1
Exploring the Shifting Contours

The changing map

Cartography has offered fertile ground upon which to stress border changes throughout history. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries scholarly literature gradually made the distinction between boundaries and frontiers clearer by differentiating between a linear and a spatial concept. In the twentieth century, the lexical mismatch between English and Latin languages – as we shall see, ‘frontier’ always had military connotations – also played a role: where ‘frontier’ would refer more to a fuzzy border to a zone, in contrast, ‘boundary’ would refer to the linear legal division and would mostly be set in the context of the restrictive division of nation-states. Nevertheless, today’s tendency is to focus on a more complex understanding of such concepts, but with a special emphasis on the dynamic, interactive, multilayered nature of border relations. Therefore, I have chosen to explore the shifting and active character of the frontier, as well as the scope of its broader social context in different settings, in Mediterranean case studies, in the US–Mexico region and in intra-European case studies.

Nowadays, we are witnessing a whole new approach to the study of borders and mobilities. We now have literature that covers a range of perspectives from trends in securitization, surveillance to digital borders, biometric borders, materialization of violence at borders, the environment of borders, the externalization of borders (especially by extending maritime boundaries) and the impact of EU enlargement on borders, particularly after the changes witnessed in
Eastern Europe\(^3\) during the 1990s.\(^4\) Moreover, between 1989 and 1991, 14,000 km of new international borders were created (Foucher 2007).

Of specific interest for my present purpose with this work is to clarify the juxtaposition of the external and internal EU borders in relation to mobility. As we shall see, the idea of the ‘wild frontier’\(^5\) in Europe would still seem to be present in a number of ways. Let us turn next to how I propose to untangle such a hypothesis.

Firstly, from my perspective, the suggested framework points to an emergence of a border paradigm shift, with regard to EU borders, that actively seeks to contain mobility. Such a paradigm is theorized as the intersection between external (as previously discussed in Ribas-Mateos 2005) and internal borders. Drawing on multiple examples from my own research as well as from numerous debates in the following sections, one key idea that emerges from the literature is that there is a complex form of deterritorialization that can be our guide in future discussions. This idea has been criticized by many, but its effects have never before been so intense or so far-reaching.

Even if state and territory continue to play an important role, state territorial power is re-articulated and reterritorialized in relation to both sub- and supra-state scales (Brenner 1999b: 3). Here, the nation-state reproduces both old and new roles for administrative forms, including categories and sub-categories of how they classify mobilities and populations. In other words, one can appreciate that border places are configured as a highly complex variety of filtering effects. Such deterritorialization involves a simultaneous reterritorialization process.\(^6\) In order to illustrate this, I shall point to some instances of deterritorialization of border controls, in the sense that controls are now exercised by transportation companies and within the consulates of most countries. As Anderson points out, the controls that were formally concentrated at national border posts are now exercised by a variety of means (2000: 25).

Secondly, this work aims to take the different fragments of research and combine them into a more complete work on the transformation of borders. This will require a rethinking of borders in light of the relation between mobility and global borders. Each chapter of the book will present different aspects of this research and will be summarized in a final concluding narrative.