

Borders and Culture: Zones of Transition, Interaction and Identity in the Canada-United States Borderlands

Victor Konrad*

Abstract

In the twenty-first century, both culture and borders remain over-determined concepts in human efforts to imagine and comprehend a world that is increasingly characterized by both flows and barriers. Culture is everywhere yet nowhere; culture is an idea ever more produced and re-produced by society. Borders are expanding prodigiously worldwide yet people in global interaction are increasingly straddling borders. Geographers have contributed substantially to our understanding of how borders work in globalization and also to how borders and cultures interact. In this paper, I explore the intersection of borders and culture in three inherently geographical contexts displayed in the Canada-United States borderlands. The first is that culture inhabits the borderlands as well as the borderlines to display and express increasingly extended zones of transition beyond borders between states, regions and communities. The zones of transition have spatial characteristics and cultural signatures. Secondly, these borderlands landscapes convey the dialectic of cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity in a zone of interaction that is neither here nor there to confront the meaning of border. And, finally, in these borderlands, identity is formed and re-formed among those who claim indigeneity and others who cannot. Here, in the borderlands, pressures toward homogeneity in cultural identity vie with more extensive forces of heterogeneity to diffuse identities. Borderlands culture conveys plural expressions of identity and singular imperatives of belonging.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, both borders and culture remain over-determined concepts in human efforts to imagine and comprehend a world that is increasingly characterized by both flows and barriers. Culture is everywhere yet nowhere; culture is an idea ever more imagined, produced and re-produced by society. According to Don Mitchell, “There is no culture in the world, only differing arrays of power that organize society in this way, and not that. Hence there is only a powerful idea of culture, an idea that has developed under specific historical conditions and was later broadened as a means of explaining material differences, social order, and relations of power.”¹ Yet, the powerful ideas of culture do prevail as social constructs to guide and direct who we are in a rapidly evolving world. Human investment in who we are and where we came from is evident in the thriving manifestations of culture within and across nation-state boundaries.

* Victor Konrad is Adjunct Research Professor at the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He can be contacted at: Victor.Konrad@carleton.ca.

¹ Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 74–75.

Similar to culture, borders are often more or less than the lines and barriers that they appear to be. In the twenty-first century, borders are emerging as filters and conduits, and as redundant and meaningless lines. They are crossed easily by ideas and some flows of goods, and, yet, simultaneously, they are insurmountable barriers to other flows of peoples and goods. Borders are found at the boundary lines between nation-states but also within national territories where the journey of border crossing often begins at airports and factories, among other places of origin. More borders are being established worldwide, and the walls and fences at an increasing number of these boundaries are emerging as more evident and effective barriers, particularly for those people without the means and proper identity to transit the borders.² In the twenty-first century, borders are more aligned with global flows than with national territories.³

The interplay of a broadened, more elaborately scaled, more demonstrative, more accessible, and more malleable array of cultural ideas, with a more extensive and more prevalent display of borders, suggests that imagining across boundaries is more important in our fluid twenty-first century lives, and that its explanation may provide a rich insight into how borders work and how people deal with boundaries. The culture that we produce not only meets at borders, but also now these social constructions are often more evident and demonstrative of the meanings that people ascribe to the act of dealing with boundaries in an ostensibly borderless world, and to the boundaries, barriers, fences and walls themselves. The porosity and selectivity of borders to flows of goods, people and ideas, plays differentially with the array of cultural expressions that is encountered at and near the boundary. Understanding the result of this interplay is crucial to understanding the meaning of borders. Do borders simply create a cacophony of notes in their intersections with cultural constructions, or does the interplay create melodies, songs and perhaps symphonies of interaction to interpret? A recent fictional account about living and coping with the new security border in the North American Pacific Northwest uses this metaphor of “Border Songs” to capture the essence of borderlands culture in transition.⁴ Borderlands culture, then, is the imagined, produced and re-produced meaning ascribed to living in a border zone or region.

In this essay, I explore the intersection of borders and culture in three inherently geographical contexts displayed in the Canada-United States borderlands. The first is that culture inhabits the borderlands as well as the borderlines to identify increasingly extended zones of transition beyond borders between states, regions and communities. These zones of transition have spatial characteristics and cultural signatures. Next, the borderlands landscapes convey the dialectic of cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity in a zone of interaction that is neither here nor there to confront the meaning of border. Borders are at once finite and ephemeral. And finally, in these borderlands, identity is formed and re-formed among those who claim indigeneity and others who cannot. Here, in the borderlands, pressures toward homogeneity in cultural identity vie with more extensive forces of heterogeneity to diffuse identities. Contemporary borderlands culture conveys

² Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

³ Manuel Castells, *The Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

⁴ Dan Lynch, *Border Songs* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

plural expressions of identity and singular imperatives of belonging.

The essay begins with a critical assessment of how borders and culture intersect in space and place, and how this relates to the border between Canada and the United States. This assessment is an evaluation of how the current literature on flows and mobility, and the contemporary understanding of barriers, may be interpreted from a cultural perspective. The discussion then moves to the exploration of how culture and borders interact in the three geographical contexts of zones of transition, identity formation, and borderlands landscape interactions. The conclusions reinforce the notion that twenty-first century cross-border regions have increased in their extent and depth, and that these zones of increased transition and interaction have actually developed their own culture, a culture that both engages and resists the dominant cultures on either side of the border.

Flows, Barriers and Culture at the Canada-United States Border

Border studies have emerged over the last few decades to envision borders as spatial and social practice.⁵ Borders both shape and are shaped by what they contain, and they grow in significance with asymmetric relationships of wealth and power.⁶ Borders are equivocal and evolving constructions, and they need to be weighed and re-weighed constantly.⁷ Also, borders have real effects and they trap thinking about territory.⁸ All of these conditions prevail for the Canada-U.S. border, but this border, due to its rapid evolution with security enhancements, exhibits the establishment of a new geographical order of crossings, corridors, gateways and places in the borderlands.⁹ It is also a border, due again to its rapid evolution, which helps us to isolate and articulate the forces to enable theorization.

During the twentieth century, the Canada-United States border was characterized repeatedly as the “longest undefended border in the world.” This enduring perception lasted until the end of the century although forces of globalization, terrorism and a changing economic order all conveyed that the quiet and benign border was indeed a construct of the past, a construct that was in fact cloaking the boundary from critical view. A schizophrenic borderlands culture had emerged in the twentieth century, and this culture was at once capable of cross-border expression and firm national

⁵ David Newman and Annsi Paasi, “Fences and Neighbors in the Post-Modern World: Boundary Narratives in Political Geography,” *Progress in Human Geography* 22: 2 (1998): 186–207.

⁶ David Newman, “The Lines That Continue to Separate Us: Borders in Our ‘Borderless’ World,” *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (2006): 143–161.

⁷ John Agnew, “Borders on the Mind: Re-Framing Border Thinking,” *Ethics and Global Politics* 1 (2008): 175–191.

⁸ John Agnew, “The Territorial Trap: the Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory,” *Review of International Political Economy* 1:4 (1994): 53–80; John Agnew, “Still Trapped in Territory?” *Geopolitics* 15 (2010): 779–784.

⁹ Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol, *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol, “Border Culture, The Boundary Between Canada and the United States of America, and the Advancement of Borderlands Theory,” *Geopolitics* 16 (2011): 70–90.

identification in communities and regions all along the extensive borderline. The border had become institutionalized with a myriad of agreements and accords between Washington and Ottawa, and many more “understandings” between cross-border neighbors all along the line. Borderlands were differentiated as cross-border regions of interaction, affinity and identity, particularly in the Atlantic and Pacific regions.¹⁰ In the Pacific Northwest, notions of Cascadia and other conceptualizations emerged to define a cross-border region of like-minded and environmentally conscious citizens engaged in similar lifestyles on both sides of the border.¹¹ Yet, at the end of the twentieth century, the notion of borderlands as cross-border constructs and viable cultural entities between the U.S. and Canada vacillated from region to region and from time to time all along the line across the continent.¹² For Canadians, the border continued to serve as a base for constructing and re-constructing geographic states of insecurity beneath the veneer of the ostensibly longest undefended border in the world.¹³

After the events of 9/11, the border was catapulted into the view of Americans and Canadians, people living near the boundary and those residing some distance from it. Border security was enhanced immediately and security became the primary concern at the border.¹⁴ Virtual walls were created with the implementation of new technologies. The sensors and various devices related to these technologies, combined with a vastly enhanced border infrastructure, particularly at crossings, resulted in the expansion, extension and coalescence of the security zone. In this sense, the new virtual wall constructed largely by the United States casts its security shadow on adjacent Canada.

The virtual barrier between the United States and Canada may be invisible to a great extent but it is a barrier nevertheless, and it joins the ranks of a greater number of enhanced borders, and, particularly, more walls, fences and definitive borders worldwide.¹⁵ These barriers have a differential impact on flows, and particularly the flows of people. Some people are privileged to pass across borders easily; large numbers of undesirable migrants are halted at the barriers. Yet, all flows are increasing in globalization. Flows of people, goods, energy and communications, among others, are greater in number and diversity, and greater in magnitude and volume. The result is that the impacts of interaction and fusion are more extensive and more diverse in cross-border regions where flows and barriers meet.¹⁶

In this global context of motion and boundaries, and particularly in the intersection zones or borderlands, culture is at once everywhere and yet nowhere, an idea ever more produced and

¹⁰ Konrad and Nicol, *Beyond Walls*.

¹¹ Don Alper and Bryant Hammond, “Bordered Perspectives: Local Stakeholders’ Views of Border Management in the Cascade Corridor Region,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26:1 (2011): 101–114.

¹² Jason Ackleson, “From ‘Thin’ to ‘Thick’ (and Back Again?): The Politics and Policies of the Contemporary U.S.-Canada Border,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39:4 (2009): 336–351.

¹³ Victor Konrad, “Conflating Imagination, Identity and Affinity in the Social Construction of Borderlands Culture Between Canada and the United States,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 42: 4 (2012): 530–548.

¹⁴ Konrad and Nicol, *Beyond Walls*.

¹⁵ Brown, *Walled States*; Elisabeth Vallet and Charles-Philippe David, “Introduction. The (Re)Building of the Wall in International Relations,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27:2 (2012): 111–120.

¹⁶ Castells, *The Network Society*; Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: New Press, 1998).

reproduced by society in these borderlands.¹⁷ Cultural constructions abound but are also bounded in new and different ways. Along the Canada-U.S. border, cultural production has re-invented itself differentially in places along the border and spaces in the borderlands.¹⁸ The broadening or “thickening”¹⁹ of the border has essentially extended and deepened the zone of cultural interaction across the border, and expanded resistance to enhanced security, thus extending the borderlands. In this expanding zone of border-related interaction, the business of the border is populating the borderlands but the zone also garners resistance to securitization as expressed in literature, art and film, and popular culture expressions such as graffiti.²⁰ Alm and Burkhart²¹ emphasize in their analysis of narratives from border communities at the extremities of Lake Superior, that cross-border culture as expressed in the stories of ordinary people is integral to understanding the border and theorizing how it works. Cross-border culture newly formed since 9/11 embraces imaginaries of how the border is in need of stiffer controls on the one hand and over-fortified and mismanaged on the other. These imaginaries lead to resistance to border securitization as well as to constructive engagement to develop remedies for governing the border.

Borders, Cultures and the Canada-United States Borderlands

Both borders and cultures have been diminished ostensibly through globalization, yet both borders and cultures are now more evident, real, powerful social constructs in the twenty-first century. One of the results of the prodigious expansion of borders worldwide is the creation of expanded borderlands of interaction, as well as larger areas characterized as interactive zones. A new cultural geography results in the extended transitions of borderlands. This geography exhibits greater and more defined spatiality: the boundary is more evident, flows are more channeled, connections across the boundary are more scrutinized, communities at the border are both more differentiated in some ways and more aligned in other ways (selective alignment and differentiation), and cross-border culture appears to be seeking a new order in an era of security primacy. Unfortunately, expanded enforcement spillover redefines and traps our thinking about the extended transitions.

Aspects of borders and border-related activity impact and inhabit more places. Human interaction with borders is more pervasive with increased migration, and many people are increasingly straddling borders as they travel more, and lead lives simultaneously and sequentially in different places across boundaries. In order to comprehend this intertwining of borders and culture, we need to think spatially, acknowledge the role of agency, recognize the impacts of processes and

¹⁷ Mitchell, *Cultural Geography*; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

¹⁸ Konrad, “Conflating Imagination,” 530–548.

¹⁹ Ackleson, “From ‘Thin’ to ‘Thick,’” 336–351.

²⁰ Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary, “Walls and Border Art: The Politics of Art Display,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27:2 (2012): 213–228.

²¹ Les Alm and Ross E. Burkhart, “Canada-U.S. Border Communities: What the People Have to Say,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 43:1 (2013): 86–106.

events, re-think territory and territoriality, and re-evaluate borders in the context of enhanced security. The following discussion will focus specifically on the way in which geography helps us to understand how borders and cultures interact, engage and evolve.

1. Culture Inhabits the Borderlands and Borderlines

In North America, the analysis of borders along both the southern and northern boundaries of the United States has led to a characterization of the border as “thickened” or extended from the boundary conception that once prevailed in the twentieth century.²² The boundary has not changed its location or its legal demarcation. The process of securing the boundary, however, has changed significantly, and this change in policy has had a profound impact on the borderlands culture, how it works and how it is revealed. The initiative to secure the boundary around the United States subsequent to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 will stand as one of the most rapid and dramatic changes in homeland defence policy by the United States. Combined with already established momentum to limit illegal immigration and the drug trade, this security initiative saw the sweeping reorganization of America’s homeland security organizations and policies into one massive Department of Homeland Security (DHS) aimed specifically at securing U.S. boundaries and points of entry in the United States. The views about the border and the discussion surrounding the border have changed significantly as well. These sweeping changes in border security engaged a wider public in the U.S. in the discussions of border issues with the result that the border discourse expanded across the United States and was not confined to the borderlands. This discourse also engaged a substantial part of the population in the U.S. as the media, the White House, Congress, policy analysts, civic leaders, and just about everyone else, weighed in on the “re-bordering” of America. This sustained discussion of borders prevailed not only during the George W. Bush administration, but it has continued throughout the Obama administration in which the debate has moved from ways to build effective walls to more comprehensive strategies to screen flows into the U.S. The dialogue about borders in the U.S. has remained largely a discourse among Americans even though the border security enhancements have also sparked substantial reaction about the border in both Mexico and Canada. Americans throughout most of the U.S. are keeping their dialogue about borders in the U.S. The exception, however, is found in the borderlands where this discourse actually engages people and perspectives from both sides of the border. The post-9/11 borderlands, then, have been imbued with new meaning and significance in the wake of massive securitization. I would argue that this renewed relevance may be traced and understood more effectively by exploring the changes in borderlands culture.

In the twentieth century, the Canada-U.S. border was secured at points or ports of entry in a spatially disaggregated system.²³ This system was characterized by a range of small to large points along the border where border security was focused and manifested. Spaces in between were secured

²² Ackleson, “From ‘Thin’ to ‘Thick,’” 336–351.

²³ Konrad and Nicol, *Beyond Walls*.

to a lesser degree with occasional surveillance but largely dependent on citizen compliance on both sides of the border. Border “guards” were to a large degree locally engaged and certainly localized after years of living in border communities. There was a high degree of port authority even though ports of entry were organized in regions along the extensive boundary. One of these regions was the Pacific slope region where the border along the 49th parallel separated the lower Fraser River Valley of British Columbia from the adjacent lowlands of the Nooksack River Valley in Whatcom County, Washington (Figure 1). Four road crossings in the region – Douglas/Peace Arch, Pacific Highway, Aldergrove/Lynden and Huntingdon/Sumas – handled the vehicular traffic whereas train, boat and air traffic was controlled through ports of entry at terminals in the region. Each port of entry had similar functions in that all were places where goods and people crossing the border were examined for compliance, yet each border crossing had its specific functions and unique character in the region. Douglas/Peace Arch, astride the main north-south route Interstate 5 in the U.S. and Highway 99 in Canada, handled the majority of automobile traffic and later in the twentieth century it excluded truck, and then later bus traffic which was diverted to the adjacent Pacific Highway crossing. This crossing also served an increasing amount of auto traffic as the population of the Fraser River Valley communities expanded. Aldergrove/Lynden emerged as an intermediary service crossing in the agricultural region of the Fraser/Nooksack River valleys, and it was closed each night. Huntingdon/Sumas, situated at the foot of the Cascade Mountains, served increasingly as an eastbound connection for truck and car traffic from the U.S. and U.S. bound traffic from the upper Fraser Valley, as well as a local crossing between Abbotsford, BC and Whatcom County communities.²⁴

In the aftermath of 9/11, a new spatial system based on security primacy has come to supersede the twentieth century crossing system. The Cascade Gateway features an enhanced and expedited corridor along the I-5/99 superhighway with newly renovated and expanded border inspection facilities at Douglas/Peace Arch and Pacific Highway. These facilities have essentially meshed into the third largest border crossing complex between the U.S. and Canada. Much of the residential space in between the two inspection facilities on the U.S. side has been expropriated by the U.S. Government and established as a secure zone. On the Canadian side of the border, the Government of Canada has reciprocated albeit to a lesser degree of security infrastructure expansion. The new facilities utilize enhanced technologies and innovative traffic management procedures to increase the flows of vehicles through the facilities while extending surveillance and inspection capabilities. Similar yet more modest enhancements are evident at Aldergrove/Lynden and Huntingdon/Sumas. Maritime vessel inspection at ports in the region, passenger and freight rail inspection, and airport inspection now extended to international facilities at Bellingham, WA and Abbotsford, BC also comprise associated and linked components of the crossing security complex. All of the Cascade Gateway crossings and the borderline and borderlands in between are now part of an integrated system of facilities and a continuous security space extending between the inspection

²⁴ Victor Konrad, “‘Breaking Points’ But No ‘Broken Border’: Stakeholders Evaluate Border Issues in the Pacific Northwest Region,” *Border Research Policy Institute Report 10* (Western Washington University: BPRI, 2010).

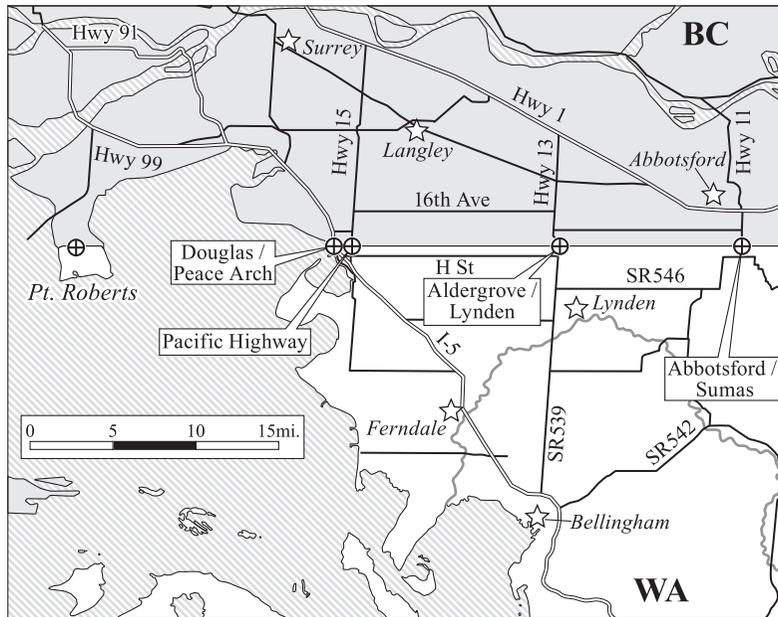


Figure 1: The Cascade Gateway, British Columbia and Washington

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stations and into the borderlands adjacent to the boundary. In effect, a new and more robust border culture of security has been delineated in the cross-border region. The Cascade Gateway may be one of the foremost portals for trade and movement of peoples between the U.S. and Canada but also it has become a security space synonymous with massive traffic jams, long wait times to cross, and a growing compendium of stories and extensive discourse about border issues.²⁵

The spatial effects of security primacy have permeated the cross-border region of the Cascade Gateway.²⁶ The most compelling evidence is seen in the expansion of the security infrastructure at and around the ports of entry. The merging of the security space of the Douglas/Peace Arch and Pacific Highway security space has seen the integration of security functions and facilities along the border and back from the boundary line to visibly “thicken” the border. Security “cells” have been constructed in the borderlands yet away from the borderline in the communities of Blaine, WA and White Rock, BC. These security installations include U.S. Border Patrol regional headquarters, storage facilities for security equipment and seizures, communication facilities and transportation depots and maintenance facilities. Some evidence of “blockbusting” is evident as the spaces between secured areas in the borderlands are expropriated by the governments for additional security facility expansion, and residents are obliged to move or be surrounded by security infrastructure. The expansion and enhancement of security space has led as well to secured spatial segregation where the “border” between secured and non-secured spaces is evident from

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

warning signs, fences, bright lighting and other security constructions. The land use identity, particularly on the U.S. side of the border in the core of the Cascade Gateway, is an identity associated with security enforcement and militarization. This identity is undergoing spatial extension, concentration, and linkage in the security zone which now extends to Bellingham and even further south. The constant, growing presence of U.S. Border Patrol vehicles and personnel in the communities and on the roads throughout the borderlands underlines the “routes” and “Communities” focus of the border securitization strategy. All of the borderlands, and more of it, are now under scrutiny.

The new spatial signature of security in the Cascade Gateway remains to be accepted by residents of the borderlands whereas it is promoted and articulated by proponents of the new “security reality.” This spatial signature is constructed of tangible components and visible effects on the landscape as well as the imaginaries of those who resist the expansion of security and those who promote it. According to surveys of border stakeholders in the Cascade Gateway cross-border region, conducted in 2009, about 80% Americans and almost 40% Canadians residing in and utilizing the cross-border region, imagine an insecure border. Approximately 35% Americans and over 50% Canadians resist security enhancements and imagine a more benign border experience. The Canadians are also nostalgic about the way the border used to be.²⁷ These imaginaries are manifested in part because Americans cannot assure total security even though they feel a right or destiny to remain completely secure. Canadians, on the other hand, depend on the trade relationship with the U.S. and they require a porous, interactive and integrative border. These differing and to some extent extreme imaginaries of the borderline and the borderlands describe an expansive and even widely diverging borderlands culture that accommodates greater diversity in a larger borderlands space. There is a “trust deficit” because the Canada-U.S. affinity that prevailed in the twentieth century has not been affirmed and re-affirmed at the time of crisis during and after the events of 9/11. Imagination, affinity and identity have been conflated in the construction of borderlands culture,²⁸ yet the spatial expression of this culture in the borderlands has been extended due to the overwhelming weight and presence of the security imperative at the border and is articulation in the borderlands. Also, security primacy overshadows and obscures other border and borderlands functions, and security primacy reshapes these functions such as trade, migration and environmental management, as security functions. Security primacy prevails in spite of the realization by many borderlands stakeholders that the U.S. needs the trade with Canada, and that their country, and particularly the borderlands communities, depend on an integrated and interactive border. The borderlands culture, then, is altered and stratified to represent layers and hierarchies of cross-border accessibility and motion, all articulated by security.²⁹

Perhaps the foremost result of this re-invented borderlands culture is that the social fabric in the borderlands is changing. This is apparent in the social stresses, discontinuities and relocations

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Konrad, “Conflating Imagination, Identity and Affinity,” 530–548.

²⁹ Matthew Sparke, “A Neoliberal Nexus: Citizenship, Security and the Future of the Border,” *Political Geography* 25:2 (2006): 151–180.

apparent in the borderlands. Interviews conducted in 2009 among members of several ethnically distinct cross-border communities in the Fraser-Nooksack valleys confirm the impact on the social fabric of Dutch and East Indian communities. Informants in the Dutch community on both sides of the border speak nostalgically about the “church rush” on Sundays when families would cross the border to attend congregational assemblies, stop for ice cream and dairy products and socialize. The enhancement of security at the border, and the extended and unpredictable wait times to cross, have seen the “church rush” all but disappear. Consequently, social interaction in the cross-border Dutch community has decreased with several negative effects noted by informants. One was a decline in local dairy product sales. Another was the reduction of extended family interaction. One impact on the community with potentially devastating long-term effects, is the observation by several informants that Dutch cross-border marriages were smaller in number. Another ethnic group impacted in similar ways is the East Indian community with a high representation of Sikh berry producers and labourers who have depended on cross-border mobility for effective and economical production, mainly of blueberries and raspberries. Their border experience subsequent to 9/11 is similar to the Dutch, and indeed more aggravated due to the prevalence of racial profiling in border inspection.

Although ethnic cross-border communities, and particularly those that might be more distinctive, have seen the greatest social stresses with securitization, almost all of the interviewees in the 2009 study referred to social stresses and discontinuities related to the border. A common lament was that sports teams did not cross to compete as often if at all. Another concern was that activist groups for water quality, wildlife preservation and other environmental issues, could not engage as effectively across the border in face-to-face meetings, with the result that these cross-border concerns were not addressed as effectively in the post-9/11 era. Added to the social stresses are discontinuities with previous policy and the trend toward transnationalism. Several respondents observed that transnationalists (dual citizens) were deemed an asset in Canada and a problem in the U.S. Another study of American relocations in the Pacific Northwest concluded that increasing numbers of Americans are immigrating to Canada, with a large component bound for British Columbia.³⁰ Yet, all of these discontinuities, relocations and social stresses have not destroyed the cross-border culture, although it has been selectively diminished. Participants in constant cross-border activity have complied with trusted traveler requirements to sustain their mobility. Moreover, there appears to be a new realization fueled by the recognition among informants that “insecurity re-bordering”, U.S. identity over-determination, and ultimately American exceptionalism,³¹ all are apparent to and repudiated by borderland residents in favour of positive and productive linkages. So, as the culture that inhabits the borderlands and borderlines has changed, ostensibly it has been diminished in its mobility, but it has gained in resolve and resistance to the security imperative. Security primacy at once confines the nature and expression of cross-border culture, and it is resisted by the culture.

³⁰ Susan Hardwick and Ginger Mansfield, “Discourse, Identity and ‘Homeland as Other’ at the Borderlands,” *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 99:2 (2009): 283–405.

³¹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1997).

2. Identity Formation and Reformation

Identity formation in border regions has been addressed in numerous studies, and, yet, these contextual studies have contributed little to conceptualizing and theorizing borderlands identity.³² The literature establishes that national borders become markers of identity constructed through social and cultural processes, legacies, myths and institutionalization,³³ and that borders are symbols of state institutions and power relations as well as embodiments of values and norms that shape identities.³⁴ Although identity is acknowledged as a key to the study of borders, identity is considered either a constant or stable entity, undifferentiated as collective or individual, or superficially defined as an attribute.³⁵ Also, identities are defined as cultural and ethnic membership by anthropologists, place affiliation by geographers, statist alignment by political scientists, symbolic representation by sociologists, and as a symbolic emphasis with notions of diversity and hybridity by literary critics. Recent interdisciplinary and comparative approaches have shown how ethnic and national identity vary across borders,³⁶ borderlands residents identify as “border crossers” or “border re-enforcers” who may share cultural traditions but not identity narratives,³⁷ identity is constructed through territorial exclusion and inclusion,³⁸ distinctions between national identity and borderlands identity,³⁹ multiple border identities,⁴⁰ sometimes constructed through everyday practices and local ways,⁴¹ and that some practices shape regional and national identities while others consist of personal ideas and experiences.⁴²

³² Eva K. Prokkala, “Unfixing Borderland Identity Border Performances and Narratives in the Construction of Self,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 24: 3 (2009): 21–38.

³³ John Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996); John Anderson and Liam O’Dowd, “Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance,” *Regional Studies* 33:7 (1999): 593–604; Newman, “Boundaries,” in *A Companion to Political Geography*, eds. John Agnew, Kathyrne Mitchell and Gerard Toal (London: Blackwell, 2003), 123–137; Annsi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (New York: Wiley, 1996).

³⁴ Newman and Paasi, “Fences and Neighbors,” 186–207.

³⁵ Prokkala, “Unfixing Border Identity,” 23.

³⁶ Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan, “Nation, State and Identity in International Relations,” in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontier*, eds. Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁷ Paolo Vila, “Processes of Identification on the U.S.-Mexico Border,” *Social Science Journal* 40 (2003): 607–625.

³⁸ David Kaplan, “Asymmetrical and Hybrid Identities in the Northern Italian Borderlands,” in *Boundaries and Place: European Borderlands in Geographical Context*, eds. David Kaplan and Jussi Hakli (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 116–140; David Kaplan, “Territorial Identities and Geographical Scale,” in *Nested Identities*, eds. Harold Guntrum and David Kaplan, (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 31–49.

³⁹ Annsi Paasi, “Region and Place: Regional Identity in Question,” *Progress in Human Geography* 27:4 (2003): 475–485.

⁴⁰ Vila, “Processes of identification,” 607–625.

⁴¹ Johan Holstein and Johan Gubrium, *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World* (New York: Oxford, 2000).

⁴² Ulle Meinhoff, ed., *Living (with) Borders: Identity Discourses on East-West Borders in Europe* (Aldershot:

Comparative research in the Virgin Islands and the Pacific Northwest suggests that borderlands identity is comprised of national identity and borderland affinity. “Perimeter security aligns with notions of national identity, yet also enables the continued articulation of a transnational borderland identity. Integration expresses borderland affinity, and it allows both national and borderland identities to co-exist. In a sense, identity crosses the border even when the impact of the boundary changes, and may do so more demonstratively in times when the border is re-asserted or altered.”⁴³ This effect is evident in both the Virgin Islands and Pacific Northwest cross-border regions.

In the Pacific Northwest, the more geographically definitive cultural construct of the Salish Sea basin is now replacing more nebulous constructs such as Cascadia to conceptualize the cross-border region.⁴⁴ The Salish Sea construct is also indigenous and pre-colonial. Within this incipient, definable construct, the Cascade Gateway is viewed as the primary thoroughfare or corridor component, and the International Mobility and Transportation Corridor project (IMTC) is widely accepted as the stakeholder representation group and the policy enabling unit to respond to change.⁴⁵ It represents a wide cross-section of borderland stakeholders ranging from security to business to environmental interest groups. As the borderline has become more definitive with security primacy, it has become increasingly difficult for both Canadians and Americans in the cross-border region to sustain a borderlands identity. Canadian and U.S. national identities have been reasserted and further differentiated with new regulations such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI).⁴⁶ Transnational identities such as dual citizenship have been diminished with a greater emphasis on national identity confirmation. Some borderlanders choose to align with growing national sentiment to “keep America safe and keep others out,” whereas other border region inhabitants insist on the facilitation of border crossing through trusted traveller programs, more effective border processing, infrastructure and technology to expedite crossing, and “customer” treatment at the border.⁴⁷ In order to reduce the growing distance between hegemonic national and borderland identities, and to acknowledge pluralism and multiple identities (ethnic, indigenous, global) apparent in the cross-border region, state and provincial governments and cross-border institutions have leveraged federal recognition of and participation in programs to expand options for identity verification. Among the successful initiatives, now being emulated outside the region in states and provinces along the border, is the enhanced driver’s license (EDL) program.⁴⁸ One wallet sized card is the auto license and proof

Ashgate, 2002); Prokkala, “Unfixing Borderland Identity,” 21–38.

⁴³ Victor Konrad and John Everitt, “Borders and ‘Belongers’: Transnational Identities, Border Security, and Cross-Border Socio-Economic Integration in the United States Borderlands with Canada and the British Virgin Islands,” *Comparative American Studies* 9:4 (2011): 288–308.

⁴⁴ “B.C. Waters Officially Renamed Salish Sea,” *CBC News*, July 15, 2010. Accessed on December 25, 2013: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2010/07/15/bc-salish-sea.html>

⁴⁵ IMTC, *International Mobility and trade Corridor Project. IMTC Resource Manual* (Bellingham, WA: Whatcom Council of Governments, 2009).

⁴⁶ U.S., DHS, *Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Updated Fact Sheet*. Accessed on December 25, 2013: http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1200693579776.shtm

⁴⁷ Alper and Hammond, “Bordered Perspectives,” 101–114.

⁴⁸ Public Safety Canada, *Canada’s First Enhanced Driver’s License Launched in B.C.* Accessed on December 25,

of identity and citizenship. This approach allows residents of the cross-border region to affirm both national and regional identities with a universal document that signals belonging. The recent Obama-Harper accord on perimeter security promises to expand options for such borderlands identity affirmation. The accord will work if the security policies outlined in the plan actually result in moving the border “Beyond the Border,” and, in this regard enable the transition zone between British Columbia and Washington State (and more generally between Canada and the U.S.) to flourish rather than to decline.

Over-determination of American identity has reinforced the line between communities at the border and contributed discontinuity to communities across the border. Impacts of identity formation and reformation on communities at the border and communities across the border are variable from border region to border region along the length of the Canada-U.S. boundary. In the Pacific Northwest, the new, robust American identity has had negative effects for the borderlands communities. In addition to the pressures on social fabric, there is evidence of a “hollowing out” effect on the local economies of border communities.⁴⁹ This impact has been recorded in other cross-border communities as well including the Niagara Gateway communities⁵⁰ and the Sault.⁵¹ The impact of identity reformation on borderlands at regional and national scales requires more research but the initial indication is that the community scale losses and negative impacts on community may outweigh the impacts at other geographical scales. This may be due in part to the privileging of citizens who fit into a trusted traveller profile easily, and particularly at the inter-regional and international levels (financial, technology, government, military elites and specialists), and the “othering” of those who do not or cannot comply with trusted traveller requirements, or simply do not have the time or resources to do so. This appears to have a greater impact at the cross-border community scale. Consequently, identity verification has been among the most unsettling of the security primacy impacts. Identity verification has evolved from a loose, imperfect system in the twentieth century to a tight, complex system in the early twenty-first century. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative has in fact complicated not simplified nationalism, transnationalism and citizenship at the Canada-U.S. border.

Many unanswered questions remain about how identity is formed and reformed with re-bordering at the Canada-U.S. border, and at evolving borders elsewhere in the world. How do heterogeneity and homogeneity of identity coexist in the borderlands? How is a sense of belonging developed in the context of multiple or plural identities? Is there true indigeneity in borderlands? There is a growing recognition that pressures toward homogeneity of identity at all scales (local, regional, national) vie with forces of heterogeneity to diffuse identities. This appears to be evident in the research conducted in the Pacific Northwest and in the Virgin Islands.⁵² Also evident is the

2013: <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/media/m2008/nr2008121-eng.aspx>

⁴⁹ Konrad, “‘Breaking Points’ But No ‘Broken Border.’”

⁵⁰ Jane Helleiner, “Canadian Border Resident Experience of the ‘Smartening’ Border at Niagara,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 25:3&4 (2010): 87–103.

⁵¹ Alm and Burkhart, “Canadian-U.S. Border Communities,” 86–106.

⁵² Konrad and Everitt, “Borders and ‘Belongers,’” 288–308.

finding that plural expressions of identity can and do link with singular imperatives of belonging, and that belonging in a globalizing world is demonstrated in cross-border communities. Belonging is more developed if a sense of indigeneity prevails in the cross-border community, that is that people living in the cross-border community can trace their roots to an indigenous community in the region, or if they can claim “indigeneity” by virtue of their founding “settler” status. True indigenous people in the cross-border region do not acknowledge the imposed “Ex-European” border as a valid boundary within their traditional territories. The Mohawk, for example, insist that the border between the United States and Canada has no relevance within their territory on the St. Lawrence River near Massena, NY and Cornwall, ON, and that they have the right of free passage and activity within this “cross-border” territory. Mohawk exercise of this claim, particularly with regard to the tax free distribution of contraband cigarettes from the U.S. to Canada, and the smuggling of firearms and illegal immigrants, has brought the Mohawks into direct confrontation with both American and Canadian border authorities. Canada, however, has recently closed its border inspection facility within the Mohawk “territory” and moved it into Cornwall to avoid further confrontation and controversy. The role of indigeneity in cross-border identity formation is truly complex, and it remains a topic for greater scrutiny along the Canada-U.S. border and in other contexts where indigenous peoples populate cross-border regions.

3. Borderlands Landscapes Convey the Dialectic of Cultural Continuity and Discontinuity

Borderlands landscapes are altered increasingly by border enhancement infrastructures and processes. Security primacy, by virtue of its emphatic and invasive impact on the borderlands of the United States and Canada, emphasizes the dialectic of cultural continuity and discontinuity. Borderland spaces and places of interaction are removed and distanced from spaces and places of differentiation. This causes the zone of interaction to be neither here nor there, liminal, and in limbo, rather than stable, defined, understood, and acknowledged. This instability or transition, and the uncertainty associated with it, call for a confrontation with the meaning of border, particularly by those who live in the borderlands and those who interact across the border. This confrontation of ideals, practices and processes is evident as well in the landscapes re-produced in the securitized borderlands.

The rise of uncertainty in the Pacific Northwest borderlands is well documented in the wait times, regulation changes and enforcement irregularities that have plagued the transition to a security primacy regime. Processes of re-bordering, and specifically procedures that lead to border-crossing uncertainty, have been verified extensively and consistently by the media and the border governance agencies have been vilified constantly with stories of hardship at the border. This condition prevails throughout the borderlands between the U.S. and Canada. In the Pacific Northwest, the uncertainties have been documented for the interior BC/WA crossings as well as those in the Cascade Gateway.⁵³ In the Gateway, there has been a concerted effort on the part of both Canadians and Americans to

⁵³ Konrad, “‘Breaking Points’ But No ‘Broken Border.’”

seek remedies to symptoms like excessive wait times at border crossings by posting wait times along approach routes and broadcasting the wait times on radio, television and online media. Unfortunately, the posting of wait times is very time sensitive and problems with postings have led to additional hardships and frustrations among travelers. In one instance, on a holiday weekend, Canadians returning home from the U.S. diverted to the Aldergrove/Lynden crossing by shorter wait times posted, found themselves stuck at the border when the port-of-entry closed before midnight. On some occasions, even trusted travellers with NEXUS cards have found that the NEXUS or expedited lane proved to be a longer wait to cross than the lanes open to the general crossing public. The result has been that many potential cross-border travellers in the region have decided not to bother with border crossing due to the uncertainty. Those who need to cross, or choose to cross, do so with a plan and multiple, coordinated reasons to cross. These may include combining a visit with relatives, cross-border shopping, accessing a postal box on the other side, attending a sporting event, gambling, and other activities such as touring. The survey already cited, of almost 100 respondents as well as a parallel set of the same number of interviews substantiated that spontaneous travel in the cross-border region was down after the imposition of security primacy.⁵⁴ This has caused economic uncertainty in the Gateway communities, particularly in those communities closer to the border dependent on cross-border traffic. The reactive processes of security primacy implementation have created a template for “band aid” solutions. In the U.S., and in Canada to a lesser extent, the veil of “national security” has often lead to rapid imposed responses to the crossing problems over thoughtful and planned strategies engaging all stakeholders. Ultimately, given these conditions, questions remain about what really works, works best, is in both Canadian and American interests, and lasts?

The landscape of the borderlands is characterized increasingly as a “frontier” zone, and as reformed security space. In this space, pervasive security polarizes secured and non-secured spaces, places and people. In the Cascade Gateway, a landscape of dairy and berry farms interspersed with small towns on the U.S. side, and larger, growing commuter settlements on the Canadian side, has been changed with both overt and subtle security infrastructure and practice. U.S. Border Patrol vehicles and personnel, rarely evident before 9/11, now are found throughout the borderlands on the U.S. side. Also invasive on the farm landscape are reconnaissance features, and high technology surveillance equipment. Many sensors are not visible but local inhabitants know they exist and these residents resent the intrusion. One farmer has made headlines with complaints that the new invasive security technology and patrols have caused his dairy cattle to produce less milk.⁵⁵ Although the “wall” constructed at the boundary line is mostly a virtual wall, the substantial increase in security infrastructure at crossing points, as well as the use of roadblocks, warning signs, military uniforms, and a general show of force, have all lead to the creation of a wedge of security primacy to further complicate already sensitive and complex transportation negotiations and procedures throughout the agricultural landscape. This polarization has led to stress and trauma among residents as well as

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Richard Judd, “Beefed-Up Border Patrol Jolts Farmers, Cows,” *Seattle Times*, November 14, 2011. Accessed on December 25, 2013: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/restlessnative/2016763130_restless14m.html?pmi...

travellers in the borderlands, and, inevitably, this has led to greater spatial segregation and place distinction between security and non-security landscapes. The cumulative result on the landscape has been to create places of fear, concern and potential violence at the borderline and in the borderlands, and to describe a new borderlands culture of separation that crosses the border to distinguish securitized spaces and places in the borderlands from spaces and places less impacted by security.

Borders, Culture and the Construct of Integration Space

The rapid securitization of the U.S.-Canada border, and the response to this security primacy in two closely intertwined countries both in the vanguard of globalization, provides an opportunity to examine closely and quickly the borderland changes that may proceed much longer in other border contexts. In a little more than a decade, Canada and the U.S. have re-invented the borderlines and the borderlands as a security zone. This paper has shown how an altered culture has inhabited the borderlands and borderlines to display and express increasingly extended zones of transition. The borderlands landscapes convey the dialectic of cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity in this zone of interaction that is neither here nor there to confront the meaning of border. And, in this zone, identity is formed and reformed among those who claim indigeneity and others who cannot.

Also, in this short time of just over a decade, there is evidence of cultural rehabilitation in the face of security primacy. In essence, borderlands culture continues to work toward the construction of integration space even when faced with the formidable obstacle of security primacy.⁵⁶ In the Cascade Gateway, it is the work of the IMTC that perseveres to sustain border culture even though its immediate objectives and outcomes are displayed as practical transportation enhancements, wait time reductions, and awareness building in the face of security primacy. In the adjacent national parks along the front range of the Rocky Mountains, both Glacier National Park in the U.S. and Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada guard a strong heritage of cross-border interaction and aligned goals over and above the demands for national security in each country. The National Parks have resisted border agency efforts to invade and control park space, and impose enhanced security measures. The traditional boat ride from Waterton in Canada to the landing in Glacier still prevails. Glacier National Park displays information and allows spaces for the Canadian and Alberta Governments to inform visitors about the border heritage and culture that inhabits the shared park space across the border.

Many places along the border convey the sustainability of cross-border community and place resilience despite the continued growth of security along the border. The example of Stanstead, Quebec and Derby Line, Vermont is well known and often scrutinized and publicized by the media. A community that pre-dated the imposition of the boundary in the nineteenth century evolved as integrated communities across the border in the twentieth century, and now resists securitization measures in the twenty-first century. Resistance has led to some compromises and self policing and the cross-border community prevails in spite of the border. In effect, Stanstead is a sustainable border

⁵⁶ Konrad and Everitt, "Borders and 'Belongers,'" 288–308.

place that remains in place. Sault Ste. Marie, a community extended on both sides of the border at the eastern end of Lake Superior, enjoys a similar situation.

In some situations, border culture galvanizes the resolve of isolated and localized social cohesion along the length of the border. This commitment to make an extra effort to link across the border in new ways to work against the negative economic and social impacts of securitization is evident in the creation of the Selkirk Loop connecting isolated towns in the interior of BC and WA/ID. Here communities facing losses of population and business due to border security enhancement devised a cross-border route linking places in a scenic environment to encourage tourists and travellers to take the time to visit their connected places and experience the cross-border culture of interaction. A similar, larger loop connects the border communities around Lake Superior. These examples show how social cohesion that is limited and controlled by security concerns across the border may, in fact, become connected and aligned laterally along the border, and further enhanced across the border through the creation of loops and other spatial strategies for connection.

Moving from sudden imposition of security primacy to affirmation of borderlands community and place is a process that appears to be most successful in the more isolated and smaller cross-border communities along the U.S.-Canada boundary. Here, imagination and meaning of the borderlands culture remain aligned. People, landscape and activities are linked. Here, also, the countervailing pressures of large scale trade and massive security enhancements have not impacted the cross-border culture to the same extent as in major corridors and gateways across the border. The major corridor and gateway crossings have all experienced massive alteration of borderlands geography, with a concomitant impact on the borderlands culture. Yet, the lessons learned in these smaller, more distant communities may help to develop templates for borderland re-integration in the cross-border regions associated with the major crossing points like Champlain, Landsdowne, Niagara, Windsor/Detroit, Sweetgrass, and Cascades. One lesson appears to be to develop a balance of the humanization of security with making security effective and efficient. Added to this are civility and affirmation of borderlands communities, place and culture. Ultimately, this rehabilitation depends on defining, acknowledging and cultivating the borderlands culture.