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## Border security interventions and borderland resilience

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### Introduction

During recent decades, border regions have witnessed various stress events, stemming from complex and often unpredictable geopolitical events, and economic, social and environmental disruptions and shocks. The global COVID-19 pandemic and national efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus by introducing extremely strict border controls provides a topical and unique example of tightened border control. Yet since the beginning of the millennium, border scholars have documented how states have introduced tightened border control and protectionism as a response to various kinds of threats and malaises (Ackeelson, 2005; Amoore, 2006). A border closure often creates a stress situation and increases and multiplies the experience of disruption in the lives of borderland people. The present chapter takes a critical stance towards border security inventions and underlines the importance of cooperation and open borders from the perspective of borderland resilience.

The chapter starts from an understanding that the relationship between political borders and processes of resilience is highly complex and multidimensional. Like resilience, borders and borderlands are also subject to multiple definitions, depending on the scale and on whether the focus is on material border infrastructure or social communities and institutions. Borders are basic political institutions

(Anderson, 1996) that materialize in a multilayered manner through legal, administrative, economic, social and cultural practices (Paasi *et al.*, 2019). Many scholars have documented how, after a border institution is established, a border gradually becomes an inseparable part of the activities and mindscapes of people (Sahlins, 1989).

Historical developments in borderlands reveal how borders have a pervasive influence in shaping the organization of human life and expressions of identity. From the historical perspective the state border *in itself* can be seen to entail a ‘plurality of disruptions’ that the border inhabitants, authorities and economies need to cope with and negotiate in the organization of their activities and settings (Wandji, 2019). Borders and consequential disruptions are not merely located at the physical borderlines, however, but are enacted and materialized in contextual and multilayered ways across various spheres of life (Newman and Paasi, 1998; Andersen and Sandberg, 2012; Paasi *et al.*, 2019). Exposure to sudden changes does not usually imply immediate acceptance, adaptation, and management of change, however, but can rather be approached as a continuous process involving different phases where social power relations and the decisions of actors play a major part (Cote and Nightingale, 2012; Bristow and Healey, 2014). When the notion of resilience is scrutinized in relation to multidimensional borders, attention therefore needs to be paid simultaneously to the politics of resilience, thus asking ‘resilience for whom, what, when, where, and why’ (see Meerow and Newell, 2019; Cutter, 2016).

The chapter scrutinizes the processes and discourses of resilience regarding border security interventions in three different geo-historical contexts. Firstly, it considers the EU neighborhood policies in which resilience thinking has become the new leitmotif (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The EU-funded resilience building initiatives in its eastern and southern neighborhoods are conceptualized in terms of a ‘border-work’ that stretches beyond the external borders of the Union (see Bialasiewicz, 2012). The discussion of the EU’s neighborhood highlights the politics of resilience and the resilience for whom question (Healey and Bristow, 2019). The chapter then shifts focus from top-down resilience discourses towards actual social and regional resilience processes. The second case examines borderland resilience vis-à-vis geopolitical events in the EU external Finnish-Russian borderland, where the 2014 Crimean crisis and consequent international sanctions halted cross-border mobilities and travel from Russia to Finland. Thirdly, the chapter examines the changing political environment and border securitization efforts at the EU internal Finnish-Swedish borderland. Particular attention is directed to the border security interventions during the 2015 ‘long summer of migration’ (Scheel, 2015) and the COVID-19 border regulations. The three examples illustrate the contextual nature of border interventions, cross-border regulations and resilience, their

entanglement with the politics of scale as well as how different values shape problem and solution narratives in a state of continuous change.

The different geopolitical border cases attest to the spatial, temporal, and contextual multiplicity of resilience (cf. Simons and Randall, 2016). They provide insight into how geopolitical environment and border transitions influence the lives of borderland people and into how the politics of resilience is entangled with border securitization. This is a topical question in Europe and globally because of the changing political landscape and recently tightened border controls. Cross-border regions and borderlands are often regarded as ‘laboratories’ of European social and territorial development (van Houtum, 2000), emphasizing solidarity, conflicts/conflict resolution and the process of integration. Following this understanding, the resilience processes of cross-border regions and connections may also be indicative of the resilience of European space making and identity more generally (see Jensen and Richardson, 2004)

### Resilience thinking and the ‘world of permeable borders’

The increasing interest towards resilience theories can be attributed to a generalized experience of uncertainty and continuous crisis (Hassink, 2010) as well as to the processes of globalization that “have made places and regions more permeable to the effects of what were once thought to be external processes” (Christopherson *et al.*, 2010: 3). In governmental documents and scholarly debates alike, the essential role of state borders is often implicitly represented as a key explanation for the increasing interest towards the resilience approach. The imaginary of the risks of a shrinking, ‘borderless’ world is employed to make sense of and explain the need for fostering resilience. The United Nations Global Sustainability (2012) report ‘Resilient People, Resilient Planet’ depicts the enhancement of resilience as a response to global problems within an increasingly complex and interconnected world, for example. Resilience debates tend to naturalize political borders as physical lines that divide different ‘systems of resilience’ and protect the ‘inside’ from the disturbances coming from the ‘outside’. The narrative of resilience in a world of permeable borders reveals that the articulation of resilience is not sensitive to the full spectrum of political interests and multiplicities of values; instead it often cements the state-centric view of resilience. Hence, state security becomes the ‘completing value’ shaping “‘problem’ and ‘solution’ narratives during times of disruption” (cf. Rogers *et al.*, 2020).

The perception of external risks and the shrinking of the world both refer to the taken-for-granted assumption of the state territorial order, and thus borders. Borders and border transitions are the product of human societies, however, and thus are incompatible with the logic of unpredictability and non-human forces like environmental disasters. Recent stress events like COVID-19 have pointed out, however, that the construction of borders and border regulations often play a crucial role in the state-centric processes of adaptation, resistance, and renewal. Border security interventions and border closures are argued to provide a solution to various kinds of problems and malaises, many of which have resulted from domestic policies. In the articulation of border security interventions, the political nature of resilience becomes highlighted, provoking ethical questions regarding whose resilience and entitlement to wellbeing are made visible and in what ways.

Contrary to the narrative that presents borders as a solution to domestic and global disturbances, a considerable amount of research originating from various disciplines suggests open borders and diversity increase societal resilience. Simin Davoudi and others (2013), for instance, note that cooperation across scales is important for human adaptability, since connections across borders facilitate social interaction and innovation. This notion is supported by the original socio-ecological system resilience theory and its notion of panarchy (Walker *et al.*, 2004), that is, the resilience of a people, a community or a region are understood to depend on their dynamic organization and structuring ‘within and across scales of space and time’ (Allen *et al.*, 2014, p. 578). Regardless of this fact, the mainstream resilience research is often embedded in a territorial conception of space where resilience is measured in relation to some territorially bounded administrative entity or community (Healey and Bristow, 2019; 2020).

Modern state borders are Janus-faced in character, ‘poised between openness and closure’ (van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer, 2005, p. 12). In border studies literature, open borders are usually considered a resource for regional and socially more harmonious development. Open borders represent a resource because the border location entails proximity to foreign markets and labor, the possibility to take advantage of cost differentials, the diffusion and stimulation of new knowledge and ideas as well as new regional identities and brands (Sohn, 2014; Prokkola and Lois, 2016). Borders are human organizations and thus coordinated by socially and politically constructed rules that to a great extent explain how and to what extent some places and communities resist, adapt and renew when confronted with stress situations. Somewhat paradoxically, open borders and cross-border connections provide a resource that has proved to be especially valuable in times of national ‘border crisis’ (Prokkola, 2019). Accordingly, local perspectives in border areas challenge the

prevailing, territorially bounded understandings of resilience and attests to the complex role of borders in resilience.

Borders are not merely manifested in the form of ‘hard’ political lines but usually entail differences in terms of ‘soft’ borders, that is, in the culture and system of values that play a pivotal role in the processes of resilience (Rogers *et al.*, 2020; Grayson, 2017). Historical developments regarding the border are crucial for understanding the expressions and articulations of resilience in borderlands (cf. O’Down, 2010), together with the notion that different cultures and institutions coexist and sometimes collide at borders. Borderlands are fruitful sites for studying in what ways geopolitics, high-level policies and security interventions influence local resilience processes and capacities. They are sites where the state powers manifest in concrete ways and where people often have rather different attitudes towards ‘the other side’ and cross-border mobilities compared with the national centers (Anzaldúa, 1987; see also Andersen and Frandsen in this volume). Any study of borders and resilience therefore needs to be sensitive to social and cultural values and political contestation. The situational and contextual examination of resilience can reveal the possible mismatches between resilience policies and local resources as well as contradictory values guiding resilience processes. It also raises the question of in what ways cross-border connections and processes are vulnerable to various economic, socio-cultural and environmental disruptions that the establishment, maintenance or securitization of a border creates.

## EU neighborhood and the politics of resilience

The notion of the EU neighborhood provides a fitting example of how top-down resilience discourses often represent borders and border management as a response to various insecurities. Resilience appears as a foreign policy goal in the revised European Neighborhood Policy of 2015 with the aim to ‘strengthen the resilience of the EU’s partners in the face of external pressures and their ability to make their own sovereign choices’ (European Commission and HR/VP, 2015, p. 4). It is argued that resilience and resilience building has become the new leitmotif of EU neighborhood policies (Wagner and Anholt, 2016). The state and social resilience in the EU’s ‘east and south’ is also one of the priority areas of the EU Global Strategy, launched in 2016 (EC, 2019).

A review of the EU strategies and policy documents on the neighborhood suggests that resilience building initiatives are closely connected to the EU’s externalized border and migration management.

The revised policy underlines the EU's interdependence with its neighbors, thus explaining how 'growing numbers of refugees are arriving at the European Union's borders hoping to find a safer future' (European Commission and HR/VP, 2015). It directs attention to the root causes of migration, and describes resilience as an effort to prevent and manage migration in the long term.

The new ENP (European Neighborhood Policy) will make a determined effort to support economies and improve prospects for the local population. The policy should help make partner countries places where people want to build their future, and help tackle uncontrolled movement of people. (European Commission and HR/VP, 2015: 4)

Borders and bordering are bound with geopolitical power relations and materialize through the practices of exclusions and inclusions. The EU's promotion and funding of resilience building in the neighborhood countries and their societies can be understood in terms of a bordering or 'border-work' that stretches beyond the external borders of the Union (see Bialasiewicz, 2012). Extending the analysis of resilience to the EU's external border and 'border-work' provides new understanding regarding the role of geopolitics, extra-national public policy, interregional cooperation and solidarity (Healy and Bristow, 2020).

Examination of the EU's Global Strategy points out that the EU resilience discourse has a strong security connection. The European border-work that has taken place in the Union's southern and eastern neighborhoods is part of an attempt to secure the internal by securing the external. Resilience building stands as a preventive and stabilizing action that is contingent upon the availability of knowledge concerning potential security 'problems' in the neighborhood. In this respect, the discussion of regional resilience in border areas, and threats to that resilience, often turns into a question of border and migration management (cf. Bourdeau, 2015) in a world of permeable borders. Resilience policies function as soft power to prevent migration by supporting adaptation *in situ* instead of developing legal migration routes from North Africa and the Middle East to the area of the European Union. Anhold and Sinatti (2019, p. 311) even argue that 'for the EU, resilience-building is primarily a refugee containment strategy that could jeopardize the stability of refugee-hosting states'. EU resilience governance invites the neighbouring states to co-border its external borders and support their migrant populations so that the migrants would stay where they are and not seek protection and wellbeing by attempting to enter the EU area. As Biscop (2017) puts it:

If Europe's neighbours are resilient to certain threats, those threats will not reach Europe itself. In more standard geopolitical jargon, a resilient neighbour would be called a buffer state. That

is a role that may appeal to certain governments, if the EU offers a high enough price. The EU has clearly begun to use Turkey as a buffer state in the field of migration, for example, paying it a hefty sum in return. (Biscop, 2017)

The EU resilience discourse introduces ‘novelty, adaptation, unpredictability, transformation, vulnerability and systems’ into a new governmental vocabulary that makes the governance of uncertainty a fundamental rationale (Welch, 2014, p. 16). The neighborhood concept provides a fitting example of resilience governance that aims to shift responsibility to the regional and community levels, as if they were self-sufficient entities – something that is considered problematic from a normative policy perspective (Wagner and Anholt, 2016, pp. 415–6).

Resilience can be approached from the point of view of information generation and legitimacy, where the key question is whose resilience is concerned and what objectives may be included in the presentation of concerns (Cote and Nightingale, 2012, p. 482). Scholars argue that ‘investing in the resilience of states and societies beyond the Union’s borders is a way forward to enable societies to minimize the impact of crises and thus deter potential threats from the EU’ (Eickhoff and Stollenwerk, 2018). This comes out especially in the debates on climate migration and the EU-driven resilience building initiatives abroad, which support adaptation in place and intra-African mobility. The financial support for the building of a more resilient neighborhood is by no means altruistic; instead it is expected to ‘pay itself back’ by increasing European internal security and by preventing large-scale migration to Europe.

The EU neighborhood policy and the management of the EU’s external borders highlight the fundamental question of resilience for whom – a question that is intimately intertwined with the institutional and everyday politics of solidarity (Healy and Bristow, 2020). The Union’s resilience discourse does not say much about the actual social and community resilience of the societies and communities in the EU neighborhood. Instead, it reveals that the notion of resilience for whom and why is an essential factor to consider when studying resilience and the discourses of resilience regarding different borders and borderlands.

## Schengen borderlands and resilience

The geopolitical environment and historical processes of borders greatly influence the mechanisms of resilience. The opened/closed nature of the border varies according to geopolitical environment, partly determining the development trajectories of a borderland and its resources to cope with various environmental, political, economic and social changes and stress situations (Prokkola, 2019). The typology of borderland interaction, developed by Oscar Martinez (1994, see also Timothy, 1999), provides a useful starting point for contemplating how the border type can influence borderland resilience. Firstly, ‘alienated’ border regions are usually characterized by geopolitical tensions. Border crossing is restricted or does not exist at all. The North and South Korea offer an example of an alienated border region. Secondly, ‘coexistent’ border areas usually have neutral relations which enable some sort of interaction, yet both countries have adopted inward-looking strategies in their problem-solving. From the resilience point of view this means that if a border community faces a sudden stress event and disruption, they must mainly rely on local capacities and domestic institutions. Thirdly, ‘interdependent’ regions where cross-border relations are characterized by networking and cooperation. Here border communities have established initiatives to solve common problems through legislative cooperation; thus they might be better prepared and resilient when facing crisis situations. Fourthly, ‘integrated’ border areas where all border restrictions have been removed and the regions are functionally merged. Here the border communities have established multiscale connections across the border and maintain stable and well institutionalized cooperation. The geopolitically steady EU internal borders are characterized by this kind of collaboration and functional regionalization, yet its borders still materialize through their legal, political, economic and cultural layers (Paasi and Prokkola 2008; Svensson, 2015).

Geopolitical borders and their economic and social trajectories are rarely stable, however. Furthermore, the volume and temporality of cross-border interaction often varies over time. The historical developments of borders show that border openings and the development of cross-border cooperation are often gradual and relatively long processes whereas border security interventions and border closures can take place hastily as a response to geopolitical events or experienced global and/or national insecurity. Accordingly, to gain understanding of the processes of resilience requires more than simply considering borderland resilience in terms of the border typologies and classifications: attention also needs to be given to border dynamics and transition. Also, the transition from one border typology to another ‘stage of interaction’ both requires resilience and impacts the resilience of a borderland in the long term. For example, integrated border communities can possess capacities and resourcefulness that can be used to anticipate and respond to sudden environmental hazards or slow onset-events.



The Finnish-Russian border, the EU's longest external border, provides a fitting example of a security border where economic and socio-cultural development have been influenced by sudden geopolitical events. The Crimean crisis in 2014, the consequent economic sanctions and the decline of the Russian ruble immensely influenced the socio-economic conditions of the Finnish-Russian borderland, where Russian cross-border shoppers have been the driving force of economic growth (Hannonen in this volume; Koch, 2018). Between 2013 and 2016, Finnish-Russian cross-border traffic decreased by 32.2 percent (Finnish Border Guard 2020) and Russian visitor arrivals in all accommodation establishments in Finland decreased by 56.4 percent (Statistics Finland, 2020). The concentration and specialization on Russian trade and tourism in the border area increased the vulnerability of the borderland economy to geopolitical turbulence.

In response to the immobility shock, the tourism industry was expected to realign and find new growth paths and realignment strategies that could increase the resilience of the border region's economy (Prokkola, 2019). Regardless of the local renewal strategies, the development of cross-border connections in the EU external borderlands are to a great extent dependent on wider-scale political decision making and geopolitics. Local coping mechanisms and opportunity structures are limited and closely interlinked and dependent on wider EU-level and national policies towards Russia. The experience of living within a geopolitically sensitive border engenders a specific borderland culture and structures of meaning making. It is suggested, for example, that people living next to geopolitically sensitive borders are somewhat socialized to a specific border mentality and practical approach towards border-related high geopolitics. In the Finnish-Russian borderlands, older generations of Finns often mention 'the lessons learned from history' as a way of explaining how local people are successfully coping with geopolitically sensitive situations (Prokkola, 2019). Simultaneously, historically formed relationships and knowledge within and across borders are crucial factors that enable regional actors to find solutions even in difficult conditions (Boschma, 2015). Altogether, examination of the EU's external borderlands shows that geopolitical environment and cross-border connections influence the processes of adaptation, resistance and renewal (see also Healey and Bristow, 2019), that is, the resilience of borderland communities. While some coping mechanisms and paths of adaptation and renewal are available to borderland people and authorities, many are not. This is partly explained by the type of borderland interaction and the historical dynamics of the border. Moreover, the selection of the coping mechanism is steered by the 'completing values' (Rogers *et al.*, 2020) and thus different geopolitical actors may prefer different approaches.

## The resilience of European cross-border regions

European territory contains more than one hundred institutionalized border and cross-border regions that have acquired membership in the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR, founded in 1971). The multiplicity of cross-border regions and their connectedness can be seen to reflect European aims of integration, tolerance and solidarity. Institutionalized cross-border regions such as the Euroregions serve as fruitful sites for gaining understanding of the resilience processes of cross-border regions and their inter-scalar connections.

Since the ‘long summer of migration’ of 2015 in Europe, there has been a shift from developing cross-border cooperation and cross-border regions towards tightened border security measures. Many EU countries that for decades strived to abolish the barriers that borders create have recently reintroduced border controls. Border surveillance and checks have again become part of the mundane experiences of mobile people travelling and commuting across the borders. Presently, Euroregions are experiencing a sudden stress from the closing of borders as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Finnish-Swedish Tornio Valley cross-border region serves as an example of an EU internal cross-border region and Euroregion where border checks and border closures have been reinstated. It can be defined as a northern Euroregion and an integrated border area (see Martinez, 1994) where interaction and cooperation are well institutionalized. The Tornio Valley is often seen as a historically borderless region with traditional communities straddling the border. The border has been relatively open since World War II and it is often referred to by locals as the most peaceful border in the world. Local people and communities have historically had to find their own ways to cope with the different institutional structures of Finland and Sweden, as well as the different iterations of the border. Administratively, the cross-border region has its roots in the 1987 establishment of the Council of Tornio Valley, which encompassed the border municipalities along the Finnish-Swedish border. Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995 and the Schengen agreement in 2001 together with Norway. Since then the regional institutions and connections have been strengthened, notably within the framework of the EU Interreg North Program (cf. Baldersheim and Ståhlberg, 1999).

Several decades of open border policy was called into question in Autumn 2015 when hundreds of asylum-seekers started to arrive daily at the northern Finnish-Swedish border crossing point. The situation was considered exceptional in Finland because historically Finland has not been a destination country for migrants. Altogether, Finland received a tenfold number of asylum applications compared with previous years (~3000 → 32 476 applications), with most of the asylum-

seekers travelling across the northern Swedish-Finnish land border crossing point in Tornio. In response to the increased numbers of asylum-seekers, the Finnish government relocated hundreds of security sector officials to Tornio to control the border crossing and the asylum-reception process. The border was securitized by the state authorities – a move that was instigated in part by nationalist right-wing movements that urged a total closure of the border. Extreme nationalists mobilized threat imaginaries and their presence in Tornio created an extra burden for actors responsible for the reception, maintenance and care practices in the asylum reception process (Prokkola, 2020).

The open border represented an important resilience factor in the securitized environment of asylum reception. The daily reception work was organized in collaboration with state and local authorities and non-governmental actors such as the Finnish Red Cross and local volunteers. The volunteers were able to work on both sides of the borderline to support the reception activities. Accordingly, in the organization of the reception, cooperation and existing networks within and across the border gained a crucial role. The actors gained topical and trustworthy information from contact persons in Sweden, for example, regarding the time, place and volumes of the new arrivals. Timely information was considered crucial for planning the reception and work schedules in Tornio. Many local actors underlined that the peaceful history and trade relations in the border region provided a resource that enabled them to better cope with the changed and stressful situation (Prokkola, 2020). It was paradoxical that at the same time as many citizens and politicians were presenting the closure of the border as a national security means, regional- and local-level cross-border cooperation was proving from the point of view of the everyday security of civil society and smooth reception work. The 2015 Tornio case shows that cross-border cooperation and a culture of cooperation contribute to the ability of regions and communities to better cope with changing situations. Paradoxically, the border security measures put in place may even weaken the sense of security in the long run because they ultimately hinder cross-border collaboration and the maintenance of trust relations that support resilience in the borderlands and in wider society.

Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an exceptional stress situation locally and globally. In open border areas like the EU internal Finnish-Swedish borderland, however, the border closure has had considerable impacts on the everyday routines and economic and social environment of the borderland people, causing additional stress and confusion. The closing of the internal EU Finnish-Swedish border on 19 March 2020 created not only a barrier but also a new and unfamiliar environment of different regulations and logics of filtering and controlling cross-border mobilities. The border traffic decreased approximately 90 percent (Finnish Border Guard, 2020). The border closure and travel restrictions due to COVID-19 are by no means exceptional; they are part of a

normalized response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, an attempt to hinder the spread of the virus. Yet, the Finnish-Swedish border is a highly interesting case because Finland and Sweden initially adopted highly different coping strategies and degrees of border control. In Sweden, the government and experts first relied more on the willingness of citizens to govern themselves, whereas in Finland the government followed many other countries and immediately imposed strict regulations and border control.

Compared with the ‘long summer of migration’, COVID-19 is a very different kind of disruption at the Finnish-Swedish border because the border was practically closed for the local people for the first time since WWII. Whereas during the 2015 border security intervention, the mobility of Finnish and Swedish citizens was not regulated, during the pandemic all people needed to have a legitimate, usually work-related reason to cross the border. The mobility of health care commuters from Finland to Sweden formed a highly critical regional question. If Finland had restricted the mobility of health care professionals, the health care sector of the Swedish Tornio Valley region would have collapsed. The COVID-19 crisis has clearly underscored that the reinstatement of borders and border closures *in itself* represents a disruption from the perspective of borderland people and their everyday lives and the regional economy. The control and regulation implemented at the Finnish-Swedish border meant that borderland people needed to continuously negotiate the different national strategies and oftentimes ambiguous instructions and statements from the Finnish government. Local and national media reported about divided families and the experienced difficulties and stresses of local people. After a month, it was reported in the news that many local people started to feel that the border closure was more disturbing and traumatic than the disease itself (Passoja, 2020).

In May 2020, Finnish citizens realized that since Sweden had not established border controls, they could simply cross the border as their constitutional right (Juntti, 2020). The situation was rather confusing, and many Swedes experienced it as unfair. Some anticipated that the Nordic solidarity and good relations were at serious risk and that it will take a long time to rebuild the trust. In May, the Finnish-Swedish border crossing point became a curious place of state control: a hybrid space where people did not know exactly what the situation was and where the rules of border crossing were negotiated case by case.<sup>1</sup> The regional authorities and actors needed to actively lobby the central state, which initially failed to recognize the unique borderland culture and connections across the border. Finally, in August 2020, the Finnish authorities established a new borderland citizenship status, ‘member of a border community’ (Finnish Border Guard, 2020). The new rule meant that people who live in the Finnish and Swedish border municipalities are legally permitted to cross the Finnish-

Swedish border even during the pandemic. A similar decision was made regarding the Finnish-Norwegian border.

This study of the Finnish-Swedish border during ‘crisis’ events shows that in cross-border areas the mechanisms of adaptation and renewal are linked with both state-centered institutions and cross-border networks and institutions at multiple scales. It remains open, however, to what extent the asymmetric COVID-19 border control and restrictions and consequent border securitization will impact the idea of the ‘borderless’ border and historically formed trust relations in the Tornio Valley border region, like other Euroregions. Connections and trust relations across the border are not something that would automatically withstand changes in geopolitical conditions. Cross-border regions are established and continuously maintained through institutional practices and everyday social relations; thus their institutional organization, established role, territorial and symbolic shape may change (Paasi, 2003). Indeed, there is a concern that long-lasting border barriers could impugn the identity and function of the cross-border regions and the European project per se (Opilowska, 2021).

## Discussion: contextual borderland resilience

Countries commonly introduce heightened border control as a response to various challenges and crises that are explained to have external origins. The responses are in many ways paradoxical because, as border scholars and others have long underlined, global phenomena like environmental hazards, economic instabilities or pandemics rarely respect state borders. Contrary of the popular understanding that draws a connection between strict border control and state internal security, open borders, transnational cooperation and solidarity usually increase societal resilience and wellbeing in the long term.

The border approach provides new understanding regarding the significance of geopolitical environment, political contestation and values – something that has been neglected in studies of resilience (Healy and Bristow, 2019; Phelan *et al.*, 2013). Any analysis of European borderland resilience needs to recognize the geopolitical site, governmental intervention, and acts of bordering at the points of resilience’s articulation (cf. Simon and Randalls, 2016). This chapter has examined border security interventions in three different European border and border policy contexts, with the focus on local and regional resilience construction and the politics of resilience. Resilience processes

have been scrutinized in relation to geopolitical conditions, border typology, regional histories, and regional and socio-cultural connections. The examples illustrate how resilience construction gains different political and normative meanings in different border contexts.

The difference between the EU internal and external border regions underscores the difference that geopolitical environment makes from the viewpoints of resilience. Examination of the EU external Finnish-Russian border shows how the geopolitical tension between the EU and Russia, after the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, arrested ongoing and planned EU-co-funded development programs and froze regional cross-border trade and cooperation. The regional stakeholders in the Finnish-Russian borderland showed adaptation to the prevailing situation and hoped that the political situation would change for the better. Their agency was limited but not totally withdrawn; they continued cross-border cooperation by keeping contact with trusted local partners on the Russian side, for example. In comparison, at the Finnish-Swedish border, cross-border cooperation has often intensified during ‘crisis’ events to alleviate the political tension. Established long-standing cross-border networks and relations were considered highly important from the perspective of the 2015 asylum reception. Similarly, local cross-border connections and lobbying have proved valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific conditions of the borderland were ultimately recognized by the Finnish government, resulting in the introduction of a new citizenship category ‘member of a border community’. Members of the border community on both side of the border now possess the right to cross the border even during the pandemic. This suggests that the borderland’s resilience has its own logic that is interconnected with yet simultaneously different from the national and European Union political agendas (see also Lois, Cairo and de las Heras in this volume).

The EU resilience policy, the narratives regarding the long summer of migration and COVID-19 border restrictions all highlight the importance of recognizing the politics of resilience and values in the formation of the conception of resilience. Comparison of the EU internal and external border areas in Finland fittingly illustrates how different state borders can be subject to different geopolitical regimes, institutions, cultural values and trust relations, which all influence borderland resilience. Cultural knowhow, strong trust relations and institutionalized connections across borders form an important resilience asset that is more likely present in open border contexts and cannot be generalized to all borders. Borderland resilience is also developed against state institutions and core-periphery relations. For example, the trustworthiness of Finnish institutions was considered important during the ‘long summer of migration’ and the freezing of EU/Finnish-Russian relations in 2014. The national institutional stability provided a mechanism for coping with the geopolitical changes in the

regional scale. Also, in comparison with the EU internal Finnish-Swedish border, the resistance to the COVID-19 border intervention has been much more modest in the Finnish-Russian borderland, where the cross-border traffic similarly decreased. It is possible that knowledge and experiences of sudden border restrictions and immobility at the securitized EU external borders have, in a way, prepared borderland communities to cope with and adapt to sudden border transitions, both decreasing resistance and increasing resilience with respect to the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The narrative framing that connects the importance of increasing resilience with the notion of a world of permeable borders is ambiguous and tends to naturalize borders as rigid lines that divide communities and determine their future. Yet global challenges know no borders and cannot be overcome through bordering and border drawing (Dalby, 2019). Environmental challenges like climate change need to be mitigated, coped with, prevented, and anticipated with the help of cross-border cooperation. In an ideal case, experienced crises and challenges would bound borderland actors together across the border to establish new connections and organizations of cooperation. This is a challenging task especially in geopolitically sensitive borderlands where tensions and conflicts of interests are present in many ways. The EU neighborhood policy provides a fitting example of how values and conflicts of interest influence and shape the conception of resilience. Also, European internal cross-border regions are often considered more ‘artificial’ and thus more vulnerable to political turbulence than the traditional state and sub-state regions (Perkmann, 2002). A critical question is whether and to what extent cross-border regions and trust-based cross-border connections are resilient to border transitions and securitization. More knowledge is needed on how multilayered cross-border connections are vulnerable or resilient with regards to different political, economic, social, and environmental changes and continuous border disruptions.

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<sup>ii</sup> The author conducted observation at the Finnish-Swedish border at the Victorian Square at the Tornio–Haparanda pedestrian border crossing point and at the Aavasaksa–Övertorneå border crossing point in March–June 2020.