Researching visual manifestations of border spaces and experiences : conceptual and methodological perspectives

Researching Visual Manifestations of Border Spaces and Experiences: Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives

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Introduction

The past several decades witnessed extensive changes in how borders are conceptualised in the field of (critical) border studies. Not only material but also invisible, abstract and symbolic dimensions of borders manifest themselves in geopolitical borderlands, as well as in other locations, in different cultural settings, and through a diversity of interpersonal and inter-group encounters. Border studies thus became a truly multidisciplinary venture, involving scholars from the fields of geography, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, urban planning, cultural studies, tourism research, political science and others. These different disciplines approach border issues from various perspectives, thus generating a more varied discourse of borders as a concept and a phenomenon. The changing status of borders and the multidisciplinary interest in border studies have created a need for further theoretical and empirical research on border issues.

Though crucially important for understanding the varied emanations of contemporary borders, visual methods have not been *systematically* and *comprehensively* addressed by border scholars. Yet, scholars do occasionally use visual methods in border research and they do gradually recognise the advantages of some of its approaches (cf. Ball 2014). The visual

aspect is entrenched in border studies: border scholars have analysed visual border manifestations (Amilhat Szary 2012a Callahan 2018; Jones 2016a), provided border typologies based on border manifestations and have discussed 'fenced' and 'walled' borders (Vogeler 2010), and used, produced and analysed a variety of border representations. They have also paid ample attention to examining the visual work performed by professional artists on borders and borderlands (Amilhat Szary 2012a, 2012b; Ball 2014), which visualises borders or uses them as canvases.

However, there is still much unexplored terrain in the visual study of borders, and the various opportunities for producing new visual data on borders and border experiences have been addressed far less frequently. Therefore, this contribution first offers a concise overview of current applications of visual methods to border research to highlight their current position in border studies and to provide some indication of the unrealised potential of a more visual approach. Whereas in some respects the visibility and physicality of borders seem to have been reduced, in other instances borders are becoming more tangible. However, by (partly) giving up their visibility, borders do not necessarily lose their functions and, in the same manner, by strengthening their material manifestations, borders do not automatically become more effective. Consequently, even though the (in)visibility is an undistinguishable characteristic of borders, the link between border visibility and their actual functions is not a direct or linear one. Visual methods, applied to specific border cases, challenge border (in)visibility and propose ways to visualise borders and to research their visual manifestations.

This first part paves the way for the second and central part of this contribution which involves a systematic and analytical presentation of the main options within visual research and their distinct affordances as applicable to border studies, based on original research and conceptual development of one of its authors in the field of visual social science (Pauwels

2010; 2015; 2020). Visual research methods are virtually without limits when it comes to their potential to serve numerous disciplines and themes, including border studies in its most broad conceptualization. This varied set of approaches departs from the idea that valid and unique insight into culture and society can be acquired by carefully observing, analysing and theorizing its visual dimensions and manifestations: visible behaviour of people and aspects of material culture. The array of visual methods discussed in this article ranges from the meticulous collection and analysis of existing or 'found' visual data on aspects of borders of a variety of sources, to the production of visual materials by the researcher (as intermediate 'data' or as end products to communicate results). But, visual methods to study border phenomena and experiences also include approaches that try to more actively involve the field under study through using visual materials in interview situations in order to trigger partly unanticipated factual information and projective comments ('visual elicitation'), or to prompt the subjects of research to become producers of their own visual data and views ('respondent-generated visuals') for scholarly or activist purposes. Finally, a visual take on material culture and human behaviour does not just involve tools to collect or produce visual data but it also yields innovative ways to 'communicate' insight into culture and society in novel ways (through data visualizations, visual essays, films and multimedia products). (Pauwels, 2015). This second part will also be further illustrated by existing border research using aspects of the presented research modes and techniques, as well as by original visual border research performed by one of the authors (Kudžmaitė 2019; 2020).

Through highlighting the unique strengths of different visual methods and techniques, we want to encourage researchers to use visual methods for studying borders and to make them think more profoundly about the importance of border (in)visibilities. We aim to stimulate more empirically grounded, locally situated and diversified forms of border

research as well as encourage further discussions on different aspects of visual border research and the application of visual methods to different border sites and issues.

Enriching Border Studies with Visual Methods

In this section, we will first attempt to elucidate the role of the visual in border studies. We then briefly consider how border dimensions have been approached visually so far and we examine the potential of applying visual methods to studying borders.

The Visual Dimensions of Border Phenomena and Conceptualizations

The visual has played and continues to play a significant, though rarely a very explicit, role in border studies. The visual aspect has been entrenched in the understanding of what borders are for centuries. It is contended that frontiers rather than strict borders existed up until the rise of the nation states (Kristof 1959; Prescott 1987). Visually observable material culture artefacts of *frontiers* were built for defensive purposes rather than to strictly mark the confines of the territories. It was only later that *borders* became 'signs of sovereignty and domain of the state' (Donnan and Wilson 1999, 15), 'manifestations of the territoriality of states' (Newman and Paasi 1998, 187), and 'inner-oriented' separating factors between (political) units (Kristof 1959). In the beginning of the 20th century, borders were delimitations between political units, and scholars discussed which physical border manifestations (mostly, natural) were serving their functions the best (Minghi 1963). Maps and atlases served as authoritative guides for world ordering (cf. Parizot et al. 2014). As such, political decisions were often made by looking at the visually observable aspects of the

world, and at their representations (i.e. maps). Some borders were even drawn , relying entirely on maps, by those who had never visited the area (Prescott 1987, 74) (an idea aptly expressed by Bady Dalloul in the video titled 'Discussion Between Gentlemen' (2016)).

After the two World Wars, international relations, re-bordering and cross-border collaborations became focal points in the discussions on borders (Newman 2006a, 171-76). Due to urbanization, industrialization and later globalization, which 'opens' borders and encourages mobility of people and goods, the focus of research has shifted to effects of the increased mobility of people from a variety of backgrounds, and together with that to numerous types of 'boundaries' between these people (Donnan and Wilson 1999, 20). The world, far from becoming 'borderless', has instilled processes that tend to *diversify* borders rather than removing them. Borders multiplied instead of disappearing, as had been prematurely predicted. They shifted to other than nation-state borderland sites and acquired different shapes and dimensions. As Paasi (2009, 230), among others, argues, 'borders are not only to be found in border areas but are "located" in broader social practices and discourses in societies, and increasingly in relation to the global space'. People may settle in and accept particular boundaries related to gender, language, financial status, religion or ethnicity, or actively contest them. Boundaries delineating ethnic, sociolinguistic and socioeconomic differences can manifest themselves in the streets of multicultural cities, at workplaces and schools, and in people's dwellings. 'Borderwork', or border building (or destroying), may be instigated by various actors (Rumford 2012) and can be performed 'from below' as much as 'from above' (Newman 2006b). Many of those borders, which have an impact on people's lives and separate 'here' and 'there', are invisible at first sight (Newman 2006a, 172). The visual aspect of different types of boundaries is subtle and is mostly revealed by looking at the multiplicity of signs of membership and belonging.

Notwithstanding the multiplication of border dimensions and sites, geopolitical borders continue to dominate border studies, while their visibility and physicality is in some respects reduced and in other respects strengthened. The overstated post-Cold War notion of an increasingly 'borderless' world proved to be premature. Due to international agreements the borders of some countries have partially lost their tangibility, as is for example the case with the inner-European borders, allowing easier flows of economic, social and cultural capital. While partially giving up their materiality, borders, however, have not lost their functions. Borders are '(re)closed' by using innovative techniques to maintain boundaries and introducing surveillance devices in border sites and beyond (cf. Rumford 2006). Political borders have become transferable and extend into spaces beyond territoriality, wherever national security is threatened, resulting in surveillance and identity checks in international trains and internet cafes in urban areas, or in virtual communities (Rumford 2006, 157-60). Almost invisible surveillance and tracking systems manage flows of people better than physical barriers. Borders now tend to 'hide' behind institutional mechanisms and behind acts of control. 'Invisible' borders signify the state's *self-induced guarantee of seeing while remaining 'invisible'*. The more the state (and the border) is (technologically) equipped, the less visible it seems to be. In those instances where borders and the state's executive power are inevitably visible, physical and corporeal (e.g., at certain international border crossing zones), their visibility is reduced by introducing such prohibitions as a ban on photography. Among other reasons, such as the safety of border crossers and border guards, these restrictions show the vulnerability of the state at the border. The state is vulnerable because in those moments the very power of the state-in-action is evoked. And the (power of the) state must remain (visually) unarticulated.

However, at the same time, some countries' borders do become more visible and tangible. Some political agendas presume that in addition to free movement of certain

material and immaterial cultural goods, flows of other globalizing phenomena (e.g., human migration) require reinforcement of boundaries: 'borders are supposed to allow a high level of mobility while protecting against social, economic, political, and public health risks the mobility of people generate' (Parizot et al. 2014). Consequently, the number of border walls has increased drastically in the 21st century (Jones 2016b). The intention of physically 'inscribing' themselves into space also suggests that some countries more than others feel a strong need to physically prove their existence by separating the inside from the outside (Amilhat Szary 2012a, 219). Keeping some flows out, physical border manifestations are also intended to dissociate or to protect walled and fenced-off countries from conflict. But, instead of reducing discord, border walls also seem to encourage conflict (Amilhat Szary 2012a) and they are often 'violent' and even deadly, taking many lives of those who attempt to cross them (Jones 2016a). Emphasizing borders by physical demarcations does not necessarily indicate an increased 'power' of the state – it might also be a sign of loss of power, of vulnerability and anxiety (Callahan 2018). Border walls mostly highlight nothing more than the state's 'performative power' (Amilhat Szary 2012a), or the ability to display their power rather than to actually employ it.

Thus, not only have geopolitical borders not disappeared but new more abstract 'borders' related to an imposition of power and social differentiation have been identified, as well as multiple perspectives from which to approach them (Newman 2011; Paasi 2009; Rumford 2012). Borders are mobile, diffuse, transparent, a-temporal and unfixed, and can appear in sites where some form of control is needed, or where divisions between individuals and groups occur. Scholars from different research fields tap into border problem-solving. They borrow techniques from neighbouring academic fields in order to expand their research scope. Visual border research can indeed enable researchers to better locate and 'illuminate' borders and border(ing) experiences.

Visual Border Studies and their (Un)Discovered Potential

Attempts to introduce a more visual approach to border studies already dates back to the early 20th century. Hartshorne (1933) for example photographed material culture artefacts and human behaviour at borderlands in the Upper Silesia region. Later, Prescott (1987, 75, 161) emphasised that aerial photography is highly instrumental for border demarcation processes and that ethnographic and visual methods can play an important role in investigating borderland inhabitants' attitudes.

Just before and at the beginning of the 21st century, border scholars promoted a more 'interdisciplinary' (Newman 2006a) and 'multiperspectival' (Rumford 2012) border research. This meant that scholars from different disciplines were invited to join the 'border' dialogue. It also meant that border scholars were encouraged to think of alternative methods for their research. Very rapidly, the main concerns discussed in international border conferences shifted from 'theorizing and concept building' to 'applying, describing and measuring' (Van Der Velde and Van Houtum 2003). The question of whether an appropriate border theory could be developed (Newman 2011) was complemented by discussions over whether a particular set of methods for border investigation should be proposed.

Scholars were experimenting with different methods for researching borders. It was clear that the (new) methods to study borders should be more 'qualitative, interpretative and ethnographic' (Newman and Paasi 1998). That meant that the scope of border research expanded to include the analysis of the 'iconography of boundaries' by looking at a variety of existing materials such as 'newspapers, books, drawings, paintings, songs, poems, various memorials and monuments, etc.' (Paasi 1998, 76) in order to see how these materials form 'border narratives' or 'plots' that promote certain border conceptualizations (; Newman and

Paasi 1998; Paasi 1998, 75). During this time, scholars aimed to 'understand the border as a perpetually changing process, using an alternative set of representations that do not reify power positions the way atlases do' (Parizot et al. 2014, 2). Borders gained the characteristics of dynamism and performativity, and the questions of 'where' 'for whom' were asked related to borders (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012). A more 'performative' and 'participatory' border research was advocated (Brambilla 2015). As a consequence, the more '*in situ*' studies were feeding border theory. Inspired by these ideas, a more v*isual approach* to studying borders came to fruition. Scholars theorised about the potential of visual border research (Ball 2014; Ball and Gilligan 2010), and applied particular visual methods in their case studies.

The visual methods and techniques that will be discussed in this article are not exclusive to the study of borders, borderlands and bordering, as they can be used for researching nearly any phenomenon that has a significant visual dimension, many of which may be outside of this field of inquiry. However, an effort is made to illustrate each of the discussed methods and approaches as effectively as possible by utilizing examples that focus on aspects and issues of borders. Some visual methods may seem more useful or may be more popular than others among border studies scholars, as will be systematically discussed here. New hybrid methods have also emerged in the course of various attempts to approach borders from a more visual perspective, as will be highlighted in the discussion section.

A visual approach to borders may address a very central issue in border research – their (in)visibility. Borders have become both more and less visible at the same time in different places. With the help of visual methods, the visible aspects of our societies can be analysed in order to uncover the underlying socio-political and other traits which cause borders to become visible or invisible.

Another way to visually examine borders is to analyse their existing visual representations. Border scholars have been particularly active in investigating these existing

visual materials relating to borders, especially, but not exclusively, as 'found' online. For instance, they have contemplated how concrete borders are represented in online images and videos, as alternative versions of the more 'official' materials (Hunter 2015; Lybecker et al. 2018). Or they have asked how refugees (and their fatalities) were depicted in different media (Bleiker, Campbell and Hutchison 2014; Lenette and Miskovic 2018). So, one of the main interests of scholars who analyse visual representations of borders is to highlight *alternative* representations of border issues and to show how and why these alternative representations differ from the 'official' ones. One more important aspect of investigating existing border representations is determining not only what is 'visually presented', but also what is omitted. The lack or rarity of particular border representations in certain sources rests substantially upon the (conscious or less intentional) selection of border conceptualizations.

Another important strand of visually oriented border studies, which challenges some of the dominant border understandings, focuses on visual border art. This research interest is often connected with an activist perspective and thus seeking to influence policy makers. The visual artists themselves are often somewhat acquainted with the work of social scientists and try to apply that knowledge in their own art production (Ball 2014, 149-50; Ball and Gilligan 2010, 3). Border art may involve artefacts and performances on issues related to borders, but these can also be performed *on* or *at* borders (Amilhat Szary 2012a; Lehec 2017). Border art can be displayed at thematic exhibitions (for example, the recent exhibition 'Beyond Borders' which took place in Brussels in 2018-2019 and focused on different border representations) or in printed publications (for example, 'Borderline – Frontiers of Peace' by Valerio Vincenzo, who photographed currently peaceful European borders). Border artefacts themselves can also become officially endorsed or illicit canvases for border art (graffiti, slogans, drawings, political messages, etc.), as, for example the 'East Side Gallery' in Berlin (see figures 1 and 2), some parts of the West Bank Barrier, or the walls of the Palestinian

refugee camps in the West Bank (Lehec 2017). By producing art on or about borders, (visual) artists question the interventions in the landscape by political forces (Amilhat Szary 2012a, 214), or the priority of the political decisions over the actual lived experiences of people. When challenged by artistic approaches, border walls often emerge as nothing more than material artefacts 'whose performative power is extremely strong' (Amilhat Szary 2012a, 214). By performing its borders, the state makes a certain claim – for example, a claim for its territorial intactness or a claim for its ethnic, linguistic, religious or economic integrity. By making their own performances on or about borders, artists question the validity of these claims and provide their own alternative readings of material border artefacts or their official representations. For instance, an alternative 'Nativity scene' by Banksy appeared before Christmas in 2019 at a hotel located right beside the West Bank Barrier. This installation shows the birth scene of Jesus Christ next to a cement wall, 'damaged' with a star-shaped hole. On the wall, the words 'love' and 'peace' are visible. The recontextualization of the Christian symbolism by manipulating the nativity scene at a controversial location stresses the brutality of the wall and of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Border scholars occasionally also create their own visual data on border issues. One popular approach is to make images of the two sides of a (political) border for comparison (Brym 2013; Gerst and Klessmann 2015). This approach leads to uncovering otherwise unnoticeable patterns of how the two sides are managed culturally, linguistically, ethnically, politically and economically, and how they differ or are similar to each other. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the visuals encountered on each side of the border can be useful for different purposes. Comparative analysis of the two (or more) sides can reveal multiple dimensions of borders functioning next to each other at different scales, contested or strengthened by one another, and most likely discrepant with the established political border (see Kudžmaitė and Juffermans 2020).

Figures 1 and 2 are part of an extensive series of researcher-produced photographs made at several occasions and over many years. The scattered remains of the since 1989 defunct Berlin wall quickly became a prime tourist attraction and a sought after artefact (displayed in many countries around the world). The long stretch of preserved wall located at the east of Berlin (known as 'East Side Gallery') became the favourite canvas for politically inspired artwork relating to its own grim past, but also to other problematic border situations and repressive regimes around the world. Systematically produced visual records such as these allow a meticulous study of both the material elements of this particular site (the wall and its artwork, the state of the pavement and objects lying around, grassroots interventions such as stickers, writings, posters, graffiti, the periphery of the wall) as well as the appearance of the visitors (demographic features, clothing) their interactions and performances in front of this artefact (taking pictures of particular spots, posing in group, selfies). One could scrutinize which artworks are preferred, what they each bring in content and form (which situations are being referred to, how many involve the past, how many the present or future, what political views dominate?), how do different groups react to which artworks, how does this site compare to other commemorative spots in the same city or elsewhere? How is the past being experienced, recuperated (politically, commercially)? Commemorative sites such as this one invite photographers of all sorts and visual researchers are hardly experienced as obtrusive. Unfortunately, actual border artefacts are usually much more difficult to access and record in such detail.

As border researchers frequently find themselves in the centre of events – commotions in the detention facilities, attempts to cross borders without the needed documents, or the building or destruction of walls overnight – a camera may prove highly instrumental in documenting these fleeting events for further scrutiny. The same applies to capturing data-rich environments (figure 3). Through purposefully produced visual records, researchers may collect a wealth of detailed information that cannot be absorbed to its full extent during the fieldwork (Bruslé 2010). Since borders – geopolitical, linguistic, economic, cultural – are rarely stable, it also makes sense to revisit the same place repeatedly at set time intervals to record changes in the (border) environment, which otherwise could remain unnoticed.

Figure 3 about here

Figure 3 was taken in the city of Kaliningrad, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia. The excavation site is the location of the former Königsberg Castle. The original Prussian fortress was conquered and destroyed by the Teutonic Order in 1255 which built a castle, marking the birth of Königsberg (the predecessor of Kaliningrad). The castle was damaged during World War II, but its well preserved ruins remained standing until 1968, when the Soviet leaders ordered for them to be blown up. The fate of the castle illustrates a very particular way of dealing with the unwanted past by destroying and rewriting it. The Teutonic Order destroyed the Prussian fortress because it was a reminiscence of pagan ways, while the Soviet authorities blew Königsberg Castle up because it was a sign of militarism. The newest structure on the site – the House of Soviets – was never completed during the Soviet era and has never served any function. By exposing both the castle site and the House of Soviets next to each other, this image provides an opportunity to reflect on how the changing geopolitical

situation of the territory influences its material culture. We can also observe some less eye-catching (and not mentioned in tourist booklets or in guided tours) aspects of the site. For example, the vegetation on the site of the ruins of the castle signifies that it is not actively taken care of. The fence around the castle ruins and the red 'danger zone' sign indicate that even though promoted as a point of interest for tourists, the castle ruins are to date treated as an excavation site rather than as a historical heritage site. A visible graffito ('3x3') on top of the House of Soviets is also an indication of poor maintenance of the building and of vandalism outbursts. While this site is one of the most popular places for tourists to visit in Kaliningrad city, the highlighted objects are currently almost functionless and uninviting 'empty shells'.

In general, border researchers seem less inclined to produce their own visual materials and often resort to methods based on existing materials, possibly because many social scientists feel that they do not have enough experience in photography and film making. Also, border researchers using visual methods often tend to prioritise the perspective of the participants – who experience the border(ing) first-hand. Researchers can encourage participants to get involved in commenting on visual materials provided or in producing their own visual materials. Participants in such studies are usually those who live on the borderlands or who are somehow affected by borders (migrants, expats, refugees). These participants most likely have a clear (individual and unique) understanding of borders and bordering experiences (Armbruster, Rollo and Meinhof 2003; Meinhof and Galasiński 2000; Vila 2013). Providing an opportunity to express these experiences may help to empower participants. The participants are believed to be given a voice by researching *with* – and not *on* – them (Brambilla 2015, 28-29; emphasis in the original).

Children's drawings are particularly valued types of 'participant-produced' visual data in border (and migration) research at the moment (Lenette et al. 2017; Maagerø, and

Sunde 2016). Asking (vulnerable) respondents to draw what they think or have experienced is a particularly strong approach in precarious situations (such as working with children in immigration detention facilities), where purely verbal interviews might be too confrontational. Participants are thus encouraged to get more involved in border research processes, and to some extent they acquire a 'voice' in the discussions or end results. For example, participants' images, drawings, maps and observations have been exhibited in photo galleries (Moya et al. 2017), have resulted in documentary films or exhibitions (Brambilla 2016a), and have been used during educational workshops (Brambilla 2016b).

So far, we have strengthened the case for a complementary – visual – approach to border research. First, we discussed the material and thus visual nature of (some) borders and, second, we summarised the main pathways for visual border studies. We now move to a more systematic discussion of the concrete visual methods and techniques for a more visual approach to border research.

Methods, Techniques and Resources for a Visual Approach to Border Studies

The changing status of borders and the growing multidisciplinary interest in border studies have created new sites of inquiry and a need for more diversified empirical research on borders and border processes. Recognizing the complexity and variety of border conceptualizations, we propose to look at how borders and border issues can be (and have been to some extent) investigated using primarily visual methods for *revealing the diversity of visual manifestations and representations of borders, as well as for examining actions, experiences and reactions of people*. This will be done in a very systematic way, guided by visual research frameworks and conceptualizations previously developed within the broad domain of visual social science by Pauwels (1996, 2010, 2015, 2020).

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Investigating Borders via 'Found' Visual Materials

A first and evident option to study visual aspects of borders is by looking for pre-existing or so-called 'found' images or visual representations. Visual materials that originate outside an explicit research context are cultural artefacts in their own right as well as rich − though not unproblematic − entries to broader aspects of the culture of the producer. Both the subject matter and how something is depicted are important sources of information. However, 'found' images often come without some valuable information, such as what exactly is depicted, precise knowledge about the production circumstances (historical, technical, cultural), or the intended and subsequent audiences and purposes. Obviously, researchers may try to expand their knowledge about these visual materials, through well-placed informants and a variety of other sources, but it is seldom an easy task. Using pre-existing imagery, however, often constitutes the sole option for examining events that predate a current research interest and time or that relate to aspects of culture that otherwise would remain inaccessible for the researcher as (a distant) outsider. A social scientific or cultural analysis of visual materials may benefit from a variety of theoretical and analytical frameworks (e.g., social semiotics, rhetoric, iconology, discourse analysis etc., see: Pauwels and Mannay 2020; Rose 2016;Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000) although each of those perspectives have their limitations and to date little effort has been devoted to constructing a more integrated and practical approach to image analysis.

So, border studies scholars can productively tap into a whole set of potentially useful visual images produced outside a research context that may offer unique insights into the mechanisms and experiences of a variety of actors involved in aspects of crossing, maintaining, enduring and establishing visible and invisible, physical and conceptual borders.

Examples of 'found' border-related material on visual manifestations of borders can vary from illustrated newspaper articles, advertisements on 'border' issues, online materials (e.g., touristic, commercial, governmental, non-governmental, and private websites), postcards, brochures, fictional and non-fictional film and TV shows, border pictures, family photos from borderland inhabitants, to visual data originating from other research projects.

Maps are among the most important and obvious 'found' visual representations of borders. They are notable instances of how not only geographers, but also scholars from other fields (e.g., semiotics) as well as lay people (with the help of contemporary technologies) visualise social, territorial, political, linguistic, ethnic, religious and many other divisions (cf. Ball and Petsimeris 2010). Ball and Petsimeris (2010), for example, investigated how social divisions have been represented in map images throughout the years. Looking at the Booth's maps of 1880s London, they noticed how colour was ingeniously used to acknowledge the coexistence of different social classes in one space (Ball and Petsimeris 2010, 9). Yet, in general, Parizot et al. (2014) contend that 'the modern history of border drawing consists mainly of static and formal outlines of division lines, giving little account of the fluidity of social experience'. Maps, as with any visual representation, do not just reveal but also 'produce reality' to some extent (Leuenberger 2016; see also Parizot et al. 2014). Leuenberger (2016) illustrated how maps are often distorted by the positionality of their creators. She noticed for example, how the West Bank Barrier is visualised very differently in maps produced on the Palestinian and Israeli sides. These findings mirror Regan Wills' (2016) study of the terminology used to describe the West Bank Barrier, which concludes that 'the wall' discourse is vivid on the Palestinian side, the term '(security) fence' is used on the Israeli side, while 'the barrier' is considered as a more 'neutral' way of naming the object(s). Scholars have thus recognised maps as important, though not the only forms of border representations and have promoted other media and methods to complement border

mapping, such as photography at border sites (Hartshorne 1933) or fieldwork (Prescott 1987, 67).

Visuals from mass media emphasise again different border issues. Bleiker, Campbell and Hutchison (2014, 192) noticed that images in mass media are the main source from which 'people in stable political contexts derive insight into those who suffer from a crisis'. They reported that asylum seekers, as portrayed on the front pages of two Australian newspapers, are represented either as 'passive victims dependent on Western benevolence' (e.g., depiction of asylum seeking women and children) or as 'threats to sovereignty and security' (represented as large groups in distant boats, without showing facial features) (Bleiker, Campbell and Hutchison, 2014: 193). Such media imagery has contributed to the creation of a 'culture of inhospitality' – the arriving asylum seekers are perceived as 'a potential threat that sets in place mechanisms of security and border control' (Bleiker, Campbell and Hutchison 2014, 198). Thus, the way the people are depicted in mass media is directly related to how they are most likely to be treated.

The online environment also provides an unmatched variety of 'found' materials. Hunter (2015), for instance, took a sample of more than 2200 images found on the internet to study border tourism in two borderlands of South Korea – the demilitarised zone (DMZ) bordering with North Korea and Dokdo bordering with Japan. Hunter (2015) included images from different search engines and from different sources, such as social media sites, travel websites and governmental websites. This visual study employed content analysis and semiotic analysis, which helped to uncover both denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings of the images (Hunter 2015, 154). Scrutinizing these found materials revealed the presence of 'heritage of conflict' tourism, which focuses on (socially constructed) landscapes commemorating conflict – such as borders (Hunter 2015, 158). The majority of analysed images originated from social media and thus not necessarily from 'official' sources (Hunter

2015, 159). The analysis of 'found' representations (images) of the two borderlands allowed the researchers to access and compare a vast amount of data from different sources and to 'capture the bigger picture' (Hunter 2015, 159).

Social media – a particularly active and popular source of online 'found' data – sets the stage for user-generated content and allows multiple voices to be heard (Lybecker et al. 2018; Munar 2010). Border researchers can engage in analysing – both quantitatively and qualitatively – images posted by social media users, who range from governmental institutions to private individuals. Social media are usually very accessible, the data are rich, and in addition to sites where language (posts, comments, tweets) dominates, there are plenty of sites where images play the main role (Instagram, Flickr). By focusing on the content of the images, researchers try to find recurrent patterns of what social media users depict under the topic of 'borders'. They can also observe recurrent content of border representations – fences, walls, trains and train stations, highways, customs buildings, border markers, billboards, rivers, etc. Social media users' imagery can also include more metaphorical representations of borders. A gap, an absence or emptiness, a crack, a mutilated object, divided artefacts and the division itself, things positioned in a line or those opposing each other, people – those separated by a spatial, generational, cultural, religious, socio-economic gap, with their backs turned to each other, touching but never being able to truly reach each other – these and other topics were found by the authors of this article while analysing social media users' images (see figure 4) in an ongoing study.

Figure 4. about here

Figure 4, for example, illustrates how applying such technical choices as extreme close-up and shallow depth of field, the crack in the stone is highlighted, expressing the idea

of 'mutilation', a violation of wholeness, and a 'wounded' substance. From strictly linear state-border imagery (e.g., crossing the border, posing at the borderline), through social divisions and metaphorical boundaries, to very personal 'selfie-type' 'border' depictions (e.g., 'me' and 'the other', 'me' and 'my body', 'me' and 'my social masks') – social media embody a fertile source for visual analysis.

Using 'found' material in visual research poses a number of legal and ethical issues that need to be addressed, such as acquiring permission for their use (by crediting the author / source and obtaining copyright clearance). Image producers have the right to benefit from their creations and researchers should observe these rights when conducting visual research on the basis of pre-existing materials, including materials available on the Internet (Pauwels 2008).

Researcher-Initiated Ways of Visual Data Production on Borders

Next to relying on existing visual sources, border researchers may also opt for generating new visual data in a variety of ways. This more active set of approaches to study border-related issues through its visual manifestations involves distinct types of researcher-initiated ways of visual data production. For researchers may decide to produce visual data themselves or prompt others (e.g., 'respondents') to do so. The choice for static (photographs, drawings) or continuous (film, video) images, and the different technologies to produce them depends primarily on the nature of the phenomenon under study and on the information one wants to extract from them (the specific research interest).

Researcher-produced visual data. Researchers may produce visual data using a number of different strategies. They can for instance start in an exploratory way or focus on particular events ('opportunistic sampling' cf. Sorenson and Jablonko 1975), and after an increased familiarity with the site and its population, gradually move to more systematic approaches using different sampling methods and 'shooting scripts' (Suchar 1997). The data production may involve a one-time cycle (snapshot approach) or necessitate multiple rounds at set times to develop a longitudinal perspective. The latter approach involves techniques such as 'interval photography' and 'time lapse photography' (for relatively rapidly evolving phenomena) or 'repeat-photography' (which implies returning to the same spot or event after longer periods of time) (Pauwels 2015; Rieger 2011).

Visual border researchers may try to capture different border-related markings, such as direct physical border manifestations (fences, poles, border customs buildings), border-related visually observable aspects (e.g., aspects of movement on border-crossing control points), symbolic signs of grouping, separation or connection (i.e. symbolism of ethnic, cultural or other groups), ethnolinguistic differentiations (language distribution on public and/or private signs reflecting or opposing to the distribution of ethnic groups in the area, and/or governmental decisions) and other kinds of visual manifestations indicating the situations of 'bordering', 'exclusion', 'isolation', 'separation', 'differentiation' (figure 5).

Figure 5 about here

Figure 5, for example, depicts a mock advertisement board that cleverly appropriates the Coca-Cola logo to express the Coast Salish people's claim to their territory, while it also acts as a token of their hospitality. The Coast Salish are ethnically and linguistically related

First Nations people of the Pacific Northwest Coast, spread over British Columbia, Canada and the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon. Grassroots interventions in the material world such as this one are particularly indicative of a politically conscious community trying to maintain their culture and territory. At the same time this image is indicative of processes of globalization and glocalization. Previous research by Pauwels (2019) on globalization as visually expressed and enacted in everyday life indeed prefigured our mutual interest in visual processes of de-bordering and re-bordering. Moreover, these fields are intricately connected with other pressing issues like the rise of nationalism, the refugee crisis and even climate change.

In principle visual research can be based on direct (in situ) visual observations, which are not recorded by a visual medium. Researchers then have to transcribe (note down in words, numbers or drawings) their observations either on the spot or some time afterwards based on their recollection of the event. In either case there is no permanent visual record which can be revisited or shared with others. This practice is less common among contemporary visual researchers, given the ease with which detailed visual records can now be produced.

However, some sensitive or dangerous research situations indeed may preclude the presence of cameras or other recording devices. Border researchers will indeed frequently experience restrictions with regard to picture taking or filming on geopolitical border locations or in (politically) contested spaces. Kudžmaitė's (2019) study on (visual) experiences of an EU – non-EU border crossing confirms that. At the border-crossing itself, it was forbidden to take photos (indicated by a visual sign of a crossed-out camera and a verbal reminder of a tour guide). Thus, a Google Maps image had to serve as a visual substitute for illustrating and discussing the 'order' which borders create at and around themselves.

Important to note is that the Google Street View function is not available at certain political borders (including the EU – non-EU border in question), leaving those borders entirely 'invisible'. This clearly indicates that while borders are increasingly introduced as more physical and thus more visible as a means to express the state's performative power, the state's executive power chooses to remain 'invisible'.

The study of human behaviour (verbal and observable), may fill the gaps in explaining cultural phenomena where the artefacts of material culture no longer can (cf. Wagner 2011). Human behaviour is closely related to its material environment (see Haldrup and Larsen 2006, 276). For instance, it is possible to investigate how people 'cross the border', how they interact with border manifestations, which items they carry across the border, or buy at or on the other side of the border, which border-related items attract their attention, which obstacles are met in their everyday (borderland) surroundings and how they try to cope with it. Burrell (2008), for example, found that crossing the border is filled with experiences closely related to material culture artefacts. Among other things, the border crossing experience depends on the means of transport (for instance, a car accommodates more belongings than it is possible to take on a plane), on the belongings taken (bigger suitcases can be filled with more souvenirs, presents or duty-free items, but are burdensome while traveling by bus), on the possibility of using certain gadgets (e.g., laptops, phones), and so on (Burrell 2008). The actual border crossing is but a brief moment, but it requires border crossers to perform different tasks and to interact with different material objects, which signify the purpose and the difficulty of border crossing.

Ethical and legal considerations come into play when observing and photographing human subjects – from the right to privacy and the prevention of harm resulting from appearing in a visual record to the legal restrictions of taking pictures at state borders (Ball 2014, 153-57; Pauwels 2015, 257-79). Researchers need to consider any negative

consequences of their visual study for all those involved, irrespective of whether subjects appear in an image. They must take precautions to prevent such consequences or at least try to reduce them to acceptable levels.

In principle research with subjects should be based on full disclosure of its aims and its possible consequences and subsequently on the explicit consent of the participants. Researchers can often advise subjects of their honest expectations of how data will be collected, for what purposes, with what consequences and to which audiences the data will be disseminated. However, the dynamic and unpredictable nature of some visual research designs, for example, involving passers-by in public places, may imply that informed consent is not possible, or at least not at the beginning of a project (Pauwels 2008). The appropriateness of obtaining written or verbal consent depends on the nature of the research, the context of the study, and the seriousness of the risks involved for participants in signing consents (Marshall 2003, 275).

'Participatory' visual border research: involving respondents with and through images. Some methods of visual data production involve subjects in more active ways. This is the case when using visual materials as stimuli in non-directive interviewing situations (i.e. 'photo elicitation') to yield factual information as well as more projective verbal data about how the respondents perceive their world. This approach may partly revert the usual hierarchical relation between interviewer and interviewee (who then becomes the 'expert') (Collier and Collier 1986).

But research subjects (e.g., people with particular border related experiences) may also be prompted to produce their own images in response to a researcher-initiated or facilitated assignment (e.g., depict the problems experienced in crossing the border or in living in the border area), and be asked to comment on them afterwards. The visual outcomes

of such assignments may offer a unique insight into the culture of the respondent both through what they include and what they leave out of the (static or moving) pictures and through studying their formal qualities (e.g., editing, shot length, framing decisions) (Pauwels 2015).

The importance of including human experiences in border studies is emphasised by Brambilla (2015, 27-28), who contends that involving people opens new research trajectories by giving them a voice and by foregrounding their everyday life experiences under the complex conditions of 'border processes as constructed, lived and experienced by human beings'. As Newman (2011, 41) highlights, 'even when borders exist, but their physical attributes (walls, fences, guard posts) are removed, they impact on the life practices of local inhabitants'. Border experiences are often very particular, and their understanding requires an engagement with people's lives, which can be done using the 'photo' or 'visual elicitation' technique, as well as involving them in respondent-generated image production.

Visual elicitation: generating verbal responses with visual stimuli. The method whereby images are used as a stimulus in the context of an interview is now primarily known as 'photo elicitation' but as many different types of images may be used (still and moving, paintings or drawings, etc.) one could better speak about 'image elicitation' or 'visual elicitation'. The visual 'stimuli' may include pre-existing 'societal imagery' as well as researcher or respondent-generated visual materials (Collier and Collier 1986; Wagner 1979).

In border studies, 'visual elicitation' may be used for researching attitudes towards people (prejudices, (in)tolerance) or for revealing problematic situations in border areas etc. (figure 6). Researchers could for example compile a set of – preferably broadly interpretable – photographs, depicting different aspects and situations (crowded and empty places, poor and more affluent parts of the border towns, linguistic signs), types of individuals and groups

(of different ages, ethnic appearance, profession, attributes), and activities (interactions and exchanges on the street, parties, manifestations). Such a collection of visual stimuli could then be used for triggering people's verbal reactions with respect to what they experience as desirable, anxiety provoking or otherwise undesirable situations. But these images also may reveal potentially problematic preconceptions and sensitivities of the respondents themselves (intolerance, xenophobia or aggression).

Figure 6 about here

Figure 6 depicts a barbed wire fence in the background on the left, and a cultural heritage sign in the foreground, indicating that this is an 'Iron Fence' border road. This image was taken not far from the Polish-Lithuanian border crossing Ogrodniki-Lazdijai, on the Lithuanian side. It was later shown to some ethnic Lithuanians living at the border towns in Poland in a visual elicitation interview setting. From the Lithuanian language sign and the barbed wire fence depicted in the image, many correctly assumed that this was an old border relict on the Lithuanian side. Many of the interviewees remembered the times when this border was functional. They also recounted how the border 'fell' and how they felt about it. Materials used in visual elicitation interviews can elicit (emotional and personal) attitudes towards the objects depicted or whatever thoughts are triggered by them, but they can also induce some factual information unknown to the researcher. In the example here, the researcher had an opportunity to learn about when the border was still functional and how the poles holding the barbed wire had been moved a little one night by locals, even though strictly guarded by border patrols (who used to wear special shoes so that any other footprint would be noticeable in the sand). The interviewees were very insightful with their answers about borders. For instance, some interviewees thought of the Polish-Lithuanian border as

still existent. They talked about a hypothetical situation where the border could close again at any moment and the barbed wire fence would regain its original function. Others contemplated that the border did not exist anymore, and they saw the barbed wire fence as a pure non-functional relict, reminding everyone how important the free movement is for human beings.

Visual elicitation has been quite popular as a research method in border studies. For instance, Meinhof and Galasiński (2000), while investigating the (changing) identity construction of former East and West German border inhabitants from three different generations, found that the participants of visual elicitation interviews (using photos from the towns of the participants from different periods of time) experienced difficulties in adjusting to new circumstances. In another visual elicitation study, Armbruster, Rollo and Meinhof (2003) tried to find out whether there was a common transnational 'identity', related to 'Europeanness'. Interestingly, certain visual triggers related to 'Europe' and the EU hardly yielded any response, as 'Europeanness' apparently was not a category with which the respondents could identify (Armbruster, Rollo, and Meinhof 2003, 886-88). Horsti (2017) then provided an example of visual elicitation as performed in a group, a sort of 'visual focus group' setting. Together with the detainees of an immigrant detention facility in Konnunsuo, (Finland), the researcher watched the documentary film 'Under den samme himmel/Days of Hope', and then focused on topics that emerged during the subsequent group discussions, such as border-related and border-caused pain, social bordering and family relations. He comments on the method as revealing 'the "voice" of witnesses as a tool to resist invisibility and the impact of "silence" as a "deliberate action"' (Horsti 2017, 12-13). Witnessing lives in different border zones through the media with the detainees revealed different ways of looking at and understanding bordering processes (Horsti 2017, 12). These examples show how visual elicitation can be used to better understand the participant's position towards

border related issues, and to encourage further considerations of the participant's thinking patterns and opinions. However, it should be noted that the choice of the visual materials by the researcher has a considerable impact on the responses (Vila 2013, 66). When not carefully chosen, the visual stimuli indeed can hamper the research process by being unrelated to the issue at hand, by being irrelevant to the respondents or by being too suggestive, or one-sided. While visual elicitation as a method may seem simple and straightforward, special competencies are required for selecting the materials and for conducting effective visual interviews (Pauwels 2015, 120).

Respondent-generated images: the way people see borders. Asking members of a group or culture under study to produce their own images in response to a researcher-initiated assignment (e.g., 'take five images of what you like most about your environment and five of what you see as problematic') constitutes an even more 'participatory visual' method than the 'visual elicitation' method (which generated only *verbal* responses to visual stimuli). It may yield first-hand examples of how people see and experience border related issues in their everyday lives and reveal the respondent's deeper values and thought patterns with respect to unique, personal or even intimate border manifestations.

Newman, Woodcock and Dunham (2006) provided a particular view on the concept of 'borderland' by inviting school children to take a picture of a significant space at school and add a caption to it. The pictures and the children's comments revealed that some school boys seemed to reside in a 'borderland' between two opposing, or bordering, groups of dominating 'masculine' and frequently bullied 'effeminate' boys (Newman, Woodcock and Dunham 2006, 298). The word 'borderland' was chosen deliberately 'to indicate both a metaphor for their social position and their actual place in the playground map' (Newman, Woodcock and Dunham 2006, 298-300). This example illustrates how 'bordering' can

happen in other than nation-state 'borderlands', and it also shows the range of the border concept. Undoubtedly, the same respondent-generated imagery technique can be used at state borderlands, given that the respondents are not asked to produce visual data in spaces where it is prohibited.

Another form of respondent-generated visual materials – participants' drawings – has recently received much attention. Lenette et al. (2017), for example, focussed on children's representation of their experiences of living in detention centres. Children in Australian detention centres, the authors concluded, express negative feelings through their drawings, understand their surroundings as 'confined, restricted, and isolated' and highlight the negative impact of this kind of living on their wellbeing (Lenette et al. 2017, 53-54). Children's drawings can be used as proof of an 'insiders'' perspective in advocating for their better treatment (Lenette et al. 2017, 56). Since children (as well as adults) living in detention have very limited means to express their opinions about their life conditions, drawings are considered as meaningful and less intrusive than interviewing, while engaging with their experiences (Lenette et al. 2017, 45-55).

In cases where they draw from memory, the participants must 'imagine' the subject, and use complex semiotic codes to materialise these imaginations. A drawing as a final product may have a much less direct link with the subject drawn than a photographic image and it is up to the researcher to further discover that link.

It is important to note that the visual outcome of a respondent-generated imagery project – even when resulting in a complete film or photo series – is not a scientific end-product. Researchers still need to meticulously analyse the images for relevant information. Through depicting their own situation, respondents may provide unique 'lived insights' to researchers for strictly scientific purposes. But this method may also serve more activist purposes (cf. 'Photovoice' (Wang 1999), 'community video' or 'participatory video'

(Mitchell, C. 2011)) by gearing the assignments and using the output towards raising levels of awareness and engagement among communities and authorities through exhibitions, publications, screenings and discussions. While (activist) photovoice projects rarely produce a scientific end-product, they may very well provide valuable data for further studies, as they potentially generate new 'situated' knowledge and insights.

Moya et al. (2017) applied a 'photovoice' approach to a border-related project asking homeless people from El Paso, the U.S. and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, to take pictures in order to answer questions related to the issue of homelessness, such as 'what are the characteristics of adults experiencing homelessness in El Paso?', 'how does homelessness affect participants' mental and physical health?', 'what are some of the barriers to accessing health and human services within the region?' (Moya et al. 2017, 4). The pictures and narratives were then selected for an exhibition at the project's gallery and for producing a documentary video (see Moya et al. 2017, 9). The participants also actively took part in the analysis of the photos and drafting the 'Call to Action' for the policymakers. Moya's et al. (2017) study showed how pictures made by the participants can be used for multiple purposes. However, the authors admitted that the sample size was too limited for its results to be transferrable to other communities or to other border regions (Moya et al. 2017, 10).

Scholarly Options for Visually Expressing Insights About Borders

Visual researchers can go further than collecting or generating visual data about borders, bordering and borderlands and publishing their findings in traditional formats and venues. The results of such activities also can be communicated in a more visual or multimodal way, using both the mimetic (descriptive, documentary) and the expressive

(argumentative, creative, metaphoric) capabilities of both the intermediate and end media. This attempt takes shape in endeavours like social scientific filmmaking and the increasingly popular 'visual essay' approach, as well as through emerging communicative formats like digital storytelling, photo-novellas, exhibitions, performances and multimedia products and installations.

The Visual Scholarly Essay

The term 'visual essay' currently denotes a variety of formats which have moved far beyond the paper-based pictures and text combinations or linear short movies. It can make use of pre-existing images, or images explicitly produced for the purpose (figures 7 and 8), of either photographic or non-photographic (drawings, paintings, graphics) nature. The major challenge of this scholarly form resides in the skilful production and synergetic combination of visual materials with other signifiers – words, lay-out and design – adding up to an expressive scientifically informed statement (Pauwels 2015).

The visual essay format opens a broad range of opportunities for presenting the outcomes of border research. Dorsey and Diaz-Barriga (2010) provided an example of an anthropological photo essay in which they tried to challenge the stereotypical ways in which the U.S. – Mexican border is usually depicted. Their 'alternative' pictures showed celebrated bi-national spaces instead of desolated uninhabited border areas, and communication and partnerships between the border inhabitants through joint events (e.g., kayaking on the bordering river) rather than aspects of what separates the two sides (Dorsey and Diaz-Barriga 2010, 129).

Figures 7 and 8 about here

Figure 7 exemplifies a purposefully produced image with an expressive load. It was photographed in Los Angeles and does not as such depict a geopolitical border. Yet the covered fence, the placard 'American', and the white passer-by makes this image predisposed to express an argument about bordering, which surpasses the immediate and particularistic content. Figure 8, a photograph depicting a wall in Berlin with a fluorescent outline of a person, invites the spectator to engage even more in a metaphorical reading (victim, homeless, refugee..?). These images are part of a forthcoming visual essay project on border artefacts and metaphors. The visual essay as a form of academic output balances between art and science, information/argumentation and implicit expression. Its 'open ended', poly-semic, multi-vocal character, its hybrid multi-media or multi modal and cross-platform appearance and its largely uncodified nature, are both its unique characteristics and its sources of controversy (Pauwels 2015).

Researcher-Generated Film and Multimedia Productions

Film and multimedia as exceptionally rich and versatile media have already proven their usefulness for both visual data production and communication. But in order to be accepted as a proper end product of a scientific enquiry, scholars should ground their filmic decisions on scientifically informed insights and use the many expressive devices (editing, framing, sound mixing, voice over, etc.) in a very considerate and motivated way, without surrendering to the entertainment industry's standards and expectations (Pauwels 2015; Rouch 1975; Ruby 2000;). Digital media technologies allow a further expansion of the

discursive potential of film and evolve it into ever more hybrid products with more possibilities and challenges.

A good example of the use of film and the potential of the networked environment is 'Vanishing borders' (2014), a film by Alexandra Hidalgo. This scholar and documentary filmmaker followed the lives of four immigrant women in New York City, who share their experiences related to immigration, womanhood, independence and multi-culturalism. The accompanying website (http://vanishingbordersfilm.com) contains additional information about the film and serves as a platform for people to share their own stories. It also provides information on the film screening options, targeting various audiences, and a list of suggested post-screening discussion questions.

Discussion and Conclusions

Visual researchers study images as cultural and political objects in their broader context, but they also use visual media to produce new data of visible phenomena for further analysis and to visually express their views on the matter at hand. Their practices should therefore be firmly engrained in an understanding of the 'politics of the image': the complex role images and visual devices play in supporting power regimes and ideologies, fake news, unmitigated consumerism, surveillance, warfare, forms of discrimination or voyeurism, or phrased in more general terms, the fact that images and in particular their uses are rarely neutral and unbiased.

However, this state of affairs does not speak against visual images as legitimate sources of information or the use of visual media to record aspects of the visual world for further scrutiny, or the use of images to raise awareness and support positive change. There is

nothing intrinsically repressive or liberating about images and visual devices. Yet, far more attention has been given by scholars to challenging the visual (in particular photographic images) than to trying to understand its potential for disclosing and communicating the world (exemplary in this regard is Sontag's (1977) book 'On Photography' of which W. J. T. Mitchell (1986, 8) notes that it could more aptly have been called 'Against Photography'). W. J. T. Mitchell also uses the term 'power fallacy' to indicate the one-sided conception of visual images as expressions of power relations, 'shared by opponents and proponents of visual culture who worry about the complicity of visual media with regimes of spectacle and surveillance' (Mitchell, W. J. T. 2005, 347). But of course visual scholars always benefit from being duly aware of the epistemological consequences of distinct technologies and practices, and of the fact that images provide at best a highly reduced and arranged 'version' of reality. Most often they are aware that their images and interventions may cause harm and may be prone to re-appropriation for more shallow causes. Therefore, ethically responsible behaviour in image-based and in particular in camera-based research is not limited to carefully observing the integrity of images and reflexively communicating any pre- or post-production interventions that may alter the ontological or epistemological status of an image. Visual researchers as a rule take precautions to prevent such negative consequences or at least try to reduce them to acceptable levels (Clark 2020; Pauwels 2020, 29).

It is important to emphasise that the 'visual' aspect of our world does not manifest itself uniquely in visual media products; rather it actively pervades our daily lives in most of its facets. Visual culture includes visual objects and 'performances' of a varied nature, for example, buildings, statues, fashion and forms of interaction, which are accessible through direct observation with several of our senses (Emmison, Smith and Mayall 2012; Pauwels 2013). In this respect it might be useful to expand the concept 'politics of the image' to 'visual politics' (Bleiker 2018a, 2018b; Veneti, Jackson and Lilleker 2019) to include the

impact of these other visual phenomena and artefacts on individuals, and also with respect to the creation of a collective memory.

A thorough study of manifestations of visual culture and image culture entails three distinct, yet interrelated, aspects: a) the production processes and contexts, b) the image or visual artefact, and c) its audiences and uses. According to Rose (2016, 27-43), many theoretical disputes concern which of these aspects is most important and why. In essence, all three aspects may provide potentially interesting insights, but depending on the specific research question, the emphasis will have to lie on one or more of these aspects of visual culture. These aspects also involve the use of different research methods, varying from interviews/surveys to ethnographic research, content and formal analysis (according to a variety of theoretical frameworks such as semiotics, rhetoric, iconology, discourse analysis, see: Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2000; Rose 2016; Pauwels and Mannay 2020), forms of audience and reception analysis (oral history, eye-tracking) and all of the visual data production methods covered in this article. When analysing images both 'naive realists', who treat images as unproblematic windows to the world, as well as extreme relativists or constructivists, who tend to deny almost completely the practicability of the depicted 'reality' as workable 'data', are on to the wrong path to truly understand the complex role in and impact of imagery on cultures. (Pauwels 2015, 61).

Images are powerful tools for crossing borders (ethnic, linguistic, national, cultural), for better or for worse, bringing the world to others, but also for imposing worldviews and values of the powerful to the less powerful. The visual approach to borders gives us tools to recognise and to expose the overpowering worldviews. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to bridge the existing boundaries and to look from the angle of the underrepresented. Acknowledging this once again elucidates the benefits of visually studying borders.

This article, thus, engaged in discussing how visual methods can – and to some extent already do – enrich border studies by providing the means to deal with the visual aspect of borders. It started out by presenting some conceptual developments in the interdisciplinary field of border studies and then continued to point at the urgent need for more empirical 'in situ' studies of borders, borderlands, border experiences and bordering processes. This observation then led to this article's main objective, to propose in a systematic manner the array of visual approaches for researching borders, as they may contribute significantly and in unique ways to more localised and situated insights into border matters and experiences. To strengthen the case of each of the visual methods, we provided some existing examples of their application. First, we looked at the research opportunities of using 'found' or pre-existing visual materials of a varied nature as potential sources of data. Then we looked at a variety of 'researcher-instigated' data production methods involving visual media or visual artefacts. These included exploratory to very systematic (and longitudinal) ways to produce visual records of border-related aspects, artefacts and behaviours and more 'participatory visual approaches' such as using visual materials to elicit information from respondents ('visual elicitation') or prompting respondents (e.g., border residents) to produce their own visuals in response to a researcher's assignment. Finally, we discussed some ways to communicate or express research findings and insights in more expressive formats (Pauwels 2015).

Using existing and novel visual methods in studying borders, however, will not always be easy. Border-related visual production comes with limitations, whether generated by the researcher or by respondents. In many cases it is forbidden to take pictures on geopolitical borderlands, which testifies of particular accepted and non-accepted behaviour at the border; consequently, though, it hampers the possibilities for data collection severely. Other dimensions of borders in different border sites (e.g., inner-city borders, class borders,

language borders), on the other hand, may be documented more freely (though seldom without some specific ethical constraints or security issues), but this raises again the question of how far visual scholars are prepared or inclined to apply the concept of a 'border'.

Finally, there is much potential if scholars choose to join their knowledge of border studies and visual methods and develop hybrid approaches, especially paying attention to how the visual strengthens or weakens borders, how borders influence the visual, how visual methods can be used while investigating the experiences of border crossers or border inhabitants, and what border representations can tell us about the reality of borders. These approaches can thus take the form of epistemological tools ('borderscapes' and 'borderscaping', see Brambilla 2015 and Brambilla, Laine, and Bocchi 2015), working groups on cultural border studies (e.g., 'Atelier Bordertextures'), experimental collectives bringing researchers, artists and practitioners together (e.g., 'The antiAtlas of Borders', see Parizot et al. 2014), new methodological suggestions for materializing borders (e.g., 'Borderframing', see Keshavarz and Zetterlund 2013) and others. Visual research of borders offers possibilities to 'illuminate', re-discover and point-out borders which have multiplied and, far from disappearing, have become less materialised and less visible at the same time.

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FIGURES

(Please don't use the photo's included in this Word document but the one's supplied as separate JPEG files)

Figures 1. and 2. Two researcher-generated photographs made at one of the remaining parts of the Berlin wall, known as the 'East Side Gallery' (© Photos: Luc Pauwels).
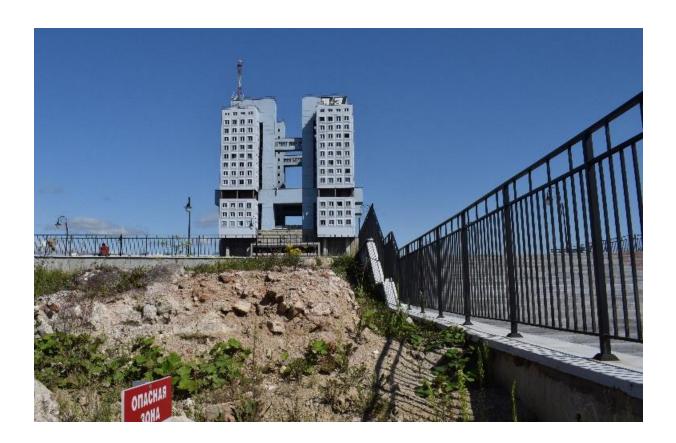
Figure 3. Researcher-produced photograph, depicting a fenced excavation site with a red warning sign in Russian ('опасная зона' which translates as 'danger zone') and a tall Brutalism-style building in the background (© Photo: Gintarė Kudžmaitė).

Figure 4. Example of a 'found' online photograph posted in the Flickr group 'borders | boundaries', titled 'Splitting stone' (© Photo: Tom Price, reproduced with permission).

Figure 5. A researcher-produced image of a 'gentle activist' bill board at an event site in Vancouver, initiated by the Coast Salish people (© Photo: Luc Pauwels).

Figure 6. Researcher-generated material used as visual stimulus in photo elicitation interviews for an ongoing study about border experiences of ethnic Lithuanians living at the borderland of Poland (© Photo: Gintarė Kudžmaitė)**.**

Figures 7. and 8. (© Photos: Luc Pauwels). The 'visual essay' approach as a format for scholarly communication typically may contain more metaphorical imagery such as these, which try to express aspects of borders, border politics and border experiences in a more conceptual and multi interpretable way.