



## Challenged Borderlands – Then and Now

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### Abstract

Throughout the 1990s, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands experienced a frenzy of building cross-border regions (CBRs) to foster “borderless” economic integration within the NAFTA framework. The changing context after 9/11 and more recently the prolonged economic recession coupled with unresolved immigration policy have created new challenges for U.S.-Mexico CBRs. Using the case of the Arizona-Sonora Region this paper analyzes the CBR’s deconstruction process and demonstrates how an originally neo-liberal economic model was able at first to redefine border space and attract a multiplicity of actors and followers, but became inadequate to cope with increasing re-bordering processes and a widening gap between state-level cross-border cooperation and national-level policies.

**Keywords:** *region-building, re-bordering, U.S-Mexico borderlands, Arizona-Sonora Region, border security, anti-immigration law, cross-border region, region deconstruction*

### Preface

My friendship and professional collaboration with Professor Doris Wastl-Walter goes back to August 1994 when we met at an international conference in Heidelberg, Germany. I was impressed by her original perspectives on borders and border regions and her ability to think “outside the box”. During her Fulbright fellowship at the University of Arizona in spring of 1996, we continued discussing the unprecedented redefinitions of boundaries, resulting from political and economic changes at the end of the 20th century. We were intrigued by differences and similarities between changing borderlands in European and North American contexts, and it was then that a seed was planted for a book that would address these new developments and their consequences for everyday lives of border residents. With additional contribution by Barbara Morehouse, a renowned University of Arizona border scholar, our *Challenged Borderlands* were finally delivered in 2004. Although Doris’ regional focus remained on Central-South East Europe, her many trips to the Arizona-Sonora border region

showed her wide interest in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands; they also profoundly influenced my own way of thinking about the Arizona-Sonora border region. The latter is the main reason for submitting my contribution on the latest developments in the Arizona-Sonora Region – to acknowledge Doris’ “she was there”, and to inform about significant turns in transborder region (de) construction during the last decade.

### Introduction

A considerable volume of contemporary literature on border regions has focused on processes of cross-border region-building. It has been widely accepted that cross-border regions (CBRs) are socially constructed, meaning that they are products of some more or less purposeful action of groups of individuals and/or institutions (Paasi, 1995, 1998, 1999a; Perkmann & Sum, 2002; Sparke, 2002; Brunet-Jailly, 2004a; Cold-Ranvilde et al., 2004; Newman, 2006c; Lenox, 2008; Newman, 2011). Thus, central to the understanding of CBRs is to identify who

the region-builders are, what are their goals, what kind of mechanisms they use to achieve goals, and what are the outcomes.

It has also been widely accepted that the surge in contemporary CBRs is closely associated with globalization and that the formation of CBRs can be seen basically as regional responses to new modes of capital accumulation requiring borderless flow of goods, technology and ideas (Ohmae, 1995; Eskelinen et al., 1999; Harmsworth, 2001; Scott, 2002; Wong-Gonzalez, 2002; Cold-Ranvkilde et al., 2004; Ganster & Lorey, 2005; Neman, 2006b; Lenox, 2008; L'Estrange & O'Dowd, 2008). The global transformation processes have widened the scope for sub-national governments and a multitude of non-governmental agents to engage internationally and facilitate the emergence of new governance spaces around mutual interests, goals, functional capabilities and interdependencies to address mutual issues and promote collective growth (Clarke, 2002; Perkmann, 2003; Lenox, 2008). Whereas these general forces under the umbrella of globalization provide a basic rationale for CBR formation, it is the regional context – history, geography, culture, and politics – that filters external influences, and provides a region-specific mix of global and regional. Thus, it is important to understand the context in which region-builders create (or attempt to create) new action spaces (Bufon, 1995; Paasi, 1999b, 2005, 2011).

The emergence of CBRs in North America during the 1990s has been well documented (Clement, 1997; Ganster et al., 1997; Scott, 2000; Sparke, 2002; Anderson & Wever 2003; Clarkson, 2003; Serano, 2003; Brunet-Jailly, 2004b; Cold-Ranvkilde et al., 2004; Pavlakovich-Kochi et al., 2004; Wong-Gonzalez, 2004, 2005; Anderson & Gerber, 2007; Lenox, 2008). The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is seen as a major driver of CBR building by advancing the level of integration (Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2011; Vázquez Castillo, 2005). However, the North American integration has taken place under conditions of political separation and absence of institutions for collective governance (Clarkson, 2003; Williams & Van der Velde, 2005). Whereas NAFTA provided a general framework and rationale for the emergence of CBRs along the U.S.-Canada and the U.S.-Mexico borders, it was the regional context that account-

ed for regional differences despite the fact that in each CBR we can identify similar actors and corresponding goals.

Conceptualizing cross-border regions as outcomes of processes of social construction also implies that what can be constructed can be deconstructed. The process of region deconstruction, however, has not been explicitly addressed. Instead, the prevalent focus has been on processes of re-bordering. Re-bordering has been addressed before 9/11 as new transnational blocs (such as NAFTA, EU, Mercosur) created new borders and generated “inclusions” and “exclusions”, and “us vs. them” as a part of global re-bordering (Ackleson, 1999; Andreas, 2000; Purcell & Nevins, 2004; L'Estrange & O'Dowd, 2008). But, after 9/11 re-bordering has primarily been framed in the context of national security, especially in the North American literature (Anderson, 2002; Andreas, 2003; Andreas & Biersteker, 2003; Biersteker, 2003; Ackleson, 2004, 2005; Brunet-Jailly, 2004c, 2006; Nicol, 2005, 2006; Olmedo & Soden, 2005; Farson, 2006; Ackleson & Kastner, 2008; Wong-Gonzalez, 2011). It can be argued, however, that the processes of re-bordering and cross-border region deconstruction are integral parts of the same story of contemporary globalization. At a regional scale, re-bordering and CBR deconstruction can be seen at the same time as a cause and effect of each other; re-bordering challenges a basic premise of a CBR, i.e. “borderlessness”, which in the end may lead on a path of a CBR's deconstruction. On the other hand, shifting or cracking of a CBR's foundations may induce re-bordering by re-enacting old or installing new barriers to cross-border interactions. Like borders that are in continuous flux (Farson, 2006), so are CBRs because the policies, ideas and structures that underpin cross-border interactions are constantly changing. While some changes may be slow or hidden, other may cause significant shifts with broad consequences for the region and its residents.

The two bordering states – Arizona and Sonora – formally announced the formation of a CBR, known as the *Arizona-Sonora Region*, in 1993, just months before NAFTA was officially inaugurated. The apparent efficiency in the organization of a cross-border governance and the formalization of specific goals contributed to an emerging image of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* as a suc-

successful model for cross-border economic development. This is why the events of April 2010, when the Arizona governor signed the Senate Bill 1070 (SB1070) – interpreted as an “anti-immigration law” – came as a big surprise to many observers. Whereas SB1070 was not explicitly directed against Sonorans (or Mexicans in general), Sonora’s government felt that its citizens became unwanted and thus potentially exposed to harassment by local law enforcement forces in Arizona. As a sign of an open protest, Sonora’s delegation declined to participate in the upcoming regular joint session of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and its sister organization *Comision Sonora-Arizona* (McCombs & Steller, 2011). With the cancellation of the plenary session – a key mechanism of the formal model of cross-border collaboration – the CBR appeared severely shaken. Moreover, a shock spread throughout the entire border region and caused the cancellation of the upcoming U.S.-Mexico border governors’ conference (Archibold, 2010).

To understand why things happened the way they did, this paper analyses an apparent deconstruction of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* from three perspectives: (1) the role of CBR builders and managers; (2) the relationship between formal and functional CBR, and (3) conflict and accommodation between national policies and regional agendas.

### **CBR’s Builders and Managers**

Markusen provided a metaphorical definition of regions as units of societal structure that are “built on concrete economic foundations, with beams roughed up out of political systems, framing set by cultural practices and finishing overlaid by the ingenuity of their residents” (1987: xi). The central notion is that it is the concentrated human action that can “raise the roof beams higher, knock out a constraining wall, or add an extension” (ibid.). Moreover, Storper argued that various groups of actors in various institutional spheres of modern capitalism have the possibility to shape the course of economic evolution. He also emphasized a new power of images when he wrote: “Interpretations and constructed images of reality are now just as important as any ‘real’ material reality, because these interpretations and images are diffused and accepted and become the bases on which

people act: they become real” (1997: 29).

In the early 1990s a set of circumstances in North America created a favorable situation for concentrated human action in border regions around powerful images of new cross-border economic regions. The subnational entities (provinces in Canada, states in the U.S. and Mexico) were reaching over the national borders and becoming involved in international matters. In the U.S. such state-level government international involvement was largely encouraged by a shift in economic development strategy from the federal government’s responsibility to develop jobs to state and local government’s responsibility. Border states in particular saw new opportunities from actively participating in the facilitation of exports and other cross-border activities that would expand markets and benefit economic development. This new approach to economic development was also a response to growing demands from the private sector requesting state’s assistance in order to cope with increasing global competition. NAFTA also contributed to rising inter-regional competition among border states for the most favorable gateway position within the NAFTA trade area.

State governments have played a central role in CBR building. Aside from Arizona and Sonora, transborder collaboration agreements in the U.S.-Mexico border were signed between the states of California (U.S.) and Baja California (Mexico), the states of New Mexico (U.S.) and Chihuahua (Mexico), the state of Texas (U.S.) and the northeast Mexican states of Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo León, as well as between four U.S. border states and ten Mexican states (Wong-González, 2004; Pavlakovich-Kochi 2011). However, state governments have been only one part of the picture. One of the major characteristics of CBR building processes has been that a multiplicity of actors outside governments has possessed of varying degrees of legitimate authority to make demands, frame goals and pursue policies, as well as command mechanisms (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006; Lenox, 2008). Empirical studies of North American CBRs have documented a key partnership between regional entrepreneurs and government as a major driving force in CBR formation (Sparke, 2000; Scott, 2002; Cold-Ranvilde et al., 2004; Wong-Gonzalez, 2004; Lenox, 2008).

In the creation of the *Arizona-Sonora Region*, two main groups of actors coalesced around common interests and spearheaded the process of a strategic cross-border economic integration. First, in the early 1990s Arizona was one of the first states to complete a new strategic plan for economic development based on neo-liberal principles. The *Arizona Strategic Partnership for Economic Development* (ASPED, 1992) outlined a need for a concentrated action in support of industries and regions with highest potential for a globally competitive position; it designated the private sector in the driver's seat in matters of economic development, and identified proximity to Mexico as Arizona's competitive advantage. The experience and social networks established during this process of public-private "strategizing" (with profound participation of newly created offices of economic development at state and private universities) proved extremely valuable in connecting with interests of the second group of regional actors organized around the Arizona-Mexico Commission with close ties to its sister organization in Sonora, *Comisión Sonora-Arizona*.

The commissions originated from the *Arizona-Mexico West Trade Commission* that was established by the governors of the two states in 1959 to discuss topics of common interest related to economy, education, health and communication (Wong-Gonzalez, 2004). Since the early days the commissions included representatives from governmental and non-governmental agencies, business people, professionals, academics and researchers. With many members of the Arizona-Mexico Commission being involved in the ASPED process, it was rather easy to transplant the neo-liberal ideas underlying the ASPED model into a cross-border regional model for Arizona and Sonora. This was strongly supported by a long tradition of economic ties between the two states in combination with an ongoing cross-border economic integration under the outsourcing model known as *maquiladora* in Mexico. The anticipation of the NAFTA trade area in which a better cross-border collaboration would bring benefits to both border states underscored the emerging neo-liberal economic model. At the joint annual plenary meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, in June 1993, the Arizona governor Symington and Sonora Governor Beltrones initiated a joint *Strategic Economic Development Vision for the Arizona-Sonora Region*. The

*Strategic Vision Project* was endorsed at the historical *Joint Legislative Protocol Session* of the Arizona and Sonora legislative bodies in December the same year (Wong-Gonzalez, 2004). With that, the two commissions, under the leadership of respective governors, became the official managers of the formally established CBR.

The Commissions oversaw the *Strategic Vision Project* and provided a forum for the coordination of activities. The project was administered around a dozen reports jointly prepared by – for this purpose specifically created – the Arizona and Sonora university consortia. The diverse groups of actors were drawn together by overlapping interests although each also had agendas of their own. The major role, however, was played by the neo-liberal business community who, like in other CBRs along the North-American borders, was primarily interested in redefining borders in terms of free trade (Sparke & Lawson, 2000; Cold-Ravnkilde et al., 2004). The private sector, although traditionally suspicious of any government intervention in free markets, needed a partnership with the state government in expectation of sharing the costs of economic activity and benefiting from assistance in expanding their action spaces (markets) across the border. In Arizona, it was especially small- and medium-sized businesses that turned to the government for assistance and support in reaching across the border into Mexico's resources and markets. Universities also were ready to enter the partnership in building CBRs following a decade of new involvement in regional economic development that resulted in the establishment of university-based offices of economic development and similar outreach entities. In particular, public universities saw their engagement in regional economic development as a valuable source of external funding, while the local community benefited from expert knowledge generated by university faculty and researchers (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2007). Besides, many border universities have had already established relationships with colleagues across the border and possessed of experience in working in a bi-national context. Like elsewhere along the North American borders (Foster, 1997; Lenox, 2008), this multi-sector coalition of private, public, non-profit and academic actors and institutions was gaining prominence as agents for regional agendas, policies and outcomes.

Most of the original CBR builders remained active throughout the 1990s within the Commissions and their respective organizations. Two modes dominated the agenda, entrepreneurial and transportation. These were similar to prevailing models in other emerging CBRs (Sparke, 2002; Cold-Ravnkilde et al., 2004). The entrepreneurial agenda has focused on attracting new business to locate in the region that provides advantages as a gateway to Mexico; the transportation agenda has focused on attracting federal money for the improvement of access to border ports of entry and their infrastructure for better facilitation of cross-border trade flows. As the first years of NAFTA's implementation coincided with economic expansion in border states (mainly through the expansion of *maquila* employment and cross-border trade), the construct of an integrated Arizona-Sonora CBR attracted a significant number of followers. A number of additional geographical images sprang up, such as Tucson's Puerto Nuevo (a vision of a trade corridor connecting Tucson in Arizona and the port of Guaymas in Sonora), and the CANAMEX Corridor (a vision of a trade corridor stretching from the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia to Mexico's D.F. with Arizona and Sonora as the "hub") (source: author's personal collection of various materials).

Parallel to the enthusiastic CBR builders and followers, another movement was gaining if not equivalent strength, but increasing media attention fueled by a growing number of undocumented border crossings intertwined with illegal drug trade. One of the most vocal groups became the *Minutemen Project*, a volunteer organization formally organized in Arizona's border Cochise County in 2004 by former marine volunteer for the purpose of "guarding the border" and raising "national awareness of the illegal immigration crisis" (Gilchrist & Corsi, 2006: xxiv). Pledging to adhere to peaceful actions, the Minutemen Project participants started assisting the Border Patrol agents and the National Guard in locating the undocumented crossers. They have also organized public protests, and used the media to draw attention to the "immigration crisis". It is interesting, although not surprising in times of changing political landscape, that some of the Minutemen Project's mission statements have been incorporated in the Arizona Legislature's documents. For example, the 2004 Minutemen's statement, "when illegal

aliens are being investigated for offenses, including traffic offenses, law enforcement authorities should be able to determine their immigration status" (Gilchrist & Corsi, 2006) resembles almost word by word the SB1070, signed in 2010.

Although the Commissions avoided dealing with issues of immigration (at least publicly during the joint plenary sessions), border security inevitably found its way into the agenda. Struggling to reconcile border security with borderless economy, the Commissions responded with the inclusion of "border security initiatives" in the plenary sessions' agenda (Pavlakovich-Kochi & Lim, 2009).

Geographic affiliation of regional actors also played an important role. By the late 1990s, the Phoenix metro area mushroomed into the state's economic, demographic and political power base. Whereas in the previous years, long before NAFTA, the primary cross-border collaboration was carried on by local actors mostly in border communities, the building of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* relied heavily on initiatives and decision-making in the state's capital. So did increasingly louder anti-immigration and pro-border security voices. This was fueled by the fact that most immigrants, both documented and undocumented (majority of which have been of Mexican origin) concentrated in the Phoenix metro area where the most jobs were available (Gans, 2008; Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2010).

There is no doubt that the widening cracks in the foundations of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* were at first overshadowed by the personality of the Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano (as an *ex-officio* chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission) and the cordial relationship (at least in the public) she was able to nurture with her Sonoran counterpart, Governor Eduardo Bours Castelo. During her term as Arizona Governor, Napolitano was presented with several versions of what eventually became SB1070, but refused to sign it into a law despite a rising pressure from the Republican opposition in the Arizona legislature. But when in her second term she resigned the governorship to join the administration of President Barack Obama in 2009, she was replaced by State Secretary Janice Brewer, a Republican. The new Governor, who was much less sympathetic to Arizona's relationship with Sonora, responded to the conservative majority in

Arizona's legislature and signed the SB 1070 into a law in 2010.

The Arizona Mexico Commission executive team appeared to have had no influence on the Governor's decision regarding the bill. It was only with a rather long delay when the Arizona business leaders, many of whom were not affiliated with the Commission, wrote an open letter to the Arizona lawmakers. These business leaders expressed their rising concern with the negative impacts on Arizona's economy and asked the state lawmakers to stop similar bills from signing into law (Kyl, 2010; Alvarado & Steller, 2011). By then, the CBR's image and the prospects for the future have been profoundly altered.

### **The relationship between the Formal and Functional Region**

Wong-Gonzalez (2004) pointed out the difference between the functional and formal CBR. A functional region develops on the basis of actual economic interactions; a formal region is more an outcome of direct government engagement or government-supported activity. In case of Arizona and Sonora, the functional region has been developing over time on the basis of exploitation of complementary resources such as mining, agriculture, cross-border tourism, and more recently, cross-border manufacturing production (within the *maquiladora* model). Historically, the strongest economic ties have developed between southern Arizona and northern Sonora (Tinker, 1997). Traditional migrant flows contributed to a special relationship between southern Arizona and Sonora. Together with memories of a historical region (southern Arizona and Sonora were once part of the most northern Spanish colonial province), these and other cross-border interactions contributed to the development of a bi-cultural region (Lozano, 1997). Since the mid-1960s, manufacturing production (*maquiladora* model) and commerce have been the strongest drivers of the cross-border functional region. By the early 1990s, the functional region has developed as an east-west corridor encompassing border cities, and a north-south corridor connecting capital cities of Phoenix, Arizona, and Hermosillo, Sonora (Wong-Gonzalez, 2004). The later has

significantly expanded in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it has been driven by the economic growth of the Phoenix metro area and the expansion of the *maquiladora* sector into the interior of Sonora.

In contrast, the formal region – officially introduced as the *Arizona-Sonora Region* in 1993 – is a product of purposeful action and explicit strategic objectives: (1) to develop Arizona and Sonora as a single region with a competitive advantage in the global marketplace; (2) to facilitate the movements of goods, services, people and information through the Region and to promote the establishment of a trade corridor with Arizona and Sonora as a hub; (3) to stimulate and encourage cross-border industry cluster development in order to increase value-added economic activity; (4) to develop external markets and new market opportunities of the Arizona-Sonora Region; (5) to promote linkages and eliminate barriers to development and to promote complementarity in commerce, trade and production, and (6) to identify and develop the economic foundations, infrastructure and services needed to reach the desired level of competitiveness in the region. Clearly, the territories of Arizona and Sonora were redefined as a new neo-liberal space reflecting a general trend (Allen et al., 1998). Only later, another objective was added: (7) to encourage economic development in accordance with the principles of sustainable development (Pavlakovich-Kochi & Mwaniki-Lyman, 2004).

Conceptualized as a single economic entity, the formal region has been defined as encompassing the entire territories of both states. This new geographic imagination (Sparke, 2002), was represented with a logo showing the image of a single region spanning (i.e. disregarding) the international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico (Figure 1).

The “marriage of convenience” – to paraphrase Weintraub's (1991) argument about the eminency of closer U.S.-Mexico collaboration – was further formalized by a series of reports that evaluated the foundation for the *Strategic Economic Development Vision of the Arizona-Sonora Region*, and later, by a series of regional *Indicators*, which for the first time measured Arizona and Sonora as a single regional unit (Wong-Gonzalez, 2004).



**Figure 1:** The Arizona Sonora Region, 1993

Source: Strategic Economic Development Vision for the Arizona-Sonora Region, The University of Arizona Office of Economic Development and the Arizona-Mexico Commission

There has been a close relationship between functional and formal space. First, they have fed each other. The existing functional space presented an important foundation for a successful launching of a formal action space. The formal action space aimed not only to strengthen the functional region but to spatially extend it as well. Whereas there has been an overlap between the functional and formal region, in many areas these two entities have differed. Arizona and Sonora exemplify to a great extent the gap between the U.S. and Mexico's economy. The functional relationships have historically developed

in part on the basis of differences in availability of natural resources, costs of labor, and access to markets. While economic integration through the late 1990s contributed to some convergence between Arizona's and Sonora's economic structures in terms of general economic indicators (Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2006), the gap has still remained substantial. The formal region redefined the gap between the two economies and their resources as "complementarity" and in a typical neo-liberal framing, omitted the question of convergence in economic well-being.

The formal and functional region also operates at different scales. The functional region encompasses a multitude of activities and actors, from big manufacturing and agricultural businesses with cross-border ties, to small border town retail shops that serve cross-border shoppers, to migrant workers (documented and undocumented) and border tourists. The strength of functional ties increasingly depends on what has been happening on a global and national level. For example, the decision of a Phoenix-located Motorola Company to relocate one of its production facilities from China to neighboring Sonora was primarily affected by a need to lower production costs as strategy in coping with increasing global competition. Or, a surge in (undocumented) migrant labor from Mexico was to a lesser degree influenced by job openings in Arizona and more by a combination of the economic situation in Mexico and U.S. immigration policies. In contrast, the formal region has focused only on selected activities with cross-border flows being restricted to goods, capital and information.

The discrepancy between the functional and formal region was at first overshadowed by great enthusiasm of all partners involved in the building of a new CBR. A vision of an economically integrated region that is globally more competitive and which strives to provide its residents with better quality of life became a powerful economic development tool. However, the Region was promoted mainly as the favorable location for manufacturing activity based on a premise of a traditional *maquiladora* model where the design, high tech operations and distribution is done in Arizona, and the low-cost assembly is done in Sonora. These parameters started rapidly changing in the early 2000. With China becoming a member of the World Trade Organization, a new, vast resource of

low-cost labor was opened for multinational companies. Many American companies took advantage of China's low-cost labor and relocated assembly plants from Mexico to China directly impacting Sonora's *maquiladora* sector as well. Partly in response to China's competition, Mexico's *maquiladora* sector moved, albeit slowly, into more technically and technologically advanced operations by using highly trained yet less expensive (in comparison with the U.S.) cadre of engineers and technicians. Sonora in particular has shown relative advantage in comparison with Arizona in the ability to graduate engineers and technicians. When some high-tech companies in Arizona such as the Phoenix-based Motorola started reducing their engineering positions in Phoenix by "moving" these positions to Sonora, it became difficult for the general public in Arizona to support the Arizona-Sonora "Regional" model, even if economic models demonstrated benefits for both states through a multiplier effect in an integrated cross-border economy.

One of the most prominent differences between the formal and the functional region has been the issue of immigrant labor force. Immigration issues were outside the frame of the *Arizona-Sonora Region*; the "movement of people" in the model's objectives was limited basically to tourists and businessmen although in the early days the Arizona-Mexico Commission started working on a proposal for a new "guest program". This attempt, however, was soon removed from the agenda as the immigration was defined strictly as the area of the federal government jurisdiction.

By 2004, about 14% of all Arizona's labor force consisted of immigrants; immigrants from Mexico were the largest segment accounting for 65 percent of all immigrant labor force (including both documented and undocumented individuals) (Gans, 2008; Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2010). Whereas immigrants and especially Mexican immigrants represented an important contribution to Arizona's economy as producers of the state's material output and as consumers, they were left outside the frame of the formal region. Thus, it can be argued that by operating in an abstract space, the *Arizona-Sonora Region* by default contributed to perpetuating hypocrisy in U.S. border policy by accepting Mexicans as workers while limiting their claims as human beings (Massey et al., 2002).

The Arizona immigration issue was exacerbated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the severe economic recession that caused the loss of thousands of jobs in the state, the immigrants – and especially undocumented ones from Mexico – tended to be singled out as the ones stealing jobs from American citizens. Also, more and more migrants were coming from central and southern Mexico, and by concentrating in the Phoenix metropolitan area, significantly altered the traditional bi-cultural region. These economic and cultural shifts in combination with immigration and border security policies (on national and state level) contributed to a widening gap between the functional and the formal region, and made the creation of a regional (Arizona-Sonora) identity much more difficult, if not impossible.

### **Conflict and Accommodation between National Policies and Regional Agendas**

Ironically, in the early 1990s a set of U.S. national policies were aimed, at the same time, at de-bordering (i.e. to facilitate cross-border economic integration through flow of goods and capital) and re-bordering (i.e. to prevent increased flow of migrants from Mexico and Central America). The preparation for and inauguration of NAFTA went hand-in-hand with the increasing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border (Andreas, 2000). However, during the 1990s the focus to securitize the border was in the Texas and California sectors of the international border (Nevins, 2002; Martinez, 2006). Until then, the undocumented migrant crossings into Arizona followed a more or less established, traditional flow of predominantly migrant workers from Sonora, a large number of whom concentrated in Arizona's border counties.

The new developments started to drastically change the circumstances affecting Arizona and Sonora. First, the "success" of U.S. government actions in "sealing the border" in Texas ("Hold the line") and California ("Operation Gatekeeper") forced the undocumented migrants to converge on the "less protected" Arizona border. Second, at the same time the number of migrants seeking an entry into the U.S. significantly increased. As Weintraub (1991) predicted, the trade agreement had a profound impact on the U.S. and Mexico's societies beyond trade,

even if trade was the main (or exclusive) motif. In the U.S., NAFTA primarily impacted demographic changes due to increased immigration and increasing Mexicanization; in Mexico, the primary impact was economic due to increased competition from foreign companies, focused foreign investments, and privatization of formerly communal lands –*ejidos*. Central and southern Mexican states were becoming the primary source of migrants, which also affected the traditional relationships between Mexican immigrants and the mainstream population (Cornelius, 2002; Massey et al., 2002; Durand et al., 2003; Arias, 2004; Binford, 2005; Sheridan, 2009).

In Arizona, changing migrant flows resulted in more migrants concentrating in the Phoenix area, which has led to the alteration of the character of the traditional bi-cultural region (Pavlakovich-Kochi, 2010). Both of these developments have contributed to growing anti-immigrant sentiment especially in the Phoenix metro area.

The new context of U.S.-Mexican relations following the 9/11 terrorist attacks is particularly evident in the area of law enforcement and public security. This has been one of the long-standing challenges in the U.S.-Mexican border region related to crime ranging from violence against unauthorized Mexican and third-country migrants to the smuggling of drugs, arms, sex slaves, stolen cars, and other contraband (Shirk, 2003). However, the advent of new concerns resulting from international terrorist threats has fundamentally reshaped the law enforcement and security regime along the U.S.-Mexican border (Anderson, 2002; Andreas, 2003; Andreas & Biersteker, 2003; Shirk, 2003; Brunet-Jailly, 2004c). The new security climate and priorities that have developed in the United States did not only reshape long-standing concerns about narcotics and immigration, but created new challenges for CBRs as many more pressing issues now revolve around confidence in the ability to protect North American populations from undocumented immigration and the penetration of terrorists (Nicol, 2006). These emerging new policies that are reshaping the interaction between the U.S., Mexico and Canada require important adjustments in CBR (Chavez, 2004; Wong-Gonzalez, 2011).

The formal Region's leadership has kept the immigration

and border security issues off the table until the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Until then the border was very much at the center of activity but mainly in terms of improvements in facilitation of trade and cross-border commerce under the overarching goal of becoming a "premier border port of entry". The increased national concern with border security and the reorganization of immigration and customs procedures reduced and greatly limited the state's vision of building borderless economy, while increasing directly and indirectly responsibilities for side effects (detention and imprisonment of undocumented immigrants; decline in cross-border retail sales; impact of longer wait times, and other).

It was after 9/11 that the Commissions' action items, which were based on the six original goals, were altered to include initiatives related to border security and protection (Pavlakovich-Kochi & Lim, 2009). The logo showing a unified Arizona-Sonora Region has vanished from the Commissions' materials. The pressure to deal with re-bordering processes put new strain on the formal region; it shifted focus away from economic issues, drained already weak energy and resources, and widened the existing faults and fissures between Arizona and Sonora; Arizona was growing more concerned with border security, while Sonora's priorities remained focused on economic development.

By the end of the first decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the undocumented immigration, counter-terrorism, border security and drug smuggling became all entangled under the Department of Homeland Security. While the number of border patrol, national guardsmen, militia and other personnel together with miles of new border fence was increasing, the perception of an insecure border has not diminished. On the contrary, the negative perceptions of the border were fueled by frequent reports about high numbers of apprehensions of undocumented border crossers and of the Arizona-Sonora border becoming the major gateway for undocumented immigration and drug smuggling. The inability and unwillingness of the federal government to deal with the immigration reform only made the situation worse (Groginsky, 2005; Hanson, 2005; Massey, 2011).

A shift in the regional agenda was also caused by new political and economic landscapes developing since

2008. The change in Arizona's political leadership coincided with the most severe economic recession (since the Great Depression of the 1930s), which turned out to be more severe in Arizona than nationally (Vest, 2009). In times of economic recession and high unemployment it is typical that the public sentiments are turned against immigrants.

Thus, by the end of the first decade a "perfect storm" was developing. The conservative Republican majority in the Arizona legislature with a Republican governor in charge was able to introduce the SB1070 interpreted by opponents as anti-immigrant, and especially anti-Mexican immigrant law. One of the most controversial aspects of the law has been the possibility for racial profiling. Soon the Arizona example was followed by five states – Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Utah and Indiana – none of which borders Mexico. None of the additional eight states – Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Mississippi and Oklahoma – that have taken steps toward passing similar legislation are away from the border with Mexico (New York Times, 2012). This indicates that in fact the SB1070 is not specific only to Arizona, but represents a new surge of re-bordering between the U.S. and Mexico at large (Wong-Gonzalez, 2011).

### Summary

This paper addressed the process of deconstruction of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* from three perspectives. The first perspective highlighted the role of agents and institutions in CBR construction and deconstruction processes. The *Arizona-Sonora Region* was built on neo-liberal principles at the dawn of NAFTA and framed by a set of specific objectives to improve the region's competitiveness in the global and North American economy. Like in other CBRs emerging within NAFTA framework, cross-border public-private coalitions involving entrepreneurs, government, universities and non-profit actors and institutions gained prominence as agents for regional agendas and outcomes. But unlike other CBRs, Arizona and Sonora already had a long standing, government-supported institutions of cross-border collaboration in place - Arizona-Mexico Commission and the Comisión Sonora-Arizona – and these two became the cornerstone of cross-

border governance model. This paper argues that what at first looked like an advantage of having established, government-supported cross-border agencies in place, turned out to be a detriment for sustainability for the formal CBR. Because the Commissions' primary responsibility has been to their respective governors, the efficiency of Commissions and their various committees depend on the political agenda of a governing party in each state, as well as on personal inclination of each governor. Thus, even if the story of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* is an integral part of the larger story of contemporary globalization coupled with rebordering in the U.S.-Mexico region, the recent deconstruction trend also demonstrates that states nevertheless remain essential in regulating and supporting such processes.

The second perspective highlighted the relationship between the formal and the functional CBR. The vision of the *Arizona-Sonora Region* – i.e. a new imaginary geography – differs profoundly from the functional region – i.e. a real geography – despite the fact that the two are related and feed upon each other. The functional region is an outcome of long historical relationships, uneven economic development, and modern transformation under globalizing forces; it is based on all cross-border flows, including flows of documented and undocumented migrants. The formal region *Arizona-Sonora Region* was constructed on foundations of the functional region, but envisioned an expanded action space beyond the functional region by encompassing the entire territories of both states, and by exploiting states' uneven resources as complementarities. The formal region nevertheless remained exclusionary by purposely focusing strictly on commerce and physical infrastructure agendas. This proved to become unsustainable under mounting pressure from increasing undocumented migration and re-bordering processes after 9/11.

The third perspective highlighted the interaction between strategic developments at the national (international) level and the regional agenda. The shift in national agenda toward border securitization without resolving the immigration reform severely challenged the formal cross-border region built on the premises of a borderless economy. Negative perceptions of an insecure and crime infested border with thousands of undocumented crossers

polluting the border environment, stealing American jobs, and burdening public services, have been fueled by Arizona's worsening economic situation. A shift in the regional agenda was also influenced by the new political landscape and a more conservative leadership.

## Epilogue

The joint plenary session of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and the Comisión Sonora-Arizona resumed in June 2011 signaling the renewal of Arizona's "relationship with Mexico, and in particular the State of Sonora", as stated in the Governor's letter (AMC, 2011). There has been no mentioning of the *Arizona-Sonora Region*, although the Governor emphasizes "common interests and goals between Arizona and Sonora". There is no doubt that what has been achieved during more than a decade of formal region-building cannot be totally overturned, but it is realistic to proclaim that the *Arizona-Sonora Region* as envisioned in the 1990s, was unable to resist the unprecedented shifts at the national and global arena. Clearly, a new security/economy nexus (Coleman, 2004) requires new scenarios for sustainable cross-border development and transborder governance (Phillip & Garcia, 2011; Wong-Gonzalez, 2011).

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