

## **Informal Cross-Border Trade: Malaysia-Indonesia Borders The Conceptualisation From 'Authority-Defined' To "Everyday-Defined"**

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### **Abstract**

*For these border studies, understanding borderlanders provides a new narrative about boundaries. The history of a nation-state of a collective nature, the alignment of power, economic segmentation, and integration of culture, ethnicity, and identity, religion, the behavior of marginal communities, as well as modern socio-political segregation are variables that can be raised in various disciplines. In this study, we offer a qualitative method with an ethnographic perspective, as many anthropologists do, but with a constructivist approach. We call it the conceptualization of "Authority-Defined" to "Everyday-Defined." The diversity of narratives and connotations in unraveling boundaries gives the perspective of contextual interpretation in different positions. Surely, understanding boundaries should also be seen in such a detailed context that the actors of border studies, i.e., society, are observed through the lens of meaning boundaries in their everyday lives. These differences lead to findings that are rich in dynamic and varied border backgrounds. This discussion focused on on-the-ground findings about informal cross-border trade, specifically at the Malaysia-Indonesia border. A trading system built by local communities is certainly different from the trade system in non-border areas and even in the country's capital area.*

**Keywords:** *Borders, authority-defined, everyday-defined, Border trade*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article discusses the philosophy of knowledge about boundaries, which is the basis for the epistemology of border studies. The deep understanding of some border thinkers and studiers from the beginning talks about history, space, without space, modern geo-politics, security, sovereignty, and now the border is the basis for the formation of the nation state. The objective of this article is to cover the philosophy of science up to the understanding of border studies related to the interpretation of government in different decades. Discussions and comments on this article are based on a top-down discussion of boundaries. As a result, the epistemology of the state's understanding of borders, markets, and society serves as the foundation for these studies in raising the concept of knowledge and establishing a thesis in border studies.

This article also elaborates on the perspective of border studies in Asia, which has various and different streaks. Commentary and discussion also show the findings on the ground about the informal cross-border trade between Malaysia and Indonesia. This article is

based on the library's literature studies method on some famous works, referring to their studies on borders. The results of the interviews conducted during the fieldwork were also included. The discussion and explanation of the perspective of science in border studies can finally be concluded by bringing findings and conclusions to the philosophy of science in border studies. In fact, border studies understanding, perspectives, issues, and various fields of knowledge provide a specific focus when discussing and studying borders. The border is becoming the basis for border studies in discussing issues related to modern geo-political separation, whether epistemologically related to the basis of space, identity, and ethnicity; or directly related to the reality of the perspective of the authority-interpretation; or the interpretation of everyday life in a specific region based on ethnicity, culture, and language.

Ethnic diversity in daily life can only be highlighted or seen through another more micro-approach, which is daily interpretation, in addition to the interpretation of authority. Through this approach, ethnic identity is described as an "articulation of personal experience" where the image of who the perpetrator is as a member of an ethnic group emerges and is influenced by the experiences they go through in their daily lives (Shamsul A.B. 1996a in Pue Giok Hun and Charanjit Kaur 2014: 58 ). The results of the analysis as stated by Shamsul A.B in 1996, 1999, and 2015 are used in the writing of this article, which is based on the interpretation of authority and the interpretation of daily life as the core of understanding borders, border communities, culture, ethnicity , identity, market, and economy, especially trade at borders. This paper is based on the results of our research in Sebatik on the Indonesia-Malaysia border, on cross-border trade on an island that is divided between Indonesian and Malaysian sovereignty (Rudiatin.E. 2018a), (Sardjono, 2018)

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this paragraph will discuss the terms and concepts related to border studies.

### **Border Studies**

Border studies is an understanding of political, economic, social, spatial and temporal contexts. The various issues seen lead to a variety of discoveries and discussions based on disciplines, perspectives and physical boundaries. A frequently asked question is the interpretation of boundaries and their location. This question brings studiers to a new level in understanding the true meaning of the border in terms of theory and concept.

Studies on borders was basically created by Ratzel in his work entitled *Politische Geographie* in 1897 (Kolosov and Scott 2013). This work debates about borders that have their origins in history and traditional culture as a trigger for inspiration interpreted by Herder, Hegel, Darwin, Fichte and others where the emergence of nation states and their borders are understood as an expression of historical necessity and / or will god Kolosov and Scott also stated about the boundaries that are the basis of the philosophy of social phenomena.

There is no dominant hegemony against any social theory related to space, and the social interest that ultimately when space is abstract, it is said that the border is one of the complete solutions by providing community life with an increasingly comprehensive social space. The fact should be remembered, studies on boundaries reflects continuity and change in scientific thinking and contributions to the conceptualization of social space as well as a diversity of social spaces and geographic scales. Having a clear understanding and not just imagination in understanding borders, gives a clear picture of the sovereignty of a country.

The exclusive setting of physical geographical boundaries is as important as cultural boundaries, economic boundaries and religious boundaries which have a direct impact on how people are managed and separated. The emergence of the discourse of globalization in the late 1980s and early 1990s revolved around global technology, cyberspace, capital flows and the west-east political clash. Political boundaries rarely equate to ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, political boundaries rarely equate to ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries. In this way, the political map of the world that shows the lines that separate the container boxes (container boxes) is largely a representation of the political elite, because many people do not recognize or associate themselves with fixed divisions.

The borders of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union brought with them wars and episodes of ethnic cleansing, according to Kolosov and Scott (2013: 4). The existence of borderless terms was the basis for reconsidering sovereignty in Central and Eastern Europe, they argue. Kolosov and Scott also stated that the existence of borderless terms was the basis for reconsidering sovereignty, having created new borders for federations such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union that brought with them wars and brutal episodes of ethnic cleansing.

### **The Issues on Border Studies**

Border conflicts that lead to claims between states and nations witness the clash of social and cultural boundaries. This is especially the case on the South Korea-North Korea border; the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Cyprus; and the border between Turkey and Armenia. In this context, borders are used to represent opposing parties as a constant threat. The importance of sovereignty and borders has changed with regard to certain groups. This is especially the case on the South Korea-North Korea side; Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Cyprus; the border between Turkey and Armenia, and the border between Bosnia and other former Yugoslav republics. In this context, borders are used to represent opposing parties as a constant threat and thus as the main ideological driver of conflict over opposing territories (Bechev and Nicolaidis 2010 and McCall, 2013).

In this regard, the border is not only seen as a dividing line to the territory and sovereignty of the country but more than that. This phenomenon creates increasingly aggressive territorial and border control. Borders do not only represent sovereignty but they are also seen in the direction of expansion and control related to coercion, political authority, economic crime, legitimate legislation; in terms of patterns including full or partial control and cooperation, and in various time periods; seasonal, temporary or continuous. Arguably, the world economic system depends on the division of space between states and countries, and increasingly, between regions and cities, because the environment of capital can circulate and compete only between legal spaces created within states and/or regions. In addition, the support of the world economy not only creates but requires social asymmetries and inequalities and thus only political boundaries sustain them.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

In-depth observation is required for understanding frontier studies. Researchers such as Martinez, who studied the United States-Mexico border community in 1994, Asmuth, who in 2003 studied Latvia-Estonia-Russia, and Mathiessen and Bürkner, who in 2001 studied Germany-Poland, and Bojcun, who in 2011 studied the Russian-Ukrainian regional border, were aware of the fact of the need to introduce new methods in the field of frontier studies.

Researchers experience daily interactions with border communities. Some researchers document how borders are narrated and influenced by collective memories in border areas that have undergone significant political change. The trauma of the cold war, as well as tightened border guarding, impacted movement and perceptions of the parties in the Austria-Hungary border region. A few years after the fall of the socialist state, the existence of borders did not erase past experiences, although the separation at the border lines continued to tighten.

The approach to understanding everyday life with geographical conditions at the border aims to acquire basic knowledge through observational participation. This approach seeks to understand how the everyday life of the world is built around borders and, more significantly, how socio-economic and political transformations and changes position social relations among people on the frontiers in the future. The confirmation or recategorization of social boundaries can actually have a political effect.

Most frontier studies base their research descriptively, as do qualitative studies. But on the other hand, it is still necessary to develop new methods in border studies that will make this study more interesting and transcend geographical space. Careful attention to the method will help the researcher to make it an acceptable set of variables in developing the theory. In building the theory of frontier studies, what needs to be emphasized is the strategy in placing the study method. In this study, we offer a qualitative method with an ethnographic perspective, as many anthropologists do, but with a constructivist approach.

Careful attention to the method will help the researcher to make it an acceptable set of variables in developing the theory. In building a border studies theory, what should be emphasized is the strategy in placing the studies method.

Based on the difference in concept, theory, and classification of these border studies, we developed several variables which typologically can be used as a basis as a theoretical framework in border studies in the future. Variables such as historical chronology, resource demands, demographic trends, institutional degrees, economic development gaps, domestic environments, global contexts, and technological differences lead to a degree of theoretical development in border studies.

Ironically, most borders today create variables such as border conflicts based on past history, such as Mexico-US-Canada, Alsace-Lorraine, Poland-Germany, North Korea-South Korea, India-Pakistan, Japan-Russia, and Palestine-Israel, and there is no lack of Philippines-Malaysia-Indonesia border. Studies involving cultural variables lead to a unit of critical variable measurement, especially at the integration border. As stated by Martinez, for example, the US-Canada border is centered on Anglo-Saxon culture, while the US-Mexico border is a clash of Mexican cultures rooted in Mediterranean culture.

As a result of the integration and clash of cultures, this also leads to disputes involving resources and demands. This dispute is indicative of studies on the variables of resource demands that lead to threats and border conflicts. Furthermore, past studies also did not see demographic variables as a trigger for studies on border population density. Demographic changes in integration and clash see cross-border related issues, population dumping, and economic opportunities that expand beyond diverse disciplines.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this paragraph will explain the findings and discussion about the understanding of border studies in various contexts.

### **Border Studies in Southeast Asia**

Border studies is something new in Southeast Asia (Tsuji-Tamura: see Boyle (2015: 128) *The Future of Border Studies in the Asia-Pacific: 'Reshaping Border Studies in Asia and the Pacific'*). Tsuji-Tamura debated that, in the era of the Second World War, Southeast Asian countries were involved in the war to claim independence, civil war, regional conflicts, and so on were an extension of the power of the colonial era. After independence was achieved, Southeast Asian countries looked forward to developing nation-states based on their own models.

The empowerment of the nation state is accompanied by the strengthening of border regions; the promotion of regional economic development is also seen as an opportunity for the survival of a country's security and economy. However, at the same time, borders are seen as something important and should be protected. This demonstrates that Southeast Asian countries are fortifying the border in various ways to ensure that it remains closed for the sake of the country's survival and security.

Zhing Da (in Boyle 2015: 125) debates about border studies in the Asia-Pacific region, especially the East-North region, which is witnessing the phenomenon of geo-political risk that is becoming more acute. He gave an example of the conflict phenomenon that occurred on the India-Pakistan border, which also borders Afghanistan. Despite the severity of the border conflict, the phenomenon of social transformation and the movement of religious groups have led to a positive phenomenon regarding border studies in Southeast Asia.

The clash of military conflicts creates another side phenomenon regarding marginal groups of border communities. Adaptation to cultural differences leads to a harmony of marginal groups in defining the border between two countries. This phenomenon, described by Oliver (2010: 74), regarding the interpretation of marginal groups or border communities, defines the border region of the country through the daily understanding and past history of their existence in the region.

As a result, Yamane (in Boyle 2015: 126) contends that the border is a product of the tendency to defend oneself (sense of self-defense). The phenomenon of the border itself is the most important key to the product of border studies, and it is interesting to conduct research on it. In fact, the phenomenon of borders that emerge from the interpretation of the mind itself leads to diversity in the need to protect and guard the border by certain actors. This makes questions such as why, how, and who, a conclusion to the tendency to defend oneself in the context of the border studies that continue to grow. Studies in Southeast Asia that focus on the post-Second World War, colonial era colonialism, continued rising to demand independence, civil war, conflicts and disputes, movements of certain groups, making the country that exists in the shadow of Westphalia develop in creating clear border lines with other countries.

### **Border Studies Gap in Southeast Asia**

The main focus of border studies gives insight into the phenomenon of conflict that occurs at the border. Disputes and debates involving military and political pressure put the probability of a country's creating a more practical separation of border lines based on the interpretation of the government (authority-defined), giving an advantage to the countries that are in dispute. This created the appearance of other border issues after the existence of a nation-state that is based on the border line in modern geo-politics based on international law.

This modern geo-political separation makes the nation state continue to put emphasis on the protection of border regions with clear border lines beyond traditional borders; religious and ethnic borders that are always in a state of ambiguity; economic borders of border communities that are capable of manipulation; and so on. This situation appears as a result of the fear of self-protection of the border from other countries. Yamane (in Boyle 2015: 127), for example, states that the fear of self-protection in the border region has connotations like the border region of the nation-state, which means fortress. This implies that the security and sovereignty of the country are protected by a border line that is always closed with various types of protection.

It is recognized that the government should protect the border region within various specific legal contexts. This protection provides an overview of the continued security of a country from external threats. A positively developed protection context is related to cooperation with other countries. For example, economic cooperation to ensure regional economic stability and prosperity is at the core of cooperation in the context of the territorial protection of countries in Southeast Asia. Social and economic cooperation at international and cross-border levels helps to reduce the psychological gaps of minority groups and marginal groups that are on the edge of border regions. The survival of border communities is the result of cooperation between countries that guarantees protection for the community and, at the same time, creates certain attractiveness and economic opportunities.

An important actor in border studies, who sees the first actor as the government and the authority in the implementation of various rules and policies, The second actor is the border community, which is seen as a marginal group that sometimes has its own interpretation based on everyday life (everyday-defined) regarding the existence of physical or non-physical borders. These two actors play an important role in the continuity of a country's borders. As a result, on the basis of border security, the government pressures minority groups and ethnic groups, which are imagined as groups that use economic resources around the border region. This is because minority groups and ethnic groups at the border have been a very significant group in terms of security and the economy at the border for a long time.

The cross-border economic phenomenon has been a very significant phenomenon for marginal groups for a long time. The use of economic resources, especially routes in border regions that cross between countries, plays an important role in various aspects. However, this matter received the attention of Tsuji-Tamura (in Boyle 2015: 129) regarding the government's behavior, which seems to close its eyes (blind eye) regarding economic affairs at the border by switching to matters related to corruption. Sometimes, this matter is also taken advantage of to provoke territorial conflicts with ethnic groups and minorities in neighboring countries.

Border studies are also related to religious borders. In Japan, as in China, communist ideology and doctrine became a sentiment of belief in the existence of regions and national borders (Tsuji-Tamura in Boyle 2015: 129). This border of religion and belief is the core of the integrity of a country's survival in closing the border from threats to security and sovereignty as well as economic dominance from other countries. In addition, in other Southeast Asian countries, the existence of MAPHILINDO (Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia) has become a model for border cooperation, which is an important agenda for the existence of religious borders.

From an anthropological perspective in general, his analysis sees border markets as location-specific and social structures, characterized not only by the economic exchange between them but also by their most important roles as arenas of cultural activity and political expression, networks of information flow, landmarks, historical and ritual, as well as a center for community participation with diverse social, economic, ethnic, and mixed cultural groups, which clash, cooperate, collude, compete, and experience clashes. Anthropological and sociological perspectives emphasize the market's continuity with patterns of social organization and cultural meaning, implying that economic behavior is not analyzed as a separate sphere of human activity but as inextricably linked to various types of social, political, and cultural behaviors, institutions, and beliefs. An individual's economic actions have a strong anchor in the context of the social networks of society.

### **Gray Area Phenomenon**

In general, the collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s reflected the existence of a better international political system among nations. This phenomenon increases the likelihood of outliving the security and survival of various systems on the political, economic, and even social levels. Democratic political institutions are seen as the saviors of the post-war world order (New World Order), which is linked to the growing market power mechanism. Developments that are directly driven by the influence of the modern capitalist world and globalization force the economy, politics, and society in favor of the trend of globalization that puts the world without borders (Borderless World). However, the development seen may guarantee that well-being and peace, once again showing anxiety when the threat arises from the spectrum conflict that starts from below, known as the Gray Area Phenomena (GAP), and this phenomenon is growing.

The gray area phenomenon includes conflicts related to terrorism, insurgency, and illegal drug trafficking; fundamentalist militant factions; ethnic cleansing; and civil wars that trigger threats across national borders and cause other instability. Although much of the activity of organized crime groups is the same as before, they have expanded their field of operations, level of cooperation, and organized crime. The use of violence has become the primary tactic, and the ability of law enforcement to combat what has become a global threat is limited. The western world has become the main target of organized crime, but many activities originate in areas such as Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, South America, and, to a lesser extent, Africa and the Middle East. Jurisdictional issues, lack of principles of common law, disregard for community politics, and inter-community strife often hinder law enforcement. These problems are compounded by the changing role of the military and other organizations, as well as rules and policies for this increasingly complex phenomenon.

Peter Chalk, in his work *Gray-Area Phenomena 1997 in Southeast Asia: Piracy, Drug Trafficking, and Political Terrorism*, interprets this phenomenon as a universal phenomenon that is growing and has a global outlook. Chalk also sees the development of the gray area phenomenon in Southeast Asia as an extension of the Cold War era related to drug production, maritime piracy, cross-border trade, and non-violent threats, with the main emphasis on the Golden Triangle; Laos, Burma, and Thailand regions; and political violence. Chalk's statement is also in line with Hiltner's statement, which states that this threat is not new to the border environment. This is because it is influenced by the factors of the vast maritime area with the forest and mountain boundaries in Southeast Asia.

This issue has received deep attention and is termed a threat in a new form as a result of the existence of borderless in the 1990s. At the same time, this phenomenon has become increasingly clear that mechanisms to overcome such threats are not well developed in the region of Southeast Asian countries. The impact of coalitions and cooperation has increased significantly, along with the importance attached to this unconventional area of regional security. However, the evidence is seen with the growth of cross-border trade in the form of economic and human smuggling; cross-border trade; kidnapping for ransom; drug trafficking; and terrorist groups, all of which have greater relevance in ensuring national security in Southeast Asia.

Sebatik, as the outermost island of Nunukan regency, East Kalimantan, is carried out directly with the State of Sabah, Malaysia. Administratively, a small island with the highest population density is "split" into two. Some of them enter the territory of Indonesia, and some of them partly enter the territory of Malaysia. Activities across the Indonesia-Sabah-Malaysia border have been going on for a long time, even before this country became independent. activities aimed at trade, exchange, and barter. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Dutch government began to pay attention to the border town of Nunukan when it became a gateway for illegal opium smuggled from Tawau on the British side. The smuggling was carried out in the context of the barter trade, which was already rampant before World War II. After the war, hundreds of people's boats, known as kumpit boats, went with raw materials to Sabah and "brought smuggled goods home."

In the 1960s and 1970s, timber dominated cross-border trade, followed by cocoa, secondary crops, and, most importantly, fishery products. Then other needs, such as basic needs, electronics, fuel oil, and last but not least, manpower, began to flow. Frontiers not found in this sense were not previously a problem in subsistence economies at that time. But now the border area in Sebatik-Nnukan is increasingly integrated with the world market. The advantageous geographical position, as a gateway for cross-border trade as well as supporting river and sea transportation conditions, is an asset for the country. Trade at the border is now faced with various regulations not only from Indonesia but also from Malaysia. Cross-border trade is not as flexible as it used to be. This gives the reason for the emergence of border markets (Rudiatin, E. 2018a) ,(Sardjono, 2018).

### **Informal Cross Border Trade: Malaysia-Indonesia Borders**

Informal cross-border trade is one category of the informal economy in general. The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines informal economic activity as economic activity that occurs outside of the formal labor market. This activity refers to working people who are largely excluded from the exchange that takes place in the recognized system. Informal economic activities at the border give a shadow to activities carried out outside the boundaries of the formal economy, without a gazette route, avoiding certain taxation and regulations. Traded goods and commodities are also possible without valid records.

Ackello-Ogutu's statement is supported by the interpretation expressed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOs) in Habtamu et. al. (2014) that cross-border informal economic trade is "the movement of goods in which or parts of the trading activity is unrecorded or unrecognized by the government and without adherence to procedural requirements of all formal institutions." Ackello-Ogutu and Habtamu's statement is in line with other opinions that refer to this informal economic activity as informal cross-border trade or known as Informal Cross-Border Trade-ICBT (Njoku Ola Ama et. al., 2013).



Njoku said ICBT is a trade involving goods and services that are traded, issued, and produced legally but outside of national policies, regulations, and taxation.

These four statements conclude that cross-border informal trade activities are informal trade activities that cross borders between countries and are outside of government taxation between countries. This interpretation also implies that trade involving goods and commodities and services like these does not pay taxes and are not bound by international policies. This includes both gazette and non-gazette trade routes. The use of route gazette by certain countries may mean that economic actors will use illegal practices to fill the space and opportunities of ICBT. Illegal practices can occur due to declared quota values, classification of goods categories, overlapping policies and understanding of trade regulations between countries, without tax declaration or goods from the country of origin to the recipient country, or avoiding certain taxes and charges (Humprey, 2018).

The demarcation between Malaysia and Indonesia on Sebatik Island, which is strategic, facilitates informal cross-border trade to continue. The survival of this ICBT goes beyond agreements such as BTA 1970, BCA 1984, and GSSC under BIMP-EAGA 2007. The three agreements categorize every economic activity on the border based on certain rules and agreements between countries. Cross-border posts, gazette quota values, and commodity types are traded differently than under the concept of ICBT, where these activities occur concurrently with both legal and illegal practices. Malaysia-Indonesia's Sebatik Island border region is dominated almost entirely by cross-border informal trade in two different dominances: legal and illegal. Legally, this trade has a valid registration and license whether it is registered in the name of border trade or barter trade. Legal practice in terms of gazette trade routes, taxation, and meeting the value of quotas and gazette commodities on the basis of complying with the agreement that has been set by both countries. Illegal practices refer to cross-border trade that is not registered with any of the laws of a country, is not recorded, is difficult to identify and sometimes does not comply with any publication by any formal institution between countries. This illegal practice often leads to cross-border trade that is smuggled, whether done consciously or not. The activities of economic actors and non-state actors who are hostile in the border region make it so complex, with various implications for the relationship between the two countries (Poltak Partogi, 2018). For example, in certain situations, under the 1970 BTA agreement, the determination of the value of RM600 is quite irrelevant for today's practice. Sometimes, cross-border trade with the quota value traded under the BTA 1970 exceeds the gazette value. This leads to the overlap of the advantage of the quota value of RM600 in the name of BTA 1970 on the Indonesian side, while on the Malaysian side, under the BIMP-EAGA 2007 barter trade, the value of quotas and commodities has been determined by Malaysia in terms of CIQs ports for export and imports.

Apart from the chronology of the ICBT concept in general and its connection with what is happening on the Malaysia-Indonesia border, the dominance of cross-border informal trade should also be considered. The dominance of this trade provides space and great economic opportunities to border communities that are so dependent on each other. In addition to looking at the market and economic transactions, this trade also brings losses to the country, whether it is security, sovereignty, distributors, or consumers. With the character and economic characteristics of this trade that can often change from legal to illegal, trade monopolies on certain commodities, corruption and integrity, health and sanitation issues on products, commodities and services, the influx of illegal immigrants, smuggling and other non-military threats also give various connotations to this trade concept. However, despite the

compactness of space, opportunities and threats, the profit of this trade is seen to be more directed to economic actors who have kinship lines, social networks, efficient communication, equality of ethnic boundaries, open markets without state institutional regulation, and high demand in both countries. In addition, the manipulation of the border community that takes advantage of the concept of border trade and barter trade facilitates this cross-border informal trade to maximize profits.

The report by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (APMM) in *Sinar Harian* dated July 20, 2017 stated the involvement of local citizens who manipulated the position of Sebatik Island to smuggle out controlled goods, including cooking gas barrels, to Indonesia. The difficulty in dealing with issues like this is compounded when goods and commodities crossing the port of Tawau to Sebatik are said to have passed through the CIQs jetty at Log Pond port, Tanjung Batu. This illustrates that economic actors in this trade use the concept of barter trade and cross-border trade, which is legal. However, it becomes an illegal practice in informal cross-border trade when the tactics used by local citizens are similar to the concept of formal trade but the strategy is to bring controlled goods in small quantities by repeatedly making this trade activity categorized as smuggling. Cross-border smuggling characterized by informality through legal practice implies that this phenomenon has taken place earlier than the existence of the separation of national borders. The clash between the Anglo-Dutch great powers during the colonial era created a form of informal economic integration development into the characteristics of society. For example, Tagliacozzo (2007) stated that these two major colonial powers started programs of expansion that had an impact on the patterns and trends of smuggling along the colonial borders at that time. This proves that the democratization of modern geo-political borders also creates space and opportunities that can be exploited in cross-border trade that is more informal in nature. The imagined informal describes the legal and illegal sides of practice, and sometimes they happen simultaneously.

The continuation of informal cross-border trade is beneficial to both countries. For example, a study states that cross-border informal trade is one of the economic mechanisms that can be developed to prosper the local economy. This trade creates opportunities for businesses and traders to obtain new markets, sources of supply, capital, labor, and technology. The form of this opportunity is often influenced by the level of economic development within the country's borders. There is mutual dependence on the economic level of a country at the border, leading to a high dependence on all the resources of the country. This economic space is taken advantage of by informal cross-border trade economic actors who have access to facilities, transport, infrastructure, and even markets created by border communities themselves. In fact, this trade is seen as a space to create various types of jobs to meet the needs of the trade. For example, the existence of baggage labor and cargo lifting labor is an interesting phenomenon along the port of Tawau-Tanjung Batu, Sebatik, and Nunukan until the pattern of cross-border trade, barter trade, and cross-border informal trade is organized to Pare-Pare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia (Sardjono, 2018). This labor that operates almost entirely informally describes the job space created by the society that depends on this trade. This statement supports the study conducted by Muzvidziwa (2001), who states that informal cross-border trade becomes the main source of family income or the main support income for husbands and frees them from the shackles of poverty.

Cultural and ethnic similarities in the Indonesian part of Sebatik island and Malaysia's part of Sabah, which are dominated by culture and ethnicity; Bugis from South Sulawesi, Java-Madura, and Dayak Tidung, support the process of socio-economic interaction between two

groups of people on the border of two countries, especially on ethnic Sulawesi, mostly from Bugis. The cross-border regulations of the two countries did not deter the activities that took place between these groups. The similarity of culture and ethnicity is often a source of benefits to facilitate the socio-economic interaction between them.

The people of a country whose ethnic and cultural boundaries intersect will eliminate the ideas of ethnic construction that separate them for survival interests. Ethnic boundaries often have a fluid character; they can be narrowed or expanded in relation to the specific needs of economic mobilization. In the economy, differences in identity and customs between ethnic groups lead to economic actions to meet the shortcomings of each ethnic group. This inter-ethnic meeting causes the complementary relationship between the two to tend to eliminate the ideas of ethnic construction that separate "I" and "them". When carrying out economic activities in the Indonesian and Malaysian communities on the island of Sebatik, there are no longer any differences between the two nations with their borders and rules. A visible phenomenon is a market society that contributes and cooperates for economic sustainability. What is known as economic integration (Rudiatin, 2018b).

Humphrey (2018: 107) states that cross-border informal trade involves a large number of economic actors operating on a small scale compared to formal trade. He classified this trade into three categories: trade carried out by informal industries (unregistered, outside of formal labor legislation), trade isolated and avoided from labor legislation, and trade carried out by formal economic systems. Second, trade is carried out by formal industries (registered with state institutions, bound by labor legislation and the formal economic system) but avoids taxation, regulations, and legislation related to cross-border trade. Third, trade that is carried out by formal industry but avoids all regulations and legislation related to cross-border trade. This involves illegal practices such as reporting trade goods in amounts, quota values, different types of trade commodities, or not reporting trade goods, in order to pay only lower taxes or charges. The same is the case with the declaration of merchandise that is not consistent from the country of origin to the country of consumption and is not consistent in declaring the commodity category. In fact, the rate of giving and receiving bribes in this trade is also worrying. Corruption and integrity in informal cross-border trade is a challenge to address at the local level.



**Figure 1.** Sebatik Island

Cross-border informal trade has become the main activity and habit for border communities, especially on Sebatik Island (Rudiatin.E 2018b), (Sarjono, 2018) The dependence of this trade is such that it cannot be separated from the community. In fact, the strong ethnic backbone is the catalyst for this trade to continue. The dependence of the two countries that have the same cluster is at the core of this dependence multiplying to this day. So much so that both countries agreed to put tolerance from various geo-political, economic, and social angles into certain cooperation. This agreement reflects both countries' desire to prosper the economies of the border communities. Geographical factors on the Indonesian side to obtain the needs of daily goods place a high dependence on the Malaysian economic space, especially in Tawau (Chitra Indah, 2017). On the Malaysian side, they see Sebatik as a source of supply, a main market, and an alternative for its products across borders. This economic dependence leads to alternative sources of livelihood for border economic actors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The development of the idea of a comprehensive study of frontier studies can be summarized in three main points. First, border studies in the past saw boundaries as an observational phenomenon. This phenomenon is seen from various angles by different scientific disciplines. The differences between the experts of the various disciplines are rooted in their respective fields of knowledge and expertise, which allow for narrative findings without comprehensively linking them to border people. Border studies in North America, for example, only look at the phenomenon of strategically positioned border areas that create interdependence between the neighboring countries. Second, in understanding the meaning of various borders, past studies have defined boundaries for various purposes, creating various concepts for understanding boundaries. Starting from the understanding of traditional connotations to the interpretation of borders as a result of the explosion of globalization, which blurs all boundaries, Third, border studies in the past have had almost no clear theoretical foundation, if any at all. This is due to the fact that it necessitates an approach that can bring together different disciplines, historical background on the border space, conflict and war involving Asian colonization, cultural-ethnic integration, and identity in the same and diverse community groups.

This narrative is used in forming the integrity of a nation state by interpreting the national borders, which sometimes brings contradictions to the understanding of marginal communities about the border region itself. The phenomenon of gray area, assimilation, symbiosis, and integration towards the border position of a country is seen to be diverse, and for sure, a country needs tolerance in various angles in order to secure the position. The border space symbolically means state sovereignty. Finally, understanding from the conversation space provides border studies researchers with a new narrative for understanding the border. The history of a nation-state that is collective, power alignment, economic segmentation, cultural integration, ethnicity and identity, religion, the treatment of marginalized communities, and modern socio-political separation are variables that can be raised in various different disciplines in unraveling boundaries in the context of different positions. These differences lead to such rich discoveries with different border backgrounds. Understanding the border, on the other hand, must be viewed in such a detailed context that the actor of the border, the marginal community, studies through the lens of interpreting the border in everyday life, through the narrative of the border community's everyday interpretation (everyday-defined).

The daily understanding and interpretation of the border community reflect a form of social reality. The social reality that is built is based on the daily social space that does not separate them. A border area provides a useful perspective for studying the origin of national territory, the evolution of national space, and the relationship between the two. So, as a result of "past events," the formation of the country's borders has become more sensitive in terms of security and sovereignty. However, bilateral and multilateral cooperation is built on the basis of prosperity between two countries, especially in border communities. Interestingly, in the space of the dividing line created by the government, border community actors sometimes see that the border is blurred, fluid, and sometimes close to non-existent.

What is clear is that the benefits of overlap, ambiguity, and fluidity regarding this border space are used and sometimes lead to polemics that are top-down and bottom-up. In the end, understanding boundaries gives multiple interpretations regarding the social reality that occurs in our everyday lives. Border issues cannot be seen in black and white. There are many dimensions that must be considered by policymakers, especially with regard to the economic needs of border crossers. The border study finds various sociocultural dimensions in the economic activities of border crossers, not only the economic dimension. The ambivalent action of market participants in cross-border trade regulations is a rational choice that cannot be interpreted as having no nationalism. This complements the political economy literature on rational choices for policymakers or for local politics. Cross-border strategies and tips that have developed among market players are often understood as a form of resistance to local political policies that threaten the sustainability of trade at the border. The most important aspect is that border studies enrich multidisciplinary studies.

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