The Politics of (un)fixity and the vernacularization of borders

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Introduction

A major shift in border studies in recent years has been away from an exclusive and primary concern with conventional nation-state borders (the external edges of a polity) to a concern with borders being dispersed throughout society and found 'wherever the movement of information, people and things is happening and is controlled'[ii]. Scholarship on borderlands[iii] and 'borderzones'[iv] has also contributed to the blurring of the nation-state's edges. Accompanying this shift - which is sometimes caricatured in terms of 'borders are everywhere'[v] - and perhaps intensified by it, is a growing focus on securitized borders, and particularly the important role of borders in regulating mobilities. These development coincide with a change of emphasis from borders as things - lines in the sand[vi] - to bordering as a process, which has in turn increased scholarly interest in the mechanisms by means of which things and people cross borders. Bordering-as-process, coupled with a general interest in a range of mobilities, has led to the recognition that borders can be mobile to the same extent as those who seek to cross them.[vii]

The shifts outlined here have greatly transformed the way we study borders but they have not, by and large, challenged the centrality of nation-state borders within the field of study.[viii] While it is acknowledged that the location of borders may have changed, their ownership, on the whole, has not. Borders remain a possession of the state, whose task is now to ensure that countries 'are open for business, but closed to terrorists and traffickers'. What this means is that the locus of border studies is still to be found in the state's securitization of mobilities, one consequence of which is that the relationship and borders and citizens is seen in terms of the latter's ability to cross the former and the potential problems that can arise from the regulation of this activity. On the one hand, the 'legitimate' movement of people across borders has been approached as a productive force to be harnessed or managed while, on the other hand, the 'illegitimate' movement of people across borders has been approached as a destructive force to be controlled or restricted.[ix] In fact, citizenship in all its contemporary guises tends to be rooted in a concern with mobilities.[x] As MacDonald points out, the 'figure of the immigrant has become a contemporary European archetype; and increasingly it is as such that the citizen is addressed'.[xi]

Given this context, it is difficult to imagine an alternative borders paradigm, one which would make it possible to shift the centre of gravity of border studies in a more societal direction and where considerations of state security would not frame all visions of bordering, and mobilities and security concerns would not frame citizenship issues. Such a border studies would make different assumptions about the role of people in bordering activity. The individual would not have to be someone whose citizenship is achieved via legitimate and sanctioned mobilities, but as an actor in the constitution of borders, rarely bringing them into being or shifting their location perhaps, although this is certainly not impossible[xii], but active nevertheless in processes of legitimization and fixing of borders (even state-imposed borders require legitimacy through the regular acknowledgement that what is called a border actually functions as a border). In other words, the border itself cannot 'speak', someone has to do the speaking for it in order to declare what is. But such a re-imagining of border studies, difficult though it may be, is a worthwhile project, not only because it challenges the primacy of a decade-old preoccupation with securitized mobilities, narrowly conceived, but mainly because it emphasises both the multi-dimensionality of border studies and the multidisciplinary contributions which work to sustain it.[xiii]

In order to both contextualize the current primacy of both securitized borders and mobile citizenry, and the relationship between them, and offer another perspective on border studies which takes a broader view of borders and bordering this paper advances a framework of interpretation which emphasizes the cosmopolitanization of borders. To this end it draws upon a number of recent trends in the border studies literature which accord a different role to ordinary people in processes of bordering. Of particular interest is the idea that we can talk of borders as possessing cosmopolitan qualities or being cosmopolitanized.[xiv] Central to these notions is a form of citizenship that allows for the construction (and deconstruction) of borders as well as their crossing. Equally central is a recognition that borders connect as well as divide,[xv] thereby challenging the assumption that '[b]orders are always initially created as a means of separation, the construction of a barrier between two sides, normally as a means of perceived defence from outside influences, be it the invasions by foreign troops, the unhindered movement of migrants, or the flow of cheap goods ...'.[xvi] Borders can work both to divide and connect: they 'divide what is similar and connect what is different'[xvii]

Accounts of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and borders usually centre on the ability of cosmopolitans – business elites, academics, 'frequent flyers' - to cross borders with

ease, or even live across borders.[xviii] According to such accounts the novel aspect of the relationship is the facility with which borders can be crossed, in line with the idea that the rise of cosmopolitanism equates to the decline of the nation-state, and that mobility is the core dimension of cosmopolitanism in the contemporary period.[xix] Such accounts of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and borders suppose some kind of enhanced cosmopolitan agency which makes borders easier to cross, but do not give due consideration to the changing nature of borders. Under conditions of globalization, the ability to cross borders is not such an impressive achievement. When a national border is marked by nothing more substantial than a signpost at the side of the (open) road, as many national borders internal to the European Union are, what freedom or mobility is represented by crossing such a border? However, accounts of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and borders not founded upon enhanced mobility are also possible. Indeed, such accounts emphasise the extent to which borders, and their ownership by the nation-state, are increasingly under pressure from both above and below: by the European Union for example, and also by the activities of ordinary people at grass roots level.[xx]

The cosmopolitanization of borders suggests that it is no longer the nation-state alone that is able to determine the role and location of borders: some responsibility has shifted 'upwards' to the supra-national level. Equally important, opportunities have shifted 'downwards' too and the vernacularization of borders captures this important 'bottom up' dimension of the cosmopolitanization of borders: bordering can exist as a political resource for citizens who are able to both contest nation-state bordering practices and institute their own bordering practices.[xxi] The case studies explored later in the paper allow for consideration of different dimensions of the cosmopolitanization of borders. Processes of vernacularization are evident in the case of the 'Stroud pound' and the ways in which a local community can institute a form of economic bordering in the face of global economic pressures. The examples of Frontex and the UK's 'offshore borders' demonstrate the ways in which national borders are no longer entirely in the hands of the nation-state, and, in the latter case, how they are in part being vernacularized through the involvement of private agencies.

The paper explores the politics of bordering from a novel perspective: that of the cosmopolitanization of borders. This allows for consideration of the ways in which bordering practices lead not simply to the construction of borders but to political contestation over the fixity/unfixity of borders, i.e. the extent to which bordering practices become

institutionalized. However, the relationship between fixity/unfixity is an unstable one. It is not always the case that those responsible for bordering will choose to fix the border in an obvious way. It is possible that political ends can be served through selectively unfixing borders, or by creating the illusion of fixity. In these ways the paper aims to contribute further to the border studies literature which seeks to shift focus away from the nation-state and which aims to study not borders-as-things but bordering-as-process.

Border Politics as a process of fixing and unfixing

The detachment of borders from their traditional association with the boundaries of state territory, as pursued actively by nation-states as well as citizens and non-citizens engaged in everyday borderwork, points towards a conceptualization of borders in terms of political resources. On this account, the border becomes a set of interlocking logics that produce institutionalised arrangements of people and things. Cooper and Perkins, for example, have argued that borders are institutions that produce further institutional facts by imposing status-functions on people and things through illocutionary speech acts.[xxii] Statuses such as 'legitimate traveller', 'illegal migrant or 'terrorist suspect' for people, or the designation of a particular good as originating from a particular space (sparkling wine as Champagne for example) are imposed by people or recognisable markers that have the legitimacy to speak in the name of the border. However, this ordering process is fragile because it is reliant upon the harmonisation of a set of contextual background assumptions that provide sets of orienting 'truth conditions'.[xxiii] Therefore, 'studying a particular border extends to include the rule structure that constitutes it as well as the sources of that structure's legitimacy'.[xxiv]

It is taken here that the goal of any border politics is to bring into being a certain type of institutional reality that takes on the guise of fixity, or conversely the problematisation of the principles that lend a particular border such fixity with the intention of redeploying the border to create new institutional realities. The model of politics underpinning this argument is derived from work in the school of pragmatic sociology of critique, principally *On Justification* by Boltanski and Thevenot[xxv] and Boltanski's later work *On Critique*,[xxvi] which places emphasis on the pluralism inherent in political life in order to draw attention to the ways seemingly fixed institutions are critiqued, tested and justified. This view of politics, however, has been criticised because, in privileging the sphere of politics taking place within institutional frameworks, it ignores the agonistic power relations that produce those

arrangements in the first place: what Chantal Mouffe describes as the ontic, day to day machinations of 'politics' takes centre stage, leaving the role of the ontological 'political' ambiguous.[xxvii] However, as Blokker and Brighenti argue, Bolantaski has subsequently clarified the relationship between politics (as deliberation, justification and distribution) and the political (as constitution).[xxviii] This model will be elaborated in the following discussion, with particular reference to the dynamics of fixity and unfixity and its relationship to border politics.

We define fixity in relation to borders as when an instance of bordering crystallises to produce objective institutional realities. Institutions such as borders provide structures of fixity by producing stable knowledge [xxix] that provides a sense of ontological security for actors.[xxx] To use Boltanski's terms, by stating the 'whatness of what is',[xxxi] borders are a part of the production of reference points that can be relied upon by actors as they navigate through 'everyday life in motion'.[xxxii] Actors practically engaged in the world are confronted with the radical indeterminacy of everyday life, both the fact that coordinated action necessitates the furnishing of particular assumptions to a setting and that incessant questioning of these assumptions would leave no basis for action. [xxxiii] In these conditions they make assumptions that form the basis for intersubjective action. Actors are also presented with the task of organizing practical activities through time, which further exacerbates the need for reliable presumptive knowledge about the world. As Bude and Dürrschmidt note:

> ...it is the system of practical relevences that structures the spatial and social layering of the world. Things, activities and people are meaningfully linked via practical orientation through plans for the hour, the day or indeed the 'life-plan'.[xxxiv]

Therefore, borders function as coordinating devices, practical everyday methods for navigating indeterminate pluralities and the extent to which the configuration of borders remains in the practical attitude of everyday life is the extent to which they remain durable, or fixed.

However fixity is only ever an illusion, at best what Schmidt terms an 'operative fiction',[xxxv] and fixity and unfixity are in constant tension. Boltanski captures this tension by observing that reliance on institutions to produce foundations for action, and thus reduce the unease of everyday life, introduces another set of uncertainties as part of a 'hermeneutic contradiction.'

First, institutions are in the business of providing actors with the conditions for action, by answering the question of what it is and what it is not possible to do from an 'objective' perspective.[xxxvi] As stated above, they are arbiters of social facts that bring a sense of order to the world by providing an end point for discussion[xxxvii] and in doing so quell the fear of actors degenerating into exchanges of points of view that maintain the risk of violence.[xxxviii] However, in relying on 'spokespersons who enable the institution to express itself clearly', institutions such as borders cannot shrug off the suspicion that they are simply vehicles for the expression of a particular, subjective, will and thus subject to power politics.

The second contradiction that institutions have to overcome is between the semantic organization of reality and the numerous practical contexts in which these ordering principles are to function. In an ideal world, a set of bordering processes would be unproblematic to all involved: the semantic ordering of people of things and the reality produced would present itself with no contradictions from all vantage points. Indeed, such would be the harmony of background contextual assumptions, semantic ordering, and practical context that the question of legitimacy of the arrangement does not arise. However, this type of arrangement remains an ideal. As Arendt states, a plurality of perspectives is the specific condition 'of all political life',[xxxix] and this plurality brings with it different sets of perspectives on the institution. For the semantic act of instituting a certain reality to hold, multiple interpretations have to be harmonized according to some shared background assumptions that lend that arrangement legitimacy.

As Boltanski and Thevenot point out, 'natural situations in which everything holds together, in which there are no exceptional beings, cannot last', and breakdown in the order, something out of place that has not been accounted for or problematises the logic of the order, will open up a space for critique.[xl] It is at this point of indeterminacy that the apparent fixity of the institutional arrangement becomes unfixed. This does not necessarily mean that critique will bring about change in the institution as suitable justifications for the breakdown may be found and the reality sutured up again. However there is also the potential for new arrangements to emerge. For example, in the case of the Stroud Pound analysed below, a new localised economic border is being justified through reference to growing critique of the ability of the national border to protect local interests against the global financial system and international currency flows. It is precisely the breakdown in this set of institutional relationships, which includes the UK border and Sterling, which has promoted this case of vernacularised bordering.

Furthermore, as will be demonstrated with the example of Frontex below, contemporary state bordering processes, which extend their reach past the traditional boundaries of state sovereignty, exacerbate this problem of harmonization. This is because state bordering in the traditional sense of the line around sovereign territory has achieved the status of commonsense, and as a result rests at a level of general acceptance. The notion that nation-states have borders is, at least at the level of practical action, self-evident to competent actors in the world. However, as states transplant their bordering practices into physical spaces further removed from their historical locus, and as a result morph into different configurations, the need for concomitant justifications, and the potential for critique, becomes more apparent. This is particularly so as these new borders may lack any of the performative features that mark them as borders: no signs displaying the sovereign symbol, no border guards, no customs, no security checks.[xli] These new types of borders are novel forms of associations of people and things and as such stand out as particular deviations: deviations that have to be justified. With Frontex, however, we see how the maintenance of ambiguity, by selective fixing and unfixing of the components of the border, can actually work in its favour.

Bauder makes the cogent argument that borders have multiple aspects due to their polysemy.[xlii] Some of these aspects will remain hidden to actors in particular contexts, while others will become visible in something similar to a border gestalt shift. Enacting this gestalt shift, or 'aspect-seeing', becomes a process of envisioning and articulating different modes of the border that imply different material practices. Aspect-seeing in reference to borders is the creative assemblage of the logics implied by bordering practices to produce new material effects. Much in the same way as argued above, the impossibility of fixity in bordering opens up the possibility for critical intervention.[xliii] Of course, this ability to reconfigure should not be located with a particular set of actors and indeed the state has proven itself particularly adept at making such interventions, so too have NGOs, the media multinationals and the supra-national agencies analysed below. [xliv] Aspect-seeing is analogous to the process of unfixing – by seeing another aspect of the complex and contradictory whole of a bordering process the 'objective for all' nature of the institution becomes problematised. Once seen, actors have the potential to draw upon these new perspectives on the border to achieve particular goals. However, while 'aspect seeing' is an important component in border work, there is a gap between the development of new ways of seeing the border and successful action.

Therefore, it is all well and good making a claim that this or that aspect of the border enables this or that form of action (be it connection or mobility conferred by a particular status), or this or that border now exists. The success of that claim lays with the actor's ability to make a case for its reasonableness: i.e. the possibility for legitimate agreement. For a newly seen aspect of the border to be deployed effectively in life in motion the arguments that support it will have to meet a set of conditions. As Cooper and Perkins put it: '"doing border-like things" – borderwork – relies on those acts being accountable, this is, socially reasonable'.[xlv] Therefore, the next question is empirical: how and to what extent are actors successful in deploying new border possibilities to account for their actions in motion, and furthermore how do these actions problematise the more general constitutive principles of politics itself (the political)? By framing the question in this way, focus is shifted away from the triptych of state-security-mobilities to the perspective of the actor or groups of actors navigating a web of institutionally instigated realities across a cosmopolitan plain. As such the border shifts from being a static, one-dimensional, material fact to a more malleable deployable logic in a chain of accounts and justifications for action. As will be demonstrated through the case studies in the following section, actors both 'above' and 'below' the state appeal to standards of fairness, justice, benefit and relevance in instituting their own institutional realities via borders, and the ability to do so is a key component of political competency.

This section has articulated a politics of borders that centres on the concept of (un)fixity. Building on observations in the literature of the multiplicity of borders and bordering practices, it has been argued that the evident contradiction between the fragile polysemy of borders and their everyday robustness can be accounted for by recourse to their practical function in producing objective institutional facts that actors can use in the practical everyday planning of their lives in motion. By stating the 'whatness of what', borders are part of the institutional regulation of the anxiety inducing indeterminacy of everyday life (while also giving rise to their own sets of anxieties), and the harmonization of the inherent multiplicity of perspectives in any form of collectivity. However, due to the hermeneutic contradiction the border cannot completely fix down the meanings it produces – the worry that the reality is fiction is never completely banished. This is both due to both the suspicion that the objectivity of borders is merely a manifestation of a subjective will and contradictions inherent in the semantic organization of people and things across multiple sets of background conditions. This contradiction has been exacerbated by novel state bordering practices that are plural, diffuse, mobile and invisible (to some). It is proposed that the politics of fixity and

unfixty operate in this space of indeterminacy, which holds the potential for actors or groups of actors to create, unfix and redeploy borders as a constitutive element of social action. The final section offers three case studies that highlight different aspects of the politics of (un)fixity in relation to contemporary bordering practices.

Borders as reference points in 'a world in motion'

A perspective which emphasizes the vernacularization of borders draws inspiration from a variety of sources, all of which allow for a shift of emphasis from state bordering, securitization and the regulation of (contested) mobilities to a greater concern with the role of borders in the politics of everyday life and bordering as a political resource, which provide opportunities to ordinary people as well as agencies of the state.[xlvi] As we have seen, borders can be political resources in the sense that they can be drawn upon by a range of actors who seek to either selectively regulate mobility, use the border as a staging post which connects to the wider world, or simply use the border as a way of navigating the multiplicity of spaces which characterise a world in motion. Thus, the vernacularization of borders refers not only to a neglected 'bottom up' dimension but to a more general appreciation that borders can be utilized for a variety of purposes.

Importantly, the 'institutional realities' offered by borders are some of the key reference points in everyday encounters with a global political landscape which offers little by way of 'relatively stable communities', in Appaduarai's terms.[xlvii] It is no accident that Rajaram and Grundy-Warr introduce the Appaduarian idea of 'borderscapes' in order to capture the idea of multiple interpretations and individual experience which are central to their understanding of borders.[xlviii] Their idea of borderscapes allows for the 'study of the border as mobile, perspectival, and relational'. They hold that 'the border is a landscape of competing meanings' and they recognize the possibility that some borders may be invisible: 'knowledge operates by making perceptible that which has reason to be seen … while making imperceptible that which has no reason to be seen'.[xlix] The work of Rajaram and Grundy-Warr has many affinities with the vernacularization of borders discussed in this paper. However, they continue to accord emphasis on the role of the state in processes of bordering: borderscapes are cast in relation to state borders. So for example while different interpretations of the border are possible it is the state border that is being contested: the border in question is still a 'zone between states'. One might ask the question, 'would it not

be better to conceive all borders in terms of borderscapes', given that they can all, to a greater or lesser extent, be perceived as 'mobile, perspectival, and relational'?

In the section below we will explore the ways in which cosmopolitan borders can constitute a politics of fixity (and unfixity), borders forming political resources in a world characterised by permanent change, global crisis, and the perception of external threats. This will be accompanied by an illustrative example drawn from the UK: the town of Stroud (and others) and its attempts to introduce a 'local currency', a form of 'citizen bordering' which creates opportunities for distant connectivities as well as the construction of 'local' borders. Following this we will investigate the ways in which certain kinds of state security borders may vacillate between fixity and unfixity, not because of any lack of clarity concerning the function of the borders, but as a result of a deliberate governance strategy. To illustrate this point, we will look at the EU's Frontex border and also the UK's 'offshore' borders, both of which appear to be more effective as a result of an ambivalent relation to fixity.

As part of the Transition Town movement several towns in the UK (and elsewhere) have taken the initiative to introduce their own local currencies. The voluntary scheme requires local inhabitants of places such as Brixton, Totnes and Stroud to change legal tender into local 'pounds' which can only be spent in local shops and on local services. The scheme is designed to prevent money leaching out of the local economy by encouraging the loyalty of local consumers, and aims at a form of local protectionism which requires the construction of an 'invisible' border between the town and the wider economy across which the flow of money is regulated.
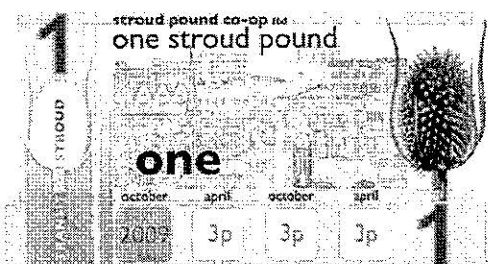
This example is of a very small-scale operation. According to one local webpage when the scheme began it involved 32 commercial outlets and the total of 'Stroud pounds' in circulation was £3,612.[1] Nevertheless, it is a clear example of vernacularized bordering, being a citizen-led, local initiative, linking with other such schemes in the UK and beyond via the

Transition movement.[li] The attempt to introduce a border around the economy of Stroud provides a local political reference point for citizens in an economic world characterised by global crisis and a (perceived) general loss of governmental control over national finances. This is explained on the Stroud pound website:

> The money we use for most of our transactions (Pounds Sterling) is tied into a system of global transactions and processes that do not serve people in Stroud particularly well. A sizeable proportion of each pound spent goes to service debts in the global economy draining resources away from the area and reducing the viability of local services. The current turbulence in the financial markets also suggests that global currencies may not be a secure basis upon which to organize our economic life.[lii]

The latter point would appear to weaken the case for the scheme neglecting as it does the clear linkage of the 'Stroud pound' to the Pound Sterling. In fact, this linkage is an asset, rather than a liability, helping as it does to institutionalize the local currency, while at the same time allowing for the possibility of an alternative perspective on what would otherwise be a 'fixed' (closed) structurally determined economic 'reality'. The statement also illustrates the rhetorical methods by which actors involved in enacting new economic borders attempt to render them accountable. In making the case for their economic border, the Directors of Stroud pound Co-op have appealed to standards of justice in the context of the emerging critique of finance capital in the wake of the recent global crisis. It is thus unfair that resources are 'draining' away from the local area to service abstract 'global' debt. But this abstract critique is then articulated with particular local concerns, which overlap but do not fully mesh with the 'debts in the global economy' argument:

> Local businesses spend their money locally. By contrast, money spent in, for example, Tesco leaves Stroud for Tesco HQ. We want to keep money circulating within Stroud District – to the benefit of local people.[liii]

Interestingly, a more recent attempt to found a local currency, the 'Bristol pound', has the backing of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which guarantees investments in the scheme. Investors who obtain their 'Bristol pounds' via the Bristol Credit Union 'have the same protection as [with] any other deposit account. The standard government scheme guarantees up to £85,000 per person'.[liv] Again, despite the obvious linkage with Sterling that

this reveals, the Bristol scheme shares the same fantasy of detachment from global financial trends as was evident in Stroud: 'The Euro is in trouble, the world's financial system is in turmoil. Is this the perfect time for cities to go it alone, and print their own money?'[lv]. Both the 'Stroud pound' and the Bristol scheme are classic examples of 'operative fictions'; purporting to offer protection against the indeterminancy of everyday life but failing to conceal the fact that the borders they have enacted cannot adequately fix the meanings it generates nor banish the suspicion that the border is a fiction. Nevertheless, citizens of Stroud and Bristol do have the possibility of shaping their own institutional reality through the utilization of their new border as a means through which to connect with other Transition Towns in the UK, Europe, North America and beyond.

Thus, these two cases are also illustrative of localised, bottom up forms of securitization, albeit with a different inflection to practices of the state. Indeed, in these cases, it is precisely the state – its currency, policy and actions – that has become the security risk for these communities. Here the rhetoric of global financial meltdown is tightly articulated with local worries over capital flight, jobs and the continued salience of local practices to make a case for the border. The traditional region-state relationship is then inverted by the use of this border as political resource – the nation-state is the threat to be warded away, not the provider of protection from diverse and diffuse risk. Through the management of their border Bristol and Stroud are able to engage with the politics of fixity, and explore the new agency that this affords: the border becomes both a method of division (Stroud, Bristol / rest of UK economy) and a method of connection to globally dispersed communities with similar goals. However, this set of relationships and their underlying logics also draws attention to the complex interaction and co-constitution of local and global. Finally, this example also illustrates the relationship between border politics and the constitutive political described above. The economic borders deployed in Stroud, Bristol and elsewhere are not only attempts at limiting flows of capital. As we have seen, the act of bordering is also a 'praxis experiment'[lvi], which questions a number of more general principles constituting the global financial system and its methods of allocating public goods.

The politics of (un)fixity can also be observed at national (and supra-national) borders, which also demonstrate the close interaction of local and global. In 2005 the European Union established Frontex, a new border agency based in Warsaw, which is designed to 'coordinate

the operational cooperation between Member States in the field of border security'.[lvii] It has responsibility for harmonizing the border control regimes of nation-states in such a way as to create common European borders out of a plurality of national borders.[lviii] Frontex enables the EU to shift its bordering activity from place to place in a very effective way. For example, the boat patrols carried out by Frontex in the Mediterranean and off the West coast of Africa operationalize a new sort of flexible border, deployed whenever and wherever it is needed but projected at a distance from the 'official' borders of EU member states. But Frontex does more than position the EU's mobile borders. In the process of semantic ordering, Frontex pragmatically (and selectively) chooses to overlook the human rights failings of its African 'partners', for example the detention camps located in (pre-Arab Spring) Libya that were suspected of falling short of international standards in respect of human rights.

Frontex's approach to border control 'on the ground' (or sea) incorporates the practices of 'partner' countries,[lix] and as a consequence, the EU 'is importing 'non-European, non-democracy',[lx] a key development for an institution which likes to be seen as a force for good in the world. Nevertheless, the failure to fully fix the border has its potential advantages. The 'mobile border' which Frontex deploys can appear as a structural reality of the EU-as-polity, forming an impermeable barrier to those wishing to enter the EU illegally. At the same time, Frontex can modulate the institutional reality of the border, opening it up to influences which make different bordering outcomes possible. The full consequences of EU decisions to allow non-EU 'partner' countries to influence border policy are impossible to predict. The reality of the border may therefore bear no relation to original policy intentions. The border is thus fixed and unfixed at the same time, its efficacy arguably enhanced by both its unpredictability and its lack of accountability.

Similar processes can be observed in the UK 'offshore borders' policy.[lxi] In a document entitled 'Securing the UK Border: Our Vision and Strategy for the Future' (Home Office, 2007) the Labour government of the day institutionalised an unconventional view of where the UK borders are located. It was revealed that no longer is it the goal of border policy to fortify and secure the traditional national perimeter. The new approach adopted by the UK was to move the border 'offshore' rather than fortify it in the standard way. According to the 'Securing the UK border' document, 'border control can no longer be just a fixed line on a map . . . we must create a new offshore line of defence, checking individuals as far from the

UK as possible'. In developing offshore borders the UK relies heavily on the 'e-borders' technology, especially the use of biometric visas and the 'remote control' of passenger carriers who are obliged to carry out their own security checks on passengers and their travel documents. The institutional reality created by e-borders achieves fixity while at the same time not being visible as an institutionalised border, comparable to passport control or the securitised airport check. The offshore border, in being located 'everywhere and nowhere' is both fixed and unfixed simultaneously, forming an institutional reality which belies its rather insubstantial appearance. E-borders are described, by the current Immigration Minister, Damian Green, as 'genuinely secure, fluid and complete'.[lxii] The difficult balance between fluidity and security accounts for the public belief that UK borders are dangerously open, a perception fuelled by revelations that a failure of communication between government and the Borders Agency resulted in thousands of people entering the UK without proper security checks. The ambivalent relationship between fixity/unfixity may work to enhance the governance of security but it does nothing to increase public confidence.[lxiii]

These two cases exhibit traits of cosmopolitanization , a process not limited to the vernacular or 'bottom-up' influences on the location and purpose of borders. Cosmopolitanization also inheres in the enhanced connectivity offered by bordering activity and the extent to which borders are no longer under the exclusive control of nation-states. The case of Frontex illustrates how key European borders are not only controlled by member states: Frontex deploys national resources contributed by member states towards European bordering priorities in the Mediterranean and off the African Atlantic coast. These EU borders connect Europe to its 'near beyond' by the extension of bordering activity into Africa through the use of partner agencies, and by promoting anti-migration advertising in West African countries designed to discourage would-be immigrants from attempting hazardous boat journeys to EU destinations[lxiv]. The case also illustrates how extended bordering processes take on the sorts of internal contradictions we discuss above. By overlooking the human rights failures of some partner countries, Frontex introduces a tension with the EU's (self produced) image as a force for good, which provides a potential site of critique and justification which at least holds the potential to bring into question more fundamental constitutive principles of the European project. Similarly, 'offshore borders' connect the UK to many points around the world where the acquisition of travel documents are monitored. These 'offshore borders', while formally borders of the state, are increasingly operated (and increasingly

vernacularized) through the work of a number of private agencies – airlines, security firms, travel agencies.

Conclusion

It would be a mistake to believe that the border as 'operative fiction' is restricted to cases of borderwork, the bottom-up, citizen-led bordering activity which was in evidence in Stroud and Bristol. In fact, the deployment of borders against the indeterminacy of everyday life are alive in nation-state and supra-national strategies of bordering. In order to emphasise the pervasiveness of vernacular and cosmopolitan bordering and bring the three examples discussed briefly here within a common framework of interpretation we conclude this paper with a reading of the bordering process under discussion drawing on Appadurai's understanding of the cultural economy of a 'world in motion'.

For Appadurai the global cultural economy is characterised by 'fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics'.[lxv] The role in which borders are cast in this 'world in motion' is, at first glance, a rather conventional one. State boundaries are increasingly permeable and he is very concerned with flows of 'cultural material ... moving across national boundaries'.[lxvi] However, Appadurai's account also outlines 'a deeper change, driven by the disjunctures among all the landscapes I have discussed and constituted by their fluid and uncertain interplay'.[lxvii] This 'deeper change' has its origins in the relationship between 'production and consumption in today's global economy' and revolves around what Appadurai terms, borrowing from Marx, 'production fetishism'.[lxviii]

Production fetishism, on Appadurai's reading, points to the tendency to understand the transnational and global (circuits of production, global management structures etc.) in such a way as to create the illusion of local or national control. In other words, the global, transnational basis of production is 'masked' by 'the idiom and the spectacle of the local'.[lxix] Expressed in slightly different terms, locality 'becomes a fetish that disguises the globally dispersed forces that actually drive the production process'[lxx]: production may appear to be local but is in fact the result of global forces. This insight can be extrapolated and applied to borders where the distant projection and 'offshoring' of borders is couched in the idiom of (national) territorial sovereignty. For example, we have seen how the UK locates its borders 'offshore', and, at the same time increases the visibility of (notional) national borders, through for example clear signage at airports and the reassuring uniforms of immigration

staff.[lxxi] In the case of Frontex the EU promotes the idea of common, defendable, and secure EU borders in the mirror of the nation-state at the same time as Frontex patrols are active away from formal EU borders, along the West coast of Africa, for example.

However, the illusion of the productive local is also apparent in the example taken from Stroud and Bristol. The argument put forward by the Stroud Co-op can only be made reasonable in the context of the global, both in terms of the logic of the account and the fact that the Stroud Pound is pegged to Sterling, which floats in relation to, and is determined by, global markets. An illusion of control over local material practices is thus achieved by an operative fiction. This does not mean that it is bound to fail: the new ecosystem produced by the economic border produces logics of practice that may indeed shore up a sense of locality. However, this is only possible with a mystification of the myriad processes, local and global, that congeal in the Stroud Pound qua marker of the border. This paper marker gives the new economic border a sense of fixity by virtue of its objective materiality – in Abbott's terms it is the 'thing of the boundary'[lxxii] – but as demonstrate above it cannot fully overcome the contradictions internal to it. Appadurai throws a very different light on the idea of these borders, now recast through the lens of production fetishism as strategies for the control of mobility that are 'globally dispersed' and where visibility is modulated in relation to purpose. Whereas the Stroud border relies on the material thing as indicator of the border in its own security and governance practices, states (either national or, putatively, supra-national) increasingly rely upon the 'invisibility' of borders for domestic security.

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[ii] Etienne Balibar, *We, the people of Europe? Reflections on transnational citizenship.*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.1.

[iii] See for example Victor A. Konrad and Heather Nora Nicol, *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) and Willem van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

[iv] V. Squire, "The contested politics of mobility: politicizing mobility, mobilizing politics", in V. Squire (ed), *The Contested Politics of Mobility: Borderzones and Irregularity* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[v] Anssi Paasi, "Bounded spaces in a "borderless world": border studies, power and the anatomy of territory", *Journal of Power*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2009), pp. 213 – 234.

[vi] Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams, "Lines in the Sand? Towards an Agenda for Critical Border Studies", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2009), pp. 582 – 587.

[vii] It also raises the question of whether all borders are politically and ethically equivalent. The statist paradigm holds that sovereign borders possess an equivalency, although some borders are 'hotter' than others. In contrast, the idea here is that borders can be constructed as equivalent but they possess no inherent equivalence. The vernacular and cosmopolitan borders under consideration here do not have the appearance of permanence which many 'important' nation-state border possess. Their 'here today, gone tomorrow' existence may make them appear unimportant when compared to nation-state borders but we would argue that the 'importance' of a border is always constructed and this is equally true for nation-state borders. Consider the examples of Calais,

Lampedusa, and Ceuta – all of them constructed in recent times as 'important' European borders out of all proportion to their role as working borders.

[viii] Liam O'Dowd, "From a 'borderless world' to a 'world of borders': 'bringing history back in'", *Society and Space*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (2010), pp. 1031 – 1050.

[ix] Squire, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[x] Peter Nyers and Kim Rygiel (eds), *Citizenship, Migrant Activism and the Politics of Movement* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[xi] Sharon MacDonald, "Museum Europe: negotiating heritage" *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, Vol. 17 (2008), p. 56.

[xii] Chris Rumford, "Social policy beyond fear: the globalization of strangeness and the 'war on terror', and 'spaces of wonder'", *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (2008), pp. 630 – 644.

[xiii] Chris Rumford 2012)

[xiv] See for example (Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Walter D. Mignolo 'The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism. *Public Culture* 12(3) 2000: 721–48. Chris Rumford, 'Does Europe have cosmopolitan borders?' *Globalizations* 4(3) 2007: 327–339.

[xv] Anthony Cooper and Chris Rumford, 'Monumentalizing the border: bordering through connectivity' (forthcoming, 2013)

[xvi] David Newman, "Contemporary Research Agenda in Border Studies: An Overview", in D. Wastl-Walter (ed), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2011), p. 35.

[xvii] Willem van Schendel, "How Borderlands, Illicit Flows, and Territorial States Interlock" in W. van Schendel and I. Abraham (eds) *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the Other Side of Globalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) p. 44.

[xviii] Robert J. Holton, *Cosmopolitanisms: New Thinking and New Directions.* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2009), P.40

[xix] Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry, "Visuality, mobility and the cosmopolitan: inhabiting the world from afar", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (2006), pp. 113 – 131.

[xx] See Anthony Cooper and Chris Rumford, "Cosmopolitan Borders: bordering as connectivity", in M. Rovisco and M. Nowicka (eds) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011); Chris Rumford, "Does Europe Have Cosmopolitan Borders?", *Globalizations*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2007), pp. 327 – 339.

[xxi] Chris Rumford, "Introduction: Citizens and Borderwork in Europe", *Space and Polity*, Vol.12, No.3 (2008), pp. 1-12.

[xxii] Anthony Cooper and Chris Perkins, "Borders and Status-functions: an institutional approach to the study of borders", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2012), pp. 55 – 72. For the original discussion of 'status functions' and their relation to the construction of social reality see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995).

[xxiii] *Cooper and Perkins, op. cit.* p. 57.

[xxiv] *Ibid.*

[xxv] Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth* (Oxford: Princeton University Press).

[xxvi] Luc Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

[xxvii] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge), p. 9.

[xxviii] Paul Brokker and Andrea Brighenti, "Politics between Justification and Defiance", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 14, o. 3 (2011), pp. 289 – 291.

[xxix] Marrianne E. Lien and Marit Melhuus, "Introduction" in M. E. Lien and M. Melhuus (eds), *Holding Words Together: Ethnographies of Knowing and Belonging* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007); Chris Perkins, "Fixing Subjectivities: the politics of belonging and achieving the nation", *Royal Holloway Politics and International Relations Working Paper*, No. 12 (2009), pp. 1 - 15.

[xxx] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

[xxxi] Luc Boltanski, *op. cit.*

[xxxii] On the relationship between mobility and fixity see Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility' Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 2010, volume 28, pages 17 - 31

[xxxiii] This insight is a key assumption in the ethnomethodological tradition of sociology. For the classic statement see Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.).

[xxxiv] Heinz Bude and Jörg Dürrschmidt, "What's wrong with globalization?: Contra 'flow speak' – towards an existential turn in the theory of globalization", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2010), pp. 489. This point is made in reference to Alfred Schütz's social phenomenology that also underpins Garfinkel's ethnomethodological programme. See Alfred Schütz, "Some Structures of the Life World", in A. Schütz, *Collected Papers, vol. III* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966).

xxxv Seigfried J. Schmidt, "Operative Fictions, or: How to Talk About Society", *Constructivist Foundations*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2008), pp. 67 – 68.

xxxvi Boltanski, *op. cit.*, p. 86..

xxxvii Cooper and Perkins, *op. cit.*

xxxviii Boltanski, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

xxxix Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition [second edition]* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 7.

xl Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot, *op. cit.*, pp. 74 – 75.

xli Corey Johnson et. al., "Interventions on rethinking 'the border' in border studies", *Political Geography*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2011), pp. 6 – 7.

xlii Harald Bauder, "Toward a Critical Geography of the Border: Engaging the Dialectic of Practice and Meaning", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (2011), pp. 1126 – 1139. Bauder refers to the later Wittgenstein and particular the Philosophical Investigations. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

xliii Bauder, *op. cit.* p. 1132.

xliv *Ibid.*, p. 1135.

xlv Cooper and Perkins, *op. cit.* p. 62.

xlvi There is also a literature on 'vernacular texts' dealing with the ways in which theory is couched in ordinary language in popular cultural artefacts (books, TV, cinema). Although tangential to the use of vernacularization in this paper this literature encourages the generation of multiple perspectives, which is also an aspect of the vernacularization of borders. See for example, Kyle Grayson, K. 'How to Read Paddington Bear: Liberalism and the Foreign Subject in *A Bear Called Paddington*'. The British Journal of Politics & International Relations. (2012) doi: 10.1111/j.1467-856X.2012.00506.x and Nick Randall 'Imagining the Polity: Cinema and Television Fictions as Vernacular Theories of British Politics' Parliamentary Affairs Vol. 64 No. 2, 2011, 263–280.

xlvii Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in M. Featherstone (ed) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1996).

xlviii Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (eds), *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at the Territory's Edge* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2007).

xlix *Ibid.*, p. xv.

l " Stroud Pounds are taking off among traders", *This is Gloucestershire* (November 2009), available: <http://www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/Stroud-Pounds-taking-traders/story-11928671-detail/story.html> (accessed 21 March 2012).

li The 'Stroud pound' scheme is based on the German Chiemgauer model.

lii "What do you mean by money 'draining resources away from the area?", *The Stroud Pound: FAQ General*, available: <http://www.stroudpound.org.uk/page4.html#Anchor4> (accessed 21 March 2012).

liii "What's so good about spending locally?", *The Stroud Pound: FAQ General*, available: <http://www.stroudpound.org.uk/page4.html#Anchor3> (accessed 21 March 2012).

liv Dave Harvey, "'Bristol pound' currency to boost independent traders'" *BBC News* (February, 2012), available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-16852326> (accessed 21 March 2012).

lv Ibid.

lvi The authors would like to thank Ben O'Loughlin for introducing this term.

lvii "What is Frontex?", *Frontex: Libertas, Securitas, Justitia* (2006), available: <http://www.frontex.europa.eu/> (accessed 21March 2012).

lviii Vaughan-Williams, *op. cit.*

lix Henk van Houtum, "Human Blacklisting: the global apartheid of the EU's external border regime", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vo. 28, No. 6 (2010), pp. 957 – 976.

lx No full reference available. Source is a paper submitted anonymously to another journal and refereed by one of the authors.

lxi Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 18-20.

lxii "E-borders to be 'genuinely secure'", *BBC News* (March 2009), available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17357238> (accessed 21 March 2012).

lxiii Rumford, *Social Policy Beyond Fear, op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

lxiv "Spain begins anti-migration ads", *BBC News* (September 2007), available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7004139.stm> (accessed 21 March 2012).

lxv Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in M. Featherstone (ed) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 296. To better understand

these disjunctures he proposes that we study the 'relationship between five dimensions of global cultural flow which can be termed ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes and ideoscapes.'

[lxvi] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 46.

[lxvii] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[lxviii] *Ibid.*

[lxix] Appadurai, Disjuncture and Difference, *op. cit.* p. 42.

[lxx] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[lxxi] Rumford, *Social Policy Beyond Fear, op. cit.*

[lxxii] Andrew Abbot, "Things of Boundaries: Defining the Boundaries of Social Inquiry", *Social Research*, Vol. 62 (1995), p. 857.