Migration, Identity, and Belonging

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Introduction

In this contribution we focus on cross-border migration and how it is related to processes of identity formation. We conceive cross-border migration as a movement across the borders of (nation-)states, regardless whether it occurs long-distance or nearby. It differs from commuting in the sense that the people concerned settle in a place, an environment that differs from the region where they originated. In a stable border context where cross-border flows of people are effectively regulated the impact is quite different from where cross-border flows are transient and being actively discouraged. In the former case (at least in contemporary times) the population that gets through is generally quite well-educated and skilled, a carefully orchestrated brain gain composed of individuals that in all probability are somewhat culturally familiar with their destination. In the latter case, migration remains partly or completely hidden from certain sectors of society and consists of lower-wage earners. Such individuals are often less prone to integrate and intend to stay only a short time. But in either context, people are trying to make a living and a home, even if temporary, and in due course their identities change as they will undoubtedly adjust their lives to some degree to accommodate their new residence and/or reinforce aspects of their heritage in counter-reaction to what is going on around them.

Geographical border studies, among others, concern the place and space dimensions of people crossing borders. Besides cross-border migration in border areas themselves, in our globalizing world long-distance migration and the related phenomenon of transnationalism increasingly call for our attention. This contribution does not pretend to give a comprehensive view on all of these subjects, but rather we will present some ideas that we feel in the future will have to be worked out within the discipline of border studies. Since this article is the result of a conference organized in The Netherlands, this country and its sub-regions will often serve as representative cases for countries of the European Union (E.U.).

Throughout this paper, our focus is on consideration of the disjuncture between political and cultural borders (as reflected and caused by inter-state migration and the sustaining of a national identity) and what this means for where and how one “be-
longs.” We start off by considering the quandary of how making a new home and identity just a short distance away can be complicated when one crosses an international boundary in the process. From there we consider the impact of larger migration flows through border regions on local identities and how this can be viewed quite differently depending on one’s geographically scale-based perspective. Shifting to a more global point of view we then investigate the cross-border connections manifest in today’s transnational identities, as well as the misgivings many have as cultures increasingly breach the political boundaries of countries.

**Identities in Border Areas: At Home across the Border?**

Borders are an integral part of identities. Since identities are not static but continuously being (de- and re-)constructed, processes of identity construction require ongoing processes of bordering and ‘othering’ of us/them (van Houtum and van Naerssen 2002). Borders between countries ideally delineate and signify different identities on both sides of those borders (hence, ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1991)) and the projection of countries (especially when regarded as nation-states) as significant cornerstones of identities. Instruments include symbols and rituals of the state and the construction of a common, usually heroic, past. This is not just limited to top-down processes generated from formal institutions of the state. In the process of identity construction people are not just passive receptors, but (both at the individual and collective level) play active roles in bordering and identity construction. People participate in social networks with diverse structures and varying degrees of hierarchy and equality: families, local communities, institutions of religions, etc. These social networks of parents, friends, and colleagues are important agencies for identity construction.

Territorial identity has multiple manifestations and goes through many stages (Hudson 2000). National identity is always significant, but its importance varies at different stages of a country’s history. During the colonial period when nationalism was at its high point in Western Europe, national and territorial identities were of greater importance in the daily life of people than they are in today’s era of advanced integration within the context of the E.U. In fact, the question has even arisen as to whether people in Western Europe are trying to tear down their national identities. If so, the resulting loss of what has come to be seen as a traditional territorial identity may create a void which will demand a replacement, quite likely a pan-European identity. At any rate, the transition time between these two may prove to be somewhat unstable as Europeans seek to define who they are and, perhaps more importantly, who they are not.

Even in European areas where the state boundary is having increasingly less importance by comparison to (for example) contemporary socio-linguistic factors in terms of impact on the activity space of local residents, the state’s role has not disappeared. Not only has the state historically emphasized distinctions like language, it continues to place some parameters on the amount of local/international political and economic cooperation that is possible (Lundén and Zalamans 2001). Perhaps this should not surprise us since as a descendent of the European Economic Community, the European Union’s move towards broad political-social unification continues to be led by economics. On the national scale, where trade is the focus of much public discourse, as well as on the scale of cross-border communities (shopping and consumption of goods),
economics continues to lead the way. But in many ways the inertia of national cultures still reigns supreme. Most people are serious about the economic aspects of European integration, but less certain about compromising their national identity. Centuries of nation-building are not easily reversed. Even if people are more than willing to layer on top of their traditional national identity a common European label, they are still characteristically German, Danish, French, Portuguese, Greek, etc.

Many border communities pride themselves on their roles as welcoming points for foreign visitors and even as launching points for an encounter with another culture (for an example from northwestern Mexico see Arreola and Madsen 1999). The ‘other’ is nearby in these places, yet home remains close. So what better place to encourage state-level integration than in border areas? With national implications at the local scale, border integration schemes test the waters with minimal resources. They also demonstrate the seriousness of a country’s commitment to positive relations with its neighbor and provide a model for national-scale integration should they succeed. As the free trade mantra is given increasingly more attention, inter-state relationships in many places have become institutionalized at the border in very specific (and economically facilitating) ways such as NAFTA-designated highways, trans-border administration of Euroregions, and even joint environmental programs. In the E.U., for example in the ‘Espace Montblanc,’ which includes areas of France, Italy and Switzerland around the Mont Blanc, environmental problems serve as a vehicle to compose a cross-border political agenda (Lissandrello 2002 (work in progress); for an African example see Singh and Jackson 1999).

In the experience of van Houtum and Strüver (2002), European borders have transitioned from places of separation to places of linkage, becoming more transparent in the process. Reaching its peak in the current European experience, the union of cross-border regions is now actively encouraged. Interconnections are being formalized, but the question now becomes just exactly how are borders functioning behind the scenes? Activities that require movements of people such as commuting, cross-border shopping, and day visits may build common identities across borders. For various reasons, e.g. to evade taxes or more favorable housing regulations, people decide to live across the border. More business is being conducted with less hassles, but are people establishing homes as well as residences? Are people really “at home” across the border, even if it is only a few kilometers from what they have traditionally called their country?

Even in the border cities of Kerkrade, The Netherlands, and Herzogenrath, Germany (“Eurode”) where the local integration experience goes beyond that of many other officially designated Euroregions, integration has its difficulties. While over ten percent of Kerkrade is ethnically German (or rather traces its immediate origins to the German side of the border), the accident of where they happen to live is largely an economic decision. Their social and political ties are still primarily to the other side (Ehlers 2001). Perhaps the flexibility to select this as an option is a sign that the border region is much more integrated than we might think upon initial consideration (Ernste 2002). Residents in this situation can selectively choose to cross the physical border without feeling the need to adopt all of the expected cultural trappings. Indeed, making the border totally disappear in this location (a local and European, not necessarily Dutch or German, goal) would necessitate a border around Eurode, a situation that would not have had any net benefit of integration at the pan-European scale.
The answer to the question of whether people are really at home across the border, even if they live near what they have traditionally called their country, is indeed complex. In Kerkrade it was found that in nearby Dutch schools across the border, German children and their families have begun to take on a Dutch identity, wherein language leads the way. Yet their political representation remains weak. Parents avoid participating in politics in the Netherlands even though their new home grants foreign residents voting rights after five years of residency in the country. Many Germans are reluctant to participate in Dutch politics because they fear World War II resentments among their Dutch neighbors. In other words, they are afraid to tell the Dutch how to behave (Ehlers 2002). So we see that there is selectivity in cross-border behavior and attitudes. In this case, language integration exists, but unification is lacking at the political level. This reminds us that there is a need for being less deterministic and more flexible in our consideration of the connections between migration and trans-border identity.

On the limited scale of two countries, the possibility may exist for the emergence of a critical mass of true biculturalists and binationalists who feel equally at home on both sides of the border (for a discussion of the role such individuals play in a border society see Martínez 1994), yet most countries are large enough to be more than just the sum of their border regions. Even if we temporarily ignore the likelihood that such a grouping of individuals would be hard to amass, it would probably still compartmentalize one side of the border from the other, and its members’ individuals may continue to be seen as having primary (or at least lingering) loyalties to one side or the other, it is therefore possible that such a type of person might help unite Germany and The Netherlands, but what does it do to unite Europe? Territorially-based multiculturalism as nationalism may yet come to pass in Europe like heritage-based multiculturalism has in the United States and other largely-immigrant countries, but if so it will require integration at a grander scale than the merger of next door border states.

Is it possible to feel “at home” across the border? If individuals were fully at home, perhaps they would simply re-draw the parameters of their identity so that they become fully categorized on what was previously the other side. In other words, they would no longer be “across” the border from their (new) true home. The E.U. hopes, of course, and the long-term viability of European unity may even depend on it, that individuals expand the scale of their identity so that their borders are congruent with the E.U. instead of a national member rather than a mere re-arrangement of internal boundaries. This would help construct, and therefore ensure the survivability and success of, the new Europe.

Sovereignty over every square centimeter of territory is the ideal of the modern (nation-)state, yet if one lives too close to the periphery his or her identities and loyalties are subject to question. Take the example of the Italo-Slovenian border area and the city of Trieste. The importance of this border increases substantially when one considers that a united Western Europe has also found its southeastern terminus at Trieste since its beginnings in the 1950s (although with Slovenia’s membership moving forward this may not be the case much longer). Concurrent with and prior to the E.U. era, Trieste also found itself forming part of a Cold War border between Eastern and Western Europe. And farther back in history, Trieste lay on the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s fringe. Still today it has a sizable ethnically-Slovenian population, and when someone states that he or she is from Trieste, a common follow-up reaction by fellow Italians from other parts of the country is to inquire if that person is Italian (Maltoni 2002). Given the area’s historical border role, a Trieste resident does not easily fit the defini-
tion of what it means for many to be culturally and politically Italian. There are people in the border area, of course, who have several belongings, e.g. when they are from Italian-Slovenian parents. A trans-border identity is the sum of this (Zago 2002).

In the non-Western world, especially in the developing countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, questions of territorialization, bordering and identity construction are still strongly related to the colonial past and processes of nation-building. The colonial powers often drew lines on the map crossing ethnic, religious, and language communities or larger social groups with common identities. In this type of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, the idea that state borders constitute membership and loyalty to a “national” community clashes with an indigenous sense of belonging to communities that cross those borders.

The construction of identities and the accompanying ideology of “othering” often relates to questions of access to economic resources and political power. In particular, poverty and access to scarce resources such as land could be cause for frequent conflict and local war. Singh has considered the fluidity of tribal association in pre-colonial times in African countries (Singh 2002; Singh 2001). Since outside anthropologists could not make sense of this, they had to “border” it all, constructing the static categories of today’s tribes as viewed from the outside. Using the example of migration in what is today Mozambique and Zimbabwe, Singh has pointed out that cross-border migration itself is a colonial conception. We can consider identities as linked to regulations of rights, more specifically the right of access to land. In pre-colonial times rights belonged to different social groups than in later periods. The Western concept of ‘national community’ was imposed and new countries were created with territorial borders that were not perceived as such by many of the old identities that continued to persist, often across the borders. On the other hand, specific social groups (or tribes, as invented by the West) who obtained power in the new states used this in order to gain access to resources that traditionally belonged to other groups.

National Emergency, Local Routine: Migration Streams through Border Localities

There are, of course “undesirable” migrations as well. How does a local resident maintain his or her identity and sense of self in the presence of major “illegal” flows through the border area one calls home? The Italo-Slovenian border is an area of crisis for the Italian state, an area where transition and leakage occurs. Yet one lady responded to a field researcher’s inquiry about the large flows of undocumented Pakistani and Indian migrants that pass through her city and neighborhood that to her “they are nothing more than shadows in the mist” (Maltoni 2002).

In a similar manner, stakes have been raised in the Arizona-Sonora borderlands. For many years, the threat from cross-border immigration (as well as drug smuggling) was a regional one at most. Illicit national flows hid themselves in the hustle and bustle of major cities like Tijuana-San Diego and Ciudad Juárez-El Paso. But as enforcement has made it tougher for these activities to succeed in such areas, the more rural but increasingly traversed Arizona-Sonora border has become a national concern.

When U.S. presidential candidate Pat Buchanan visited Douglas, Arizona in January of 2000, he stopped a couple miles west of town where a dilapidated barbed wire fence is the only barrier (Ibarra 2000). His campaign visit at this location was intended to drive home the message that the Clinton administration was not doing enough to
protect this border. Never mind that an extra-tall heavy-duty metal fence guarded the outskirts of Douglas, that heaps of scrap concrete rubble designed to restrict the crossing of illegally-entering vehicles extended to the east, and that a brand new fence had been installed in the centre of town. Federal consideration of local input on the new section of fence through the central part of town had even helped solicit increased local support for the fence-building cause. But partnership and progress were not the goal on this visit. National politics were at stake.

Both Trieste and southern Arizona serve as local stages for such national rhetoric when it comes to immigration. Shrubs and bushes have been cleared in both places immediately next to the border and spotlights added to make offenders more visible and easier to catch (as well as complete the shadow analogy of the Trieste informant quoted earlier). In practical usage, the efficacy of such moves is in doubt as there is always somewhere else to cross. Such action is designed as much for national consumption as for any practical local effect. Baud and van Schendel wrote that “there has always been an enormous gap between the rhetoric of border maintenance and daily life in borderlands.” (1997: 220). As both Trieste and Arizona have become symbols of immigration run amok by the states of which they are a part, we are given cause to wonder about how this has affected the border regions through which the migrants pass.

Another case study with forthcoming results relates to a different set of circumstances: Nienke van Olst’s work on refugees in Poland who often shun integration into local society. With their goal to move westward, or wait for the European Union to expand and include Poland, they have created a different dynamic (van Olst 2002). In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the national immigration emergency has had a polarizing effect. At the same time that enforcement has become more visible and crossing more difficult in major cities, the issue has risen to prominence in more rural regions. No longer do many local individuals remain content to dismiss passing migrants as a transient phenomena with little impact on their lives. While some remain relatively indifferent to the local routines of passing immigration streams as a benign facet of the place where they live, others have formed alliances with national concerns and even vigilante groups (Rozemberg 2002). For such individuals, their identity is decidedly tied up with national norms and expectations.

In northeastern Italy, border citizen militias based on the U.S. experience have even been formed by new immigrants against newer potential immigrants (Maltoni 2002), perhaps out of concern that large masses of their numbers would make their own presence too visible for comfort. The same situation is reflected in the sub-text of two recent U.S. films: Lone Star (1996) and The Guardian (2002). In both the Italian and U.S. cases, local anti-immigrant concerns have become an emergency in part due to processes that connect beyond the local.

The routine of what happens on the local scale is not always benign or acceptable, of course. Dramatic increases in drug traffic and desperately unscrupulous migrant smugglers have added a very real sense of danger for many in southern Arizona. Local hospitals and governments pick up the tab for migrants who injure themselves jumping a border fence or have become dehydrated in the desert. For others the overwhelming nature of large flows of illicit traffic being diverted to rural areas is just too much to passively accept any longer. Another segment of border society has also protested that stepped-up border enforcement is placing migrants and border residents in increasingly dangerous situations and have set up water stations in the desert to offset this
situation. Symbolic of the polarization referenced earlier, these stations have also been targets of vigilantes bent on discouraging the migrants who use them.

The tangible presence of discarded water bottles in rural ranchlands and national parks as well as federal enforcement officers in both rural and urban communities has a more noticeable impact than a few migrants sneaking across a street and blending in with the hustle and bustle of large populated areas. On nineteen transects of a 48-mile stretch of Arizona’s Highway 15 south of Casa Grande on the Tohono O’odham Indian Reservation, some ten percent of 845 vehicles surveyed in late 2002 and early 2003 were marked as belonging to the U.S. Border Patrol. The percent of vehicles marked as belonging to local police accounted for less than one percent. Increased outside attention here make even the most passive of individuals more consciously aware of their circumstances as an often-crossed border locale.

In the case of the indigenous Tohono O’odham who in the past have been able to connect with traditional lands and fellow tribal members across the border with little attention, increased scrutiny from the outside world has important ramifications. People are sometimes made to feel like criminals for visiting villages across the line that have always been O’odham, but only in the last several centuries “Mexican” or “U.S.” territory. From both within and without, this divide increasingly threatens the legitimacy of “Mexican” Tohono O’odham as members of the cross-border Tohono O’odham Nation, which is territorially and legally based in the U.S.

In the context of the larger geographical area of North America, Mexican immigration into the United States (regardless of legal status) is often assailed precisely because this type of cross-border connection is maintained by others, especially among Mexican nationals broadly speaking. In this light, widespread U.S. acceptance of matricula consular ID cards (an official card issued by the Mexican government for identity, not employment-eligibility purposes to its U.S. residents) is seen by some as an attempt at Mexican extra-territorial influence (Alonso-Zaldivar 2003). By replacing passports (a more explicit and traditional form of acknowledging the crossing of an international boundary) with more generic ID cards borders are breached, the urgency of national immigration emergencies diminished, and more credibility is given to now-routine illegal immigration, both at the border and beyond. Or so goes the argument. Migrants’ preservation of language and cultural traits, as well as close-knit communities in areas near to and far from the border, even though in keeping with the traditional diversity of the United States, is another example of the border routine turned immigration emergency that is noted by critics.

So how does one maintain identity and sense of self in the presence of major “illegal” flows through the border area they call home? Overlooking or ignoring the situation only works to a certain degree. When flows are substantial enough, many resort to connecting with or protesting against the state and its policies, which remains the standard by which people everywhere are defined and is seen as the ultimate defender of the status quo. Some may even look explicitly across the border to another nation, if not its state embodiment, in a transnational manifestation of identity, although like more classical cases of irredentism this risks drawing criticism as unnatural to the national communities that are still taken as a given. Of course, as we have begun to see, this transnationalism is not exclusively limited to local border residents in today’s world.
Diasporas and Transnationalism: Carrying Home and Making Home

The classical image of an immigrant is that he or she makes a home in a foreign place, adapts to another environment, and then assimilates the culture of the receiving country. Linkages and ties with the home country gradually fade away and what remains is perhaps the (unlikely) dream of returning upon retirement. If it was ever true, however, this picture has lost much of its relevance. Cultural traits have proven to be strong. As part of the colonial economy workers were recruited from poorer parts of the world to work on estates or as urban middlemen elsewhere. Hence, the presence of South Asians (and South Asian culture) in East African countries, Africans in the Caribbean, and Chinese in Southeast Asia. In many cases, they maintained their religion: even today many South Asians in the Caribbean are Hindus and many Chinese in Southeast Asia are Buddhists. Often, these cross-border links are maintained based on family ties. This transnationalism (belonging both to the community of the receiving country and community in the country of origin) can create many conflicts, both in everyday life and at higher levels.

Globalization not only has led to an increase in long-distance migration, it has also intensified this transnationalism. Time-space compression, internet, and e-mail have brought ‘home’ within easy reach wherever one stays in the world. This applies not only to international tourists, but migrants across national borders as well. The migrants of today carry their imagined communities with them to an even greater degree than before and actively use these new communication opportunities in constructing and maintaining their identities despite spatial dispersion (for examples based on the U.S. experience see Zelinsky and Lee 1998). The diasporas of today are not likely to fade away as fast as before, but rather can be expected to stay alive much longer. Social networks are crucial in maintaining the existence of imagined communities abroad. That means the more frequent and intense the relations with parents, friends, and colleagues in the country of origin and within the host country, the more the immigrant will preserve traits of his original imagined community. Nevertheless, migrants live and work in another (at first host, later home) community. In time migrants will develop their identities on the basis of dual attachments to both the host country and the country of origin. Hence, the development of transnationalism that, in addition to the feeling of belonging to two national identities also includes behavior and activities that connect two countries. One manifestation of this is campaigning by Mexican political figures among Mexican residents in the U.S. who, although they cannot yet vote in Mexican elections from abroad, exert considerable influence on the elections back home due to the extensive transnational connections that exist (Mena 2002; Sheridan 1998).

In border studies, transborder migration and transnationalism has extensively been studied with regard to the U.S.-Mexican border area. Cases in point concern research on the economic impact of transborder migration on the villages or urban neighborhoods of origin i.e. the impact of remittances on households (for example see Conway and Cohen 1998; Klaver 1997; Rubenstein 1992; Taylor and Wyatt 1996) as well as social impacts (for example see Mountz and Wright 1996). In addition, other studies concern the situation of migrants in the U.S. and focus on immigrant communities in the host country (such as New York and Los Angeles) and the social networks members
maintain to support each other. Well known examples are the ethnic entrepreneurs who start businesses with financial and other support of family and friends.

Similar European studies focus on the southern Mediterranean border of the E.U., which in its length could be compared with the Mexican-U.S. border. Regulated labor flows across this southern European border to the West European countries started in the seventies. For The Netherlands these flows were largely comprised of migrants from Morocco and Turkey. Around a decade after the start of this migration the first studies were published (de Mas 1991). A salient point is that at the time these studies were carried out, Morocco and Turkey were considered to be fairly distant countries. But the perception of what border countries are has changed considerably since then. The Netherlands now literally (as part of the E.U.) as well as figuratively (in terms of cultural and economic linkages) borders both countries. Moreover, during the last few years the entrance of Turkey as a member of the E.U. has been discussed intensively—bringing Turkey even nearer to the Dutch people. Increasingly, the topics studied under the rubric of “border studies” are not restricted to border areas per se but also incorporate issues like transnationalism that transcend borders both near and far.

Where do borders start and end? In a current research project of Marisha Maas transnationalism constitutes the background for remittances of Filipino immigrants in The Netherlands (Maas 2002). After more than two decades of residence in The Netherlands and having obtained Dutch nationality, these immigrants continue to contribute to family income “back home.” One aspect of this study concerns the impact on economies in the region of origin. Specifically, Maas compares the attitude and behavior of migrant-entrepreneurs with migrant wage earners, testing the hypothesis that entrepreneurs will not only send money or goods but will also transfer their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge to the region of origin by way of their social networks. As one of the interviewed transnational entrepreneurs said: “I do so since if I am not starting an enterprise in my region of origin, money sent home will be used for consumption and essentially disappears,” adding “if I go back, there will be pressure to disperse all the money I have” (Maas 2002). This is in line with Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt (1999) who view transnationalism as restricted to cross-border mobility. According to them, it primarily concerns people who regularly move from one country to another country, as is the case with businessmen who have companies in two countries. In this sense, the experiences of Filipinos does not differ much from that of Moroccan or Turkish migrants. In regularly travelling from one country to the other, transnational individuals span the borders of two territories. In transnational space (Faist 2000), The Netherlands and The Philippines have become border countries.

Large Migration Flows and Their Impact on Territorial Identities

In Canada, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand, immigration constitutes part of the national territorial identity. As early as 1916 the journalist and cultural essayist Randolph Bourne envisioned the U.S. as a country populated by nationals with strong ties to their countries of origin. As a result, Bourne characterized Americans as international citizens and branded the U.S.A. “Transitional America” (Renshon 2001: 5). In U.S. history, the “melting pot” has been hailed as part of what makes that country strong. But in recent years, this construction of its heroic past has come under increasing criticism as it became interpreted by many from outside the mainstream that this
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was just a framework for watching non-Western cultural heritages become subsumed by those of European ancestry.

Instead, it is increasingly being recognized that the ethnic and cultural background of the U.S. is more like a salad bowl or vegetable stew where everyone maintains a unique identity and provides a valued contribution to society. On the contrary, as symbolized in the phrase “Fortress Europe,” European countries have not yet accepted the idea of being immigration countries. Nevertheless, a substantial portion of West European residents were born outside the borders of the E.U. Again, we’ll use The Netherlands as a case in point since it mirrors the concern as it exists in many of the European countries.

In The Netherlands several waves of migration can be discerned. After the Second World War substantial migration took place from the former colony of Indonesia, as well as emigration to Canada, Australia, and the U.S. In the sixties and seventies labor migrants began to arrive from the frontier countries of Europe: Morocco and Turkey. Beginning with the eighties, family reunions (including marriages with brides and bridegrooms from the country of origin) and asylum seekers started to dominate the migrant landscape. At present around 15% of the Dutch residents are foreign born or have one of their parents born abroad (the Dutch definition of *allochtonen* versus *autochtonen* or “native born” people). Most of them are concentrated in large cities, as is reflected in the 40 percent *allochtonen* in the Randstad Region (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and nearby urban areas).

In the eighties, Dutch urban geographers focused on the issue of segregation in cities. In The Netherlands, as in many countries, a determining factor is the housing market. A large number of immigrants are in subsidized housing in low income neighborhoods in Dutch cities. Examples are “de Indische buurt” in Amsterdam, “de Schilderwijk” and Transvaal in The Hague, and Spangen in Rotterdam. Currently, however, the most vigorous debate concerns the issue of immigration and its consequences for Dutch identity. Although some concerns were expressed before the start of the millennium, usually from the right, the debate received a firm impetus with a full-page article called “The Multicultural Drama” published in one of the leading newspapers of the Netherlands and written by Paul Scheffer (2000), a representative of the Social Democrat Party (“Partij van de Arbeid” or Labour Party). By stating “Let us take Dutch history and traditions seriously,” the article contained a plea to restore Dutch norms and values, in other words to strengthen the traditional “imagined community.” Pluralistic, or multicultural, society was considered threatening to a Dutch culture and the entire concept came under dramatically increased attack.

In politics, the first half of 2002 was characterized by the rise and subsequent murder of a new political leader, Pim Fortuyn, who received substantial support for his anti-establishment and anti-immigrant statements. In the wake of September 11, it is regrettable but perhaps not surprising that a lot of resentment has been directed against the Muslim population. The election gain of Fortuyn’s party post-mortum in May 2002 caused the traditional political parties to take a more critical stand toward immigration, and as a result the new prime minister from the Christian Democratic Party expressed support for the idea of a debate on the norms and values of Dutch society.

As stated previously, The Netherlands is but a bellwether of larger European trends. Similar developments occurred in other countries of the E.U. as well, with Austria, Denmark and France leading the way. Multiculturalism is no longer the post-modern thrill of encountering differences and creating new forms of hybrid cultures, but rather
as something that separates. Within this political-ideological climate, a rather sceptical view exists towards pleas for tolerance and democracy. Multiculturalism and the implication of consensus and living together with different worldviews, attitudes, and behaviors is firmly rejected. Furthermore, within this framework transnationalism is viewed as something that hinders the integration of migrants in a society that has its identity already defined and pretends to have benchmarks to measure the acceptability of its members.

It thus becomes clear why the Dutch novelist Naima El Bezaz, of Moroccan descent, has argued that immigrants should look for marriage partners in The Netherlands and invest their money in The Netherlands rather than in their countries of origin, behavior perceived as threatening the coherence of a society as defined within the confines of the present state. This reflection on national identities is rather paradoxical considering the efforts of European countries to form one united Europe. It shows that within the E.U. context it is necessary to reconstruct the concepts of integration and identity, and to differentiate between different levels/stages/dimensions, in other words between local and international integration, between before and after the September 11th, between the economic and political/cultural, and between “good” and “bad” pluralism.

Earlier we hinted that the territorially-based multiculturalism as nationalism belief remained somewhat elusive in the nation-building work of the new Europe. An even larger issue, however, is heritage-based multiculturalism with large flows originating outside of the current E.U. membership. It is not clear that Turkish membership (a largely economic and political issue) will bring a solution to this social and cultural concern. Multiculturalism is an alternative that Americans have largely moved on to. The issue continues to be debated in the U.S., which has its own share of individuals and groups with extreme views on the subject, but anti-multicultural (i.e. anti-non-European-cultural) forces have not reached the level of political empowerment recently manifest in the political elections of some European Union members states. Certainly California’s Proposition 187 (for more information see Clark 1998; Armbruster, Geron, and Bonacich 1995), among other items, are manifestations of this trend. But on a national (and even state) political level in the U.S., such issues remain less prominent (Smith and Tarallo 1995). Although multiculturalism issues (largely focused on the Mexican economic/jobs context) have been a significant part of the political platform of the Reform Party in recent years, some would argue that the wide appeal and preemptive movements of the (repressively-)dominant two-party system has kept it from becoming a front-burner issue of primary importance in political campaigns. The concept of multiculturalism has had and will certainly continue to draw the interest of future border research.

Before concluding this section, we would be remiss if we did not remind the reader that the impact of immigration on territorial identities is not restricted to the post-industrial countries of the North but occurs wherever substantial cross-border migration takes place. Malaysia, for example, is a small middle-income country that has 17 million inhabitants (comparable to The Netherlands). This includes an estimated two million labour immigrants, many of them from the far larger (in both land surface and population) neighboring Indonesia. In fact, it is quite easy to illegally cross the border between the Indonesian Island of Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia. In pre-colonial times, intensive interaction in trade and population occurred between the people called the Malay who lived on the many islands of the Southeast Asian archipelago.
During the colonial era, an artificial boundary was created between the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and British Malaysia. In the latter country the British imported labour from China and South Asia. Current ethnic divisions between the Malay majority (55 per cent), Chinese (35 percent), and others (mostly of South Asian origin) are sharply drawn and a precarious balance exists. In the past, the Malaysian government generally welcomed Indonesian immigrants as they were of Malay stock, Muslim, and spoke a related language, therefore strengthening the relative position of the majority and indigenous Malay population. But once their numbers grew rapidly, including the influx of labour made illegal by modern geopolitical borders, Indonesian immigration began to be stigmatized by linking immigration with illegality and crime. These processes initiated a new definition about the meaning of being Malay, stressing Islam as the core of Malayness with disregard of language and customs. Malay identity thus became located as part of the *ummah*, the Islamic society worldwide, and the specific relationship between Malays and Indonesians was downplayed (Spaan, van Naerssen, and Kohl 2002).

**Conclusion**

In this contribution we presented some ideas on cross-border migration and how it is related to processes of identity formation. Borders are an integral part of identities and, since people continuously construct their identity, they are also continuously engaged in bordering processes. Yet geopolitical borders do not correspondingly adjust as often nor as easily as do identity borders. Looked at from another angle, borders between national states imply different identities on both sides of the borders. Yet in border areas themselves these issues are often blurred, especially when ethnic, religious and language communities cross borders. How do people from the other side of the border feel “at home” across the border when that border continues to reflect centuries of nation-building more than it does just a few years or decades of integration? Since identities are composed of multiple layers, it can first of all be observed that there is selectivity in cross-border behavior and attitudes. Language integration may exist, for example, while politically there remains a clear break. Or language may be preserved while political integration moves forward. Despite such sporadic assimilation, however, borders are ideal test areas and barometers for projects of broader international integration.

At the same time, a break exists between the rhetoric and reality of migration streams through border regions, this time depending on the scale of one’s perspective, which is in turn connected to the size or degree to which the streams overwhelm/impact local areas. There is little doubt that transient flows of people to some degree affect the areas where they cross borders. The presence of major “illegal” flows through a border area has been characterized as the presence of “shadows in the mist.” But we have shown how it can also result in connecting with or protesting against the national state and its policies when viewed from or linked to the national scale. The national state remains the standard for controlling migration, shaping identity, and defining belonging. This leads us to the question of how identity construction also functions differently within various political contexts. An example is the current widespread debate in European countries regarding international migration, integration, and the multicultural society. In both theory and practice internal E.U. integration is considered to be a good thing, but at the same time the role of integration/multiculturalism
vis-à-vis individuals and groups less historically compatible with Western European cultural norms remains unresolved. America’s immigration-based heritage/nationalism seems to be providing a somewhat smoother transition to multiculturalism. Transnationalism (or continued connections not only with others of similar heritage, but others continuing to reside in one’s place of origin) continue to integrate economies and cultures in vastly dispersed locations while challenging traditional notions of nation states and territorial identities.

We feel that the concepts discussed in this paper are relevant for research that both focuses on and transcends borders. We hope that the concepts discussed have advanced an understanding of the interrelationship between migration, identity, and belonging. Many ideas will, of course, need to be worked out in more detail within the discipline of border studies in the future as they are applied in specific contexts.

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