Border Regions Series

COMMUNITY, CHANGE AND BORDER TOWNS

H. Pinar Şenoğuz

Community, Change and Border Towns

This book provides an interdisciplinary approach to power, inclusion/exclusion and hierarchy in a Turkish border town, with a focus on the impact of nation-state border on social stratification and change.

Through the lens of ethnographic research and oral history, the book explores social mobility among various strata within the context of transition from Ottoman rule to the Republican regime, in order to reveal culturally informed strategies of border dwellers in coming to grips with new border contexts. It is suggested that the border perspective will move the social analysis beyond “methodological territorialism” and provide a theoretical framework that explores social change at the intersection of local, national and transnational processes.

This book will appeal to readers interested in borders and circulations, social structure and power relations in border regions, as well as transnational shadow networks in the Turkish/Middle Eastern context. The book is a valuable resource for students and scholars of border anthropology, political and economic geography, studies of globalization and transnationalism, anthropology of illegality and Turkish and Middle Eastern studies. It will be a useful grounding for humanitarian professionals who are learning about the social and economic landscape of border towns.

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Border Regions Series

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H. Pinar Şenoğuz

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To Nejat
(Paramaz Kızılbaş)
and all the beautiful people
who fought without borders for humanity
whose imagination had no bounds

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Introduction

Borders demarcate nations. They produce belonging. Borders delimit our worlds and give meanings. They define our places in society, to where and whom we feel attached. But they also offer challenges. We push ourselves beyond our borders and seek to free ourselves from limitations, to change our lives in a better direction or at least manage a life that we think is worth living. This book aims to highlight the place of borders in our lives, by pointing to an actual border setting at the southeastern margins of Turkey. I present the story of the transformation of Ottoman Kilis into a border town, as told from the perspective of its dwellers. Drawing on historical and anthropological approaches, I explore the processes and dynamics that transformed the place into a border town and underline its historicity.

I focus on the impact of border on the cultural and economic landscape of Kilis, a town which has been identified as nowhere in Bilad al-Sham,¹ but as a border town after the establishment of the Republic, inconspicuous for a long time, yet it recently gained prominence with the eruption of the Syrian crisis in 2011 as opposed to other Eastern and Southeastern border towns. The overriding question of the book concerns the ways in which the border influences the life prospects of town dwellers. Border affects socio-economic strata by introducing new territorial, cultural, and economic barriers that they have to accommodate. The first set of questions concerns the ways in which the border shapes the living of socio-economic strata by severing and shifting their cross-border ties. In what ways do border-induced changes such as loss of land properties, shifting routes of trade and status of goods crossing the border, binational relations of kinship affect families at the border? How do these changes alter the class and status relationships among the strata themselves?

Yet, this book is structured around an overriding question that allows room for the structure (border) and agency (dwellers) dialectics. The impact of the border on dwellers from various strata is not only constraining, but it is also enabling them. This book adopts a framework that inquires about the impact of border on dwellers as well as dwellers' capacity to manipulate and circumvent it, providing room for portraying them beyond being mere victims of state policies. It argues that dwellers can utilize the border as an economic resource, by seeking shelter across and evading legal liabilities to the state and its territorial control. Thus, the

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main objective of the thesis is to recognize and make visible the struggles and adaptations of dwellers to the border.

While border introduces new distinctions, it also offers new opportunities of encounter and contact across the border. Therefore, I argue that the second set of questions that should be asked must highlight the ways in which socio-economic strata adjust to the border by developing new networks and connections. What sorts of mechanisms and linkages do they develop to rely on? How do they manipulate and circumvent the territorial as well as cultural and economic barriers? In what ways do these shifts in the cross-border ties contribute to the social stratification structure by redrawing class boundaries?

A town is not just designated a border town by being adjacent to the border but as it is argued by Buursink, “it also came into existence because of the border” (Buursink, 2001, pp. 7–8). The processes and dynamics at the border regulate the border-crossing of people, animals, and goods in ways to enable their movement or halt it and, thus, produce different mobilities and enclosures for socio-economic strata, which they have to accommodate in various ways. I assume that movement/enclosure at the border inflicts its dwellers with values, practices, and relationships that are not found anywhere else in the nation-state and creates “the border experience” (Martinez, 1994) that is often marginalized by social analyses.

Through the lens of ethnographic research and oral history, I explore belonging and social mobility among various socio-economic strata within the context of transition from Ottoman rule to the Republican regime because it will help me to reveal the impact of border on the cultural and economic landscape of Kilis. The aim of the book is to account the social change with the shift of Kilis, an Ottoman inland frontier and a resettlement area for Arabic, as well as Kurdish and Turcoman tribes accused by the Ottoman central power of “political banditry” (Soyudoğan, 2005) into a modern nation-state border. For substantiating my research question, I introduce a theoretical framework that explores the social change in a border town at the intersection of local, national, and transnational processes. I suggest that the border perspective will move the analysis beyond “methodological territorialism” (van Schendel, 2005) that encapsulates the social analysis into the idea of nation-state as unit of analysis. From the vantage point of border, I will demonstrate that social reproduction and social mobility strategies of families in Kilis are incorporated in the broader cultural, social, and economic transformation of Turkey long before globalization started to put limitations to the state sovereignty and territorial control.

Porous border, strangled dwellers

Kilis border town, a small province in southeastern Turkey, has become known worldwide lately due to the extensive news coverage of the Syrian conflict by the world media. Located at the Turkish-Syrian border and presently contiguous to a territory of war and mass demolition, the name of this border town, as well as other towns on the border, probably circulates among United Nations (UN) staff, international non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, government

officials, and state bureaucrats. When a flow of migrants along the Turkish border started, the prefabricated camp in Kilis located at the zero point on the border was turned into a showcase for the Turkish government in order to present to the world that it does whatever it can to take care of the human crisis and to accommodate its Syrian guests.² The names who paid initial visits to Kilis camp for Syrian migrants in 2012 include UN special envoy for Syria and former UN general secretary Kofi Annan, UN goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie and the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The visit of Erdoğan seemed to target the attention of world politicians concerned with the plight of Syria as he gave a speech to the migrants, heralding them their victory against the Assad regime in Syria and warning Bashar al-Assad (Kibritoğlu & Çelebioğlu, 2012).

In contrast to the global attention transforming Kilis into a hub of movement, the incoming Syrian migrants simply accentuate for the town dwellers their sense of containment at the border. A local man picturesquely explains it to me by imagining the town as a place squeezed between two stakes at the opposite corners of the town's administrative boundaries with its adjacent city Gaziantep in the north-northwest. He refers to two villages, both named Kazıklı, meaning literally "with pales" in order to portray the town as a territory nipped from its two corners as if impaled and made into a confined place because once you enter the town's boundaries, you have nowhere to go because of the enclosing border with Syria. He says: "We are squeezed between two Kazıklıs."

The increase of "global flows" shapes every corner of the world but in different ways. Globalization creates new spatial inequalities that highlight class disparities beneath them despite its promise towards a borderless world. Although the world is shrinking through a web of communications and exchanges, and geographical movements across the globe seem to defeat the territorial borders of nation-states, there are a great number of people with feelings of confinement and immobility at border geographies in an increasingly globalizing world. Border scholars Hillary Cunningham and Josiah Heyman suggest that the theme of mobility is intrinsic to the questions of power, justice, and inequality (Cunningham and Heyman, 2004, p. 294). For them, mobility, as well as enclosure are "vital to the exploring relationships of differentiation across space" (Cunningham and Heyman, 2004, p. 295). I believe that these points are illustrated in the above-mentioned feeling of being squeezed, expressed by the local man in Kilis.

I have carried out field research in Kilis town between January 2011 and June 2012. The Syrian uprising that broke out in March 2011, three months after I started my field research, had been a challenge for me that made me think more about the sense of containment prevalent among Kilis dwellers. The dwellers depicted the town as devoid of industrial investment and vibrant cultural life, especially after the urban elite had deserted. The border is portrayed as a physical hindrance, an obstacle to the industrial development of the town because, without infrastructure and good highway connections to its surrounding ports and business clusters, it lacks the viable conditions for attracting investment. Kilis was for the dwellers a socio-economic and cultural margin. Culturally, town dwellers have as much attachment across the border as they have with their co-nationals.

4 *Introduction*

Economically, cross-border trade can be a viable option for livelihood and a better life and yet it puts them in jeopardy of criminalization.

As the Syrian opposition grew larger in their struggle to depose of the Assad regime, I bewilderedly kept a close watch on the reactions of local residents. While the national media coverage highlighted the armed conflict and civilian deaths, the dwellers of Kilis continued to argue that the news included exaggeration and there were no such grave conflicts. Eventually, the arguments get varied in that the protests went beyond purpose and the son Assad was actually a good leader, that imperialist forces wanted to create trouble in order to realize their Great Middle East Plan and that Turkey is being trapped by these forces. The prime minister's statement that the Syrian unrest was their internal affair aggravated local fears that the government's attitude would hinder cross-border trade, which was the source of livelihood for a significant number of dwellers. Hence, the incoming of Syrian migrants as well as solidarity actions by local and international NGOs with Syrian opposition in Kilis was met with the resistance of the town community.

Soon after I finished my field research and left the town, the Turkish government closed its border with Syria for security reasons and banned the exit of Turkish citizens. In the Kilis case, it is possible to observe that the globalization framework created new conflicts and spatial arrangements that the town dwellers now have to accommodate. Thus, the emphasis on the global flows and border crossings highlighting mobility may overshadow how these movements enclose spaces of exchange and livelihoods and produce immobility for certain groups.

Not only trade relations, but also other sorts of cross-border exchanges, relations of trust, straddling forms of living such as cross-border labouring or land tenure, kinship, familial alliance and ethnic affinity historically characterized the Kilis border. Transborder movement was part of everyday life, making the dwellers differ from a broader population that is not located adjacent to an interstate border. Then why are the town dwellers engulfed in a strong sense of containment? Paradoxical though it may seem, the border experiences of dwellers cannot be understood without superimposing their sense of containment with the porosity of the Kilis border. This is a question worth thinking about, indicating how volatile and vulnerable life at the border could be.

Historical and ethnographic context

Prior to the Syrian war, Kilis was a border town with a population of about 130,000 located on the Turkish-Syrian border, hosting ethnically Turcoman, Arab, and Kurdish groups with kinship bonds extending to the Syrian side. In the Ottoman Empire, Kilis was an inland frontier for these nomadic tribes, sedentarized by the central authority since the late seventeenth century (Kasaba, 2004). Kilis region also marked the beginning of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, as distinguished from the Anatolian lands. While the Turkish-Syrian border was delineated between Turkey and France with the Ankara Agreement of 1921, it has been disputable for the Turkish side since the beginning. According to Güçlü, the political boundaries of Syria did not exist prior to the Sykes-Picot agreement, known

as a secret alliance between Britain and France in 1916 to define their spheres of influence (Güçlü, 2006, p. 641). But the boundary line nearly corresponded to the assumed linguistic and national boundary of the Turkish area, though it was far northern at its initial demarcation.

When the deputy Ali Cenani from Ayıntap (Gaziantep) made his speech in 1922 on the disputed borderline, he addressed the squeezing of Kilis town by the demarcation of the border. “The line passing just by five kilometer south of Kilis town has rendered that country almost paralyzed,” he said (TBMM, 1922, p. 425). The border demarcated in 1921 had torn apart the former Ottoman land from the emerging Republic of Turkey and abandoned north Syria, as well as some of the Kilis agrarian fields to the French Mandate. The provisional delineation of the border was substituted in the meantime by a frontier better suited to the needs of the Turkish side and special regulation of border crossing allowed large landowners to have access to their propriety at the Syrian side. The final delimitation of the border could only be completed with the restoration of Antioch to Turkey in 1939. Big landowning families could continue to claim proprietorship over their lands left at the Syrian side and harvest their crop until their lands were confiscated by the Syrian Baath Party rising in power in 1954 within the context of agrarian reform.

However, the Turkish-Syrian border remains highly contentious in terms of international politics. Regarding the border dispute, the issue was never resolved in the nationalist imagination of linguistic unity because of the significant Turcoman population left in North Syria, particularly in Aleppo and its vicinity. On the other hand, the Cold War policies of the 1950s embraced the border and reinforced it with the wiring and mining of the whole boundary line except Samandağ of Antakya. The rise of the Baath Party in Syria as it won a significant number of parliamentary seats accelerated the political tension between the countries. The background to the tension was the US-led Cold War against the Soviet Union and the American quest to build a transnational security organization in the Middle East against Soviet impact (Baş, 2012). The international relationship between Turkey and Syria was caught in the crisis in 1957 and Turkey dispatched troops to its border. Nevertheless, both Turkey and Syria realized that they would not be able to win without allies in a potential close combat and the political tension loosened.

It is not possible to access the documentation about the mining of the border during 1956–1959. The Turkish government declared that mining of the border was intended to stop smuggling, citing a high-profile incident when smugglers shot two customs agents dead (Köknar, 2004). Nevertheless, the smuggling alone does not explain why the mine laying continued for three years, especially taking into account that illegal trade has actually increased in volume and value after the mining of the border. Moreover, more mines were laid again after the 1980 coup (Özgen, 2010). Mine laying is responsible for many deaths and maimings at the Kilis border.

The Kurdish question and water dispute are two other major sources of political tension. The water dispute goes back to the 1970s as Turkey started the

construction of water dams within the context of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) (Olson, 1997). After Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Marxist-Leninist insurgency PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, Kurdish Workers' Party), found shelter in Syria in the late 1970s, the two issues were played by the countries as trump cards to each other. Yet, Turkey's concern with securing its border against the 'dangerous population' actually dates back to the 1920s and 1930s, and archival sources show that Turkey is quite disturbed with the settlement of deported Armenians, insurgent Kurdish as well as Assyrian and Yazidi emigrants along the Syrian border with Turkey (Altuğ and White, 2009). The Kurdish question between Turkey and Syria found a resolution with the signing of the Adana agreement in 1998 and led Syria to deport the Kurdish leader (Aras and Polat, 2008). But, the emergence of the Kurdish movement in northern Syria and the 2013 declaration of autonomous zones by the Democratic Union Party (PYD) seems to resurrect Turkey's security concerns at its border.

In the light of this brief historical overview, I suggest that international relationships and state politics make the Turkish-Syrian border highly unsettled. I do not only refer to the impact of international politics, but also to the spillovers of internal politics of the states respectively on these borderlands. Despite the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) efforts to mend the fences with Syria until a popular uprising broke out in this country, the relationships between Turkey and Syria have been characterized by boundary disputes, political tensions, and alienation, as well as political negotiations, cooperation seeking, and diplomatic bonds. As part of the Middle Eastern geography, the Turkish border with Syria is characterized by authentic multiculturalism (Doğruel, 2013), ethnic hostility, and religious sectarianism created by nation-state context (Altuğ, 2002), political geographies of ethnic and political divisions (Tuncer-Gürkaş, 2014) and a cosmopolitanism based on multiple and controversial ways of remembering and forgetting the Armenian genocide of 1915 (Biner, 2010).

Local discourses and narratives in Kilis town draw on a historical ethno-symbolism (Canefe, 2002) that utilizes myths of origins and ancestry of Turkish people and memories of a distinct Muslim Anatolian society. The Armenians of Kilis were deported following the 1915 Deportation Law and the Jewish community had completely left by the late 1960s, possibly following the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967. Local historical accounts emphasize the Turkification and conversion to Islam in the region.³ These accounts point to the suppression and assimilation of ethnic and religious identities to the national unification and erasure from the popular imagination of the cultural and historical legacy leftover from the Christian communities.

The ethno-religious assimilation is also apparent in the cultural domination of Sunnite Islam, alienating the Alawite identity. The assimilation of Alawite Turcomans in the Kilis region has its historical roots in their settlement in the mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. İlbeyli Turcomans of Kilis are among the tribes converted to Sunnite Islam with strong tribal bonds and identification due to their relatively recent settlement (Aydın, 2011, p. 11). Turcoman villages are located eastwards, where Kilis lowlands are converging with the Turcoman-dominated

plain of Gaziantep, though these lowlands are studded with Kurdish and Arab populations as well. On the other hand, *Kurd Dagh*, a highland border region in eastward Kilis, is predominantly populated with the Kurdish population.

Hence, the case of Kilis affirms the argument that the border is not a homogeneous unit and there can be many borderlands along a geopolitical frontier with particular and distinct border cultures (Donnan and Wilson, 1999). This borderland is distinguished from other places along the Turkish-Syrian border as a strong case of assimilation and stability in terms of the ethnic and political conflicts surrounding it. These features of Kilis borderland make the struggles and adaptations of local dwellers to sustain their cross-border ties in the Middle Eastern political geography even more significant. The refugee arrivals do not undermine these features but rather enhance them. The Syrian refugees, as new inhabitants of the town, have soon become integral to these struggles and adaptations.

Fieldwork on the border

Borders, as margins of the nation-state, are marginalized in official and popular discourses. Depicted as entrenched in the traditional community relationships and underdevelopment, the borders are stigmatized as sites escaping the state order and open to corruption and illegal practices. The borders are also stigmatized by border dwellers. In Kilis, for instance, most of the dwellers associate the border with its unregulated trade and illicit economy. Kilis dwellers notoriously name their efforts to earn a livelihood at the border as “smuggling” and place it at the center of their border perceptions, as if it is the only distinctive characteristics of this border. To put it differently, borders bring their own ideologies, stories, and ways of interaction that the border researcher must delve into in order to explore what living at the border meant to the border dwellers. This might prove rather challenging when this is not legible in the official and archival records, sources of information are not cooperative, or secrecy dominates among the dwellers.

The research consists of 18-months’ fieldwork on belonging and social mobility processes among various socio-economic strata in Kilis. Anthropologists classify ethnography as a genre of storytelling, reminding us that our ethnographic works are also narratives transforming the sense of fragmentation, contingency, and dislocation experienced in the field (Bruner, 1986; Rapport, 2000). This book locates the agency of town dwellers in accommodating themselves to the border on the foreground against the view of border dwellers as being mere victims of artificial territorial boundaries drawn by colonial powers in the Middle Eastern context. I explore different strategies adopted by various socio-economic strata to navigate territorial borders and group boundaries. For this purpose, I rely on ethnographic and oral history approaches as well as a reflexive anthropology establishing an intimate rapport with the town dwellers to overcome the challenges of doing fieldwork on the border.

The border context has imperatives that determine the research question as well as strategy. Kilis, as the provincial hinterland of Ottoman Aleppo before the demarcation of the border (see Map 0.1), remained a moderately big town after it

Map 0.1 Cuinet's map showing Kilis as district (*kaza*) of Aleppo province, 1835 (Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons)

became annexed to the city of Gaziantep. The town bears the traces of a highly stratified social structure inherited from the Ottoman landholding class and agricultural production. The cultural and architectural inheritance of long-established notables is still present, though notable families have lost their social and economic power since the 1960s. Even though these families remained among the wealthy strata of the town, I realized their feelings of decline should be interpreted as part of their social mobility experiences with the demarcation and consolidation of the border. The historical background that informs identity formation in this border region indicated that the question of belonging should be addressed by a genealogical study of family histories through Ottoman archives. Life stories of notables conducted towards an inquiry about the ways in which social mobility processes at the border pave the ground for critical belongings and transform the meanings of illegality, wealth, and work, which are inflicted by a border culture difficult to penetrate. This is an important reason why I make much use of participant observation data.

As the method of study, I rely on oral history and ethnographic research supported by in-depth interviews, archival research, as well as trope analysis. Embracing oral

history within the ethnographic context is not uncommon. Yet, it extends the question of intersubjectivity, that anthropological writing tackles since the ‘interpretive turn’ (Vila, 2003) after *Writing Culture* (Marcus and Clifford, 1986), to oral history interviews and renders oral history and ethnographic study alike (Di Leonardo, 1987). However, the added value of oral history interviews, in contrast to in-depth interviews, is that oral history allows the researcher to unravel the past through a multiplicity of standpoints and encompasses the complexity of conflicts (Thompson, 1998). Oral history reveals the silenced and omitted accounts of the past, often shrouded in secrecy by the prevailing modes of history writing, an impact that could be observed not only in the narrating of family histories among Kilis notables but also in the peasants’ accounts of their relationships with the notables.

In the total, I conducted 44 recorded (voice recording and note-taking) interviews, including more than one person in a few cases. The interviewees were recruited from a social composition including three socio-economic strata: namely, old wealth, new wealth and middle class, and rural and urban poor (see the Appendix for Interviewee Profiles and Explanatory Notes for Oral History and In-depth Interviews). I define old wealth as traditional landed and trade notables, a status distinction which I discuss in length in Chapter 2 on the notables. New wealth and the middle class are comprised of extended families that are usually—but not necessarily—from a rural background and have moved up among the ranks of the urban middle class. One shortcoming is that I could not recruit interviewees among the small circle of new wealth, who have started to make investments in Istanbul since the mid-1960s and settled there all together after the 1980 coup. I try to meet this deficit by giving a profile of new wealth in Istanbul, by introducing the story of a barber in Chapter 4 on new wealth. Members of new wealth in Istanbul and extended families from a rural background living in Kilis experienced upward mobility through the same mechanisms and wealth-generating practices during the 1960–1980 period of import-substituting industrialization. The new middle class also includes heirs of old notables, whose social reproduction strategies are based on education and urban employment. Finally, I classify the rural and urban poor as lower strata. These interviewees are usually the offspring of independent peasant families or families working at the landlord’s household as domestic and casual labourers.

The study recruits a wide arrange of interviewees among local notables, chiefs, tradesmen and shopkeepers, professionals and intellectuals, border villagers, and urban poor. They also include a few former mayors and parliamentarians, which contributed to my understanding of how local political dynamics articulated with the broader border politics. Interviews with officers at governmental and semi-public institutions added to the information about the socio-economic structure and dynamics of social change. Regarding the sectoral composition, the background of interviewees mainly covers agriculture, trade, and transport sectors. When I could not conduct a recorded interview, the interactions and encounters in the field kept a vigilant eye to subaltern voices. These range from casual labourers and unemployed youth to women peddlers and border villagers. I had informal dialogues with groups of high school students, women gatherings, and border villagers.

There were many cases where I could not take personal information such as age and current profession. But the dialogues gave me important clues about the interviewees' position and status as well as insights about the history and facts about illegal border trade and its impact on the socio-economic structure of the city. Thus, I prefer to give the birth year intervals of five years in order to classify the interviewees along the age groups. Regarding the age scale, old wealth typically included the oldest age groups, with birth years ranging between 1920 and 1955, with the exception of Latife born in 1911. The birth year intervals ranged between 1930 and 1975 for new wealth and the middle strata as they have been interviewed principally about the shadow economy of the import-substituting industrialization period of 1960–1980, except an old-generation woman who could give information about her father's involvement in smuggling livestock as early as the 1940s and a younger transport company owner. The age distribution among the rural and urban poor is almost even as the interviews were concentrated both on the agrarian labour structure between the 1930s and 1960s, and the cross-border trade introduced in the mid-1990s. The book draws much of these ethnographic data offered by the encounters and exchanges with these unrepresented groups.

Recorded interviews were likely to take the form of oral histories about social and economic life. As interviewees were reluctant to talk about the present situation, they were more inclined to talk about the past in order to avoid, for instance, revealing their involvement in illegal trade. While urban notables and the new rich gave accounts of their family life and social history of the town, border peasants and the urban poor narrated their struggle with regard to subsistence and the change in their relationship with the landowning class. The border peasants were also afraid of law enforcement and military surveillance at the border.

Since I have met with difficulties in conducting recorded interviews, I have complemented them with snippets of responses (Vila, 2000, p. 254) and micro-narratives (Doevenspeck, 2011) in order to uncover hidden narratives beneath the dominant stereotypes and prejudices and to approach the everyday experiences and practices at the border. Such pieces of conversations are employed by border studies in inquiring the narrative construction of boundaries, identities, and belonging at the border (Paasi, 2003; Vila, 1997, 2000; Doevenspeck, 2011; Pelkmans, 2006; Flynn, 1997). Putting emphasis on narrativity does not necessarily mean to employ a narrative methodology that applies the procedural set of techniques to relate small-scale stories to the wider context of narratives. Rather, I work with local narratives in order to disclose the 'border talk', i.e. in what ways dwellers talk about the border, which issues and problems they bring to the foreground, why these are being told and not the others. As I refer to in the analysis chapters of this book, the border talk in Kilis town included issues about the demarcation of border and local resistance against the French occupation, trade activities connecting Kilis with trade and finance centers in the region, the use of border as economic resources, and cross-border marriages and kin relationships. These narrative accounts reveal the shifts in power relations experienced in everyday life.

Finally, I support my discussion with reference to a purposive sampling on local and national newspapers in order to study the criminalizing discourses and their possible effects shaping the experiences of border dwellers. During the fieldwork, I

Figure 0.1 A prayer break in the border village of *Kurd Dagħ* (Photo courtesy of the author)

have regularly tried to follow daily news appearing in local papers. There are four local newspapers in Kilis, among which two of them date back to the early Republican period. Although they tend to sound like tabloid press publishing mainly the news circulated by the local police department of anti-smuggling, they reveal the differences of opinion and established alliances among various positions of political adherence. The websites of these newspapers provide virtual forums for readers expressing comments and, thus, they give clues about the public opinion of the local community. The study also draws on archival sources, including international treaties, laws and regulations about border control and customs as well as smuggling, and minutes of parliament meetings. These documents shed light on the official discourses related to controversial issues of border management, the definition of border as a legal category and the criminalization of transgressive activities.

Short visits to the town after I finished my fieldwork allowed follow-up observations about the impact of the Syrian conflict. These visits included professional occasions in October 2012 and March 2016, when I worked as translator-fixer for MSF and Deutsche Welle respectively. I also paid a week-long visit for research in July 2015 and held semi-structured interviews in the town center and border villages of Elbeyli and *Kurd Dagħ* (see Figure 0.1).

Conceptual framework

Border studies constitute a theoretical background to this study. However, as Paasi (2011) argues, this scholarly literature is not yet an integrated field of study. As

the researchers of border, we cannot refer to a ‘border theory’ as groundedly as we may speak of the state theory or theory of social classes. Border studies has been revived as an interdisciplinary realm of investigation under the impact of globalization, but mainly adopted anthropological approaches prioritizing conceptual boundaries rather than territorial borders or even embracing a theoretical framework that puts the territorial borders out of sight. Moreover, as studies on border are proliferating, the understanding of borders are perpetually changing and diverging depending on the research problems addressed and eventually become part of theorization. Nevertheless, research on border is still empirically compartmentalized, largely deprived of historical and comparative analyses.

The conceptual framework of my study combines the arguments produced from within border studies and oral history with the debates on post-Ottoman social stratification in order to provide a transdisciplinary approach to power, hierarchy, and in/exclusion in a particular border region. Oral history and theories of social stratification are methodological imperatives of the research as they substantiate historical analysis with the concept of socio-economic mobility among different strata.

Border, frontier, boundary and borderland

The literature review in Chapter 1 is fully devoted to highlighting the analytical power of the concepts adopted in this book with reference to border studies. Still, this section shortly introduces some of these concepts.

In this book, the term “border” is used to refer to the territorial and, in the case of Kilis, political boundary. Border drawn between two nation-states is necessarily territorial and cartographic, i.e. delineated on a map. As opposed to the term “frontier”, border encloses neighborhood, communities, and nations and turns them into territorially-bounded units. As Strassoldo argues, frontiers are “areas of growth into ‘virgin’ territories” (Strassoldo, 1980, p. 50). Famously known as Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, the term frontier is used to denote the territorial expansions of civilizations and empires (Baud and van Schendel, 1997). In other words, frontier does not signify limits or barriers, but openness, expansiveness and dynamism.

A new genre in border studies employs the notion of “borderland” as a focal metaphor to denote a liminal space where two distinct cultures face and counterpose each other (Wilson and Donnan, 1998). The literature review extensively cites the criticisms about the new borderlands genre from within border studies in order to elaborate on the approach to “border/land as liminal space.” The term “borderland” for this book signifies the “existence and impact of a border on the human landscape” (Newman, 2003, p. 19). It denotes a border location embedded within networks straddling across the territorial border between two or more states (Baud and van Schendel, 1997; Wilson and Donnan, 1998). Embracing the notion of borderland reiterates the fact that the border is more than a line bisecting a geographical space. Constantly shifting, Baud and van Schendel figuratively describes it as an accordion in order to portray contracting and expanding ties radiating at the two sides of the territorial border in response to various

contentions and strife raised by state politics and transnationalism (Baud and van Schendel, 1997).

Within the realm of border studies, the term “border” and “boundary” could be used interchangeably. In this book, boundaries are associated with communal borders to “signify the point at which “we” end and “they” begin” (Migdal, 2004, p. 5). Contemporary border studies combine the concepts of borders (territorial delimitations) and boundaries (social categorizations) in a single analytical framework to explore the bordering processes, through which, as Newman argues, the categories of difference or separation are created (Newman, 2003). The source of inspiration for this development is the turn to Barth’s paradigmatic ideas on ethnic boundaries (Donnan and Wilson, 1999). Instead of defining ethnic identity as a set of features shared by the member of groups, Barth (1969) looked at the inclusion and exclusion processes through which ethnic boundaries are maintained and re-confirmed. Borrowed from Barth, boundaries acquire an analytical power to study apparently unrelated phenomena of boundary-making within the nation and the territorialization and policing of borders enclosing the nation, recently illustrated by the analyses of Fassin (2011), Parizot (2008), and Yuval-Davis et al. (2017), among many others.

In this book, boundaries point to the group (class) identifications among socio-economic strata in Kilis. To set it more clearly, this book valorizes Barth’s original question about how the group identifications could be maintained despite their boundaries being transgressed. It shows how the tensions of old/new wealth and upper strata/peasantry are constantly negotiated through marriages and other forms of alliances across borders and boundaries.

Social mobility

I draw on an oral history approach in order to underline my methodological premises related to social mobility. Social mobility can be defined as the movement up and down the stratification (Kerbo, 2006). Border historians turn to oral history in order to “reconstruct the historical self-images and perceptions of social groups in the borderland and the impact of these on people’s political, economic, and cultural behavior” (Baud and van Schendel, 1997, p. 242). I adopt oral history as a theoretical perspective to inform social stratification analyses with particular emphasis on social mobility, which is brilliantly illustrated by the works of oral historians Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (1997). They argue that narrative approach exceeds the often-preferred survey method in social mobility studies by revealing the crucial importance of local context. While social mobility processes in Kilis town could be analyzed in conformity with regular patterns of mobility, they critically diverge in terms of subjective perceptions and evaluations and local structures of opportunities. Narrativity adds great power in explaining the reproduction, transformation, emergence, or disappearance of class and status in border zones, where a fast buck could be as easily spent as it is earned.

The overly changing nature of borders and border policies differentially allowing and hindering the border-crossings generate a context of unequal power

relations in which the social hierarchies of class, status, and prestige fluctuate. Arbitrary border policies allocate unequal risks to various strata but they normalize them as consequences of living at the border (Cunningham and Heyman, 2004, p. 294). Therefore, this book adopts an analysis of social stratification structure with the aim of determining the parameters of social mobility rather than describing the class positions and identities. An oral history approach to social mobility helps to unravel family histories, which are “such extraordinarily rich sources of hard information directly relating to the construction of social trajectories [of social mobility]” (Bertaux, 1989, p. 85). According to Bertaux, the key concept to the analysis of social mobility is *transmission*.

An oral history approach relies on case histories of families in order to trace the social status as construed as a property of family groups, which is transmitted among generations (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, 1997). Rather than individuals, parent–offspring relationships are inquired. Bertaux-Wiame and Thompson (1997) define social mobility in terms of regular patterns such as intergenerational occupational transmission, the role of marriage, access to education and housing as cultural capital. In the case of Kilis, the familial histories particularly account for the local notables that depends on their patrimonial wealth as well as paternalistic relationships of agrarian production. However, they also shed light on what ways new wealth as well as the lower strata diverge from expected social trajectories of class reproduction, i.e. in cases that the occupation is not transmitted between generations. While these patterns constitute the vertical mobility paths of families by transmitting their economic and cultural capital to their offspring, I also add the conversion of capital held in one form to another as an aspect of horizontal mobility.

Conversion of one type of capital into another, Bourdieu argues, occurs only if the latter is “more profitable or more legitimate in the current state of instruments of reproduction” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 277). For Bourdieu, there are four types of capital, including economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Yet he considers the economic and cultural capital possessed by individuals as the most important. Bourdieu emphasizes that cultural capital is heritable and critical to the reproduction of social standing among individuals. This type of mobility, usually neglected by other models of social mobility, can also shed light on various conflicts between various groups among social strata (Weininger, 2005).

Social stratification

A transdisciplinary study of in/exclusion in Kilis town needs to be framed within the context of local power and inequality structures that remain latent in border zones. Although the cartographic mapping makes the territorial boundaries appear as crossing deserted plateaus and mountains, wide and barren fields without human trace, borders are not demarcated on blank space. The demarcation of border shifts the social stratification among inhabitants and alters the forms of identification.

Social stratification refers to a hierarchy and inequality of ranking among social groups in the society. It incorporates institutional processes that create

these hierarchies and inequalities as well as mobility mechanisms that shift them. Classification among social groups can be done according to a set of categories: namely, the degree of inequality, rigidity of the stratification system, ascriptive traits and degree of status crystallization (Grusky, 1994). A Marxian tradition, informed by the theories of Marx as well as Weber, has long produced numerous work to bring the class and status groups within a single analytical framework. Bourdieu's reproduction theory (1984) has made a great leap forward to straddle the division between class and status, by incorporating the notion of distinction and taste and defines classes on the basis of their internalized dispositions—or tastes—rather than objective conditions of existence. While this book adopts Bourdieu's approach to social mobility in terms of reproduction and conversion, it nevertheless embraces the concept of 'strata' as a key concept of analysis in order to address the unresolved division between class and status groupings.

Studying the demarcation of Kilis border town has a theoretical backdrop informed by the Ottoman social stratification system. The latter lies at the roots of class structure of modern Turkey. One approach in the Ottoman historiography conceptualizes the Ottoman social stratification as Asiatic, with peculiar ascription and achievement criteria than those existing in Western Europe. This line of thought conceives the Asiaticism as an intermediate formation in the transition of advanced agrarian society (Grusky, 1994, p. 9). For example, Şerif Mardin (1967) is a proponent of this approach, tracing the origins of contemporary class structure in Turkey back to the Ottoman social order. Mardin conceptualizes the Ottoman social order in a dichotomy of the ruling class and the ruled class, the latter mainly being the peasantry. According to him, the most important shift in the Ottoman stratification structure had been the Land Code of 1858 allowing private proprietorship of the state lands. The private proprietorship of land had led to the emergence of a new class of landowners as the ruling class in the provincial Ottoman. An important aspect of Ottoman social stratification was its rigid nature as expressed by the ruling class' concern for "everyone keeping his proper place" (Mardin, 1967, p. 129).

Mardin argues that the nascent Turkish regime has largely preserved the Ottoman social stratification structure split by a historical dichotomy between the ruling and the ruled, as well as intra-group conflict among the ruling elite. The provincial rulers in the Ottoman Empire are regarded by the Ottoman historiography as "notables" playing a role as intermediaries between central authority and the local population (e.g., Hourani, 1968). For these scholars, the feudal relationships, such as large landholding, which are inherited by the Republican State, complicate the analysis of social stratification structure in terms of capitalist classes.

A second line of thought in Ottoman historiography explores the unfolding of Ottoman history on the basis of the mode of incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world economy: peripheralization thesis (Keyder, 1991). This approach, in turn, aims to define social classes in terms of production relationships and ownership of the means of production. The two lines do not only diverge in defining the mode of production (Asiatic or peripheral capitalist) but also contend each other in the definition of social stratification structure in the Ottoman order. Khoury tries to bridge the two lines by discussing the definition of local notables

as a class with respect to property or its relationship to the means of production as well as to the social position of its constituents (Khoury, 1990, p. 219). He discusses the notables as a class *per se*, but also as a “class in formation” by emphasizing the significance of the social standing together with the ownership of the means of production and the patronage relationships, which put to their disposal a wider range of benefits and services than the landownership would. I adopt Khoury’s definition in conceptualizing the notables as a social class to unearth their social reproduction and mobility strategies, which do not attract enough interest in the Turkish scholarship.

My discussion about the inner social stratification in Kilis town does not go against the grain of the Turkish social stratification debate but rather engages in a conversation with it. My analysis critically adopts the peripheralization thesis and dwells on the agrarian question that occupied the attention of Ottoman historiography for a long time. Briefly, this thesis argues that the petty-commodity production prevailed among the peasants after the World War II together with the decline of large landholding and sharecropping. I underline the role of local notables, the status of peasantry, and shifting relationships on land tenure as well as patronage in the transition to the Republican regime. I pay particular attention to trace the shift of ‘traditional’ relationships based on reciprocity and kinship to scrutinize the ways in which these relationships continue to be effective, informing new power and inequality structures in market economy.

I contribute to the debate by shedding light on the mechanisms of illicit wealth generation and redistribution, as well as their normalization embedded in everyday transactions and exchanges, as part of social reproduction and mobility strategies. I demonstrate that the wealth generation through illicit means underpins the vested interests of traditional landed notables and prevents the peasantry from gaining independence. This book elaborates on the historical evolution of underlying mechanisms with the transition from the late Ottoman to the Republican era. These mechanisms have recently come on the radar within the framework of post-1980 trade liberalization and neoliberal governance. Therefore, the rise of new wealth, capitalizing on the post-1980 trade liberalization policies, has mainly attracted scholarly attention as a post-1980 phenomenon (Bali, 2007). However, this book points to the ascendance of new wealth between the 1960s and 1980s. It also shows how new relations of dependency are established between the ascendant wealth and the peasant poor. The analysis of social mobility processes, moving beyond methodological territorialism, captures the sub-national and transnational dynamics of wealth generation.

Presentation of chapters

I elaborate further on the theoretical background of the above-mentioned conceptual sources in Chapter 1 in order to explore the inner stratification and change in Kilis border town. I give an account of seemingly divergent theoretical threads on border studies: first, the conception of borders as liminal spaces and second, the conception of borders as state margins. I evaluate these threads on the basis of

their strength and weaknesses in order to redress an interdisciplinary approach to the study of borderlands. Lastly, I review the Turkish literature on border in order to highlight the main themes and questions.

The objective of the three following parts is to present the empirical analysis of social mobility strategies among three strata, each being devoted a separate part. In Chapters 2 and 3, it is argued that subjective perceptions and evaluations of traditional notables about the shift in their status as old wealth have culminated in their experience of falling from grace since the 1960s. By carrying out a discussion about whether the local notables could be considered as early capitalists, these chapters indicate that these families could benefit from new opportunities in the circulation of goods and gold as the border transit regime allowed them to access their landed estates and the trade markets in northern Syria and yield an economic accumulation. Thus, they show that local notables had to embrace illegal means of economic accumulation and accept what was once disgraceful for them in order to reproduce their social standing, while this process irrevocably undermined the social capital that traditional landed notables relied on to distinguish themselves from trade notables, the latter being more adept in seizing new opportunities of illicit trade.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the growth of the shadow economy along Kilis border and explore the social and economic conditions of the rise of new wealth since the 1960s. They detail how the town dwellers took benefit of the protective measures during the import-substituting industrialization period of 1960–1980 by reckoning rents to the illegal entry of consumer goods as well as gold and foreign currency. Chapter 5 shows that the illegal trade of gold as well as consumer goods promoted upward mobility by undermining structural constraints of social stratification and shifted the social and urban landscape of the town by embedding the local economy into national and transnational shadow networks.

The third section is the last one devoted to the empirical analysis of the ways in which rural and urban poor turned into border labourers and normalized their engagements in illegal trade. Chapter 6 highlights the historical conditions in which the rural poor emancipated themselves from the paternal relationships of patronage established with large landholders, which, yet, were quickly replaced by large-scale entrepreneurs that drew on traditional power structures based on land tenure and kinship. It argues that illegal trade at the border gave rise to a border economy, with the mining of the border from the mid-1950s. Then it explores how the cross-border trade regulations officially introduced in Kilis border in the mid-1990s permitted the town dwellers to yield differential profits and reckon upon a semi-legal small-scale trade. Chapter 7 demonstrates that the rural and urban poor, in the absence of patronage by large-scale entrepreneurs, are increasingly exposed to the dangers of criminalization and being unable to pay criminal fines, dangers of growing economic indebtedness. It also points to the ways in which the poor historically relied on kinship relations to normalize their exchange practices deemed illegal by local authorities.

The conclusion highlights the main findings by drawing on the overriding debates of the book with particular emphasis on social trajectories of socio-economic strata and their stories of social mobility and belonging. Finally, the

Epilogue to this book offers a snapshot of the post-conflict situation in this borderland with a focus on the demographic change, local hospitality towards refugees, emergence of a humanitarian–military nexus and shifts in the local labour market after the refugee arrivals, as well as the ascendance of a war economy and new trade geographies in the broader region.

Notes

- 1 Bilad al-Sham historically refers to the geographical region, which is also known as the Levant or Greater Syria.
- 2 The governmental policy stipulates the temporary protection of Syrian refugees and does not provide the right to asylum. This topic will be revisited in the Epilogue.
- 3 For instance, according to Ekrem, a local historian, the Turkification of Kilis region was due to a Karahanlı prince as he defeated the Byzantine dominion and the settlement of his retinue of Turcoman tribes, while the conversion of the locals to Islam happened under the Ottoman rule after the conquest of these lands with the Mercidabık War in 1516. But, Aydın (2011) argues that the Turcoman tribal identity was originally quite dissimilar to the modern Turkish ethnicity.

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