INTRODUCTION

Boundaries, borders and frontiers have become keywords in social science and cultural studies in the 1990s, and political geographers have developed new, socio-culturally informed approaches to reflect critically the social construction and reproduction of territories, boundaries, difference and identity and their meanings in social practices and discourses. These approaches have forced the scholars to reflect more sensitively the links between social and spatial.

My lecture maps the changing roles of boundaries in this new situation, but does it by analysing also the historical background to our current thinking. I will start by deconstructing the meanings that have been associated with boundaries and the process by which these assumptions have gained their significance in geographical thinking. This perspective is more fruitful for evaluating the roles of boundaries in the globalizing world than the traditional approach of political geography that views boundaries as naturalized lines or limits of sovereignty, in a way undermining the dynamic relations between social and spatial. The historical approach renders possible an understanding of how boundaries and exclusions have become part of the material practices, ideologies and narratives through which social groups and their identities are constituted, i.e. how social and spatial come together. Boundaries and their links with power, action, mobility and identities are therefore crucial for interpreting the spatialities of the contemporary world.

I will evaluate at first the construction of state territoriality and boundaries in the complex formed by state, territory and sovereignty. Geographical knowledge discourses and the development of a specific boundary language for use in political geography have been important in this process showing the link between power and knowledge. My lecture tries therefore to unpack the spatialities implied by this language. Identity and boundaries are often seen as two sides of the same coin, but often with boundaries regarded as exclusive constituents of identity. I will therefore discuss the links between state, nation and identity to show how state boundaries - not as pure lines but as specific forms of spatialized discourse, ideology and practice - become part of daily life. Then I will discuss the contested, interdisciplinary discourses on the effects of globalization on boundaries and the final section will raise some challenges for border studies.
THE RISE OF BOUNDARY DISCOURSE

Boundaries have become important keywords in social science and cultural studies during the 1990s but the following set of quotations from distinguished authors, representing different academic fields, show that different views of their roles exist.

"Put simply, in terms of real flows of economic activity, nation-states have already lost their role as meaningful units of participation in the global economy of today’s borderless world" (Kenichi Ohmae 1995:11).

“…in some ways the modern nation-state, with its sovereignty defined by familiar territorial boundaries, seems as firmly rooted as ever: tax-collectors stop at the border, immigrants are stopped at the same border and transnational (or, more strictly speaking, trans-state) linkages can still be snapped off by independent state power” (James Anderson 1995:67).

“Contemporary frontiers are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction or political authority ends and another begins; they are central to understanding political life. Examining the justifications of frontiers raises crucial, often dramatic, questions concerning citizenship, identity, political loyalty, exclusion, inclusion and of the ends of the state” (Malcolm Anderson 1996:1)

“Borders and boundaries, identities and difference construct and determine to a large extent the space of agency, the mode of participation in which we act as citizens in the multilayered polities to which we belong” (Nira Yuval-Davis 1997:17)

While all of them discuss the roles of boundaries, it seems as if the previous authors are not at all discussing the same theme - their views simply differ so much! Hence, some scholars argue that borders and nation-states will lose their roles or even vanish from the globalizing world and current geoeconomic order characterized by mobility, speed and flows. As if making a mockery to the previous ones, others suggest that states and boundaries are still crucial in international governance but in new, less fixed ways. For a third group of authors both nation and state are perpetually significant but it is the nation-state that is in trouble. This argument is based on the following logic: while territory and territoriality are constantly important for state legitimacy and power, ideas of nation are increasingly driven by discourses that are not explicitly territorial or cross boundaries. And while these theoreticians put forward their rather abstract argument, simultaneously a growing number of scholars in Europe and elsewhere in the world, among them geographers at Nijmegen University, are convinced on the need to study the economic, cultural and political roles of boundaries and cross-border activities.

Different opinions on the future of boundaries reflect of course partly diverging theoretical
frameworks that are used in interpreting the processes of globalization. An other background is the simple fact that boundaries have many functions. On the one hand, they are elements in the international governance and international law through the principles of sovereignty and territoriality, on the other hand, instruments of state policy and territorial control but they are also constituents/challengers of existing social identities. The meanings of boundaries are always contextual and historically contingent. State boundaries in particular are deeply ideological but also involve material practices and consequences. Like nationalisms, boundaries are part of the ways in which people try to make sense of the world at all spatial scales. Boundaries not only to divide but also define and regulate social action. As the famous sociologists Georg Simmel once pointed out, human beings need boundaries to orientate themselves in space – but this does not mean that these boundaries should inevitably be understood as being exclusive.

Several backgrounds exist for the current interest on boundaries. Firstly, the fall of the West-East divide from the world geopolitical landscape meant that both ‘East’ and ‘West’ lost their ‘Others’ when the former divide has melted into a series of gateways aiming at geoeconomic integration. Illustrative of this tendency is the fact that the Berlin Wall, the former key symbol of this divide has now become a well-selling commodity in heritage business markets. Another factor has been the violent re-definition of territorial and ethnic identities particularly in Eastern Europe and Africa. While we now tend to think that boundaries do not matter to the extend they used to before the collapse of the Soviet Union, in fact Gerald Blake argues that there has probably never been a time when so many borderland regions world wide have become such difficult or dangerous places to live. Borderlands are increasingly under stress, Blake suggests, and shows how the current world still harbours some 50 unresolved boundary disputes. This ‘stress’ is of course partly based on globalization and the effects of the flows of capital/finance, goods, ideas and people on boundaries, sovereignty and governance. Current border-crossings reflect changes in (information) technology but the human aspect is increasingly important. Concomitantly the governance of citizenship and new images of threat - such as increasing rates of crime or AIDS - become instruments of power policy that are explicitly linked with border-crossings. Increasing environmental risks and the rise of electronic spaces also force to reflect the porousness of state boundaries. Last but not least, ideas and ‘post-approaches’ (post-modern, post-structuralist and post-colonial) have forced us to question the ideas of fixed boundaries, identities, truths and power and instead put stress on the fragmentary, hybridity and the impermanent.

BOUNDARIES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF TERRITORIALITY

All human boundaries that divide and territorialize space are political and contested, because they inevitably order and structure social relations. Boundaries exist, in open or hidden forms, in politics, administration, economy, culture, organization of ethnic relations, education and other forms of national socialization. These practices and discourses are the medium where the consciousness of state sovereignty, of ‘we’ as an abstract community, and the relations with the Other are created and reproduced.

Boundaries are one part of the perpetual process of institutionalization in which territories,
identities and meanings are produced and reproduced (Paasi 1996). Accordingly boundaries are not only sterile lines but are 'located' everywhere in human societies, in multiple practices and discourses in which socio-spatial inclusions and exclusions emerge and where social practices and discourses integrating diverging spatial scales come together. Understanding how boundaries, territory and state are sedimented in daily life paves the way for scrutinizing their links and, more importantly, for analysing the significance of boundaries in the increasingly complex world of 'flows'.

We live our daily life in a complex network of socio-spatial relations and scales but the state-centred system with more or less exclusive boundaries defines much the way how the spatiality of the world is understood and how the knowledge of this world is produced, organized and used. In spite of the mixed cultural influences, voluntary and forced migration, the link between state, territoriality and sovereignty has been so dominating that it has been almost impossible to avoid what Agnew calls 'territorial trap'. This is based on the following assumptions.

- modern state sovereignty, security and political life require clearly bounded territorial spaces.
- a fundamental opposition between domestic and foreign affairs exists.
- the territorial state acts as the geographical ‘container’ of modern society, i.e. boundaries of the state are the boundaries of political and social processes.

Hence, the world is understood as consisting of bounded, exclusive territories that have their own identity. The assumptions behind territorial trap look relatively simple, but they are extremely powerful since they are sedimented both in material practice and ideologies. They are ‘forces at operation’, which puts stress on how the spatiality of the state and its limits and, indeed, ‘our’ limits become part of governance and the everyday experience. ‘Territorial trap’ hides the fact that collective identities are not naturally generated but socially constructed and they are produced by the social construction of boundaries and forms of exclusion and inclusion.

One part of the naturalization of territorial thinking is the narrative of the evolution of the international system of states, which in various historical stages becomes materialized in static, ahistorical cartographies. This story describes how the Modern world has been shaped by the interaction of capitalism, industrialism, military competition and the state, and how the state as a political organization covering a particular territory has been the major social form that modernity has produced and the most effective expression of the link between power and space. It usually reminds, how The Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the development of cartography and the visualization of space with maps helped to establish the dominance of a horizontal, geo-strategic view of space and contributed to the rise of the space of states. As far as boundaries are concerned, this story reminds how traditional zones, frontiers, were gradually replaced by exclusive boundaries at the early 1900s.

Of course all states have always shared at least some of their power with other states and organizations and empires of one form or another have not completely disappeared from the world. In spite of this fact the number of states and boundaries has increased continually following the processes of secession, unification and de-colonization. While some 50 state
existed in 1900, current 190 states are linked together with more than 300 land boundaries that have a unique, often violent history and tensions still exist between the two states. 300 land boundaries means that there are more than 600 interpretations of their meanings, at least one on both sides of the border, probably even more. While the border is the same, its meanings may vary on different sides in national history writing and spatialization of memories. 'History' is a major instrument of justification in boundary disputes. It is, however, a contested element, since the ‘plots’ of boundary narratives are typically highly selective. They are also often presentist, constructed from the perspective of the existing states.

Political geography and the invention of boundaries

The power of territorial trap is hence based on the fact that it is sedimented in numerous state-based institutions and practices. One of the most important institutions is the production of knowledge which has been particularly useful in the governance of the state system and in the creation of territorialized meanings. Many academic disciplines, geography as one of the best examples, have their origin in the practical interests of the state and are perpetually involved in the practices that aim at inscribing exclusive territorial entities with a content, a history, a meaning and a trajectory.

The history of political geography illustrates well the links between knowledge and power. The period before World War II was important in establishing the research practice and boundary terminology, and in fixing the meanings of the political geographic ideas of boundaries. After World War II the exclusive and expansionist terminology developed by political geographers and geopolicians lost much of its importance. The division between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ boundaries, for instance, was generally rejected. Boundaries remained important topics, however, and textbooks on political geography have not been able to pass the discussion on the roles of boundaries. In the frozen Cold War geopolitical landscape border scholars paid particular attention to land boundaries dividing sovereign territories. Both geographers and international relations scholars have understood boundaries mainly as normative categories and have concentrated on defining boundaries, classifying the periods of boundary formation and on mapping boundary landscapes and border-crossing activities.

During the 1990s geographers became interested in the cultural meanings attached to border landscapes. Political geographers and critical geopoliticians also became interested in the socio-cultural processes of inclusion and exclusion, and how boundaries are used in the construction of communities, territorial identities, and representations of ‘us’ and the Other. Several scholars have shown that the ‘purification of space’, the rejection of difference, the securing of boundaries and symbols to maintain homogeneity in social groupings are employed at all spatial scales, varying from the territories of local gangs in cities to nations and global geopolitical spaces.

New interest in the cultural significance of political boundaries emerges from the fact that boundaries are not neutral instruments exploited by the state but they also constituents of (national) identity and naturalization of nations as ‘individuals’. Most theorists of nationalism
note the significance of territory and boundaries in the construction of national communities and the images of their past, present and future. Nationalism promoted by the state exploits both history and territoriality to make the boundedness and monopolization of violence appear natural to ‘us’. The state exploits these elements both in the construction and reproduction of its territory and citizens, the latter understood - or state institutions tend to represent it - as constituting a ‘nation’.

**Challenging the assumptions on cultural homogeneity**

A major ideological manifestation of territorial trap has been the understanding of ‘national cultures’ as homogeneous, coherent phenomena so that territory and national exclusiveness become naturalized parts of cultures. Group identities based on culture are never ‘natural’ but always created for specific purposes. Also nations are social constructions, ‘imagined communities’ (Benedict Anderson), that have different meanings in different places. This means that a state that is successful in reproducing itself as a ‘nation’, must have specific symbolic and institutional practices for narrating, signifying and legitimating the past and present of the nation and the bounded territory that it occupies. Nation is sedimented in numerous institutions. Besides administration and governance, important constituents of nation are economy, culture, education, religion, family, jurisdictional systems, political institutions, military and border guard institutions, the media and cultural institutions. These institutions reify the past, present and the future of the nation and national territory.

‘Cultural identity’ is both the scene and the object of political struggles. Indeed it is a political statement which is part of the processes that are usually labeled as ethnic. The contemporary world harbours hundreds of ethno-national groups – according to some estimations even 5000 ‘nations’. They coexist with some 200 bounded states that represent a vast array of internal differences in ‘national’ cultures, economies, identities and backgrounds of inhabitants. In fewer than 20 states minorities account for less than 5 percent of the population. This suggests that most modern states are plural, even if the attempt to fuse national identity and national state has been the major motive in European and world history. In spite of this fact many social groups in Europe and elsewhere regard themselves as ‘nations’ and struggle for self-determination or a state of their own. This suggests that territory and boundaries are still important in national imaginaries, spatial discourses and practices. Most border conflicts occur nowadays inside states rather than between them.

**BOUNDARIES AND GLOBALIZATION**

Previous analysis of territorial trap shows its importance for thinking almost self-evidently that all individuals should belong to a nation and state, and have a national identity that culminates itself in the citizenship that the state has admitted on the grounds of ethnic similarity, origin, etc. Ideas of national identity and the rights of inhabitants are thus crucially linked with the state. These relations have changed since the 1945 so that while (political) identities are perpetually comprehended as particularized and territorially bounded, rights have become increasingly abstract and are defined and legitimated at the transnational scale.
While the world presented in maps is often ahistorical and stable, it is the postcolonial struggles that give the current geopolitical map much of its dynamic. The separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation or displacement - colonizing imposition of foreign culture - has been one of the most formative experiences of this century and since World War II the estimated number of refugees alone has been 60-100 million people. Whereas the refugees at the end of World War II were mainly Europeans, this group is increasingly heterogeneous today, main groups being the refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Bosnia and some African countries. UNHCR’s statistics show that there were more than 22 million refugees in 1998.

Displaced people and immigrant groups have raised their voices, challenge the state-centred territorial order and the significance of boundaries, reflecting many times a search for identity for resistance against oppression. States, for their part, struggle to maintain representations of a bounded national community and identity, and attempt to control or even destroy these voices by using physical or discursive violence. State elites have various strategies for promoting social integration, such as assimilation encouraged by the state, various forms of socio-cultural autonomy or language accommodation for minorities. The statistics of Amnesty International show that violence is a much used instrument. In 1998 human rights were violated in 142 states, political murders occurred in 47 states, people were arrested because of their opinions in 78 states and arrested people were tortured or beaten in 125 countries. This effectively displays the unbalance between the territorial boundaries of sovereign states and the mental boundaries of existing or emerging ethno-national groupings.

**From one territoriality to many territorialities**

Geographers have defined territoriality as a medium to create and reproduce much of the geographical context through which people experience the world and attach meaning to it, i.e. territoriality has been understood as social construct. They have also reminded us it is not just a static, unchanging form of state behaviour. The state may use diverging territorial strategies that in fact require specific flexibility of its boundaries. Hence the state usually strives to control its military strength inside boundaries, at times expands it well outside the existing territory, often in the form of military alliances (e.g. NATO). Nationalism and discourses on national identity aim at promoting ideas of cultural homogeneity and of the existence of a ‘nation’, whereas in economic sense states may have extra-territorial motives and expand their economic boundaries by creating supra-national units, like European Union or NAFTA. Territories may then have different relations with each other through their border areas. Some forms of territoriality may overlap, while others do not.

All this means that no contemporary discussion of state borders can avoid addressing globalization since this process implies ‘border crossings’ and blurring of the spatial categorizations between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Globalization is a contested category, referring to tendencies such as the relative shrinking of the world or the increasing consciousness of the world as a whole. Authors do not always make it clear whether they talk about the globalization of institutions (economy, culture), consciousness or communication networks. Hence globalization refers to a number of processes, like the internationalization of
production, finance or state activities, changing international division of labour, migration from poor to richer states, or transformations in communication and information technologies. The globalizing consciousness condenses well in the somewhat contested idea of ‘cosmopolitics’ that has emerged as an alternative political project when nation-state is challenged by processes of globalization, religious fundamentalism etc.

One part of globalization discourse has been the rise of specific rhetoric. Manuels Castells has been extremely influential in providing spatialized metaphors and flow-rhetoric for current debates. He speaks about a ‘space of flows’ which increasingly exceeds the traditional ‘space of places’. The emergence of flows, immigration etc. will increasingly decrease the roles of sovereignty and identities of states and challenge national identities and national boundaries.

The images and metaphors of border crossing been particularly important in discourses on ‘cyberspace’ and its effects on current spatializations. It is argued how virtual spaces or information cyberspaces will give rise to new global geographies and new spaces that will change the ways we think, the forms of communities and identities. Cyberspace points to the fact that border-crossings occur not only in concrete spaces of existing border areas but also in the spaces of metaphor, representation and imagination.

Despite the development of cyberspace, the role of traditional/new institutions that produce and reproduce territoriality and boundaries, and forms of national socialization, will remain strong. Kevin Robins states that it is perhaps too easy to think of cyberspace and virtual reality in utopian terms as an alternative space and reality. He argues that we should start from the real world, recognize that difference, asymmetry and conflict are constitutive features of that world, not community. O’Tuathail and Dalby state that the digital nation may transgress state boundaries but it will remain the virtual ‘home’ of a small elite fraction of the world’s overall population.

**A DIVIDED GROUND?**

Previous discussion shows that boundaries are not only a research objects for political geographers but an essential category for regional geographers, economic geographers and cultural geographers. Figure 1 shows some of the concepts that are in use among researchers in these fields. In spite of their clearly common interest geographers operating in these fields seem not to meet each other but have their own, more or less bounded academic territories and boundaries. Hence, political geographers have developed new approaches but are still basing their work on some key categories, such as state, nation, sovereignty and territory, economic geographers are more interested in economic integration and interaction but do not pay so much attention to the categories of political geography, cultural geographers shape territories and boundaries in relation to identities and (new) regional geographers reflect the problems of demarcating regions and identities. These fields are not, of course, totally separate but perhaps more cooperation would be beneficial for developing research. I see this as one future challenge for boundary researchers. An other challenge is naturally the crossing of the boundaries between different academic disciplines, because boundary studies are today carried out by geographers, anthropologists,
economists, sociologists, literary theoreticians to mention but a few fields. All these fields face major questions. Perhaps the most frequently made one is:

Fig. 1. Boundaries in geographical research

ARE BOUNDARIES DISAPPEARING?

Recent interpretations of current geopolitical and geoeconomic transformations raise the question if boundaries are really vanishing? Or is it rather so that our traditional
conceptualizations are inadequate in understanding their new roles? It is clear that we are moving towards a situation where exclusive state boundaries are, at least in some areas, becoming porous. Increasing cross-border interaction and new regionalizations change many closed 'alienated borderlands' to 'interdependent', and perhaps finally 'integrated borderlands' (Martinez). ‘The motion machine’ challenges the assumed isomorphism between territorial and national integrity. Territory as the source for loyalty and national identity is increasingly divorced from territory as the site of sovereignty and state control. On the other hand, new emerging spatializations, such as economic and institutional ‘fortress Europe’ or the ideas of the ‘clash of civilizations’ may concomitantly become mediums of exclusion against outsiders.

The ideas and ‘truths’ of boundaries or nation-state are themselves products of contested discourses. The contested views display that knowledge and understanding are situated categories. Hence the economic, political and cultural contexts effect on how researchers shape the categories that they use to interpret current transformations. Boundaries, their disappearance or globalization mean different things for researchers coming from various states and ‘academic territories’. And not for researchers but also for politicians, international capitalists, business gurus, military leaders, refugees and displaced people or ordinary people.

Hence, for the proponents of ‘strong’ version of globalization thesis states are less important than transnational corporations, social movements and communities that cross boundaries. Many authors suggesting these tendencies come from US, Britain and Japan where state territoriality has not been an important part of economic, cultural and military activities and where state boundaries have been minor obstacles in expanding the existing ideologies and forms of culture into global hegemony. In fact, globalization, too, has a ‘power-geometry’ (Massey): people are in the same position in relation to ‘flows’. Global networks are dominated by the images, products and identities that reflect western modernity.

Most ‘strong’ thesis supporters see boundaries as fixed entities and territoriality or sovereignty in essentialist terms. This means they have been stuck with the modernist language of traditional political geography. It is obvious that strong globalists, rather than discussing concrete state borders, use the ideas of boundary or borderless world as metaphors depicting the condition of economic liberalism and expanding capitalism. As such they are ‘big metaphors’, since they change the rhetoric that is used in research.

A group of scholars that may be labelled as ‘weak versionists’ see internationalization more important than globalization (Anderson & O’Dowd). For them the state is still the major context in which people organize their life. Accordingly, territorial states simply operate in a different, global context. The major question is what will be the balance between markets and state in the systems of global governance. States may now have less control over economic flows, ideas, or pollutants but they remain controllers of their borders in the geopolitical landscape and the movements of people across them. Hirst and Thompson (1996:181) argue that most people still live in closed worlds, ‘trapped by the lottery of their birth’; for them nation-state is a community of fate. The continually increasing number of states and boundaries suggests quite opposite tendencies than ideas of the disappearance of
There exists still one important question: the question of moral. Agnew and Corbridge have pointed out that there is no reason to assume that moral boundaries should coincide with the boundaries of our everyday community (and, I would add, state) in the current world. Peace activists, feminists and environmentalists, for instance, increasingly ‘cross’ the state borders in their argumentation and activities. Appadurai takes one more step and suggests that if nations are ‘imagined communities’, it is the imagination that will have to carry us beyond the nation.

CONCLUSIONS

I have evaluated in my lecture how boundaries have become crucial elements in political life and in academic geography and, further, what is the role of boundaries in the contemporary, globalizing world. I have shown that current discussions on globalization and disappearance of state boundaries are often based on rather crude generalizations and that these debates have been stuck with traditional language that present boundaries as fixed lines or understand the erosion of boundaries or borderless world as metaphors for economic liberalization. Due to this fact many recent works on globalization have not provided any conceptual or methodological guidelines as to how to study boundaries in the transforming world.

I have argued that boundaries should not be viewed from the perspective of static territorial lines but should rather be understood from a broader socio-cultural perspective that emphasizes the production and reproduction of territories and boundaries, and their symbolic meanings in discourses and institutional practices that occur at all spatial scales, from local to global. This argument is based on the fact that boundaries are both symbols and institutions that produce distinctions between social groups and are produced by them. As institutions and discourses boundaries have usually ‘spread’ everywhere into the society, they are not ‘located’ only in the border areas. Boundaries are therefore one part of what I have labeled as the discursive landscape of social power that exist in social practices and relations. This is why boundaries do not self-evidently disappear when some practices - e.g. economy - change. This simply means that instead of one territoriality we have several overlapping territorialities.

Boundaries, so long regarded as neutral lines in the geopolitical landscapes, are in fact present in national iconographies, commemorations, military parades, literature and folklore, sites of battles and landscapes that all signify and symbolize national identity. Therefore border scholars should use critically many kinds of materials: media discourses, manifestations of ‘high’ and popular culture, educational materials, etc. One challenge for boundary studies is the analysis of the contextual forms of national socialization and of boundary maintaining institutions: military, religion, education, immigration/racism, foreign and security policies, for instance, are crucial elements in the construction of the geographies of exclusion. Border scholars need to reflect the paradoxes and contradictions that are hidden in the practices and narratives of boundaries, identities and exclusions. Hence, border scholars need to reflect the structural and ideological constituents of boundary
formation but also to be sensitive to the ethnographies of daily life, where boundaries are ultimately produced and reproduced.