ROUTLEDGE INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOKS

Routledge Handbook of European Borderlands

Edited by James W. Scott and Thomas M. Wilson

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF EUROPEAN BORDERLANDS

The *Routledge Handbook of European Borderlands* revisits and reassesses the concept of borderlands in Europe, balancing case-specific perspectives with rich theoretical and conceptual avenues of research.

The significance of the transformations after the fall of the Soviet Union made European borders central to the emergence of border studies as an emerging field of study, and since then, the financial crisis, rising migration, Brexit, and the Covid-19 pandemic have continued to make European borderlands a focus of research, national and international policy, media, and everyday concern. Bringing together a wealth of cross-cutting and empirically rigorous international scholarship, the handbook investigates European borderlands as spaces of encounter and political, social, and cultural change. This book depicts borderlands as both fundamentally relational and ambiguous products of fanciful geographical imagination, as well as real and lived places in which communities engage in different forms of integration, differentiation, and contestation, at many levels of political, economic, geographic, and social interaction. Drawing on a range of different disciplinary perspectives, the handbook covers key topics such as security, migration, social inequality and justice, cross-border governance, cooperation and development, environmental threats, health and disease, and conflicts over citizenship, sovereignty, and territory.

This handbook provides the perfect guide to understanding the multilayered complexities surrounding borderlands, and as such will be of interest to researchers across the fields of geography, politics, migration studies, international relations, anthropology, sociology, tourism, cultural studies, and European studies.

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Designed cover image: This photograph was taken by the author, James W. Scott, at the Grūtas Park in Lithuania. The park is a museum that preserves the memory of Soviet occupation and dictatorship. The photograph portrays a reconstruction of the pre-World War II border between then-Poland and the Soviet Union.

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James W. Scott, Joensuu
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INTRODUCTION

European borderlands as arenas, platforms, and mirrors of transformation

James W. Scott and Thomas M. Wilson

Introduction: the enduring salience of Europe's borderlands

Borderlands, understood in cultural, social and political terms, have been central to Europe's evolution towards a system of sovereign states and its slow progression to a more robust sense of political community. Historically, borderlands have preceded the emergence of state territoriality and formal borders and they have been central to narrations of nation-state becoming, albeit often in terms of a teleological consolidation of a 'state idea'. At the same time, borderlands remain powerful imaginaries of socio-cultural 'inbetweenness' that defies unambiguous characterization based on national categories. More recently, a degree of political inbetweenness across borders has been reflected in the production of semi-administrative spaces of cross-border cooperation and border security regimes that operate within highly flexible, even mobile territorial contexts. Europe's contemporary borderlands are of course conditioned by state territoriality and, in many cases, supranational agreements such as that defining the Schengen Area. Nevertheless, they are not structurally determined by borders. Above and beyond strictly legalistic or administrative definitions borderlands come to exist through patterns of interaction and as geographical ideas and imaginaries. Borderlands are therefore significant not only as artefacts and elements of European heritage but as reminders of the ambivalent role of bordered (state) territoriality as a stabilizing but also violent and disrupting force.

Karelia is a European region that exemplifies the various layers of meaning that can be attributed to borderlands. Karelia has been narrated as a Finnish core cultural area, a Finnio-Ugric zone of transition, a Russian frontier and also as a common space between both national cultures (Scott 2012). The validity of these narrations is not negated by border closures or the present geopolitical context of EU-Russia tensions. However, understandings of Karelia have been clearly impacted by the vicissitudes of cross-border relations and Eastern Finland's post-Cold War experiences of 'debordering' and 'rebordering' (Laine, this volume). As a result, few observers on either side of the border continue to link Karelia's regional identity to cross-border cooperation and economic synergies. Karelia is but one example of the complex relationship between European societies, their borderlands and their borders. Borderlands have innate potential to widen horizons and provide expansive opportunities unavailable in a particular national context, but that potential must compete with the many demands to which formal borders are subjected. Particularly in times of anxiety, desire for openness is pitted against a perceived need to securitize and restrict the crossing of borders.

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This volume is a collection of scholarly analyses of what is happening in selected European borderlands today. In doing this it also of necessity provides equally scholarly critiques of the contemporary state of comparative border studies. Many of these contributions are informed by a sense of urgency given the multiple crises that face Europeans and other global populations. The territorial dimensions of the Ukraine-Russia war, which at the time of writing have seen Ukrainians make substantial inroads into the Russian Kursk region but lose ground in greater Donetsk, provide what may be seen as an extreme example of how borderlands mirror larger issues in world affairs. Though extreme, it has informed many other appreciations of the fragile nature of borders and borderlands, as may be seen in every European country with a shared border with Russia. Other major border issues in Europe also provide motivation to many if not most of the contributions to this Handbook. The Mediterranean and the Balkans are still sites of great danger and concern for migrants and sending and receiving countries. Brexit is a process that has stimulated many responses across the European Union (EU), some of which seem to have played into the ideological and political playbooks of conservative and potentially fascist movements. Complementing or exacerbating many of the resultant concerns about borders and safety has been the post-pandemic realization that borders do not provide any particular security against disease, or for animal and other fellow organisms in European ecosystems. Brexit, migration and pandemic have been at the heart of the turn to the Right in many European locales. The obvious upshot of these events and processes in Europe, and the scholarly response to them, is the simple premise, but one worth continued repeating, that, while borderlands have increasingly come to symbolize processes of interstate integration and transnational governance, they remain key features in policies of securitization and restrictive border management, as Europe's many long-standing crises amply document.

The contributions to this Handbook demonstrate that borderlands exist as lived spaces and social imaginaries that emerge between states, societies, and cultures. A sustained interest in the constitution and development of borderlands by political and economic elites, popular media, and scholars can be partly explained by the fact that they help us all to interpret the impacts of globalization and geopolitical transformations on national societies. Since the end of the Cold War order simultaneous processes of integration and fragmentation have created new borderlands and reconfigured existing ones worldwide. Some of these borderlands are emblematic of reconciliation processes and peaceful co-existence, others reflect the shifting fortunes of interstate relations in tense and uncertain geopolitical times. While French-German and German-Polish experiences have produced new bi-national spaces of interaction, historical memories of conflict and mutual mistrust haunt many post-socialist borderlands of Europe. Nevertheless, the sobering realities of the present-day world often obscure the fact that borderlands remain spaces of possibility, contexts in which the creation of something new and no longer constrained by narrow national perspectives is taking place. It is no coincidence that the EU has appropriated borderlands – albeit with reference to the more technical notion of border regions – as laboratories of integration. It is also no accident that for many observers the roots of future successful European integration, particularly in regard to the development of a European identity that is both effective and affective, will be in Europe's borderlands (Kohli 2000).

Local and regional cross-border cooperation has flourished in the European context and this is cause for cautious optimism that national particularisms can be transcended. Borderlands have given evidence of their resilience in the face of central government meddling and the frequent political exploitation of borders as a source of national influence. However, when one considers the situation of non-Europeans, and particularly those seeking refugee status, the picture can change dramatically. In many cases, the inbetweenness of the borderlands space becomes part and

parcel of border and mobility control practices that consign refugees and migrants to a legal limbo. In such cases, moreover, exceptional spaces of exclusion can emerge throughout society, often far from geographical borderland spaces. What we find are everyday liminal spaces defined by legal status and different categories of belonging and citizenship.

Above and beyond the ambiguities of borderlands as spaces of possibility, we recognize that understandings of the term 'borderland' have fundamentally shifted in recent decades. Similar to the notion of 'region', the contemporary scholarship has developed a fundamentally relational approach in which borderlands are 'fuzzy' and malleable categories that are not necessarily fixed to any specific geographical location. This is in stark distinction to the more rigid and state-centric criteria which prevailed in political geography and other academic disciplines up to the 1970s. These earlier understandings are certainly not obsolete and it is clear that historical processes of state formation have been major drivers of borderlands emergence. However, as this anthology of essays on European borderlands clearly demonstrates, the forms, contexts, and socio-political spaces in which borderlands can be understood to exist have vastly expanded. This volume builds on an extensive research background that has investigated the roles of borderlands in the narration of European histories and the territorial, political and social transformations of European states. What emerges from these different perspectives is a multidimensional and often ambivalent framing of European borderlands as spaces of cooperation and dialogue but also as spaces of securitization and exclusion, particularly at the EU's external borders. Given the present context of geopolitical tension and insecurity much is at stake. While Europe's highly diverse borderlands are a reflection of diversity as a European value, they are also sites of struggle to maintain diversity and openness in the face of right-wing populist but even more mainstream pressure for 'national preferences' and cultural politics that insist on unambiguous definitions of national identity.

The aim of this Routledge Handbook is to revisit and reassess the concept of borderlands as reflected in Europe's social, political and cultural transformations. As part of the overall introduction to the multidimensional themes developed here, this first chapter offers a discussion of conceptual change in the study of borderlands and thus foregrounds the research and policy contexts that inform contributions to this Handbook. The Handbook is intended as a resource for scholars and students from a wide variety of disciplines to engage with interdisciplinary aspects of borderlands studies. It also seeks to provide encouragement for future research avenues that reflect the salience of borderlands in understanding processes of political, social, and cultural change.

Relating borders to borderlands

One of the abiding features of the scholarly study of international and other geopolitical borders is that borders, as subjects and objects of research, never cease to surprise. Said differently, what happens at borders, and what happens because of the notions people have about their and others' borders, makes the idea of borders, along with the uploading events at whatever border is the focus in that news cycle, headline news. This, in turn, often positions borders at the forefront of public considerations of local, national, and global response. This is also another way of saying that the changing dimensions of borders, and the changing relations between states and other social and political entities at or about their borders, underlie the conclusion that borders and border relations are urgent matters, an assertion that is often supported with reference to natural and man-made disasters that have an impact on borders and borderlands today, and at any time in the recent past. And while the spotlight may be on some borders in times of peril and stress, it is also clear that precarity is an aspect of daily life in all borderlands, in those territories and communities who live, work and play at and across international border lines. This precarity is a matter of urgency to the

people who daily experience it, alerting us all to the oft-overlooked fact that borderlands have their own internal dynamics, including their own constructions of what the border means and how social boundaries relate to that border.

In reviewing border studies as a preliminary to our intended examination of borderlands, and as one way to energize the planning and implementation of this Routledge Handbook, it quickly became clear that there is no uniform or accepted definition of borderlands within any one academic discipline or across a range of them. This was not surprising to us. We editors have toiled for decades within our own fields of geography and anthropology, and across the social sciences through our endeavors within the growing cross-disciplinary field of border studies and in our own border studies academic institutes, to conclude that borders, boundaries, and frontiers are sometimes synonyms to scholars, but more often are not. This state of affairs thus ostensibly demands that each author and scholarly product clarify the definitions of the concepts used.[1] In addition, our own real-world life experiences in urban, rural, regional, and national borderlands – Scott, among others, in Berlin and Karelia, Wilson, among others, in Brooklyn, Belfast, and Northern Ireland – give us some purchase, and we hope insight, on borderlands as both lived experience and analytical category.

The comparative study of international and other geopolitical borders has in the last few decades made a concerted effort to liberate our mutual understanding of these borders from hegemonic notions of them as natural or the successfully realized territorial and sovereign limits of the nation- or national-state. This view of borders as containers for the nation is a historical product that should be approached by scholars and others critically, and should be done so by 'bringing history back in' to reconsider the evolution of the concept and the realities of nations and states (O'Dowd 2010). This call to remember the historical conditions of state and nation-building, which is simultaneously a call to remember those conditions which created the borderlands, has been increasingly made since the 1990s, a period when the more traditional view of borders as symbols and institutions that demonstrated the power of the state to safeguard national territory, sovereignty and citizenry began to change. From the 1990s, in fact, border studies scholars have shown that while the state is still the 'dominant container of political power in the world' (Jones 2016: 16; see also Casaglia 2020: 27), the locus and balance of political and economic power have shifted in significant ways to agents and agencies above and beyond the level of the state, and to newer domains within the state. Borders are no longer simply or even mainly 'lines in the sand' (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009, 2012) but are institutions in their own right (Paasi 2009, 2012) that are material and symbolic sources of political and territorial power (Newman 2003, 2006) across various regional, national, and global scales of political and economic integration and differentiation (Laine 2016, Laine and Casaglia 2017).

However, still at or close to the center of all of this theorizing of how a multiscalar global ecumene affects quotidian life for elites and common folk across Europe and the wider world, is the fact that international borders are still largely lines in the sand, on the mountaintop, in the river and offshore. As lines they need to be recognized and acted upon. For many the need is to cross them while for others the task is to facilitate, filter or prevent crossing. This is why at the heart of this volume and its contributions is the realization that borderlands as a concept denotes significant connection to land, or perhaps it is better conceived as an attachment to land, territory, and/or property.[2] As ethnographers of all sorts have ably demonstrated, culture sits in places, in the socially meaningful 3D realities often conceived of as space.[3] As such, borderlands are not only identifiable and accessible locations but are places where people have more or less a sense of belonging, or at least awareness that others have these affective ties to the place. This is why, in the midst of so much theorizing of the impact of globalization on local and other forms of identity and identification, where borders

seemingly no longer function as they once did, we can speak in a European context of the Mediterranean as the 'world's deadliest border' (Albahari 2015) and of some areas that ring it as part of a 'no go world' (Andersson 2019). Bluntly put, the analysis of borderlands must consider as a first principle the roles that land, territory, space and place play in any configuration of that border by any interested party at any level of political, social, cultural, and economic life.

Borderlands also serve metaphorically, in and outside of the 'real' borderlands stretching along and away from state borders. This metaphorical sense of borderlands juxtaposes the significance of land and territory to border populations to the virtual everyday lives of other peoples, many distant perhaps from geopolitical borders. The boundary-making explicit in the creation and reproduction of national borders pervades national consciousness, influencing practices and discourses that ostensibly spread from border areas through the whole society (Paasi 1999). Borderlands in this sense include the region stretching away from the border on both sides of the borderline, but also to the many conceptual boundaries entailed in social practices and cultural boundaries within these same border areas.[4] All people experience the borderlands of identity, those areas of social doubt and precarity inherent to all identity relations and that are found both in daily encounters with others and in longstanding relationships. As the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo concluded some decades ago, when considering his own ethnic upbringing as a Chicano in the USA, '[b]orderlands surface not only at the boundaries of officially recognized cultural units, but also at less formal intersections, such as those of gender, age, status, and distinctive life experiences' (1989: 29).

Simply put, the notions of 'borderlands' we proffer here, most if not all of which can be easily discerned and filtered through much of what constitutes border studies today, serve three main functions. Borderlands as a concept focuses attention on the land and territory that constitute the legally demarcated border, those areas identified by governments as the official place of the border. In some countries today and in the past, this can be a wider frontier and security zone than is found in other parts of the globe, places where special rules and identities apply that do not hold sway elsewhere in the respective countries. Borderlands as such function in distinct but related ways in the territory contiguous to a legal borderline. Borderlands are also manifested through the socially constructed ideas, constructed both locally and elsewhere, of where the border is in relation to that borderline. In this way of seeing borderlands, they include not only the geopolitical border, but also the zones of spatially anchored meaning and discourse, action and practice, institutions and roles associated with life at the border. In this mode of description and analysis, the 'border' can be a zone in peoples' vision and understanding that can extend many miles into the territory of the state, in a manner sometimes related to state definitions of where the border region is and sometimes in ways unrelated to government and governance. As ethnographers have amply documented, inquiring of local people 'where is the border' may elicit some remarkably distinct, sometimes contradictory, but always illustrative responses that show how borderland people perceive the physical dimensions of the border and its related territory. The third form of borderlands that we offer as an introduction to the range of perspectives that the contributions to this volume represent is that of the literal and metaphorical role of borderlands as a social boundary, as a marker of identities. Borderlands in this respect are interfaces, between us and them, between sameness and difference. In this vein the border and the borderlands, at any geopolitical boundary, are themselves the interface, creating conditions that make borderlanders different from those populations, cosmopolitans and others, distant from the border. When considering these perspectives together we suggest that borderlands represent interactive social spaces impacted by situated encounters of different cultural, social and political realities at an everyday level. In the spirit of Fredrik Barth (1969) we view borderlands as fluid social realities and permeable frontiers that are potential catalysts of change and hybridization, not necessarily agents in the 'nationalization' of group identities but also forces for tradition and stasis.

Borderlands as social and cultural fields

Given this perspective on borderlands, it is hardly surprising that many disciplinary approaches to the comparative study of geopolitical borders have focused recently on the cultural dimensions of both everyday and monumental life in their related borderlands. The cultural turn that has permeated all of social science, and perhaps most dimensions of public life, has led to the increasing awareness in border studies of the social and cultural boundary making that sometimes is directly attributable to geopolitics, but sometimes not. But despite the growing importance of culture in political and economic affairs, no border scholar can afford to ignore the material significance of the geopolitical roles of borders as markers of state power, national sovereignty and international agreements. But each discipline, due to their own historical paths and current trajectories, has a different emphasis on the balance in approach to theory and method related to the interplay of 'border studies', simply described as the comparative examination of how borders work and what happens in borderlands, and 'border theory', the use of the ideas and perhaps most significantly the metaphor of borders to recognize and analyze fault lines of individual and group identities.[5] This balance in approach, similar in manner but with some notable differences across the social sciences and humanities, has laid the groundwork for new and exciting possibilities for future research agendas in border studies, agendas that embrace the notion that in borderlands 'political rationale, fear and affect coalesce' (Scott 2020a: 5).

In the evolution of their own approaches to the material and ideological dimensions to borders and borderlands, social anthropology, history, and cultural geography have recognized and pioneered the study of 'border cultures', i.e., those cultures, societies, and identities that are endemic to borderlands, but are also the cultural roots of the borderlands that play roles in wider conceptualizations of national and regional culture. As Donnan and Wilson (1999, 11–12) pointed out decades ago, culture is elemental in the study of borders and borderlands for a variety of reasons. National, regional, and local culture frames diplomatic and commercial ties between and among a host of governmental and corporate bodies involved in international relations. These cultures are proactive as well as reactive, and often help to direct national policies, attitudes, and societal trends (for example, as witnessed historically at the Spain-France border when local Catalan forces influenced what would become the inter-state and international border's location [see Sahlins 1989]). In addition, border peoples and their communities are parts of wider social, political, and economic entities, enabling conditions for sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural frontiers, zones of creativity in the making of local cultures that mirror national and other cultures from across the borderline but perhaps just as likely to be from much more distant parts.

Border cultures, however, cannot be analytically, ethnographically, or historically isolated from other more apparent and hegemonic notions of geopolitical borders as markers and manifestations of state and other forms of political dominance and power. Border cultures, societies, economics, and politics are inextricably linked to borderlands as places and spaces where peoples deal with the territorial limits of state power. This is not to ignore or deny that national states also often wield soft and hard power beyond their national territorial limits: while all states attempt this some are better placed and resourced to be successful. All national states project an image of their power, and back this up with policies and practices to demonstrate their power at their borders, through both the legitimate and illegitimate use of force. Borderlands are sites of political and economic relations that are sometimes amicable and sometimes not. But they are also places and spaces where national, regional, and local cultures mix and meet, mate and berate, mash and clash.

These areas of mixed, hybrid, and integrated border culture and society, sometimes equally known for their tensions and sharp differentiations, may be found to some degree at any

international or other geopolitical border, but they exist to a heightened degree in some noteworthy borderlands. These border zones, because of their notoriety and roles in global relations, are often perceived as 'hyperborders' (Romero 2008, Richardson 2016, 2020), but for our purposes here we may just as usefully see them as 'global borderlands' because of the volume, intensity and significance of the political and economic relations that occur there. They are also global borderlands because these relations are part of wider economic, political, and social relations, at continental and global scales, that are imagined as being due in some way to the border. In many cases this global significance is also hyped by the media which focus on the violence and tragedy at these borderlands. Regardless of how they have become so regarded, these global borderlands have become hegemonic in scholarly and popular consciousness as zones of political, cultural, economic, and social interaction that seemingly serve as models for borderlands everywhere. The most studied borderland on a global scale is not in Europe, but its changing role in world affairs may help us to illustrate key themes in the changing topographies of European borderlands.

Writing in 2013 Michael Dear speculated on the idea of borderlands as spaces of transition. In this case, he referred to the 'Third Nation' bridging Mexico and the United States at the border and beyond.[6] He observed that:

> In recent years, I've travelled the entire length of the 2,000-mile US-Mexico border many times, on both sides. There are so many unexpected and inspiring places! Mutual interdependence has always been the hallmark of cross-border communities. Border people are staunchly independent and composed of many cultures with mixed loyalties. They get along perfectly well with people on the other side, but remain distrustful of far-distant national capitals. The border states are among the fastest-growing regions in both countries — places of economic dynamism, teeming contradiction, and vibrant political and cultural change.

Anticipating Donald Trump's massive wall-building project, Dear concludes that border barriers and the hardships and violence inflicted upon the region by the USA's punitive border regime would not stop the 'third nation' from flourishing.

This particular 'third nation' may be seen in some circles to be a special case. It is apparent that European borderlands are seldom narrated in such emotive ways in scholarship and in the media. At first glance this seems to reflect a lack of similar historical contexts of bi-nationality for it is often difficult to identify European cross-border entities that parallel the transatlantic conditions apparent in North America.[7] And yet, what Dear describes resonates with European experience, and this is evidenced by what may be seen, on one hand, as an increasing everyday transnationalism and routinization of border-transcending practices, or, on the other, as a new awareness of many of the transnational ties and routines that have characterized European borderlands for decades, in some instances, and for centuries in others. This perspective on borderlands as a 'third nation', which borrows from the longstanding analyses of borderlands in feminist and ethnic studies that derive from Gloria Anzaldúa's examination of the USA-Mexico borderlands, where 'the lifeblood of two worlds' come together 'to form a third country – a border culture' (1987, 3), redirects our collective gaze from borders as peripheries to their roles as core elements of much that is significant in the bodies politic, economic, and social of the nation. Borderlands as third nations and countries allow us to shift the narrative of borderlands as mere appendages of, or liminal spaces within, nation-states to a perspective that endows them with meaning and agency as socio-spatial phenomena. Another way to approach these phenomena is to examine them in their roles within politics, writ large and small.

Borderlands as political arenas

It seems to be an accepted fact that all geopolitical borders, and most importantly all international borders, are 'inescapably political', where 'borders express political agency in deciding life and death questions as well as creating spaces for dialogue and coexistence', and are 'mutable, adaptable and malleable' political technologies (Casaglia 2020, 27). It follows then that if all borders are political, so too are all borderlands. But this is only a partial story, a half or less-than-half truth. As we have just asserted, borderlands are landscapes and tropes of culture and identity, spaces, and places where cultures mix and culture is created. Borderlands are both terrain and mindsets where social relations mirror aspects of social structure and organization often more comfortably called nations and other ethnic entities, which are also equally associated with varieties of class, race, gender, and sexuality. One result of the growing importance of culture and identity, in what was once the preserve of those who saw borders as political and geographic structures that marked and established national territory, sovereignty, and citizenship, has been the recognition that borders are the physical realizations of political, social, and economic processes, and that the related acts of bordering are significant and unavoidable everyday practices (Iossifova 2020, 92–93). But the increasing awareness of these processes, and the growing attention paid to them, are social and cultural realities that can be seen as both threat and support for borderlands as politics. For example, as one geographer sees it with reference to the 'hyper-borders' already discussed, these borderlands also entail 'hyper-realities' where

> We find countless examples of alternative imaginaries, where instrumental and contingent notions of belonging can triumph over rigid state-centric typologies of identity. While borders can be symbols of division and difference, they can also generate a myriad of alternative and fluid senses of belonging. (Richardson 2020, 44)

This 'third-way' approach to understanding and studying borderlands reflects a fundamental paradigmatic shift in the way human territoriality and state spaces have been conceptualized by scholars, but also increasingly by others who have come to see the multi-dimensionality of border politics.[8] The need to adopt various analytical perspectives on borders and borderlands has been apparent to scholars since the birth of our respective scholarly disciplines. In more traditional schools of human geography, 'borderlands' have been typically understood as frontiers between nations in the process of 'becoming', as zones of transition between societies and their emerging nationhood (see Rumley and Minghi 1991, House 1980, 1982). This is a classical notion of 'frontier' based, for example, on North American or Russian experience as a regional situation that precedes the consolidation of state territoriality within formal borders, or the colonial imposition of bordered administrative territoriality. In Ladis Kristof's (1959, 281) famous formulation: 'the frontier (as borderland) is characteristic of rudimentary socio-political relations; relations marked by rebelliousness, lawlessness and/or absence of laws'. According to Kristof these characteristics diminish with the increasing centripetal forces of state-building and emergence of state (often teleological) borders.

Friedrich Ratzel's (1897) classic political geography of borders also took the frontier as a point of departure, a state of nature given by environmental conditions and the need for human societies to establish a sense of territoriality. In Ratzel's definition the borderland (Grenzsaum) is a partly protective, partly interactive space that facilitates the exchange needed to support individual groups while reducing the potential for conflict between them. While this definition can be partly reconciled with Barth's (1969) social anthropological framing of borderlands as permeable

frontiers between ethnic groups,[9] in Ratzel's geo-deterministic scheme hybrid identities at some point take on less 'ambiguous' forms as borderlands become subsumed into civilizational projects of nation-building and territorial expansion.

These ideas of borderlands ephemerality are compelling when viewed from the perspective of conceptual history, but they of course could not anticipate the long-term salience of borderlands as vital geographical concepts and social realities, reflecting the fact that the development of the nation-state has not been linear or straightforward. Many of Europe's historical borderlands have indeed perished in any active or practical sense but they exist as historical, linguistical, townscape relics and vital narratives of regional identity. One need only consider the significance of Andalucía, Sicily or Corfu as historical crossroads whose multicultural pasts are inscribed in local architecture, cuisine, place names, and dialects.

Fast-forwarding several decades to the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall, we find a radically transformed borderlands debate. Baud and van Schendel (1997), for example, urged us to go beyond the state-centric perspective and the reification of state borders as an object of study for this staid approach reproduces formalistic and static categorizations of borderlands. In a similar methodological caution, Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) label this approach as 'methodological nationalism', where the nation-state is uncritically viewed as the apogee of political evolution and where scholars accept states' views of their own histories and futures as the realizations of a natural order of things. In their compelling arguments for a new borderlands history, which is at the same time a critique of the national-state as both concept and contemporary event, these authors have both recognized the physical, political and social impacts of state borders but at the same time also have suggested that these impacts have often disrupted everyday life. In this reading, borderlands are often places where locals ignore the border or subvert its purposes, such as the exercise of power and legal control. According to van Schendel (2005, 45–46): borderlands are sites where state territoriality and the parading of sovereignty at borders are contested, often consistently and regularly through such things as smuggling. But state borders are still sites where states project their power, where both due and undue attention is paid to matters that are highlighted as being threats to the nation and state. Borderlands are locations where the state must have a large and hard presence. This clash of what to some are contradictory realities in borderlands, of spaces where the state and nation are both reinforced and subverted, informs all border and borderlands studies today, and is emblematic of borderlands as political arenas.[10]

As perspectives on borderlands have shifted in border studies, within academic disciplines and in interdisciplinary approaches, there has been a similar evolution in theorizations that situate borders not at the extremities or liminal edges of the state but as key actors in national and global political economy. According to Emanuel Brunet-Jailly (2005, 639) borderlands have emerged as political agents, noting that the 'unifying, symbolic, dividing and exclusionary role of a border as a founding principle of a sovereign state is currently under pressure'. Brunet-Jailly's theorization focuses on capacities for political agency in rather specific cases, namely cross-border metropolitan regions such as San-Diego-Tijuana, Seattle-Vancouver, and Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta. While these might be exceptional regions globally speaking, there is much evidence that border cities, twin-cities and regions at state borders are significant places economically and politically for they demonstrate the malleability in state projections of sovereignty, and are evidence, in some locations in Europe, for what many in the EU see as shared sovereignty, a keystone of European integration.

Within the context of European integration in general and debates regarding trajectories of European Union territorial cohesion specifically, the borderlands concept has experienced a renaissance of sorts, for example in the guise of border regions. One reason for this is that cross-border

cooperation and local and regional community-building have become part of the political identity of the EU as they contribute to prospective imaginations of a more cosmopolitan and more integrated future. The European Commission (2015) has showcased these borderlands as overlapping and multi-scalar cartographies of formal and semi-formal cooperation across European borders that have been built up since 1989. However, the characterization of borderlands as laboratories of 'Europeanization' reveals a tension between positive, indeed rather normative, readings of being at 'the margin' and critical assessments of EU dysfunction, spatial polarization and crisis. Consequently, the framing of borderlands as socio-political, economic, and environmental spaces partly reflects but also transcends interpretations of European integration as a process of simultaneous de-bordering and re-bordering.

Overview of the handbook

The present volume seeks to shed light on several questions that emerge when pondering the significance of Europe's borderlands. How have they been formed in the European context and why? How do they exist as political and social phenomena? What constitutes conditions of 'borderlandness' as 'inbetweenness'? In order to address questions such as these this Handbook is organized into four broadly defined sections that elaborate the ideas developed above though some 25 contributions representing individual scholarly perspectives. There are undoubtedly overlaps between the sections given the inherent difficulty of identifying specific single issues or topics that unambiguously characterize individual borderlands. However, these four sections capture major dynamics conditioning borderlands that for the purposes of this volume are characterized as: securitization, cooperation, resilience, and enactments of sovereignty. As such, the themes that will be elaborated here are indicative of the diverse ways in which borderlands can be contextualized and understood.

At one level borderlands are spaces of securitization and buffer zones in terms of governance of asylum and border permeability. Related to this, they are also places where the enactment but also the targeted political orchestration of sovereignty is performed as well as experienced at the everyday level. In the case of the EU, borderlands have been interpreted as spaces that embody situations of peripherality and liminality, but also centrality as socio-political categories in debating the EU's future and questions related to resilience in the face of mobility restrictions and 'rebordering' tendencies. Borderlands as spaces of encounter and dialogue are another major focus of the collection and several chapters portray European borderlands in terms of everyday interaction where EU border porosity is negotiated, border openness enacted, and cooperation is promoted and practiced in concrete terms. As the following chapters demonstrate, Europe's borderlands exist within the tension of these highly different if often interconnected dynamics.

Section one: borderlands of (in)security and control

The 'revenge of borders' is a leitmotif that informs many of the chapters in this handbook and it aptly reflects the increasing political emphasis of security, understood for example in terms of restricted mobility and the creation of 'hostile environments' for asylum seekers and refugees. Thom Tyerman and Nick Vaughn-Williams begin this section with a look at the British-European case and the post-Brexit enactment of UK sovereign power through the securitization of unauthorized migration. Here, the (English) Channel is narrated as a borderland where crisis and perceived threats to national integrity are buffered by sovereign borderwork aimed at assuaging nationalist and (post)colonial ontological anxieties. The authors argue that border security practices serve

to create a borderland imaginary of sovereign power and security that obfuscates the violence exerted by border control, and that the failure of such practices to stop 'undesired' migrants from crossing also undermines this enactment. The instable Channel border 'must be continuously recreated through everyday acts of embodied violence that segregates populations according to post/colonial racialized hierarchies of humanity'. In the following chapter by Jaume Castan Pinos and Steen Bo Frandsen crisis and anxiety also feature prominently as drivers of borderland geopolitics. Borderlands are on the frontlines of geopolitical turbulence. Despite the frequent normative framing of borderlands as spaces of cooperation, these authors suggest that Europe is 'fertile ground' for their geopolitical instrumentalization. Historical memory and the revival of historical grievances continue to haunt many border regions and have the potential to unsettle cross-border relations produce varying degrees of conflict. In turn, such instrumentalization decidedly contributes to the unsettledness of many European borders. Borderland geopolitics are also at the center of Tatiana Zhurzhenko's analysis of the present Ukrainian-Russian context, evocatively framed as a shift from 'borderlands to bloodlands'. This borderland emerged with Russian and Ukrainian nation-building projects after 1991 and has since transitioned through several phases of permeability, post-Soviet 'inbetweenness' and then nationalization and ultimately alienation As part of Russian aggression the borderland is presently characterized by a mosaic of geopolitically contrived borders, pseudo-states, ceasefire lines and. as Zhurzhenko argues, 'grey zones in a permanent state of exception'. Analyzing different dimensions of border temporalities (fading nostalgia for the Soviet past, decommunization in Ukraine and re-imperialization of Russian history) Zhurzhenko suggests that the 'post-Soviet moment' in the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands is indeed over.

In Agnieszka Halemba's chapter the Polish-Belarusian borderland forms the backdrop of a geopolitical instrumentalization of migration that ostensibly responds to perceived threats emanating from a Russian proxy but also has served the Polish government's agenda of criminalizing undesired refugees. The borderland itself is a sparsely populated forest realm that has been transformed into a space of deterrence where refugees are objectified as 'living weapons' of hybrid warfare. As Halemba documents, these harsh bordering practices are presented as a moral issue across the political spectrum: 'all parties mobilize the language of morality, values, ethics and rights to justify their actions or criticize the actions of others'. The borderland and the forest area it encompasses are also narrated in relation to nature, highlighting their role as (geo)political actors in multiple debates. Sarah Green provocatively questions the national, European, and ultimately anthropocentric exceptionalisms that inform the control and security functions of border regimes. Green challenges the notion that borders can effectively function as unambiguous categorizations of difference. This includes the idea that any specific border in Europe can be understood exclusively as European. Directing her gaze towards non-human border-crossers, such as animals, plants, and microbes, Green argues that borderlands are criss-crossed by different, often conflicting, classification logics (and thus borders). Thinking about more-than-human 'bystanders' in the development of European border regimes and the classification systems that allow certain living beings to be considered 'invasive' or species habitats to be divided, we are reminded that borders are always more than 'just' borders as they permanently generate deep ethical, philosophical and scientific questions. The final chapter in the section deals with borderland securitization as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Elżbieta Opiłowska and Florian Weber investigate the impacts of 'covidfencing', i.e. the process or national retrenchment in response to public health concerns and popular anxieties. In 2020 and beyond local populations in many European borderlands suddenly found themselves at odds with the centrally decreed border closures and mobility restrictions. Employing the concept of resilience, Opiłowska and Weber study the capacity of subnational actors to resist, recover, and transform. Based on case studies of the trinational

Saarland-Loraine-Luxemburg and German-Polish border regions, they indicate how borderlands inbetweenness empowered a politics of resistance that in many cases resulted in special dispensations for local communities and an ability to negotiate pandemic border restrictions.

Section two: creativity, cooperation, and resilience

Local resilience in cross-border relations is never completely endogenous and the interplay of European-level, national, and local border-related dynamics is of key significance. As Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola points out, borderlands are indeed both spaces of contact and division and she aptly documents this in her analysis of the resilience of Finnish-Swedish cross-border relations. She provides vital historical background regarding gradual processes of state-building in which inhabitants on both sides of the borderland experienced 'spatial socialization' within national identity narratives but also later a Europeanization of territorial identity though new forms of cooperation. While crisis situations such as the 2015 refugee event and Covid-19 revealed tensions between local, national, and European attachments, cross-border relations and borderland identities also indicate sturdiness and resilience. European borderlands, particularly in its 'core' regions, are frequently associated with effective regional forms of cooperation. Christophe Sohn elaborates the example of the 'Greater Region' (la Grande Région) encompassing Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg which to an extent functions as a space of cooperation but also a 'paradox of integration'. What we find is an astonishing disparity between high levels of economic interdependence within the Grande Région (Luxembourg is a major employment center that provides livelihoods to but also depends on commuters from its French and German hinterlands), and low levels of political cooperation in order to manage interdependence and its externalities. Here, cross-border cooperation has struggled to integrate the various visions and interests in this tri-national space and has failed to address environmental and other development problems generated by economic inequalities. According to Sohn, here we are confronted with the vexing situation of a cross-border regional idea addressing a vital need to transcend borders but an economic and 'uncooperative' borderland that thrives on the exploitation of border-induced differentials.

A more successful case of cooperative region cum borderlands is provided by Juan-M. Manuel Trillo-Santamaría, Valerià Paül, and Roberto Vila-Lage. The focus here is on the borderland between the autonomous region of Galicia in Spain and Northern Portugal, known by its acronym GNP. The authors present the GNP as an example of a 'cooperative borderland', partly based on programmatic cooperative agendas but also on local traditions of cross-border interaction. The authors describe the emergence and development of the GNP as a cross-border region and as the most established of the Spanish-Portuguese Euroregions. As they indicate, region-building through cooperation and EU support of cross-border projects has had to contend with numerous political tensions, many of them national and ideological in nature. Ultimately, GNP has endured as it is seen to serve local needs on both sides of the border. The authors suggest that GNP is a success story that has weathered more general tendencies of national retrenchment Europe-wide and that it underscores the importance of cross-border cooperation as a promoters of cohesion within the EU. Another example of a cooperative borderland, but at a smaller scale, is that of the many twin cities in Europe that have pursued different forms of cross-border integration. Ekaterina Mikhailova's study of twin cities across national boundaries provides an historical overview of their emergence and contribution to the development of cross-border cooperation in Europe more generally. As Mikhailova argues, European twin cities have developed a specific cooperation model centered on the pooling of resources and thus the generation of synergies between collaborating neighboring urban settlements. In some cases, this represents an element of EU soft power – an inspiration for joint cross-border action of local authorities outside of the EU.

Mikhailova's arguments resonate with suggestions that borderlands offer innovative potential for cooperation across borders. Vincent Pijnenburg and Henk van Houtum discuss borderlands as 'borderscapes' that represent resources for cooperation rather than simply spaces where barriers require constant transcendence. They argue that borders inherently represent critical and creative resources for cross-border opportunities and offer the Dutch-German Euroregion Rhine-Meuse as an example. Conceptualizing border spaces simultaneously as thresholds and creative resources they develop a spatial design approach or 'collaborative borderscaping' as a co-create spatial planning scenario across national borders. The final chapter in the section takes us back to the problematic but frequent co-existence of cooperation and securitization practices in borderlands that not only restrict refugee mobility but politicize borders in ways that that negatively impact cross-border relations. Raffaella Coletti's account of the Italy-France context is particularly illustrative of a rebordering dynamic underlying political and institutional change. As Coletti argues, this rebordering can be characterized as a 'revenge of borders' in an uncertain Europe. Reflected in frequent suspensions of Schengen regulations at the border. It serves as an example of a return to more old-fashioned pre-integration geopolitical thinking is changing thinking on and practices at the EUs internal borders and they seem to be re-assuming their capacities to denote 'defensive lines' against cultural, economic or political threats, despite European integration. While the Italy-France borderland is an emblematic space of reconciliation and integration and a place of long-standing cooperation, this borderland is presently better known for the harsh management of migrant mobility and the revisiting of past territorial claims.

Section three: mashing and clashing sovereignties and identities

As indicated above in the first section, the parading of sovereign power in borderlands cannot conceal the fact that national sovereignty is at best partial in practical terms. However the power of territorial national sovereignty as a popular imaginary remains considerable. Katy Hayward and Milena Komarova begin the third section of the handbook by interrogating competing constructions of Irish and UK sovereignty within the context of the Brexit process and negotiating a new border regime. The post-conflict and post-Brexit borderland situation on the Island of Ireland is significant as it defies the imposition of hard-and-fast territorial control and exposes the fuzziness of sovereignty as a concept. The authors' analysis suggests that in the present borderland context sovereignty is enacted by 'mashes' of different regulations, actors, practices, etc., and as a result, local citizens with different Irish national aspirations can profit from the ambiguities of fluid borders. Nevertheless, local citizens continue to give credence to the imaginary of national and territorial sovereignty as indivisible. Thus, as the authors suggest, the Irish-UK borderland is a site where 'Westphalian notions of sovereignty persist in the territorial imaginations of citizens even as the significance of Westphalian borders recedes'. In the following contribution Thomas M. Wilson posits that *Brexitism* has become a core feature of local and everyday political ideology, action and symbolism in the Northern Ireland borderlands. Borrowing from scholarship on banal nationalism, Wilson posits that *Brexitism* fosters both an instrumental and banal Europeanism, where European integration can be simultaneously approached as supportive of various Irish Nationalist goals that to outsiders might appear to be contradictory. To many Northern Ireland borderlanders, Brexit has pushed them to reconsider their political futures in ways not predicted by the British Brexiteers who succeeded so surprisingly in their referendum victory in 2016. Wilson asks whether Europeanism, as a post-Westphalian imaginary of sovereignty, exists in the Northern Ireland borderlands and whether borderlanders expect this Europeanism to grow. Based on his ethnographic research on the Northern Ireland borderlands Wilson's answer is a clear 'yes'.

As several chapters in the Handbook indicate, intersections between state sovereignty and borderlands are clearly manifested in the governance of refugee mobility and 'refugeehood'. Olga Demetriou pursues this line of investigation with a view towards borderlands as spaces of exceptionality. Appropriating the metaphor of 'imbrication', Demetriou elaborates how layers of histories, discourses, laws and political practices have created the specific conditions upon which contemporary practices of bordering, securitizing and 'processing' refugees are based. The concept of imbrication is significant because it captures the inbetweenness of borderland spaces where the exceptionality inherent in sovereign territoriality is coterminous with the EU's supranational regime of border governance. In his chapter Christian Lamour elaborates on the multifaceted connections between populism, borders, and borderlands. He suggests that 'populism is a concept, a way of acting, and a flexible approach to space, consisting of using borders and borderlands to connect with a proportion of the citizenry open to an antagonistic vision of society'. Lamour explores the populism-borderlands nexus from three main perspectives. First, he discusses the centrality of borders and borderlands in the conceptualization of populism. This leads to his second perspective of mapping the behavior of populist political forces in borderlands in relation to their (frequently ambiguous) attitudes towards cross-border mobility and border controls. Finally, Lamour links connections between populism, borders, and borderlands to a broader framework of socio-spatial relations and also in relation to the (de)bordering processes enacted by ordinary citizens. Migrants and refugees are perennial targets of right-wing populist discourse, however Marie Sandberg reminds us that the political mainstream has much to account for in this process of demonization. Sandberg calls for more critical introspection into the nature of political and social border-making and how ways in which borderlands emerge through the creation of liminality. She asks the question: 'when borders diffuse into societies and bodies, when do we know how and when they matter?' Through her focus on the boundary work of refugees and volunteers in the regime of mobility deterrence, temporary protection, and return policies that has characterized the post-2015 retrenchment of Danish immigration and asylum policy, Sandberg argues for a more nuanced border vocabulary to better understand what living with political, social, and ultimately existential liminality means. The condition of liminality is not limited to any specific border context but is indeed implicated in struggles for refugee recognition worldwide. Finally, with Martin Klatt's chapter our gaze shifts to the case of the Danish-German borderland and another form of border retrenchment. Ostensibly a textbook example of good cooperation practices. Klatt delves into uncomfortable questions related to national sovereignty and the construction of national (Danish and German) minorities. As Klatt indicates, normative notions of borderlands as laboratories of integration are not necessarily reflected in positive ways; in this case institutionalized cooperation has come to a standstill, with former best practice examples of cross-border public services slowly being dismantled and repurposed as 'national' solutions. Despite the theoretical existence of preconditions for effective cooperation there is no automatic guarantee such cooperation will materialize. In the Danish-German case Klatt identifies three decisive factors that explain this: (1) competition between state-level interests and those of cross-border cooperation, (2) a lack of local commitment to develop interaction across the border and (3) the legacy of historical memories and their specific translation as national narratives of parallel societies of clear-cut majority and minority populations in the borderlands. All of these factors are set within a framework of national retrenchment in border management and systemic barriers to further integration.

Section four: European borderlands in (post)globalization

Globalization is both a measureable indicator of functional and economic interdependence across borders as well as an imaginary of convergence and integration that can be interpreted in multiple

ways. Borderland inbetweenness is often narrated as a reflection of globalization processes but it is not always clear whether this inbetweenness signifies a 'post-national' condition or forms part of a re-enactment of national sovereignty (Widdis 2019). In fact, the idea that many borderlands have entered a phase of 'post-globalization' has been posited by Konrad (2021), You and Romero (2022) and others. What seems clear is that many European borderlands have persisted in cross-border cooperation at the same time that bordered sovereignty is being reasserted and ideas associated with open, cooperative borders are being marginalized. With the final set of essays that complements previous discussion of conflict, cooperation and resilience we explore different borderlands contexts that reflect the ambiguities of globalization s expressions of 'post-national'. Péter Balogh's point of reference is Hungary, which embodies Endre Ady's famous metaphor of a 'ferry country', a borderland nation moving between East and West in its search for a place in Europe and the world. Hungary's national 'borderlandness' is presently reflected in neo-nationalist and populist challenges to Hungary's predominantly Western identity. This is revealed in narratives of national uniqueness that are based on myths of historical Eastern origins and fed by disillusionment in the West as well as pragmatic considerations. Balogh enumerates parallel and partly contradictory projects that define this repurposing of Hungary's borderlandness. One of them is regional alliance building with other countries at EUrope's edge, as a counterbalance to the EU core's hegemony. Another one is Hungary's ambitious kin-state politics that occasionally cause frictions with some of the neighbors with whom regional cooperation is envisioned. James W. Scott continues the discussion of the significance of kin-state politics and ethnogeopolitics in the case of the Ukrainian regions Transcarpathia. Transcarpathia (Zakarpattya in Ukrainian) is a product of long-term historical processes and particularly of 20th Century de- and reterritorializations of multinational European empires. Moreover, Transcarpathia is a study in complexity that reflects post-1991 political and social transformations and Ukraine's emerging relations with the EU. Scott analyzes how Transcarpathia has become a target of Hungarian and Russian ethnogeopolitical agendas that involve the instrumentalization of the region's borderland context in order to suggest Transcarpathia's non-Ukrainianness, thus implying a need to belong unambiguously to an appropriate national space. Ultimately, Transcarpathia's borderland situation will depend on the long-term consequences of the present conflict and Ukraine's future relations with the EU.

Borderlands conflict and contestations are also at the center of Şule Can's exploration of Turkey as a security borderland and de facto border guard for the EU in order to prevent the passage of refugees. This situation has particularly impacted refugees since the Syrian civil war but also in the aftermath of the 2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Focusing on Antakya, the southernmost border city of Turkey, Can argues that Turkey and EU member states are complicit in promoting human suffering by perpetuating violent border politics and a situation of legal limbo for Syrian refugees in Turkey. These border politics exacerbate the uncertainty and extremely dire conditions under which earthquake survivors including refugees live and the discrimination against them that continues. Can also discusses how the Euro-centric approach to security and Turkey's position as the EU's borderland mutually reinforce racism against migrants in Turkey. Along somewhat similar lines Ramazan Aras and Ibrahim Emre Yanik analyze the creation of the Turkish security wall on the border with Syria as a 're-inscription' of Turkish sovereignty and power. The authors argue that the wall's significance is not limited to securitization and physical separation but also works to undermine multifarious cross-border ties that have long existed between Turkey and Syria. Aras and Yanik propose that the wall projects Turkey's political, historical, cultural, and economic interests in the region, along with fears, anxieties, and frustrations towards strengthening regional and cross-border ethnic-nationalist and sectarian mobilizations. They also claim that the newly erected wall is yet another layer of extraterritorial security and mobility control within the European border regime, aggressively filtering out unwanted refugees.

Post-globalization as illiberalism as well as the (re)nationalization of borders are also in focus in Karolina Follis' study of recent events in Poland's eastern border regions. Follis revisits the tensions between the Europeanization of the EU external border after Polish accession and the subsequent rebranding of the Eastern border as one of 'protecting Europe' from refugees and hybrid war. Concentrating on the period between 2015 and 2022, Follis investigates disparate responses of the Polish state to different groups of people (Ukrainians and Afghans, for example) arriving at its border stem from the same political imperative, namely, to reclaim and reemphasize sovereign power over the border. Follis suggests that by (re)nationalizing the border, Poland's rightwing government demonstrated its political value to the EU.

Marek Wieckowski also deals with transboundary natural areas but as borderlands that have emerged from legacies of relative isolation and physical separation. Present-day conservation areas in border regions often coincide with borders that historically emerged in unpopulated areas. In addition, reopened geopolitical borders have revealed untouched natural areas that offer themselves as protected areas. As Wieckowski explains, the political marginalization of border areas has simultaneously increased the natural value of protected natural areas and in several cases facilitated the establishment of national parks at and across borders. Many borderlands in Europe therefore have an active role in nature conservation in river, coastal and mountain areas such as the Alps, Carpathian Range and Scandinavian Mountains. Several of these conservation areas have received international recognition as natural heritage areas and form the basis of substantial cross-border relationships and cooperation. Wieckowksi outlines the development of borderlands preservation areas from their origins through to the contemporary situation in Europe. The author's objective is twofold: on the one hand, to illustrate the role of close connection between natural environments and borderland evolution, and on the other to highlight how cross-border conservation has evolved under different geopolitical circumstances.

In the final chapter of the book Jussi Laine takes us back to an emblematic European borderland, that which straddles the present-day Finnish and Russian border and which closely reflects the vicissitudes of Finnish-Russian relations. Laine relates the several changes in the borderland's status in terms of bordering and rebordering processes. As he states, recent history suggests that clear-cut trajectories towards gradual cross-border integration within borderlands are rather the exception than the rule. In the case of the Finnish-Russian borderland, globalization has resulted in highly ambivalent outcomes that can be captured with de/rebordering processes. After World War II this borderland emerged as an ideologically loaded 'civilizational' frontier zone between East and West. However, after the end of the Cold War the borderland represented a showcase of post-Soviet era good neighborliness and cooperation, and then an example of a 'Europeanized' and new integrative neighborhood. With the present conflict the Finnish-Russian borderland has again become a highly bordered space and extensive cross-border cooperation initiatives have ceased. As a result, the tangible benefits of everyday cross-border cooperation and interaction, quite significant for the many peripheral areas located within the borderland space, have evaporated. In this sense, the Finnish-Russian borderland maintains symbolic significance as an example of 'post-globalization'.

Conclusion

The essays contained in this Handbook aptly illustrate the rích diversity that characterizes Europe's many borderlands. While it is true that many, perhaps all, borderlands share some structural and processual features related to security, legal statuses, trade, etc., it is also just as true that all borderlands also have their own peculiar historical and contemporary characteristics. Borderlands, like

the geopolitical borders and overlapping social boundaries that help to frame these features, are richly polysemic and polymorphic (Wilson 2024). Despite being mercurial, and perhaps because of the changing and ever dynamic nature of European borderlands, this Handbook offers a chronicle of many diverse, some parallel and some contradictory, aspects of contemporary European borderlands, from the UK to Russia, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. At this present time our discussion of things (geo)political is very much influenced by what can be termed a 'revenge of borders'. This is indeed reflected in many of the contributions to the Handbook. Nationalist and neo-imperial aggression against borderlands and their ambiguous senses of identity is one extreme case of this revanchist impulse. We are also confronted with frequent exploitations of identity at borders through populist political forces.

This Handbook also offers a longer-term perspective according to which borderlands formation represents an unfinalizable process of interaction that is conditioned by national and regional histories as well as processes of conflict and reconciliation. Some of our authors depict events and processes strictly or mainly on one side of an international borderline. Still others examine cross-border cooperation, competition, and other forms of longstanding relations. Yet other authors explore very new developments at some borders, developments often with wider significance in the region, continent or globe. And there are even some contributions to this collection that, true to form to the letter and spirit of comparative border and borderland studies, see whole countries and regions as borderlands between major civilizational and global entities and forces. This is because borders and border studies, and borderlands and borderland studies, cannot be easily contained, spatially and conceptually. They do not fit neatly into the boxes and two-dimensional matrices applied to them by map makers and cosmopolitan elites alike. Thinking and acting beyond the box is demanded of border scholars, and necessary in the continuing scholarship of European borderlands.

Notes

1 The attempt to reconcile disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches to the same or similar topic, which in this case is related to borders and borderlands, is particularly difficult to achieve in major state of the art compendia, for example, see Scott (2020b), Wastl-Walter (2011), Wilson and Donnan (2012), Wilson (2025b).

2 Our call to remember borderlands as inextricably tied to ideas and institutions related to territory is also a reminder that it is easy to fall into the territorial trap about which John Agnew (1994, 2008) famously alerted us, where national and state borders were uncritically associated with hard limits of power, sovereignty, and identity.

3 The usage and definition of 'place' and 'space' varies across the social sciences and cultural studies. Here we refer to place as a location, a coordinates on a map, for example, while space is how those locations are made meaningful through cultural relations. We accept that for some the terms might need to be reversed.

4 For a longer consideration of borders, frontiers, and borderlands *as* boundary making institutions, practices, and beliefs, and as institutions, practices, and beliefs *in* borderlands, see Álvarez (1995, 2012), Donnan and Wilson (1999, 2012), Green (2012, 2018), Paasi (1996, 1999), Wilson (2025a,b).

5 For an early and influential review of this interplay between border theory and border studies, see Heyman (1994).

6 https://blog.oup.com/2013/02/third-nation-along-the-us-mexico-border/.

7 The 'third country' conditions that Anzaldúa recognized in the USA-Mexico borderlands have parallels in other North and South American border zones. This is true not only in the nominal North-South global divide between what once were seen as First and Third World nations, which was the particular interest of Anzaldua because of its concomitant borderlands of ethnic, gender, racial, and class divisions that are linked to the geopolitical. These and other forms of 'everyday regionalism' characterize other Western hemisphere borderlands, such as the Canada-USA border (Wilson 2024: 74–78). Another form of transnationalism may be seen in the impact of efforts by the EU and others to foster a European identity

as one way to offset past nationalist conflict, a situation that had developed in Northern Ireland that was subverted to some degree by Brexit (Wilson 2020)

8 Border studies within academic disciplines have increasingly adopted perspectives and sometimes methods that are often associated with other cognate scholarly fields. It is also true that the growing field of border studies, interdisciplinary by definition, has always relied on particular disciplinary strengths and conceptualizations. It is thus all but impossible to view the comparative study of borders without analytically and methodologically adopting a multidisciplinary approach (Wilson 2025a, 2025b).

9 This work by Barth impelled social and cultural anthropologists to examine the ethnic and cultural dimensions of national borderlands. These have been core features of the anthropology of borders since the 1970s. For reviews of the evolution of anthropological and other ethnographic studies of borders in borderlands, see Donnan and Wilson (1999), Rösler and Wendl (1999), Wilson (2024).

10 It is not our intention in this introduction to provide yet another overview of the state of border studies. However, it would be impossible to provide any meaningful introduction to a compendium of contemporary borderland studies without reference to key themes in the evolution of borderlands as political institutions and processes, and of dominant and alternative social, economic, and cultural practices and values to be found in borderlands. For an introduction to these key themes, which have lately coalesced around concepts of bordering, ordering, othering, borderscapes, and borderities, see Amilhat Szary et al. (2015), Andersen et al. (2016), Brambilla (2015), Brunet-Jailly (2005), Green (2012, 2015), Johnson et al. (2011), Jones (2012), Kolossov (2005), Kolossov and Scott (2013), Laine (2016), Newman (2003, 2006), Paasi (1996, 2012), Parker and Vaughan-Williams (2009, 2012), Rumford (2006, 2012), Scott (2020), Van Houtum (2005, 2021), Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002), Vaughan-Williams (2009, 2015), Yuval-Davis et al. (2019).

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