

Chapter 2

Defining border, boundaries, text and narrative

- Understanding border in Cultural Studies
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- Borders and boundaries

2. 1 Understanding border in Cultural Studies

A scholar of geography, while looking at the nature of borders as a physical entity, is likely to discuss border as a geo-political space. In this chapter, I try to argue why it is important to look beyond this to understand border as a symbol, a cultural marker and a discourse embedded in a rich texture of meanings. This, however, does not mean that the geopolitical space is unimportant. To understand and interpret the narratives and discourses surrounding border, it has to be looked at from a socio-cultural and historical lens as well. The narratives of/about borders as such can also be studied from the perspective of identity politics in a region.

Houtum's (2011, 49) questions why and how in general borders are socially produced and/or reproduced. Why do we border ourselves and at with what gains and at what price for ourselves and others? The answer to this question has often been elusive.

Border as a concept has been interpreted, re-interpreted, deconstructed and problematized over time and space. Over the years, borders and boundaries have witnessed growing interest in Social Theory. Geography was probably the earliest discipline to study boundaries and borders (Kolossoy, 2005, 607). Over time, however, joining the bandwagon of theorists who typically deal with borders as sets of practices and discourse, scholars of geography agreed that borders can be studied from multiple perspectives.

Meanings associated with border has been interpreted and explained from these multiple perspectives. These meanings are not the creation of a set time; it is always created and re-created in the discourses and practices in/of the borders. Generally, border suggests a divider, a marker of two different spaces sharing a boundary. This understanding is however limited; we would instead like to contend that the roles of border changes, and so does its meanings in different contexts. As such, there have been different connotations attached to the term 'border'. There is thus a lot of scope for change in meanings associated with border in the expressions of its practices and acceptances which are often contested and negotiated.

Borders, in encompassing certain sections of a society and a certain geographical area, extend to being a demarcation, demarcating from other societies. The demarcation is not

just about mapping lines that become a physical set up, it is about the ways in which the societal managers conceive of the inclusion-exclusion binary in the context of various social groups (Newman, 2011, 33). The inclusion-exclusion binary set control over certain groups and eliminates certain other groups as outsiders, thus symbolically attaching borders to power and control. This comes in handy for state administrations that view borders as markers of power which set down rules to be followed by those inside a border, limiting their movement and social contacts.

Paasi (2011, 22) is of the view that if borders are understood as a mechanism of societal and political control over society, then there must be varied ways in which borders are present more widely. Paasi (ibid) thus suggests that borders are a context-bound phenomenon; social, cultural, political and economic practices and discourses in making sense of borders cannot be undermined. The very indeterminate nature of borders fascinates border scholars. Scholars are keen to study the foundation of the premises on which borders are understood by people living along the borders.

Acceptance of border as a dynamic entity makes border theorists suppose that a fixed “Border Theory” to fit in all the aspects of understanding or reading borders and boundaries is unlikely. It is unlikely as borders are shaped and imagined differently in different narratives. Instead of a fixed, all-encompassing theory, it is perhaps the problematizing of such theories that could provide more adequate tools for border scholars (Paasi, 2008). Scholars like David Newman (2011), Anssi Paasi (2008), and H Donnan and TM Wilson (1998) advocated that a general border theory is unattainable and that it may not even be desirable because of its intrinsically dynamic nature. Donnan and Wilson (ibid) believe that the primary concern in border studies is to approach the issues of place, space and identity.

Paasi (2013, 2) observes that the academic impulses behind the new interest in border studies are also associated with the rise of interest in postmodern and poststructuralist thinking in the social and cultural sciences. Postmodernism denied the existence of absolutes and ultimate principles applicable for explaining everything for everybody and everywhere. New approaches drawing on post-structuralism and ethnography emerged in the 1990s when scholars of geography considered the emerging interdisciplinary field of Cultural Studies (Newman, Paasi, 1998).

Paasi (2013) citing Lamont and Molnar (2002) views that the importance of studying the meanings of borders in everyday life is obvious since borders provide most individuals with a concrete, local, and powerful experience of the state, for this is the site where citizenship is strongly enforced. Poststructuralism, which is an extension of its predecessor structuralism, looks at binary oppositions that are mutually exclusive. In the case of borders, the ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘we’ and ‘the other’ explains the mutually exclusive oppositions coming out from the borders. Varied themes have fostered the growth of border studies as a unique interdisciplinary area of study.

Paasi (2013, 12-13) integrated the dimensions discussed by cultural theorists and scholars (Bachelard 1969, Said 1979, Walker 1993) and showed that both ‘we’ and ‘the other’ can be both ‘here’ and ‘there’, dividing lines between these socio-spatial elements may be fuzzy– an idea suggested also by ÓTuathail (1996). This inevitably complicates the idea of making national bounded spaces on the basis of categorical ‘othering’ and the distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Paasi (1996, 14) in presenting an analytical framework for forms of socio-spatial integration and distinction discusses the concept of ‘we’, the ‘other’, ‘here’ and ‘there’.

	<i>Here</i>	<i>There</i>
<i>We</i>	Integration within a territory	Integration over boundaries
<i>Other</i>	Distinction within a territory	Distinction between us and the other

This explains how borders function and how identities of ‘we’ and the ‘other’ are constructed within and beyond the demarcated territory.

Newman (2003) shares that linking all types and categories of borders into a single space has created a common glossary of border terminologies, focusing on concepts such as the demarcation and delimitation of borders and looking at the ways in which borders are crossed, managed and negotiated. In the constant negotiations happening at the border the discussion on meaning-making processes and construction of identity gained momentum. The process of ‘othering’ and the sense of ‘belonging’ to one or the other side of the borders developed as a vibrant axis to look at the politics of identity.

Two distinct identities, places and spaces are created along the borders. Borderlanders are directly affected by the often seemingly arbitrary actions of two (or more) different states, not just their 'own' government (Anderson, 2001). Border-making lies in the daily practices and ways of life of the people inside, outside and along the border. Anderson (2012, 220) who analysed borders as 'barriers' or 'filters' protecting from the outside world and at the same time acting as 'bridges' or 'gateway' to it indicates that border has a lot to do with community. While, 'barriers' or 'filters' gives an idea of a protected wall protecting the 'insiders' from 'outsiders', it could also mean exercising control over people living along the borders. It could also be a connecting link to the outside world, thereby making it a 'bridge' or 'gateway' to the outside world. Borders help to create our ideas of what will be 'inside' or 'outside'. The whole idea of belongingness and identity is based on the borders that act as markers of differences. This also brings us close to the idea of territoriality and nationalism in which the proponents often gain some of their ideological power from discourses and practices differentiating communities (Anderson, 1998).

In their understanding of personal and group identities Newman and Paasi (1998) talk about social scientists' attempting to understand the role of space and, in some cases, territory. The duo also proposed that borders are to be viewed as social constructs and not as naturally given entities. Paasi (2011) believes that borders are a set of social practices, a process. The association of border with process and the attempt to treat it as a living phenomenon calls for revisiting the discourses, knowledge, narratives, symbols and institutions that are related to it. The empirical and theoretical themes have varied, since border studies reflect wider social processes and relations, contextual features, and existing theoretical and methodological trends in academic research (ibid).

Similar viewpoints have been expressed by cultural researchers interested in historic relations and symbolic links between various social groups and communities (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1982; 1986; Eisenstadt and Giesen, 1995). A socio-cultural perspective stands for analysing how borders create identities and how identities as sets of practices deconstruct the borders. Borders are as much the products of society as are other social relations which constitute social space (Paasi, 2013, 8).

Recently in social and cultural theory, the social and symbolic construction of borders and boundaries has made its way in determining the parameters of inclusion and

exclusion. The inclusion and exclusion phenomenon is obvious in the study of borders from the perspective of everyday life of the people in the borders. The point of contact usually creates an 'us' and an 'other' identity, and this takes place at a variety of socio-spatial scales (Newman, Paasi 1998). It can then be challenged that borders are not only a physical manifestation of demarcation between states, but, a process. This was the opinion shared and propagated by many social and cultural theorists and political geographers. Border is a process that brings together categories in which boundaries and borders can be operated, and have the evidences of its contacts with the way of life of the people in the borders. Life in the borders is a story in itself. It is the story telling in the form of discourse that also suggests the porous and rigidity of the borders. It becomes a metaphor, subjective in the perception of the people. In the words of Carlisle (1994, 10), we can say that there are two ways of understanding things; either by way of a metaphor or by way of a story.

Scholars like Anderson (2001), Houtum (2011), and Paasi (2011) regard borders as institutions and processes. Houtum (2011) associating his study with these given impressions, contested that the important question is not where a boundary is, but how a boundary is and what the practices of boundary are, adding that, it is not as much about the border but about bordering. Boundaries are drawn socially, culturally, politically and economically, thereby dislocating borders from the perspective of physical borderlines and bringing it close to the social and cultural processes and institutions.

The people in border areas (or those who continually negotiate with borders in their everyday life) create, recreate and structure identities in borders. Identities in borders are a constructed practice that is unremittingly fetched from available social and cultural discourses and narratives. Socio-cultural discourses and narratives explain the changing nature of borders and other varied propositions. In all this variety, cultural studies acts as a prism through which borders and boundaries can be profitably studied. With the advent of globalisation, scholars from various fields took it on them to study the changing nature of borders and boundaries. Borders and boundaries are often used interchangeably. However, there is a thin line between the two terms. They cannot be studied separately from each other. Subjective entities in borders become apparent in the cognitive mapping of the 'us' and 'them' breach. Identity, for instance, is one of the catchwords in current interdisciplinary border studies, often associated with others such as difference and inclusion/exclusion or inside/ outside. These ideas are shared by

political geographers (Newman and Paasi 1998), international relations scholars (Walker 1993; Albert et al. 2001; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; McSweeney 1999), anthropologists (Mach 1993; Donnan and Wilson 1999) and linguists (Benwell and Stokoe 2008), so that they are clearly not a monopoly of any field.

This was also endorsed by Newman and Paasi (1998) who stated that boundaries that emerge in the borders are creations of identities vice versa, making the two, different sides of the same coin. Anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists, for their part, have often looked at the cultural and social boundaries affecting communities and the identities of border citizens (Cohen 1986, 1998; Donnan and Wilson 1999).

Borders and identities interlock stories and society. Individual and collective border stories can help understand what border means to people and how different types of barriers or interaction functions of the borders are understood at the local level and how they materialize in daily practices (Prokkola, 2009). The daily practices and the discourses about it cannot be viewed untouched by socio-cultural dimensions of the society. Various historical developments have shaped the structures of human life and their identities. Borders and boundaries are no different.

Néstor García Canclini says,

I grant importance to stories and images about this border relationship because I reject the hypothesis that interaction between countries happen only through formal legal dealings and quantifiable economic calculation with discourses configures to look objective. Agreements between nation and people are also organized by a collective imaginary which expresses a particular view point more through the use of stories and metaphors than through numbers and hard data. (Canclini,1998,118)

The discourses direct the insights evoking strong sentiments in societies about borders which appear to be the only truth for them. It is the consistency in the issues picked up in the discourses that makes it look objective. This very rationale is being contested in understanding what exactly borders mean to the people. On one hand, it is the possession of lands and the economics involved with border politic; on the other hand, cultural identities as creations of the performed activities in the borders provide the basis of meanings and interpretations of the borders.

Paasi (1999) shares that during the last 10-15 years or so border studies has become increasingly diversified, adding that “While a catch-all theory of borders might be an unattainable dream, there exists a vital search for new conceptualizations on the changing roles of borders.” Anderson (2001) is of the view that a complementary way of theorising borders is to focus on cultural identities in border areas and their political implications.

Borders is a state of mind, a social condition that even without the physical attributes (walls, fences, guard posts) leaves an impact on the life practices of the people residing across the border (Paasi, 2011).

2.2 Towards a new theoretical paradigm for understanding borders

I began the chapter by discussing the complexity of studying political borders as research objects. This section scrutinizes some of the recent debates in which the concept of border has been challenged, extended and expanded. This discussion aims at showing how there can be gaps not only between various camps in academic debates but also between such debates and the society, and that such gaps may ultimately be unfortunate and prevent the development of new theoretical approaches in border studies. The focus in the study can be shifted from the physical dimension or location of the border to an analysis of the dynamics and functionality of the bordering process (Newman, 2011, 44). However, location or territoriality cannot be kept aside for too long in understanding the bordering process. A society tends to exhibit the process of bordering with the idea of ‘here’ and ‘there’.

Paasi (2011, 6) who is of the opinion that development of border studies have not been linear writes, “New themes have not simply replaced old ones. Rather, old and new approaches have bolstered each other. Similarly, empirical and theoretical themes have varied, since border studies reflect wider social processes and relations, contextual features, and existing theoretical and methodological trends in academic research.”

As such, looking at the performative characteristic of border like that of the cultural spaces, borders can be viewed as ‘place’ opposing the subtext of the ‘abstract line’ that affects everyday lives in the borders. By this it is meant that more than just being a marker of division and grouping, it is the everyday exercises that define the existence of

borders. Green (2012) in her work states the idea of borders generating differences it marks, rather than simply reflecting. The practices that involve 'bordering' and 'borderness' are related to the theories of what constitutes them. It is this bordering process and practices of borderness that border have come out as a marker of a cultural space. It is worth looking at how the process of 'othering' has been incorporated in the study of borders.

Michaelsen and Johnson (1997) in citing Paasi writes that border scholars have recognized the process of 'othering' in various contexts and its manifestation is found in foreign policy discourses, educational practices and popular culture. Newman (2011, 44) also pointed out that most borders, by their very definition, create binary distinctions between 'here' and 'there', the 'us' and 'them', the 'included' and the 'excluded'. "In this sense, there are common themes which are relevant to all types of border, even if this does not constitute a single model or theory in its own right. Social scientists have much to contribute to our understanding of these border dynamics, taking them beyond the limited understandings which are limited to a single academic discipline... (ibid)"

Green (2012) who plunged into meaning, purpose and qualities of border stated that borders are generated by people in their practices by notions of what constitutes border in historically changing conditions. The role borders play in classifying and categorising the world of places, people and things talks about how contextually and conceptually borders are studied. The symbolic role of bordering, and the process of identity creation regularises the understanding that identities are the work of border narratives.

The ideas about borders are being interpreted and thereby the definitions of borders are changing, inviting an additional theoretical framework that looks at borders as a work of memory and performative space. New theoretical viewpoints on border studies are emerging as borders are beginning to be seen as symbols and institutions which are produced and reproduced in social practices and discourses (Paasi, 1999).

Studies of borders from a cultural perspective look in to its performative character as well as its participatoriness. Borders are participatory in the sense that it emerges in the narratives and is witnessed in the way of life of a people. In this view, there is a call for reading binaries of the border and varied meanings that emerge from it.

In the narratives and discourses of/about borders, perspectives of people are modified by lived experiences and activities. Society interprets the text of border based on memories.

“Texts are artifacts apt for interpretation -in a texted world addressed by a worded text” (Margolis, 1993). The encounter between worded text and memory forms the basis of assimilation and separation between two sets of people living on either side of the border. As for the worded text, it is in the discourses about border, boundaries and memories that most identities are created. Social memory is part of Maurice Halbwachs’s idea about individual memories in his *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* in 1925. This is how we might best understand the relation of two states sharing a border:

Social memory suggests varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged. ...this approach we argue, enables us to identify ways in which past and present are intertwined without retifying a mystical group mind and without including absolutely everything in the enterprise. (Olick, Robins, 1998, 112)

In this we cannot ignore the process of grouping because of identified borders. Ethnic groups are formulated with memberships. Barth (1998) explains in his essay that ethnic groups have a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. The very foundation of borders as set of practices and discourse tell us why ethnic identity is imperative to study the borders.

Barth in *Ethnic Boundaries* (1998, 10) explains ethnic group as:

- largely biologically self-perpetuating
- shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
- makes up a field of communication and interaction
- has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

The study takes into account the second and third criteria of Barth’s definition about ethnic groups. In the interstate borders two large group; Arunachalee and Assamese live

along the borders. It is to see how these groups identify each other in the context of boundary demarcation with the help of such characteristics of an ethnic group.

Barth's understanding that though ethnic refers to a group of people with a shared identity, a common history and a traditional cultural heritage, it can also be associated with the idea of social organisation as emergent and contested, culture as something characterised by variation and other social relations. Ethnic identity is a matter of self ascription and ascription by others in interaction and about social organisation of culture difference (Barth, 1998, 6).

He (ibid, 11) also opines that the idea of each tribe and people maintaining their culture in ignorance of its neighbours is no longer entertained. He is of the view that social relations are maintained across such boundaries and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomised ethnic status.

Barth argued,

Boundary persists despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories. (Barth, 1998, 10-11)

Newman (2011, 44) opines that all borders create or reflect difference, be they spatial categories or cultural affiliations and identities. This study looks at how borders tend to construct identities and the roles narratives play in exhibiting it. Diener (2011, 374) states that research into borderlands and the creation of spaces betwixt and between, inherently confronts the representational quality of boundaries and how the symbolic processes of inclusion and exclusion relate to identity and belonging.

The discipline of cultural studies takes into account the cultural meanings and their production in everyday cultural life where the signs and meanings play a significant role. Borders are accepted as a meaning-making process, where life along the borders can be interpreted based on social practises and experience. The characteristics of borders as shaping narratives, constructing identities, setting power controls, shared history and so on paves for a new theoretical paradigm to study borders.

In the words of Paasi,

Since borders are context-bound phenomena and are deeply rooted in social, cultural, political and economic practices and discourses, a general theory of borders would suggest that they are more or less separate objects of social research that can be universalized in the form of a theory that would obviously then be, contrary to the variegated nature of contexts, more or less fixed. A general theory of borders is hence problematic not because the borders between states are unique – although each of them indeed is – but rather because borders can be theorized reasonably only as part of a broader effort towards social-cultural theory. (Paasi, 2009, 28)

Borders, along with the understanding of territorial belonging and relation between identity and place, also consider the daily performance of history, economics, politics, and socio-cultural behaviours that is affected by and in turn affects the border (Diener, 2011, 375). The symbolic and metaphoric meanings in constitution of identities can help study the changing roles of borders. Paasi (2011, 14) shares that the complexity of state borders as research objects is based on the fact that the meanings attributed to such borders are *inward-oriented*: as being closely related to the ideological state apparatus, ideological practices such as nationalism (and related national identity narratives) and the material basis of such practices, which manifests itself in territoriality.

2.3 Borders as Text

Border is a text that creates an image in people's minds. Everyday cultural life is surrounded by signs, symbols, and meanings continually repackaged in an interpretative form to be reproduced. Such reproduction must have an account of the way it is reproduced. Hanks (1989) writes that a vast collection of disciplinary orientations sticks to labels such as text, textuality, discourse, rhetoric, narrative and poetics. He further stated that even though research on texts revolves around literacy and writing, language acquisition, education and socialization and political discourse, a text can also be looked at as a socio-cultural product and process (ibid, 95).

Texts acquire meaning when they are interpreted by the readers and there is a relation between readers and texts where personal and shared contexts are present in reading and

interpretation. Borders, as such, can also be looked at from the perspective of the people who are the readers. The practices and narratives of routine life relating to the border can be taken as text. In addition, these narratives and practices of everyday life relating to the border bear a close relationship with memory. These memories in turn are related to shared-stories of the past. Border as text draws sustenance from people's shared ideas of being a part of a place or group at some point of time in the past. There is thus a situation in which border itself becomes a state of mind, giving it varied meanings and conditioning one's social existence.

Paasi (2011, 22) in stating that if borders are taken as research subjects the meanings attributed to it cannot be ignored said, "If borders are understood as marking the spread of societal and political control into society, (and even outside of existing state border), there must also be other ways in which borders are present more widely." While on one hand borders are rigid, static constructs, in the form of check posts, boundaries, fences, walls, and barb wires, on the other hand, they can be seen beyond their materiality to reflect a state of mind as an experience or an interpretation. Border is produced and enacted in the discourse of regular social practices. While some think of border as an agent of unification/division, it is the physical, social, political, economic and cultural aspects of border that makes it a text that can be expounded. Borders also become a state of mind, a social condition that even without the physical attributes (walls, fences, guard posts) leaves an impact on people residing across the border (Paasi, 2011).

James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd (1999) have shared that in order to develop an understanding of border beyond its legal framework; one has to incorporate the symbolic uses of border. The symbolic use of border is reflected in the way people perceive the border in their daily narratives. Hanks (1989) outlined narratives, poem, traditional story, novel, myth, newspaper headline, conversational exchange, and lecture as texts that follow certain features. The activities along the border determine the nature of borders which calls for interpretation. These activities are often guided by social interactions and common stories. As such borders can be read as text and as stated by Houtum (2011, 54), "A line in the sand is not always a limit, as well as a border is not always a line in the sand. A line is geometry, a border is interpretation."

Interpretation being a subjective phenomenon is guided by social circumstances. There is a condition – a state of being that shapes border and gives it varied meanings wherein it conditions the rhythm of life, the very social existence. Interpretation is in itself a discourse created by cultural condition that indicates certain knowledge about the people who interprets the world around them and others. This is also suggestive in the words of Denzin (1990) that texts are indeed an interpretation of the textual artefact.

Paasi (1998, 76) has given different expressions of narratives of boundary that manifests itself in institutions like education, media, novels, memorial, ceremonies and spectacles, thereby pointing to the fact that social imagination is very often fuelled by an ‘us versus them’ binary, a binary which rest on the idea of difference from other communities. In the narratives, borders are processes that melt with the practices of the people. Every aspect of the society can be read and re-read as the very nature of a society is like that of a text.

Hanks (1989) opines that text can be defined as a process of production, as a finished product (linguistic code or opus), as a means to or refraction of other (extratextual) ends, as a mode of understanding and responding or as a series of "receptions," inseparable from historical principals interacting with principles of evaluation. Border in this line can be looked at as a process of production from the narratives of the people who construct meaning that is inseparable from history. Thus, while a text is technically supplied with codes on the other hand anything that can be interpreted can be used as text.

Paasi (1996) observes the pre-eminence of borders in current political-territorial grammars, striving to make the current complex roles of borders visible by expanding the understanding of what borders mean and where they are located. While all the meanings and understanding of borders that we come to terms with undoubtedly depends on where borders are marked and what impact does it have on the lives and itself. Houtum (2011, 50) shares that border is a simulation of a model, the meaning attached to the border that actually creates the border, he adds. In suggesting borders to be understood as interpretation, Houtum makes it clear that there is a need for a thorough understanding of numerous factors that give border its interpreted meanings.

In the relation of border and text, narrative is inseparable. Narratives tend to conjure up an image in people’s mind as pointed out by Eeva Kaisa Prokkola and Anssi Paasi.

“Although scholars in the humanities and social sciences disagree to some extent about what constitutes a narrative, they concur that all forms of narrative aim at making sense of experience and constructing and communicating meaning – and often identity. Meaning is not inherent in an experience or act, however, but is constructed through cultural and social discourses” (Prokkola, 2009, 26). “Once created borders become transformed into reality a default situation which impacts upon daily life patterns and social mores, determine the parameters of exclusion and inclusion, and creates the categories through which social and spatial compartmentalisation is perpetuated” Newman (2011, 36).

Cultural Studies being a diverse field caters to different theoretical and methodological perspectives and practices and is not restricted to a singular theoretical approach. As such in cultural studies text is more than a written language and is used as interpretation of the matter, it comprises the everyday life, its meaning and practices. Reading border as text, the manifestation of these texts is said to be in the narratives. The shared experiences along the border touched by the physical set up and the mental conditioning of the people manifests it as text. In discussing the physical set up, the demarcations of two states by land, check posts, markets, rivers, barb wires, government establishments, maps act as the bordering process. Bordering is a process as well as a product of the people living along the borders. While at it, what possibly could mean in stating about the mental conditioning comes up as a challenge to the physical understanding of borders. The physical set up as the markers of borders are subjects of discussion in narratives, wherein meanings are created, re-created and arrived at, going beyond the material construct to being a state of mind; an experience, an interpretation.

2.4 Borders and Narratives

Roland Barthes’s view on narratives as the ultimate way to knit world around us make narratives an important aspect of social science. The society is often exposed to countless forms of narratives thus making it universal in nature. He believes that the structure of the narratives should be considered in the narrative itself. From the very first, linguistic provided the structural analysis of narrative with a decisive concept, because it pointed out the essentials for any system of meaning namely its organisation (Barthes, Duisit, 1975, 241).

Barthes and Duisit (ibid, 260) opine that narrative viewed as object is the basis of communication; there is a giver of narrative and recipient of narrative. His explanation on the importance of narratives has made the study focus on narratives in order to conjure up an image of the world the societies, communities see around them. Borders as text paves its way into narratives that are understood as ‘tools’ or ‘codes’ by means of which individuals and social groups agree upon or contest the definition of ‘reality’ and the normativity of bordering actions and practices (Prokkola, 2009). In the book *Narrative and Culture*, Janice Carlisle writes that the representation of external events and telling of those events fits in narrative and to omit narrative means to elude meanings. Narrative is this writing and rewriting the text of our life from various experiences. This study is an attempt to see how borders shape narratives and how narratives in turn construct the identity of ‘self’ and the ‘other’. The study lays emphasis on narratives for the obvious reason that borders and identities are shaped in narratives.

Barthes writes,

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor have been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, trans-historical, trans-cultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes, 1977, 79)

He (ibid) says in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narratives. Narratives are constantly evolving and with it the meanings of borders. Border then produce and reproduces ideas about the

way of life of the people which has its own interpretative meaning. New conceptualizations and representations of space have emerged within cultural studies, differing from those which political geographers traditionally created in their accounts of boundaries, many of which are, anyway, explicit representations of space, scale and culture (Agnew, 1993).

Prokkola (2009) says that “all forms of narrative aim at making sense of experience and constructing and communicating meaning and often identity. Meaning is not inherent in an experience or act, however but is constructed through cultural and social discourses”. Narratives act as a significant tool to understand the views and opinions of society and their imagined sense of ‘us’ and acceptance of belongingness. Paasi (1998), advocating meanings of borders and boundaries to be obvious in stories shared by people based on common experiences, history and memories stated that “Narratives should not be comprehended only as modes of representation but also as discourses that crucially shape social practice and life”.

Prokkola (2009) and Paasi’s (1998) view on narratives fall in line with Barthes’s structural analysis of narratives which express the universality of narratives with which social being are in constant contact. He says that these narratives have a range of styles and forms from language to practices and discourses. There is a lucid similarity in Prokkola, Paasi and Barthes’s view on narrative. Researchers dealing with borders in a bid to elevate the functionalities of narratives have stressed on how borders and boundaries are constantly produced and reproduced.

Prokkola in citing Newman writes,

One of the challenges to border theorizers is to collect individual and collective border stories, for only in this way can we understand what borders mean to people and how “different types of barriers or interaction functions of the borders” are understood at the local level and how they materialise in daily practices. (Prokkola, 2009, 21)

This hints at the characteristics of border that are made sense of in the narratives. In underscoring the importance of narratives for border studies, Prokkola (ibid, 22) shares, “Narrativisation is an important medium which helps people to create order in the world

and to sustain and construct both personal and collective identities". Much emphasis has been given to narratives that deal with people's social consciousness in identifying with the border. New meanings of inclusion and exclusion emerge in border narratives. Paasi (1998, 76) gave multiple expressions of narratives of boundary that manifests itself in institutions like education, media, novels, memorial, ceremonies and spectacles, thereby saying social condition is defined by boundaries which set limitation in merging with other community

Hanks who projected text to be a socio-cultural product and process said evidences in studies show the basis of ethnographic studies of text. "Text can be taken (heuristically) to designate any configuration of signs that is coherently interpretable by some community of users." (Hanks, 1989, 95)

Borders are manifested in texts that range from physical sets to mental disposition. To understand the readings of narratives and discourse it is imperative that all kinds of borders and boundaries are considered.

These narratives range from foreign policy discourses, geographical texts and literature (including maps), to the many dimensions of formal and informal socialization which affect the creation of socio spatial identities, especially the notions of 'us' and the 'Other', exclusive and inclusive spaces and territories. The lines, fences and edges, some visible and many invisible, which separate the 'us' and the 'Other' are often hidden within these life texts or 'cartographies of power'. It is particularly important to deconstruct these texts and narratives within conflict situations, especially in terms of understanding who creates these texts and for what purpose. (Newman and Paasi, 1998, 195)

To consider everyday life in border-areas, local narratives can be used to study what happens in and around the border. Taking narrative analysis as the methodology, the next chapters engage in approaches that are ethnographic as well as discursive to look into borders as text while interpreting the Assam-Arunachal border narratives. The collection of stories from the past resonating in the memories and the practices of the day to day life melts in the narratives. Meanings keep emerging and viewpoints, sometimes in conflict with one another, continually shape and alter these narratives. These meanings are contextual and often may not be in acceptance to others' perspectives. When speaking about narratives in and around the border, boundaries emerge in these

narratives which brings the identity of the 'self' and 'other', 'exclusion' and 'inclusion', and 'insider' and 'outsider'. Narratives from the Assam-Arunachal borders can help understand continuously changing meanings for borders, boundaries and the creation of identities. Identities from the meaning-making process of the text are a narrative outcome that is performed in day to day life.

Personal and collective identities constructed in the narratives of the people can be looked at as a practise of ordering the lives in the border areas. As such border identities are narrativized and performed through the available social and cultural discourses (Prokkola, 2009).

2.5 Borders and Boundaries

The terms 'borders' and 'boundaries' are often used interchangeably (Haselsberger, 2014, 509); however, there is a distinction, and this chapter explores the possibilities of both the terms being used in various contexts. The discussions are on account of how scholars have used the terms and the meanings and representations that they provide.

The meanings of boundaries and borders may be derived in the words of Paasi and J Raivo (1998, 5) as,

Boundaries may be simultaneously historical, natural, cultural, political or symbolic phenomena and each of the above elements may be exploited in diverging ways in the construction of territoriality and the ideas of borders. Borders may exist as one part of the 'discursive landscape' of social power which extends itself into the whole of society and is produced and reproduced in various social and cultural practices and discourses. (Paasi, Raivo, 1998, 5)

The terms have figured prominently in border studies and have gained visibility in cultural studies as well. The contemporary meanings of borders and boundaries are extensions of the earlier understandings of the same. Boundaries are read not as lines but sets of practices and discourses like Paasi employed in her study on borders (1999, 669). Boundaries cannot be limited to geographical lines as boundaries were itself created or demarcated based on linguistic, socio-cultural identities and ethnic grouping.

In recent social and cultural theory, the idea of boundary refers increasingly to the social and symbolic construction of boundaries between social collectivises rather than state boundaries. Cultural researchers have been interested in historic relations, struggles and

symbolic links between various social groupings and communities (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1982; 1986; Eisenstadt and Giesen, 1995). Borders are seen more as a formal entity while boundaries are noted as less formal. In this study boundaries are associated with the state of mind and borders with the material and physical appearance. The contemporary meanings of specific boundaries require several 'keys' linked to economics, politics, administration and governance as well as with legislation and local and national/local attitudes/identities (Paasi and J Raivo, 1998, 4). Borders move from the discursive landscape of the state and administration and reach the people through narratives. As such, it is imperative that border narratives are analysed to examine and interpret the mental landscape and socio-cultural conditioning of the people.

Paasi and Newman are of the opinion that the ideas of borders, boundaries, borderlands, border-crossings and transgressions of borders used in various disciplines are employed in a metaphoric sense to avoid being linked with the material spaces like the traditional study of borders does. Ashley (1989, 311) writes "Displacing the state, poststructuralism puts this boundary in doubt. The boundary itself is never simply there, poststructuralism knows. It is always in the process of being marked, transgressed, erased, and marked again. The questions to be asked are not: Where is the boundary? What marks the boundary? ... Instead, the sort of question to be asked is ... a *how* question. How, by way of what practices, by appeal to what cultural resources, and in the face of what resistances is this boundary imposed and ritualized".

Based on new heterogeneous theoretical literature and empirical approaches on boundaries, four themes seemed to be important to political geographical argumentation: a) the suggested 'disappearance' of boundaries in the post-modern world, b) the role of boundaries in the construction of socio-spatial identities, c) boundary narratives and discourse, and d) the role of different spatial scales of boundary construction (Newman and Paasi 1998).

'Boundary' in the study of Assam-Arunachal border narratives is read as process of creating the lines that demarcate and establish social meanings. While borders in this study look at how it paves its way in to social practices and with what results. Borders and boundaries as such are part of a family of loosely interconnected concepts. Paasi is of the view that boundaries exist and get meanings reproduced in local everyday life. As such he uses narratives based on local experience in the border to explain boundaries as

discourse and life in the divided community. Boundaries, by definition, constitute lines of separation or contact. This may occur in real or virtual space, horizontally between territories, or vertically between groups and/or individuals (Newman and Anssi Paasi 1998).

Scholars from various disciplines are studying intensively not only the material functions of boundaries but, increasingly, also their symbolic and metaphoric meanings and their roles in the constitution of identities (Paasi, 1998, 669). Haselsberger (2014, 509), in defining borders and boundaries said though they are used interchangeably, it has its own specific meaning. The term refers to a legal line in space, separating different jurisdictions, nations, cultures, etc. (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999).

The term "boundary" emerged in the seventeenth century and is derived from bound [a limit] as well as from *bonnarium* [a piece of land with fixed limits]. A "boundary" is a linear concept, demarcating one particular facet (Haselsberger, 2010).

Boundary is inward in its orientation which is dealt with in the processes of thinking, reasoning, or remembering. Boundaries are a separating wall in the minds of people that distinguishes 'them' from 'us' and borders are socially constructed entity that comes to life in narratives. Boundaries create identity and are created by identity and identity starts where borders are marked. Boundaries give cultural meanings to physical borders. In studying the Assam-Arunachal border, borders are the base of the study and boundaries its structure. Both are used in the study to interpret various texts that manifest construction of identities and life along the borders.

Paasi (1991) shares that "State boundaries are equally social, political and discursive constructs, not just static naturalized categories located between states. Boundaries and their meanings are historically contingent, and they are part of the production and institutionalization of territories and territoriality." Boundaries are understood in the form of social and cultural boundaries that stems up in the discourses about the activities in the borders. Borders as such are the frontiers, the place or a reference point of the kinds of boundaries people deal with. The changing roles of borders have also made boundaries a construct that keeps evolving. Boundaries are said to range from physical and territorial to social, personal and symbolic (Newman and Anssi Paasi, 1998).

Sacks (1986) in explaining borders states that it is a division between the in group (We) and the out group (Other) laying down an ideological practice and discourse that transforms national spaces and histories, cultures, economic success and resources into bounded spaces. In accordance to the definitions of borders and boundaries, it can be understood that both are work of interpretation and not just an administrative creation of the states and country. To understand the very nature of these two entities, people's experiences and practices gives scope to the researchers to work on narratives.

State boundaries from being a physical marker of the insiders and outsiders are now symbolic to construction of identities. Paasi (1996) says that borders are related to ideological practices and it is the material basis of such practices that manifest the 'us' and 'them' divide. This chapter explains to us that in order to study interstate borders or for that matter international border, researchers have to be clear with the concept of bordering and borderness. It can be conclusively established from this chapter that borders and boundaries need to be approached from a multiple perspective and that to understand it; communities living along the border cannot be overlooked. It also indicates that identities are constantly constructed and presented in borders based on boundaries acting as cultural markers of the 'self' and the 'other'.

The following chapter titled 'History of Assam-Arunachal border: Negotiating with the past and present' gives an account of the history of the interstate borders in terms of the 'Hills' and 'Plains' identity creation. It gives a historical account of how borders and boundaries were created between the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

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