GEOGRAPHY AND BORDER

Coğrafya ve Sınır

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Abstract

There has been an increasing interest in borders from a variety of disciplines. This paper scrutinizes an extensive range of literature in the border studies. Initially, it draws a conceptual framework that clarifies how to approach and study borders. Later, it identifies constantly evolving concerns in the border studies from a historical perspective. It provides valuable insights into how to understand this continually progressing research area. It argues that borders are not just about producing a bounded space but also producing a social collectiveness. Bordering is an on-going process through which socio-spatial homogenisations and differentiations occur. Borders inform individual and collective identities; they shape and are shaped by collective and individual consciousness. Borders, by definition, are about creating and taking sides, which construct many more associated dichotomies: inside-outside; we-they; inclusion-exclusion; and us-the other. The process of imagining the existence of 'other' is crucial in creating borders. The paper also argues that there is a need to move beyond many dichotomies in border studies: symbolic or material; real or imaginary; barriers or zones of cultural encounters; top-down or bottom-up; and frontiers or multiple sites. This paper provides an important insight into this constantly evolving research area.

Keywords: Geography, Border, Bordering, Border Studies

Özet

Sınırlar, birçok disiplin için giderek artan ilgi çekici araştırma alanları olmuşlardır. Bu çalışma, sınır çalışmaları alanındaki mevcut literatürü kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmektedir. İlk olarak, sınırların bir araştırma alanı olarak nasıl anlaşılması ve çalışılması gerektiğini netleştirecek bir kavramsal çerçeve oluşturulacaktır. Ardından, tarihsel bir perspektiften sınır çalışmalarının sürekli değişen ve gelişen ilgi alanları değerlendirilecektir. Bu makale, sürekli gelişerek ilerleyen bu araştırma alanının daha iyi anlaşılmasına yardımcı olacak değerlendirmeler sunmaktadır. Sınırlar, sadece bir mekanın hudutlarının oluşturulmasıyla ilgili değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal bir birlikteliğin meydana getirilmesiyle de ilgilidirler. Bu yüzden, sınır kurumu, sosyo-mekansal homojenleşme ve farklılaşmanın oluşturulduğu sürekli devam eden bir süreç olarak görülmelidirler. Bireysel ve kolektif kimlik oluşturulmasında sınır önemli bir yere sahiptir. Döngüsel bir şekilde, sınırlar bireysel ve kolektif bilinçleri şekillendirmekte ve bu bilinçler tarafından şekillenmektedirler. Tanım itibariyle sınır, taraflar oluşturma ve bu taraflardan birine ait olmakla alakalıdır; bu yüzden beraberinde bir çok dikotomi oluşturur: içeri-dışarı, biz-öteki, dahil etme-dışlama. Bir 'ötekinin' varlığını tahayyül etme süreci, sınır oluşturmadaki en önemli süreçtir. Bu makale, sınır çalışmalarında görülen birçok dikotominin aşılması gerektiğini savunmaktadır: sınırlar sembolik mi – fiziksel mi; gerçek mi – suni mi; bariyer mi – kültürel karşılaşma ve etkileşme alanları mı; yukarıdan aşağı mı üretilir – aşağıdan yukarı mı; sadece hudutlarda mı yer alır – birçok alanda mı görülür. Bu makale, bu sürekli evrilen araştırma alanının daha iyi kavranmasını ve çalışılmasını sağlayacak önemli analizlerden oluşmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Coğrafya, Sınır, Sınır Kurumu, Sınır Çalışmaları

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INTRODUCTION

Borders have become a constantly evolving research area for geographers. Geographies, just like history, are made by people (Said, 1979). As Barth (1998) articulates every society creates/defines its space in order to create itself. Making geographies is about creating territories by drawing borders. Borders, for geographers, are firstly expression or manifestation of the territoriality of states (Newman and Paasi, 1998). Yet, borders are not only physical lines on the ground but the processes through which socio-spatial homogenisations and differentiations occur. Hence, it provides a wide range of research areas for geographers. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature in the border studies in order to provide valuable insights into how to approach and study borders.

The paper starts with drawing a theoretical framework through which borders can be understood and studied. It includes some initial clarifications about the research's stance in the border studies. Following this theoretical framework, it introduces some popular conceptualisations of borders and outlines main developments in the border studies and its constantly evolving concerns from a historical perspective.

Studying Borders: A Theoretical Framework

Borders are understood here as processes, rather than static physical lines that separate social, political and economic spaces. Constructing borders is not simply about drawing lines or building fences in physical landscapes but also about the processes through which social and spatial categories and differentiations occur (David Newman, 2006). In other words, it is not just about producing a bounded space but also producing a social collectiveness. Identities are seen here as constantly evolving processes. Social identities are being constructed and re-constructed through these bordering processes. 'Others' and 'us' are equally important for the formation of borders and therefore constantly produced and reproduced. This paper is concerned with the bordering process, as on-going socio-spatial homogenisations and differentiations, rather than the border per se as a physical line.

Borders are primarily about territoriality, as an ordering principle of social and political life (James Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999). Borders are spatial manifestations of power and sovereignty (D. Newman & Paasi, 1998). Space is seen here as social products, rather than a geographical feature, and tends to conceptualise notions of border and territory (Lefebvre, 1991, p.26). Constructions of borders are part of the processes of *'institutionalisation of territoriality'- the processes in which their territorial, symbolic and institutional 'shape' is determined'* (Paasi, 1999, p. 670).

The relationship between borders and identity are permanent processes. It is important to acknowledge the constitutive nature of borders in social and political life (Rumford, 2012, p. 897). Borders inform individual and collective identities; they shape and are shaped by collective and individual consciousness. Borders are the lines where 'we' supposedly ends and 'the others' starts. Borders are dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives (D. Newman & Paasi, 1998). Identities obtain meanings through borders and as Sack (1986, p. 13) state '*borders tend to be characterised by identities which are shifting and multiple, in ways which are framed by the specific state configurations which encompass them and within which people must attribute meaning to their experience of border life*'.

Borders, by definition, are about creating and taking sides, which construct many more associated dichotomies: inside-outside; we-they; inclusion-exclusion; and us-the other. The process of imagining the existence of 'other' is crucial in creating borders. As Sibley (1995) argues, geographies are being produced by rejecting and excluding 'difference' or in his own term by 'purifying space'. Agnew (2008) states that there is nothing 'natural' to borders.

Finally, there is a need to move beyond many dichotomies in border studies: symbolic or material; real or imaginary; barriers or zones of cultural encounters; top-down or bottom-up; and frontiers or multiple sites. Borders have both material and symbolic uses. In a sense, they are real and can have physical presence. Their effects are real and, as Agnew (2008, p. 176) argues, they 'trap thinking about and acting in the world in territorial terms'. In another sense, they are imaginary lines on the ground with symbolic meanings and are social, political and discursive products (Paasi, 1999). Material dimensions of a territory are endowed with imaginative values which stem from a range of social, cultural and political meanings (Bachelard, 1994). Borders play important roles in the construction of 'imaginative geographies' (Said, 1979). Borders can also be both barriers (for some) and gateways (for others) (Rumford, 2008, p. 2). The question here is 'borders for whom?' (David Newman, 2003, p. 22). Borders, in the contemporary world, are increasingly taking the form of '*asymmetric* membranes' (Hedetoft, 2003, p. 152) that allow free pass to certain goods and people while protect against unwanted entrance of the others (Rumford, 2008, p. 3). Bordering processes are not just institutional top-down, state-centred, managements but also performative bottom-up negotiations. Borders are not just state projects but also produced and reproduced in numerous social (economic, cultural, administrative and political) practices and discourses (Paasi, 1999). Finally, borders, in the contemporary world, are not only at frontiers

any more, but increasingly spreading everywhere (Etienne Balibar, 1998). All these arguments will be developed further in the following section.

Understanding Borders

There is an extensive understanding of borders in the literature. As E. Balibar (2002, p. 75) states, that there is not a simple way to answer the question of what a border is. There is not an essence that can be attributed to the border that would be valid in all cases through space and time, and which would also encompass all individual and collective experiences in the same way (E. Balibar, 2002, p.75). This is not just because every state border is unique, but also because the production and reproduction of territoriality/territory, state power, human agency and experience are deeply contextual (Paasi, 2005). Borders have always been the main indicators in the world's political maps. Yet, their formations, meanings and functions have been perpetually changing throughout time and space.

Borders have been approached in many different ways; different topics were popular, different themes were debated and different views were held on how to study a border since the earliest systematic border studies. There have been numerous assumptions related to borders –their power, significance and functions, and the agencies impacting on borders and bordering– (Paasi, 2012). In order to provide a better understanding of border studies and its succession of concerns, seven main themes have been identified in the literature:

- Formations and locations of borders
- Functions and effects of borders
- Bordering processes
- Borderless world
- Border securitisations
- Transnationalism
- The new spatiality of borders

This list is not an exhaustive one. It only aims to introduce some popular conceptualisations of borders and to outline main developments in border studies and its constantly evolving concerns from a historical perspective.

Early border studies, as summarised by Julian Minghi (1963), mainly focused on the nature of the boundary's location and history. The earliest systematic studies were mostly descriptive, mainly carried out from a military perspective and tried to classify the borders as good, bad, artificial and natural (Minghi, 1963, p. 408). Holdich's works can be a good example for this approach to border; he viewed borders as barriers and defined the best borders those which are based on distinctive natural features, such as mountains, lakes or deserts (Holdich, 1916, p. 504). Bachelard (1994), like Holdich, argued that rivers, as regional bonds, would make good boundaries. This kind of approach was widely held especially during the First World War.

Later, this approach '*shifted from the criteria by which a boundary drawn to the functions which it performs*' (Minghi, 1963, p. 413). This change in the perspective was related to the recognition of borders as contact points between territorial power structures in addition to demarcation of national sovereignty. Boggs (1940) argues that borders have specific functions that vary throughout time and space. He also views borders as barriers to economic relations (Minghi, 1963). Spykman (1942) suggested that borders are 'points of contact of territorial power structures and territory' is central to understanding power relations across borders. Holdich (1916) also stated that borders with few functions are better to strengthen state power. Following the Second World War, borders were mostly turned into military regions where the combats took place (Brunet-Jailly, 2011). Hence, the following border studies suggest to change the borders' functions in order to lessen boundary tensions across borders (Donnan & Wilson, 1999).

The literature during the first half of the 20th century shows that the initial interest in borders was about their locations, formations and history. As Minghi (1963) observed, the focus shifted towards border's functional meanings and effects which change over time and space. Minghi's work reflected the transformation in the border discourse of the time: 'function' and 'effect' started to have much more importance than 'form' and 'location'. In this later conventional wisdom, borders served various economic or social functions. Borders were seen as the territorial delimitation of sovereign states and became central to the nationalist agenda.

Towards the end of the 20th century, border studies have undergone a major transformation (Bauder, 2011; David Newman, 2006; Paasi, 2012; Henk Van Houtum, 2005). David Newman (2006, p. 144) called this period as the renaissance of border studies. In this later trend, borders are understood not just static naturalised lines between states but also social, political and discursive constructs and the meaning they carry is produced, re-produced and/or institutionalised (David Newman, 2006). It is later understood that it is the bordering process that affects our lives on a

daily basis, rather than the border per se (D. Newman & Paasi, 1998). This new conceptualisation 'shift *the analysis and understanding of socio-spatiality away from the static world of container-borders to the complex and varied patterns of both implicit and explicit bordering and ordering practices*' (H. Van Houtum, Kramsch, & Zierhofer, 2005, p. 2). Hence, the border scholars paid more attention to how borders are constructed socially and reflect the discourses and practices of national identity, rather than taking their existence for granted (Agnew, 2008). Borders are critically investigated as '*differentiators of socially constructed mindscapes and meanings*' (Henk Van Houtum, 2005, p. 673). From this perspective, the main 'site' of the border is not only the borderland but also the complex, perpetually on-going, hegemonic nation-building process (Paasi, 2012). States are also not the only actors in bordering processes, but as Rumford (2006, p. 159) states '*borders have human and experiential dimensions, and can be appropriated by societal actors for non-state purposes; signalling an important dimension of community identity, for example*'. Borders are, hence, as much related to nation and identity as state. In this sense, the roots of borders are in historically contingent social practices and discourses that are related to national ideologies and identities. Johnson et al. (2011) label these as 'discursive/emotional landscapes of social power' that often draw on various forms of nationalism. From this point of view, there are no natural borders. This has led to new debates on the construction of borders, in other words, how borders are made in term of its symbols, signs, identifications, representations, performance and stories (Henk Van Houtum, 2005). This was the point where the proliferation of border studies started.

After the end of the cold war, there was a substantial growth in border studies (Johnson et al., 2011). Many researchers were suggesting that bounded territorial units are declining as a result of the increasing flows of capital, commodities, information and people across the state borders (Ohmae, 1995). Therefore, the argument of the 'borderless world' started to dominate the border studies toward the end of 20th century. It was argued that the traditional understanding of borders as symbols of 'past', fixed world or 'the space of places' was increasingly being replaced by a dynamic world and a 'space of flows' (Castells, 1992). Yet, the assumption of disappearing borders was also widely criticised. Amin and Thrift (1994, p. 2) argued that 'globalisation does not represent the end of territorial distinction and distinctiveness' rather it means 'an added set of influences on local economic identities and developing capacities'. Hirst and Thompson (2001) argued that despite the rhetoric of globalisation; the world's population is still 'trapped by the lottery of their birth'. J. Anderson (1995, p. 67) also finds these end-of-border scenarios exaggerated and noted that 'in some ways the modern nation state, with its sovereignty defined by familiar territorial boundaries, seems as firmly rooted as ever'. This much-discussed topic has gradually been overcome by the increased border securitisations as a part of the 'war on terror' as a result of 9/11 attacks. Hence, as Paasi (1998) stated, borders stayed with us.

The terrorist attack of 9/11 has brought a new approach to border studies (David Newman, 2006). In this new era, there was increasing attention to the process through which borders can be more rigidly controlled. Therefore, the notion of a borderless world through globalisation is in contradiction with the reality of the increased border securitisations as part of the 'war on terror' (Johnson et al., 2011). The main attention in border studies has started to focus on new border fences (Jones, 2009b), biometric borders (L. Amoore, 2006), expanded security practices at airport (Adey et al., 2008), the 'technologisation' of borders and visualisation practises (L. Amoore, 2006), cognitive boundaries of categories (Jones, 2009a), and the relationship between territorial borders and the so-called borderless world of networked, topological space (Johnson et al., 2011; Paasi, 2009). In the light of the rich-but-diffuse recent history of border literature, Paasi (2012) observes the changes in the border practices. He argues border practices have become increasingly mobile. Increasing technical surveillance and control on borders, border-crossings and border-crossers have stretched the borders beyond the border areas.

Along with these two relatively recent and conflicting tendencies in border studies, a new theme has gradually become more popular in the literature: transnational space and/or transnationalism. The emergence of this new theme can be thought as a response to the increasingly mobilised borders in these spatially fluid times (Yeoh, Willis, & Fakhri, 2003).

The term 'transnational' is commonly used to refer to various types of social relations and interactions that transcend 'national' borders. In this sense, transnationalism describes a condition in which multiple ties and interactions link people or institutions across nation-state borders (Vertovec, 1999). Therefore, it has become a popular study area where the increasing intensity and scope of circular flows of persons, goods, information and symbols can be analysed. There have been numerous research papers about transnationalism (see among others, Basch, 1993; Kearney, 1995; Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995; Vertovec, 2001). All these scholars have agreed that transnationalism is a complex and multi-dimensional field. Some of the previous studies focused on transnational migrations and the sociological analysis of transnational communities (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, & Vazquez, 1999; Levitt, 2001; Schiller et al., 1995; Voigt-Graf, 2004); transnational corporations and economic networks (Dicken, Forsgren, & Malmberg, 1994; Yeung, Liu, & Dicken, 2006); transnational urban politics and social movements (Conradson & Latham, 2005; Guarnizo, 2003; Smith, 2005); and the significance of newly emerging transnational cultural forms (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996).

Finally, another tendency in border studies is about the spatiality of borders. The earlier questions about borders' formations, locations and functions confront the scholars anew in the contemporary world. The 'spatial turn' in border studies brings a new perspective on how to understand and study borders. The first important shift is about the location of borders: borders are no longer only at the frontiers of states but increasingly dispersed 'everywhere' (Etienne Balibar, 2004, p. 1). As opposed to the 'borderless world' thesis, E. Balibar (2002, p. 92) suggests that '*borders are being both multiplied and reduced in their localisation and their functions, they are being thinned out and doubled*'. His arguments about 'diffused borders' suggest that whole countries are transforming into borderlands (E. Balibar, 2002, p. 92). Bordering practices do not only occur at frontiers but in multiple sites: border regions, customs, media houses, educational units etc. Rumford (2008, p. 1-2) suggests that borders can even be elsewhere too, such as in another country: i.e. UK passport control for the Eurostar trains is now in Paris and French passport control is in London. Louise Amoore (2011, p. 63) describes these expansions of borders as 'spatial stretching', '*in which the border is "exported" via "touch-points" and "encounters" between mobile people, objects and data, in a system designed to operate far beyond state boundaries'*. Borders are being elements of the current surveillance mechanisms and societal control in today's dynamic world characterised by 'motion' (Paasi, 2011). There is also '*a shift from state-centric approaches to a concern with other, non-territorial spaces: public spheres, cosmopolitan communities, global civil societies, non-proximate or virtual communities, and transnational or global networks, none of which can be bordered in conventional ways*' (Rumford, 2006, p. 160).

As also argued in the previous paragraphs the notion of 'a world in motion' does not necessarily refer to a world without borders, rather increasing border crossings. The contemporary social life is recursively being formed and reformed in mobilities, in uneven and complex ways (Urry, 2000). However, as Rumford (2006, p. 163) states '*borders and mobilities are not antithetical. A globalising world is a world of networks, flows and mobility; it is also a world of borders'*. Another important point in these arguments about these increasing mobilities is that borders do not treat everyone the same way, so they do not mean the same for all. Borders can be permeable to some and restrictive to others (Rumford, 2012, p. 895). Border crossing experiences mostly depend on the passport that the border crosser holds. As argued earlier, contemporary borders are taking the forms of '*asymmetric* membranes' (Hedetoft, 2003, p. 152) that allow the movements of certain goods and people while protecting against unwanted entrance of the others (Rumford, 2008, p. 3). The important question is 'borders for whom?' (David Newman, 2003, p. 22).

To sum up, it is important to note that these seven themes identified here are not exhaustive, as many more different themes were debated, different approaches were popular and different views were held on how to approach and study borders over time. Through these seven themes, this section introduced some popular conceptualisations of borders and outlined main developments in border studies and its constantly evolving concerns from a historical perspective.

CONCLUSION

This paper provided a literature analysis of border studies. It started with some initial clarifications in the border studies. It is stated that the border in this research is understood as bordering processes rather than just a mere physical line or fences in a landscape. By bordering processes, it refers to the construction of socio-spatial categories or, in other words, the processes of socio-spatial differentiations and homogenisations. Bordering and identity building are seen as interdependent processes. Space is seen as human production, and identity as constantly evolving processes. The relationships between borders and identity are understood as permanent ones.

The second section introduced some popular conceptualisations of borders, the main developments in border studies and some of its constantly changing concerns in the literature from a historical perspective. It showed that borders have been understood, approached and studied in various ways since the earliest systematic border studies. In this section I identified seven main themes in the literature:

- Formations and locations of borders
- Functions and effects of borders
- Bordering processes
- Borderless world
- Border securitisations
- Transnationalism and finally
- The new spatiality of borders

This is by no means an exhaustive list, as many more different themes were debated, different approaches were popular and different views were held on how to approach and study borders over time and space.

This paper has provided an important insight into this constantly evolving research area.

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