate such flows; their borders become more permeable and subject to intrusion from 'outside' cultural influences. In such a world, the nation is confronted with many competing sources of social identity as it loses its resonance with those locked into the cosmopolitan rhythms of global economic and cultural flows. The nation, therefore, tends to relinquish its hold on the popular imagination, and lose its relevance as a hook upon which people can hang their identity.

A related expression of this perspective sees not so much the secular decline of national identity as its transfiguration into new forms, as it becomes detached from its original territorial basis. The social anthropologist Arun Appadurai (1996), for example, argues that the changing relationship between his 'five dimensions of global cultural flows' (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes) entails a progressive detachment of nationality from territory. National 'primordia' have become globalised and "have become spread over vast and irregular spaces as groups move yet stay linked to one another through sophisticated media capabilities" (p. 41). Global electronic mediation, combined with mass migration and the increased porousness of state borders, has transformed national identity and its articulation with the territorial state. As Appadurai puts it, "the nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself diasporic" (pp. 160-61).

To sum up, globalisation is said to erode state sovereignty, regulation, citizenship and territorialised national identities, which is a gauge of, and an impetus to, the decline of national borders. For many, this represents an epochal transformation from a state-centred international order to a trans-national, global one. Martin Albrow (1996) usefully encapsulates what is often taken to be the essence of this transformation; namely, the de-linking of state, nation, society and their territorial correlates:

It is simply a fact that the nation-state has failed to confine sociality within its boundaries, both territorial and categorical. The sheer increase in cross-national ties, the diversification of modes of personal relationships and the multiplication of forms of social organization demonstrate the autogenic nature of the social and reveal the nation-state as just another timebound form. (p. 164)

The time-bound form has now run out of time, the state becoming de-centred and society and identity reconfigured beyond or below its boundaries. Sociality is now the province of an emergent 'world society' where people construct their social life and experiences across, rather than within, national borders. This world society anticipates the creation of a 'world' or 'global'

state (Shaw, 2000), even if today such a state exists less as a reality than as a potential (Albrow, 1996, p. 173).

Critique

The border-erosion, de-territorialisation thesis is seductive. One would have to be a poor observer of contemporary realities not to acknowledge the border-eroding tendencies of the developments sketched above. Ecological problems *do* transcend national borders; lines on maps *are* transgressed by flows of information, refugees, disease and crime; ‘virtual’ relationships *are* non-territorial, but nonetheless real; the movement of capital and commodities *do* batter down the Chinese walls, to paraphrase Marx’s memorable metaphor. As a consequence, the cartography of the modern political imagination *has* been challenged in fundamental ways by intensified globalisation, as has the territorial sovereignty of individual states and the integrity of the inter-state system more generally. But a challenge does not inexorably beget its own victory. The central problem of the border-erosion, de-territorialisation thesis is that it mistakes the challenge as a confirmed, irreversible result. It is not that the tendencies that it posits are wholly absent, but that it posits them in such a one-sided and highly generalised way that it neglects their differential effects and glosses over counter-tendencies.

This is most clearly evident when considering the sovereignty-demarcating functions of national borders. To begin with, it should be pointed out that state sovereignty has always been constrained in various ways, more so for some states than for others. Sovereignty has been more of an ideal of international relations than a reality, or at least it has been a different sort of reality than that which it is often presented as being (Krasner, 1999, pp. 24-30).⁴ It has been a reality in which the *de facto* sovereignty or autonomy of states has always fallen short of the absolutism implied by their claims to *de jure* sovereignty. Hence it is a misnomer to posit the ‘end of sovereignty’ or even its serious attenuation, when that which is said to be at an end or attenuated was never what strong globalisers assume it to have been in the first place - absolute and indivisible authority. This is not to imply that national borders have never been, or are not still, crucial for circumscribing state sovereignty, or that they have not changed. But it is to say that state sovereignty, conceived of as absolute and indivisible, should be understood as a condition to which states aspire rather than one that necessarily defines them. Borders delimit the reach of a state’s *de jure* sovereignty, but do not guarantee its *actual* or *de facto* sovereignty, and have never done so, despite received wisdom about inter- and intra-state relations.

Moreover, the extent to which states approximate the sovereign ideal has been and still is highly differentiated. This problematises the claim that intensified globalisation entails a *generalised* demise of state sovereignty and national borders. As Michael Mann (1999 and 2001) and Linda Weiss (1998 and 2003) have cogently argued, states differ enormously in terms of their size, power and degree of autonomy in the face of global sources of pressure and constraint. The USA, for instance, is able to unilaterally deploy military force, and play a disproportionate role in shaping the architecture of global financial and trading markets, while states of the global ‘South’ are largely subject to, and constrained by, them. For many of these states, their sovereignty is questionable in any meaningful sense of the word. Accelerated globalisation further diminishes what little autonomy that they do have. The point is that the way in which globalisation affects them, and the options that they have for responding to global pressures, are very different from states in the OECD. This reflects the uneven distribution of economic and

political power between states. In turn, the various member states of the OECD are also affected by, and respond to, globalisation very differently. The rich comparative literature on 'welfare regimes', for example, provides compelling evidence that globalisation is filtered through the prism of national institutions (George and Wilding, 2002; Esping-Andersen, 1999; Castles, 1998). This filtering process has been realised in a wide array of adjustment strategies, and a diversity of political-economic and welfare outcomes, in different states and clusters of states. Globalisation is, if it is anything, highly uneven in terms of its effects and the political-economic responses that it elicits.

This raises the issue of state capacities. Just as individual states are differentially affected by intensified globalisation, so too are their various capacities. Some capacities may be enhanced even as others are weakened. While states, for example, increasingly relinquish some of their economic capacities (to autonomously determine interest and currency rates, to run large budget deficits, to deploy Keynesian demand management strategies), their capacity for monitoring and regulating the movement of people across their borders may well have increased (though, once again, this is globally very uneven). As Saskia Sassen (1996) points out, "when it comes to immigrants and refugees... the national state claims all its old splendour in asserting its sovereign right to control its borders" (p. 59). The hyper-reinforcement of border protection in the USA since 11 September 2001, as it simultaneously champions and is partially subject to further border-eroding liberalisation of trade and investment, illustrates this differentiation of state capacities. In the case of Australia, the government has cracked down on a supposed 'flood' of asylum seekers at a time when it is divesting itself of responsibility and involvement in widening areas of economic activity. As implied in the contrasting posters cited at the beginning of this paper, capital may seek and be granted asylum within Australia's borders, but asylum seekers are denied the same right.

This relates directly to regulatory functions of national borders; their role as barriers to, and conduits of, movement. As I have implied above, although it is true that many state borders have lost their efficacy as barriers to the movement of capital, commodities and particularly information, they still very much fulfil that role when it comes to regulating the movement of people, especially in wealthy Western states. The scramble to increased border protection across the Western world over the last decade is the most visible expression of a strengthening of state borders as barriers to, and conduits of, movement. Furthermore, even where national borders are eroded, it is frequently the case that they are reconstituted in new forms. The erosion of borders between many European states in the late twentieth century, for example, has been accompanied by a strengthening of the political boundary represented by the broader territorial jurisdiction of the European Union (Anderson, 2001; O'Dowd, 1998). Political borders within the European Union have become more porous, while the external boundary of the European Union as a whole has become more 'hard-edged', in both a political and a symbolic sense. One could say that some of the political, symbolic, and even material substance of European state borders, has been transferred upwards to the jurisdictional boundaries of a European 'supra'- or 'multi-national' state. This morphing of political boundaries has taken palpable form in the abolition of many passport controls between European Union member states, while controls on the movement of people into Europe have been strengthened, as reflected in tougher immigration policies, encapsulated in the term 'Fortress Europe'.

In addition to this reconstitution of political boundaries above or beyond nation-states, it is also possible that the erosion of existing political boundaries is accompanied by a re-division of political space within previously existing states. Over the last twenty years - the very years in

which the erosion of national borders is usually assumed to have been at its most acute - the success of contemporary nationalist movements in realising their own states exemplifies the creation of new national political boundaries, as older ones are erased. Here the creation and destruction of national borders is a mutually constitutive process. The clutch of new states arising from the wreckage of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are obvious examples. Indeed, it seems that there is a positive correlation between intensified globalisation and secessionist nationalist movements, whose very reason for being is the transformation of existing political space and the redrawing of borders (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002; Guibernau, 2001; Hechter, 2000). However, this re-drawing does not represent a decline in the significance of borders, but, on the contrary, a heightening of political and cultural perceptions of their importance. The amount of blood spilled, sacrifices made and energy invested in securing new national borders in recent years is a visceral index of this heightened importance. The reconfiguring of national borders raises questions about citizenship and identity.

As with sovereignty and regulation, the imputed decline of borders as markers of citizenship rights is also over-stated. While it is true that there is a disjuncture between the (trans-national) spatial reach of many contemporary political processes and the territorial jurisdictions in which democratic rights are largely exercised, citizenship is still attached to states, whose obligations are circumscribed by the borders within which citizens reside. Thus access to social welfare services, health, education and legal entitlements - at least in those privileged parts of the world where they exist at all - are inseparable from the territorial state. Even where these are degraded or 'residual', as they are in the English-speaking states of Esping-Andersen's (1990) 'liberal welfare regimes', they are still the preserve of territorially-defined states. Along with better paid jobs, these are some of the main reasons why people want to cross borders; they are barriers, to be sure, but ones whose transcendence also constitutes opportunities and a promise of a better life.

This is drawn into stark relief when considering the US-Mexican border and its different meanings, depending on what side of it one is standing. Crossing it in one direction is not the same as crossing it in the other (Kearney, 2004, p. 131). From north of the border it represents a gateway to pleasure and indulgence for cashed-up US tourists, or a point of entry for access to cheap labour for US companies; from south of the border it represents an obstacle to be overcome, in order to access the economic opportunities that working in the US promises. Over time, it is becoming more permeable to capital and commodities, but less permeable to the northward flow of people (more accurately, less permeable to 'legal' migration) as US immigration policies harden. On the face of it, these tougher immigration policies might seem dysfunctional; after all, it is well known that hundreds of thousands of illegal Mexican immigrants are crucial to Californian and Texan employers. But as Kearney points out (2004, pp. 147-48), they are actually advantageous to American employers and states in that illegality helps keep wages low, creates a more pliant labour force and reduces the costs of some consumer products. Moreover, illegality shifts the costs of social service and retirement provisions for migrants back onto Mexico. Hence this border, and we could say national borders in general, very much retains its function as an instrument of citizenship inclusion and exclusion, even though its function as a barrier to the movement of capital and commodities is being reduced. The much-heralded NAFTA agreement is an institutional embodiment of this contradiction. It represents a striking instantiation of the *elective affinity* between the strengthening of borders as barriers to the movement of people, and their weakening as barriers to the movement of capital.

Moreover, those global institutions that are claimed to be the harbingers of a supra-national, cosmopolitan order that transcends state-defined citizenship rights - the UN, the G7, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank - remain international (more precisely inter-state) rather than supra-national institutions. They are composed of states, they are funded by states, their actions reflect the interests of states and they are forums for competition as well as co-operation between states (Mann, 1993). They may well be more than the sum of their national parts, but those national parts remain important constituent elements for shaping the form and direction of such institutions. The recent conflicts within the UN (over the questions of Iraq, the scope of the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction, the authority of the UN *vis-à-vis* particular states, and much more besides) attests to the persistence of 'national interest' in impeding the realisation of a more cosmopolitan notion of citizenship.

If the decline of borders as markers of citizenship rights is over-stated, so too is the view that globalisation in general, and 'global culture' in particular, diminishes their classificatory function and dilutes national identities and/or detaches them from territory. In many, if not most, respects, the opposite conclusion seems to be more warranted. That is, as globalisation has accelerated, so too has nationalist contention, with intensifying efforts to draw or strengthen territorial and symbolic boundaries between a national 'us' and a foreign 'them'. The exacerbation of ethno-nationalist conflict since the 1990s - in the Balkans, the post-Soviet successor states, Africa and Asia - is the most damning evidence against the decline of borders as markers and containers of collective identity, and sources of identity contestation. In all of these conflicts territorial borders have, directly and indirectly, been fundamental to what is, and what is seen to be, at stake. Disputes about where borders are drawn, or should be drawn in the future, disputes about what categorical identities should and should not be included within these borders, disputes about who should control state institutions, and therefore the distribution of political and economic rewards, within a given territory are at the heart of the contemporary intensification of ethno-nationalist contention (Conversi, 2002; Wimmer, 2002; Kecmanovic, 1996). Where national borders have for all intents and purposes collapsed, or are only very weakly maintained - as in some sub-Saharan African and Central Asian 'quasi-states' - this signals not so much the generalised decline of borders, but a manifestation of intensified conflicts over their specific form and content.

So-called 'neo-nationalism' has also been on the increase in Western states, as far-right nationalist populism has grown, achieving periodic electoral success in France, Austria, Denmark, Italy, Australia and elsewhere. While their respective profiles have waxed and waned, and while they embody many political and ideological differences, Le Pen's *Front National* in France, Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria, the People's Party in Denmark, Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in Australia, and more nebulous movements such as those led by Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan in the USA, are all representative of this trend. Despite their heterogeneity, what they all share is an appeal to those sections of their respective national constituencies who are most vulnerable to, and marginalised by, increased globalisation. These groups constitute a coalition of the disaffected whose insecurities and fears are expressed in, as well as being bolstered by, the policies and programme of far-right nationalist-populism. This reflects itself in a generalised hostility to 'foreign' intrusions into 'the nation', which has had its most obvious manifestation in the trenchant anti-immigration stances that these parties have taken and, its corollary, in demands to increase border protection. An index of their success is the extent to which mainstream political parties have taken up and propagated the more virulent anti-immigration rhetoric, which seems to be a vote-winner in Western states throughout the world. If

the early years of the new century saw some far-right nationalist-populists losing previously won ground, it was in no small measure thanks to traditional parties of the left and right embracing their anti-immigration rhetoric and strengthening borders to the movement of people.⁵ They did so as they weakened other dimensions of borders, especially those that once functioned to impede or slow the movement of capital and commodities.

So where does this apparent paradox leave us in terms of understanding the contemporary relationship between national borders and intensified globalisation?

Borders, territory and intensified globalisation

The foregoing discussion enables us to crystallise some of the key continuities in the function of national borders and territory in the epoch of accelerated globalisation. These all revolve around the shifting dialectic between mobility and immobility, movement and fixity.

The first point to note is that national borders and territorial forms of organisation, on the one hand, and processes of globalisation, on the other hand, are not part of a zero sum game, where an acceleration of the latter signals a decline in the former. Territoriality and the existence of national borders are not either/or choices between presence and absence, nor do they necessarily stand in an inverse relationship to intensified globalisation. Such a sterile counter-position, Neil Brenner (1999) has convincingly argued, obscures the possibility that territoriality is being *reconfigured* or *re-scaled* rather than uniformly eroded. Not only is their good empirical evidence that ‘de-territorialisation’ and ‘re-territorialisation’ proceed in tandem (witness the extensive statistics provided in Held *et al*, 1999), but also that globalisation itself presupposes territorial forms of organisation. The de-territorialising, boundary-eroding and space-time compressing tendencies of globalisation presuppose provisionally fixed and relatively immobile territorial infrastructures. These are, in turn, dependent on the regulatory and order-maintaining capacities of territorially circumscribed states. Globalisation is thus a double-edged, dialectical process through which flows of capital, commodities, people and information are constantly accelerated and geographically expanded, while at the same time producing, reproducing and reconfiguring territorially fixed infrastructures that enable such acceleration and expansion (Brenner, 1999, pp. 43, 62). Accordingly, globalisation does not just unfold on the ‘global scale’, nor is it counter-posed to ‘sub-global’ political boundaries and forms of territorial organisation, including those of nation-states. Rather, global relations encompass, depend on and are filtered through sub-global forms of territoriality. The modern, territorial state remains the most important of these forms - albeit one that is highly variegated in terms of power and autonomy - and has been central in driving intensified globalisation (Zysman, 1996, p. 164). As long as this remains the case, borders that demarcate *de jure* sovereignty, and authorise state actions in the eyes of its populace and other states, will remain essential for understanding and acting in the contemporary, globalised world.

This point speaks directly to the question of the state’s regulation of movement. As we have seen, one of the most schizophrenic aspects of current border transformations has been the diluting of borders as economic barriers, while simultaneously being strengthened as barriers to the movement of certain classes of people. At first glance, this seems contradictory and even paradoxical. But the paradox is more apparent than real. It simply reflects the uneven relations of power in a global division of labour, where mobility has become one of the main sources of political leverage for determining how the world’s wealth and power is distributed. Mobility and

immobility are not the naturalised, original conditions that they are sometimes presented as being, and nor is 'globalisation'. Rather, they are the outcomes of protracted political struggles fought and political choices taken, which have tended to free the movement of capital, but have denied that same freedom to labour (Agnew, 2003). Far from being passive victims, states and their representatives have been central actors in this process. The reconfiguring of borders in the European Union and the United States, as I have suggested above, provide graphic illustrations of this ongoing tendency.

This last example also raises the issue of citizenship. Why is it that US citizenship, or citizenship in most OECD countries for that matter, is so highly sought after? Precisely because of the many advantages that are conferred on the bearers of such citizenship. To be a citizen is to hold a privileged set of rights with respect to a particular state, which are denied to non-citizens. Civil and political rights, as well as labour rights and access to a state's social welfare provisions, are still largely the preserve of (wealthy) territorial states, with borders marking the extension of those rights. These rights are often taken for granted in the West (not least by those cosmopolitan intellectuals living in wealthy states and claiming that the world is 'borderless'), but their worth is highly valued by those to whom such rights are denied. This is most clearly the case with refugees and stateless persons. To enter into the world of citizenship is to enter into a world of political and economic advantages that are not available to stateless people and refugees. The benefits of having one's own state are most obvious to those who are deprived of such benefits, as any Palestinian or Kurd will testify. This goes some of the way to explaining the manifest strengthening of national identification amongst many of the world's stateless nations despite, or perhaps because of, intensified globalisation.

Finally, as I have alluded to above, national identity is still very much attached to territory and, as Gellner (1983) once pointed out, to the frequently expressed desire to make the territorial limits of cultural and political boundaries coincide. Even where national identity has gone 'diasporic' it is still very much oriented to territory and to mythic, interpersonal and memorialised links with a 'homeland'. Globalisation has not diminished this orientation; in many ways it has actually heightened it, as is confirmed by the quantitative and qualitative increase of nationalist contention over the past two decades (see figures provided by Marshall and Gurr, 2003). In so doing, it has sharpened conflict over territory and borders, and sharpened perceptions of their importance, even as it has made them, in some respects, more permeable.

As I have argued, this 'in some respects' is weighted heavily in favour of the movement of capital, commodities, information and wealthy tourists. At the same time, and largely in response to the same causes, borders are being strengthened as barriers to the movement of the world's poor and desperate. These two seemingly paradoxical developments are not contingent and externally related, but are mutually constitutive phenomena which express the differential effects of highly uneven processes of globalisation, in which mobility is a key source of social power. National borders continue to be the main institutional structures determining mobility or its relative absence. So long as this remains the case, and it will for the foreseeable future, national borders will retain their centrality to global politics and economics, and to the cartography of the modern political imagination.

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¹ The concept of 'borders' is not as self-evident as it might seem. There have been long-standing controversies over fine-grained distinctions between borders, boundaries, barriers and frontiers, and the extent to which they are political, legal or cultural constructs (see Kearney, 2004; Prescott, 1987). For the purposes of this paper, I will be mainly referring to the political-legal sense of the term 'national border', which demarcates the territorial reach of a state's *de jure* sovereignty, and regulates its relationships with other states and external non-state agents. As such, "[b]orders are the political membrane through which people, goods, wealth and information must pass in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the state. Thus borders are agents of a state's security and sovereignty, and a physical record of a state's past and present relations with its neighbours" (Wilson and Donnan, 1998, p. 9).

² Border-erosion and de-territorialisation, the observant reader may have already noted, are not quite the same thing. It is conceivable that national borders may be eroded, while territory retains, or even increases, its significance for social and political life. Posed differently, the symbolic and material functions of national borders may decrease in effectiveness over time, even though human communities, organisations and identities remain obdurately premised on, and wedded to, particular territories. Thus border-erosion and de-territorialisation are conceptually distinguishable. Be that as it may, however, I have deliberately elided them as this reflects a dominant strain in the literature, which assumes that border-erosion and de-territorialisation are parallel, if not synonymous, processes.

³ ‘Globalisation’ is obviously a highly contested term, as is its periodisation (see Hay and Marsh, 2000; Scholte, 2000; Held *et al*, 1999). Here it will be minimally defined as the totality of those processes contributing to worldwide economic, political, cultural and social inter-connectedness. I take these processes as having emerged contemporaneously with modernity, though they have greatly intensified since the early 1970s, which has been the impetus for much recent ‘globe-talk’ that has stimulated this paper.

⁴ Stephen Krasner (1999) has shown that the various meanings of sovereignty - including mutual state recognition (international legal sovereignty), the right of non-interference by external actors (Westphalian sovereignty), political authority and effective control within the borders of a polity (domestic sovereignty), and the ability to regulate flows across state borders (inter-dependent sovereignty) - have all been violated, in practice, right from the 1648 Peace of Westphalia itself. Individual states have had their sovereignty violated through both outside intervention and invitation. The Peace of Westphalia, for example, contained provisions that insisted on religious toleration between Catholics and Protestants within the belligerents’ states, which curtailed the very real desires of Catholic rulers to repress Protestants, and of Protestant rulers to repress Catholics, within their respective territories. Similarly, the Peace of Utrecht of 1713 expressed the agreement that France and Spain would never be united under a common King, thus constraining the political ambitions of rulers on both sides of the Pyrenees. The Treaty of Utrecht of 1731 also restricted British autonomy by protecting the rights of French Catholics in the areas of Arcadia and Hudson Bay, which France had ceded to Britain (Krasner, 1999, p. 34). What these examples show is that sovereignty - understood as absolute authority within a given territory, over which no external actors have authority - was always more of a normative ideal than a political reality.

⁵ This has been particularly striking in Australia. Pauline Hanson and her One Nation party rose to prominence on an anti-immigration platform, which has subsequently been championed by the conservative Coalition with sweeping electoral success. This success has coincided with a decline in the fortunes of One Nation from its apogee in 1998, when it polled 27% of the vote in the Queensland state election and 10% of the vote in the federal election. In acknowledging the popularity of the Coalition’s tough anti-immigration stance (which reached its symbolic peak in late 2001, when the government refused 400 asylum seekers permission to disembark on Australian soil after they had been rescued from their sinking vessel), the Australian Labor Party shelved its muted criticisms of such policies leading up to the 2001 federal election. This effectively meant that both of Australia’s main political parties held the same in principle position on immigration, even if they differed over the details of its implementation. This point was not lost on Hanson herself, who commented publicly that the political convergence between the main parties was a vindication of her own party’s agenda. In 2004, the ‘Australian model’ is

being proposed as a positive solution to Britain's so-called immigration problem by that country's Labour government.