

Border-Making and its Consequences: A Global Overview

Machteld Venken, Astrid M. Fellner, Adriana Dorfman, Jussi Laine,
Daniel Meier, Laurie Trautman, Dhananjay Tripathi and Wolfgang Zeller*

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This conference report reviews the open access digital publication of the Global Track organized within the framework of the Second World Conference of the Association for Borderlands Studies in Vienna on July 10 and 11, 2018, with the aim to offer an overview of border studies worldwide. The track consisted of nine ninety-minute conference sessions, of which eight were filmed and seven were made available on YouTube. These seven sessions discussed border-making and its consequences in Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and North America. In this essay, the authors, who were either involved in the organization of the track or followed its development closely, situate the global track within the context of borders and research on borders worldwide. Here we present the scientific contributions in the Global Track and reflect on its strengths and weaknesses.

Borders within and across Continents

State borders in Europe have for a long time received considerable attention. After the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 established the territorial state as the basis of the modern state system, creating international borders as legal territorial boundaries, European regimes expanded into the rest of the world, exerting imperial power. The long-lasting era of imperial rule came to an end for inhabitants of the European continent following World War I, when the European continent was reshaped to become a patchwork of individual nation-states, whereas colonial rule continued in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The European continent saw internal borders successively reshaped during and after the Second World War, making Central and Eastern Europe stand out in a global comparison regarding the frequency of border changes. In the period after World War II, the European unification process began in Western Europe with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, a process triggered by a concern to

* Corresponding author: Machteld Venken is Professor of Contemporary Transnational History at the Centre of Contemporary and Digital History, University of Luxembourg. She can be contacted at: machteld.venken@uni.lu; www.machteldvenken.com. Co-authors: Astrid M. Fellner, Professor of North American Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Saarbrücken; Adriana Dorfman, Associate Professor at Departamento de Geografia and Permanent Professor at Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul; Jussi Laine, Assistant Professor, University of Eastern Finland; Daniel Meier, Researcher, PACTE/Sciences to Grenoble, University of Grenoble; Laurie Trautman, Director, Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University; Dhananjay Tripathi, Assistant Professor, South Asian University, New Delhi; Wolfgang Zeller, Senior Research Fellow, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh.

overcome, initially, economic borders and, later, political borders. During the Cold War years, the idea that the Eastern and Western blocs had somehow achieved a state of permanence and immutability was practically axiomatic. At the same time, decolonization fueled bordering processes in other parts of the world. With the end of the Cold War order, military confrontation on the borders of the region eased, but a new phase of unpredictability in great-power relations emerged that was less bound to the logics of realist geostrategy. The period after the fall of the Iron Curtain has witnessed new opportunities for overcoming territorial borders and developing cross-border mobility within the European Union. Profound changes were triggered by the enlargement of the EU, the Schengen zone, as well as NATO, all of which gave rise to specific problems of cohesion and cooperation between the “old” and “new” member states, but especially between “new” members themselves. Systemic political and socio-economic changes, together with institutional debordering and more extensive cross-border communication, deeply transformed the significance of borders and borderlands within Europe.

As part of projects promoting integration and Europeanisation, broad accord appeared for lowering and softening borders and promoting the movement of people, money and goods. At the same time, the collapse of communism revealed unfinished projects of democratization and nation-building, and new windows of opportunity opened for the renegotiation of state borders as a result of regime change or claims for self-government ignored in the past. While the process of European integration has been instrumental in transforming these “scars of history” into locomotives of economic development and innovation, the recent waves of migration have changed the situation of borderlands again and provoked the construction of new walls. These manifest as both physical and administrative barriers. The latter may be less tangible and localized, but they nevertheless have a very noticeable impact on the lives of migrants. The development of the EU external border, in particular, has been susceptible to geopolitical processes and changing patterns of migration and mobility. In the post-Soviet space, the shift of administrative internal borders to state borders has been accompanied by a change in perspective to a more nation-centered perception of borders. However, demarcating Europe is not as easy as it may seem. Borders are not only geographical: ideas, intellectual heritage and cultural values are also bordered. The origins of Eurocentrism lie in the idea of Europe, which has emerged as a cultural idea associated with structures of power and identity projects.

In other regions of the world, borders and de/bordering processes have developed and evolved in different ways. Whereas Europe has made its own borders over an extended period of time, with multiple centers of power shaping the outcome, African borders were largely imposed by European imperialist powers and developed over an extremely brief historical period, from the 1880s to the end of World War I. African borders are therefore typically considered to be a problematic legacy of the territorial partitioning during European colonization and imperialism. However, while it has been argued that the concept of borders was culturally alien to Africa before European incursion, this view is not universally held. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the system of zones and border marches existent in pre-colonial Africa, which served to delimit the territory of the continent’s kingdoms, as well as some of the socio-political structures and institutions in operation at the time, can be said to have performed a function similar to present-day borders. There is also evidence from across the continent that important details of African colonial territoriality and boundary demarcation were not

simply imposed but intensely negotiated between European agents and indigenous leaders as part of the extended colonial encounter.

It is undisputed that African borders play a significant role in perpetuating conflict and continue to affect the continent's social, economic and political development to this day. Even at the territorial center of African states, political and administrative control are often weak and unstable. Projecting state power into Africa's borderlands is typically a futile, temporary and localized affair. The largely unchanged territorial outlines of the African postcolony are like a poorly tailored suit that African leaders and their societies inherited upon independence, but which does not fit in many places. Over the past several decades, the suit has been slowly worn in. Today African boundaries sustain the livelihoods of many Africans, such as the state officials in an often bloated and inefficient bureaucratic apparatus, traders, currency exchangers and other border workers. The former colonial boundaries have in many ways become part of the landscape and a resource which some can (ab-)use to sustain their everyday life. While normative assessments of the legacy and present status of African boundaries are largely negative, the scholarly gaze is drawn towards African borderlands owing to their relevance as highly productive margins – sites of intense political, social and economic experimentation and innovation.

The socioeconomic innovation prevalent in many African borderlands has also not gone unnoticed by policy-makers seeking to foster African regional integration “from below” as a way to heal colonial scars. Often guided by principles (and funding) from the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and several other overlapping projects for African regional and continental integration seek to overcome partition and barriers to commerce and everyday interaction. Although these organizations can justly boast of certain achievements, their actions have also resulted in unintended outcomes and these are often most visible in the borderlands. For example, the early twenty-first century has seen an unprecedented and ongoing boom of long-distance transport and border infrastructure expansion, largely but not exclusively driven by Asian demand and Chinese Belt and Road activity. So-called Transport Corridors, One Stop Border Posts and Export Processing Zones are designed to increase connectivity for selected commodities and high-value areas. But at most African border crossings, the throngs of traders, truckers, officials, sex workers and migrants, all bustling side-by-side in search of opportunities, is evidence of Africans' continuing struggles to make a living in a world that is definitely not borderless.

In the Middle East, borders were also shaped by Western powers—in this case, mainly France and Great Britain in the aftermath of the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. Founded on the basis of these European powers' zones of influence thanks to the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), these new state boundaries were largely imposed upon local populations, dividing local communities (religious, ethnic or tribal) and subjugating them to Western rulers or their local surrogates. Moreover, these borders marginalized ethnic or national groups, such as the Kurds and Palestinians, with dire consequence to this day. As is the case in Africa, the colonial borders have shown great resilience beyond the independence era and through various authoritarian regimes. For local inhabitants, crossing borders has always been a thorny issue, presenting them with a number of obstacles to cooperation and

open markets: most prominently, dividing ideological lines, arbitrary rules and refugee crises, as well as the no-go area of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, which was boycotted by all Arab states until the Camp David Agreement of 1978. The recent offshore resource findings and the subsequent EEZ delineation in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea are opening new perspectives, although once again rivalries and political tensions are slowing down the social benefits of such resources.

Since the emergence of the Islamic State movement with its dramatic “mise en scène” of the breakdown of the Iraqi-Syrian border, some analysts raise the scenario of a general breakdown of “colonial lines” in reference to the Sykes-Picot agreement. No other region in the world seems to be facing such a challenge to the state border system as the Middle East. In reaction to this threat, governments stoke fear and try to protect their state sovereignty from outsiders of all sorts – be they foreign workers, illegal immigrants or terrorists – through a border walling process. Erections of sophisticated and costly fences at state borders have transformed the regional landscape and are raising issues of state sovereignty and regime legitimacy; they are also highlighting the existence of local communities that are largely straddling international borders, resulting in alternative boundaries of belonging. In other words, questioning borders in the Middle East in the context of the post-Arab uprisings reveals the importance of history in national trajectories to explain the emergence of a new jihadist movement seizing swaths of land across international borders as well as the transformation of the state and the militarization of its elites in some cases.

In Asia, borders primarily reflect the security anxieties of a state. This security-centered approach to borders is partly due to Asia’s colonial legacy but also indicates the existence of serious current political divides. Moreover, there are regionally specific issues in Asia that make border studies more challenging. In South Asia, the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan remain deadlocked and refuse to bridge the partition of 1947. In Central Asia, economic imperatives are now posing questions about the utility of national borders. In East and South-East Asia, various maritime border issues are complicating the regional security situation. In West Asia, political instability and religious fundamentalism are making border issues intractable. Asian borders are also complex and interesting in a number of ways. Asia is a region with abundant natural resources and immense economic potential. By improving border connectivity, commercial possibilities hold out the promise of realizing the dream of an Asian century. Asia is also a crucible of different cultures, undefined by territorial limits, and which defy all sorts of borders and boundaries. There are sensitive questions connected to societal limits that find themselves manifested in patriarchy, class discrimination, religious fundamentalism and terrorism. There are also critical issues such as migration, refugees and environmental degradation, the solutions to which require cross-border cooperation. Interestingly, while there is apprehension and anxiety towards borders in Asia, it is an economically growing region. This economic growth entails that Asian countries rethink their borders as a catalyst for expanding trade and business.

In the Americas, there is an array of diversity in the formation and meanings of borders, which span from Argentina north through Latin America and to the northern Arctic. These borders share some similarities in their historical formation and cultural contexts but are largely defined by their differences, which are rooted in both physical and political structures that shape sovereignty and territory. In Latin America, borders and frontiers sometimes overlap in space and in meaning. In both Spanish and

Portuguese, the word “frontera” (or “fronteira”) carries an ambiguous sense, meaning both territorial sovereignty and expansion of control and exploitation of land. Successive waves of exploitation saw the appropriation and plunder of the economic resources (such as water, fuel, land and labor) of these regions. Furthermore, discontinuities linked to social divisions are strongly marked in the landscape. In Latin America, most present-day boundary lines are the legacy of the formation of nation-states during the nineteenth century. Besides the internal tensions and conflicts, external factors involving the break with Iberian colonialism in the region greatly influenced this process. The peopling or colonization of these borders is related to the demarcation of state territories. As a result, twin cities are scattered over many of these lines. Colonial relations are still found in some parts of the continent, as in French Guiana (an ultramarine department of France), and in the Falkland Islands (British territory strongly contested by Argentina) and several islands in the Caribbean Sea. Overall, South America demonstrates the strong permanence of geopolitical territorialities expressed by the will of sovereign state control over nationalized borders.

The most discussed border in the Americas is the U.S.-Mexican border. The product of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, the U.S.-Mexican border is 3,145 kilometers (1,954 mi) long and has become the site of countless illegal border crossings. The subject of a great deal of media attention, this border has become heavily militarized in the twenty-first century, culminating in the recent plans of President Trump to build a border wall to control immigration. By contrast, the Canada-U.S. border has often been described as the most peaceful land border in the world. The border spans nearly 9,000 kilometers and crosses both dense urban networks and vast stretches of land and marine wilderness. This geographical feature alone means that much of the border remains unmonitored, delineated only by small concrete markers. In addition, 90 percent of the Canadian population lives within 150 kilometers of the border. In contrast, less than 20 percent of the U.S. population lives in states that share a border with Canada. This asymmetry, combined with the population differentials between the two countries and a large U.S. consumer market, drives large cross-border flows in both directions. Canada and the United States have many strong ties spanning trade and security. They share an integrated supply chain, particularly in the automobile sector. Arrangements such as NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) and Preclearance operations function as a joint partnership between both countries, with Canadians operating on U.S. soil and vice versa. Additionally, the U.S. and Canada not only share the same language and standard of living, but many families span the border and a number of dual citizens exist in both countries. The Canada-U.S. border is generally less politicized and problematized when compared to the U.S. southern border with Mexico.

Research on Borders

In recent years, the approach to borders as bordering processes has become prevalent, viewing borders as results of social processes, which has opened the way to a broad spectrum of research interests, especially for cross-border everyday life issues. Because of increasing globalization, border regions have become a focus of intense research, ranging from political cross-border cooperation,

cross-border spatial planning to regional development. As a result, border studies have become a multi- and interdisciplinary field that concerns itself with a wide range of multifarious mechanisms behind these bordering, de-bordering and re-bordering processes, including geopolitical, everyday life and/or artistic issues, which they approach from a critical perspective.

In Europe, much of the research on borders has sought to provide a nuanced and critical understanding of borders as resources in terms of the exercise of power, the management of conflict, cross-border co-operation, and the everyday negotiation of borders within the broader frame of fundamental social, economic, cultural and geopolitical transformations that have affected the continent. Various research projects funded by the European Union (such as the Interreg and Frame programs) have highlighted how state borders reflect tensions as well as points of connection within intercultural and interstate relations. State borders have remained as an important frame of reference with many of the studies emphasizing the social significance and subjectivities of state borders while critically interrogating “objective” categories of state territoriality and international relations.

On the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union, global economic fluctuations, the recent debates over migration and refugees and security concerns have contributed to an increase in research on borders and the branching out of border studies into new disciplines, which have created the need to study borders beyond their understandings as geopolitical divisions. Hence, in addition to state borders, border studies in Europe focuses on cultural, symbolic and other types of social boundaries. This has made the field increasingly interdisciplinary, with critical examination of border and identity understandings becoming part of political and everyday discourses. Central research focuses on comparative historical and sociological state building, geographical perspective on changing meanings of borders, critical geopolitics, markets and regional development, as well as the daily life and identities in borderlands. Border regions (or “borderlands”) reflect many of these aspects as they are themselves defined by historical memories of life at borders as well as by the active engagement of borderlanders with changing border symbolisms and functions. Although formal state boundaries often serve as reference points in discussions of territory, identity and Europe, it is not just the physical border itself but its various representations that are at issue.

Border studies, through a cultural studies lens, focuses especially on the symbolic and social dimensions of borders and border regions in a critical perspective, analyzing borders both synchronically and diachronically as a result of complex spatial, temporal, social and cultural phenomena which are not static, but mobile, dynamic and mutable. Borders are thereby unmasked as contingent social and cultural productions and as instruments of power, which determine and often also substantiate our perception of the world.

During the 1980s/90s pioneering work in the field of African boundary studies was conducted largely by historians and scholars of politics/IR such as Anthony Asiwaju (Ibadan), Paul Nugent (Edinburgh) and William Miles (Boston). A workshop in Edinburgh in 2007 led to the founding of the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE). The choice of name reflected the growing interest of Africanists – in particular, social anthropologists, historians and political geographers – to study the past and present day-to-day realities of life with the continent’s boundaries. A consensus emerged that African borderlands, though often geographically peripheral, were relevant or even central to processes

of social, economic and political transformation on the continent, and that a sustained collaborative effort should be made to study them.

In the Middle East, there has been a long tradition of adhering to a classical definition of state borders with a limited debate on the wall built by Israel in the West Bank and maritime issues in the Gulf area between Iran and the Arab monarchies of the peninsula. A major change occurred in the last decade with a growing number of researchers addressing the issue of borders from various angles. In contrast to the previous period, borders have remained at the heart of some researcher projects that shed more light on classical topics such as refugees and migrants crossing borders (Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqi as well as foreign workers in the Gulf and African migrants crossing the Maghreb states), thus raising other aspects, such as the identity and status of such actors. While borders have provided a more interdisciplinary perspective to the discourse, most of the research carried out has remained within the sphere of disciplinary knowledge. From this point of view, it is interesting to see how anthropologists have started to problematize more significantly the border as a proper object of research, a technological device shaping behaviors in a specific environment. In political science and international relations, the border – along with its components (borderlands, border towns, border defense shields and weaponry) and actors (smugglers, tribes, military, international organizations, jihadists) – has been brought back to the center of questioning following the Arab uprisings. For their part, geographers and historians have been reflecting for a longer period on borders. Following the growing interest and international focus on them, borders came to be understood by researchers carrying out fieldwork as key elements in understanding and reading historical shifts and regional, urban or communal changes. However, it remains true that few of these researchers relied on the conceptual toolkit of border studies.

In South Asia, border studies are still not accepted as a separate academic field. Border creation in colonial South Asia was done for administrative convenience and also to defend the legitimacy of British rule. Post-colonial South Asia in this regard is also a post-partition region and all of these partitions involved large-scale violence that shapes present-day understandings of borders. It is also important to mention that India and Pakistan fought three and a half wars and continue to have hostile relations. As a result, borders continue to be viewed as a matter of high security, a discourse also reflected in academic research. Although there is some interesting work on themes related to borders and borderlands, these studies are viewed from the lens of politics, geopolitics, political science, international relations/security studies and economics (related to cross-border trade). Nevertheless, there are exemplary works on women in the Indian borderlands and on how borderland inhabitants experienced the India–Pakistan partition. Similarly, the stories of torture, violence and hate are part of Bangladesh's liberation.

Recurrent keywords in Latin American border studies are territories, identities, security, frontiers, twin cities, the Amazon, migration, memories, integration, culture and work, mirroring the main topics of the disciplines working on border studies: geography, history, literature and linguistics, political science, international relations, anthropology and education. Some of these keywords refer to relevant features of the region, be they environmental or social, such as the Amazon, frontiers or twin cities. These three topics have been central in the understanding of the region as a whole, in different ways. The study of the Amazon and its internal frontiers offers insights on the environmental and social

contradictions of the development models which directed (or legitimated) the occupation of the region. Research on twin cities has been central in defying the territorial trap presented by official discourse and in identifying and promoting bottom-up solutions in border management.

Border studies have by now a long history in the U.S. with fields such as Chicano/a Studies, especially anthropology and literature, being interested in the study of the U.S. borders since the 1960s. Since the 1990s the U.S.–Mexican borderlands have witnessed growing immigration from Latin America, the relocation of industries under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the paradoxical situation of the free flow of goods and capital and the simultaneous reinforcement and securitization of the border. Various centers and institutes for border studies at U.S.-American universities, particularly in the Southwest, offer multidisciplinary research focusing on issues of free trade, undocumented migration, the drug trade, border securitization, the militarization of policing, the struggles for environmental justice, and the cultural and linguistic particularities of the U.S.–Mexican borderlands.

Research on borders and borderlands in the Canada–U.S. context spans a number of disciplines and is primarily rooted in geography, political science, history, economics, anthropology, and literature. This research ranges from quantitative analyses of the Canada–U.S. trade relationship to cultural issues, such as the mobility of indigenous groups bifurcated by the border. The Canada–U.S. border security relationship is also the focus of much research, particularly in the post-9/11 context, as is transboundary environmental cooperation.

The Global Track

The first session was titled “Migration, Trafficking and Borders: Contemporary Global Challenges”. At a time when states within Europe were attempting to make it more difficult for migrants to cross their borders, the panelists representing the International Organization of Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Anti-Corruption Academy unanimously supported the statement that closing a border merely displaces migration flows and puts migrants at risk. In order to reduce migrants' risks on the route and improve supporting systems, they argued that, in addition to responsible government policy, civil society has to be on board.

Providing a space for explorative investigation of potential approaches for cultural border studies, the session “Border Textures: Interwoven Practices and Discursive Fabrics of Borders” presented theoretical tools that helped reveal border (re)production processes in Western-Europe by focusing on their complexities and multi-layeredness. The concept of bordertextures goes beyond the established bordering approaches or multidimensional approaches, which consider different dimensions in an isolated manner. Bordertextures conceptualize the border as a complex / relational formation of interwoven practices, discourses, bodies, and knowledges from a performative perspective.

“Eastern Dimension of EU Actorness” offered a more reflective understanding of actorness in conceptualizing EU geopolitical agency as political innovation, i.e. as something deeply engaged in, and sensitive to, very different political, social and cultural practices. Such a reflective geopolitics

involves the elaboration and implementation of a cooperation philosophy that understands global agency as a learning and adaptation process and that eschews static metanarratives of civilizational antagonism, “national interest” and geographical determinism. “Neighborhood”, for example, signifies more than proximity and should be seen not in terms of normative “spheres of influence” but rather as possible spaces of broader cooperation.

“Africa: From Barriers to Bridges: The Evolution of African Borders and Borderlands Since the First World War” was scheduled, but none of the presenters managed to travel to Vienna, citing problems with their Schengen visa procedures. Panel organizer Dr. Willie Eselebor was required to remain in Nigeria and focus his attention on preparations for the Border Regions in Transition conference, which his institution in Ibadan was preparing to host in October 2018, and in particular, the complicated immigration procedures for overseas participants. This episode is not an isolated case. In the context of ever more muscular regulation and policing of overseas travel from Africa to Europe (particularly the UK) and the U.S., the already costly and time-consuming visa clearance procedures have in recent years become noticeably more difficult to navigate for Africa-based colleagues. Vice versa, the many practical problems faced by organizers of international conferences held on African soil have for years hampered, though not stopped, efforts to convene the border studies community there.

“Rethinking Borders and Territory in the Middle East” took the opportunity of current transformations in Middle Eastern politics to address contemporary issues – from the way local inhabitants, tribes and smugglers are managing the border on a daily basis in Libya after the fall of the Qaddafi regime, to highlighting how the outsourcing of security control to private companies using sophisticated technical measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories risks dehumanizing Palestinian crossers, to the different effect of borders on the Druze community; whereas Druze became part of the fabric of the Israeli state, with some serving as high-ranking officers in the army, they are marginalized in Lebanon and Syria.

“Borders and Boundaries in Asia: Borders in South Asia” foregrounded a region that is rarely the focus of border research. It took the discussion beyond the conventional narrative of borders as lines of permanent division between territories, and showed how borders are also drawn in the minds of people. A reading of India–Pakistan textbooks, for example, provokes the realization that crossing borders in South Asia is not just physically tough, but also requires mental openness.

The session on Latin America was supposed to present the ambiguous relationship between economic and political integration projects and environmental geopolitics on the basis of local scale studies of border culture and practices in the Bolivia–Brazil–Peru border region, South American peripheral border regions and the U.S.–Mexican border. However, only Andrew Tirrell’s presentation, which highlighted the need to bring together issues and agents in order to tackle the environmental effects of border-making, took place.

The session on the Canada–U.S. border highlighted the innovative cross-border relationships in different regions of the borderlands, as well as the barriers that inhibit greater integration and mobility. More specifically, it focused on cross-border collaboration at the regional scale, which is a critical challenge in conceptualizing international borders as a homogenous place. The session’s focus on

applied research, case studies and policy development complements more academically based research. Panelists agreed that empowering subnational governments and stakeholders can serve as a counterbalance to the ebb and flow of federal policy; however, the ability of subnational stakeholders to exhibit effective leadership varies at different regions of the Canada–U.S. border owing to geographical distance, political culture, institutional set-ups and different histories and settlement patterns.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Global Track was sponsored by the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (German Federal Centre for Political Education), whose definition of global as “let others speak” was supported by a track proposal organised along a territorial division of the world, including scholars from the different world regions as session organizers, and which ensured gender parity among them. Some criticism of these conditions is not entirely unwarranted. First, cultural border studies do have a stronghold in Europe, whereas the topic of border security is more prevalent in research on borders in Asia. Second, the grant only offered lump sums to speakers regardless of origins, which may explain why some of speakers from distant countries could not attend.

The authors acknowledge the first attempt to bridge research efforts scattered around the globe within one track. In offering a wide variety of border issues and approaches by border scholars from all over the world, the track provides a useful open access overview of the state of the art in the field of border studies globally. The track allowed for a showcasing of the strengths of regionally specific work, such as the work on border theory in the session on Western Europe, and the bottom-up approach taken in research on the North American border, while at the same time providing an arena of expression for border research on less studied regions, such as South Asia. While the goal of enabling indigenous authors to speak was intended to be the central appeal of the track, this goal was not entirely realized owing to last-minute cancellations. Gender equality, on the other hand, could be guaranteed on the organizational level (with female and male scholars each taking responsibility for over half of the sessions), but not on the level of speakers, where we encountered twelve male and eight female speakers, and all of the female speakers participated in sessions on the Western world. The importance of the Global Track will be assessed in the coming years. Already during the conference, the track kicked off a productive dialogue among participants, of which this essay also constitutes proof. On YouTube, the videos generated 512 clicks within their first three-month period online.

Most authors questioned the benefit of having a predefined geographical categorization in panels, which reinforces a territorialized view of borders (also referred to as the territorial trap), as well as differences between these categories. Because border scholars working on a specific region (e.g. European Studies, African Studies, etc) are used to interacting and debating with each other on the very lively academic conference circuit, the added value of an Association for Borderlands World Conference lies in the opportunity to participate in mixed panels with scholars working on similar topics in other world regions. This would highlight similarities in border processes throughout the world. While acknowledging the decentralized organizational structure of the Global Track, the authors

are of the opinion that a closer coordination between the sessions could have led to a more systematic approach to addressing several common issues, which would also have facilitated the comparison. Asked about the appropriateness of the open access movies of the Global Track, participants in an online evaluation survey seemed broadly positive: “A start – a small step – but a good one.” However, some voices were eager to point to the inadequacy of the initiative: “Not good enough. Watching a movie is not equal to participating.”

The authors highly recommend continuing on the path of a Global Track during the next world meeting of the Association for Borderlands Studies. Inter-regional comparison could be achieved by asking Global Track panelists to address a set of guiding questions or topical points in each session, and/or aiming to include panel discussants with expertise on regions other than the one prioritized by the session they are discussing. Interesting insights might emerge from a dialogue between experts working on different formerly colonized regions (e.g. Africa and Asia), regions with substantial interaction through cross-regional migration (North and Latin America or Europe and the Middle East), or specific themes, such as border security or migration. This would highlight how similar border processes can be found throughout the world and could aim at developing (1) a globally comparative border studies framework and (2) a synthesis of established approaches and theoretical/methodological needs. Including an expert from outside the area of focus in a panel or a roundtable conversation with representatives from each panel of a track are also possibilities. These changes could result in a great deal of insight and knowledge on both the state of border studies globally and opportunities for cross-pollination. Conference participants proposed including live streaming, podcasts and internet conversations so that those not fortunate enough to attend Global Tracks in the future can also be heard and contribute to the debates.