

*Research*

BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES AND EQUALITIES

Veliko Tarnovo, 30 May – 1 June, 2014

## WHY SOCIOLOGY IS SILENT CONCERNING BORDERS

**Stephen E. NIKOLOV**

*Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge,  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

---

**Abstract.** Border in sociological sense means a barrier that separates social groups, strata, their values, and the difference between ways of life between particular social groups. Such groups may be separated by many dividing lines, or borders: social/living conditions, opportunities/prospects, legal rights/customs, viewpoints, and so on. Sometimes mobility does not permit other than individual, or small-group, crossing of these borders. It seems really strange why border topic is almost completely absent from the sociology. It is so pertinent to the fate and shaping of various social groups, depending from the location of the border. We think of a boundary whenever we think of an entity demarcated from its surroundings. Events, too, have boundaries – temporal ones: their beginning, climax, final. All our lives are bounded in the continuum between our births and our deaths. A philosopher would imply also that even imaginary, abstract entities, such as concepts or layouts, have

boundaries of their own. One may say that condition for all this boundary/border talk is coherent, and whether it reproduces the world around us' structure, or the organizing activity of our intellect, are matters of deep philosophical controversy. Borders are difficult to disappear totally even within the European Union, providing some obstacles to the freedom of movement to those left still outside the Schengen agreement.

*Keywords:* sociology, borders, ethnicity, identity, loyalty

---

It seems really strange that borders as a topic, so full of philosophical content, and so pertinent to the fate and shape of various social groups that depend on their location vis-a-vis the border, is absent from sociology. We think of a boundary whenever we think of an entity demarcated from its surroundings. There is a boundary differentiating sphere's interior from its exterior; there is a boundary (a border) separating Greece and Bulgaria, regions in the country, districts within a city. Sometimes the exact location of a boundary is blurred or otherwise contentious (as when one tries to trace out the margins of Mount Everest, or even the edges of own body). Sometimes the boundary lays slant to any physical discontinuity or qualitative delineation (as with the border between the upper and lower halves of a homogeneous sphere). In many cases border is only virtual, imaginary, imposed by certain human arrangement irrelevant to the existent and observable setting. However, no matter if it is clear or fuzzy, natural or artificial, every object persistently has a special attribute, a boundary. It marks it off from the rest of the natural environment – being it an own class of objects, or different ones, or altogether but the former object itself. Events, too, have boundaries – temporal ones: their beginning, climax and end. All our lives are bounded in the continuum between our births and our deaths. The soccer game begins after the starting whistle of the referee, and finishes with his final blow. A lesson starts and

ends according to the sanctioned schedule. Thus, we see, that boundary in its numerous meanings is a universal phenomenon, which unyieldingly ushers and shapes every human activity.

### **Border in the social studies**

Philosophy would imply also that even imaginary, abstract entities, such as concepts or layouts, have boundaries of their own. *Philosophical border* places limits of the knowledge about universe or world by the human mental power, human being capacities as individual or of humanity as whole, internal restrictions concerning reality – secular/profane, or the divine order beyond us. In psychology, where the term *border/boundary* is easier to understand intuitively than to explicate, a boundary is defined as the edge of appropriate behavior in a given situation (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993). Psychology finds border between the personal judgment and that of the group, or between the subjective, personal, internal assessment of the self, and that of the *milieu*, of those around, or the society as a whole. But modern boundary theory goes beyond behavior to matters of language, time, place and space, money, self-disclosure, and receptivity to input from outside the dyad.

Boundaries are, on the one hand, central to the common-sense picture of the world and, profoundly problematical on the other. Accordingly, we may make a distinction between two main types of theories – realist, which depend on whether one is willing to take the problems at face value, or eliminativist, that bypass these problems altogether, treating boundaries as mere theories, conventional ways of saying it (*façons de parler*). Boundaries cannot exist apart from the entities they bound, though there may be discrepancy as to whether this ontological dependence is generic, or specific. In the first case, a boundary cannot exist except as a boundary/border of something), in the second – this boundary of something cannot exist except as a boundary of that thing (Brentano, 1976; Chisholm, 1984).

Our interest, however, is further devoted to a special kind of borders – those imposed by people according to certain procedures and internationally accepted regulations. Such borders may be either natural, or artificial. A river, as well as valleys, ravines, mountain ridges, and various other naturally shaped objects is a natural boundary and in that case through the centre of the chosen natural barrier is drawn the line of division. An artificial boundary is one made by a human hand. As one of the famous border-lines' draughtsman from the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, points out:

[W]e must distinguish between the category of Natural Frontiers and the category of Artificial Frontiers, by which are meant those boundary lines which, not being dependent upon natural features of the earth's surface for their selection, have been artificially or arbitrarily created by man" (1907, p. 12).

It was, at least until the 20<sup>th</sup> century wars in Europe and especially on the Balkans with their further formation of new states with their borders. For the new borders often it was not possible to find natural landmarks, so they sometimes were dividing places, villages, homes from the yards. Very often one could hear one and the same story – the officer responsible for drawing of this border has been drunken, and thus has allowed village's cemetery or church to remain on the other side of the border line.

Boundaries are frequently marked by partition fences, ditches, hedges, trees, etc. It appears that such a fashion has firstly been introduced by Poles, and they have invented a new word to indicate in such way artificially designated border: *granica* [granitsa], or a dividing-line, or a hedge, which is designated. This is where the German word *grenze* comes from, widely spread through the Bible in M. Luther's translation, and thus further on to Netherlands – *grenz*, Danish and Norwegian *grense*, Swedish *gränz*. In the same

meaning it has been accepted also in the old Russian, *граница*, and also in the other Slavic languages, and Romanian [*granița*]. Moreover, in many Middle Ages documents same word and its derivate could be found in a Latinized form: *granicier*, *granicierum*, *graniciebus* (Slownik, 2000, pp. 474-475). In the different languages, no matter we use words *border/boundary* in English, or Slavic *granitsa*, this means the conditional/imaginary line, dividing adjacent zones, estates, regions etc., which is the limit of certain territory; line of division. (See also Abramov, 1999; Chernov, 2001); border between two countries and regions is the dividing line between them; in some instances it also includes the land that is close to this line (*borderland*); imaginary line that separates one area from other areas (Collins, 2000).

### **What about the sociology?**

It is not to say that sociology does not use the term “border”: according to various authors, it means a barrier that separates social groups, strata, their values, and the difference between ways of life between particular social groups. Such groups may be separated by many dividing lines, or borders: social/living conditions, opportunities/prospects, legal rights/customs, view-points, and so on. Sometimes mobility does not permit other than only individuals, or small groups to cross these borders. In the light of all these reflections, it seems really strange why border topic is almost completely absent from the sociology (Giddens, 1989: 49). There is no concept, or even serious analysis, what happens to a group when it is divided somehow by certain kind of border, or such a border has been moved in one or another direction. In this sense, border has great impact on the fate and shaping of various social groups from a community to society, ethnicity, and nation. It predetermines to a great extent their behavior and interactions. We think of a boundary whenever we think of an entity demarcated from its surroundings. One may say that condition for all this boundary/border talk is coherent, and whether it reproduces

the world around us' structure, or the organizing activity of our intellect, are matters of deep philosophical controversy.

Depending from the character of the border between two or more social groups/communities – i.e., the inflowing degree of mutual penetrability – we could speak of different degrees of mutual impact and inflowing of the one group into the other(s): exchange of know-how, customs, cuisine, and human beings. Trade is an important, though only one of the many examples of such exchange. In this text, however, we shall concentrate ourselves on the one of the extreme kinds of borders – the interstate ones that to the greatest possible extent restricts contacts and communication.

In pre-global sociology, a 'society' – by far and large, central focus of sociology, what for it actually emerged and exists – is defined as an entity contained within the boundaries of the nation-state, as if the real boundaries of the state were constructing a social space of interaction and sociability for its citizens (Touraine, 2003). Thus Nation-state was the 'box', which 'society' lays widespread. This vision of 'society' reverses the reality of nation-state building; state control over boundaries is a feature of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Widespread was recognition of passport controls and various measures for supervision and surveillance mechanisms through which states could effectively police their borders, is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon (Torpey, 2000). Transnationalism came into existence at that moment in time when successful nation-state building 'contributed to the creation of large numbers of people "out of place" – that is, crossing over the national boundaries erected in the last two centuries' (Roudometof, 2000, p. 367; 2005, p. 119). That application of space as a metaphor to describe the reality of transnationalism is actually an expansion of the former 'container' theory of the nation-state (Beck, 2000a, 2000b, 2001).

If we go beyond the traditional grasp of transnationalism as a feature of international, transborder migration, it is necessary to conceptualize

transnational interactions that take place among people and institutions in two or more separate ‘containers’ or nation-states. Internal globalization is the process of creating the room or the space for these interactions; i. e., internal globalization provides the preconditions, incl. the material and non-material infrastructure for the emerging spaces of human interaction. The resulting reality is one of *transnational social spaces* (Beck, 2000a): a space that, by definition, cannot be restricted to transnational labor markets (Portes, 2000). On the contrary, they can extend into other spaces, incl. those of international trade, transnational sexuality, popular music, journalism, and many more as well as spaces fostering construction of multiple identities (ranging from those based on gender to those based on the race, religion, or ethnicity). Hence, the notion of trans-border social space is considerably broader than the concept of transnational communities. And here is the sociology that may step to analyze these complex interactions.

Further, there is a proposition among sociologists that patriotism (i. e., attachment to certain nation or state) does not necessarily imply ethnocentrism. Thus, ethnocentrism is a quality that should be linked conceptually to native people, who are expected to adopt the point of view of unreserved support for one’s country, putting one’s country first and protecting national interest irrespective of whether their own position is morally superior or not (Roudometof, 2005, p. 122). In other words, the state or the national society remains the key factor influencing the public’s stance; including the extent of openness towards the world that lies ‘outside’ the nation’s borders.

Political scientist Jens Bartelson provides a critical analysis and conceptual history of sovereignty, dealing with philosophical and political texts from the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and Modernity. He states, that, despite the high volumes of inter-state exchanges, “this system as well as the units remain identical with themselves throughout the globalizing process”

(Bartelson, 2000, p.184). In other words, state and/or the national society remain the key factor influencing the public's attitude; including the extent of openness towards the world that goes 'outside', or beyond, the national borders. Lack of correlation among the continuum's various dimensions means that it is not significant to speak about a single, transnational/transborder, universalized version of cosmopolitanism-localism). Rather, such an outcome is consistent with the various streams of glocalized cosmopolitanisms (variously referred to as 'situated', 'rooted', 'vernacular', and so on (Tomlinson, 1999; Pollock et al., 2000; Szerszynski & Urry, 2002; Roudometof, 2005, p. 123).

In his pivotal article, 'Transnationalism, Cosmopolitanism, Glocalization,'<sup>1)</sup> Greek sociologist Viktor Roudometof (2005, p. 126-127), has tried to clarify the correlation between transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Both these terms present both sociological description and common everyday speech. It is important to note, that these terms are not entirely sociological concepts, but commonsensical ones. Author claims that in his understanding these terms are filled of contemplations that involve concepts of status, national origin, ethnicity, race, and gender. Hence, they are sociological by their nature, and we should add here that all they have the border as an idiosyncratic attribute. Current discourse is focused almost entirely on the interactions between transnationalism and international migration, which seems too narrow and restraining. Borders that divide communities that reside from one or the other side might be included too in the agenda.

The initial application of the concept of transnational social field comes from the field of international migration (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). In contrast to transnational social fields, transnational social spaces can be conceived of as consisting of flows (Urry, 2000) of human interactivity. If relations in transnational social spaces are free-floating, relationships in social fields are far more structured, more 'solid' and less 'fluid'. Robertson

(1992) has put forward the notion of *global field*, but by that, he refers to global structurization. The global field properties are those concepts that are relativized by globalization. This relativization of the relations between the individual and the nation-state is actually an aspect of the broader process of globalization. The construction of transnational social fields (as well as transnational social spaces) is an important facet of the overall process. Nevertheless, it is clear that Robertson's global field is a concept considerably broader than that of the transnational social field.

During the post-1870 period – the 'golden era' of nation-state building in Europe (Hobsbawm, 1990), cosmopolitanism was seen as something negative, and confronted with nationalism. This connection has been largely destabilized in the post-1945 period, as the movement of peoples has strengthened the tendency of individuals living outside the borders of their national homeland to maintain their ties with their nation and to participate in national projects coupled with their nation.)

Over-border activities, to call this *transnationalism*, involve three different levels, and each of these includes various structures – some less, other better developed according to the degree of steadiness of their inherent activities. As we pointed out earlier, there exist transnational, trans border spaces, built upon the continual interactions and activities worldwide, carried out by numerous formalized (i.e., international organizations or relations, established by formal agreements between states) and informal actors – collective or individual, but channeled by certain groups or trends. These take place within transnational, over-the-borders social fields, or 'containers', if we use the above mentioned term. Theoretically, such 'container' may be expanded to fit within itself the whole planet. We shall see, however, that this is only a prospect, but nevertheless this trend is extremely unevenly distributed all over the globe, where some parts (Europe as a whole, USA/Canada, Southeast Asia) are more advanced, at the same time as other parts are virtually excluded from

that movement. Further, as much structured and continuous these interactions are, they become more and more sound, and involve exercise of power relations that engage multiple agents and actors. Here we may point out such examples as international communities set up on purpose by a variety of professional, supervisory or decision-making groups or bodies, typically operating around the globe. With the contemporary means of communication, which offer exchange in real time, transborder mobility is by far not a precondition, though end of the rigid control over the international travel and contacts with the end of the Cold war was a real and great step forward.

Moreover – that geographical expansion of transnational social spaces into the global-wide cultural milieus responsible for producing not only cosmopolitan, but also the completely opposite, local attitudes. German sociologist Ulrich Beck's called for a revisiting the cosmopolitanism-nationalism intellectual debate as a promising input to the challenge of contemporary nation-states analysis (2000b, p. 100). Beck's support for the 'cosmopolitan society (or nation)' reveals his adherence to the paradigm of cosmopolitanism vs the local ethnocentrism, which is consistent, not adverse, to the civic and more democracy leaning conceptualizations of nationalism – or patriotism. Refreshing such ideas and debate may suggest, among the other, additional political solution to the powerful waves of anti-immigrant ethnocentric protests overwhelms the EU states. However, as V. Roudometof notes, "this should not be confused with the *reality* of cosmopolitanism – the only way to accurately measure the success (or failure ) of cosmopolitan values is to clearly separate our moral advocacy of them from cosmopolitan (and local) attitudes as observable phenomena" (Roudometof, 2005, p. 127). For example, British political theorist David Held maintains that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century 'each citizen of a state will have to learn to become a "cosmopolitan citizen" as well: that is, a person capable of mediating between national traditions, communities of fate, and alternative

styles of life' (Held, 2000, p. 402). Held's formulation implies very obvious appreciation that a specific orientation at the individual level is a prerequisite for an effective 'cosmopolitan', i. e., transborder, supranational public policy.

In one of his short essays, 'The Great Return'(2002), Czech and French writer and émigré Milan Kundera whose prose is saturated with rich elemental sociological observations – in a story of an international couple illustrates namely that process of labelling and individual grasp through own experience. Both they, came from contrasting backgrounds – girl has fled from a Communist country seeking asylum and a better future in Paris, and, in contrast, her friend and lover, 'comes from a Swedish town he wholeheartedly detests, and in which he refuses to set foot'. Both they, are involved in steering their connections to place, locale and their multiple identities as Parisians, transnationals, cosmopolitans, refugees and so on. While both of them live in a country and a city outside their own nation-state and even speak to each other in a language other than their native tongue, their experiences are not regarded as identical. Both of them are pigeonholed, labelled, and they will be judged by how true they are to their labels' Girl is complaining, however, that her boyfriend 'was seeing her exactly the way everyone else saw her: *a young woman in pain, banished from her country*'. This is, actually, an extension of her initial status as a refugee who has escaped from her country. In the case of her partner this advanced status is taken for granted. People around admires him as *a nice, very cosmopolitan Scandinavian who's already forgotten all about the place he comes from* while her girl has a lot to accommodate with (Kundera, 2002, p. 100; emphasis in the original).

To reiterate theoretical discourse developed above, there are some mutually related sociological concepts – namely, ethnicity, identity, nation building, interactions between divided communities, and so on. First of all, it is necessary to say that the concept of ethnicity's meaning depends on the deno-

tation and content of a number of other concepts, above all those of ethnic identity and ethnic group. Here, however, concept of ethnic group is the fundamental one, which from the others is derivative (Isajiw, 1992, p. 5).

E. Cashmore's stresses on the salient feature of a group that regards itself as 'in some sense (usually, in many senses) distinct' (Cashmore, 2003, p. 142). And 'distinctiveness' here is the key word. It is, indeed, *border* that shapes that distinctiveness. Once the consciousness of being part of an ethnic group is created, it takes on a self-perpetuating quality and is passed from one generation to the next.

One of the most prominent contemporary researchers and theoreticians of ethnicity and nationalism, American sociologist Rogers Brubaker, suggests an alternative approach, emerging from the relatively new discipline of cognitive anthropology.<sup>2)</sup> He calls it "ethnicity without groups." In this approach, ethnicity is essentially a 'way of seeing' the social world around us and "categorizing" ourselves and others within that world. His works are even more interesting for us, because he contemplates on empirical material from the Balkans – namely, former Yugoslavia, and Transylvania. His the suggestions fits well with the complicated phenomena of ethnicity as it exists in the area, where many of its numerous manifestations and forms, has emerged and developed often in the flames of war and with the pain of huge masses of local people, relocated, divided and violently coerced to change identity, family memory, and loyalties in order to survive. Brubaker writes:

[T]o understand how ethnicity works, it may help to begin not with "the Romanians" and "the Hungarians" as groups [here we could just as easily substitute the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bosniaks], but with "Romanian" and "Hungarian" as categories. Doing so suggests a different set of questions than those that come to mind when we begin with "groups." Starting with groups, one is led to ask what groups

want, demand, or aspire towards; how they think of themselves and others; and how they act in relation to other groups. One is led almost automatically by the substantialist language to attribute identity, agency, interests, and will to groups. Starting with categories, by contrast, invites us to focus on processes and relations rather than substances. It invites us to specify how people and organizations do things with, and to, ethnic and national categories; how such categories are used to channel and organize processes and relationships; and how categories get institutionalized and with what consequences (Brubaker, 2004, p. 24-25).

Identity – another core concept of sociology – is seen both as ‘internal’ and ‘external’ to the individual and group. It is internal to the extent that is seen as subjectively ‘constructed’ by the individual, but it is external to the extent that this construction corresponds to certain ‘objective’ circumstances arising from the daily relationships, social roles, cultural institutions and social structures (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 49) – incl. borders that divide individuals and groups one from another. When an identified group, or community, is, for example, a little village, separated by few kilometers from other villages in a rural area, its borders appear to be very simple. That pattern of human interactions may be seen as consisting of relations between the residents living inside that location – village or the ‘container’. However, the residents interact also with people outside their own village. They sell and buy crops and cattle, and marry persons from nearby and far away, and may move or bring husband/wife to live together. At any given time, village residents may have various close or remote relatives, living elsewhere. Thus, borders of that community is not so clear-cut, it is infuse and relatively easy to be penetrated – which is not the case with the more or less heavily guarded interstate borders.

Borders are actually missing from the analyze of any of these fundamental for sociology models – probably because they are external, seemingly unrelated to sociology because of simply having only certain technical parameters if grasped ‘per se’ alone. However, interstate borders that without any doubt may appear as important factor in all these concepts and other ones that are shaped because of the external border lines that separate one group of people from another. What happens when borders occur to be moved, leaving some parts of a previously homogeneous population separated from ‘their’ state and majority fellow countrymen, target of more or less harsh regime of restrictions, incl. on freedom of movement, access to relatives, family events, property, and newly imposed requirements for loyalties, education, professional career, price of what may be assimilation, multiple competing identities. Such painful experience, which epitomizes recent Balkan history, is repeatedly left outside the attention of sociology – both as universal and local-case analysis.

Surely, there is something rather haughty in claiming that man always is located on the border, on the edge, as some psychologists use to profess. Such a claim is actually allowed only to specific types of personality, who dispose of various particular attributes. Most people, at least typically, would prefer not to differ from these around them: this is usually unreliable and even unsafe. If everyone in the neighborhood is tall and white, who – if, indeed. One has the choice – would prefer to be short, fat, and dark? This may make him an object to ridicule, and may diminish him/her chances to marry and have wholesome completion in his/her life. Even far more advisable is if everyone else is, for example, Shia, it is better to be a Shiite. And even in an open democracy, one needs a certain obstinacy to work voluntarily in a direction different from that of the community, especially when it is small.

## **From dispersed among various disciplines toward sociologically knitted border studies**

In modern time borders are comprehend as complex spatial and social phenomena that are highly dynamic. Such understanding of the boundary underwent large transformations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and went through a exhaustive modification over the last 15-20 years, and radically transformed the borders' research. In the 1980s emerged brand new, multidisciplinary generation of researchers on the border, including anthropologists, economists, ethnographers, historians, legal experts, political scientists and political geographers, sociologists, and as a field it acquired an increasingly interdisciplinary nature. Border studies were shaped on the model of similar research efforts like Cultural studies, Regional studies, Urban studies, Women studies that involve experts from various domains that approach different aspects of the subject. Since the early 1990s, there have been huge growths of border studies mostly in Europe and North America. Many research centers devoted to different aspects of the borders were established, published were a huge amount of articles and monographs. This revival of border research was promoted largely by the end of the cold war and its negative effects namely the burgeoning of interstate borders. Researchers conceptualize boundaries not only as spatially or geographically based phenomena that delimitate the sovereign territories of states, but also as a socially, politically or economically articulated affiliation or exclusion of, for example, peoples, religious and ethnic groups and individuals (Paasi, 2003).

Such border studies' research units exist in many European countries, namely in Germany (where they seek, among the other, to find out why, almost 25 years after the German reunification, which most Germans strongly aspired to happen, there is still striking and further reproducing obvious difference between these generations that have grown and socialized in Western parts, and the 'Osies' – those that have lived in the 'GDR'), and Scandinavian

countries, in North America, mostly in the Southern States, bordering Mexico, and so on. With insignificant exceptions, this trend in the border studies is virtually absent in the Southeast Europe, or the Balkans – arena of the most frequent border changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In one of fascinating books that appeared during recent years, Tatiana Zhurzhenko's *Borderlands into Bordered Lands* (2010), this new development has received an excellent depiction. It is also evidence to the ways that borders affect our daily lives everywhere. Borders, as Zhurzhenko argues, are not only marked on the land, through forests and mountains but in the minds themselves where discourses and narratives are woven and geopolitical choices are made. In exploring the making of nowadays Ukraine's borders,<sup>3)</sup> author elucidates how states debate not only their borderline on the ground, but also identity, loyalties, citizenship, culture, and even language as influenced by the border. She describes how the reorganization of the border affects the daily lives of people, making their once close neighbors remote and secluded, converting sameness into discrepancy, affecting identities, and making new loyalty demands. Thus, the book is not only key in understanding the making of border but on how borders shape our daily lives. Zhurzhenko shows how these axes collide within the country, contending for the mentality of its and their internalized identity. Hence the book reveals, that borders are not simple constructs, built, rebuilt, and de-built at someone's will, but that they have a life of their own and that they, any mystique aside, have true long lasting effects on people's lives. Thus, Ukraine is a typical case of a "borderline" identity between a persuasive Europe and the gravity hauling of Russia, a line that runs virtually through the heart of the country – an imaginary, but no less real border. Thus, it is also an account associated also with the most recent tragic events in Ukraine.

These constantly shifting boundaries in Europe as long term lines of enclosure and mobility restriction 'longue duree' are analyzed by L. Leonti-

dou (2004) at the European/supranational level through the deconstruction of three regional narratives on “Europe” and its ‘reborderings’ in different millennia. Narratives are very important and special source when borders are under scrutiny, and this is probably another reason for keeping this topic out of the mainstream sociology. Here quantity methods have limited application, and the so called quality methods, based on individual cases; narratives, memories, and thus having ‘non-representative’ character often are looked with haughtiness by many academic scholars. Narratives reveal what important and long lasting significance in identity construction and spatial ties around boundaries have had. These narratives are evidence of the historically specific and constructed nature of the boundaries of Europe, as well as the power relations involved in changing size and shape of the ‘containers’. Unwrapping such narratives is important in understanding sociopolitical constructions of ‘Europe’ and its boundaries/borders, their reinforcement or relaxation, criticizing essentialism, as well as commenting upon the ambivalent placing in the European Union of certain candidate and neighboring nations.

Although with formally recognized minority status, Bulgarians in Yugoslavia (now Serbia) have been always facing strong pressure to suspend relations with the mother country, to give up the cultural and historical heritage, (“Bulgarian” is a synonymous to a fascist, occupier and an enemy, according to the political vocabulary of Belgrade). Under the conditions of such difficulties and ambiguities, Bulgarians there were (and still are) forced to choose between volatile, rather symbolic belonging to former national community from which they were isolated, and immediate imperatives of everyday life for a dignified existence, safety and well-being of the family. In these circumstances, a potential arises for double and possibly multiple identities, in which the primary ethnic marker becomes more formal, subordinate and vulnerable. Variations in spoken language, customs, and the overall behavior which continually dominate, further exaggerate separation from the primary

ethnic group. These processes accompanied the general trend towards crisis and decline of the nation-state, where the outbursts of nationalism throughout Europe are the expression of that tendency, and not a movement in the opposite direction to strengthen the ethno-identity. These are processes that require careful research and analysis, which would lead to the making of adequate political decisions rather than existing in most cases hysteria, hasty and unjustified measures experiments.. These are processes that require careful research and analysis, which would lead to the making of adequate political decisions rather than presented in most cases hysteria, hasty measures and unjustified experiments.

Borders are difficult to disappear totally even within the European Union, providing some obstacles to the freedom of movement to those left still outside the Schengen agreement. Europe is a cultural construct that emerged around the Mediterranean in a captivating Greek myth, much earlier than the age of written history. The notion of Europe then ‘shifted’ to the northwest as a colonial cultural–religious construct of ‘Christendom’ during the Middle Ages, before nation-states emerged. Much later, European integration – in the context of globalization after the end of the Cold war confrontation – not only did not eradicate borders, but actually created some new and often bizarre hierarchies that are supported by a bureaucratic tales and an institutional discourse for unification after two devastating world wars (Leontidou, 2004). More than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the question still remains "Do good fences still prevent uninvited visitors, do they help maintaining good neighbors?" Since the Great Wall of China, construction of which began under the Qin dynasty (from 221 to 206 BC), the Antonine Wall, built in Scotland to support Hadrian's Wall, the "wall" has been a must in the defense of definite entities demanding autonomy. But whether the wall is something more than an obsolete residue in the management of borders today? During recent decades, the wall has been given fresh verve in North America,

particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border, and in Israel-Palestine. On the Balkans, Greece and Bulgaria resorted to building fences in order to prevent the influx of Syrian and other refugees. But the success of these new walls in the development of security and insecurity remains unclear. Walls, actually, contribute to the feeling of anxiety and uncertainty as far as they accumulate fears and suspicion, hardly creating a sense of security for those 'behind the line'?

Following the October 2013 disaster in Lampedusa, where more than 400 people lost their lives, EU leaders expressed their sadness and solidarity and called for measures to prevent such tragedies in the future. However, there has been no confirmation of an irrevocable political will to transform these generous appeals into practical mechanisms that could lead to a real improvement in the situation of refugees and migrants who make their way to Europe, and to bring to an end human rights violations at EU's borders.

Instead, the focus of Europe's decision-makers remains on exclusion: building higher fences, installing more surveillance equipment and increased policing of the borders. This is forcing people to take increasingly dangerous routes. A recent report by Frontex, the EU border agency, highlighted the increasing numbers of human lives lost. In the first five months of 2014 alone, more than 170 men, women and children have lost their lives in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas; hundreds more are missing feared dead (See Amnesty...). Most of those who perished were clearly escaping violence and persecution—almost 60% of those who crossed the central Mediterranean irregularly in 2013 has been from countries as Syria, Eritrea and Somalia.<sup>4)</sup>

[H]uman tragedies unfolding every day at the borders of Europe are not because they are inevitable or EU does not control the situation. In fact many of them are caused by the European Union. EU Member States should at least begin to protect the people, not the border... The

responsibility for the deaths of those who tried to get into the EU, is a collective responsibility. Other EU Member States can and should follow the example of Italy and stop the loss of life at sea, supporting the efforts of search and rescue in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

Many fiction writers or movies present a grim picture of the not so distant future, where a handful of affluent, prosperous countries in Europe and North America are sealed as inaccessible fortresses that fiercely deter, using highly sophisticated and lethal equipment, hordes of hungry, ailing, repulsive "Third world" people. Sadly, we are steadily proceeding to such stage of the humanity's development, which would completely renounce thousands of years of human civilization, and all values, sanctified or secular, that we pretend to adhere. If we want to avoid such a prospect, we need to dissuade hasty and unqualified politicians, police officers, border guards, and military from keeping the monopoly over the borders' protection and freedom of movement. Instead, broader circles of various areas' experts, intellectuals, broadly minded people need to be invited to find fair solutions of the complex problems that force natives to seek risky ways to escape horrors of their everyday life and destiny. And sociologists have there to say a lot.

#### NOTES

1. Glocalization is a neologism, which is merging the words "globalization" and "localization" used to describe a product or service, developed and distributed globally, but mold to accommodate also user or consumer in a local market, customs or culture. This means that the product or service may be tailored to conform with local laws, customs or consumer preferences. Products or services that are effectively "glocalized" are, by definition, going to be of much greater interest to the end user. According to the sociologist Roland Robertson, who is credited with popularizing the term, glocalization describes a new outcome of local conditions toward global pressures. At a 1997 conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture," Robert-

son said that glocalization "means the simultaneity --- the co-presence --- of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies." – i.e., therefore, interdependent and enable each other.

2. An introductory text in this field is Roy D'Andrade, *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (Andrade, 1995). Two websites which introduce the discipline of Cognitive Anthropology are: <http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/coganth.htm>; <http://www.geocities.com/xerexes/coganth.html>.

3. Name of the country, Ukraine, means literally 'on the edge', which reminds its complicated past – between Russia and Poland, with small parts of its population belonging also to Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, used as petite exchange coins in Russia's relations with these countries, and Germany, and for geopolitical purposes. All that was – and is, indeed, at the expense of the local population.

4. [http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR\\_050012014\\_Fortress\\_Europe\\_complete\\_web\\_EN.pdf](http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR_050012014_Fortress_Europe_complete_web_EN.pdf)

## REFERENCES

- Bartelson, J. (2000). Three concepts of globalization. *Intern. Sociology*, 15, 180–196.
- Beck, U. (2000a). *What is globalization*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (2000b). The cosmopolitan perspective: sociology in the second age of modernity. *British J. Sociology*, 51, 79-105.
- Beck, U. (2001). The cosmopolitan society and its enemies (pp. 181-202). In: Tomasci, L. (Ed.). *New horizons in sociological theory and research: the frontiers of sociology at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Brentano, F. (1976). *Philosophische Untersuchungen zu Raum, Zeit und Kontinuum*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- Brubaker, R. (2004). *Ethnicity without groups*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

- Cashmore, E. (2003). Ethnicity (pp. 142-146). In: *Encyclopedia of race and ethnic studies*. London: Routledge.
- Chisholm, R.M. (1984). *Brentano and intrinsic value*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins (2000). *Collins Cobuld learner's dictionary*. Mason: Heinle ELT.
- Côté, J.E. & Levine, C.G. (2002). *Identity formation, agency and culture: a social psychological synthesis*. Mahwah: Erlbaum.
- Curzon, G.N. (1907). *Frontiers - the Romanes lecture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- D'Andrade, R.G. (1995). *The development of cognitive anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1989). *The nation-state and violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gutheil, T.G. & Gabbard, G.O. (1993). The concept of boundaries in clinical practice: theoretical and risk-management dimensions. *American J. Psychiatry*, 150, 188-196.
- Held, D. (2000). Regulating globalization: the reinvention of politics. *International Sociology*, 15, 394-408.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. (1990). *Nations and nationalism since 1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isajiw, W. (1992). Definition and dimensions of ethnicity: a theoretical framework. *Joint Canada-United States conference on the measurement of ethnicity*, Ottawa, Ontario, pp. 407-422.
- Kundera, M. (2002). The great return. *New Yorker*, 20 May, 96-105.
- Leontidou, L. (2004). The boundaries of Europe: deconstructing three regional Narratives (pp. 593-617). In: *Identities: global studies in culture and power*, Volume 11, Issue 4. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Paasi, A. (2005). Generations and the “development” of border studies. *Geopolitics*, 10, 663-671.

- Pollock, S. Bhabha, C.A., Breckenridge, H.K. & Chakrabarty, D. (2000).  
Cosmopolitanisms. *Public Culture*, 12, 577–589.
- Portes, A. (2000). Globalization from below: the rise of transnational communities (pp. 253-270). In: Kalb, D., van der Land, M., Staring, R., van Steenberg, B. & Wilerdink, N. (Eds.). *The ends of globalization: bringing society back in*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: social theory and global culture*. London: Sage.
- Roudometof, V. (2000). Transnationalism and globalization: the Greek-orthodox diaspora between orthodox universalism and transnational nationalism. *Diaspora*, 9, 361-398.
- Roudometof, V. (2005) Transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, glocalization. *Current Sociology*, 53, 113–135.
- Smith, M.P. & Guarnizo, L.E. (1998) *Transnationalism from below*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Slowik. (2000). *Slowik etymologiczny*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Szerszynski, B. & Urry, J. (2002). Cultures of cosmopolitanism. *Sociol. Rev.*, 50, 461-480. .
- Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Torpey, J. (2000). *The invention of the passport: surveillance, citizenship and the state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Touraine, A. (2003). Sociology without societies. *Current Sociology*, 51, 123–131.
- Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology beyond societies*. London: Routledge.
- Zhurzhenko, T. (2010). *Borderlands into bordered lands: geopolitics of identity in post-Soviet Ukraine*. Stuttgart: Ibidem.
- Абрамов, Н. (1999). *Словарь русских синонимов и сходных по смыслу выражений*. Москва: Русские словари.

Чернов, Г.В. (2001). *Англо-русский/русско-английский словарь*  
*‘Американский вариант’*. Москва: Glossarium.

✉ Dr. Stephen Nikolov  
Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge,  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
13A, Moskovska Str.  
1000 Sofia, Bulgaria  
E-Mail: [stephnikolov@gmail.com](mailto:stephnikolov@gmail.com)

© 2015 Venets: Author

