

ARTÍCULO INVITADO

Negotiating the “Spatial Turn” in European Cross-Border Governance: Notes on a Research Agenda

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ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the slippery nature of the term “governance”, the paper begins by canvassing a “first-wave” of academic reflection on the governance of European cross-border regions, emergent in the early to mid-1990s amid a EU-phoric plethora of institutional innovations designed to create “laboratories of European integration” within and across the internal borders formerly dividing European member states. The paper then excavates the limitations of this theoretical sediment, arguing that by drawing on literatures rooted in public administration and political science, the properly *spatial* dimension of cross-border governance has been muted, if not rendered invisible. The paper seeks to address this shortcoming by focusing on insights offered up by the “spatial turn” in geography and the wider social sciences as they relate to the increasingly visible problematic of transboundary governance evident at this time. Through this conceptual frame the author argues for a normative as well as theoretical specificity to cross-border regional spatiality, one which foregrounds the fact that, rather than merely epiphenomenal or derivative to state space, European cross-border regions (or, *euregios*) today are themselves important sites where the very meaning of “the political” is being negotiated, contested, resisted and transformed. The paper suggests that a way forward in the analysis of governance in Europe’s cross-border regions will demand breaking beyond several key assumptions of the mainstream border studies literature, notably the by now mantra-like insistence of borders as involving primarily identitarian distinctions between “Us and Them”, and, concomitantly with this outlook, an understanding of internal European borders and cross-border regions as idiographically unique appendages to state territoriality. In contradistinction to these hegemonic assumptions, a postcolonial, “contrapuntal” research agenda is posed, one which seeks to actively counter the logic of reducing cross-border “difference” to the “Same” by way of a renewed comparative perspectivalism.

Key words: governance; cross-border regions; spatial turn; Same/difference; decolonization; frontier.

Negociando el “giro espacial” de la gobernanza transfronteriza en Europa: notas de una agenda de investigación

RESUMEN

Sin dejar de reconocer la naturaleza escurridiza del término “gobernanza”, este artículo comienza trazando una panorámica de la “primera ola” de producción académica sobre la gobernanza de regiones transfronterizas en Europa, que surgió entre principios y mediados de los 1990 entre la pléthora EU-fórica de innovaciones institucionales destinadas a crear “laboratorios para la integración europea” dentro y a través de las fronteras que tradicionalmente han dividido a los Estados miembros europeos. A continuación, el artículo examina las limitaciones de esta base teórica, argumentando que al haber bebido de la literatura procedente de la administración pública y la ciencia política, la dimensión *espacial* propiamente dicha de la gobernanza transfronteriza ha sido silenciada, si no directamente invisibilizada. Este trabajo busca hacer frente a esa deficiencia, centrándose en las propuestas que ofrece el “giro espacial” en geografía y en las ciencias sociales en general, al relacionarse estas con la problemática cada vez más visible de la gobernanza transfronteriza actual. A través de este marco conceptual el autor defiende, tanto normativa como teóricamente, una especificidad de la espacialidad regional transfronteriza; una que ponga de relieve el hecho de que, más que meramente epifenoménico o derivado del espacio estatal, las regiones europeas transfronterizas (*euromiembros*) son hoy en día y en sí mismas importantes lugares donde el propio significado de “lo político” está siendo negociado, contestado, resistido y transformado. El artículo sugiere que un paso adelante en el análisis de la gobernanza de las regiones transfronterizas en Europa requerirá acabar con alguna de las premisas clave de la literatura clásica sobre los estudios de frontera. Esto es, la insistencia, como si de un mantra se tratase, en que las fronteras implican, en primer lugar, distinciones identitarias entre “Nosotros y Ellos”, y, de forma simultánea a esta perspectiva, un entendimiento de las fronteras internas y de las regiones transfronterizas de Europa como apéndices ideográficamente únicos de la territorialidad del Estado. En contraste con estas premisas hegemónicas, se plantea una agenda de investigación postcolonial, “contrapuntual”, que busca hacer frente activamente a la lógica de reducir la “diferencia” transfronteriza a la “Igualdad” a través de un perspectivismo comparado renovado.

Palabras clave: gobernanza; regiones transfronterizas; giro espacial; Igualdad/diferencia; descolonización; frontera.

Negociando a “virada espacial” na governança transfronteiriça europeia: notas sobre uma agenda de pesquisa

RESUMO

Reconhecendo a natureza escorregadia do termo “governança”, o artigo começa por angariar uma “primeira onda” de reflexão acadêmica sobre a governança das regiões transfronteiriças na Europa, desde o início e meados da década de 1990 em meio a uma infinidade “euro-fosfórico” de inovações institucionais destinadas a criar “laboratórios de integração europeia” dentro e através das fronteiras internas, anteriormente dividindo os estados-membros europeus. O artigo, em seguida, busca pesquisar as limitações desse sedimento teórico, argumentando, com base em literatura enraizada na administração pública e na ciência política, que a dimensão propriamente espacial da governança transfronteiriça tem sido silenciada, se não tornada invisível. O trabalho visa a colmatar essa lacuna, concentrando-se nas perspectivas oferecidas pela “virada espacial” na geografia e nas ciências sociais, que dizem respeito à problemática cada vez mais visível no momento atual da governança transfronteiriça. Dentro desse campo conceitual, o autor defende uma especificidade teórica e normativa da espacialidade regional transfronteiriça, a que coloca em primeiro plano o fato de que, ao invés de apenas um epifenômeno ou derivado de espaço dos estados, as atuais regiões transfronteiriças europeias (*euromiembros*) são também locais importantes onde o próprio significado do “político” está sendo negociado, contestado, resistido e transformado. O artigo sugere que uma maneira de avançar na análise da governança das regiões transfronteiriças da Europa exigirá quebrar e além dos vários pressupostos fundamentais do *mainstream* da literatura e dos estudos sobre fronteira, nomeadamente a atual

insistência-mantra que analisa as fronteiras coç base nas distinções principalmente identitárias entre “Nós e Eles” e, concomitantemente com essa perspectiva, a compreensão de fronteiras internas da Europa e de suas regiões transfronteiriças como apêndices ideograficamente únicos da territorialidade do Estado. Em contraposição a esses pressupostos hegemônicos, apresenta-se uma agenda de pesquisa pós-colonial e contrahegemônica, que procura ativamente contrariar a lógica de redução da “diferença” transfronteiriça ao “mesmo”, e isso por meio de um perspectivismo comparativo renovado.

Palavras-chave: governança; regiões transfronteiriças; virada espacial; Igualdade/diferença; descolonização; fronteira.

REFERENCIA NORMALIZADA

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SUMMARY: Introduction. 1. Conceptualizing Cross-Border Governance in the EU (1st Wave). 2. Critique and Renewal: The “Spatial Turn” in European Cross-Border Governance. 3. Pending Problematics. 4. Tropical Panopticism? Geo-Historical Antecedents on the Decolonial Frontier. 5. Towards a “Contrapuntal” European Border Research Agenda? Acknowledgements. References.

Introduction

As was the word “culture” for Raymond Williams (1958), the term “governance”, if not the most difficult word in the English language, certainly harbors a slipperiness all its own. As one of the master-signifiers shaping our *Zeitgeist*, its inherent ambiguity and malleability acts as a place-holder for thought: we know we are undergoing a period of dramatic change in the world as we have known it, yet we lack the critical distance that would allow us to adduce a proper name to this interregnum. Hence, “governance”. But times of semantic uncertainty, this paper argues, are also moments of *possibility*, for both theory and praxis. It is precisely within the cracks and fissures of indeterminate meaning inhering in a term that interventions can be made, new projects hatched, agendas set (or re-set, as the case may be).

In this light, the particular act of stock-taking and renewal this paper sets out to achieve is threefold. First, the paper will canvas what we may label a “first-wave” of reflection on the governance of European cross-border regions, emerging in the early to mid-1990s amid a EU-phoric plethora of institutional innovations designed to create “laboratories of European integration” within and across the internal borders formerly dividing European member states. Second, the paper pinpoints the limitations of this theoretical sediment, arguing that by drawing on literatures rooted in public administration and political science, the properly *spatial* dimension of cross-border governance has been muted, if not rendered invisible. The paper will address this shortcoming by focusing on an attempt by this author and Barbara

Hooper in the mid-2000s to transpose the insights offered up by the “spatial turn” in geography and the wider social sciences to the increasingly visible problematic of transboundary governance evident at this time. Through this conceptual frame we argued for a normative as well as theoretical specificity to cross-border regional spatiality, one which foregrounds the fact that, rather than merely epiphenomenal or derivative to state space, European cross-border regions (or, *euregios*) today are themselves important sites where the very meaning of “the political” is being negotiated, contested, resisted and transformed.

The paper ends by building on the insights produced by the latter research effort, suggesting that a way forward for the analysis of governance in Europe’s cross-border regions will demand breaking beyond several key assumptions of the mainstream border studies literature, notably the by now mantra-like insistence of borders as involving primarily identitarian distinctions between “Us and Them”, and, concomitantly with this outlook, an understanding of internal European borders and cross-border regions as idiographically unique appendages to state territoriality. In contradistinction to these hegemonic assumptions, a “contrapuntal” research agenda is posed, one which seeks to actively counter the logic of reducing “difference” to the “Same” by way of a renewed comparative perspectivalism. Such an approach follows a sensuous rationality (Ray, 2001) which can at once be periodized in the context of European decolonization (as well as earlier moments of 19th century European expansion/contraction) and spatialized in such a way as to link cross-border dynamics within Europe’s internal borderlands to its external frontiers. At stake, I suggest in concluding this essay, is the possibility of developing a spatialized cross-border comparative methodology without recourse to a teleological norm.

1. Conceptualizing Cross-Border Governance in the EU (1st Wave)

Markus Perkmann, since the early 1990s a leading theoretician of European cross-border governance, could already by the end of that decade look back on a burgeoning literature that was nonetheless “often confusing and somewhat contradictory” (Perkmann, 1999: 658). Confining his analysis of cross-border cooperation (or, CBC) to “the more or less institutionalized collaboration between sub-national authorities in contiguous areas close to EU state borders” (1999: 658), Perkmann attempted to shepherd some analytical order into the diverse experiences of European transboundary regionalism by capturing cross-border governance as “an emergent effect” of variously scaled processes of institution-building with a strong involvement of non-local actors (1999: 660). A growing body of research on the multi-level nature of governance within the European Union would serve as an important backdrop for this reflection (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Rather than the outcome of a single overarching strategy, however, Perkmann conceived of transboundary regional structures in terms of differentiated contexts undergoing perpet-

ual change and adjustment, implicating transformations which would generate historically irreversible trajectories not always produced under the conditions of actors’ own choosing.

Drawing additional theoretical insight from a “new institutionalism” in sociology as well as heterodox political-economy (March and Olsen, 1989; Powell and Di Maggio, 1990; Granovetter and Swedberg, 1992), Perkmann focused attention on the routines, norms and procedures shaping the path-dependent development of CBC in various European transboundary arenas, notably in the period following upon the implementation of INTERREG Operational Programs in the early 1990s. From his analysis of the complex articulation of cross-border regional administrative mechanisms – involving local cross-border, regional, national and supranational regulatory units – he could observe that institutional interventions at the transboundary regional scale had the capacity to change the landscape of opportunities and constraints for local actors in such a way as to produce recursive structural effects (Jessop, 1997; LeGales, 1998). Apart from his acknowledgment of the structural constraints to effective CBC, however, a crucial hypothesis of Perkmann’s at this time would be that of a fundamental *historical openness and indeterminacy* at work in the administrative mechanics of governance at the cross-border regional scale: “the «object of governance» is not preconstituted but co-evolves with the operation of governance institutions” (1999: 660). The underlying “circularity” between transboundary governance institutions and actors, he posited, would allow in turn for “genuine cross-border actors” to emerge (1999: 661).

From our current vantage point more than a decade on, we might justifiably observe in Perkmann’s theoretical enframing of cross-border governance a case of cautious, yet undeniable, EU-phoria. This optimism would already be tempered in the details of empirical findings of actually-existing CBC, largely perceived as following the logic of a “network” (Rhodes, 1997). From a normative perspective, the implications of such a term would raise troubling, yet underexamined, issues. Lacking the constitutive elements of public action, network CBC would be seen as largely “technocratic” and “vertically integrated” in nature. The latter two features of CBC policy-making would be expressed, first, in terms of an inability on the part of the higher levels of EU bureaucracy to grant analytical and/or policy specificity to cross-border regions as distinct from sub-national regional programming areas. Within the directorates general responsible for the administration of INTERREG funds, for instance, CBC would be considered merely one part of the wider policy field of European Structural Funds. Similarly, within the Commission, representatives sitting on cross-border monitoring committees would normally be responsible for a whole range of Community Initiatives in specific areas, with CBC only a minor part of their portfolios. In short, routines and procedures for CBC would be addressed in the same way as the implementation of standard ERDF policies. The lack of a compelling territorial focus and analytical coherence to CBRs would be

summed up by Perkmann thusly: "What really matters are not CBRs as such, but successful multi-level policy implementation" (1999: 664).

What is properly at stake here? From a normative perspective, it is admittedly hard to grasp. As within the wider contemporaneous governance literature, we are made aware of the shifting scalar parameters of steering and guidance in Europe from a Keynesian national frame to that of myriad sub-national and cross-border regional initiatives (the latter held as largely following homologous dynamics), involving in turn a range and diversity of actors whose action frameworks break free from the purported rigidities of a state-centered bureaucratic perspective. To its credit, this literature recognizes that the degree of actual autonomy achieved by CBRs with respect to nation-state and supra-national administrative systems is conditioned by their embedding within existing Structural Funding frameworks as well as the degrees of "strategic reflexivity" of local actors *vis a vis* respective national governments (ie, the German *Laender* having more local "voice" than their Austrian and Italian counterparts) (Perkmann, 1999). But apart from these nuances a deeper problematic haunts this scholarship, in that it finds itself incapable of crafting an analytics drawing on the temporal and spatial specificities of borders (and borderlanders) in relation to State power.

This much is hinted at when Perkmann acknowledges that in most cases CBRs have no formal right to be represented on INTERREG steering committees (1999: 662). And it is further gestured to when he points out that within the 2-tier governance structure of CBRs – comprised of local organizations, representatives and administrative bodies on the one hand and supra-local INTERREG committees on the other – final CBC project selection and funding remains with the national INTERREG co-ordination bodies, not with the Euregions, who are considered merely as "projects" receiving "technical assistance" (1999: 659). The ongoing primacy of supranational EU and state administrative systems *vis a vis* local cross-border actors has subsequently been corroborated across a range of research in the early 2000s, from work confirming the predominance of member state development agendas in INTERREG-financed projects in the context of Anglo-French and Benelux CBRs (Church and Reid, 1999; Kramtsch, 2002), observations of low levels of cross-border economic integration, mobility and technology transfer along the Dutch-German and Dutch-Belgian borders (van Houtum, 1997; Kratke, 1999; van Houtum and van der Velde, 2004) and scant "bottom-up" participation in processes of CBR governance in the Dutch-German and Franco-Iberian border regions (Struver, 2004; Hakli, 2004); resulting in absent cross-border "communit[ies] of fate" (Scott, 1999).

In all these cases, I argue, *an unacknowledged power geometry is at stake*, but framed within the language of "topocratic networks", "principle-agent" dynamics and multi-level scalar hierarchies, the normative implications of these shifts in governance remain frustratingly muffled. It may indeed be true that "...there is no easy answer to the question «who governs?»", but to then claim as a logical conclu-

sion that “[i]n a way, everybody (co)-governs ... [a]s with all networks, there is no core agent that [can] be identified with any of the network members” (Perkmann, 1999: 663) is to miss the insight that shifts in governmental levels always demand a realignment of governmental power. Not fortuitously, this conclusion is evinced in Perkmann’s very own findings of the continued hegemony of nation-state administrative units with respect to CBR structures *in spite* of his claim that CBRs represent “terrains for the emergence of new transnational actors and new opportunities for existing actors” (1999; 658).¹ Not only is a more sophisticated rendering of the power relations influencing the articulation of governmental levels between the EU, member states and CBRs warranted, but also an increased awareness of the role our own conceptualizations play in opening up the terrain for practical thought and action at the cross-border regional scale. Indeed, it is in this very light that we may productively join Spanish political geographers María Lois and Heriberto Cairo when they ask: “How and for whom is the bordering between states enacted?”² (Lois and Cairo, 2011: 14). In the reawakened context of power, we may also say with Lucien Febvre that thought, and the practices it evokes, are intimately bound up with political *possibility* (Febvre, 1935/1997).

2. Critique and Renewal: The “Spatial Turn” in European Cross-Border Governance

How to conceptualize shifts in cross-border governance as shifts in socio-spatial power? And how to capture the properly normative dimension of these processes? More than half a decade ago my Nijmegen colleague Barbara Hooper and I were the first to propose analyzing cross-border governance in the European Union through the lens of a broadly defined “spatial turn” in the social sciences (Kramsch and Hooper, 2004). Through this conceptual lens we argued for a normative as well as theoretical specificity to cross-border regional spatiality, one which foregrounded the fact that, rather than merely epiphenomenal or derivative to state territoriality, European cross-border regions (or, *euregions*) today are themselves important sites where the very meaning of “the political” traditionally associated with state space is

¹ One is tempted at this juncture to coin the term “Lampedusan governance”, in honor of the Italian novelist Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, who, in his classic *Gattopardo*, has his protagonist Tancredi claim “If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change” (Lampedusa, 1960: 40). When reading Marxist theories of governance and meta-governance, in particular, one is presented again and again with seemingly paradoxical Lampedusan-like *déjà vu*: yes, the state has been “hollowed out” by new governance arrangements; but on the contrary, the state has not lost sovereignty and is still the principle regulatory body active on the world stage, with all other territorial arrangements mere epiphenomena to the state’s periodic spatial fixes.

² Translated from Spanish by author.

being recursively negotiated, contested, resisted and transformed (for a more recent formulation, see Rumford, 2008).

In proposing the "spatial turn" as our primary analytical reference point, we drew on a now well-established literature within critical human geography attempting to reinscribe space as a foundational category of human existence, alongside that of time and the social (Gregory and Urry, 1985; Gregory, 1994; Massey, 1984; Soja, 1985, 1989, 1996). In addition to having a temporal biography and forming part of society (the preserve, respectively, of the historians and sociologist), human action always literally *takes place*, has a space of its own. As Edward Soja remarked contemporaneously with the fall of that world-historical Ur-border known as the "Iron Curtain":

Just as space, time, and matter delineate and encompass the essential qualities of the physical world, spatiality, temporality, and social being can be seen as the abstract dimensions which together comprise all facets of human existence. More concretely specified, each of these abstract existential dimensions comes to life as a social construct which shapes empirical reality and is simultaneously shaped by it. Thus, the spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space, the construction of human geographies that both reflect and configure being in the world. Similarly, the temporal order is concretized in the evolving dialectic that has been the ontological crux of Marxist thought for over a hundred years. To complete the necessary existential triad, the social order of being-in-the-world can be seen as revolving around the constitution of society, the production and reproduction of social relations, institutions, and practices. How this ontological nexus of space-time-being is conceptually specified and given particular meaning in the explanation of concrete events and occurrences is the generative source of all social theory, critical or otherwise (Soja, 1989: 25).

The advantage of this approach was that it enabled us to situate "Europe" and its bordering practices within a critical appraisal of modernity, not only to be grasped as a properly historicizable phenomenon but, crucially, as a set of spatial practices implicating relations of power at their very core. Through this lens, the "dividing practices" constitutive of modernity could be presented as a true *espace probleme* (to adapt Febvre's notion of "*histoire probleme*", 1935/1997), referring to a problematic whose antagonistic "geo-strategies" worked themselves out spatially according to a variable repertoire of rule and domination characteristic of earlier European borderlands and frontiers in which the state had not yet achieved its fully hegemonic form (Kramtsch and Hooper, 2004). In this manner, we meant to move "beyond" what we perceived to be the spatial turn's inherently state-centric urban

and regional bias.³ Such a bias, we believed, with its susceptibility to nested and scalar thinking consonant with the “Russian doll-house” metaphor, prevented the conceptual capture of borders and border regions as autonomous objects of theoretical inquiry governed by geographies that could not be reduced to the epiphenomena of state space. Inverting Michel Foucault’s famous insight that since the 19th century “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (Foucault, cited in Soja, 1989: 10), Barbara and I argued that:

In theorizing the specificity of the regional, once again, as in prior periodizations of capitalism and capitalist restructuring, the [cross-border] regions “in question”, though obviously never fully subsumed under the dictates of capital, are nevertheless subtly and persistently tied to a logic which grants analytical primacy to the state ... [I]n the *longue durée* of the interplay of regionalization and regionalism, the territorial framework of politics – whether in the form of peasant rebellions, urban-based working-class movements or feminist revolts – has been pre-defined as a local (often domestic), or at the extreme a national affair. Paradoxically, then, the most forward-looking spatial theorists of the past 30 years treated borders as they did time and the temporal... (Kramsch and Hooper, 2004: 5).

Against the backdrop of this theoretical observation, we posited the existence of a set of “border regimes-in-the-making” operating across contemporary European space, each shaped by distinctive EU-wide modes of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1991). By this we meant to signal that “the regional dimension of cross-border regions and the particular modes of governance that they call for cannot be grasped solely according to the symbiotic or tension-filled dynamic linking a sub-national territorial unit to the next highest and vertically “nested” scale (i.e. the state, the EU), but must be understood in connection with the logics of wider EU-driven strategies” (Kramsch and Hooper, 2004: 6). The first such regime, applicable to the internal border regions of mature, Western European member states, we somewhat clumsily labeled the “*Absent Non-Border*”. Such a border, we suggested, constituted a certain ideal, utopian geography of Europe, an “absolute networked space” defined primarily by functional inter-relationships, as evinced in trans-European transport infrastructure or telecommunications circuits (see also Sparke, 2000). The “absent” in “non-border” gestured to the live paradox that while borders had offi-

³ This bias continues to stubbornly inform Soja’s work even today, as when he claims rather grandiloquently that “cities and in particular their social spatialities are today —as they have been for the past 12,000 years— the primary force for artistic creativity, economic innovation, technological change, and societal development. Twenty years ago, such an idea would have been inconceivable, even absurd. Today it is at the forefront of the Spatial Turn” (2009: 31). At least from the vantage point of our 2004 volume, Barbara Hooper and I would beg to differ.

cially disappeared on maps, their legacies continued to register in cross-border space through what my Nijmegen colleagues Martin van der Velde and Henk van Houtum coined "the production of cross-border indifference" (2004). This pointed to the fact that despite the border's physical demise, it continued to inform the "mental spaces" of inhabitants living on either side of the former international dividing line. As documented in the work of Struver (2004), the persistence of mental border spaces would go far to explain the generalized lack of knowledge on the part of most borderland inhabitants of cross-border regional initiatives imposed from higher levels of governance, and would thereby contribute to placing the problem of "democratic deficit" as a major component of any wider cross-border analytics.

The second border regime we designated "*March*", an ancient term denoting in premodern times an "*espace-entre*" or neutral buffer territory between sovereign powers, as existed during the Carolingian empire and under the reign of Charlemagne. The logic of the March, we believed, was currently being resurrected through attempts on the part of the EU to position newly acceded Central and East European member states on the front lines of perceived emerging threats, such as trans-border criminal networks, human and drug trafficking as well as migration flows from the Middle East and South Asia (Kennard, 2004). In this light, it was not haphazard that in a map produced by colleagues in Poitiers we were able to locate dense clusters of migrant detention centers along the inner borders of newly acceded states. It was also to be expected that, given the historical vulnerabilities of sovereignty for nations in this part of Europe, caught as they were between major world powers for much of their developmental trajectories, the member states of Central and Eastern Europe would jealously maintain their prerogatives and be less willing to "pool" their governance instruments in the service of cross-border institution-building as would be the case further to the West (Virtanen, 2004).

Finally, we applied the term "Postcolonial *Limes*" to evoke EU bordering practices at Europe's external frontiers. Drawing purposively on the Roman declination of the term *lime* as signifying edge, fringe, or outer limit of imperial power, we meant by this to highlight the ways and means by which Europe sought to govern its variously constituted territorial "outsides". While remaining agnostic as to whether the European Union today constitutes a full-fledged empire (Borocz, 2006; Zielonka), we nevertheless wished to suggest that in its dealings with its contiguous periphery the EU demonstrates an empire-like conduct in its attempt to create a zone of peace and stability through relations of institutionalized asymmetry. Nowhere is this more explicitly evident, we argued, than in the context of a reworked Euro-Mediterranean partnership articulated within the framework of the European Neighborhood Programme (ENPI).

3. Pending Problematics

Our 2004 volume thus posed a “cross-border regional question” for EU border studies, one which located a “politics of space” at the center of any analysis of transboundary region-building in Europe today (see also more recently Rumford, 2008). While not linked to notions of epochal transition within and beyond modernity, as early formulations of the “spatial turn” had proffered (notably Soja, 1985, 1989),⁴ we nevertheless retained the central idea of borders in all their manifestations as the outcome of relations of power, the properly political dimension of which would be determined by who and what has control over borders, towards what end, and (admittedly more implied than revealed in our chapter contributions) to what degree we may perceive openings for *resistance* in struggles over the spatiality of borders (echoing Balibar’s call, 2004). In hindsight, however, while our comparative analytical framework may have shed light on certain archetypical modalities of power in the governance in European cross-border space, such a methodology ran a double risk, potentially essentializing key features of transboundary rule within a timeless historical continuum, while cutting off the spatially constitutive relations binding one border regime to another. The danger posed by the former would be that it could lead to a depoliticized notion of border change and transformation; while the latter would underplay the possibilities for cross-cutting trans-border alliances within, across and beyond European space (see Kramsch, forthcoming).⁵ This analytical task we find increasingly urgent in the current conjuncture, as the multiplying predicaments and deficits of governance within Europe’s internal borderlands are coming to share many of the same features afflicting the EU’s external frontiers. Such overlapping similarities cry out for a shared analytical frame, one that is capable of holding in productive tension contradictions inherent to both forms of rule as outcomes of a crisis in the broader workings of the European governmental system.

It is in the context of these experiences gnawing in tandem at Europe’s internal and outer borderlands that I would propose a shared problematic, one which we might usefully describe in terms of a logic that *attempts to reduce “difference” to the value of the “Same”*. To be sure, this logic has a very old pedigree, perhaps

⁴ Here the author finds himself more in accord with Keating’s recent injunction to avoiding framing change in terms of epochal transitions, focusing rather on discursive continuities and their shifting socio-spatial contexts (2008).

⁵ In their fine introduction to a special issue of this journal devoted to the theme of borders on the Iberian Peninsula, María Lois and Heriberto Cairo would seem to share this concern when they argue for a conceptual lens open to “different political geographies extending *from* a political horizon and *through* the politics of the European Union ...” (2011: 16; translated from Spanish by author). It is precisely this idea of border “politics-as-horizon” that I (and others) are attempting to recuperate in the current conjuncture (see also Merrifield, 2010).

extending back to Plato’s “poetless” *Republic*, one whose bordering dynamics would be succinctly summed up by Vauban’s more recent suggestion to Louis XIV that that he should not forget while raiding neighboring principalities to maintain the internal coherence of his empire through extensive fortification (Febvre, cited in Burke, 1991: 165). And of course since the early 20th century of Rosa Luxemburg, passing through the Frankfurt School and on into the contemporary works of Moshe Postone and Slavoj Žižek, it has also informed Marxist debates concerning capitalism’s incessant drive to overcome all physical barriers and assimilate its non-capitalist “outside”, while never able to fully transcend the limits set by its own inner contradictions (Luxemburg, 1972; Žižek, 2010). Rather than locating a primary explananda for this logic within a set of overarching macro-societal overdeterminations⁶, however, I propose that for such an “art of governance” to be effective it requires a *particular will to see space as a visual Whole*.

The emphasis I place on the faculty of sight here is not accidental, drawing as it does on the foundational role of vision in the claiming, ordering, and regulation of space in modernity (Crary, 1990; Mitchell, 1995; Brennan and Jay, 1996). To be sure, one of the Ur-texts to link vision and modernity with power was Michel Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses*. Training attention on that architectural *utopos* that was Jeremy Bentham’s 18th century Panopticon, Foucault sought to reveal how the principles of orderly and utilitarian design originally intended for a prison complex would subsequently go on in the 19th and 20th centuries to permeate modern societal institutions as a whole through their paradoxically totalizing and individuating functions.⁷ Crucially for Foucault, the role of panoptic sight would be constitutive of a dense network of power within which no central observer could be located (i.e., “the prison guard in the watchtower does not exist!”). Rather, as envisioned by Bentham, surveillance would largely be internalized by the carceral inhabitants, acting *as if* the guard inhabited the tower and modulating their conduct accordingly.

Governmentality as the “conduct of conduct”, in Foucault’s words, would gradually permeate the various institutional apparatuses of the state. In each instance, space would become codified on a binary basis with respect to the perceived distance from a norm, which in turn represented the apex of Reason. Thus, the

⁶ This is where I must part ways with Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou’s project to reinstate a “Communist Idea” as a guiding principle for early 21st century politics. As Alain Finkielkraut rightly observed recently in a fascinating and revealing exchange with Badiou, such an “Ideal”, however much it attempts to preserve the fundamental heterogeneity and plurality of the world, nevertheless partakes of the logic of what I am calling the reduction of difference to the Same (Badiou and Finkielkraut, 2010).

⁷ As Soja would remind us in his Los Angeles lectures, the Greek term *utopos* means both “a place and no place”; Bentham’s Panopticon, fortunately, was never put into practice (although certain prison complexes this author has had the chance to observe in the United States veer dangerously close to the original 18th century vision).

physically or psychically “sick” —as newly constructed categories of subjectivity as well as scientific discourse— would be physically separated from “the healthy” in large hospitals, where they would be subjected to therapeutic treatment; “students” defined as not having reached the age of intellectual and/or emotional maturity would be sequestered in “schools”; and the indigent would be retired from the public spaces of the city and stocked in poor houses. The norms thus established would come to regulate movement from one space to the other within a determinate hierarchy of Being, each subject to its own sets of rules and governing principles. Power would be conceived by Foucault as “capillary”, reaching down to the innermost fibers of individuals and circulating within an economy of meaning that had no fixed Center.

Could we not apply this Foucauldian logic to the constitution of borders within European modernity? As geopolitical “dividing practices” *par excellence*, have not borders and boundaries, particularly since the consolidation of nation-state territoriality in the late 19th century, represented a paradigmatic tool of the modern state for enclosing a unified space containing the dream of undifferentiated culture, politics and economy? And this spatial practice, has it not equally been defined around a “norm” of national citizenship, marked off decisively and aggressively from forms of citizenship lying beyond the pale of the boundary, in that netherland represented by *another* nation-state? The peculiar normativity of the border could then be observed at first sight on the most banal high-school map, as denoted in canonical color form: France as “pale yellow”; England as “olive green”; Germany as “purple”; Belgium as “green”; Spain as “dark pink”; and Holland as (of course) “orange”. Within this Mondrian-like colored patchwork of solid tones on the map hanging from the classroom wall, we may already identify that *will to reduce difference to Sameness* characteristic of homologous state institutions within the modern “order of things”.⁸ From this vantage point, an entire technical cosmos would be required – in the form of passports, security checks and finger printing, among others – in order to regulate the passage from “yellow” to “purple”, from “orange” to “green”.

Since their inception, I argue, cross-border regions (or, *euregios*), while ostensibly created as “laboratories of European integration” in pursuit of the EU ideal of

⁸ In this regard, I thoroughly agree with Michael Keating that the achievement of “Westphalian” unity has never been fully achieved (even in the mature Western European democracies) and has thus always been a partial and unfulfilled project (Keating, 2010). What I nevertheless wish to insist on here is that the *will to Sameness* has remained a stubbornly persistent a feature of modern state space, which, as we shall see, replicates itself in myriad ways at the cross-border regional scale. It goes without saying that my conceptualization of cross-border space is also seriously at odds with Paasi’s seminal formulation (1996); rather than an outcome of “Us/Them” relations, I argue that bordering practices in Europe today —at least as shown in practice at the cross-border regional scale— are more of the type “UsThem”, where the “Them” is increasingly corralled into an undifferentiated “Us”.

“unity in diversity”, have in actuality followed closely the footsteps of the spatial logic adumbrated above. In a brochure obtained from the foundation (*Stichting*) governing the tri-national and tri-lingual Euregio Maas-Rhine (hereafter EMR), for example, we read the following “visionary” statement:

If the creation of the Euregion Maas-Rhein must be resituated within the context of the creation of Europe and, more specifically in relation to cross-border cooperation, it is evidently in history that one must find its origin, this region having always known in the past a relatively high degree of homogeneity ... Unfortunately, the treaties of Vienna (1815) and London (1839) have had the effects of arbitrarily cutting off the region to the benefit of the three 19th century modern nation-states: Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands ... As it happens, national borders have much too accidentally and capriciously torn apart inhabitants, cultures and territories ... So that the ancient and natural rapports may be reestablished and intensified, it was high time to eliminate [these] borders, the Euregio Maas-Rhine being a good means towards that end”⁹ (EMR, *Europa Concreet*, undated: 7-8).

In a passage that surely would have made Renan blush, we see EMR enacting an “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1988) which serves as an isomorphic counterpoint to the modern nation-state of earlier centuries. And as with other euregions emerging across the face of the continent, EMR produces maps of itself, which, while indicating each national sub-area in differently shaded colors, nevertheless visualizes itself as a territorial whole whose constituent parts exist in isolation from that of their respective national hinterlands. Thus, while ostensibly overcoming its internal boundaries, EMR reproduces them in order to differentiate itself from higher order scales of governance – national, EU – as well as those *euregios* with which it shares contiguous territory. The constitutive links which one bound the different areas of the euregio to wider geographical circuits is thereby erased. This, I suggest, has important substantive as well as methodological implications. Substantively, it reduces the identity space of the euregio to that of singularly essentialized abstractions: “*the*” Germans, “*the*” Belgians, “*the*” Dutch’. The internal complexities historically fissuring each of these identitarian categories —themselves fruit of those very same wider constitutive (and often colonial) geographies— are thereby repressed and kept “hidden”.¹⁰ Secondly, adopting the nationalizing visual optic of Sameness has the effect of closing a wider comparative

⁹ Translated from the French by author.

¹⁰ The “hidden repressed” of euregional identity burst into view for this author when, at a panel held in Maastricht to discuss EMR identity in the context of the Dutch city’s bid to apply for European Capital of Culture (ECOC) in 2018, an Afro-Belgian woman raised her hand during the discussion and said: “My father came from the Congo to work in the mines here after the war. In all your talk of the Dutch, German and Belgian identity of Euregio Maas-Rhine, where does *he* fit in?”.

lens with which one might link the logics of transboundary rule both temporally to previous rounds of territorial expansion and contraction, and spatially in connection with cross-border regional dynamics occurring elsewhere on the continent, particularly at the EU's outer margins.

4. Tropical Panopticism? Geo-Historical Antecedents on the Decolonial Frontier

Such an act of comparative spatio-temporal recovery, I suggest, might find useful resonances in struggles to refashion Europe's external territorial frontiers during the time of mid-20th century decolonization. The European "decolonial moment" reminds us that for much of their histories European interstate boundaries were often enfolded within a wider matrix of imperial power involving the projection of a second ring of frontiers in the colonial theaters of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Kramsch, forthcoming). As colonial historians such as Robert Cooper have pointed out, panoptic vision on the European colonial frontier worked differently than in the metropole:

However much surveillance, control, and the narrowing of boundaries of political discourse were a part of Europe in its supposedly democratizing era, power in colonial societies was more arterial than capillary – concentrated spatially and socially, not very nourishing beyond such domains, and in need of a pump to push it from moment to moment and place to place" (Cooper, 2003: 33).

Colonial vision on the European frontier is thus always partial, fragmentary, permeated with shadows and blind spots (see also Kramsch, 2010b).¹¹ This insight should not only be a "theoretical rallying point" for historians, as Cooper suggests, but should also motivate geographers to examine how "power is constituted, aggregated, contested, and limited" (2003:33) within the particular spatiality of the frontier. This latter point bears special emphasis, given the current predilection of

¹¹ Nowhere was this contested perspectivalism more on display than in the vicious campaign to retain French Algeria. Surveying the Algerian independence struggle, Raymond Aron was one of the first to cast the struggle over the future of French Algeria in terms of day and night, light and dark: "There are ... certain circumstances in which, even if one accepts the criterion of man today and of his spontaneous individual conscience, it is by no means easy to decide who is liberating or enslaving whom. By day, the French army «liberates» the populace of Algeria from the terror of the F.L.N.; by night, the F.L.N. «liberates» this same population from the terror of the French army. Elections held by daylight show a majority in favour of the French army; elections held under cover of darkness would assuredly give a contrary result. *I have no idea whether the populace is giving its honest opinion in the dark or in the daytime...*" (Aron, 1959: 15; emphasis added).

human geographers to foreground the dominating, disempowering and invisibilizing effects produced by the “abyssal lines” of a colonial modernity which continues to cast long shadows into our day (Casas *et al.*, 2010: 75, citing in turn Santos, 2007; also van Houtum, 2010; Sidaway 2011). As Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo and I have recently argued, by focusing exclusively on the “spectacular” spaces of EU external bordering practices, we run the risk (often against our best intentions) of constructing narratives that in the end only serve to *reinforce* borders as sites of oppression and domination, rather than seeing in them spaces of contestation, resistance and possibility (Ferrer-Gallardo and Kramsch, 2012).

It would be to the very specificities and possibilities of the European frontier that the late geographer and boundary scholar Ladis Kristof dedicated a seminal article at the onset of African decolonization.¹² Perhaps primed by his own inter-war trans-Atlantic biography, Kristof responded with alarm to a perceived re-naturalization of boundaries and frontiers in the late-1950s social sciences, particularly within his own field of geography. Keen to reinject a “political, i.e., moral and legal, element” in the study of frontiers and boundaries (1959: 269), Kristof offered a crucial distinction between the two terms. The “boundary” signaled for him the “inner oriented” limit of the state, within which all is “bound together... fastened by an internal bond” (1959: 270, 272). Boundaries thus respond to the need for clearly delimited state territorial sovereignty. As an abstraction of the national legal system:

[T]he boundary is not tied inextricably to people —people teeming, spontaneous, and unmediated in their daily activities on, along, or athwart the border. It is the mediated will of the people: abstracted and generalized in the national law, subjected to the tests of international law, it is far removed from the changing desires and aspirations of the inhabitants of the borderlands... [The boundary] has no life of its own, not even a material existence (Kristof, 1959: 272).

The frontier, on the other hand, was to be seen for Kristof as a “phenomenon of “the facts of life” —a manifestation of the spontaneous tendency for growth of the ecumene” (1959: 270). As civilizations developed, the frontiers between ecumenes became “meeting places” for “different concepts of the good life”. Inherently “outer-oriented”, frontiers, unlike boundaries, became political over time to the extent that they embodied an “integrating factor”:

Being a zone of transition from the sphere (ecumene) of one way of life to another, and representing forces which are neither fully assimilated to nor satisfied with either, [the frontier] provides an excellent opportunity for mutual interpenetration and

¹² I am indebted to James Sidaway for informing me of Kristof’s recent passing.

sway. Along the frontier life constantly manipulates the settled patterns of the pivotally organized socio-political and cultural structures (Kristof, 1959: 273).

Against the wider backdrop of decolonization and creeping Cold War geopolitics, Kristof argued that as boundary disputes are “fading away”, they are replaced by “frontiers of ideological worlds”, which in their abstraction prove less dependent on the territorial dimension of nation-state politics (1959: 278). Rather than view this new frontier as a threat to the extant international legal order, Kristof argued on the contrary that they provide a space of opportunity:

Given the existing conditions, it is wiser to recognize that between the two great ideological ecumene certain “grey areas” of frontier lands, equivocal loyalties, and undefined allegiances, are unavoidable; perhaps not only unavoidable but even desirable: they permit mutual influencing and interpenetration in a broad border zone... The “grey areas” of the ideological frontiers of today are capable of a more sophisticated intellectual-political role. In contact with and willing to internalize currents from both poles, they are not merely transitive but also transformative: like an electrical transformer they adjust the tensions of the two political voltages to permit at least some flow of current without danger that flying sparks will fire the whole house (Kristof, 1959: 279-80).

Perhaps no figure of mid-20th century decolonization embodied such a “transformative” role as Albert Camus, whose attempts during the long and agonized struggle for Algerian independence to “internalize currents from both [French and Algerian] poles” I describe at greater length elsewhere (Kramersch, 2010a). Suffice it here to mention that Camus, notably in his political writings (1965), developed a perspectival view of the Franco-Algerian conflict drawing on an ideal of “justice” rooted in the ethical demand “to see the Other” (*voire l’Autre*). Crucially, this vision of Algeria and France takes place on the basis of a re-spatialization of the Franco-Algerian frontier, relocating it within a broader field of geopolitical tensions which I have denoted the “*frontiere-monde*” (Kramersch, 2010a: 114). It is here, at a time when French statesmen and intellectuals of both the Right and Left attempted to co-opt the Algerian independence movement either within the framework of a French-driven technocratic settlement or through the lens of a metropolitan-led Socialist programme, respectively, that Camus offers us the possibility of seeing Europe and its “outside” *otherwise*.¹³ This he achieves in a way that escapes the teleological visions that would later afflict modernization theory and its developmentalist successors, whereby Europe would be situated at the *cap* of civilization and normative

¹³ Heartfelt “*merci*” to Alain Faure for offering to describe Camus as a “quintessential border crosser” (personal communication, 2010).

progress while the rest of the World languished in a Dantesque periphery and semi-periphery, condemned to eternally “catch up” with the West.

5. Towards a “Contrapuntal” European Border Research Agenda?

In response to critics of his earlier path-breaking book, *Orientalism* (1978), which sought to critically examine the means by which a swath of the world known as “the Orient” had been for centuries represented in the Western spatial imagination, Edward Said proposed an intriguing methodology for engaging politically with the Manichean bordering practices by which non-European Eastern lands had traditionally been erected as the pure “Other” to Occident. In so doing, Said offered up a musical metaphor for how to handle the purified practices of “Us/Them” characteristic of Western modernity: the contrapunt (Said, 1993). As in a Bach fugue, contrapuntality for Said expressed a modulation of tone and rhythm that could not be reduced to a hierarchy of elements.¹⁴ Rather, contrapuntal space would seek to reveal the “intertwined histories and overlapping geographies” that had always bound Western metropole and non-Western colony alike. His “method”, if one may speak of it as such, consisted in laying bare the traces of colonial space in such characteristically “English” novels such as Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* or in such a quintessentially Italian opera such as Verdi’s *Aida*. Through such a move, the constitutive “outside” of Western culture would be revealed¹⁵, the impossibility of a pure “Us/Them” between Orient and Occident made manifest. At its heart, I suggest, lay the seeds for a *spatialized cross-border comparative methodology without recourse to a teleological norm*.

This may strike us at first glance as nonsensical. After all, shouldn’t the task of any rigorous comparative method be to discover precisely such a norm, as evinced in the by now overused term “best practice”? As applied to the analysis of European borders and border regions, such a view would posit certain border regions as having achieved a level of democratic maturity and/or governmental effectiveness that could then surely serve as a template for border regions lacking the accoutre-

¹⁴ In this context it is highly apropos that, shortly before his untimely death, Said and the Argentinian-Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim co-founded the East-West Divan Orchestra, comprised of Arab Palestinian and Jewish Israeli youth, as a way to showcase the “contrapuntal spatialities” historically binding both peoples.

¹⁵ In this context, the French boundary scholar Fabienne Leloup claims a special place for what she terms “revelation” in the emergence of territories: “[L]a révélation rend visible voire discutable une image, une vision... Sans cette révélation l’espace reste neutre, aucun destin commun ou souhait de faire ensemble ne sont nécessaires à l’action. La révélation rend visibles les facteurs d’intégration...” (Leloup, 2010: 11). I would further argue, along with Said, that therein lies a *politics* in “revealing” socio-spatial relations from a different and “emergent” perspective, in our case by opening up new avenues, a new optics for cross-border space, with important material consequences for thought *and* action.

ments of a fully functioning demos. Such, indeed, has been the case, whereby euregions such as Maas-Rhein, representing one of the oldest experiments in trans-boundary parliamentarianism, have “consulted” with euroregions in Central and Eastern Europe, teaching them “how it is done” in the Western part of the EU. And, with respect to Europe’s relations with its external frontiers, such is the case as well, whereby the EU attempts to construct a “Ring of Friends” around its contiguous geopolitical perimeter, offering countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Belarus and the Ukraine the promise of a vaguely defined “Partnership” with the EU, grounded in improved access to European markets, but contingent upon the potential “friends” adopting a series of “European” norms and values: “good governance”, “democracy”, “liberal market economy”, “rule of Law”.

Yet in light of the arguments presented in this paper, what these contemporary initiatives within Europe’s inner and outer borderlands signify is an *ongoing and chronic inability to see the “Other” other than as a reflection of the European Same*. What a “new comparativism” across transnational EU/non-EU borderspace might bring to light, therefore, is a rejuvenated awareness of double nature of European boundaries, both as spatial medium and presupposition for norms and forms of intra-metropolitan governmentality producing a particular internal purification of space *and* as staging si(ght)s farther afield, on the European frontier, providing that very metropolitan normativity the grounds —literal as well as figurative— on which to erect itself idiosyncratic *cap* as a universal point of reference. To grasp how this peculiarly modern European normativity was produced, the dialectical tension between its internal borders and external frontiers must be grasped in one continuous sweep of the eye, producing what we might call (paraphrasing a similar postcolonial move in urban studies) a “world of borders” (Robinson, 2011). Only in this way, following Kristof, might we affirm that:

The limit in the political world is not a matter of is; like everything political it is of the domain of ought... And the life span of the boundary is coeval with the pre-eminence of the forces stemming from the given “ought”, for it is a function of human will... Given certain values the boundary ought to be here or there, *but it may be elsewhere* (Kristof, 1959: 276; emphasis added).

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