

**Doris Wastl-Walter (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to
Border Studies*, Ashgate: Farnham: 2011, 705pp.,
ISBN: 978-0-7546-7406-1**

J.J. Zhang*

The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies makes a significant contribution to the field of border studies as it is the first attempt at providing a comprehensive overview of a diverse and at times, confusing field of study. Edited by Doris Wastl-Walter from the University of Bern, Switzerland, this collection of 32 chapters, is divided into eight parts. Each part addresses a particular strand of research: theoretical framing, securitisation of the border, identity issues, cross-border economic regimes, social borders, neighbourly cooperation, and trans-border environmental management. As well as endeavouring to provide multidisciplinary case studies from around the world, this collection also aims to garner significant contributions from both renowned scholars and young researchers.

The first part (*Theorizing Borders: Conceptual Aspects of Border Studies*) consists of six chapters aimed at providing some conceptual basis to border studies. Acknowledging the multi-disciplinary nature of this field, the writings here give a good overview of the various approaches to the study of borders. The possibility/practicality of coming up with a border theory is taken up in earnest by Anssi Paasi and David Newman. Discussions on the absence and presence of borders, how we can see “border” as a verb, how borders are fabricated truths that serve the interest of those in power, and how borders are not just encountered but produced by people (as described in Henk van Houtum’s chapter) are all thought-provoking and set the stage well for the rest of the companion. The concept of collective memory is then introduced by Tatiana Zhurzhenko to discuss hybrid identities in borderlands, and how these borderlands are not marginalised but locales of power. On a larger scale, Alan K. Henrikson’s piece represents a foray into trans-border diplomacy and the concept of “good neighbourhood” that takes a “peace-via-borders” agenda to explore how borders can go beyond being places of conflict to becoming places of cooperation. Finally, Stefanie Kron ponders on the concepts of intersectionality and border feminism to analyse subjectivities in transmigrant communities.

James Wesley Scott provides the first instalment of the second part (*Geopolitics: State, Nation and Power Relations*) with an insightful piece depicting the changing borders since the fall of the “Iron Curtain” in 1989 and the expansion of the European Union in 2004. He also provides a useful overview of various traditions in border studies spanning from determinism to relativism and pragmatism. The ensuing four chapters provide a slew of empirical examples from some of the most disputed borderlands in the world. These include the contested meanings of the “Green Line” for both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and their actions to challenge or retain the separation (Nicos

* J. J. Zhang is a PhD research postgraduate at the Department of Geography, Durham University, U.K.

Peristianis and John C. Mavris); the emergence of new state boundaries in the post-soviet era and geo-political relations across newly formed borders, concentrating on territoriality, identity, security and the circulation of people and goods in creating a “good neighbourhood” (Vladimir Kolosov); the intricacies of the environmental security framework in interrogating border debates in both Arctic and Antarctica (Lassi Heininen and Michele Zebich-Knos); and finally, the lived experiences of contested territorialities at Myanmar’s border with Thailand, China and India (Karin Dean).

The post-9/11 era heralded in a new phase in border studies in which border scholars were confronted with a myriad of challenging issues such as the reinforcement of border controls, increased surveillance, and the securitisation and militarization of the border. Part three of this companion (*Border Enforcement in the 21st Century*) serves to gather influential work on this theme of “re-bordering.” Discussions include border regimes in the US and the European Union (Jason Ackleson); the “homeland security” discourse in the US (Heather Nicol); and utilization of surveillance technologies such as the full-body scan at border checkpoints and deployment of military aircrafts to secure international borders (e.g. US-Mexico border; Iraq’s borders) (Alison J. Williams). Edgardo Manero continues the border enforcement theme by looking at the relationship of borders with sovereignty issues in Latin America, while Valérie Gelézeau discusses the persistently militarised inter-Korean border as a frontier of development and transformation.

Borders are not only physical fences erected by the state but are also experienced by people in their everyday lives and affect how people identify themselves with their neighbouring “other.” The fourth part of this collection (*Borders and Territorial Identities: The Mechanisms of Exclusion and Inclusion*) provides empirical examples from Europe, Mongolia and Iran. Jan D. Markusse focuses on national minorities in European Border Regions and presents case studies from the Basque Country, the former Habsburg Kronland of Tyrol, and the Slovak-Hungarian border region, exploring the various internal boundary-making processes and the role and development of such territorial boundaries. This is followed by Alexander C. Diener who discusses the relationship between borders and the challenges of territorial belonging amongst the Mongolian Kazakhs. In final chapter of this section, Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh gives a rare insight into Persian history and mythology in explicating Iran’s perceptions of borders and territorial identity.

Part five of the book (*The Role of Borders in a Seemingly Borderless World*) tackles cross-border economic regimes and their impacts on people’s lives in borderlands. Case studies in this section come from the European Union, China, Southeast Asia and the US-Mexico border region. A review of literature pertaining to borders and labour migration in the European Union is set out in the first chapter by Roos Pijpers. In the following chapter Chun Yang discusses the challenges of cross-border governance of the Pearl River Delta-Hong Kong region under the institutional framework of “one country, two systems.” Building on such cross-border economic development, Tim Bunnell, Hamzah Muzaini and James D. Sidaway, look at the economic, social and political implications of the city-state of Singapore establishing the Island of Bintan, and Indonesia as its economic and recreational hinterland under a regional economic cooperation framework known as the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle. Vera Pavlakovich-Kochi wraps up this section with insights on various cross-border collaborations in the US-Mexico border region under the NAFTA framework,

and their implications for policy makers.

The final three parts of this book provide a glimpse into the emerging strands of border research. Drawing on case studies from Asia and Africa, Part six (*Crossing Borders*) addresses the “mobility turn” in the study of borders, concentrating on the movement of people across international and domestic borders, and their bordering practices. Starting this section is a study on the everyday bordering practices between non-documented North Korean migrants and the inhabitants of the Korean-Chinese borderland of Yanbian by Eunyoung Christina Choi. In the subsequent chapter, Parvati Raghuram and Nicola Piper continue this discussion of the social border by explicating how female economic migrants in Asia encounter various bordering processes within origin and destination countries. This is followed by Elisabeth Bäschlin and Mohamed Sidati’s investigation of the Sahrawi in Western Sahara and this people’s conceptions of border and territoriality, and the border realities that they face today.

The penultimate part of this companion (*Creating Neighbourhoods*) gathers experiences from Europe on how national borders could be transcended by fostering stronger economic and socio-cultural collaborations amongst border regions. Heikki Eskelinen starts this part by discussing the present and future possibilities of interaction and collaboration at the Finnish-Swedish and Finnish-Russian borders at the local and regional levels. This is followed by Károly Kocsis and Monika Mária Váradi’s study on interethnic neighbourhood relationships, both cordial and contentious, at the Carpatho-Pannonian Area of Central Europe. The authors show what happens when ethnic borders do not correspond with state borders and when relations between neighbours are plagued by historical baggage. Lastly, Gabriel Popescu assesses the formal integration of the Lower Danube Euroregion by the European Union. More specifically, the author focuses on the impact of institutionalization on cross-border interaction and cooperation in the Romanian-Ukrainian-Moldovan borderlands.

The three chapters in the final section (*Nature and Environment*) look at transboundary management of natural resources. Juliet J. Fall provides a more theoretical insight into natural resources and transnational governance. In particular, her chapter demonstrates how global natures and natural resources are not just being managed, but are mobile, embodied and performed. The next chapter by Sanette L.A. Ferreira reviews the success of the Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) initiative in Southern Africa in its management of wildlife across boundaries. The author discusses the relationship between conservation and tourism before reporting on the current status of TFCA’s establishment, and the various constraints such an initiative faces. Clive Schofield contributes to the final chapter of the book by shedding light on the necessity and intricacies of maritime boundaries delimitation, and the potential of maritime joint development to settle sovereignty disputes.

In all, this research companion has succeeded in demonstrating what borders are, and where and why they (re)appear or disappear. However, there seems to be a lack of attention on *how* the borders are *accessed* in these studies (with the exception of Karin Dean’s chapter). In other words, more on fieldwork methodologies and reflections on how borders are encountered in the fieldwork process would be most welcome in such a collection. Readers would not only benefit from the theoretical and empirical aspects of border studies, but also profit from the multiple methodological routes explored by other scholars. As such, a section on methodologies depicting how scholars gain

access to their field sites, and some cross-cultural issues or reflections on their positionalities when *doing* border research would significantly increase the value of this book as a research companion.

The chapters that go beyond the “physical” border, and explore the social aspects of border(ing) practices were of particular interest to this reviewer. Indeed, the proliferation of borders does not stop at the limits of the sovereign state; it instead overflows and extends beyond political boundaries to affect personal experiences as well. Nevertheless, it would be useful to see more contributions on the “future” of border studies in terms of new ontological approaches. What happens after the “human-turn”? How, for instance, can border studies contribute to socio-cultural theoretical debates on “materiality”? How can non-human things participate in bordering practices? Particularly striking is Anssi Paasi’s advice in Chapter One that, it is through the constant development of new theoretical approaches that border studies can continue to stay relevant.

That said, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* is successful in elucidating the vast strands of research at multiple sites around the world, and providing the researcher with various thought-provoking conceptual frameworks in a systematic manner. This book can be highly recommend to both students and policy makers who are interested to know more about border(ing) issues, and researchers working in the fields of political geography, political science, anthropology and international relations. The editor can be congratulated for putting together such an excellent collection of research on border studies, and also the authors of the 32 chapters for their inspirational writings.