



Evolving Canada–United States cross-border mobility in the Cascade Gateway



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ABSTRACT

The security enhancements along the U.S.–Canada border subsequent to the events of 9/11 have challenged cross-border commuting and personal travel, cross-border freight, and the economic development of border regions. In this paper, the first of these themes is treated in the context of one cross-border region: the Cascade Gateway in the Pacific Northwest. The focus is on human mobility across the border. What impact has security had on human mobility in the cross-border region? How have residents of the borderlands adjusted to the impacts of security on mobility? In essence, how has the border crossing culture changed? Parallel interviews and a survey of 100 stakeholders in the Cascade Gateway, as well as border traffic data, document the impacts of security on mobility both in the U.S. and in Canada, and articulate the responses of stakeholders to the heightened security. Among these responses are the role enhancement of the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project (IMTC), expansion and alignment of cross-border transportation systems, transnational co-operation in mobility governance, and initial reconstitution of a culture of cross-border movement.

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1. Introduction

The enhanced border between Canada and the United States appears strangely enigmatic in an era of global flows emanating in significant part from North America. Due the immense pressure to step up security and the almost equally strong imperative to expedite crossing in a world of flows, the border has been re-invented to enable the rapid crossing of some goods and services, and some people (Konrad & Nicol, 2008a; Brunet-Jailly, 2007). The recent invocation of a Beyond the Border Action Plan (Canada, 2014) to move some of the business of the border away from the border has extended the re-invention of the border, but the imperative remains to alleviate the sustained pressure on the border crossings. Most people wait for what may indeed become intolerable, uneconomic and uncertain outcomes. The uncertainty, the wait times, and indeed the fear of the border have impacted the border crossing culture.

Two differentiated and even opposing positions have emerged among travelers, and these positions are articulated by border stakeholders to explain the clogged border. Some advocate the border as necessarily more definitive, enforced, divisive, and secured. Security has primacy. For others, the border has become a problem with snarled

traffic, contradictory regulation, invasive enforcement and rapid, unpredictable change. They are alarmed by heightened security, and their reactions combined with the broadly reported border incidents, have created an imagined barrier above and beyond the visible security enhancements at the boundary. The overall result of this differentiation of perceptions and the manifestations of security primacy is an altered human geography of the Canada–U.S. borderlands. An imperative to understand this new geography of flows in an era of border enhancement has engaged leading theorists (Agnew, 2008; Van Houtum, 2005; Walters, 2006). Recent interpretations focused on understanding mobility in the context of heightened security (Popescu, 2012) show promise for disentangling the intersection of globalization and heightened bordering. However, more than a decade has passed since the events of 9/11, and insecurity prevails at borders that appear more fortified than ever. All of the efforts to ostensibly build a better border—new and more infrastructure, expanded regulation, giant leaps in technology application, many more security personnel—have yet to produce a border that works for both Canadians and Americans in the twenty-first century.

After the turn of the twenty-first century, cross-border mobility between the United States and Canada changed decidedly and emphatically (Andreas & Biersteker, 2003). Mobility has become restricted, managed, aligned and selectively expedited through security measures imposed at the border and in the borderlands by both countries (Ackleson, 2009). The spontaneous travel and relaxed cross-border migration which characterized the twentieth-century

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border relationship between friends and neighbors has been replaced increasingly by cautious, planned, multipurpose trips and rule-bound migration between business partners and allies in the war on terror (Abelson & Wood, 2007). The border now is perceived as an emerging constraint to mobility, and this perception has been expanded by media representations of a thicker border, and substantiated by the 'security-scapes' constructed in the borderlands (Alden, 2008; Konrad, 2010, 2015).

The focus of this paper is on human mobility across the Canada–U.S. border with specific emphasis to explain how security enhancements along the border have challenged cross-border commuting and personal travel in the Cascade Gateway of the Pacific Northwest region. What impact has security had on human mobility in the cross-border region? How have residents of the borderlands adjusted to these impacts of security on mobility? How has the border crossing culture changed? In parallel interviews and a survey of approximately 100 stakeholders in the Cascade Gateway cross-border region, the consensus of both Americans and Canadians, residents of Washington State and the Province of British Columbia, is that the border is not 'broken' as portrayed in the media. Rather the border is viewed as complex and dynamic, with multiple functions, regional distinctiveness, intra-regional variability, and growing pains as it 'thickens' with security, technology and infrastructure (Alper & Hammond, 2011). The border has expanded both as a local and regional mobility construct and a national security construction to become more immediate and real in the lives of those who choose to and need to cross it, and those who have decided to avoid crossing, or those who are now explicitly excluded from crossing. For border stakeholders in the region, the new twenty-first century border is a challenge to be engaged, but not necessarily welcomed, because the stakeholders identify with and prefer a 'thinner' border. Most stakeholders are, however, engaged in imagining, conceptualizing and building a border that will be both easier to cross and become secure (Konrad, 2010).

In order to follow the arguments in this paper, it is necessary to define and clarify the terms mobility and commuting, and variations of these terms. Mobility has several connotations: changeableness expressed as variegation, fluidity, inequality and transiency; motion defined as the successive change of place, and articulated as transit or passage, progression or recession, and oscillation; and moral sensibility displayed as sensitivity or sensitiveness, and vigor or vitality. Contemporary cross-border mobility encompasses all of these dimensions with perhaps a greater emphasis attributed to the successive change of place with its characteristics of passage and transit rather than the progression once more widely associated with mobility and particularly migration. Commuters are rooted in both place and the periodicity of their movements. To commute is to be periodic, often with a regularity of occurrence to the point of habit, to substitute, change one place for another, transfer and be metonymic, to interchange, double or engage in a mutual change and transpose, and to compromise in mutual concession or give and take.

In this paper, human mobility across the border is confined to the personal and business travel expressed in commuting, vacation travel, occasional trips and other forms of cross-border movement in vehicles, yet it relates to and contributes to a much wider, expanding literature drawing on theories of mobility, circulation, flows, and networks of people, goods and information (Urry, 2000, 2007), and their application to borders (Amilhat Szary & Giraut, 2015; Konrad, 2015). The paper explores the changes in the border crossing culture between Canada and the United States in response to heightened security. Within this evolving culture of crossing in the Pacific Northwest, it is necessary to understand the establishment, growth and influence of the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project. Also important is the process of adaptation, expansion and alignment of cross-border transportation systems in the region. A final component to consider is transnational cooperation in mobility governance. Before addressing these responses to enhancing mobility in an era of security primacy,

the paper conceptualizes briefly the changing nature of mobility across the border between Canada and the United States.

2. Contextual and theoretical ruminations on changing mobility in the Canada–United States borderlands

Often referred to as the 'longest undefended border in the world', the twentieth century Canada–US border worked as an intricate set of scaled relationships encompassing communities, regions and countries (Konrad & Nicol, 2008a). Because it worked effectively and quietly underlying the positive bi-national relationship, the border was heralded as symbolic of integration and coordination between the U.S. and Canada. The border has changed, and so has every cross-border region constituting this border. Although the border has not been closed since the brief but resonant events on September 11, 2001, the border is different, and this difference, associated as it is with the forces of securitization and restriction, has resulted in visible, measurable, irreversible, irreconcilable, and even irascible changes (Alden, 2008). The changes are palpable in many respects but none is more evident than the uncertainty of crossing envisioned by the public on both sides of the border. This uncertainty looms despite the efforts of both national governments to expand the engagement of the public in identity verification compliance (Abelson & Wood, 2007). The border is viewed increasingly as hardened, and this perception has convinced many to stop crossing or to change their crossing patterns, and in some instances, expedite their crossing certainty and velocity with trusted traveler status (Olmedo, 2005). Some people simply no longer cross because uncertainty extends to crossing time as well, and in some instances intolerable wait times also stop expedited travelers.

Other changes that are both perceived and real are militarization (Drache, 2004) and increased regulation and interrogation (Muller, 2010; Salter, 2008). For Canadians, and even Americans more familiar with a visible military presence, the border now appears, and indeed is more 'armed' and intimidating. It is a bigger place bristling with intrusive technology, more uniformed and armed personnel, prominent barriers and signs with curt demands. The changes are felt both by the crossing public and the firms engaged in business across the border. The avowed long term objective is more consistent and effective documentation but the short and intermediate term effect is just more and inconsistent regulation. The militarization and regulatory transition, with their attendant inconsistency, duplication and variation in enforcement, impact crossing frequency and patterns, and create more uncertainty. Uncertainty, militarization, and regulation all cost more money, and more time, which, in a North American context, is in effect more money. Another dramatic change then is the substantially increased cost of the border. More personnel, more infrastructure, and vastly enhanced technology have cost both countries billions of dollars, and there exists a looming possibility of significant user fees to further impact crossing frequency.

The theoretical approach employed to comprehend human mobility across changing border systems is first how people decide to move across the border, next the thresholds that either hold them back or convince them to go, and finally the trajectories that border crossers create to enable their journeys (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011). During the twentieth century, according to numerous sources and studies compiled by Konrad and Nicol (2008a,b) and Nicol (2015), the Canada–US border was crossed constantly by people who would return to their homes and also those who would stay in the neighboring country. People living in the borderlands knew each other, they crossed the border routinely, they had business links and operations that extended across the permeable border, and their language among other aspects of culture was shared. From this tradition of quiet crossings for work, family interaction and relocation in almost seamless cross-border regions, a sense of entitlement to cross the border emerged. During the second half of the twentieth century, as Canadians and Americans became more affluent and mobile, they purchased properties across the

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