EURASIAN BORDERLANDS

Spatializing Borders in the Aftermath of State Collapse

Edited by

TONE BRINGA *and*

HEGE TOJE

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INEQUALITY AND
DIFFERENCE

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The idea for the research project "Eurasian Borderlands: Transforming Religious, Ethnic and Socio-Economic Relationships" came as a result of numerous discussions on state (trans)formation, war, mobility and history based on fieldwork from former Sudan, Yugoslavia, Yemen and the Caucasus at the Department of Social Anthropology in Bergen, Norway. These are areas that had experienced either state collapse, or profound political change through violence and warfare. Our discussions revealed that there were similar elements at play in these processes, and from these conversations, a Eurasian Borderlands research project was conceived. A three-year-long research project was funded by the Norwegian Research Council, including a postdoctoral fellow, Hege Toje, and a PhD candidate, Elina Troscenko. Tone Bringa has headed the project. Tone Bringa, Hege Toje, Elina Troscenko and Leif Manger formed the core group of

researchers. In addition, our meetings were attended by PhD students Mehmonsho Sharifov and Giorgi Cheisvili who participated in discussions and contributed insights into border issues in Tajikistan and Georgia. Guzel Sabirova and John Schoeberlein enriched our discussions while guest researchers at the Social Anthropology Department in Bergen. John Schoeberlein has been an important contributor at all stages of the project. Leif Manger, while busy with other projects, has always been willing to join project meetings to offer his ideas and reflections.

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Contents

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List of Figures

Introduction: Eurasian Borderlands

Tone Bringa and Hege Toje

INTRODUCTION: EURASIAN BORDERLANDS

Recent events in Europe—the war in Eastern Ukraine, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the building of border fences to keep out migrants—have given border studies a new urgency. In this book, we examine border processes characterized by both openings and closures in the aftermath of a defining moment on the eve of the 21st century; the break-up of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the communist federated states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia made way for new state borders and nation-states, often through violent means, and as the result of ethnic cleansing on ethnically diverse territory. Concomitantly, over the last two decades the European Union (EU) developed a more unified policy toward a common external border.[1] Yet, while the latter development has produced a series of studies, it is striking that there is no single volume which deals with the changing borderlands in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.[2] This book seeks to fill this gap by looking at border dynamics in the former Soviet Union area.

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union, its outer borders, which most Soviet citizens had been barred from crossing since 1923 (See Pelkmans 2006; Chandler 1998), became generally more permeable. This change facilitated mobility from the former Soviet Union to areas such as Europe, China, the USA, Turkey and the Middle East, and vice versa. New opportunities for travel enabled new connections and dependencies. New relationships were developed in trade, education, cultural exchange and religion—oftentimes connecting people with the people and institutions previously unreachable under the strict border regime of the Soviet Union (see Kalb 2002).

At the same time, new borders emerged as new states were created along previously internal, administrative boundary lines. Crossing the border in areas that had formerly been unified became difficult with new visa regimes and citizenship categories that defined a new set of insides and outsides. Indeed, in the former Soviet space, the collapse is commonly referred to as *razpad,* "falling-apart," conveying a sense of fragmentation that captures both the state collapse and the territorial transformations that took place after 1991. Railroad networks were divided into several autonomous units to match new political boundaries, reflecting a desire for national control of the infrastructure of circulation and communication. Infrastructure grids such as roads, gas pipelines, electricity networks and water supplies are not only channels that connect borderlands with a center (Donnan 2010, 254), but ways to integrate territory. Such grids are thus transposed as part of the political work of territorially and socially delineating new or aspiring nation-states. This restructuring complicates people's everyday lives and often leads to conflict, as has been documented for the Ferghana Valley by Madeleine Reeves (2014). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, border regimes covered everything from tense militarized borders to borders where mobility was unhindered by physical barriers. The borders are usually the demarcation lines of internationally recognized sovereign states, but they may also mark aspiring but unrecognized states. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of its neighboring communist states ultimately implied a re-drawing of political, economic and social boundaries. It affected the entire former Soviet space, re-arranging relations between center and periphery, spurring the new forms of identity politics, producing new religious and economic landscapes, new modes of interaction and new systems of meaning, and altering the flow of ideas, goods and people. These processes are at work in the world that has emerged today, and are the subjects of the studies in this volume.

Borderlands

The expression "spatializing borders," found in the subtitle of this book, may appear as an oxymoron. But the expression resonates with terms such as "spatializing states," which Ferguson and Gupta introduce to capture "how states come to be understood as entities with particular spatial characteristics," (2002, 981) and with Setha M. Low's term "spatializing culture," by which he means "to locate both physically and conceptually [culture] in social space" (1996, 861). By using the term spatializing borders, we want to stress that borders not only delineate territory, but also delineate and even separate social space and spaces of interaction. In general terms, this book is concerned with changing state borders and their impact on people's mobility and their relationships with each other and the state. The book explores processes of social mapping and the dynamics of bordering in borderlands in areas where international state borders or borders in the making may separate communities and form new patterns of interaction and mobility, where cultural identities are formed ambiguously, and often in tension with the state's official categorizations, and where people are vulnerable to the changing aspirations of political leaders and to animosity between neighboring states, and live in "borderlands under stress" (Blake 2000, 1; see also Donnan and Wilson 2010, 3; Berdahl 1999; Brown 2004). The communities in such lands are often considered marginal—they are far from the center of state power, but they still embody the state's claim to sovereignty over territory. Borderlands may be areas of heightened control, but they may also be sites of resistance and of social and cultural exchange and creativity. They are locations where the interplay between borders and boundary-making is often dynamic processes.

We will argue that, to understand the dramatically changing border landscape in the last decades, there is much to be gained from shifting our gaze away from the center and redirecting it toward processes at the borderlands, keeping in mind that such "borderlands could be intrastate as well as interstate" (Readman et al. 2014, 12).

"Borderlands" is a term that allows us to investigate how people's lives are formed by territorial borders, and how these borders are, in turn, formed by people's social and cultural practices. We see borderlands "as a special type of place," one that "generates a particular kind of social relations in which the border and its transformations become an instrument (as well as a reflection) of different forms of power and conflicts as these emerge and

mutate" (Donnan 2010, 254). We can understand the processes Donnan identifies by studying the emergence or transformation of borderlands in the aftermath of state collapse, because this leads to re-alignment between centers and peripheries, involving a re-definition of territories and the formation of multiple boundaries and borders-in-the-making.

BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES

In recent years, anthropologists have become increasingly interested in border studies through the lens of people's everyday lives and their sense of collective identity. The creation of boundaries, and ethnic boundaries in particular, is a precursor to this,[3] and some scholars writing about borders use boundaries and borders interchangeably. However, distinguishing between the two words based on their semantic nuances allows us to explore the interplay between symbolic/category boundary-making and border-making. Processes of boundary-making, we suggest, sometimes precede and sometimes result from border-making.

A border is a specific type of boundary that forms a physical and symbolic demarcation of politically controlled territory. Boundaries, however, are drawn around categories and symbolic entities. Categorization is a fundamental part of human thought, and it is one reason that anthropology has long been concerned with boundaries as a concept. The most influential study of boundaries is Fredrik Barth's 1969 edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, which rejected the prevalent position of the day that saw cultures as "delineated unchanging wholes." It offered, instead, a new perspective by focusing on the boundaries of ethnic groups and arguing that boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. This processual perspective was a radically new insight at the time, and later theorists owe much to this book, since the perspective on ethnicity and ethnic groups offered in the book questioned the taken-for-granted nature of group boundaries. The concern of the scholars contributing to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* was with the durability and stability of boundaries, but it is above all the alteration of boundaries and borders which affects people's lives, often dramatically and violently.

But Barth's volume took the existence of the boundary itself for granted, and thus ignored the role of politics and history in the creation of these boundaries. Borders, we suggest, are ways of naturalizing imagined ethnic, cultural and political boundaries. Weedon reminds us "the appeal to the 'natural' is one of the most powerful aspects of commonsense

thinking, but it is a way of understanding social relations which denies its history" (1987, 3 quoted in Peterson 2013, 57), and Peterson adds, "to characterize something as 'natural' both denies its history and erases its politics" (Peterson 2013, 57). In this volume, we acknowledge the role of history and politics, while highlighting the processes of naturalizing difference through borders and boundary-making.

The contributors to this volume are notable for the attention they have given to the history and politics of the borderlands they study. This is crucial in trying to understand contemporary border and boundary dynamics. Particularly perhaps, since states in this region are still influenced by the Soviet legacy of both ethnically labeling and categorizing their citizens, and defining and controlling the boundaries between them.

Before 1989, studies of borders and border regions often questioned top-down models of the nation-state and views of cultures as units naturally bounded within nation-states (see Pelkmans 2006), and this helped us to challenge the way difference was naturalized through boundaries and state borders, but with the fall of the Berlin Wall, border studies became more concerned with the effects of removing state borders on communities that had been divided since 1945 (see Borneman 1993; Berdahl 1999). Since the 1990s, the scholarly literature on borders has developed into a multidsciplinary subfield of border studies: political scientists, human geographers, historians, sociologists and anthropologists have all contributed their perspectives to the study of borders.[4]

The 1990s literature, according to Berry et al. (1998), was "influenced by globalization and globalization theories […] and moved away from the ideas of 'boundedness'" and was more concerned with "the fluidity of phenomena […] such as culture, identity, sovereignty, national territory, citizenship" (1998, 7). But the dramatic and often violent re-drawing of borders in Eurasia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia challenged predictions of disappearance of boundaries and a "space of flows" (Castell 1989, quoted in Kemp 1998, 75).

Starting from the Barthian understanding of the socially constructed ethnic boundary as stable over time, independent of the movement of people across it, we now arrive at a point where boundaries (as boundary-making) must be linked to "dimensions of time and space" (Berry et al. 1998, 7). Kemp, drawing on Soja, argues that social theory has (so far) "privileged time over space" and suggests that this explains why "social theory has paid scant attention to […] territorial boundaries" (1998, 74); she applies the term "spatial socialization" (ibid., 76; see also Paasi 1996, 8)

to combine space and time. Sarah Green (2012, 585) suggests the term "tidemarks" with similar intentions. We see "spatial socialization," looking at the interplay between spatial delineations and identity, as involving two sets of processes, one being time and space, and the other, boundaries and borders. We examine in this volume how the border itself is constituted, considering, on one hand, spatial and temporal perspectives on social practices, and political and historical perspectives on state-making on the other.

Eurasia

The title of this book is *Eurasian Borderlands*; the concept of "Eurasia" has acquired various meanings and is used both in a geographical sense and as part of political discourse. Scholars who deal with cultural and economic history have found it productive to consider the term "Eurasia" as a landmass—one in which the exchange of knowledge, goods and people can be observed. Specifically, "Eurasia" has been used to launch a critique of a Eurocentric understanding of cultural and economic history. In *The Eurasian Miracle*, Goody discusses the shared history and the cultural and economic exchange between Europe and Asia, countering what he sees as Eurocentric narratives about modernization and capitalism. He argues that the history of modernization and capitalism is not the history of Europe, but of Eurasia (Goody 2010; see also Hann 2016).

A second use of the term has become common within Western academia: Eurasia has come to denote the Soviet Union's fifteen successor states, which cover parts of both Europe and Asia. Several prominent research institutions and university departments, whose scholarship and research deal with Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, have adopted Eurasia in their names. Eurasia is, however, a flexible term and is therefore often expanded to include neighboring states that may have economic, cultural or political relations with the post-Soviet space; this is particularly true for Afghanistan and parts of western China.

A third use of Eurasia is specific to Russia and the Central Asian successor states to the Soviet Union. This use is part of a Russian political discourse, which has gained an ideological meaning in the form of what is known as "Eurasianism" (see Tsygankov 2003). "Eurasianism" is rooted in an early twentieth-century Russian political and intellectual movement that sees "Eurasia" as a referent to a "Russia [that] is not in essence a European country but a unique civilization, created by the union

of the Slavic and the Turko-Mongol steppe peoples" (Humphrey 2002, 263), and based on "an inherent spiritual, geographical, racial and political affinity of Russia with Asia" (Bernstein 2009, 25). It has been seen by non-Russian scholars in the Soviet successor states as a form of new Russian imperialism, but also as representing Russia's "third way" which allows for republics far from the political center in Moscow to conceptualize "themselves as the geographic centres of Eurasian space" (Humphrey 2002, 264–265).[5] In 2000, Russia's President Vladimir Putin declared "Eurasianism" to be the ideology of the new Russia, replacing the old Soviet ideology. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), officially launched on 1 January 2015, is the latest manifestation of "Eurasianism." It is based on the same templates as the EU, starting out as a customs union with an aim of achieving free movement of goods, services, capital and workforce within its borders.[6]

For the authors of this volume, Eurasia is a regional tag for scholarship of the post-Soviet space, but is also used in the same way as Goody, considering this area as an interconnected field of various forms of mobilities, infrastructure and historical memory.[7] The flexibility of the concept of Eurasia thus allows us to bring in neighboring regions and states, to better understand the historical formation of state structures and political and social processes. A study that takes these intertwined trajectories into account increases our understanding of complex transformations and how borders and boundaries are formed in the aftermath of state collapse.

Soviet Borders

The Soviet Union, including its extended boundaries through the Warsaw pact, was known for its strict border policy and controls. The borders were physical symbols of the resistance to international capitalism, and their protection was seen as vital to the Soviet self-contained economy. The Soviet border therefore attained a quality of sacrosanctity (Bassin et al. 2010). Furthermore, policies such as the state monopoly on foreign trade and restrictions imposed on passports also underpinned Soviet territorial control. At the same time, the highly restricted borders constituted an essential paradox for the Soviet Union: They defied the Marxist principle of internationalism among the working classes, a principle that is necessarily premised on open borders (see Chandler 1998). It was believed by authorities that Soviet citizens should be protected from capitalist impulses that might contaminate their minds and bodies. For the same reason,

travel beyond the borders was reserved only for a select few. This constituted an ideologically based xenophobia, which was particularly intense in the border areas (Martin 1998, 829). These borderlands of the Soviet Union housed a population of predominantly non-Russian peasants, a double source of potential disloyalty: Peasants were considered politically immature and could therefore easily be misled, and non-Russian populations would typically have loyalties to people of the same ethnicity as well as links of kinship, trade and friendship with people on the other side of the border (Brown 2004; Berdahl 1999). Mathijs Pelkman's (2006) study of the border between Georgia and Turkey shows how such relations were a source of suspicion for the state security agency, and the border population was therefore highly vulnerable to state violence.

In order to enforce the border and assure the presence of a loyal border population who would collectively guard the border, the Soviet authorities in the 1930s and 1940s removed parts of the non-ethnic Russian population living in border areas through forced migration, repression and massacres. At the same time, Russian migration to these territories was actively promoted. (For a discussion of the Soviet policy of "ethnic cleansing" in these border zones, see Martin 1998.) This produced a paradox of simultaneous state-run processes of nation building and destruction among ethnic minorities residing in borderlands in the Stalinist era. We see today the consequences of this brutal policy where displaced populations find themselves vulnerable minorities in the post-Soviet nation-states, or have attempted to return and faced a changed demographic. This also includes Russians, who in some areas have lost their privileged position and are actively deprived of citizen rights in these new nation-states.

Soviet Territorial Anatomy and the Legacy of Nationality Policy

In order to understand how the post-Soviet borders came about, we need to look at some central features of the Soviet nationality system. After the Soviet Union dissolved, this system was scrutinized by several scholars (see for instance d'Encausse 1995; Brubaker 1994; Hirsch 1997). The nationality system shaped the territorial anatomy of the Soviet Union and conditioned the spatial transformation that followed. It was essentially a system of institutionalized multi-nationality based on a Leninist–Stalinist nationality formula. This principle has been termed "ethno-territorial

federalism" and combined conflicting concepts of ethno-national identity, territory and nationhood. As Rogers Brubaker points out, it left a legacy for the successor states of a tension between two incompatible definitions of nationhood; "one territorial and political, the other personal and ethno-cultural" (1994, 55). This legacy played and still plays a major role in shaping the border landscape in the post-Soviet space. Territory was organized in a four-tier hierarchical system where the fifteen union republics each defined the national home of one *narod* or people (titular nation). The Soviet system placed the highest degree of collective rights to the category of *narod*, tied to the status of union republics where national administrative cadres were bred, as well as institutions of the *narod's* language, culture and history. In spite of the official rhetoric of the Soviet state as a state where all nationalities held equal rights, the Russian *narod* (people) held a special position. It was the titular nation of by far the largest territory of the Soviet federated republics, but its territory was left largely unmarked, and its boundaries defined by the other national territories. Its cultural and political dominance were reflected in, among others, state-directed mobility of Russians to non-Russian Soviet republics as teachers, military personnel and communist party cadres, and the fact that Russian served as the Soviet Union *lingua franca*. The ethno-territorial *narod* system formed an institutional basis for nation building after 1991.

Significantly, the union republics had the legal right to secede from the federation, and these are the entities that became independent states in 1991. Below the union republics, there were twenty autonomous republics. The majority of these (sixteen in all) were located within the Russian union republic, but there were also a few in other republics. Below this level, there were eighteen so-called autonomous provinces (*oblast*), such as Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan, south Ossetia within Georgia and Adygea within the Krasnodar *krai* (territory) of the Russian union republic.[8] (The fourth tier consisted of autonomous *okrug*s assigned to indigenous peoples in the North.) All of these were defined on an ethnic basis with a titular nation.[9] Generally, these autonomous provinces upgraded their status to federal republics within the new Russian federation when the republics became independent nation-states.[10] While the change from union republics to independent states on the whole went smoothly, the conflicts that did arise as the Soviet Union dissolved were mainly connected to the change in political status of the autonomous republics and provinces, which, according to the constitution, did not have the right to secede.

The Soviet state collapse enabled two important developments: first, it made it possible to redefine juridical positions, rights and ownership to territory on an ethno-national basis, and second, the opening of borders, meant access to ideas, material resources and support from people beyond the Soviet Union. We have seen this in both Christian and Muslim missionary activities in the former Soviet space (see Pelkmans 2009) and in the military support for struggles that took place after 1991, such as the foreign Muslim fighters in Chechnya, and the provision of training camps for Chechen separatists in the 1990s in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Pokalova 2015). Within the former Soviet space, ethno-political claims to territories mobilized people in support of different sides. Orthodox Christian Cossacks from Don and the northern Caucasus took active parts in the wars of Abkhazia, Transnistria and also in the recent warfare in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

In the case of Chechnya, the ethno-nationalist movement sought full independence from the Russian Federation. In the case of Abkhazia, the movement refused to become an autonomous republic within a Georgian nation-state. These are just some of the unresolved issues of nationhood and state that shape the border landscapes discussed in this volume. They are not only political issues of territorial status and degrees of sovereignty, but also issues of belonging, linked to the legacy of the Soviet nationalities system that tied ethnic categories to specific territories.

Border Conflicts and War

While the major wars of the 1990s in Chechnya, Tajikistan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Moldova, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo did not continue through the end of the twentieth century, border conflicts and skirmishes continued to take place in this region. In the following section, we will review some of the violent conflicts around border and sovereignty issues which are relevant for borderland cases discussed in this volume.

In 1991, the Soviet leadership in Moscow accepted the right of the union republics to secede and that the borders of the republics would be the borders of the new nation-states.[11] There was perhaps surprisingly little violence along the borders of union republics as they became independent states. In the early 1990s, conflicts arose in the region concerning the sovereign status of territories that had served as either autonomous republics or autonomous regions [*oblast*] within larger republics. The population within these autonomous regions was usually ethnically different

from the populations of the republics within which they were located. In the Ferghana valley, where Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan meet, the process of delimiting the post-Soviet borders has still not been completed, and violence in disputed areas between local communities and between border guards occurs intermittently.[12] The conflicts in the Caucasus erupted as a result of the disputed status of peoples and territory after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Within the Soviet Union, Georgia was unique as a non-Russian republic in that it had three autonomous territories—Abkhazia, Adjara and South Ossetia—in its relatively small territory. When Georgia gained its independence in 1991, Adjara, which has a large Muslim population, became an autonomous republic within the independent state of Georgia. Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, refused to become parts of an independent Georgia, a position defended by Russia, which eventually led to war in these territories. The wars resulted in hundreds of thousands of displaced people and communities divided by a militarized border.[13] In 2008, following a week-long war between Georgia and Russia over the unresolved status of South Ossetia, both South Ossetia and Abkhazia were recognized as sovereign states by Russia and some other states, but not by the UN. Georgia still considers both Abkhazia and South Ossetia part of Georgian sovereign territory temporarily occupied by Russia.

Nagorno-Karabakh represents another trajectory as an ethno-political-territorial entity since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Similarly, it had the status of an autonomous region within the Union Republic of Azerbaijan, but violence broke out when the regional parliament voted to join Armenia, later full-scale war broke out between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces when Nagorno-Karabakh declared its independence as Azerbaijan, a former republic, gained hers.[14] Thousands of people have been displaced and Nagorno-Karabakh remains an unrecognized state (see Yalçın-Hackmann, this volume).

Most recently, Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 in support of a separatist, violent uprising in the Russian-speaking areas of Eastern Ukraine. The tensions between a Western-oriented Ukrainian nationalist government and Russia came to a head when Ukraine began moving toward closer ties with the EU at the same time as Russia was in the process of developing its counterpart to the EU, the EEU. Russia saw its sphere of influence threatened by the prospect of having the EU expand further into what it considers its historical hinterland. At the same time, the Russian population in Ukraine feared that they would face a marginalized minority status

if the country got too close to the EU.[15] Russia, then, drew a new border at Eastern Ukraine—between the EU and EEU. This case of unilaterally changing mutually recognized borders is different from the other border conflicts since the break-up of the Soviet Union. This conflict ended up being less about unsettled border issues and contested sovereignty and more about, as Plokhy suggests, "gather[ing] back the Soviet republics more than twenty years after its collapse" (2015, xi).

Perhaps the recent developments are reminders that contrary to the illusions that political maps create, borders are far less stable than conventionally assumed. In the midst of these developments, we are seeking to develop a comparative study of ethnographic cases from border areas across the post-Soviet space where spatial re-organization is taking place as part of state-making efforts.

Chapter Summaries and Common Themes

In her 2014 monograph "Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia," Madeleine Reeves suggests that borders are a work in progress that have to be made and maintained by many different actors who interact with each other and the landscape. This volume is similarly concerned with borders in the making. It brings together the perspectives of scholars from different academic fields and traditions to comment on how the changing character of borders in Eurasia since the fall of the Soviet Union affects the lives of people who live in Eurasian borderlands. While their methodologies may differ, the contributors to this volume all share the belief that people's everyday practices and lives are critical to understanding larger scale political, social, cultural and economic changes. The ethnographic cases in this volume show how people navigate, use and redefine new margins and forms of belonging. They also suggest the ways that borders are institutionalized and naturalized. This book aims to highlight the diverse and complex ways in which new borders have changed patterns of social interaction, mobility and spatial orientation of the people who live in the borderlands formed in the decades following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Pisano and Simonyi open the volume by comparing the borderlands of two widely separated territorial edges of the former Soviet empire: Ukraine's border with Hungary and the Russian Federation's border with China. They use this comparison to reflect on what "it means to think about post-Soviet and 'Eurasian' borders" (p. 27). They focus on how a

researcher conceptualizes what is observed, and explore the implications of labeling a border or borderland as either "post-Soviet" or "Eurasian," and argue that while both "post-Soviet" and "Eurasian" are appropriate ways to describe these borderlands, the terms also color our ethnographic narratives in different ways. The concept of "post-Soviet" makes the Soviet Union the historical reference and privileges a vision of the demarcation itself and its accompanying infrastructure. In contrast, the "Eurasian" approach reveals two very different borderlands. In the Russian Federation's borderland with China, Pisano and Simonyi identify clearly defined categories of citizenship and belonging, while in Ukraine's borderland with Hungary, citizenship, categories of belonging and the symbolic marking of territory are much more ambiguous.

People living on the Russia–China border are connected through ties of mutual economic dependency and exchange, albeit through spaces that limit interaction between the Russians and the Chinese. People and goods are channeled into nationally defined spaces, both within and around the demarcated border—a border that "clearly divided two nationally inscribed territories at the demarcation line" (p. 44). The Hungarian–Ukraine borderlands, on the other hand, are characterized by ethnic ties, language and religious affiliation that cross the state borders.

Pisano and Simonyi demonstrate the very different trajectories of the former Soviet Union outer borders—borders that, they argue, are best captured through the lens of "Eurasian borders" rather than "post-Soviet." While a post-Soviet lens focuses our attention on a particular state structure, it is perhaps a less useful tool for considering conflicting sovereignties crossing the borders. The analytical category of Eurasia, however, allows the inclusion of social and economic dynamics of new connections and competing sovereignties beyond the borders of the post-Soviet space. This exercise in comparison suggests that the regional labels we use matter. They may be colored by specific discourses and uses within different academic fields and political contexts, but they also do different jobs.

Subsequent chapters in this volume discuss the formation of post-Soviet borderlands and how people's lives are affected by these new borders. These chapters not only illustrate how these state borders have shaped lives, but how people's lives have shaped the borders. In the second chapter, Guzel Sabirova studies another border that used to be the border of the Soviet Union with China. It is a place where both post-Soviet and a Eurasia regional and political links come into play. The town of Karakol, in the northeastern part of Kyrgyzstan, is a region that borders both China