

# Border/scapes. Borderlands and design studies in dialogue

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*Nel corso degli ultimi decenni, un crescente interesse verso la produzione culturale sui territori di frontiera si è diffuso parallelamente alla moltiplicazione globale delle frontiere politiche stesse. L'emergere di nuovi approcci culturali e teorici in questo senso, ha aperto prospettive inedite riguardo ai processi di mutua 'costruzione' tra confini politici, (nuove) geografie e strutture del potere, comunità locali/transnazionali. La nozione di borderscapes, nel suo potenziale immaginativo e contro-egemonico, è emersa recentemente come concetto operativo transdisciplinare capace di mettere in relazione diversi campi del sapere. Questo servizio intende contribuire al dialogo tra studi di frontiera e discipline del progetto, presentando una selezione critica di esperienze di ricerca e pratiche progettuali in luoghi di frontiera, sia all'interno sia al di fuori del contesto Europeo*

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All over the years 2000s, post-9/11 securitization discourses and the resulting re-affirmation of political borders into a renewed global geography of *in/exclusion* (Cruz, 2004, p. 1) have deeply influenced the study of borders and borderlands in their mutual social, economic and spatial interweaving. The intensification and multiplication of international migrations fluxes, transnational and *transbordering* processes (Irazábal, 2014) have produced a series of new transcalar topographies of knowledge with different outcomes, both in academic urban studies and in professional design<sup>1</sup> practices.

In a recent publication, *A companion to Border Studies*, Wilson and Donnan (2012) stressed the «increasing prominence of borders in the lives of many people in all parts of the world» in consideration that «there are more international borders in the world today than ever there were before» (Wilson and Donnan, 2012, pp. 1-2; Bodington, 1999, p. 4; Irazábal, 2014, p. 1). In this framework, some lines of research have assumed particular relevance in relation to spatial disciplines. For instance, the identification of borders as «social constructs and processes rather than stable entities» (Paasi, 2005, p. 19) that are «socially produced and reproduced, and thus are always susceptible to be modified, transformed, erased, recreated, reimagined, transgressed» (Soja, 2005, p. 34). Furthermore a conceptual shift occurred in different disciplinary fields in the last years: from a conception of borders as geographical and political peripheries and national 'edge-lands' to another one recognizing them as 'new centres', 'new begging' (Wilson and Donnan, 2012, pp. 3, 13; Eker and Van Houtum, 2013) and «spatial points of origin» (Schoonderbeek in these pages).

The growing international and cross-disciplinary interest towards new conceptualizations and approaches to borders, such as the *borderscapes* notion (Rajaram and Grundy-War, 2007; Brambilla and van Houtum, 2012), have opened innovative understandings of the mutual 'shaping' processes between political borders, (supra)national power relations and structures, transnational socio-spatial practices and networks and everyday «border struggles» (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). By exploring the *borderscapes* notion as a guiding concept in its different meanings, through the work of scholars, architects and planners practicing on/across borderlands, and envisioning the border in its «constant state of becoming» (Brambilla, 2014, p. 4), this *Theme for Territorio* intends to contribute to a reciprocal dialogue between *borderlands studies* and *design studies*. Though not exhaustive of the broad production on borders and borderlands design, the dossier aims to clarify how *border studies* can be relevant for design disciplines,