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National Populism and Borders: The Politicisation of Cross-border Mobilisations in Europe

By Oscar Mazzoleni, Cecilia Biancalana, Andrea Pilotti, Laurent Bernhard, Grégoire Yerly, Lukas Lauener, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar (2023), 243 p., ISBN: 978–1–80220–804-7

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A plethora of literature has addressed right-wing populist parties' narratives and discourses revolving around nationalism, cultural grievances, and the defence of the nation but without examining the extension of the relationship with territorial borders. Oscar Mazzoleni, Cecilia Biancalana, Andrea Pilotti, Laurent Bernhard, Grégoire Yerly and Lukas Lauener use this open question as a starting point for their book *National Populism and Borders: The Politicisation of Cross-border Mobilisations in Europe*. In this book, the authors ask how borders in Europe as a manifestation of territorially bounded communities (p. 4) are politicised by national populist parties.

Intriguingly, the book distinguishes between borders as issues, narratives and territorial spaces of mobilization (p. 6). This multi-layered approach allows the authors to take a nuanced look at the various linkages to national-populist politicisation attempts. In addition, the authors emphasise that borders are not only a national, but also a regional factor. Hence, Switzerland presents a suitable case study as the country allows the free movement of persons (FMP) but grants its different regions (cantons) a certain autonomy in how to organise cross-border relations with neighbouring areas. Within this multi-scalar context, a variety of national (the Swiss People's Party) and regional populist parties (Geneva Citizens Movement, Ticino League) have used the cantonal socio-economic conditions to politicise territorial borders. As such, this book is interesting for readers studying populism, cross-border relations and nation-states but also regional politics and cultures.

The 12 chapters of the book are arranged in three thematic sections. The first section analyses the construction of borders with a focus on discourses, strategies, frames and attitudes related to territorial boundaries in regional contexts. Most authors of the chapters in this section – except the last one – use qualitative methods to provide a broad range of foci on actors involved in the production of border narratives. The first chapter finds that national-populist parties politicise borders in times of crises – such as the Covid-19 pandemic – but to different degrees. In the canton of Ticino, borders are treated more as a direct issue of defence against “the other” (S. 32), compared to the canton of Geneva, where borders are seen as an indirect issue related to a loss of economic power and sovereignty. The next chapter shifts the focus towards the transnational sphere and finds that regional populist parties on both sides of the Swiss-Italian border defend their national boundaries while avoiding conflicts with their foreign populist counter-parts by blaming their own national or the supranational level for border problems emerging during the pandemic. Looking at the cross-border regions in Geneva and Basel, the following chapter argues that sub-state branches of the Swiss People's Party politicise their borders in different ways. In Basel, the party uses a cross-national lens, while in Geneva, a cross-regional narrative is applied. The last chapter of the first section argues that populist attitudes are related to individuals' positive views on re-bordering policies (p. 78). The empirical analysis shows strong support for the

so-called re-bordering hypothesis, which argues that national populists' attitudes go hand in hand with preferences for closed boundaries and against globalisation (Olivas Osuna, 2022).

Using predominately survey data, the next section, comprising three chapters, is devoted to European integration and citizens' views and preferences on national borders (p. 11). The first chapter analyses how cross-border commuters, regional contexts and party-affiliation influence attitudes towards the FMP policy and the EU in general among candidates running for election in the parliament. The authors find that Italian-speaking candidates are more Eurosceptic than the ones from other language regions, and candidates affiliated with national populist parties are more sceptical toward the FMP and the EU. The next chapter shifts the focus from the elite view towards public opinions on national borders (i.e., re-bordering or de-bordering attitudes) and how this influences citizens' support for European integration. Looking at the national level and three border regions (Ticino, Basel, Geneva), the study shows that if citizens are in favour of closing borders (re-bordering) and intend to vote for the SVP, they are less likely to support European integration. The last chapter examines territorial dimensions as an important factor that influences voting behaviour regarding immigration. The multivariate analysis finds that border residency fosters Euroscepticism in that these citizens are more prone to vote for an initiative to limit the influx of migrants (p. 154).

The third section focuses on citizens' attitudes in cross-border spaces of mobilization. The first chapter examines how citizens in the cantons of Geneva, Ticino, and Basel perceive border relations and the tension between cross-border cooperation and conflict. The analysis is grounded in the historical contexts of each region and highlights the role of path dependency and populist parties in the conflictual politicization of borders (p. 187). The next chapter investigates how citizens in the Canton of Ticino perceive cross-border labour migration. The authors find an ambivalent pattern in the sense that there is no general negative view on foreign cross-border workers regarding the regional economy, but if residents are close to national populists, they have a rather negative view of commuters in terms of personal economic well-being. In the next chapter, using again the case of Ticino, the authors evaluate the attitudes of citizens living in "in-between places" (p. 211) - the areas that are neither global hubs nor deprived and left behind - towards borders. According to the winners and losers theory, the authors conclude that high levels of education and mobility play a role in developing positive attitudes towards de-bordering, while feelings of being left behind and economic decline fuel the need to re-border.

Overall, the authors present an impressive collection of empirical research. This book provides new insights into the previous understanding of national populist parties by demonstrating the importance of territorial boundaries for these political actors. The three sections of the book offer a timely and important overview of "multi-scalar national populism and border politicisation" (p. 229). The approach to consider borders as issues, narratives and spaces of mobilization as well as opportunities and constraints, presents a multidimensional field for the analysis and interpretation of the national populist politicisation of borders.

The book is clearly structured along populists' rhetoric construction of borders, the linkage between European integration and the perception of borders, and public opinions on regional and cross-regional spaces. In some of the chapters, however, the hypotheses could have been more clearly formulated as they sometimes either comprise two arguments at once (pp. 102, 125), contain redundant parts (p. 103), or are fairly long-winded (p. 125). In addition, the operationalisation and measurement of some variables seem not always immediately intelligible. In chapter six, the authors use a question on the effect of bilateral treaties to measure the respondents' position on the FMP (p. 106), while the mere acceptance or rejection of the limitation initiative is taken as an indicator of "Eurosceptic behaviour" in chapter eight (p. 157).

Despite a few methodological issues, the authors offer a broad range of quantitative and qualitative approaches and manage to coherently present their arguments and findings. Other content-related strengths of the book are the inclusion of both the supply and the demand side of the politicisation of borders, and the focus on regional spaces, citizens' perceptions

of national borders, and sub-national parties. The dimension below the state level offers a welcome extension to the usual nation-centred comparative literature on populism, public opinions, and territorial spaces (e.g., Lamour, 2022). However, while the regional perspective is a strength, the authors could have included further regions instead of focusing only on the cantons of Geneva, Ticino and Basel, as previous studies have done in a similar fashion (e.g., Bernhard et al., 2015). A broader focus on sub-national areas would have further underpinned the argument on the importance of various spaces of mobilization and could have been illustrative of the varieties of populism in cantonal branches (Storz & Bernauer, 2018).

Finally, I agree with the authors that populism and nationalism need to be linked to territorial borders as the latter constitute an important frame for the understanding of public opinions, voting behaviour, and attitudes. Due to the fairly unique political, geographical, and cultural settings in Switzerland, it might be somewhat difficult to transfer the findings to other states and regions. Nonetheless, this case study offers a valid starting point for further research.

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The Human Imperative: Power, Freedom and Democracy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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The book targets a wide audience, covering political and economic decision makers, academics, students, journalists as well as all other interested readers. It offers a useful complement to the large emerging literature on Artificial Intelligence (AI), its regulation, and societal impacts. In light of the current debate about the regulation of AI at both EU and international