BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

Volume 3, Issue 2
Spring & Summer 2022

Academic and artistic explorations of borders in the 21st century

PORTFOLIO
The Social Life of Images
By Mario Jimènez Dìaz
(Cover image)

Featuring Special Section:
MEXICO'S SOUTHERN BORDER AND BEYOND
Edited by Margath A. Walker and Jared P. Van Ramshorst

BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

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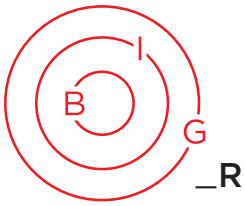

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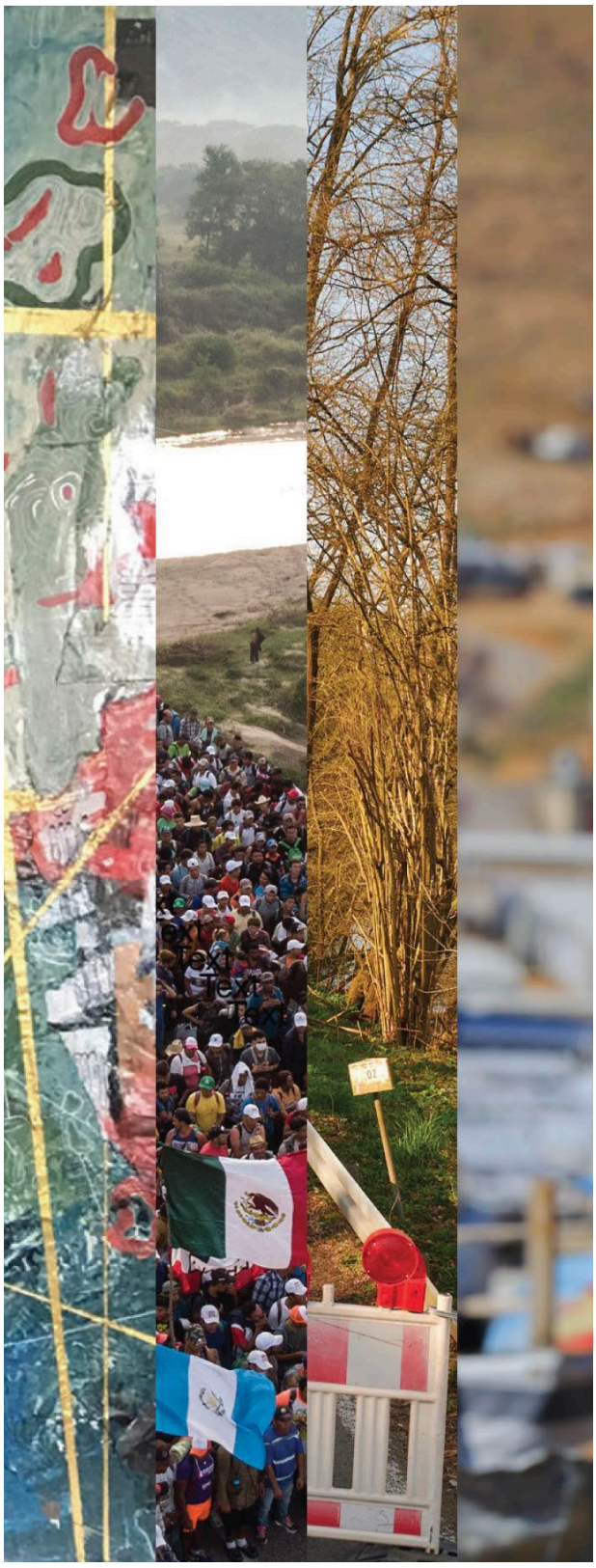

BIG_Review is a bi-annual, multidisciplinary, open-access, and peer-reviewed journal, providing a forum for **academic and artistic explorations of borders in the 21st century**. We publish scholarly work (academic articles, review essays, research notes, film reviews, and book reviews) as well as artistic work (photography, painting, poetry, short stories, fiction reviews, and more). The journal is committed to quality research, public access, policy relevance, and cultural significance. We welcome submissions from all disciplines and backgrounds.

Scholarly submissions should engage with the research literature on borders, including, for example, bordering processes, borderlands, and borderscapes. We encourage studies that go beyond the 'land image' by exploring borders as non-contiguous, aterritorial, mobile, electronic, biometric, functional, etc. We are especially interested in explorations of borders and global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, migration, and economic shocks. We also seek border studies that break new ground by integrating Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and practices. We encourage innovative theoretical work as well as empirical and quantitative research. Articles should be between 7,000 and 10,000 words in length. Book and film reviews should be between 500 and 1,000 words, and essays between 1,000 and 4,000 words. Academic submissions must be previously unpublished and not simultaneously under other publishers' consideration.

Artistic submissions should pertain to borders, whether political, social, cultural, personal, or metaphoric. Borders capture the popular imagination and inspire creative works, which in turn influence the forces shaping borders. We promote portfolios and individual works of photography, painting, poetry, short fiction, video, commentary, and other forms. Under Creative Commons licensing, artists retain copyright of their work and benefit from increased exposure at no cost to them.

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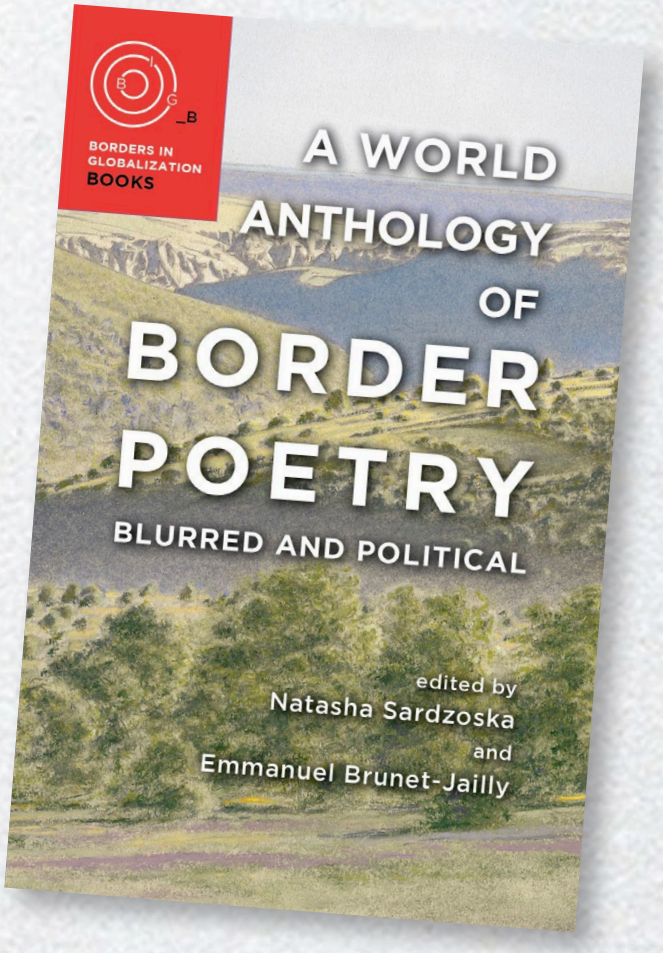
A World Anthology of Border Poetry

Blurred and Political



This multilingual anthology presents the works of poets from around the world, showcasing the state of the art and distinct contributions of poetry to literary criticism and dissent. Beyond the social sciences and humanities, the book points to the importance of poetry for the fields of inquiry into borderlands and frontiers as intersectional and relational human experiences. The poems invite the reader to explore innovative approaches to reading and writing borders, those that transcend language within their conventional semiology of boundary transgression.

About the Editors

Natasha Sardzoska, PhD, is a poet, author, polyglot translator, and Adjunct Professor at Schiller International University.

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Letter of Introduction

Dear Readers,

We are excited to share the new *Borders in Globalization Review*.

This issue begins with a Special Section: Mexico's Southern Border and Beyond, curated by guest editors Margath A. Walker and Jared P. Van Ramshorst. Mexico's northern border with the United States has dominated our collective political imagination, leaving the Mexico–Guatemala border understudied. This Special Section builds on a growing body of literature that integrates findings on Mexico's southern border into the broader study of borders. The small collection includes original research by both early career and established academics that touches on themes of immigration and border policy, the lived experiences of migrants at the border, survival strategies as a form of resistance, climate change and climate-induced mobility, and the importance of local solutions to regional and global challenges. Also included in this issue is an article by Lacin Idil Oztig that analyzes Israeli policy toward African asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants, highlighting the important roles of NGOs and judicial power.

In the Chief Editor's-Choice Portfolio, The Social Life of Images, artist Mario Jimènez Díaz showcases his distinct mixed-media style, heavily influenced by the mixing of cultures he experienced growing up in Mexico near the US border. "Twin Cities Torn Apart", for instance, featured on the cover, provides glimpses into the experiences of families and communities divided by the Mexico–US border, with actual 'sutures' evoking Mark Salter's memorable border metaphor. Following the portfolio, our Poetry Section, edited by Natasha Sardzoska, includes the works of two wonderful poets—Lucilla Trapazzo explores migration as a consequence of a neglected humanity while Dubravka Durić's work centres on the materiality of borders and the emotional relationship many have with bordering processes in the aftermath of the wars in Yugoslavia.

Edited by Elisa Ganivet, the Art & Border Section includes three essays. First, Madeleine Filippi introduces us to the work of Sarah Trouche, a performance artist who uses her body to challenge our conceptions of borders. To quote Filippi, "the choice to show her naked body, which engages and confronts audiences and renders herself vulnerable, becomes a living receptacle of the history of a territory in the service of potential dialogue between peoples and temporalities." Then, published in French for the first time, we are excited to share Alberto Pacheco Benites' *Trois Regimes de Murs* ("Three Regimes of Walls"), which outlines a new cartography of walls under the rubrics of 'portable', 'transparented', and 'factual' walls. The section closes with a short text in Spanish by Clara Bolívar that tells us a story of international art collaborations focused on border walls with reference the fall of the Berlin Wall. English translations are provided side-by-side to each of the three essays in this section. We conclude the issue with two film reviews, one by Hakan Ünay and one by Caroline Schmidt Patricio and Edgar Garcia Velozo, and two book reviews, by Chayanika Saxena and Sam Kerr.

I would like to thank Natasha Sardzoska and Elisa Ganivet for all the work they put into curating our poetry and art sections respectively and to Michael Carpenter for all the creative work and time he puts into constructing each issue. We are also incredibly grateful to the Centre for Global Studies and the University Libraries staff at the University of Victoria who continue to support us.

Please share with your friends and colleagues and keep in touch through our journal webpage and social media—we have some BIG things (pun intended) coming up for our next issue!

Happy reading!

Stephanie Gruhlke, Managing Editor

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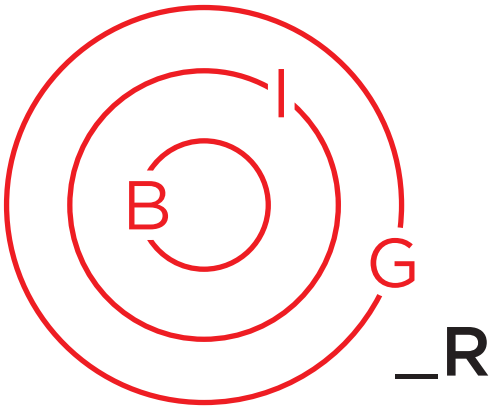

ARTICLES

BIG_Review articles are long-form explorations of borders in a globalized world, presenting original research from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. All articles undergo at least two double-blind peer reviews, drawing on the expertise of our Editorial Board and a wider network of borders scholars, subject to the discretion of the Chief Editor. Like all *BIG_Review* publications, articles are available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing.

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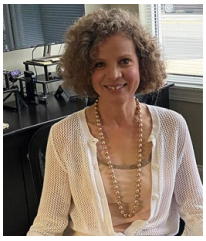
SPECIAL SECTION

Mexico's Southern Border and Beyond: Assembling New Understandings



Edited by

Margath A. Walker and

Jared P. Van Ramshorst

With an Introduction by the Editors

Within the Anglo-speaking world, Mexico's southern border has remained relatively understudied. This special section assembles an interdisciplinary group of scholars working in diverse contexts on a border corridor worthy of further scholarly attention. The range of contributions contain far-reaching implications for how scholars understand borders, immigration enforcement, and transnational migration. The enclosed articles cover a wide range of related topics, from climate change and mobility to humanitarianism, resistance, and security.

Margath A. Walker is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geographic and Environmental Sciences and School of Urban and Public Affairs at the University of Louisville. Her research focuses on borders and belonging as well as how securitization is linked to insecurity. In addition, her work examines how social theory can explain social dynamics in border regions along Mexico's two borders. She has published in leading journals and has a forthcoming book entitled *Spatializing Marcuse: Critical Theory for Contemporary Times*. Email: margath.walker@louisville.edu Twitter: @MargathWalker

Jared P. Van Ramshorst is an Assistant Professor of Global Studies in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at Kean University. His research examines the global politics and intimate experiences of migration from Central America to and toward the United States, including the ways migrants navigate asylum policy, international borders, policing, and immigration enforcement. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Latin American Geography, Geopolitics*, and *The Professional Geographer*. Email: jvanrams@kean.edu

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SPECIAL SECTION

Introduction: Mexico's Southern Border and Beyond

Jared P. Van Ramshorst [i]
Margath A. Walker [ii]

In this introduction, the editors of the special section situate the study of the Mexico–Guatemala border, lay out the themes of the collection, and summarize the individual contributions.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has refocused attention on international borders and territoriality. At the present time of writing, spring 2022, more than 474 million cases of infection have been reported worldwide and over six million people have died because of the novel coronavirus. Multiple variants of the virus have evolved over time, and nearly every country has been engulfed by its spread, as COVID-19 defies international borders and knows no boundaries. The pandemic has generated food and labor shortages and supply chain disruptions and has aggravated longstanding health inequities and political tensions around the world. Within the United States, these developments were met with the closure of its national borders in March 2020, effectively sealing off the Canada–U.S. and U.S.–Mexico borders to "nonessential" travel. The consequences of this action have been most pronounced at the U.S.–Mexico border, where restrictions have prevented migrants from Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and elsewhere, from claiming asylum. Such attention to the U.S.–Mexico border, and its impregnability, was only exacerbated under the Trump administration, which mobilized racial anxieties and xenophobia to pursue an anti-immigrant agenda defined by "zero-tolerance" practices and a rigid, law-and-order approach. But while the U.S.–Mexico border has been crucial for understanding international migration and contemporary practices surrounding bordering and immigration enforcement, it has largely overshadowed the increasing importance and political salience of Mexico's southern border, the Mexico–Guatemala border, which has quickly become a key site for migration and mobility in the Americas.

Indeed, long before reaching the U.S.–Mexico border, migrants from Central and South America as well as Europe, Africa, and Asia cross the Mexico–Guatemala border. This 541-mile (870-kilometre) expanse has experienced its own fortification and militarization, and more recently, the global effects of COVID-19 (Kauffer 2020). Both Mexico and Guatemala, for instance, have sought to curb travel in and around their shared frontier during the pandemic, implementing travel restrictions for "nonessential" border crossings and closing the border, albeit temporarily, altogether. Following the

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World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of a global pandemic in 2020, Guatemala shuttered its border with Mexico for six months. Similarly, Mexico announced new enforcement efforts against unauthorized migrants at its southern border with Guatemala, referencing health concerns over the spread of COVID-19. In March 2021, a Mexican soldier shot and killed a Guatemalan man at the border, thereby illustrating the cumulative effects of border and immigration enforcement under COVID-19 and the mounting significance of the Mexico–Guatemala border more broadly.

The idea to gather a group of international scholars working on Mexico's southern border first arose on the cusp of these events in early February, 2020. Initially, our goal was to meet and present work at the Annual Conference of the Association of Borderland Studies (ABS) in Portland, Oregon, to contemplate and collectively discuss the Mexico–Guatemala border from a variety of geographical and interdisciplinary perspectives. Meeting in person became untenable for what have now become obvious reasons under the global pandemic, and the conference was subsequently canceled. Nevertheless, we managed to keep these conversations alive through virtual formats among a small group of scholars working to study the Mexico–Guatemala border.

Emerging from this dialogue was the desire to focus attention on the diversification and effects of bordering practices and immigration enforcement beyond the familiar tropes of "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2002) and the "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994), which sees scholarly work on contemporary immigration control constrained by the boundaries of sovereign, individual states—most often, the U.S. and its southern border with Mexico. This is especially true within the modern context of international migration throughout North America, as large numbers of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras travel *across* Central America and Mexico to reach the U.S., and as both Mexican and U.S. governments implement punitive immigration policies aimed at impeding, incapacitating, and policing migrants. These dynamics, we argue, necessitate an approach that considers multiple international borders, countries, and continents involved with bordering practices and immigration enforcement. The articles in this special section respond to this call by centering developments along the Mexico–Guatemala border as well as in Canada, Guatemala, Mexico, and the U.S., thereby providing an alternative and supplement to the U.S. and U.S.–Mexico border. In doing so, the articles show how contemporary practices around bordering and immigration enforcement in North America unfold and are constituted by a diverse array of international borders, countries, and continents, including but not limited to the U.S. and the U.S.–Mexico border.

Within the Anglo-speaking world, however, Mexico's southern border with Guatemala has remained relatively understudied (see: Carte 2014; Galemba 2017, 2018; Walker 2018, 2020). Historically, the region has been more diffused and less populous than its northern counterpart, the U.S.–Mexico border, but in recent years has become increasingly visible as a site of cultural, economic, and geopolitical struggle. A series of high-profile developments, in particular, have precipitated a renewed and urgent focus on the Mexico–Guatemala border. These developments include the so-called "migrant caravans" travelling north from Central America, which has seen large numbers of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras gather to travel across Mexico together. While advocacy groups organized caravans in the past to protect migrants as they travelled north, those in 2017 and 2018 ignited contentious debates in both Mexico and the U.S. over international migration and border and immigration enforcement.

Mexico's *Programa Frontera Sur*, a sweeping border and immigration enforcement program announced in 2014 by former Mexican President Peña Nieto and extended under current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has also directed attention toward the Mexico–Guatemala border. Under this policy, Mexico fortified its southern border with Guatemala and mobilized a formidable system of blockades, immigration checkpoints, and patrols aimed at preventing migration. While hundreds of immigration agents were dispatched to the Mexico–Guatemala border alongside new surveillance equipment and infrastructural improvements at ports of entry, *Programa Frontera Sur* has relied primarily on a regional enforcement strategy, concentrating its resources at so-called "belts of control" that now stretch across southern Mexico. Here, authorities have established frequent patrols and inspections at highways, roads, and train depots, where migrants are often stopped, searched, and interviewed. More than half a million migrants have been deported since the program's announcement, thereby exceeding deportation efforts under both the Obama and Trump administrations in the U.S.

Finally, global climate change has seen changing rainfall patterns, irregular temperatures, and extreme weather events beset the region, generating displacement throughout North and Central America. In 2017, for example, Hurricane Nate triggered catastrophic flooding and mudslides from Costa Rica to Guatemala, leading to widespread destruction and over $787 million worth of damage. These impacts, as well as others, are only expected to intensify as the region becomes warmer, drier, and increasingly susceptible to environmental change in the future, gesturing toward displacement and outmigration over the coming years. Taken together, these developments signal a necessary emphasis on the Mexico–Guatemala border and region surrounding it.

A significant body of scholarship, therefore, has started to emerge from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives situated among and within this region between Guatemala and Mexico. Recently, for instance, Mexico has been understood as both a country of destination and transit

for Central American migrants and its southern border with Guatemala viewed as a microcosm for enacting various immigration laws (see for example: Brigden 2018a, 2018b; Carte 2014; Vogt 2018). There is also a wider literature on borders and place-making, including the ways in which mundane, everyday experiences link up with wider social and political processes of enacting and performing borders at multiple scales (see for example: Galemba 2017; Walker 2020). Despite these current developments, most work on borders and immigration enforcement continues to focus on well-worn areas of study and topics, such as the "externalization" of borders, detention and deportation, and policing, where the U.S. and U.S.–Mexico border remains the only referent. What new insights can scholars generate through attention to other international borders and boundaries? How might concepts and theories surrounding bordering practices and immigration enforcement shift alongside new geographic perspectives? In what ways do other borders, such as the Mexico–Guatemala border, contribute to and inform the operation of better known and studied ones, like the U.S.–Mexico border?

Aiming to overcome this bias, this special section builds upon perspectives from an 'other border' to advance theory-building from places that have been nominally cast as marginal. It is not so much that Mexico's southern border or Guatemala's northern border has been peripheralized, although that is undoubtedly true to a degree, as much the U.S. border with Mexico has loomed so large in our collective political imagination. The intense focus on one boundary at the expense of Mexico's other border neglects how processes related to Mexico's southern border are re-ordering how we come to understand and grapple with borders and bordering more generally.

This collection brings together an interdisciplinary group of early-career and established scholars working in and on less covered areas in Central America and Mexico. The papers fill an important empirical gap with contributions covering a wide a wide range of topics, methodologies, and scales, including local fieldwork on both sides of the Mexico–Guatemala border. The contributors are fairly diverse in terms of their location and provide novel analytical, conceptual, and theoretical perspectives that will advance this burgeoning field of study. Van Ramshorst and Walker center the Mexico–Guatemala border and recent immigration policy in Mexico to advance the notion of "spatial hierarchies", which they use to discuss the ordering and partitioning of territorial spaces. As they demonstrate, border and immigration enforcement, and its reliance on spatial hierarchies, divides North America from Central and South America according to colonial logics, with far-reaching consequences for the world's asylum seekers and migrants alike. In similar fashion, Angulo-Pasel documents the ways in which the Mexico–Guatemala border emerges as a site of constant struggle and tension between, on the one hand, state sovereignty and territoriality, and on the other hand, migrants' everyday survival strategies and forms of resistance. Drawing primarily from discourse and policy analysis, their paper details how Mexico's southern border has emerged from a deep entanglement between Mexico and the U.S., whereby the U.S. endeavors to enforce a policy of containment through the often-overlooked Mexico–Guatemala border. Finally, Schmook et al. explore the role of climate change in Mexico and Guatemala to better understand how government policy and adaptation are crucial to place-making and bordering within the region. Their analysis underscores the contested politics of this geopolitical region, shedding light on contemporary issues surrounding development, environmental change, and displacement and mobility. Together, these articles, which constitute the special section, point to the growing importance of the Mexico–Guatemala border and region around it.

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ARTICLE
SPECIAL SECTION

Subordinating Space: Immigration Enforcement, Hierarchy, and the Politics of Scale in Mexico and Central America

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In recent years, security and immigration enforcement has expanded rapidly throughout Mexico. From checkpoints and patrols to a vast system of detention and deportation, Mexican officials have implemented far-reaching measures to curtail international migration from Central America. Many of these efforts have been concentrated along the Mexico–Guatemala border and deep within southern Mexico, culminating in Programa Frontera Sur*, a militarized approach to border security implemented in 2014. In this article, we explore how security and immigration enforcement in Mexico rely on spatial hierarchies that divide north and south. The practice of security and immigration enforcement has received significant attention across many disciplines. The notion of spatial hierarchies and the ways in which scalar differentiation impinges upon well-being has been less covered. As we show, these hierarchies partition North and Central America according to colonial modes, subordinating the latter as inferior while working across global, national, and local scales. Crucially, the linkages between securitization and the spatialization of hierarchies provide insights into nation-building and regional identity, where Mexico and the United States are increasingly designated as separate from South and Central America.*

Introduction

Recently, a series of so-called "crises" along the United States–Mexico border have drawn significant attention to bordering practices, immigration enforcement, and international migration in the U.S. In Summer 2014, thousands of women and children from Central America arrived at the U.S.–Mexico border along the Rio Grande Valley in south Texas. While many of these arriving migrants voluntarily turned themselves over to immigration authorities to claim asylum, the Obama administration was quick to declare "an urgent humanitarian situation" and "crisis on the border", requesting more than $3.7 billion to expand detention facilities, increase surveillance efforts, and hire additional Border Patrol agents (USBP) and immigration judges (Shear & Peters 2014; Rose 2019). This emphasis on deterrence, rather than aid or assistance, exposed not only the federal governments' inability to respond to the sudden increase in migration

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but also its unwillingness to accommodate migrants from Central America, as the majority of these asylum-seekers were apprehended, detained, and eventually deported (Preston & Archibold 2014).

Less than four years later, another so-called "crisis" erupted at the U.S.–Mexico border as a large caravan of migrants set off from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in hopes of reaching the U.S. For years, advocacy groups in Mexico and Central America had organized similar caravans to protect migrants as they travelled north; however, in 2018, the event kicked off a media frenzy in the U.S., igniting public debate over international migration and border and immigration enforcement once again (see for example: Agren & Holpuch 2018; Semple 2018a). The Trump administration described the movement of people from Central America as a "national emergency" and "invasion", mobilizing military personnel at the U.S.–Mexico border to intercept them (Shear & Gibbons-Neff 2018). Trekking across Mexico on foot, the caravan travelled approximately 3,000 miles (4,828 kilometres) before reaching their destination in Tijuana, Mexico, where they were placed in temporary encampments and shelters along the border. Many migrants eventually returned home or settled in Mexico, while others waited weeks and months to claim asylum in the U.S. (Alvarez 2019). By the end of 2018, Trump officials had announced the Migration Protection Protocols (MPP), or "Remain in Mexico" program, effectively sealing off the U.S.–Mexico border from Central American migrants and asylum-seekers alike (Tackett et al. 2018).

Together, these events reflect the growing importance of Central American migration and an ever-expanding landscape of border and immigration enforcement aimed at impeding, incapacitating, and policing migrants across North America. The U.S., for example, has steadily fortified and militarized its southern border (Andreas 2009; Jones 2011, 2012), while extending the reach of immigration enforcement and surveillance far into the U.S. interior by fusing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with city, county, and state police departments (Coleman 2009; Menjívar 2014). Meanwhile, a growing, robust, and fully private industry of immigrant detention has emerged to satisfy the U.S. federal government's appetite for holding and incarcerating migrants (García Hernández 2019; Loyd & Mountz 2018; Macías-Rojas 2016). Yet, Mexico has also worked simultaneously to restrict migration from Central America. From blockades and immigration checkpoints to a formidable system of detention and deportation, Mexican officials have rapidly expanded policing and border and immigration enforcement throughout the country. Such efforts have included a series of high-profile operations beginning in 2001 and culminating in *Programa Frontera Sur*, a far-reaching plan authorized in 2014 by then-president Enrique Peña-Nieto. Under this strategy, and bolstered by the U.S., Mexico has fortified its own southern border with Guatemala and deployed hundreds of immigration authorities to the south alongside blockades, checkpoints, and patrols, converting this region into an expansive dragnet and enforcement operation targeting Central American migrants (Isacson et al. 2014, 2015). Since its implementation in 2014, Mexican authorities have apprehended hundreds of thousands of migrants across southern Mexico (Fredrick 2018). By 2015, rates of deportation in Mexico had nearly doubled over the previous year, and since the program's announcement in 2014, the Mexican government has removed more than half a million migrants, far exceeding deportation efforts in the U.S. and in some years, removing twice as many migrants (Bonello 2015; Fredrick 2018). Therefore, Mexico, alongside the U.S., is now key in controlling, monitoring, and regulating migration across Central and North America. However, while ample geographic attention has been given to bordering practices and immigration enforcement in the U.S. context (see: Ackleson 2005; Coleman 2007, 2009; Coleman & Kocher 2011; Winders 2007), much less has been devoted to the ways in which these mechanisms operate in Mexico, Central America, and beyond (see: Brigden 2018a; 2018b; Van Ramshorst 2021; Vogt 2018, 2020; Walker 2018).

In this manuscript, we examine *Programa Frontera Sur* and related Mexican immigration policy to uncover the spatial dimensions and contested politics of immigration enforcement in Mexico and beyond. Drawing from a decolonial framework, which refers to the historical process of divestment from colonial power replete with its forms of knowledge and ways of understanding the world (Noxolo 2017; Radcliffe 2017), we explore how Mexican immigration enforcement relies on a form of "spatial hierarchies" that divide North America from Central and South America through colonial logics. Here, we define spatial hierarchies as the imagined economic, political, and social ordering of territorial spaces. While the notion of hierarchy, particularly as it relates to scale, has been utilized by geographers for some time (see for example: Delaney & Leitner 1997; Jonas 1994; Massey 1994; Smith 1992), it has rarely been employed in relation to bordering practices and immigration enforcement (see: Walker & Winton 2017). As we demonstrate below, Mexican and U.S. officials mobilize such hierarchies and a colonial imagination to partition North America from Central and South America, subordinating Central and South America as inferior while simultaneously reinforcing North America's economic, political, and social superiority. Our use of spatial hierarchies is particularly useful, we argue, in signaling a distinction from the mere "externalization" or "outsourcing" of borders and immigration enforcement (see for example: Menjívar 2014; Vogt 2020), allowing for a more nuanced apprehension of these historical processes across multiple scales. In addition, our attention to spatial hierarchy and its production through Mexican policy evades the well-worn characterization of the U.S. as

sole perpetrator of geopolitical harms. This is not meant to divest responsibility from the U.S., who has flexed its colonial power in strategic and violent ways throughout history (see: Grandin 2004; 2006; Rabe 2012; Schoultz 1998). Rather, it is to show how states such as Mexico and the U.S. are concurrently imbricated in contemporary modes of colonial oppression, especially regarding the control, monitoring, and regulation of international migration across Central and North America.

To develop these arguments, the paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature in geography on hierarchy and the politics of scale. Second, we provide the historical context and geopolitical backdrop through which southern Mexico and the Mexico–Guatemala border emerged. As we show, the historical creation of the Mexico–Guatemala borderlands has been contingent upon colonial practices and a unique form of Mexican exceptionalism that has sought to differentiate Mexico from its southern neighbors. Third, drawing from policy analysis, we examine how border and immigration enforcement in Mexico produce and rely on spatial hierarchies by examining three key policies: *Plan Sur*, the Mérida Initiative, and *Programa Frontera Sur*. In doing so, we demonstrate how bordering practices and immigration enforcement produce a spatial imaginary in which Mexico and the U.S. are increasingly designated as superior and set apart from Central and South America. Finally, we conclude by reflecting on the implications of these hierarchies for understanding more recent developments, including the Trump administration's Migration Protection Protocols (MPP), or "Remain in Mexico" program, and the Biden administration's attempts to undo it.

The Mexico–Guatemala Border and Beyond

The construction of spatial hierarchies is rooted in the long durée of Mexico's economic and political relations with its international neighbors. Current policy and practice did not emerge in a vacuum, and the current configuration of the border was forged as part of the national imagining and making of Mexico in the 19th century. Such an endeavor—the national construction of Mexico—as it were, necessarily entailed differentiating it from its southern counterpart, Guatemala. Such processes of nation-building, which render borderlands marginal and peripheral to the territorial state, become integral to the assertion of sovereignty in historically entangled areas. The state of Chiapas, in particular, illustrates the contested history of this region, reminding us anew that political boundaries are often instantiated through top-down forces operating quite far from everyday cross-border connections.

Throughout the colonial period, Chiapas was part of the *Capitanía* of Guatemala. Following independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico and Guatemala both sought to influence Chiapas. After Chiapas joined Mexico in 1824, Guatemala continued its territorial claim with some regions of Chiapas favoring joining Guatemala (Kenyon 1961). The boundary treaty of 1882 settled on the border between Chiapas and Guatemala and was finalized in 1895 (Romero et al. 1897). The Soconusco region, located in the southwest corner of Chiapas, maintained its autonomy until 1842.

Although the administrative divisions had been implemented on the map, the lived reality for much of the population remained one of interconnection, porosity, and unclear political demarcation. So much so in fact, that monuments were installed by the International Commission of Limits and Water in the 1960s to signal the separation of the two nation-states. Inhabitants often did not know which side of the border they were on. Galemba's (2018) ethnographic work captures how those on both sides trace their roots to Guatemala but cross-border flows in both directions occurred at different political junctures. Many inhabitants, for example, fled this area for Guatemala during the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

The ongoing economic and political linkages of the border region is a pattern orchestrated early on. Chiapas's coffee growing region was sparsely populated in the 1800s resulting in Mexico's importation of Guatemalan labor. Workers were often indigenous and eventually naturalized as Mexican citizens. Guatemalan resentment towards Mexico continued over the loss of territory with intermittent attempts at reclamation (Hernández-Castillo 1992). As a result, Mexico embarked on a vigorous policy of Mexicanization along its southern borderlands. In the 1930s, fortified by the nationalist ideology of *mestizaje*, Mexico's assimilationist policies included: forced acculturation through the prohibition of the indigenous languages, the burning of indigenous clothing, and the installation of Hispanicization centers and frontier schools. All of these efforts were accompanied by strong anti-Guatemalan rhetoric. According to Galemba (2018), "Even though indigenous communities in the highlands of Chiapas were also targeted for integration policies, highland indigenous groups were considered distinctly Mexican. In contrast, indigenous groups at the border were more intensely targeted for assimilation because they shared ethnic affinities with Guatemalan indigenous groups" (39).

Crucially, becoming Mexican meant no longer identifying with indigenous heritage for the majority of the border population along Mexico's side of the border. This, in spite of the fact that Chiapas has the largest indigenous population in Mexico. The social organization of cultural difference has been key to national demarcation in contemporary times. During Guatemala's civil war in the 1980s, nearly 200,000 refugees fled into Mexico (Jonas 2013). Mexico would eventually establish refugee camps, although Guatemalans could not purchase land or travel outside of the camps (Ogren

2007). The deep connections between communities on both sides of the border stemming from history, kinship ties, and wage labor relations has been viewed by the Mexican government as a destabilizing force. In 1984, Mexico moved refugees to Campeche and Quintana Roo. Those who refused to relocate were provided with fewer services (GAO 1989). This brief historical context articulates how Mexico has engineered spatial hierarchies in pursuit of a nationalist advantage.

Nearly 200 hundred years of nation-building in Mexico has created an internalization of the political boundary between Guatemala and Mexico. With that comes an association of indigeneity with Guatemalan nationality in spite of close cross-border ties and the characteristic porosity of this boundary. The formation and development of a bordering regime did not concertedly take hold until the exodus of indigenous Guatemalan refugees began fleeing the counterinsurgency war. The influx of Guatemalans into Mexico altered conceptions of this area as primarily nonindigenous. Anglophone accounts of the making of Mexico tend to elide how nation-building, securitization, and migration are fraught with a coloniality of power (Van Young 2004), a framework based upon what Aníbal Quijano refers to as the "racial" social classification of the world population (2000, 2010). Thus, proceeding from a perspective of de-coloniality attends to the oppression and control of social life built into the classification and differentiation of bodies. A decolonial framework uses historical hindsight to illuminate patterns of power which have shaped our intellectual, political, economic, and social world (Mignolo 2008; Lugones 2010) and the ways colonialism's effects continue to endure and manifest less tangibly (Santos 2010). Ariadna Estevez's work (2012), which she calls a Mexican epistemology for studying migration, operates in a similar vein by placing neocolonial power and migrant subjectivities in conversation. Similarly, Amarela Varela (2019) uses the concept of disposability (basurización) to understand how the framing of migrants as illegal facilitates the production of abject subjectivities. Such analytics lay bare the terrain upon which contemporary immigration policies proceed, namely in the cases presented here, through the subordination of southern Mexico and Central America.

Space, Hierarchy, and the Politics of Scale

As a key concept in geographical inquiry, understandings of scale have shifted significantly from its history as a foundational cartographic and operational principle. Whereas cartographic scale represents a fixed, mathematical relationship between the Earth and map, operational scale refers to a tangible, partitioning of space through hierarchies such as local, national, global, and so on. Crucially, however, scholars have demonstrated how this notion of scale is socially produced rather than ontologically fixed (Delaney & Leitner 1997; Jonas 1994, Smith 1992). In this way, scales do not exist as fixed, hierarchical levels of activities and processes but are instead outcomes of those very same activities and processes, and it is precisely this complex and recursive relationship between the social and spatial that produces and reproduces space itself and a pronounced geographical imaginary (see: Delaney & Leitner 1997; Dodds 1997; Marston 2000). In other words, these hierarchical divisions of space represent specific ways of interpreting and seeing the world, a political and spatial imagination that illuminates the "hidden geographies" (Agnew 1993) of power relations and the ways in which these dynamics unfold over time and space.

To this end, scholars have long remarked on the centrality of scale in political discourse (see: Cox 1998; Jonas 1994). Here, scholarship has advocated a constructivist approach to scale, examining how the concept is produced both by and through cultural, economic, political, and social relations. Judd (1998), for instance, discusses how the state's ongoing construction of scale through administrative and governmental structures enables and restrains political possibilities. Similarly, Morrill (1999) examines how wider scales of government, including the national-scale, has been harnessed to achieve capital allocation and industrialization, subjugating more local, rural concerns for those of the broader U.S. Taken together, these studies show how hierarchy and scale are implicated in decision-making and the various power geometries that shape administration and governance.

This production of space—and thereby scale—has been central to nation-building and boundary-making in Mexico. As Smith (1992) explains, it "is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested" (66). These processes delineate territorial arrangements of power, marking socio-spatial boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. In defining who belongs and who does not, this differentiation relies on hierarchical categories such as ethnicity, race, religion, and class, among others. Power and state sovereignty, thus, work through territorial divisions and control over boundaries that are fundamentally hierarchical in nature, where space is partitioned, controlled, and administered according to perceived cultural and political differences. In Mexico, these scaling processes have involved differentiating the southern frontier in Chiapas from Guatemala, subordinating the latter as distinctly indigenous and non-Mexican. While these spatial hierarchies are socially produced, evidenced by close cross-border ties and the porosity of the border, they nonetheless, have powerful material consequences, for "once these layers are presupposed, it is difficult not to think in terms of social relations and institutional arrangements that somehow fit these contours" (Marstonet al. 2005, 422). Thus, as we demonstrate below, Mexican immigration policy has relied upon such hierarchical divisions of space to

engage in border and immigration enforcement, which continuously subordinates Central and South America as inferior and separate from a superior North America, including the U.S. and Mexico.

Subordinating Space: Spatial Hierarchy in Mexican Immigration Policy

While the boundary between Mexico and Guatemala remained indeterminate and porous from the political independence of both countries to the late-twentieth century, the region was permanently transformed during the Cold War as thousands of Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans crossed into Mexico, fleeing civil war and political upheaval (Coutin 2007; García 2006; Jonas & Rodríguez 2014). From 1954 to 1996, death squads, revolutions, and military coups, often instigated by the U.S., ravaged Central America (Grandin 2004, 2006; Rabe 2012). Many displaced Central Americans sought refuge in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. Obtaining asylum, however, was difficult, as they encountered restrictive immigration and asylum policies across North America (García 2006). While the majority eventually returned home, the initial exodus worked to solidify the Mexico–Guatemala border's significance and visibility, especially for Mexican and U.S. officials who recognized its strategic importance in controlling Central American migration. In the aftermath of these conflicts, the Mexico–Guatemala border became central to Mexican immigration policy, especially as neoliberalism took root in the form of structural adjustments programs, free trade agreements, and dollarization. Such policies, which emphasized austerity, deregulation, and privatization, not only exacerbated economic inequalities throughout Latin America but also led to further outmigration from Central America, as individuals increasingly sought economic opportunities abroad (Brown & Cloke 2005; Moodie 2006, 2010).

Plan Sur

Responding to this outmigration from Central America, in 2001—before the September 11, 2001 attacks—Mexico announced *Plan Sur*, a then-new comprehensive enforcement program located along the Mexico–Guatemala border. Under mounting diplomatic pressure from the U.S. government to curtail Central American migration, Mexico increased inspection activities and deployed military personnel to its southern border (Andersson 2005; Ogren 2007; Solís 2007). As Galemba (2018) explains, *Plan Sur* was largely motivated by the expectation that if Mexico strengthened its own southern border, the U.S. would improve its treatment of Mexican immigrants. The program, which followed from several high-level meetings between former U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox, installed frequent patrols and established interior checkpoints along high-traffic corridors in border states like Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz. Drawing from partial U.S. financial support, although the amount of funding is still unknown, the initiative authorized the construction of staffed kiosks and barriers along Mexico's remote jungle frontier with Guatemala (Hagan 2006, 2008). It also expanded detention and deportation, introducing new policies that streamlined removal of migrants through ports of entry into Belize and Guatemala, regardless of their nationality (Ogren 2007). Importantly, *Plan Sur* required collaboration and the coordinated efforts of Mexican federal, state, and municipal agencies, including the National Institute of Migration (INM), Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB), and Office of the Attorney General, whose work was previously separate (Hagan 2006, 2008; Ogren 2007). Whereas before 2001, Mexican agencies pursued border and immigration enforcement separately, through haphazard and disorganized attempts, *Plan Sur* ensured a smooth and seamless operation. The program ultimately signaled a new era of border and immigration enforcement in Mexico, which until then, had been largely absent from the federal government's approach to immigration. Under *Plan Sur*, Central American migrants were now subject to policing, detention, and deportation throughout Mexico.

From the beginning, Mexican and U.S. officials framed *Plan Sur* around a security threat posed by the flow of narcotics, terrorism, and transnational crime from Central and South America, designating these areas as separate from, and a danger to, North America (Ogren 2007; Solís 2007). Among *Plan Sur*'s main objectives were orders to combat smuggling and drug trafficking from Central and South America into North America, and under its implementation, the Mexican government dispatched army and navy troops throughout the Mexico–Guatemala borderlands who had previously focused on organized crime and drug interdiction elsewhere (Ogren 2007). By the end of 2001, in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration had identified the Mexico–Guatemala border as a strategic site of cooperation and international security between Mexico and the U.S., labeling it "America's third border" (Solís 2007). U.S. advisors and policymakers described it as a region in desperate need of state intervention, a "soft underbelly" where "venal criminals alike flood into Chiapas with a view to reaching the U.S." (Grayson 2006). This language was echoed by Mexican officials, and speaking in the U.S. months before *Plan Sur* was announced, then President Vicente Fox declared that "The most pressing issue between both countries is drug trafficking... Only by joining forces with strategic coordination [and] sharing information, we can face and defeat this situation" (Sanchez 2001). Here, Fox alluded to the flow of narcotics through Central and South America by describing drug trafficking as "the most pressing issue" between Mexico and the U.S. According to Fox, the "only" solution was to cooperate with the U.S., "joining forces" to coordinate and share

information. In doing so, Fox positioned Mexico and the U.S. as separate from and endangered by Central and South America, thereby articulating a spatial imaginary that partitioned North America from its counterparts to the south. Central and South America were, thus, depicted as "lawless", "ungovernable", and thereby inferior (Cirino et al. 2004), while Mexico and the U.S. were seen as civilized and orderly, hence superior.

This hierarchical subordination of Central and South America, was also evident among INM officials. Responding to a question posed during a press conference in 2001 before the Mexican public, INM Commissioner Felipe de Jesús Preciado Coronado explained that, "I can tell you of the very serious problems of insecurity, of the unhealthiness of sleeping on the streets in all the border cities. This is due to thousands of undocumented immigrants entering Mexico, and for national security, and national sovereignty, this institute will have to solve the problem" (BBC 2001). Preciado's response drew attention not only to the "problems" and "insecurity" generated by Central American migration, but also its "unhealthiness". Drawing from longstanding tropes that describe migrants as dirty and disease-ridden (see: Harper & Raman 2008), such rhetoric worked to depict Central American migrants as contaminated and impure. Crucially, these same tropes were widely circulated and deployed during colonialism to portray indigenous bodies as contaminated, dirty, and sick. Similarly, Preciado evokes images of mass migration and countless numbers of immigrants waiting to enter Mexico by referring to the "thousands of undocumented immigrants entering Mexico" that threaten Mexico's national security and sovereignty. It is through this language that Central and South America are distanced from North America and subordinated as inferior, depicted by Mexican officials as backward and dangerous places teeming with criminal activity, disease, and large numbers of immigrants. *Plan Sur*, therefore, signified not only a novel approach to border and immigration enforcement in Mexico but also one that officials increasingly justified through a discourse of colonial logic that distinguished North America as superior to and separate from Central and South America. This approach and strategy to border and immigration enforcement portended the arrival of Mexico's War on Drugs and the Mérida Initiative in 2006 and 2007.

The Mérida Initiative

On December 11, 2006, newly elected Mexican President Felipe Calderón deployed 6,500 soldiers alongside federal police to the state of Michoacán. Military Humvees, helicopters, and navy gunboats provided support for the mission, as ground troops descended on locations affiliated with drug production, trafficking, and distribution (Enriquez 2006; McKinley 2007). Over the previous decades, Mexico had been consumed by escalating cartel violence and drug-related conflicts. Addressing the public from a military base nearby, Calderón asserted, "Mexico does not surrender and will not surrender... We will not falter in fighting Mexico's enemies. We will give no truce or quarter to criminals" (Madrazo Lajous 2016). Soon, this mobilization spread across Mexico, engulfing half a dozen states and much of the active military and police force—7,000 troops occupied the resort town of Acapulco, 3,300 soldiers and federal police flooded into Tijuana, and nearly 6,000 more swept through the Sierra Madre (Boullosa & Wallace 2015; Grillo 2012). Mexico had officially declared war on drugs.

In the following months, Calderón's offensive resulted in dozens of high-level arrests and record seizures of cash, narcotics, and weapons (González 2009). Buoyed by this success, Mexican and U.S. officials promptly announced the Mérida Initiative, a bilateral security cooperation agreement that pledged $1.4 billion to assist Calderón's administration in waging its war on drugs (see: Ashby 2014; Gallaher 2015). Under the three-year initiative, Mexico received military and police training from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), as well as new technology and equipment, including biometric scanners, x-ray machines, transport helicopters, and surveillance aircraft (Grillo 2012). Support also extended to upgrading software systems, government databases, and police registries. The first tranche of money arrived in 2008, as the Bush administration worked to deepen its "shared responsibility" with Mexico in breaking "the power and impunity of drug and criminal organizations" (Ashby 2014). Subsequent funding for the program continued under the Obama and Trump administrations, both of which expanded the initiative over time. Importantly, a significant portion of funding from the Mérida Initiative was appropriated for Central America. In 2008, the Obama administration launched the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) as a separate, yet related, program which provided equipment and training to law enforcement and drug interdiction operations across the region (see: Meyer & Seelke 2014). Mexico and the U.S. were now formally bound in fighting the drug war, which threatened North America from within Mexico and beyond its southern border.

While the Mérida Initiative centered on counternarcotics, it also explicitly addressed border and immigration enforcement, and much of the provisioned U.S. aid was intended for the fortification and militarization of the Mexico–Guatemala border, further incorporating Mexico into U.S. security interests following 9/11 (Ashby 2014). By 2010, Mexico and the U.S. had attached a key stipulation to the agreement, which announced the creation of a "21st century border" aimed at curtailing immigration and cross-border activity in the Mexico–Guatemala borderlands (Ashby 2014). In doing so, Mexican and U.S. officials continued to conflate migration with narcotics, terrorism, and transnational crime from Central and

South America. For example, shortly after the Mérida Initiative was announced, Mexico's attorney general Marisela Morales visited the Mexico–Guatemala border, asserting that "the illegal flow of people and merchandise that exists and the delinquency it generates demand a strengthened institutional coordination" (Kovic & Kelly 2017). Here, again, Mexico and the U.S. were positioned as separate from and endangered by Central and South America, with Morales declaring that the "delinquency" generated by flows of people and goods from south of the border required "strengthened institutional coordination". Much like the rhetoric utilized during *Plan Sur*, this spatial rendering imagined Mexico and the U.S. as superior and in need of protection, whereas Central and South America were seen as criminal and dangerous.

Similarly, in the U.S., the Atlanta DEA chief explained to reporters in 2009 that "the flood of Hispanic immigrants into American communities... helped to provide cover to drug traffickers and distributors" (Arrillaga 2009). Others suggested that members of Al Qaeda and Hezbollah conspired with smugglers to enter the U.S. from Honduras and other countries across Central America (Grayson 2006). This spatial hierarchy separating North America from its counterparts to the south while subordinating the latter proliferated in the wake of the Mérida Initiative, culminating in widespread fear of "spillover" violence (del Bosque 2009) that implicated Central American migrants in the war on drugs and further rationalized Mexican and U.S. intervention to propagate "international security" that subordinated Central and South America while communicating North America's economic, political, and social superiority. These dynamics were only exacerbated by *Programa Frontera Sur*.

Programa Frontera Sur

In 2013, while the drug war pressed on, Mexico again turned its attention to Central American migration, as migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras left for the U.S. in mounting numbers (Massey et al. 2014; Spörlein 2015). In June of that year, Mexico's Secretary of the Interior visited the southern border alongside governors from Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo, and Tabasco, announcing the formation of a "comprehensive development program" to address "the problem generated by migration" (Peters 2013). Months later, delegates from the INM and Guatemala's national police met with U.S. DEA and FBI counterparts in the border city of Tapachula to discuss preparations for the program (Hernández 2014). With few details released to the public, Mexico slowly increased the presence of army and navy troops along the Mexico–Guatemala border while President Peña Nieto appointed a so-called "migration czar" to oversee ongoing arrangements (Cárdenas 2013; Torres 2015). These developments indicated a large, paradigmatic shift toward the southern border.

Eventually, in July 2014, Peña Nieto, accompanied by Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina, formally announced *Programa Frontera Sur*, a far-reaching plan aimed at border security and immigration enforcement in Mexico (see: Isacson et al. 2014, 2015; Wilson & Valenzuela 2014). The program centered on two main objectives: first, protecting migrants in transit and second, increasing security at the southern border and along well-established migration routes. It should be noted that there is a lack of transparency surrounding *Programa Frontera Sur*. Beyond its initial announcement and decree establishing a coordinating office, no official documentation exists. This absence of information has been highlighted by Mexico's Federal Institute for Information Access and Data Protection (IFAI), which in 2014, requested supporting documents from INM regarding the program. INM declared that no such documentation existed (see: Poy 2014). Under the new plan, Mexico would improve infrastructure at ports of entry, provide temporary work and visiting permits for migrants, and develop new sources of funding for shelters and medical units (Wilson & Valenzuela 2014). Speaking before the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, Peña Nieto assured policymakers that Mexico was, and would always be, a place of "origin, transit, destination, and return for people" (Castillo 2016). While the government rhetorically emphasized human rights and protections for migrants, however, the program was much different in practice, working to rapidly expand policing and immigration control throughout the Mexican interior in unprecedented ways (Olayo-Méndez 2017).

Following the announcement, Peña Nieto dispatched hundreds of INM agents to the south alongside military and federal police. At the Mexico–Guatemala border, Mexico deployed new surveillance equipment and upgraded existing infrastructure at ports of entry (Isacson et al. 2014, 2015). Crucially, however, *Programa Frontera Sur* depended on a *regional* enforcement strategy, with checkpoints and blockades concentrated along "belts of control" that stretched inland from the southern border to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca and Veracruz, forming a rigid bottleneck for migrants travelling north (Martínez & Castillo 2014). Within each of these "belts", authorities established frequent patrols and inspections at roads, highways, and train depots, where individuals could be stopped, searched, and interviewed. INM, meanwhile, employed mobile checkpoints and installed new detention facilities across the region as they raided restaurants, hotels, and bus stations (Isacson et al. 2014, 2015). The program also attempted to curtail migrants' use of freight trains, colloquially known as the Beast, directing INM and federal police to intercept migrants at railroad crossings and ordering conductors to increase speeds in high-traffic areas (Castillo 2016; Pérez Silva 2014). Likewise, rail companies were urged to contract with private security forces and construct physical barriers along railways to further impede migrants from accessing trains (Avendaño 2013). Together, these

efforts transformed southern Mexico into an expansive dragnet and enforcement operation that encompassed multiple agencies and hundreds of miles/kilometres of checkpoints, blockades, and patrols. Through this regional enforcement strategy, the program further partitioned Central, South, and North America by dividing northern Mexico and the U.S. from southern Mexico and other countries to the south. Drawing from a spatial hierarchy that located the "problem generated by migration" in and around the Mexico–Guatemala border, Mexican officials distanced themselves from Central and South America, thereby portraying Mexico as superior to and removed from countries to the south, separated by the presence of its new enforcement operation throughout its southern regions.

Programa Frontera Sur required close coordination between federal, state, and municipal agencies. Drawing from partnerships developed under *Plan Sur,* Peña Nieto established the Coordinating Office for Comprehensive Attention to Migration at the Southern Border, days after the program's announcement (Wilson & Valenzuela 2014). Under the charge of Mexico's Secretary of the Interior, this coordinating body was responsible for organizing operations and ensuring careful collaboration between agencies. While immigration enforcement is entrusted to federal police and INM through Mexican immigration law, *Programa Frontera Sur* involved a wide range of entities responsible for its implementation, from the customs bureau and military to state police, municipal governments, and local administrations (Isacson et al. 2014, 2015). The program also deepened Mexico's sense of "shared responsibility" with the U.S. and others, using the Mérida Initiative to deliver millions of dollars in new equipment, infrastructure, and training (Wilson & Valenzuela 2014). Mexico received patrol boats, helicopters, observation towers, and scanning equipment, as well as support and advising from CBP, DEA, FBI, and ICE officials (Isacson et al. 2014, 2015). These provisions extended across North and Central America, including additional funding for Belize and Guatemala along Mexico's southern boundary, as well as for El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, among others (Wilson & Valenzuela 2014). Guatemala and Mexico also pledged to share migrants' fingerprints and facial characteristics with the U.S. through an integrated biometric database (Isacson et al. 2014). Thus, *Programa Frontera Sur* dramatically expanded policing and immigration control throughout Mexico on an unprecedented scale, entailing restrictive, multi-agency enforcement operations within the interior and a network of transnational support from countries across Central and North America. Yet, despite this, the program has relied upon a spatial imaginary and hierarchy in which Mexico and the U.S. are increasingly designated as superior and set apart from Central and South America, as both countries struggle to restrict migration from south of the Mexico–Guatemala border.

In the wake of Programa Frontera Sur, apprehensions and deportations among Central Americans have risen sharply (Bonello 2015; Fredrick 2018; Isacson et al. 2015). Following its implementation in 2014, authorities have apprehended hundreds of thousands of migrants across southern Mexico, holding them in detention centers and temporary facilities before they are deported to Guatemala (Fredrick 2018; Isacson et al. 2015). By 2015, rates of deportation in Mexico had nearly doubled over the previous year, and since the program's announcement in 2014, the Mexican government has removed more than half a million migrants, far exceeding deportation efforts in the U.S. (Bonello 2015; Fredrick 2018). Amid this growing system of policing and immigration control, corruption and abuses against migrants have been widespread, including extortion, sexual assault, and torture committed by military and police (Suárez et al. 2017). Accordingly, migrants have turned to alternative routes and clandestine modes of transportation to evade checkpoints, blockades, and patrols, utilizing remote locations and distant, rugged terrain that isolates migrants from shelters and humanitarian aid (Castillo 2016; Isacson et al. 2015). Routes have become not only longer and more complex but also increasingly dangerous, as migrants are vulnerable to violence and abuse perpetrated by local gangs, cartels, and corrupt officials, as well as environmental hazards such as dehydration, heatstroke, and hypothermia.

Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to refocus attention on the ways that the triad of bordering practices, immigration enforcement, and international migration operate in Mexico, Central America, and beyond. We reflected on the increasing importance of spatial hierarchies and spatial subordination in relation to the restriction of mobilities in the context of North America, drawing out how Mexico has worked to restrict migration from Central America. In particular, we unraveled the spatiality of far-reaching border policies like *Plan Sur*, the Mérida Initiative, and *Programa Frontera Sur*. We distilled how the divisions created through policy rhetoric and practice are defined through the production of the social ordering of territorial spaces based on differentiation. Notably, North America is separated from Central and South America, a move which designates the former territories as inferior and the latter as superior, and is based upon longer histories of colonial imaginaries. Calling attention to spatial hierarchies illustrates how states such as Mexico and the United States are jointly involved in regulating contemporary forms of oppression reliant on older colonial logics. What is more, understanding the nuances of subordination indicates an important nuance between "externalization" and the "outsourcing" of borders amid processes related to immigration enforcement. Seen from perspective of how hierarchy

and scale in tandem impinge upon decision-making, the management of mobility becomes a multi-scalar endeavor shaped through numerous actors, some obviously much more powerful than others.

We expect that these dynamics will only continue given recent developments under the Trump and Biden administrations in the U.S. and the López Obrador administration in Mexico. For example, under the Trump administration, bordering and immigration enforcement extended deeper into states such as Mexico and Guatemala, epitomized through recent policies such as MPP and Safe Third Country agreements, and utilized Mexican and Guatemalan territory to control migration from afar. This suite of laws further codified efforts to disenfranchise and exclude migrants from Central and South America at a distance, in the spaces between origin and destination, and required migrants to "remain in Mexico" during legal proceedings and barred them from protection altogether if they pass through another country—inevitably, Guatemala or Mexico—before the U.S.. Mexico has only acquiesced to this draconian approach to immigration and asylum policy, consenting to MPP while bending under pressure to arrest and deport more migrants from south of its border. While the Biden administration has reversed many of these efforts under MPP and Safe Third Country agreements, *Programa Frontera Sur* continues unabated, as both Mexico and the U.S. continue to collaborate to restrict migration from south of the Mexico–Guatemala border. It is within this context that spatial hierarchies become ever-more important in understanding contemporary bordering practices and immigration enforcement.

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The More Things Change ... Governance and Resistance along the Mexico–Guatemala Border

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With the politics of borders, the socio-economic divide between the United States and Mexico is evident. The geographic proximity to the U.S. makes the Mexico–Guatemala border an extension of the U.S. border enforcement regime. This article argues that the politics surrounding the U.S.–Guatemala border have not necessarily changed, because, at the core, the main objective of these border governance practices is to stop the movement of undesirable bodies (Khosravi 2011). Further, the article argues that the practices of containment force migrants to resist through their movement and seek strategies of survival. By comparing the administrations of Peña Nieto and López Obrador (AMLO) and analyzing the survival strategy of migrant "caravans" through border policy analysis and fieldwork conducted in 2014, I show that this border is a site of struggle between the state's power and migrants' forms of resistance. I find that border tactics are influenced by U.S. border enforcement requirements of increased militarization and policing, but also aim to restrict and control certain populations. The result is the perpetual securitization of people and the militarization of pathways. Migrants, however, also employ forms of organizing such as travelling in mass groups to achieve safe passage, thus exercising their agency through movement. The bordering practices and the forms of resistance indicate that this border is a constant site of struggle that requires further examination.

Introduction

Compared to the United States–Mexico border, Mexico's southern border has been described by scholars and social activists (Ruiz et al. 2020; Meyer & Isacson 2019) as long, porous, and sparsely populated. Yet, Mexico's border policy for its southern border with Guatemala continuously receives both political attention and military aid. To a large extent, this attention has to do with the dependent bilateral relationship between Mexico and the U.S. vis-à-vis prominent issues such as immigration, trade, and drug trafficking. Multiple U.S. administrations have used the important bilateral trade relationship to pressure Mexican governments to act as a "buffer state", to contain and restrict northward migration of now primarily Central American migrants coming from the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras (Isacson et al. 2015; Meyer & Isacson 2019). The target populations of these border enforcement policies appear to be those deemed by the nation-state (both Mexico and the U.S.) to be "irregular", "undocumented", "unauthorized", and/or "illegal". Mexico has actively policed and militarized its southern border, often using multiple security forces at the municipal, state, and federal levels as well as the military (WOLA 2015).

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The result has been a pattern of violent deterrence and containment that places "unauthorized" migrants on dangerous and secluded pathways, increases their vulnerability, and makes them susceptible to human rights violations by the same security forces who are theoretically supposed to be respecting their rights as outlined in Mexico's 2011 *Ley de Migración*.

This article argues that due to the geographic proximity between the U.S. and Mexico, border governance in Mexico has not only been influenced by the U.S. and pressured to be an extension of the U.S. border regime, but the core politics surrounding the Mexico–Guatemala border have not necessarily changed in practice because these bordering tactics aim to stop the movement of "undesirable" populations. These policies of containment are typically presented with political narratives of protection, such as the case the with the *Programa Frontera Sur* (PFS) in 2014 (Angulo-Pasel 2019). However, on the ground, deterrence and the restriction of movement, rather than protection, appear to be the objectives of the Mexican government. Nevertheless, while containing and disrupting irregular migrant movements may be the principal objectives, these policies and discourse have also created resistance. Thus, this article further argues that the Mexico–Guatemala "border", in all its manifestations of nation-state enforcement (practices of containment, surveillance, intimidation, apprehension, detention, deportation) is a site of struggle, which propels migrants to resist through movement because these border policies do not address the historical and sociopolitical conditions that motivate this migration. Analyzing the entanglement of border practices between Mexico and the U.S. provides the opportunity to examine an overlooked arena of the struggle between power (Mexico's border regime and punitive border practices) and resistance (migrant survival strategies to travel north).

This article primarily uses discourse and policy analysis to observe how border policies, and narratives surrounding those policies, are used to negatively construct and frame "unauthorized" migrants as security threats and/or criminals. This negative framing sets the political agenda by "othering" migrants through fear and justifies punitive policies (Pope 2020). I also use data from fieldwork conducted in 2014 to highlight the effects of these policies on migrants and the struggles they face. The fieldwork consisted of semi-structured interviews with migrants and key informants, participant observation, and reflexive journal field notes. It took place in the states of Veracruz and Oaxaca. Theoretically, I employ critical border studies, which allows us to analyze the intersections of the nation-state's border regime and migrants' experiences and struggles. I utilize critical border theory to question what borders are, who implements border practices and to what end, where borders are located on-the-ground, and how migrants try to regain control over their movements vis-à-vis the power of the nation-state.

After providing a history of the entanglement of the border relations between the U.S. and Mexico, the article will focus on two cases which showcase how the border between Mexico and Guatemala is not only an extension of the U.S. border regime, but more importantly, is also a site of struggle between those who seek to contain and those who seek to move. The first case involves the two most recent presidencies in Mexico of Enrique Peña Nieto and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). The case of these two presidents offer an interesting juxtaposition in that at first it appeared as though there may have been a break from the "business as usual" of hardline border enforcement through promises and political rhetoric from AMLO, but the practices quickly reverted back to the same tactics and techniques of border control. This case highlights the use of power and containment through discourse and policy. The second case showcases migrant struggle through resistance by examining the migrant "caravan", which has become a prominent strategy of resistance for migrants as a result of border enforcement tactics.

Borders and Migration from a Critical Standpoint

In order to critically examine the dynamics of the southern border in Mexico, this article utilizes critical border theory to understand how irregular migration and migrants have been "othered" and represented as a national security "threat". As such, it is not necessarily all migration that the Mexican government seeks to contain and restrict, but rather a certain type of population or as Khosravi (2011) notes, the control of movement of those deemed "undesirable" by the nation-state. Critical border scholars concentrate on the relationship of migration and security to interrogate how and why "unauthorized" migration has been connected to a state's national security discourse. Within discourse and policy, migration has been socially and politically constructed as a threat to be managed and controlled (Walters 2010). This social construction of threat occurs alongside political framing and agenda setting which presents "unauthorized" migrants negatively as criminals or "bogus" refugee claimants. This has been referred to as a "border spectacle" (De Genova 2013) whereby the state, through border enforcement, enacts exclusion and (re)produces "illegalized" migration as a category. The category of "illegal" is placed on "selected migration streams and bodies while other streams and bodies are marked as legal, professional, student, allowable" (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015, 67). Within the Mexican context, for instance, migrants from Central American are differentially excluded by being perceived as thieves, drug traffickers, rapists, among others (Isacson et al. 2015). These narratives, therefore, make it easier to justify militarized border

security policies and enforcement operations. Given the increasing xenophobia and local resentment towards foreigners, Mexican citizens may feel this enforcement is necessary given the threat "unauthorized" migrants supposedly pose to their communities (International Crisis Group 2018).

In essence, the securitization of migration is a part of a wider politicization project, which negatively characterizes "unauthorized" immigrants and/or asylum-seekers as a challenge to national identity, culture, and sense of belonging. Thus, since migrants are framed and perceived as a "threat", "unauthorized" migration becomes a security "problem" to be dealt with using institutional policies that protect public security. According to Huysmans (2000), the security problem (i.e. "unauthorized" migrants that seek to destabilize public order) comes first and the border policy is an instrumental reaction or a tactic/technique to solve the "problem". Therefore, the policy "protect[s] the state, its society... against the dangers related to an invasion of (illegal) immigrants and asylum-seekers" (Huysmans 2000, 757).

Framing "unauthorized" migration and migrants as a "threat" also reinforces the concept of "othering" as these migrants are not part of the social cultural fabric. Through the use of "us versus them" political narratives, nation-state governments are able to objectify the other. Additionally, these fabricated "threats" objectify the other using elements of race and culture, which shows existing post-colonial hierarchies (Aradau et al. 2021). "Unauthorized" migration management, therefore, effectively becomes a continuation of the colonial project where foreigners are subjugated and racialized (Walters 2010; Loyd et al. 2012; Walia 2021). Overall, border policy becomes a political project of belonging, of who belongs and who does not (Yuval-Davis et al. 2019). Bordering practices, in turn, can happen everywhere and in everyday life (Balibar 2002), not only at geographic boundaries like the Mexico–Guatemala territorial line. As will be shown below, border enforcement may begin at the southern border but the "border", in its many manifestations, follows the "unauthorized" migrant throughout their journeys. As such, the border follows and surrounds "unauthorized" migrants because bordering processes and practices have the potential to be materialized anywhere (Nyers 2008; Khosravi 2011).

Alongside constructing negative narratives through "threat" and "othering" discourses, the externalization of border enforcement is another tactic used by sovereign states to contain and restrict "unauthorized" migration and is a key bordering practice that is directly connected to the perception of migration as a "threat". According to Casas-Cortes et al. (2015), this process is "based on the direct involvement of the externalizing state's border authorities in other countries' sovereign territories, and outsourcing of border control responsibilities to another country's national surveillance forces" (73). Since nation-state actors view the regulation of this migrant population as imperative to protecting the country's internal public security, government officials need to ensure that this "threat" does not reach its territorial border. At the same time, if this population does reach and surpass the border, border enforcement has to also shift internally within the nation-state's borders. These bordering practices have been referred to as promoting a "delocalization" of the border (Walters 2006), a "spatial stretching" of the border (Amoore 2006), and/or the state's "remote control" (Lahav & Guiraudon 2000) whereby both state and non-state actors may participate in the border enforcement regime. Using externalization as a tactic again challenges the conventional ways we think of "borders" as territorial lines dividing nation-states since policies related to border control can happen anywhere (Balibar 2002) and not just at the official line between two sovereign nation-states.

In addition, by critically exploring borders, we observe that despite the continued attempts by the nation-state to control, borders are difficult to regulate because they are not only fixed territorial lines. States try to enact their sovereign power by executing different tactics and techniques to maintain territorial claims, but borders become fluid and shifting boundaries. The "border" is constituted as a transnational space, an "ambivalent space at the fringe of two societies" (Biemann 2002, 1). By examining these shifting boundaries, we are able to (re)define the border by "giving attention to the fluidity of nation-state borders and the complexity of the experiences of those who live in them and/or across them" (Brambilla 2015). With this standpoint, we can understand migration from the migrants' perspective. Thus, when observing the Mexico–Guatemala borderlands, we can reconceptualize this space as a site of struggle. A site of struggle between the nation-state's border regime, which is trying to contain and disrupt "unauthorized" migration, and, migrants, who are resisting the state's techniques of power and domination and living everyday lives through the struggle for survival. This type of migration can also be looked upon as struggles over human mobility, or the right to move (Sharma 2020). Within this struggle, mobility or movement becomes the means of survival. As Franck (2019) notes, these struggles "shed light on both the consequences and limits of state power in the attempts to control and discipline [migrants]" (22).

Furthermore, if we analyze migrants' experiences, we learn that they experience multiple struggles in their journeys, but migrants are also capable of their own tactics in order to break away from their sociopolitical conditions and practice their right to move to survive. Similarly, feminist border theory (Aaron et al. 2010; Ruiz-Aho 2011) has paid particular attention to studying marginalized voices, which are usually silent when the referent object is the nation-state. Giving voice

to marginalized populations deconstructs the power hierarchies that borders create and, instead, centres subaltern forms of knowledge. The case of migrant "caravans" is a perfect example of how migrants seek strategies within their control in order to achieve their own goals of mobility. By examining borders through the migrants' perspective, I show that they are not "threats" but rather claims-making agents, who seek, and to the extent possible, request rights to which they are entitled.

At the same time, however, it is also important not to romanticize migrants as heroines who are able to overcome all struggles of "unauthorized" migration. There continues to be ongoing debates about structure and agency with regards to migrant (im)mobility (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013; Squire 2017). Migrants may grapple with bordering practices beyond their control, but they are not simply passive victims in this migration space and can enact forms of resistance albeit within a small space for action (Stierl 2020). Therefore, during their journeys, migrants encounter forms of constrained agency (Angulo-Pasel 2018). In all, a migrant journey may start as an individual movement but can quickly become a collective action. Organized movements, like the so-called Central American "caravans", may seem like a simple act of walking together. But, as part of the struggle, it also resembles a political mobilization and creates a new socio-political space to express themselves in solidarity. Thus, through the exercise of movement, of walking together, "collectively joining together in movement, and through their movement, [they are] manifesting their grievances or demands by appropriating space and indeed producing a new space through their movement" (Aradau et al. 2021, 16).

In sum, through the cases of the two latest presidents, Peña Nieto and AMLO and the migrant caravans, we will see how these migration struggles interact. But first, I will provide a history of U.S.–Mexico border relations which sets the scene for migrant struggles.

A History of Entanglement: Mexico–U.S. Border Relations

To appreciate the dynamics of the Mexico–Guatemala border, one needs to examine the entangled history and relationship of the border that divides Mexico and the U.S. Like many other borders that divide economically prosperous regions from those labelled as either part of the "developing world", "Third World", or the "South", geographic proximity to more affluent countries creates more impetus for hard security policies. Astutely, Anzaldua (1987) argues that the U.S.–Mexico border is "*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (pg. 25). Furthermore, fear and insecurity are strong drivers for the securitization of borders, especially when "migrants attempt to cross between regions of great economic disparity"(Mountz & Hiemstra 2014, 383). As such, with respect to border enforcement, the Mexican–Guatemalan border can equally be seen as an externalization of the U.S. border. In the last decade, it may also be argued that Central American countries such as Guatemala, for instance, are trying to contain and disrupt the movement of "unauthorized" migrants, and thus also become border enforcers for the U.S. For example, in January 2021, the Guatemalan government ordered the military to stop a migrant "caravan" attempting to cross into Mexico, complete with tear gas (Ochoa et al. 2021). This pattern of militarization within the region reproduces images reminiscent of the civil wars back in the 1980s.

Consequently, with respect to border enforcement relations, Mexico has always had an intertwined relationship with the U.S. As will be further elaborated below with the examples of two Mexican administrations, Mexico has been referred to as a "buffer state" and a border enforcer for the U.S. Therefore, as many critics point out (Ochoa et al. 2021), a central challenge for Mexico continues to be its dependency on U.S. border policy. This relationship has a tense history, which can be traced back to Mexican independence and the controversial war of North American Invasion in 1846 where Mexico lost vast territory to the U.S. Then, during World War II, the *Bracero Program* was implemented between the two nation-states due to the labour shortage in the U.S., where more than 4.5 million Mexican agricultural workers circulated in and out of the U.S. for more than 20 years. Nevertheless, despite the family ties this program cultivated, when the program ended in 1965 and was replaced with the *Border Industrialization Program* and the *Immigration and Nationality Act*, the U.S. government did not provide any legal pathway for immigrants to stay in the U.S. The *Border Industrialization Program* was the beginning of the maquiladora industry along the Mexico–U.S. borderlands, which has created labour exploitation by foreign-owned companies. While an in-depth examination of these events and associated border policies are beyond the scope of this article, they are important in that they highlight Mexico's asymmetrical relationship with the U.S. and demonstrate a source of resentment among Mexicans vis-à-vis their dependency with respect to the U.S. being the principal source of capital and the country who typically drives the economic relationship.

Furthermore, the constant pressure by the U.S. government to increase border enforcement and its connection to containing "unauthorized" migration was greatly influenced by the national security threat of the drug war and its correlation to "unauthorized" migrants who were perceived as the criminals participating in the drug trade. In the early 1970s, the Nixon administration declared the "War on Drugs" and perpetuated a consistent rhetoric linking migrants and the drug trade,

which furthered criminalized "foreigners" (Nevins 2001). Therefore, Mexico has had a complicated history with respect to migration. In 1976, the Mexican government passed and implemented the *General Law of the Population*. Whereas earlier laws focused on importing foreigners to modernize and increase population growth, these laws were amended to become more restrictive to immigration in 1976. The resulting law was unfavourable to immigrants, especially those found to be entering Mexico without legal documentation. At the same time, however, given the proximity to the U.S., there was a strong history of emigration (Fitzgerald 2005), which was encouraged as a form of development through the use of remittances. The migration-development nexus was in full force in Mexico, and the image of the "migrant hero" (Sørensen 2012) was well promoted among government officials. While the Mexican government persuaded the U.S. to embark on immigration reform for its nationals living in the U.S., the *Law of the Population* criminalized undocumented migration (Garcia Aguilar 2015). In fact, it made it a felony to enter Mexico without legal documents or to be found with an expired visa; crimes punishable for up to ten years imprisonment (Gonzalez-Murphy & Koslowski 2011). This hypocrisy was recognized both internally and externally as pressure mounted by civil society organizations in Mexico, and U.S. government officials, to "practice what you preach".

The negative framing of irregular migrants continued into the 1990s. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was implemented in 1994, created contradictions where policies facilitated and increased trade and opened markets and access to cheap Mexican labour, but paid little attention to allowing the mobility of this cheap Mexican labour. Furthermore, NAFTA's economic policy increased the number of Mexican farmers and workers seeking job opportunities by privatizing collective farms thus eliminating agricultural subsidies, deregulating agriculture, and selling land to foreign investors (Fernández-Kelly & Massey 2007). While NAFTA created disparities, inequalities, and displacement among Mexicans, the U.S. government implemented several border enforcement operations along the U.S. Southwest border, including Operation Hold the Line/Blockade (1993) in El Paso, Texas and Operation Gatekeeper (1994) in San Diego, California. The social construction of the criminal irregular migrant was distinct from the trusted business travelers whose movements were not only allowed but encouraged with the implementation of NAFTA. Thus, the securitization of the border and militarization of border enforcement is dependent on the population in question. Prior to NAFTA, U.S. border policy had already begun a more restrictive pattern with the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, where the government actively criminalized the hiring of "unauthorized" workers by U.S. employers and began to increase funding for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as well as Border Patrol (BP) agents.

When Vicente Fox came to power in 2000, there was increasing pressure to change restrictive immigration laws in Mexico. The Fox administration was able to secure bilateral immigration reform discussions with George W. Bush but the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) halted all negotiations from moving forward. With respect to migration management, the norm in both the U.S. and Mexico became to increase the securitization of "unauthorized" migrants. Prior to 9/11, however, the national security discourse vis-à-vis irregular migrants had been established by the Fox administration with the implementation of *Plan Sur*. However, its objectives were remarkably reinforced after 9/11 as *Plan Sur's* intentions clearly linked the control of illicit flows, such as drugs and arms, as well as "unauthorized" migrants by explicitly promoting the control and vigilance of migration flows "from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to the southern border" (Garcia Aguilar 2015, 60). This political narrative illustrates how "unauthorized" migration becomes embedded in the national security discourse. The securitization of migrants in Mexico continued in 2002, when the U.S. and Mexico established the *Smart Border: 22 Point Agreement* (Office of the Press Secretary 2002), which sought to enhance control and security at Mexico's southern border. Throughout these policies, civil society groups within Mexico continued to criticize the government for its lack of commitment to the protection of migrant rights in favour of national security objectives and kept pressing the government to develop reforms to its restrictive migration policies.

This explicit conflation between "unauthorized" migrants, and illicit flows like illegal drugs and arms was not only an increasingly accepted narrative among the public, but was further solidified by the Calderon (2006–2012) administration, when together with U.S. support, it launched the *Mérida Initiative* and the "war on drugs and organized crime". The *Mérida Initiative* was a foreign aid package that combined economic, technical, and intelligence aid in order to combat organized crime (which included transnational migration) all in the name of "defending sovereignty and national security" (Garcia Aguilar 2015, 61; Benítez Manaut 2011). One of the main pillars of the policy, for example, included creating a 21st Century Border Structure which would "facilitate *legitimate* commerce and movement of people while curtailing the illicit flow of drugs, people, arms, and cash" [emphasis added] (Ocampomi 2021). As a result, since 2006, Mexico experienced an extreme rise in violence throughout the country. During Calderon's tenure, over 40,000 people were killed in military operations and inter-cartel violence (Mercille 2011). The following sections examine the two latest Mexican administrations to highlight the exercises of power the nation-state enacts to control and contain "undesirable" migrant populations and the correlation to U.S. political pressure to extend its border enforcement regime; and, how migrants, despite these border tactics, exercise their rights and resist through organized collective movement.

Exercises of Nation-State Power

Peña Nieto's Border Policy

With respect to border enforcement, the Peña Nieto administration followed the security patterns set forth by the Calderon administration. Enrique Peña Nieto is perhaps most (in)famously known for the border policy the *Programa Frontera Sur* (PFS) or the Southern Border Plan, which highlights how discourse and policy continued to be used to "other" and contain "unauthorized" migrants. Together with the Guatemalan administration, the PFS was launched in July 2014. The PFS was the latest iteration of Mexican border policy, which although claimed to want to achieve migrant safety, protection, and the respect of migrant rights, actually had detrimental effects on migrants crossing Mexico. Furthermore, when examining the events surrounding the implementation of this policy, we discover that this governance directive was plainly influenced by what was happening in the U.S. borderlands during the same time period. Until this point, Peña Nieto's immigration policy had been fairly discreet. As a *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) candidate, migration did not appear to be a central campaign issue, nor initially a top priority for his administration (Alba 2013).

According to the Peña Nieto government, the principal objective of the PFS policy was to "protect and safeguard the human rights of migrants entering and transiting through Mexico and to regulate international crossings so as to increase the development and security of the region" (Presidencia de la Republica 2014). This objective, however, appears to promote two seemingly contradictory narratives—one which seeks to protect the human rights of migrants and the other which increases the security of the region. When the PFS was launched, it outlined five distinct action items. Four of the five items relate to border security and controlling migratory movements; all, however, in the name of the migrant's safety and protection. The principal aim appeared to be to devote funds and enforcement resources to the southern border region to lower the number of U.S.-bound "unauthorized" migrants (Castañeda 2016). This plan involved increasing checkpoints along major train routes and highways travelling northbound and setting up raids within the interior of the country where migrants may be found (ie. hotels, motels, etc.). In particular, the enforcement operations on the cargo train referred to as "La Bestia" were most visible where "migration authorities... blocked migrants from boarding trains, [and] pulled migrants off of trains" (Isacson et al. 2015). In all, this immigration security crackdown along the southern border prompted concerns from international organizations and non-governmental organizations about the excessive use of force by Mexican authorities (WOLA 2015; Boggs 2015; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) 2015).

Once more, the context behind this policy is important to note as it highlights the entanglement of Mexico's border security relationship with the U.S. During the summer of 2014, the Obama administration established bilateral negotiations with the Mexican government after the U.S. declared a humanitarian crisis at its southern border due to the high volume of unaccompanied children that were attempting to achieve safe passage into the U.S. There was intense media attention surrounding this "crisis", which showed overwhelmed Border Patrol personnel and facilities as well as discontent among the public in border states (Conlon 2014). The Obama administration sought cooperation and applied political pressure to the Peña Nieto administration to contain the "flow" of irregular migrants travelling to the U.S., ostensibly "stretching" its border enforcement objectives and promoting the use of Mexican border enforcement as a buffer state or a stopgap for "unauthorized" migration. The security crackdown was successful in apprehending and deporting thousands of migrants coming from Central America with approximately a 71 percent increase in apprehensions between July 2014 and June 2015 compared to the same period the previous year (Isacson et al. 2015). Furthermore, in 2015, Mexico apprehended more Central American migrants when compared to its U.S. counterpart: 174,529 apprehended in Mexico (SEGOB-INM 2015) versus 145,316 apprehended by the U.S. (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2016). As can be observed from Figures 1 and 2 below, it is clear that the consequences of the PFS from Mexico's perspective was to implement a policy of containment in the southern border region and boost deportations.

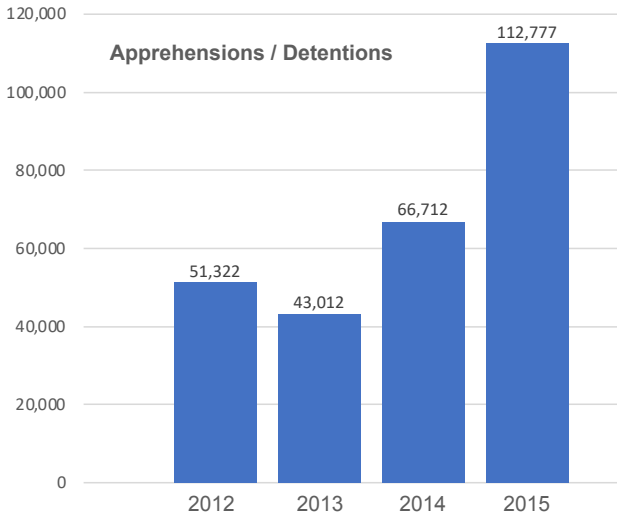

Figure 1: Apprehensions/Detentions at the Southern Border. Southern border states included in this chart are Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, and Quintana Roo. Source: SEGOB-INM 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 (Compiled by author).

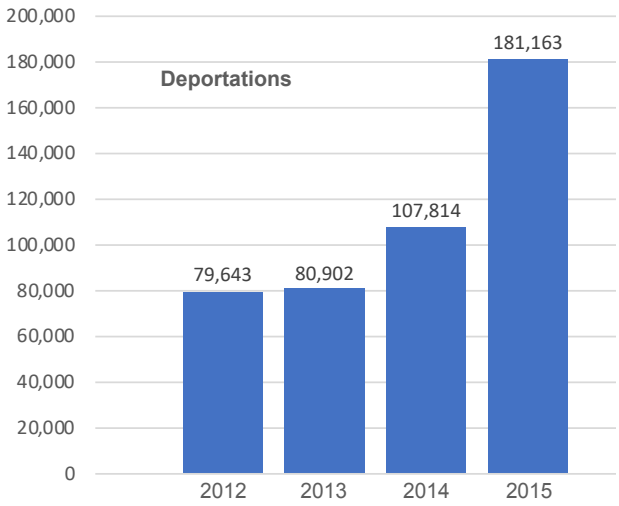

Figure 2: Mexico's Deportations by Year. Source: SEGOB-INM 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 (Compiled by author).

AMLO's Border Policy

When the Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) administration came into power in December 2018, there were high expectations among civil society leaders that the hard security policies vis-à-vis "unauthorized" migrants that Peña Nieto had implemented would change (Ruiz et al. 2020). First, politically, AMLO was very different from his predecessor. He was from the progressive party, MORENA, which he founded in 2014 after losing two presidential runs, citing electoral fraud. In comparison to the PRI party, the MORENA party represented a progressive leftist position, which advocated for members of the underclass, equality, and social justice (Chouza 2014). Second, with regards to "unauthorized" migration, AMLO advocated for a social and economic development approach in the southern border region to address the root causes of migration rather than Peña Nieto's security approach. His objective was to foster development with major infrastructure and social projects, which in turn would help reduce migration (Vega 2019). Originally, President AMLO promised to promote a more humanitarian approach to migration. His new administration pledged to change Mexico's migration policy and placed migrant rights defenders in key policy positions (Ruiz et al. 2020). Thus, despite the previous administration's punitive detention and deportation policies and U.S. President Donald Trump's relentless attacks on "illegal" immigration and xenophobic remarks towards both Mexican and Central American migrants, AMLO, even prior to his election victory, campaigned on the need to protect Central American migrants and defend their human rights (López Obrador 2018).

Nevertheless, the complex and dependent border relationship between the U.S. and Mexico proved to make the push towards a more humanitarian approach to "unauthorized" migration difficult. What has been dubbed the "Trump Effect" in the U.S. had negative consequences on Mexican border policy. In particular, there are two relevant factors that have directly influenced border policy, and both culminated with the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) or the "Stay in Mexico" policy. First, there was the "Zero Tolerance" policies, which began to be formulated in 2017, but would not be formally introduced until April 2018. The immigration policies associated with "Zero Tolerance" further criminalized irregular migrants by convicting any migrant with a felony crime if they crossed into the U.S. unlawfully. This set of policies not only justified the separation of families, but also reproduced the divisive "othering" narrative and xenophobic rhetoric of the "illegal" migrant.

Second, there was the migrant exodus from Central America that was referred to as "migrant caravans" and began in October 2018. The Trump administration continued to fabricate an "invasion" narrative using fear of criminals trying to attack the U.S. as a justification for its policies. Again, there was a clear pattern of associating this population with a national security emergency, a narrative that was "reliant on creating a sense of siege" (Pope 2020). In Mexico, these events were occurring during AMLO's presidential campaign and then while he was President-Elect. Even before he assumed the presidency, however, AMLO was vocal with his support of the members of the migrant "caravans" and offered to provide them with humanitarian protections. Once in office in January 2019, the *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (INM), under the direction of the AMLO administration, began granting humanitarian visas with the right to work to "caravan" members who entered through Tapachula, Chiapas (Joseph et al. 2019). This humanitarian visa process was much different than the more arduous application process for humanitarian visas during the PFS era under Peña Nieto, which could take up to 5 months to obtain and did not provide a work permit (Angulo-Pasel 2021). The INM named this humanitarian visa process the *Programa Emergente de Emisión de Tarjetas de Visitante por Razones Humanitarias* [Emergent Program for the Granting of Visitor for Humanitarian Reasons Cards], which included an expedited screening and interview process and typically took five days (Ruiz et al. 2020). The program proved to be very successful in that by January 23, 2019, there were already 8,727 applications for this humanitarian visa (Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB) 2019).

Yet, the Trump administration's constant focus on "unauthorized" migration coming from Mexico and the multiple migrant "caravans" in the early months of AMLO's presidency, escalated the political pressure from the U.S. This pressure, along with an overwhelming number of applicants for this new type of humanitarian visa, abruptly halted AMLO's policy prerogatives. More specifically, the policy shift from the promised humane

approach to "unauthorized" migration towards more enforcement-based tactics began to take shape after President Trump threatened to impose escalating trade tariffs on Mexican goods entering the U.S. if the Mexican government did not do more to stop the flow of "illegal" migrants coming to the U.S.–Mexico border; thus, laying bare the dependent economic relationship between the two nation-states. The tariffs would start at 5 percent and could eventually increase to 25 percent (Shear & Haberman 2019). The AMLO government, aware that the U.S. is Mexico's number one economic trading partner, knew these tariffs would have detrimental effects on the economy and its popular support. Thus, after a series of bilateral negotiations, all of the factors mentioned above culminated in the *U.S.–Mexico Joint Declaration and Migrant Protection Protocols* (MPP), otherwise known as the "Remain in Mexico" policy. With this agreement, the Mexican government would actively crackdown on migration enforcement at the Mexican southern border and the U.S. would be able "to send asylum seekers back to Mexico to wait for their immigration hearings in the United States" (Meyer & Isacson 2019, 8). According to official statistics from the INM, apprehensions and detentions in the southern states which make up the borderlands with Guatemala (Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Quintana Roo) and overall deportations rose again: apprehensions and detentions from 73,176 in 2018 to 98,076 in 2019; and deportations from 115,686 in 2018 to 149,812 in 2019 (SEGOB-INM 2018; 2019). Once more, similar to the Peña Nieto administration, the new AMLO government found itself acting as an external border enforcer for the U.S., and border practices reverted back to displaying the nation-state's enforcement power.

The Role of the National Guard

Shortly after the bilateral agreement was reached between the two countries in June 2019, the threat of tariffs was withdrawn, and the border enforcement efforts increased. The AMLO administration employed a new border enforcement technique by deploying the recently created National Guard to the Mexico–Guatemala border to stop "unauthorized" migrants from entering Mexico. Reminiscent of the PFS policy, this militarized security force set up checkpoints along major highways and train routes. There was also accounts that immigration officials raided migrant shelters (Lakhani 2019). Overall, in Mexico, there were and are many concerns with this new security force. First, despite claims to the contrary, the National Guard consists primarily of military or ex-military personnel who have been deployed to assist in migration enforcement. According to a report by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the National Guard was to assume all federal policing functions where "the government expected that most Federal Police agents would move over to the new force, but this has not been the case" (Meyer 2020). Instead, three quarters of the National Guard members are from the army or the navy. Given their broad powers in civilian policing and public security tasks, there are major concerns with using army and navy soldiers due to the lack of accountability and the expanding militarized nature of public security in Mexico (Meyer 2020). In June 2019, the National Guard deployed approximately 21,500 officers as part of the surge of border enforcement operations along the southern border (Ruiz et al. 2020). However, using guardsmen for migration issues further militarizes the border and raises human rights concerns due to the lack of human rights training or interaction with vulnerable populations the guardsmen receive (Meyer & Isacson 2019). As a result, there have been multiple reports of members of the National Guard "assisting" the INM in border enforcement operations, actively preventing migrant "caravans" from travelling to and through Mexico, including physically abusing migrants with riot gear, using tear gas, and forcing them on buses to take them back to Tapachula (Abbott 2020; Tucker 2020; Meyer 2020).

Exercises of Migrant Resistance

Altogether these border enforcement policies affect the lived experiences of migrants who attempt to achieve safe passage throughout Mexico. They encounter a journey of violence, which begins as soon as that decision is made to migrate; as they prepare to enter a clandestine space. Through migrant knowledge networks, they are aware that their journey will be long and dangerous, but they still move. This act of moving is a form of resistance; they move despite nation-state governments telling them otherwise. Throughout my fieldwork, I found that despite their struggles, migrants are aware that movement is their strategy for survival. They know they are going against the power and laws of the nation-state, but they still move. Thus, through their movement, migrants challenge the border regime and existing structures because that is how they survive. No matter how small, the power to move and resist borders is still there. I encountered migrants who had been victims of physical and sexual assault, as well as kidnapping and extortion. The journey may involve walking for days through the most secluded fields and developing blisters the size of rocks on the bottom of one's feet and/or it may involve trying to board a deadly freight train as a mode of transportation, which can amputate or kill people. Overall, it involves palpable fear and distrust of anyone and everyone along the journey, including the authorities that are supposed to "protect" but instead abuse. The journey is full of precarity, liminality, and vulnerability, but they still move.

Within this migration space, which is filled with struggles between those who seek to contain and control, and those who seek to move, migrants find strategies to survive their migratory journeys, reclaim control over their movements, and overcome the power of the "border". "Unauthorized" migrants move because they have been

forcibly displaced by various forms of structural violence, which excludes and marginalizes them (Hyndman 2004). Bordering practices that disrupt and criminalize a population intercept rather than address root causes of forced displacement and migration. For instance, not only are there great economic inequalities in Central America, but this inequality is caused by a history of exploitation and rural displacement, which makes it difficult to obtain a sustainable livelihood. Initially, AMLO appeared willing to address socio-economic development but his policies reverted back to containment.

Consequently, the Guatemala–Mexico border is a site of constant struggle between the power of the nation-state and the strategies of survival and resistance migrants use to travel north. One such strategy is what has been referred to as the migrant "caravan", although migrant activists choose to call these movements a migrant exodus to bring attention to the unlivable situation this population faces. Caravans have become more visible, larger and more widely discussed. This is due to the increased use of social media (i.e. Facebook) for organizing, increased safety for migrants, and increased media attention (Sieff & Partlow 2018). This form of organization and migrant resistance became especially known in October 2018 when it received ample media attention and wrath from the Trump administration. This particular migrant "caravan" grew to approximately 4,000 people and its members were primarily from Honduras (Roberts 2018). Nonetheless, it is important to note that these movements are not necessarily new, but rather, have gained more momentum and recognition in the last five years. In fact, for the last decade or so, there have been yearly migrant "caravans" throughout Mexico, two prominent ones being the *Viacrucis Migrante* which began in 2010 (Garrido 2018) and the mothers of missing migrants, which travels north every year looking for their missing loved ones (Kron 2016). Civil society groups, like *Pueblo Sin Fronteras*, typically organize these movements as "an affirmative protest mobilization against unjust border and immigration policies" (Tazzioli & De Genova 2020, 877).

There are three prominent reasons why migrants use this survival strategy. One has to do with the issues of security and safety. "Unauthorized" migrants are preyed upon by both state and non-state actors. Members of criminal gangs frequent secluded areas to kidnap and extort migrants. Similarly, federal, state, and municipal authorities abuse and extort people along migrant trajectories. During my fieldwork, I encountered many migrants with stories about their border violence. One story involved a 14-year-old boy who I met at a migrant shelter. Like others, he was escaping violence in his home country of Honduras. When I met him, he was in the process of applying for a humanitarian status in Mexico because he had been gang raped by a group of men. Another story involves a woman, also from Honduras, who was fleeing her country without her children in hopes of finding safe passage to the U.S. to claim asylum. She wanted to immigrate to the U.S. and then bring her children to join her. When I met her, she was travelling with a man, who I first believed was her spouse. Upon speaking with them, however, I found out that this man was setting out on his journey again within the next couple of days while she was staying behind. Up until this point, they had been travelling together and pretending to be a couple so that the woman would not be harassed or sexually abused by others on their journey. In return for this "protection", there was an understanding that there was an exchange of sexual relations. Given the gender-based violence that occurs on the journey through Mexico, she felt safer in this partnership. Thus, "caravans" allow migrants to travel in groups which affords them more security during their journeys versus travelling alone. There is strength and safety in numbers, especially when there is press attention. Together these migrants also show resistance to border policies by using their right to move together despite governments' attempts to stop them.

Second, travelling in large groups that have been organized by civil society means that migrants do not have to acquire the services of coyotes and/or *polleros*. Coyotes/*polleros* are migration facilitators who charge a fee in order to help smuggle migrants through Mexico and into the U.S. As border enforcement and control continues to escalate, the need for coyotes and the cost of acquiring their services also increases. As pathways in Mexico become more violent and dangerous, the service becomes more expensive to account for the risk involved in the journey; services can range from $5000 to $10,000 dollars (Isacson et al. 2015). Lastly, travelling in large groups, which are organized by civil society, is a collective social protest of resistance that fosters solidarity among its members. Within this migrant struggle, this form of collective mobility is a social movement that serves to call attention to, and bears witness to the gang violence, poverty, inequality, and environmental devastation its members endure (Wurtz 2020). It is a form of resistance that seeks to identify social and political demands and fights for the rights of its members; the right to move, the right to seek asylum, the right to a life free from violence, the right to survive. Therefore, through the exercise of movement and resistance, migrants that organize and walk in "caravans" are not victims, but claims-making agents who can regain control of the narrative by demanding the rights of asylum to which they are entitled. These social movements will continue as a strategy as long as the conditions in their home countries persist.

Conclusion

In sum, Mexico's southern border with Guatemala is an important site of struggle, which requires more attention. When we examine this border, we discover that territorial borders are but a line on the sand (Parker & Vaughan-Williams 2009). In reality and

on-the-ground, this border manifests in many forms; it is an invisible wall. It is the checkpoints along highways and train routes, it is the raids at motels where migrants frequent, it is tear gas and riot gear worn by National Guard members, and, paradoxically it is primarily said to be done in the name of the "protection and safety" of migrants. Although this border is an important site of study, it is also similar to other borders around the world where bordering practices are used as techniques of containment to restrict the movement of unwanted populations.

My research shows that when borders divide a relatively affluent state from one deemed to be a "developing" country, hardline security policies through "othering" discourse and policy are justified and endorsed to deter "unauthorized" migrants. It also shows that when we examine the border as bordering practices, we can easily observe how the more affluent state can use its political and economic leverage to extend and spatially stretch its border enforcement regime into an entire region and to multiple territorial borders. The Mexico–Guatemala border becomes an overlooked site of struggle, which shows the relations of power and resistance. By analyzing the Peña Nieto and López Obrador administrations, we can see how the border security relations between the U.S. and Mexico are entangled, but also how the nation-state enforces its power through containment tactics. By examining migrant strategies of survival, like migrant "caravans", we discover how this nation-state power interacts with migrants' forms of resistance.

Even though irregular migrants suffer countless numbers of human rights violations, from sexual assaults and beatings, to kidnapping and extortion, they are agents with rights and display resilience despite their vulnerabilities. As long as the root causes of corruption, violence, inequality, and poverty, among others, are not legitimately acknowledged and addressed, migrants will continue to move north for a sustainable livelihood and a life that is free from violence. Their movement is their survival strategy. Their movement is their form of resistance to demand basic human rights. Travelling in "caravans" demonstrates their solidarity, their agency as claims-making individuals, and their commitment to finding a better life. This is a form a social protest that calls attention to their living conditions and also actually takes into account migrants' safety and security.

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ARTICLE
SPECIAL SECTION

The Border-Development-Climate Change Nexus: Precarious Campesinos at the Selva Maya Mexico–Guatemala Border

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Borderlands can be places of socio-economic tensions, development challenges, and ecological risks, now exacerbated by climate change. We investigate the border-development-climate change nexus using research from Calakmul, Mexico and Petén, Guatemala, to detail the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of campesinos *in the Selva Maya cross-border region. Our mixed methods approach combines historical analysis and ethnographic interviews with 70 campesinos. We demonstrate how large scale development approaches result in local and specific policy interventions, but produce mixed outcomes for campesinos, neglecting the most marginalized. Despite the absence of any major border crossings, a porous border in this area allows flows of people, goods, and services to connect the region, but there are differential national outcomes. In Petén, many campesinos suffer from 'irregularity' (lacking rights to the lands where they live and cultivate), preventing access to state development benefits. In Calakmul greater climate change demands adaptations beyond the scope of recent policy interventions. We consider how the border region includes biophysical processes as well as socio-political and cultural ones, and we argue that policy interventions are required at global, national, and local scales to address structural inequalities and co-create local solutions to development, migration, and climate change challenges.*

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Introduction

Borderlands are often spaces of change, comparison, and possible tension. A border is both a territorial marker and a suite of processes in which daily practices reflect governance contexts (Paasi et al. 2022). It creates a zone across and a transition space between two territories. These territories may be pursuing different development trajectories, influenced by national socio-cultural and policy contexts far removed from the border itself. Less studied is the physical and biological context of borders; there is some dicussion on the *bordering of nature* and efficacy of transfrontier parks, but little on the *nature of bordering*. In this study we explore a borderland defined by a biologically and socially porous border that runs through tropical forests, inhabited by flora and fauna (including people). Are the people who follow forest paths and streams across the border invisible and unaffected by the material border? To what extent are such 'hidden' borders overtaken by physical global processes like climate change and to what extent do they still structure the lives of residents? In this paper, we unpack the lived experiences of a marginalised group, the campesinos,[1] who inhabit and traverse the Selva Maya. We explore the border-development-climate change nexus through this region of the Mexican–Guatemalan border which, unlike the busy border to its southwest, is little studied.

The Selva Maya is the largest tropical forest north of the Amazon, encompassing northern Guatemala, western Belize, and southeastern Mexico with over four million hectares of protected areas (GIZ n.d.). It is vital for biodiversity conservation and climate stabilization in Mesoamerica. Forests produce rainfall and atmospheric moisture, thereby helping to cool the climate and recharge groundwater (Ellison et al. 2017). Historically, these forests were home to the Maya civilisation and today the region is home to half a million people, including indigenous and mestizo campesino settlers and ranchers (Primack et al. 1999). The area is currently experiencing significant environmental and socio-economic change. Climate change is causing less predictable and more severe precipitation patterns, causing both droughts and flooding with already severe consequences for agriculture and ecosystems (Esperon-Rodriguez et al. 2019). Such impacts resonate with historical events, as erratic climate was involved in the demise of the Maya civilization in the region (Douglas et al. 2015; Evans et al. 2018; Turner & Sabloff 2012).

The Guatemala–Mexico border bisects the Selva Maya, as it runs for 871 kilometres between the Guatemalan departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango, El Quiché, and Petén and the Mexican states of Chiapas, Tabasco, and Campeche. According to Fábregas Puig (2011), a southern border did not exist in the imagination of Mexicans until the 1980s,[2] when the civil war[3] in Guatemala poured thousands of refugees into the southern Mexican states (Chamarbagwala & Morán 2011; Manz 1988; Taylor et al. 2006). Northern Guatemala and southern Mexico more broadly can be considered a cross-border region, even beyond the Selva Maya, because of geographical, cultural, and social continuities (Villafuerte Solís 2017). At the macro scale, geopolitical interests converge, mostly with the United States government, for control and containment of irregular and illegal flows of drugs, weapons, migrants, while exploitation of natural resources has long been a central theme in the history of the region (Toussaint & Garzón 2020).

At the micro scale, the cross-border reality varies along the border. This paper focuses on the little studied border section in the Selva Maya between Mexico and Petén. Much of our recent knowledge of the Mexico–Guatemala cross-border region derives from research on the section between Chiapas, Mexico and San Marcos and Huehuetenango, Guatemala. There, the border constitutes a crucial territory connecting Central and South America with North America (Fernández-Casanueva 2020). This cross-border region is characterized by poverty, violence, and organizations demanding autonomy and resisting extractivist projects (Villafuerte Solís 2017), but also by strong social, commercial, and cultural ties that go beyond state boundaries (Fuentes Carrera 2020). In contrast, the forest of the Selva Maya presents a barrier to many cross-border activities in the north and northeastern section of the Guatemala-Mexico border region. We aim here to evidence the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of campesinos in this cross-border region, as they navigate the interlinked challenges and policies of neoliberal development and climate change. In so doing, our findings contribute to an understanding of the border-development-climate change nexus and inform practical future policy directions for the region.

Today, the campesino form of living is strongly shaped by changing conditions for cultivating land—particularly climatic, market, and regulatory conditions defined or mediated by states. The Guatemalan and Mexican governments aim to address current issues that campesinos are facing in different ways through recent developmental strategies and policy interventions. To address poverty and poor yields from a market-oriented standpoint, both governments devised increasingly neoliberal agricultural policies with the goal of improving food security for the poor and supporting the more industrialized agricultural sector (Carte et al. 2010; FAO et al. 2014). To date, these policies have failed to deliver on their promises for campesinos. Most campesinos in Petén and Calakmul remain largely subsistence producers, with some income diversification through additional activities such as beekeeping and remittances from family working elsewhere or national aid programs subsidizing household incomes (Taylor et al., 2006). Even though hunger has become rare in rural Mexico, it remains a concern in Guatemala, especially among families

with limited land access (Aguilar-Støen 2012; Carte et al. 2010, 2019). Agricultural policies largely have not reduced campesinos' poverty and, together with climate change, create a double exposure for rural communities and increasing the precariousness of their lives (O'Brien & Leichenko 2000). For example, campesinos are dependent on rainfall for farming therefore, the risks of drought or uncertainty at the onset of the rainy season exacerbate the challenges of agricultural production, especially on the drier Mexican side (Mardero et al. 2020a). Neoliberal policies have often exacerbated inequalities between large-scale farmers with capital and resources, and the more numerous campesinos (Carte et al. 2010). This article contributes to debates at the nexus of borders, development, and climate change through an examination of campesino precarity in this Selva Maya cross-border region. This cross-border case study enables analysis of development resulting from state and non-state factors (Novak 2016), including the effects of globally induced climate change in this local context.

The border-development-climate change nexus

There has been a shift in our understanding of borders as fixed, place-based entities to the idea that "borders are everywhere" (Balibar 1998), implying that multiple forms of limits are enacted throughout a territory via societal processes and discourses (Paasi 2009). Borders are seen primarily as socio-political constructs (for both 'dwelling' spaces and political responsibilities: Agnew 2008). Hence, both the different political contexts delineated by the border and the practices of bordering offer a rich ground in which to study development. The relationships between borders and development are contested and complex. Borders can trap us into territorial thinking and impede us from pursuits of development across state boundaries (Agnew 2008). Borders that are more open to the movement of people may facilitate development (through remittances and knowledge flows) and thus partially address deep structural inequalities, although they also potentially impede development within countries of origin (for example, through brain drain) (Tebble 2021).

Development has long been seen as both an "immanent and unintentional process" (such as the process of capitalism) and as "an intentional activity" (Cowen & Shenton 1998, 50), and it is generally accepted that political structural change and intentional specific interventions can co-exist and interact (Mitlin et al. 2007). Importantly, Novak (2016, 484) adds a third understanding, with development as "a set of social experiences and outcomes" for individuals and social groups. Understanding how the social experiences and lived outcomes for campesinos in this cross-border region reflect the intentional and unintentional development contexts for agricultural production, and therefore the actions of states, is thus critical to knowledge at the border-development-climate change nexus. Although this cross-border region shares the same forest, indigenous ancestry, and exposure to climate change, the fortunes of campesinos have diverged on either side of the border due to regional and national socio-political and historical contexts.

Climate change has already significantly impacted this region (Mardero et al. 2020b), exemplifying the influences of global capitalist practices on biophysical as well as social processes. While there has been limited theorisation of borders and climate change, it is understood that climate change will impact the mobility of human populations, including migration across borders (Cundill et al. 2021). The specific manifestations and reasons for this is context dependent and scaled. For example, climate change-induced reduction in crop yields in Mexico is significantly associated with migration to the United States of America and it is predicted that such emigration will continue as agricultural productivity declines (Feng et al. 2010). In addition, climate change will cause some species to move, which will have consequences for conservation and socio-ecological systems (Titley et al. 2021).

Since development and its wider policy consequences do not always reflect intention, we must explore the lived experience to understand them (Martin 2005; Novak 2016). Thus, we investigated local perspectives of campesinos through ethnographic fieldwork on both sides of the border. Specifically, we posed the following research questions: What "policy landscapes" (i.e. the imprint of policies on the landscape) have evolved around agricultural development and climate change on both sides of the border? How is climate change manifesting in this region and what are its consequences? What is the lived experiences of campesinos and what are their current vulnerabilities? What are the dynamics and fluidity of this borderland, and how are development interventions and climate change influencing these? By addressing these questions we seek to contribute to a wider understanding of the border and development nexus (Novak 2016) as it intersects specificly with climate change.

To answer these questions, we map the diverging trajectories of the region through a short historical analysis. We demonstrate evidence for, and effects of, climate change on agriculture and livelihoods. Finally, we explore the lived consequences of policy interventions for campesinos in Petén and Calakmul and investigate how they navigate the biophysical, social, and financial gradients across the border through an ethnographic approach. We aim to present a story sympathetic to the campesino that is cognisant of the complexities of context, with an emphasis on global imperatives. We conclude with recommendations for governance directions.

Methods

This research is grounded in the authors' experiences of working across multiple projects intensively for up

to 25 years in Calakmul, Mexico and more sporadically for up to 30 years in Petén, Guatemala (e.g. Schmook & Radel 2008; Schmook et al. 2013; Lecuyer et al. 2019; Mardero et al. 2020a). For this paper, we used an interdisciplinary and multi-method approach, drawing on results from multiple studies to interrogate the situation of campesinos in the Mexico–Guatemala cross-border region of the Selva Maya.

We conducted a brief analysis of the shared and divergent recent histories of Petén and Calakmul (since about 1950), with a particular focus on agricultural and climate policies implemented in both regions (Hanberger 2003). We then drew on ethnographic fieldwork with campesinos on both sides of the border. This fieldwork occurred in two villages and one hamlet in Petén and in 15 *ejidos*[4] in Calakmul.[5] We conducted 70 in-depth interviews within two research projects, in Petén and Calakmul in 2018 and again in Calakmul in 2019 and 2020. In Petén we used both snowball and opportunistic approaches to identify participants and in Calakmul we selected participants using systematised random selection. Interviews focused on (among other topics not explored here) campesinos' livelihoods, border dynamics, impacts of climate change on agricultural activities, adaptation to climate change, and experience with governmental programs. Most interviews were carried out in the respondent's home and lasted an hour on average. Informed consent was gained for recording, or, in some cases, before notes were written. Recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed in two ways. First, interview notes and transcriptions were analyzed using Dedoose (www.dedoose.com). Text was coded and classified into categories or thematic fields that emerged from an examination of the data (inductively). In this paper, we draw on themes in relation to the border, agriculture, and development. Second, we synthesised interview results into a narrative supported by selected indicative quotes to represent the lived experience of participants.

Study Regions: Background and Historical Analysis

Guatemala Study Region: Petén

Petén is the largest and most recently colonized of Guatemala's 18 departments, covering almost 36,000 square kilometres or about one-third of its territory (Zander & Dürr 2011). The current (2018) population of Petén is estimated at 545,600 (INE 2019), translating into a population density of approximately 15 inhabitants per square kilometre. According to the last census, 60% of the population was rural. Around 30% identify as indigenous (compared to 42% at the national level), belonging to Mayan groups Q'eqchi', Mopan, and Itzaj, while the remaining 70% identify as *ladino* (mixed European and indigenous descent) (INE 2019). Petén is by far the most forested department in Guatemala with 45.6% of its territory still covered by forest and the Maya Biosphere Reserve falls within its boundaries. Forest loss remains high at an annual 1.5% from 2010 to 2016, whilst the worldwide annual rate in 2015 was 0.13% (Ritchie & Roser 2021). Petén is known as Guatemala's "granary", because it accounts for 47.6% of the land used for maize (*Zea mays*) production in Guatemala (MAGA 2012). Here, Campesinos practice subsistence milpa,[6] planting maize and beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) as staple and commercial crops and other products for family consumption (tubers such as sweet potato *Ipomoea batatas*, fruits, etc.) and for sale (squash Cucurbita spp. and sesame *Sesamum indicum* seeds) (Zander & Dürr 2011). Much of the soils are shallow and unsuitable for intensive production. Low-lying areas are periodically flooded in the rainy season, often destroying harvests.

Mexico Study Region: Calakmul

Calakmul, a Mexican municipality of the state of Campeche, lies north of Petén across the border and covers approximately 14,000 square kilometres. Its current population of 31,714 inhabitants distributed over 158 localities results in a very low population density of 2.27 inhabitants per square kilometre (INEGI 2021), which is strikingly less than Petén. In Calakmul 85% of the population is rural (Sánchez Islas et al. 2019) and 44.1% were born in other Mexican states. Two thirds of the population consider themselves indigenous (68%) (Calakmul State Development Plan 2019-2021) with Chol, a Mayan people originally from Chiapas, being the largest group (74% of the indigenous population). Other groups represented in the population are Tzeltal, Peninsular Maya, Tzotzil, and Totonaca (INEGI 2015). Around 94% of Calakmul is covered by forests, partly because half of its extent corresponds to the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve (Metcalfe et al. 2020). Forest loss in Calakmul was estimated at 0.12% annually between 2001 and 2013 (Ellis et al. 2015); as in Petén, the rate of loss has been declining since the early 1990s (Ramírez-Delgado et al. 2014). Like in Petén, there is a pronounced precipitation gradient that constrains the type of tropical forests. To the north, where annual precipitation is around 900 mm, the seasonal tropical forest is drier and shorter, whereas precipitation to the south can reach 1400 mm, resulting in seasonal tropical forests where evergreen tree species dominate (Vester et al. 2007).

Despite similar soils, conditions for agriculture are not as favourable in Calakmul as they are in Petén because of differences in rainfall. In Calakmul, rainfall tends to be marginal for both crops and cattle. Individual households, using the milpa system, have cultivated smaller areas each year, while at the municipal level, total hectares under maize and chihua have augmented given an overall population increase (Schmook et al. 2013). Additionally, the importance of jalapeno chili (*Capsicum annuum*), once the most important

commercial crop, has decreased (Dobler-Morales et al. 2020). The most important commercial crop is currently chihua (*C. argyrosperma*), a squash variety cultivated for its seeds. Campesinos today may also engage in beekeeping, small-scale cattle ranching, labour migration (to the tourist corridor of the Caribbean and to the U.S.), or community-based forestry in the largest ejidos (Carte et al. 2010; Chowdhury 2010; Radel et al. 2010; Schmook & Radel 2008).

Colonization and Land Tenure in Petén and Calakmul

Most agricultural frontier colonization in Petén and Calakmul started around the 1960s, as roadbuilding in the 1950s better connected these locations to the rest of the country and encouraged settlement by landless families (Grandia 2009). Though both are considered agricultural frontier regions, and as such have only recently experienced agricultural expansion, their histories diverge in terms of how colonization has occurred, leading to distinct experiences of land tenure security.

In Petén, campesinos face land tenure insecurity because much of the land was settled "illegally" by internal migrants in search of land to pursue agricultural activities. Today, these campesinos are considered to have "irregular" status. Campesinos in Petén also face land scarcity due to natural population growth, in-migration, and the displacement of small-scale agriculture by cattle ranching and large-scale plantations such as oil palm (Zander & Dürr 2011). Most campesinos in Petén do not own land and must rent or borrow to cultivate (Grandia et al. 2013). According to a 2009 census conducted by the NGO Pastoral de la Tierra, 51% of the population had no land to cultivate. Furthermore, plots are becoming ever smaller as they are sub-divided for children, and soils are increasingly infertile which, together with either excess or lack of water, negatively affects production (Grünberg et al. 2012). This reduced or lack of access to lands has pushed some campesinos to settle in protected areas. In contrast, land rights in Calakmul were granted collectively through the institution of the ejido. Nevertheless, there are differences in land access and other resource-based assets between ejidatarios (who have access rights to land) and pobladores/avecindados (who do not have such rights) (Navarro-Olmedo et al. 2016). The size of the land holding also varies widely among ejidos, from 20 ha to 300 ha; yet campesinos in Calakmul cultivate only a small fraction of their land right, leading to an effective farm size ranging from 0.5 hectare to about 6 hectare (not counting, for some, area under pasture; see Dobler-Morales et al. 2020).

In short, Petén and Calakmul have similar recent settlement histories. National policies to encourage agricultural settlement and decrease political conflict

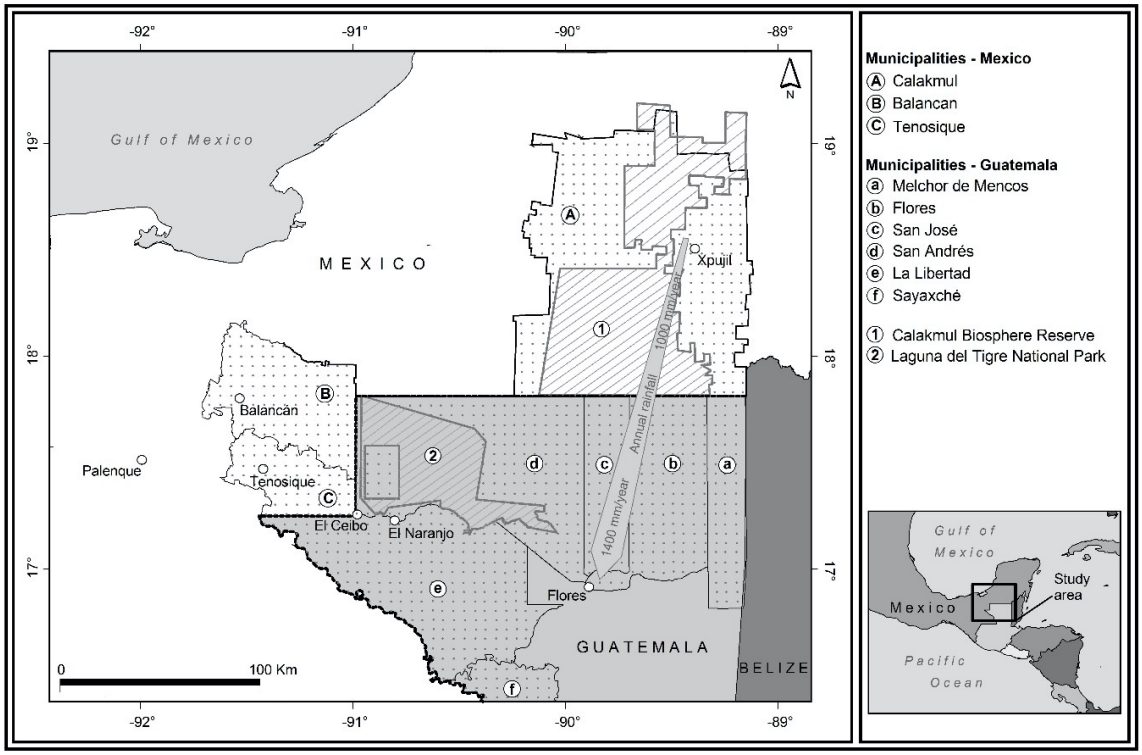

Figure 1. Study region, including municipalities (lowercase letters for Guatemala, capital letters for Mexico) and protected areas (numbers) on both sides of the border and the North-South precipitation gradient. Source: Map elaborated by H. Weissenberger, ECOSUR.

elsewhere, accompanied by road construction, led to similar patterns of re-settlement in the latter 20th century. In Petén, unlike in Calakmul, land access for poorer farming families was problematic from the start, leading to greater precarity for campesinos south of the border.

Agricultural Policies in Petén and Calakmul

Beginning in the early 1980s, many Latin American governments prioritized individual property regimes and reduced state support for campesinos, such as credit and extension services. With a renewed emphasis on large-scale agro-exports, rural areas experienced major transformations. There are areas where agribusinesses have not yet penetrated due to the impossibility of large-scale mechanization, a challenging climate, or difficult access - a situation experienced in Calakmul (Kay 2015). Nevertheless, campesino livelihoods in Calakumul and Petén have changed dramatically and income from farming is often less than 50% of total income. Today most campesinos here, as elsewhere in Latin America, can only subsist with off-farm income, remittances, state pensions, and antipoverty programmes (Kay 2015).

In Guatemala, after policies in the 1970s aimed at improving production for both national consumption and export, the 1990s saw the development of policies centered on the rural poor to improve nutrition and insert them in the market economy (FAPDA 2014). Today, agricultural policies and programmes continue to revolve around the same ideas. A flagship program of the Ministry of Agriculture ("Family Agriculture Program for the Strengthening of the Campesino") was implemented in 2012 and is central to the articulation of most national policies, including the national development plan K'atun Nuestra Guatemala 2032 (CIA 2015; CONADUR 2014; Gobierno de la Republica de Guatemala 2016). The Guatemalan government also continues to implement several other policy instruments to support the agricultural sector, based on the Gran Plan Nacional Agropecuario (GPNA) 2016-2020, with most supports focused on price protections. However, despite these policies being on paper and in the official discurse, many campesinos in Petén do not receive these benefits due to their irregular settlement status (see findings below).

Unlike Petén, rural Calakmul is characterized by a strong presence of government support. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Mexican state took up the challenge of improving small-scale ejido farming, through subsidies, providing low-interest loans to ejidatarios, and promoting agricultural extension to train and encourage farmers to use Green Revolution agricultural packages for crops (Vargas Hernández 2008). The system of guaranteed prices and the strong safety net of other supports came to an end in the 1990s after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect. As a result, the value of maize production per unit of cultivation declined (SIAP 2020), and poverty among rural households increased (Caceres & Richards 2002). In response to this, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development and Fisheries (SAGARPA) implemented its two flagship programs, PROCAMPO (1994) and Alianza para el Campo (1995) which aimed to support low-income agricultural producers during the transition period to an open economy (Yunez-Naude & Barceinas Paredes 2002). PROCAMPO (renamed ProAgro Productivo in 2014 and Produccion para el Bienestar in 2019) subsidised not only campesinos but also big landowners on a per hectare basis and has remained one of the most important agricultural programs in Mexico. The new agricultural and social welfare program, Sembrando Vida, inaugurated in 2019, generated high expectations among Calakmul communities, especially given its provision of a fixed monthly payment to campesinos for cultivating their lands.

Petén and Calakmul have both seen a litany of agricultural policies and programs for campesinos. Despite shared challenges with respect to trade liberalization and climate change, agricultural programs in Calakmul have brought significant benefits to campesinos, while programs in Petén have been unavailable to these poorer households due to their irregular settlement status.

Evidence of Climate Change

Climate change is already evident on both sides of the border. For Petén and the whole of Guatemala, there is an observed increase in temperature and precipitation variability (ECLAC et al. 2018; IPCC 2012). There is no area in Guatemala that has not suffered the effects of drought in the last thirty years. In the case of Calakmul, several authors report that precipitation and temperatures have also changed in recent decades, with more frequent and longer droughts, greater variability in precipitation, and higher temperatures reached more frequently and for longer periods (IPCC 2014; Mardero et al. 2012; Orellana et al. 2009).

Although both the Mexican and Guatemalan sides of the Maya Forest are affected by rising temperatures and precipitation variability, Calakmul lies in a drier zone (between isoyeths 900 to 1300 mm) of a precipitation gradient across the region and thus has suffered heavier impacts from droughts than Petén which is located in a wetter area (1400 to 2500 mm).

Results of the Ethnographic Interviews: Experienced Precarity

For the research results we focus separately on each country, with a narrative analysis of how associated national agricultural and linked climate change policy is

perceived through lived experience in the contemporary rural contexts of Petén and Calakmul. We supplement data from the interviews with additional data from our historical analysis. In the discussion that follows, we provide a comparative analysis for the cross-border region, including the movement of people, goods, and money across the border. This section is followed by an interrogation of the findings' implications for the notions and practices of borders.

Intimidation, Eviction, and Irregularity in Petén

Our interviews reveal that some of the Petén communities within Laguna del Tigre National Park, inside the Maya Biosphere Reserve, share a particular history of oppression and inequality related to land insecurity. Residents reported living with a constant threat of displacement, and thus loss of their agricultural livelihoods, by state and non-state actors. Since they moved to the area they have had to deal with the Franco-British oil company PERENCO paradoxically located within this protected area. Settled here to flee the armed conflict and associated resettlement policies, people in the area have never fully possessed land titles and have lived under the constant threat of eviction and intimidation. The oil company has not only caused extensive deforestation but has also displaced several communities and threatened local populations by militarizing the area.

In Guatemala, oil partly finances the army. In the framework of the extension agreement of the oil contract N°2-85 (the first concession contract), the "*Batallon de Infanteria de la Selva*", or "*Green Battalion*", was created. It is financed by PERENCO with $3 million (USD), plus a contribution of $0.30 (USD) per barrel produced (Collectif Guatemala 2011). The Battalion's official mission is to fight for conservation and combat drug trafficking but in practice (according to residents, NGOs such as *Salva la Selva*, and the *Collectif* Guatemala reports) the military intimidates locals who oppose projects for the exploitation of natural resources, violates the right to free movement of people and goods, and pressures communities against organising for the legitimate assertion of their rights. Soldiers occasionally burst into villages and threaten villagers with eviction. Incidents like these in the communities of El Progreso were a recurrent story shared by those interviewed. In these communities, leaders were promised support for village improvements if they signed a "voluntary eviction" agreement; sometimes they were bribed. After signing, they were told: "*Look gentlemen, your leaders already signed the voluntary eviction document, so we give you an eviction date*" (Resident from Rancho Nuevo, Petén 2018).

The National Council of Protected Areas in Guatemala (CONAP) has also tried to evict several communities from reserve lands on the basis of natural resource protection, even though they allow the presence of PERENCO. The communities filed a complaint with the Guatemalan government (backed up by the United Nations and international NGOs) to revoke the oil company's concession and gain land access, but more than two years later there was still no signed receipt by the government to acknowledge the complaint:

> *All the communities have appealed for land tenure, because, just as they need oil money, we need land and we want to have authorisation, even if it is just a piece, to live on something of our own, because if we are Guatemalans we have the right, but it has been two years since that document [the appeal] and President Jimmy Morales, the clown, does not want to sign it* (Resident from Santa Rosa, Petén 2018).

Informants explained the strong presence of drug-lords as another reason for the territorial dispute of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. According to one interviewee from Santa Rosa, Petén authorities (in collusion with drug-lords) exert pressure to evict campesinos who are deemed inconvenient:

> *Well, the truth is that in this area there has been a lot of drug trafficking, but those who have these organizations are the same people from the Government, they are people from the Government who work in this, and that's why it harms them that there are communities in the area* (Resident from Santa Rosa, Petén 2018).

Due to their irregular settlement status, the communities or *rancherios* (hamlets) located in the reserve receive no services or support from the Guatemalan government. There are no state educational services, therefore, in some communities residents have set up a small school with one teacher using their very limited personal resources. In a few cases they have a teacher paid by the neighboring Mexican (not Guatemalan) municipal government. There are no doctors or nurses, nor access to medical equipment or drugs in their communities; therefore, people cross the border to Balancan or Tenosique in Mexico when they require medical attention. According to a resident of Rancho Nuevo, it has been more than 10 years since the last visit from a representative of the Ministry of Health who, during his visit, only handed a first-aid kit to the community:

> *Here we do not have any government support. We knocked on the doors of the secretary of education in Petén and they told us, 'look, the truth is, we cannot give you a teacher because these are protected areas, and you cannot live there, you do not get any [state] benefits living there', and we came away empty-handed (...). In fact, we have support from Mexico for education and health (...) There is also the mobile health service; they vaccinate us and monitor the pregnant women and they don't charge you anything, only 20 pesos* (Alcalde auxiliar Rancho Nuevo, Petén, Guatemala, 2019).

Guatemalans frequently cross the border into neighboring Mexican communities to buy basic goods, mostly food, and to barter with local merchants often in exchange for agricultural products at lower than official market prices. The Guatemalan side of the border is also lacking services such as water and electricity. Some villagers and stores own a small solar panel or a generator. Water is extracted from wells.

Despite these adversities, many Guatemalans cannot relocate to other regions of the country. Some of them have thus decided to settle without authorization on the Mexican side instead. Border dynamics between Mexico and Guatemala have been challenging at times. One of the main problems has been, and remains, undocumented crossing of migrants, drugs, firearms, and other illegal goods. Currently, a major problem is the looting and cross-border trade of precious woods such as cedar (*Cedrela odorata*) and mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) in Guatemala.

Conditions for Campesino Agriculture and Market Sale in Petén

Campesinos related that, as a result of living in 'illegal' communities on the Guatemalan side of the border, they never receive any kind of government agricultural extension or support. Campesinos in both Petén and Calakmul practice rainfed agriculture and grow mostly maize and beans for self-consumption and *chihua* for the market. Despite the lack of agricultural program support, productivity in Petén is superior given higher rainfall and better soils. Maize yields are typically 2 tons per hectare versus 0.5 tons per hectare in Calakmul. In Petén, however, many campesinos now cultivate less land and harvests are declining because of increased rainfall variability and weed invasion. Also, maize production has decreased because of its low profitability, and now campesinos prefer to produce *chihua*, which pays better and is easier to transport because it is lighter per volume.

Campesinos in Petén expressed that the climate has changed, although not as acutely as expressed by their counterparts in Calakmul. Some of the Guatemalan producers told us that about 15 years ago they began to perceive greater climatic variability and more drought years. As one resident explained,

> *It is no longer the same: now it has not rained well for several years, including this year. Last year the same thing happened to us. It has been now two years that I haven't been cultivating for this reason, the drought hit us hard* (Resident in a hamlet, Petén, 2018).

Despite the drought, campesinos from the Petén shared that they could potentially grow and harvest more, but difficult market access in Guatemala and the inconvenience of selling in Mexico keep them from doing so. Lack of roads and poor road conditions cause high transportation costs for agricultural products to move to the interior of the country, therefore, Guatemalan campesinos prefer to sell their crops in Mexico. Grain trade is very common between communities in Petén and communities in the Mexican border municipalities of Balancán and Tenosique (Tabasco), whereas between Petén and Calakmul there is no grain trade, as there are no nearby settlements on the Guatemalan side. In addition to the difficulties in transporting products, the Peteneros face discrimination and low prices from the Mexican middlemen. They receive three to four Mexican pesos per kilogram of maize (while Mexicans usually get five pesos), and for chihua seeds they often receive less than half the price paid to Mexicans. As one Mexican informant bluntly told us, the Guatemalan campesinos are "more screwed", and therefore it is easy to abuse them. That is why sometimes Guatemalans are blamed for low prices—they are more needy and therefore more willing to sell their products at a very low price. One Mexican buyer offered better prices than other buyers because he considered the prices paid to Guatemalans were generally unfair:

> *The problem is that they cannot store their harvests, they have to sell it because they are in need, they have to sell their harvests, even at low prices, or they have to give their harvest [to the buyer] and they pay them little by little* (Santo Tomas, Balancan 2018).

Increased rainfall variability has been accompanied by a trend of increased rainfall in Petén.[7] However, interviewed campesinos did not yet perceive climate change as negatively impacting agriculture (apart from those reporting the effects of drought in some years). In addition, the limited role of the state in Petén means that campesinos commented very little on national agricultural and climate policies. Interviewees did mention that they had heard that international NGOs sent funds and support to them in exchange for forest conservation, but they claimed that such funds rarely reached them and that reserve authorities keep this money. Interviewees also expressed discontent with the lack of incentives for their natural resource conservation efforts and were unaware of any government initiatives related to climate change mitigation or adaptation.

Changing Conditions for Campesino Agriculture in Calakmul

Campesinos in Calakmul related that they cultivate only small plots (less than two-to-three hectares on average), the vast majority without mechanization or irrigation. Traditionally, they sow maize in two cycles each year, with the spring/summer crop in May and harvested in September, and the autumn/winter crop, called tornamil, in October for harvest in February. Harvests can be up to one ton per hectare of maize during a 'good year', but yields usually oscillate around 500 to 800 kilograms per hectare. During 'bad years', caused by severe drought or pests, harvests can even be less than 100 kilograms per hectare or nonexistent:

> *Now it rains less. When I arrived, there was more humidity, it rained a lot, but now it is almost pure drought. Before, the sun came out, but quite normal, now the plant is burned: in the morning it is still fine, at 10 or 11 o'clock, it is already too hot (...) it (the plant) is already in a poor condition, the leaves wither* (Resident from La Paz, Calakmul, 2018).

Many campesinos reported decreasing yields because of the increase in the number of severe droughts and pests (wildlife and diseases), more irregular and declining rainfall, and extreme heat. In addition, crop cycles and the agricultural calendar have also changed due to rainfall variability, especially since the mid-1990s. According to interviewed campesinos, traditional sowing dates are increasingly delayed due to the late onset of the rainy season. Some informants reported that when the rainy season starts too late, they do not cultivate their plots and rather wait for the *tornamil* (autumn-winter cycle). This has severe consequences, as one maize harvest is not enough to feed a family for a year, making it necessary to purchase it. Other campesinos continue to cultivate during the spring-summer cycle, but crop losses, such as those due to unpredictable weather conditions, are a constant threat. As stated by a resident of Villa de Allende, in Calakmul (2018), "*here the time for sowing has changed a lot, because of the rain*".

In addition to new climatic conditions, campesinos also linked the decline in production to soil degradation caused partly by fallow shortening. According to a few respondents, until the 1990s one could choose where to cultivate and move freely from one part of the *ejido* to another and practice fallow cycles of up to 10 or 15 years. However, shifting cultivation has changed because of the combination of: 1) the implementation of the Program for the Certification of Ejido Rights and Land Titling (PROCEDE), which allowed for the transfer from collective to individual land tenure in *ejidos*; 2) the need to provide land to new people arriving in the *ejidos* and to the children of the original settlers; 3) conservation measures (prohibition of clearing and burning old-growth vegetation and forest for new plots); and 4) agricultural policies that limit areas for crop cultivation or promote the conversion of milpa to pasture. All this has resulted in a significant fallow reduction (from 10-15 years to less than 5 years), with negative impacts on soil fertility and an accompanying increase in agrochemical inputs. As one campesino from an *ejido* in the southern part of Calakmul explains:

> *Before there were more possibilities of rotating plots because land was not limited. One could work whenever wanted: one hectare here, two hectares there. The land was beautiful. Nobody prohibited it, because everything was free. Now, because everyone has their [own] plot, you'll have to work in it and the next year the same. I haven't been moving to another plot for four years or more* (Resident of La Paz, Calakmul 2019).

Agricultural and Climate Change Policies and Initiatives in Calakmul

In contrast to Petén, rural Calakmul (and the Mexican countryside in general) is characterized by state omnipresence and a wealth of support programs: subsidized agrochemicals, monetary support after climatic disasters, monthly money transfers to producers, payments for environmental services, and social assistance programs, among others. Campesinos mostly referred to two agricultural programs: the well-known and long-standing PROCAMPO (aka *ProAgro Productivo and Produccion para el Bienestar*) and the new agricultural and social welfare program *Sembrando Vida*. Campesinos' decisions are driven by opportunistic responses to agricultural policies and programs. This is especially true with the new *Sembrando Vida* program.

From the outset, *Sembrando Vida* generated great hope and high expectations among farming communities. The program has been especially attractive to *pobladores* (rural villagers without formal rights to land) since, unlike other agricultural programs, it is not necessary to present a land title. Many perceived it as an opportunity to return to work their own land, to be campesinos again, and no longer to be employed by others or leave the community in search of work:

> *Before, we campesinos worked 'for free' because we worked our own plots and lost the harvests, we made no profit, and we had to work [as farm hands] for a day wage [and we had] to work other people's land to have a little money. Sembrando Vida now means working for oneself, for one's own benefit and on one's own land, and thanks to that, the campesino who was away returned to his land* (Resident from La Paz, Calakmul 2018).

Campesinos expressed greater satisfaction with current federal support programs compared to those in previous years. However, program policies appear to undermine campesinos' autonomy and local knowledge by dictating how they must manage their sponsored plots, sometimes changing the way they previously managed them. For example, every year land preparation for the milpa was undertaken using traditional slash and burn techniques, and more recently the use of herbicides to combat the increased weed pressure, but now both are prohibited. Additionally, some campesinos commented that *Sembrando Vida* imposes agricultural techniques that in their experience do not succeed.

Mexico has policies to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation in the agricultural and rural sectors, but their implementation is not always clear. The campesinos interviewed were not aware of any action plan on climate change and reported that they have not received any training from the government on how to adapt and deal with this issue in their agricultural activities. The only actions identified by

some of the respondents were related to conservation and reforestation measures, through the increasingly popular National Forestry Commission's (CONAFOR's) Payments for Environmental Services (PES).

Discussion: Development Within or Across Borders in a Context of Climate Change?

The above campesino narratives of development, policy intervention, and climate change have consequences for the border in theory and in practice. As we already know, the border is not defined merely by territory and global forces such as neoliberalism affect both sides of the border in our study region (Agnew 1994; Paasi et al. 2022). Campesino experiences evidence that climate change, another global issue, also influences development as immanent and unintentional *across* the border (Cowen & Shenton 1998). However, such global influences also affect these development processes differently *within* borders because of the diverse cultural-historical contexts and policy landscapes (i.e., development as intentional practice).

In both Petén and Calakmul, on either side of the border in the Selva Maya, clear historical phases can be identified. The rise and collapse of the Mayan civilisation occurred due to combined climatic and political changes (Turner & Sabloff 2012). Subsequently, colonisation abused natural resources and created deep social inequalities. Continued unrest and population pressures (particularly on Petén from further south in Guatemala) and government incentives (especially for Calakmul) led to (re)colonization by settlers and indigenous people from other locations. Current settlement resulted from campesinos fleeing war and poverty or seeking agricultural land. High rates of deforestation by new settlers pushed back the forest frontier with agricultural activities. However, this has not led to prosperity for most settlers, with wealthy ranchers owning extensive tracts of land and many campesinos eking out an existence, sometimes in high population densities (in Petén especially) and without land tenure (*pobladores* in Calakmul and the majority of campesinos in Petén). As a result, this cross-border region now hosts a heterogeneous matrix of people from different ethnicities, with diverse rights to land, and different levels of power and autonomy. The inequalities deriving from these national histories have increased vulnerabilities for the poorest and most precarious of campesinos in this border region. This situation is particularly exacerbated in Guatemala where campesinos have been forcibly intimidated or removed, not only by the state but also by large private companies and organized crime.

Different state approaches and regulatory frameworks have led to a range of interventions to support development on either side of the border, creating contrasting landscapes of policies. The contemporary policy landscape for agriculture on both sides of the border is still strongly influenced by neoliberal approaches, trying to engage campesinos in markets and rewarding larger commercial enterprises. However, in Petén, the few programs and policies that support campesino production have had little effect because of the violence, intimidation, and the "irregularity" as described above that prevent campesinos from accessing associated program benefits. In Mexico, the most recent policy, *Sembrando Vida*, aspires to restore dignity to the work of campesinos and therefore should incorporate recognition of the importance of their agricultural production. Campesinos receive program benefits if they comply with the rules and attend compulsory meetings, regardless of how much they harvest. This research uncovers how campesinos experience these policy landscapes in this borderland, in line with other border scholarship that explores daily practices in border regions (see: Paasi et al. 2022). In Petén, for example, campesinos considered the global discourse of combating climate change to reinforce national policies to destroy "irregular" communities discursively labelled as forest destroyers, while ignoring, as a cause of forest destruction, oil extraction, the activities of organized crime, and the expansion of agribusinesses potentially linked to them.

The consideration of climate change within the border-development nexus is an important addition to understandings on borders and development. Precipitation increases along a gradient from north to south across this border and therefore creates differing opportunities for agriculture as well as different forest characteristics. Biophysical parameters relating to climate and climate change thus occur not as binary manifestations between two territories separated by a border, but rather as a gradient traversed by the political border. The gradient is dynamic and exhibits trends for temperature increase and precipitation change. In Calakmul, the longer-term, severe effects of climate change have forced campesinos to adapt by themselves while simultaneously developing increasing dependence on government support. As climate change worsens globally, campesinos in Petén, further south along this gradient, will also experience greater effects of climate change. This gradient thus offers the opportunity to develop and implement policy for climate change adaptation in the north and share lessons to the south. We propose that future research investigate and monitor this gradient and support learning and practices at individual, farm, and regional scales to mitigate and adapt to climate change. As we have demonstrated, the border serves as a political marker and enables us to explore the efficacy and consequences of different policy and regulatory instruments.

Climate-change-induced crop failures and lack of access to markets limits agricultural development across the region. Existing precarity means that people cannot respond effectively to changing conditions. Hence, the immanent process of development and intentional development interventions interact as neoliberal, capitalist approaches

to development in Latin America (Cowen & Shenton 1998; Mitlin et al. 2007). Planned interventions together support the established elite, further marginalize those without formal land rights, and risk exacerbating inequalities. Against this background, some Calakmul campesinos diversify or even leave farming to engage in alternatives where possible and Petén campesinos experience even fewer options (Carte et al. 2010). Our results demonstrate the complexity of power and social relations in relation to interactions of climate change and development in this cross-border region.

Campesinos in this study expressed despair and resignation in the face of their perceived lack of agency to address local practical challenges (e.g. lack of market access) combined with external challenges (e.g. militarised intimidation) and non-human challenges (e.g. lack of rainfall, higher temperatures). In Petén, there was a lack of faith in national intervention (with the experienced absence of the state); whereas in Calakmul there was hope and then some disillusionment over the latest interventions (with an experienced omnipresence of the state). Exploring the "lived experience" of these actors situated within policy landscapes reveals how marginalised campesinos feel powerless in the face of development and climate change (Carte et al. 2010; Green et al. 2020; Martin 2005). "Irregularity", or lack of formal land rights, especially in Petén, means that many campesinos cannot benefit effectively now from agricultural or climate change policies. In the absence of fundamental changes, attempts at financial support for the region could further embed the elite and further marginalise the poor.

As climate change is the result of industrialisation and 'progress' mainly in the global North, but with dire impact in the global South including for campesions, there is a moral imperative for global action. The question is how we navigate a role for international actors, especially in cross-border regions, to contribute to an alternative development future, without negating national interventions (see Mitlin et al. 2007). Currently, international climate change programs such as REDD+ focus on climate change mitigation and do not always deliver for the most marginalised groups (McGregor et al. 2014). While these programs may offer some support for campesinos and create positive ecological and carbon outcomes, they rarely tackle adaptation or address the underlying issues of inequality, land rights, and non-sanctioned intimidation by criminals or private companies. The dual global climate change challenges of mitigation and adaptation will have to be tackled with international and cross-border agreements as well as local contributions. Whilst mitigation was initially at the forefront of global climate change discourse, as the impacts become more visible and viscerally felt, adaptation has become more prominent and '*mitadaptation*' (actions for both mitigation and adaptation) is being urged. Borders can "limit the exercise of intellect, imagination, and political will" (Agnew 2008) by creating structural barriers within a region such as the Selva Maya. However, it is critical that climate change adaptation learning developed in Calakmul is shared with campesinos in Petén, and that relevant new livelihood practices can be co-created across the border region.

The geography of the biophysical context of this cross-border forest region, the Selva Maya, offers additional complexities. The forests in Calakmul and Petén create a continuous habitat for rich biodiversity, while the absence of roads, on the Guatemalean side and traversing the border, creates a barrier for humans. Yet this is not a hard barrier. Our research reveals that many human crossings and exchanges do occur to the west of Calakmul, due to closer settlement proximities. Any consequences of a clear binary of national policies in the cross-border region is thus eroded through the movement of people, goods, and finance. For example, many Petén residents seek healthcare, education, or access to markets in Mexico.

What does this mean for our understanding of the dynamics and fluidity of borders, particularly on the border and development nexus (Novak 2016), together with climate change? Borders are now conceived less as concrete boundaries between states and more as contextualised social and cultural processes (Paasi 2005). In this paper, we argued that different bio-physical processes on each side of the border shape differential social responses. Borders produce both institutionalised practices of governance and emotional responses to historical memory and future expectations (Paasi 2005). Being situated mainly within the forest, without built infrastructure, the Selva Maya border between Guatemala and Mexico has little public performance of border-ness. Nevertheless, the border reveals different governance approaches and their impacts on either side of the border, at the same time that the border remains porous to resultant flows.

Conclusions

This study is innovative in its analysis of the Mexico–Guatemala cross-border region in the Selva Maya and its interdisciplinary and mixed methods approach combines historical socio-political analysis and ethnographic results to explore the border-development-climate change nexus. In line with Novak (2016), we conclude that exploring borders and development together can strengthen our understanding of both, but that climate change now must be central to that exploration. We have shown that analysis in a cross-border region can inform policy interventions for climate change and agriculture. We found that the wider processes and approaches to development at national levels interact to create local experiences of specific policy interventions, unfortunately neglecting some of the most marginalised campesinos. Exploring the lived experience of policy enabled us to examine efficacy of interventions from the perspectives of the

interviewed campesinos (Martin 2005; Mitlin et al. 2007; Novak 2016). This study revealed how current inequalities are the result of long term and complex historical and socio-political events and processes, and that these limit future transformative modes of development. The Selva Maya border is porous and even superceded by social ties, with the transfer of some people, goods, services, and illegal activities even in this isolated and forested region. The political border traverses an important biophysical gradient of climatic parameters. Overall, this cross-border region offers a unique opportunity to explore how socio-political histories, policy landscapes, and climate change are creating mixed outcomes for campesinos in the region. Campesinos on both sides of the border in the Selva Maya require support to strengthen resilience against the interacting issues of climate change and agricultural development challenges. New development approaches should address structural inequalities and global change mitigation and specific local adaptation interventions, whilst also recognizing the unique trans-border cultural and ecological richness. Borders can be seen as both "discursive landscapes of social power/control" and "technical landscapes of control" (Paasi 2009). We suggest that borders also create different policy landscapes that represent and influence the experienced development journeys in adjacent territories. The connectivities of borderlands can soften the hard lines of development policy between such territories by enabling some flow of people, goods, and services across the border, as we have shown here (see also: Paasi et al. 2022). We also need to appreciate the ecological landscapes of borders; the present characterization of a border is a product of not only past socio-political and cultural processes but also trends in biophysical processes. Hence, the effects of climate change will increasingly interact with development approaches within and across borders, demanding serious consideration to address the precarity of marginalized groups in borderlands.

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Notes

1 We use the term *campesino* in the absence of an English equivalent; neither smallholder farmer nor peasant capture the identity, relationship to land, and often precarity of the campesino (Boyer 2003; Wolf 1955). Eric Wolf (1955, 453–54) established three basic criteria for defining the peasant: (1) agricultural production as the main occupation, (2) effective control of the land and autonomous decision-making over crops, (3) a subsistence rather than reinvestment orientation. These three criteria also form the core of the term campesino. However, campesino does not have the negative connotation of the term peasant, or the entrepreneurial, profitmaking, spirit of the term farmer.

2 It was the 1982 incursion of the Guatemalan military in Mexico to kill refugees in a camp in Márquez de Comillas that made the Mexicans suddenly perceive their southern border. This incursion horrified Mexico because it gave sudden concrete form to the civil war in Guatemala and violated Mexican territory by a foreign force.

3 The civil war in Guatemala (1960-1996) is arguably the most turbulent and bloody conflict in recent Latin American history. Approximately 200,000 people lost their lives or disappeared, more than 500,000 were displaced, and many Mayan villages were destroyed (Chamarbagwala & Morán 2011; Taylor, Moran-Taylor, and Rodman Ruiz 2006). Petén was among the six departments with the highest number of casualties per 1000 inhabitants (Chamarbagwala & Morán 2011). During the years of violence, many Guatemalans fled to refugee camps across the border in Mexico (Manz 1988). Campesinos in Petén, many of whom had moved to Petén to find better living conditions by gaining access to land and to escape the massacres that resulted from the intensification of the civil war in the highlands, suffered in many ways from the civil war. Not only did they suffer atrocities at the hands of the military, especially during the worst period of 1979-1984 (Chamarbagwala & Morán 2011), but many also lost their land as more and more title deeds were distributed to people closer to power (military, large landowners, etc.). These land grabs were triggered, at least in part, by a World Bank project aimed at regulating land rights in Petén.

4 *Ejidos* are communities defined by common property practices instituted through agrarian reform after the 1910 Mexican Revolution (Perramond 2008).

5 Names of all communities have been changed.

6 Milpa is derived from Nahuatl and means "cultivated field". Using shifting cultivation techniques, a small field is cleared and burned, from mature or younger forest, cropped for a few seasons with maize and companion crops and left in fallow to restore soil fertility and eliminate weeds.

7 We performed analysis of rainfall historical tendencies for both sides of the border, which revealed rainfall variablilty and rainfall increase in Petén.

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ARTICLE

Israeli Policy Toward African Asylum Seekers and Unauthorized Migrants

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This article sheds light on Israel's practices against African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants. Since the mid-2000s, Israel has received a large influx of undocumented people from African countries. In order to curb unauthorized border crossings, Israel reached an agreement with Egypt for the return of unauthorized border crossers into Egypt, started building a border fence, and increased the number of detention centers. The 2012 amendment to the 1954 infiltration law made it so that any irregular border crosser was considered an infiltrator and therefore, detained. In 2015, Israel announced its forcible relocation policy. After examining asylum and migration dynamics in Israel and the governmental responses, this article identifies the pivotal roles played by Israeli human rights organizations and the Supreme Court in thwarting the government's detention and forcible relocation policies.

Introduction

In Israel, the status of foreigners is determined by four laws: the Law of Return, the Citizenship Law, the Entry to Israel Law, and the Anti-Infiltration Law. According to the Law of Return, Jewish people who reside abroad are entitled to receive Israeli citizenship along with their children and grandchildren. The Citizenship Law regulates cases of family reunification. The Entry to Israel Law applies to the entry of tourists and migrant workers into the country. After Palestinian guerilla fighters (Fedayeen) launched attacks against Israel after crossing the Egyptian and Jordanian borders, Israel adopted the Anti-Infiltration Law in 1954. This law describes any person who enters Israel unlawfully from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, or Palestine as an infiltrator (Sabar & Tsurkov 2015).

In Israel's Declaration of Independence, the state of Israel is referred to as "the birthplace of the Jewish people and their ancient homeland". It is also stressed that "Israel would open the gates wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations" (Provisional Government of Israel 1948). Following the Second World War, Israel witnessed an influx of Holocaust survivors as well as Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (Ziegler 2015). Between 1948 and 2000, approximately three million Jews migrated to Israel (Smooha 2002).[1] Even though Israel gives every Jew the right to return to the homeland, it does not aspire to be a country of international migration. As such, people who do not fit the criteria of the Law of Return are only granted short residency permits (Hotline for Refugees and Migrants 2019). In Israel's immigration policy, an exception was made for Falash Mura (Ethiopia's Jewish community).[2]

Even though Israel actively supported the formulation of the 1951 Refugee Convention and ratified it in 1954 (Yacobi 2016), it did not have a formal national asylum

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system prior to 2002. That said, Israel has not always adopted a closed-door policy toward asylum seekers. When Ethiopia descended into a civil war, Israel airlifted thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel in a covert military operation in 1991. Israel also accepted non-Jewish asylum seekers as a gesture of goodwill (Paz 2011). For example, between 1977 and 1979, it opened its doors to 360 Vietnamese boat people who fled the communist regime in Vietnam and granted them full rights and government-subsidized apartments (Weinglass 2015). In 1993, it granted refugee status to 84 Bosnian Muslims. In 1999, it granted refugee status to 112 Kosovar Albanians (Ziegler 2015) and in 2000 it gave shelter to nearly 6,000 members of the South Lebanese Army fighters (Christian militia who fought on the side of Israel against Hezbollah) along with their families after the country withdrew from South Lebanon (Herzog 2009). The country also accepted a small number of refugees from Iraq (Kritzman-Amir & Shumacher 2012).

Despite these historical examples, in recent years Israel has not adopted a particularly generous refugee policy. Of the 80,000 asylum applications the country received over the last 15 years, only one percent of applicants were given refugee status or other forms of protection (UNHCR 2020a). Israel offered group protection to citizens of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and South Sudan when those countries were embroiled in violence. However, these protections were short-term, as these people were asked to leave when humanitarian crises or civil wars in their respective countries ended (Wagenheim 2018).

Starting from the mid-2000s, for the first time in its history, Israel witnessed an influx of African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants. The Olmert government restricted their ability to live and work in central Israel and took action to expel children of illegal workers as well as their families. The Netanyahu government adopted a tougher stance by labeling them as terrorists and adopting exclusionary border practices. Under his government, legislative changes were made to prevent the entry of undocumented people and facilitate their deportation. With the 2012 amendments made to the 1954 Infiltration Law, anyone who entered Israel illegally was defined as an infiltrator and consequently detained and imprisoned.

This article sheds light on the clashes between the Israeli government's security-based approach towards African asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants and the humanitarian approach promoted by Israeli human rights organizations and the Supreme Court. After examining migration and refugee dynamics in Israel and the government's detention and forcible relocation policies, this article identifies the important roles played by Israeli human rights organizations and the Supreme Court in thwarting the government's exclusionary practices. This study contributes to the academic and political discourse by examining the nexus between the government, NGOs, and the Supreme Court in Israel in the context of asylum and migration policies.

An Overview of Israel's Migration and Asylum Policies

Until the 1990s, Israel did not incentivize international labor migration and there were only a small number of non-Jewish migrants in the country. This stems from the country's objective of maintaining the Jewish majority (Paz 2011). In order to fill its labor shortages, the country instead recruited Palestinian workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, as Palestinians returned to their homes after work, they did not fit the category of labor migrants. There were up to 100,000 Palestinians working in the agriculture and construction sectors. However, following the 1987 Intifada, the country faced severe labor shortages in these sectors. From the 1990s onwards, the country started to recruit overseas workers from Romania, Thailand, and the Philippines (Raijman & Kemp 2002; Sabar & Tsurkov 2015). Furthermore, the official recruitment of labor migrants was followed by a flow of unauthorized immigrants, many of whom arrived in Israel and overstayed after their visas expired (Raijman & Kemp 2002).

Israel's economic prosperity during the 1990s attracted a large number of international migrants both from developing and undeveloped countries (Ben-Nun 2017). A relative tolerance was shown to labor migrants as well as unauthorized migrants due to labor shortages (Afeef 2009). At the beginning of the 2000s, foreign workers made up 10 percent of the labor force in Israel which created frustration in Israeli society as it led to an increase in the unemployment rate for Israeli citizens (Sabar & Tsurkov 2015). In 2002, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migrant Workers recommended decreasing the quota for migrant workers and the expulsion of 100,000 migrant workers by 2005. Following these instructions, then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon created an immigration directorate tied to the Ministry of Interior in order to tackle illegal immigration. He also went on to announce that 50,000 unauthorized migrants would be deported by 2003. Since it lacked sufficient staff, the immigration directorate relied on the Israeli Police for arrests and deportations, which led to violence. Israeli Police Chief, Shlomo Aharonishky, described these arrests and deportations as a military operation (Sabar &Tsurkov 2015, La'Oved 2003).

As underlined in the Introduction, Israel lacked national refugee legislation prior to 2002. Before 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) registered and evaluated all asylum applications and gave their recommendations to Israeli officials who ultimately had the power to approve or deny these applications (Yaron et al. 2013). After the country engaged in large-scale deportations of

undocumented people in 2002, many unauthorized migrants started to seek asylum in Israel. From 2002 to 2003, asylum applications registered by UNHCR increased from 283 to 1,389. Against this backdrop, Israel developed refugee-related procedures for screening asylum seekers (Kritzman-Amir 2009). The National Status Granting Body (an inter-ministerial committee consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, and Interior) was established in 2002 and took over responsibility for evaluating asylum claims registered by UNCHR (Cue 2002; Afeef 2009; Kritzman-Amir 2009). In 2011, new units, established in the Population and Immigration Authority, were granted authority to register and interview asylum applicants (Kritzman-Amir & Shumacher 2012). Overall, according to Israel's current asylum system, the National Status Granting Body evaluates asylum applications and the Ministry of Interior has the ultimate authority for refugee status determination (Kritzman-Amir 2009; Sabar & Tsurkov 2015).

Israel's Exclusionary Practices against African Asylum Seekers and Unauthorized Migrants

Starting from the mid-2000s, due to economic inequality, oppression, violence and conflicts in its neighboring states, Israel started to receive a large influx of African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants (Human Rights Watch 2008). Israel is seen as a last resort of destination for African people who lack the financial resources to go to Europe or the US (Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen 2011). Most Africans who come to Israel are Sudanese and Eritrean nationals. The Darfur conflict in Sudan and the oppression of unelected President Isaias Afwerki in Eritrea led many people to evacuate their homes and seek shelter in Israel. Israel's strict refugee policies have pushed many asylum seekers to avoid legal channels of entry. In addition to asylum seekers who undertake perilous journeys to escape the oppression and violence in their country of origin, many Sudanese and Ethiopians who resided in Egypt escaped to Israel due to limited freedom or to find better work opportunities (Human Rights Watch 2008a; Yacobi 2010; Graham 2018).

Sudanese people make up the largest number of foreigners in Egypt. After the 1976 Wadi El Nil agreement was signed between Sudan and Egypt, Sudanese people were given access to employment, health services, education, and property ownership. However, this agreement ended after Hosni Mubarak survived an assassination attempt in Addis Ababa in 1995. After this incident, the circumstances of Sudanese people living in Egypt significantly worsened. Even though Egypt and Sudan signed the Four Freedoms Agreement in 2004 that covers the areas of freedom of movement, residence, work, and property ownership between both countries, the agreement has not been fully implemented. Many Sudanese live in Egypt without a formalized status. This predicament has forced many of them to flee to Europe and Israel (Karasapan 2016). Flows of Sudanese people from Egypt to Israel increased after an event in 2005, where peaceful Sudanese protesters were fired upon in front of the UNHCR offices in Cairo (the 2005 Mustapha Mahmoud Park Massacre). 56 people were killed and hundreds were wounded (Sabar & Tsurkov 2005).

While earlier Sudanese and Eritrean people who escaped to Israel lived in Egypt for many years, currently most of them come directly from Sudan and Eritrea, using Egypt as a transit country (Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen 2011). The porous nature of the Israeli-Egyptian border has also created permissive conditions for irregular migratory flows from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Ivory Coast to Israel via Egypt (Yacobi 2010). Most Africans are smuggled from Egypt to Israel by Bedouin tribesmen (Sherwood 2012). Many of them witness abuse by Bedouins during their journey while some of them are held for ransom in the Sinai desert (BBC News 2011).

As explained earlier, Africans who came to Israel in the mid-2000s have found themselves in a political environment in which Jewish immigration is encouraged and non-Jewish immigration is strongly discouraged due to the unemployment dynamics in Israel (Sabar & Tsurkov 2015). Although Israel developed an asylum system in 2002, very few people have been granted refugee status. Individuals, whose asylum applications are approved, are only given temporary residence identity cards, rather than being granted permanent status (Yaron et al. 2013). The Ministry of the Interior, which occupies a central stage in the country's asylum system, has flexibility regarding the determination of refugee status. Even though the UNHCR no longer conducts interviews with asylum applicants, it is entitled to give recommendations to the Ministry of Interior for a fair asylum procedure. However, in practice, the Ministry rejects many asylum applications without even reviewing them (Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen 2011). The Israeli director of the UNHCR raised concerns pointing to the arbitrariness of the refugee determination process (Friedman 2010a).

Israel has systematically denied asylum applications from the majority of Sudanese and Eritrean citizens granting only a few temporary residencies (Human Rights Watch 2014; Human Rights Watch 2009; Yaron et al. 2013). Most asylum seekers were labeled labor immigrants and their refugee status was not recognized. It is important to note that Sudan gives its citizens who visit Israel prison sentences of up to ten years. Eritreans who are returned from other countries face detention, torture, and ill-treatment. Furthermore, people who escape indiscriminate conscription in Eritrea are imprisoned and face torture, ill-treatment, and forced labor (Human Rights Watch 2014).

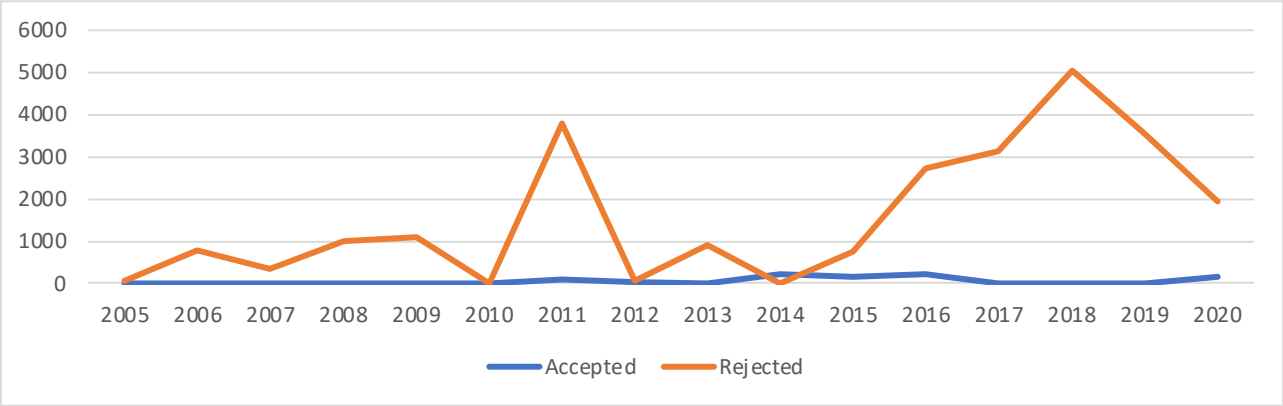

Figure 1. Accepted and Rejected Asylum Applications in Israel. Source: UNHCR (2020b)

Figure 1 shows the significant discrepancy between accepted and rejected refugee applications in Israel. This stems from the government policies to prevent asylum seekers from submitting asylum applications by finding slight inconsistencies in individuals' memory of irrelevant, minute details as justification to deny refugee status. This constitutes a stark contradiction to the principles of the UNHCR (Sabar & Tsurkov 2015).

Many Israeli state officials claim that the motive of Africans entering the country is not related to seeking asylum, but rather it is about employment (Human Rights Watch 2014). The irregular entry of African people to Israel was not only seen as an economic problem, but also a security problem related to concern about the ethnonational character of Israel (Paz 2011). Knesset Member Yaakov Katz (from the National Union Party) stated that "the Jewish people have spent 100 years building a Jewish state and in 10 years the infiltrators can wash it all down the drain" (quoted in Magnezi 2010). The mayor of Eilat, Meir Yitzhak Halevi, launched a media campaign to decry the influx of undocumented people from the Egyptian border and described Israel's attitude of inaction as "national suicide" (quoted in Friedman 2010b).

Against the backdrop of an increase in irregular flows along the border and heightened political tension, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak gathered to discuss border-related problems in 2007. Mr. Olmert requested that Egypt take action to prevent irregular border flows into its territory. Egypt agreed to take back irregular border crossers caught by Israel on the Egyptian-Israeli border. According to the agreement reached between both countries, in addition to irregular immigrants, asylum seekers would also be deported to Egypt without being able to make an asylum claim in Israel (Reliefweb 2007).

Moreover, Mr. Olmert insisted that Mubarak assure the safety of deported people from Israel to Egypt (Yacobi 2010). Yet, three days after the agreement, Egypt started to adopt a shoot-to-kill policy at its Israeli border. From 2007 to 2008, 32 Africans were killed by Egyptian authorities in their attempts to reach Israel (Human Rights Watch 2008b). The Egyptian Foreign Ministry justified the shoot-to-kill policy, claiming that there is a flow of weapons at its Sinai border. An official from the Ministry underlined that, due to the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979, the number of Egyptian border guards is limited. They further specified that if Egypt could increase the number of border units, then it would abandon the use of lethal force at its border (Human Rights Watch 2008a). Yet, the Human Rights Watch report indicates that unarmed asylum seekers and migrants were targeted by Egyptian border guards and Egypt's border shootings continued in the years to come. In 2010, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, said that she knew "of no other country where so many unarmed migrants and asylum seekers appear to have been deliberately killed in this way by government forces" (quoted in Human Rights Watch 2010).

Mr. Olmert's agreement with Egypt was heavily criticized across the political spectrum in Israel. The head of a legal aid center for refugees at Tel Aviv University, Anat Ben Dor, noted that irregular border crossers should not be deported to Egypt unless they are treated properly and according to the 1951 Refugee Convention guidelines. The Hotline for Migrant Workers, Israel's leading organization that work that assists refugees and migrant workers, pointed to the pattern of asylum seekers losing their lives in their countries of origin after they were deported by Egypt. Amnesty International's Israel department also criticized Israel's refusal to examine refugee claims carefully (Reliefweb 2007).

During this period, there were fervent debates in Israel about the country's refugee policies. Sixty-three Knesset members signed a petition asking Mr. Olmert to refrain from deporting African asylum seekers, stressing the "unimaginable" horrors they go through as well as Israel's obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The petition stated that "the refugees who arrived here need protection and shelter. Their absorption as refugees is a moral duty, considering the history of

the Jewish people and the values of democracy and humanity" (quoted in Ynet News 2007). Zevulun Orlev, an MP from the National Religious Party, stated that "Jewish morals and Jewish history obligate us to treat refugees in peril with the utmost sensitivity" (quoted in Ynet News 2007). Similarly, Yuli Edelstein, an MP from the Likud Party, asserted that Israel should do all in its power to aid the Darfur asylum seekers "because they've been through a terrible massacre, and returning them to where they've fled from could cost them their lives" (quoted in Ynet News 2007). The parliamentarians who signed the petition recommended that Israel serve as a temporary asylum until asylum seekers are safely transferred to other countries (Ynet News 2007).

Despite calls to show compassion to refugees from across the political spectrum, Mr. Olmert likened the influx of asylum seekers to a tsunami, focusing on the necessity to take every measure to halt this influx (Paz 2011). In 2008, the Olmert government proposed a new anti-infiltration act to prevent the influx of Africans from Egypt to Israel. The proposed act brought immediate jail sentences for unauthorized border crossers. Pro-human rights and pro-migrant NGOs including the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Hotline for Migrant Workers, and the Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel initiated a campaign by naming and shaming MPs who supported the anti-migrant legislation. Against the backdrop of the growing public reaction, the Olmert government withdrew the 2008 Anti-Infiltration Act (Ben-Nun 2017).

In 2009, the Olmert government initiated a policy to prevent asylum seekers from living in central Israel (Paz 2011). This is called the Gedera-Hadera policy (named after two cities designated as no-go areas for asylum seekers). Under this policy, asylum seekers and immigrants were required to sign documents, confirming that they would not live or work in central Israel. The government justified this policy by referring to the growing number of asylum seekers in Tel Aviv. The Olmert government also adopted an immigration policy based on the deportation of children of illegal immigrants along with their families. This policy was vehemently criticized by then President Shimon Peres. While visiting a school in Tel Aviv in which many children of foreign workers study, Mr. Peres expressed that "I felt they had an innate Israeliness, a love of Israel and desire to live here" (quoted in Miskin 2009). After eight human rights organizations signed a petition against the Gedera-Hadera policy, the government representative, Yochi Gnessin, defended the policy before the Supreme Court of Justice on the grounds that it was consistent with previous legislation (Izenberg 2009).

The Netanyahu government, which came to power in 2009, canceled the Gedera-Hadera policy and allowed illegal workers with children to remain in Israel for three months until the government developed a policy on the matter (Miskin 2009). The then Interior Minister Eli Yishai justified the cancellation of this policy by arguing that it would have negatively impacted towns struggling economically (Eglash 2009). In 2010, in response to a protest in Tel Aviv against African refugees and immigrants, Netanyahu implored Israeli citizens not to take matters into their own hands, not to use violence, and not to become agitated, stressing that unauthorized immigration would be tackled within the framework of the law. He also mentioned that "the migrants, mostly from Sudan and Eritrea, are trying to enter Israel not only because of economic opportunity, but also because they know that in Israel they will be treated humanely" (quoted in Keinon 2010).

However, the Netanyahu government later switched to even more exclusionary practices against African asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants than its predecessor. In 2010, Netanyahu described a three-pronged strategy that consisted of heavy fines on employers of unauthorized immigrants, the construction of a border fence, and a detention center. In 2011, the deportation of unauthorized border crossers to Egypt was halted due to increased risks for the deported individuals, resulting from the political change in the country—although unofficial claims indicate that occasional deportations took place (Ziegler 2015). While adjusting its policies in light of the political changes brought on by the Arab Spring, the government maintained its exclusionary practices against African asylum seekers and immigrants and 2011 witnessed the burgeoning of detention centers across the country (Global Detention Project 2018). The electric fence on the Egyptian border was completed in 2014. While the border fence decreased unauthorized entries to Israel, there were occasions in which the fence was breached that eventually led authorities to lengthen and equip it with additional detection devices in 2016 (AFP 2017).

Netanyahu justified his government's exclusionary practices with a threat-oriented discourse. In 2010, he stressed that asylum seekers inflict cultural, social, and economic damage to Israel and pull the country towards the Third World (Goldstein 2010). In his later remarks, Netanyahu noted that unauthorized immigrants pose a threat to the security and identity of the Jewish state. He went on to say that:

> If we don't stop their entry, the problem that currently stands at 60,000 could grow to 600,000, and that threatens our existence as a Jewish and democratic state… This phenomenon is very grave and threatens the social fabric of society, our national security and our national identity" (quoted in Sherwood 2012).

Interior Minister Eli Yishai went so far as to compare undocumented entries of African people to the Iranian nuclear threat (Efraim 2012). Similarly, Miri Regev, MP from the Likud party, compared African asylum seekers to cancer and later apologized for her remarks (Friedman 2012).

The Netanyahu government systematically ignored the humanitarian dimension of the influx of Africans into Israel and simplified the problem by labeling all Africans in Israel as "infiltrators". The then Education Minister Naftali Bennett (leader of the far-right Jewish Home party) warned the government not to turn Israel into "a paradise for infiltrators" (Stoffel 2018). Israeli Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked implied that Africans constitute an economic burden to Israel by stating that "the state of Israel is too small and has its own problems. It cannot be used as the employment office of the African continent" (quoted in Wagenheim 2018).

In 2018, Netanyahu went so far as to describe African undocumented immigrants as a greater threat than Sinai terrorists and stressed the importance of the border fence with Egypt to keep out African immigrants (Staff 2018). In sharp contrast to the discourse that links Jewish values with refugee protection, Netanyahu argued that exclusionary border practices are the only way to keep Israel a Jewish state (Staff 2018). In a similar vein, Population, Immigration, and Border Authority Director Shlomo Mor-Yosef, blatantly stated that "we don't encourage immigration of non-Jews" (quoted in Wagenheim 2018). Even two weeks before the 2021 Israeli elections, Netanyahu defended the border fence by saying, "I prevented the overrunning of Israel, which is the only first-world country that you can walk to from Africa. We would have had here already a million illegal migrants from Africa, and the Jewish state would have collapsed" (quoted in Harkov 2021).

The Netanyahu government's exclusionary discourse and practices against African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants took place concomitantly with the Likud party's stronger alliance with radical Jewish nationalism and the ultraorthodox, and Netanyahu's strategies of promoting social divisiveness: Jews vs. Arabs; religious vs. secular; native Israelis vs. asylum seekers (Stein & Zimmermann 2021). These discursive and legislative practices are aligned with Netanyahu's vision of the future of Israel, in which only Jews have political power (Peleg 2019). Netanyahu's nationalist, populist policies culminated in the 2018 Nation-State Law that stated that only Jewish people have the right to exercise national self-determination in Israel. The following sections explain how Israeli human rights organizations and the Supreme Court of Justice played important roles in thwarting the government's detention and forcible relocation policies against African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants.

Case Study and Methodology

This study examines the adoption and the reversal of Israel's exclusionary practices against African asylum seekers and unauthorized immigrants through process tracing. Process tracing refers to "the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events" in a way that unpacks causal processes (Bennet & Checkel 2015, 7). The main idea of process tracing is concatenation, which 'is the state of being linked together, as in a chain or linked series' (Waldner 2012, 68). Specifically, through process tracing, this article identifies the ways in which NGOs and the Supreme Court influenced policy changes in the domains of asylum and migration in Israel. The empirical analysis is built upon a variety of sources: official reports of the UNHCR, Human Rights Watch, humanitarian NGOs in Israel, newspapers, academic articles, and books.

Israel's Detention Policy

In 2012, the Knesset amended the 1954 Infiltration Law, as a result of which all unauthorized border crossers were labelled as "infiltrators". According to this law, Israeli authorities could detain unauthorized border crossers, including asylum seekers for three years before their deportation. Human Rights Watch, an international NGO, condemned the law on the grounds that it violates international refugee standards and criminalizes asylum seekers (Human Rights Watch 2012). Human rights organizations in Israel submitted a petition to the Supreme Court of Justice to overturn the 2012 Anti-Infiltration Act (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2012).[3]

The government defended its position by referring to the national security rationale. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that the 2012 Anti-Infiltration Act contradicted the Israeli Basic Law of Human Dignity and Liberty (Ben-Nun 2017). It unanimously revoked the 2012 Anti-Infiltration Act on the grounds that the detention of those deemed as infiltrators without trial for three years was unconstitutional. Edna Arbel, Justice of the Supreme Court, countered the government's security-based argument by referring to Israel's international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Ben-Nun 2017). She further noted that:

> We are driven towards complex confrontations with this issue of the migrants. We must remember that when faced with this issue, we are not confronted with people coming to harm the population of the State of Israel, but rather with a miserable population, who is arriving to our shores from a destitute humanitarianly stricken region, a population which conducts a miserable and poverty- stricken life in Israel too (quoted in Ben-Nun 2017, 182).

After the Supreme Court ruling, the Knesset passed a new amendment, shortening the detention period to one year. However, it also passed legislation that gave a green light for the establishment of the notorious Holot detention center in the Negev region for unauthorized border crossers. The detention center would be under the authority of the Israeli Prison Service (UNHCR 2020c). According to this legislation, after unauthorized border crossers are jailed without trial for one year,

they will be automatically transferred to Holot and then deported. In 2014, following another appeal by the aforementioned human rights organizations, the Supreme Court ruled the new amendment unconstitutional with a majority vote and ordered the shutdown of the Holot detention center within 90 days (Hotline 2019). Justice Uzi Vogelman, who voted for the revocation of the government's legislation underlined that "[t]he incarceration of cross border infiltrators whose deportation is not immediately foreseeable, for a period of one full year—not as a punishment to any act on their behalf, and without any ability of their own to promote their release—harms their rights severely (Ben-Nun 2017, 216).

With a new amendment made to the Anti-Infiltration Law in 2014, the Knesset reduced the detention period to three months. While automatic transfer to Holot was maintained, the mandatory residence at Holot was reduced to 20 months (UNHCR n/a). Human rights organizations in Israel submitted another legal petition to the Supreme Court to invalidate Knesset's amendment (Hotline 2014). While the Court found the three-month detention period constitutional, it ruled that 20-month mandatory detention at Holot was disproportionate and invalid (UNHCR n/a).

Following the Supreme Court's objection, the Knesset reduced the detention period at Holot to 12 months in 2015. In the same year, the Ministry of Interior issued an amended regulation that reduced the detention duration at Holot to less than 12 months, depending on the person's age, medical condition, and asylum application prior to 2015. In 2016, the Population and Immigration Authority in Israel announced that Darfuri people would no longer be brought to Holot (UNHCR 2020c). Overall, against the backdrop of the protests of human rights organizations and the Supreme Court rulings, the government shut down the Holot detention center in 2018. By 2018, all detention centers for asylum seekers and irregular immigrants (including Dekel, Givon, and Kziot detention centers) were shut down (Global Detention Project 2018). The following section examines Israel's forcible relocation policy.

Israel's Policy of Forcible Relocation

Israel has a policy of voluntary return for all foreign nationals who entered the country illegally. The Assisted Voluntary Return Department within the Population and Immigration Authority examines the applications and assists eligible applicants with purchasing plane tickets, obtaining travel documents, avoiding detainment. Eligible applicants are granted $3,500 USD. The department collaborates with international organizations, airline companies, and foreign diplomatic missions for the voluntary return of irregular entrants to Israel (Population and Immigration Authority 2019). Between 2013 and 2017, approximately 4000 Eritrean and Sudanese nationals participated in Israel's Voluntary Return Program (Birger et al. 2018). The participants noted that in addition to the difficulty integrating into the Israeli society and the lack of education and economic opportunities, the Israeli government's promises persuaded many people to participate in the program (Fennig 2021). For example, a voluntary return program participant interviewed by Fennig states that:

> The Israeli government does everything it can to create pressure, everything except for physically forcing you to leave. And, at the same time, they give you hope in what will happen after you leave. They say 'we will give you papers, we will give you money, we have people over there that will help you'. They try to paint this rosy picture and show us that we will be better off than we are now (quoted in Fennig 2021, 7).

Many studies indicate that participants of the Voluntary Return Program were sent to either Rwanda or Uganda. Most importantly, after they were sent to the third country, most of them were denied protection and legal status and became vulnerable to human trafficking (UNHCR, 2018; Birger et al. 2018; Avraham et al. 2015). A Voluntary Return Program participant expresses his experience in the following words:

> When we arrived in Kigali I showed them documents. The security removed all documents and they said just wait there. Then they took us, me and three Eritreans to a guesthouse which couldn't get out of, we stayed there for two days. I asked to the guard if I can go outside. He said I can't because I don't have documents. I said, but the documents are with you, you took them. He said no, I didn't take them it was someone else at the airport. So what do you mean, I am not legal? Yes, you don't have passport, you don't have any documents, so you are not legal and you can't go outside, maybe the police will arrest you (Fennig 2021, 8).

Israel swiftly established diplomatic relations with the Republic of South Sudan when the country was established in 2012. Shortly afterward, the Population and Immigration Authority in Israel called on people from South Sudan to return to their country, offering 1,000 Euros with a warning that if they refused, they would be arrested and deported. Following this, many deportations took place with no opportunity given to deportees to make asylum applications (Ziegler 2015). In 2013, the Population and Immigration Authority in Israel started to pressure Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers to return either to their country of origin or to third countries (Rwanda and Uganda) by offering them financial incentives (Hotline 2019). In 2015, the government officially announced its policy of forced relocation. From 2015 to 2018, 56 people were forcibly deported to third countries (Hotline 2020). In 2017, the Supreme Court's ruling stressed that the agreement with third countries should only be limited

to voluntary relocation. In view of this ruling, the government attempted to include forcible relocation in the agreement made with the third countries. UNHCR expressed concern regarding Israel's forced relocation policy (UNHCR 2020c).

In 2018, the Israeli government announced that it would pay $3,500 USD to sub-Saharan African asylum seekers (identified later as Rwandans and Ugandans) including a free airline ticket if they voluntarily returned to their home country or a third country. This move was declared illegal by the UN and canceled shortly after its announcement (Graham 2018). In the same year, the government announced a new forced relocation procedure which stipulated that single Eritrean and Sudanese men who did not make an asylum application or whose asylum request was rejected, along with those whose asylum requests submitted after 2018, should leave Israel within 60 days. Undocumented people in the Holot center were given only 30 days. The deportations were to start on April 1st, 2018. The government announced plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda and Uganda. Official announcements that the procedure might be extended to families increased concerns (UNHCR 2018, 2020c).

Following the official announcement regarding deportations, a number of mass public protests erupted across the country. Prominent writers including David Grossman, Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Meir Shalev, and Etgar Keret implored Netanyahu to cancel the government's deportation plans, calling him to act "morally, humanely, and with compassion worthy of Jewish people" (quoted in Lior 2018a). Numerous psychologists wrote letters to Netanyahu, stressing the possible harmful impacts of deportations on asylum seekers. A great many doctors wrote letters to the Population and Immigration Authority, demanding an immediate halt to deportations. A group of pilots declared on social media that they would not forcibly deport Africans, calling the stance of the government "barbarism" (Lior 2018b). Several school principals wrote letters to Netanyahu and the Education Minister protesting the government's plans. They called for a humane solution, stressing that deportations violate human rights, Jewish values, and conventions that Israel signed, such as the Refugee Convention (Lior 2018b; Haaretz 2018).

Haaretz Editorial (2018) described the government's deportation plans as Netanyahu's moral descension. Hundreds of academics, film stars, and television personalities also condemned the government's plans and called for the integration of African asylum seekers into Israeli society. A group of rabbis initiated an activist program asking Israelis to take an example from the Dutch people who helped Anne Frank and her family during World War II (Haaretz 2018). Many Israeli rabbis said they would hide African asylum seekers in their homes (Birnbaum 2018). Rabbi Susan Silverman launched the Anne Frank Home Sanctuary Movement (Miklat Israel) for hiding asylum seekers facing deportation. Seven Holocaust survivors also spoke out against the government's deportation policy and expressed their intention to hide asylum seekers in their homes (Lidman 2018). Rabbi Avidan Freedman, a Religious Zionist educator and activist, and many others, accused the government of creating the refugee and migrant problem for political gain (Wagenheim 2018).

The Center Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel stated its firm opposition to the deportations of African asylum seekers from Israel. Colette Avital, chairwoman of the Center, underlined that these practices lacked compassion. She went on to say that "we as Holocaust survivors think it's sad that we—precisely those who should have learned the lessons of our history—are behaving in this way toward a handful of people who are not endangering either Israel's demography or its future" (Gontarz 2018). Netanyahu also faced harsh criticisms from the Jewish diaspora. The Jewish Agency for Israel (the world's largest Jewish nonprofit organization) selected Isaac Herzog (Netanyahu's political rival) as its chairman and put pressure on Netanyahu to give refugee status to more than five hundred children who are affiliated with the Jewish Agency and to adopt a transparent reviewing process for all asylum seekers (Wagenheim 2018).

On March 15th, 2018, the Supreme Court suspended the deportation of Eritreans and Sudanese asylum seekers. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling, detainees who refused to relocate to Rwanda or Uganda were released (UNHCR 2020c). On April 2nd, 2018, the Israeli government and UNHCR signed a framework of common understanding on the situation of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers in Israel. According to this agreement, UNHCR would assist in the departure of some Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers to Western countries with resettlement, family reunification, private sponsorship, and humanitarian admission schemes. In return, Israel would give appropriate legal status and rights to those remaining in the country. More specifically, in line with the agreement, 16,000 African asylum seekers would be resettled in Western countries, while the remaining 23,000 would be allowed to remain in Israel. Yet, a day later, the Netanyahu Government canceled the agreement (Zieve 2018).

Overall, the Israeli government's policies of forced deportation and open-ended detention failed. In April 2018, Israeli authorities acknowledged before the Supreme Court that third countries did not accept asylum seekers deported by force. Currently, Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers who intend to leave Israel are allowed to seek refuge in Uganda. However, Israeli authorities are barred both from detaining and forcibly deporting them (Hotline 2019). The Netanyahu government did not find a long-term solution to the situation of African asylum seekers.

Even though the Israeli government canceled the 2018 agreement with UNHCR, the UNCHR continued to resettle asylum seekers outside of Israel. In 2018, the UNCHR resettled 145 Eritreans and one Sudanese. In the following year, these numbers increased to 115 and six respectively. In total, between 2015 and 2020, UNHCR could only resettle 829 asylum seekers outside of Israel (UNHCR 2021). Due to limited resettlement options, UNHCR further supports refugee resettlement out of Israel through family reunification, humanitarian visas, and a Canadian private sponsorship program. In 2019, UNHCR supported the application of 450 refugees for admission under the Canadian private sponsorship program.

While a few hundred Darfurians were granted residency on humanitarian grounds, the same privileges were not granted to Eritreans and Sudanese (Sabar & Tsurkov 2015; Berman 2012). Furthermore, Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers who crossed the border from Egypt were automatically granted a three-month "conditional release" visa that prevents them from making a refugee application. According to the UNHCR statistics, as of 2020, there are 56,477 "persons of concern" (plus approximately 8,500 children) in Israel. The highest number of people of concern are listed as Eritreans and Sudanese, followed by Russians, Ukrainians, and Georgians (UNHCR 2020a).

Discussion and Conclusion

Israel was built as a Jewish-democratic state.[4] Both early and recent legislative documents portray Israel as a state of Jewish return rather than an immigration state (Kritzman-Amir 2009). In this context, Israeli immigration and citizenship norms privilege the return of Jews to the country while discouraging and excluding Arabs from neighboring countries as well as Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza (Kritzman-Amir 2009). Even though Israel did accept non-Jewish asylum seekers in the past, it does not have a good record on wider humanitarian issues of granting refugee status to those who are not Jewish. This ties in with a general debate about the nature of the Jewish State and the desire by many on the right not to see the Jewish identity of the state being weakened.

From the 2000s onwards, for the first time in its history, Israel witnessed large-scale asylum and migration inflows from African countries. Asylum and migration influx to Israel is inextricably linked to repression, conflict, war, economic inequality, and environmental disasters that instigate global mass migration (Kritzman-Amir & Shumacher 2012). Compared to other countries in the Middle East, Israel's share of the burden for African refugees and migrants is relatively small (Kritzman-Amir & Berman 2010). Yet, the Israeli government adopted inflammatory rhetoric and exclusionary practices against them. By labeling both African asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants as infiltrators, the government framed them as an existential threat to Israel (Tirosh & Klein-Avraham 2019). The term "infiltrator" was primarily denoted to armed Palestinians who entered Israel illegally from Arab countries to stage attacks in the 1950s. As such, it has powerful connotations, bringing to mind grave national security issues and terrorism (Kalir 2015). The government's asylum and migration discourse and policies tapped into the otherization and the dehumanization of Africans by the mainstream media (Tirosh & Klein-Avraham 2019), the growing public anxiety against asylum seekers and migrants,[5] the rise of the far-right in the country, and a global trend towards exclusionary border practices and securitization of "the other" (Kapur 2003).

From the 2000s onwards, Israel's political arena has witnessed fierce clashes between the Israeli governments that supported exclusionary practices against African asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants and the NGOs and the Israeli Supreme Court who promoted humanitarian principles. In other words, the threat-oriented discourse has clashed with a human rights discourse that stressed Israel's legal and moral obligations (Kalir 2015). By analyzing the processes between the adoption and the cancellation of Israeli governments' asylum and migration policies, this article illustrated important roles played by Israeli humanitarian NGOs and the Supreme Court in affecting policy change. Humanitarian NGOs played an important role in the reversal of the 2008 Anti-Infiltration Act proposed by the Olmert government by engaging in advocacy campaigns of naming and shaming. Detention and forcible relocation policies adopted by the Netanyahu government were also thwarted through the active involvement of humanitarian NGOs and the Supreme Court.

Taken together, this study provides an insight into NGO and judicial power in influencing asylum and migration policy in Israel. The current study opens up various future research avenues. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit African asylum seekers and immigrants hard. Tens of thousands have lost their jobs and are at risk of losing their homes. Unlike Israeli citizens, African asylum seekers and immigrants are not eligible to apply for unemployment benefits after they lose their jobs (Bernard 2020). NGOs, including Hotline and Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel (ASSAF), began to provide aid to refugees (Bernard 2020). UNHCR Israel launched a $840,000 USD cash assistance program during the pandemic in an effort to support thousands of vulnerable asylum seekers (UNHCR 2020d). Future studies could analyze the implications of the pandemic on African asylum seekers and migrants in Israel. Since the beginning of the Ukrainian war, Israel has allowed the entry of an unlimited number of Ukrainians who have relatives in Israel, while limiting the number of non-Jewish refugees who can be admitted to 5,000. A comparative analysis

of Israeli policies regarding African and Ukrainian asylum seekers also offers a fruitful avenue for future research (Rubin 2022).

Notes

1 Yet, in Israel, these people are considered returnees, not immigrants (Smooha 2002).

2 Falash Mura people are of Jewish descent, but they are not eligible for the Law of Return since most of them converted to Christianity in the 19th century. In 2010, the Israeli government approved an immigration scheme for 8,000 Falash Mura in Ethiopia (BBC 2010).

3 NGOs in Israel who signed the petition include: the Clinic for Migrants' Rights at the Academic Center of Law and Business in Ramat Gan, the Refugee Rights Clinic at Tel Aviv University, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants, Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel, the African Refugee Development Center.

4 This led some scholars to describe Israel as an "ethnicdemocracy" (See for example, Smooha 2002).

5 According to the poll conducted by the Israeli Democracy Institute in 2012, 52 percent of the population agreed with the anti-migrant and anti-asylum discourse (Kalir 2015). In addition to pro-refugee protests, anti-refugee protests were held in Israel (Kalir 2015). The local population complained about crime and violence from the refugees and called for the government to deport them or find some other solution. I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Zoe Levornik for making this point.

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ESSAY

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ESSAY

Bunker Mentalities: The Shifting Imaginaries of Albania's Fortified Landscape

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Between 1967 and 1986, the Albanian government built an estimated 750,000 small and medium-sized military bunkers for defense purposes. These concrete constructions were spread across the country's territory, with many concentrated along borders and beaches, in cities, and near key industries, strategic points, and transportation infrastructure. Long symbols of the communist regime, after it collapsed in 1991, the bunkers lost their purpose. As a result, both the narratives surrounding bunkers and their actual uses experienced significant transformations. Originally designed to control borders and instill fear in the population, bunkers have since been abandoned, destroyed, and graffitied, as might be expected. More notably, local entrepreneurs have transformed some bunkers into hotels or restaurants, while the state and non-profit organizations have turned others into commemorative sites that respectively glorify or expose the communist regime's undertakings. Our ethnographic research into the discursive and material shifts to Albania's fortified landscape, based on several field trips, interviews and investigations carried out between 2007 and 2017, identifies four contemporary "bunker mentalities" in Albania: indifference, derision, commodification, and commemoration.

Introduction

Between 1967 and 1986, the Albanian government built approximately 750,000 small and medium-sized military bunkers for defense purposes (Stefa & Mydyti 2012). Construction on the bunkers began following the decision of First Secretary Enver Hoxha and continued until one year after his death. The bunkers were motivated by the concept of popular defense, understood as the massive mobilization of civilians in militias as opposed to the development of a professional, highly trained army. The mushroom-shaped concrete constructions were spread across Albania's territory, with many concentrated along borders and beaches, in cities, and near key industries, strategic points, and transportation infrastructure. Some bunkers were also placed within the country's interior

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with the aim of slowing down both airborne attack and potential invaders, such as Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, or NATO (Eaton & Roshi 2014). The bunkers were maintained by the military until 1991, when the communist regime established in 1944 collapsed.[1] The strategic reasons for the bunkers' construction quickly became obsolete, resulting in the destruction of many of the concrete formations. Yet tens of thousands of them still conspicuously dot the landscape. Most are ignored or abandoned. Some have been repainted or graffitied, and others commodified and turned into hotel rooms, bars, and restaurants—a process which began around 2010. A select few have been turned museums and sites of remembrance by both the state and private actors either to memorialize Albania's recent communist past and its leadership or to document its injustices.

Several authors have reflected on the evolving perceptions of these scattered bunkers, focusing on the political dimensions of their evolution (Galaty et al. 1999; Iacono & Këlliçi 2016; Glass 2017). Additional publications have investigated the memorial and economic dimensions of the changing bunkers (Stefa & Mydyti 2012; Iacono & Këlliçi 2017). Albanian bunkers attest to a paranoid perception of foreign threats by the communist regime (1944–1991). They evolved from military tools, with domestic dimensions, to useless artefacts inherited from a despised past after the collapse of the communist regime in 1991, to objects of derision, memory markers, or even touristic assets: it is this peculiar evolution of representations and narratives about these landmarks that we addressed in this paper. While Payne (2014) offers a useful typology of bunkers ("appreciated," "interpreted," "adapted," or "exploited"), our findings, based on information gathered through twelve semi-structured interviews conducted in Albanian in Tirana, Dürres, and Dhermi, and several field trips to Albania between 2007–2017, revealed a different typology of "bunker mentalities" that has arisen since the fall of communism. We determine that the social meaning invested in Albania's bunkers has changed from a pervasive fear of invasion to indifference, derision, commodification, and commemoration. Although Albania's heavily militarized built environment dating from the communist period still largely remains in place, dramatic changes to the political, economic, and cultural contexts in which it is embedded underscore that it is possible to invest even the most unyielding concrete fortifications with new meaning.

1. Mushrooms on the Landscape

1.1. Scattered elements of the past

Most of Albania's bunkers are small and were designed to host two infantry soldiers equipped with rifles or simple machine guns. No artillery was supposed to be hosted in these fortifications. Instead, they were designed as infantry-based bunkers able to be quickly manned in case of attack. The most common type of bunker is a small

Figure 1. Map of Albania. Source: authors.

concrete dome set into the ground with a circular bottom extending downwards, just large enough for one or two people to stand inside (Figures 2–5). Known as *Qender Zjarri* ("firing position", or "QZ") bunkers, they were prefabricated and transported to their final positions, where they were assembled. They consisted of three main elements: a 3-metre-wide hemispherical concrete dome with a firing slit, a hollow cylinder to support the dome, and an outer wall with a radius 60 centimetres wider than the cylinder. The gap between the cylinder and outer wall was filled with soil (Stefa & Mydyti 2012). The bigger *Pike Zjarri* ("firing point", or "PZ") bunkers could accommodate a dozen soldiers. A few even larger bunkers were dug into rock formations to house military equipment and political officials (Nepravishta 2014) (Figure 6).

1.2. The hard logic behind the bunkers

The practice of fortifying borders predates modern states. The Egyptian and Roman Empires and successive kingdoms across Eurasia built defensive walls and fortresses to keep invaders out. Such practices differ

Figure 2. Beach bunkers, Dhermi, 2007. Photo: authors

Figure 3. Bunker on the shores of Lake Ohrid, Pogradec, near the border with North Macedonia, 2007. Photo: authors.

Figure 4. Bunker in Kafasan, next to the border with North Macedonia, 2012. Photo: authors

Figure 5. An urban bunker in Durrës, 2017. Photo: authors

Figure 6. Military bunkers dug into the mountain, Dajti, 2015. Photo: authors.

Figure 7. Bunkers of the Spanish Linea P near Roses, Catalonia, 2018. Source: authors.

from the modern practice of erecting walls to prevent immigration (Paz 2017). More contemporarily, the twentieth century is replete with examples of states fortifying their borderlands with bunkers, largely in times of war. After World War I, beginning in 1920, Italy built defenses along the newly established Rapallo border[2] with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Grom et al 2018; Kumer et al 2020). In the years leading to World War II in the 1930s, France built bunkers along its infamously fallible Maginot Line, while Germany created a similar construction with its Siegfried Line. Fears of Nazi invasion drove Sweden to embark on a large-scale fortification of its southern coastline with the Skåne Line (Högberg 2000; Vernon & Zimmermann 2021). From 1939–1940, following the Soviet Union's annexation of the Baltic states and its occupation of eastern Poland, the Politburo erected scattered bunkers along the Molotov Line spanning its new western borders (Short 2008). Then, between 1942–1944, Germany turned its gaze to the coast to protect from seaborne invaders, building the Atlantic Wall, a series of coastal fortifications stretching from Scandinavia to continental Europe (Kaufmann et al 2012). Franco's Spain began building its Linea P[3] along the French border in 1939 and continued its construction until 1948 (Rodriguez 2010) (Figure 7), indicating the continuation of militaristic practices post-war.

In Cold War-era Albania, the official doctrine guiding the construction of Hoxha's bunkers was that their presence would gradually wear down an invading force by compelling them to search and destroy the bunkers. They were built in response to several perceived foreign threats, which heightened after the Soviet–Albanian split in 1961 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968. Hoxha professed a belief that Albania might be the next target of the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, particularly since he was hostile towards the government of Tito in Belgrade, the latter's capital. Bunkers were meant to provide for the defense of the country along a partisan guerilla doctrine. In other words, what they lacked in firepower they made up for with a popular resistance that was imagined as being able to gradually wear down any invader (Vickers & Pettifer 1997, 210–211; Turku 2009, 108). The strategy partly relied on visualizing "Albania's determination to defend itself at all costs" (Turku 2009, 108). Built on beaches and along borders with a view to stopping or slowing down an invader, Albanian bunkers were consistent with the logic of border fortification and territorial defense. They were also scattered across the territory to ensure that the enemy could be fought deep inside the country's territory—a similar strategy to that in Switzerland and Austria (Stein 1990) and Yugoslavia (Grom & Štukovnik 2018).

As no detailed official account of the Albanian bunker's production has been published or declassified, there are no official figures nor maps to aid in estimating their exact number or location. Estimates of their construction range from 180,000 to one million, with the most frequent reported range being between 500,000 and 750,000 (Glass 2017). The economic effort of such an endeavour consumed significant financial and industrial resources (Glass 2015). At the height of bunker production between 1977 and 1981, the government invested an estimated two percent (Glass 2014) of net material product[4]—a significant share of the budget—into this activity. As a proportion of the economy, the cost of the bunkers' construction equates to twice what France incurred to build the Maginot Line (Asllani 2010; Stefa & Mydyti 2012), a military defense that ultimately proved as useless as the Albania's bunkers.

The effectiveness of Hoxha's strategy was never put to the test as no invasion of communist Albania ever took place. There are some reports, however, that they were used in combat situations after the regime's collapse. During a period of civil unrest in 1997, sometimes referred to as the Albanian Civil War, in the face of fighting between government troops and rebels, residents of Sarandë in southern Albania were reported to have taken up positions in bunkers around the town (Spollar 1997). In addition, after the outbreak of the Kosovo War in 1999, as Serbian artillery batteries located across the border in Kosovo shelled border villages in Kosovo and Albania, Kosovars and other local residents used the bunkers to take shelter (Holmes 1999). During the conflict, the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) also reportedly used them as defensive positions against the Serbian army (Walker 1999; Strochlic 2015).

The bunkers' military value may be partly assessed through testimonies and recent observations. The concrete used to build these bunkers often shows signs of premature deterioration, especially in locations close to the sea. In contrast, German-built concrete bunkers dating to World War II near Pogradec do not appear to suffer from such deterioration (as of authors' field trip, August 2010). One engineer we interviewed attested that individual bunkers could easily be razed by a bulldozer (Figure 8), which provokes questioning of how their structural integrity would have withstood any onslaught by advancing tanks (Informant 1, Tirana, 2010).

1.3. The hidden ideology of bunkers

While the bunkers outwardly aimed to serve as a military deterrent, they had a more domestic function, too. Hoxha mandated that Albanian families help erect and maintain these bunkers (Informant 2, Tirana, 2012; Iacono & Këlliçi 2015), which formed part of the regular collective chores the population had to carry out as part of their mandatory civil service (Informants 2 and 5, Tirana, 2012). Bunker parts were prefabricated (Glass 2014) and then shipped to their destinations, where civilians helped with their final assembly. By disseminating the bunkers across the country, the totalitarian regime strove to inculcate a siege mentality within the population (Galaty et al. 1999; O'Donnell 1999; Glass 2008; Morgan 2017; Iacono & Këlliçi 2015). This strategy of exercising control by instilling fear may explain why some Albanians still associate bunkers with "bad memories" of the political control and constant surveillance exercised by the police and informants alike (Informant 2, Tirana, 2012). Post-Hoxha, Albanians often describe these bunkers as symbols of repression and intimidation (Galaty et al. 1999; Martin-McAuliffe 2017). As one high-ranking military official interviewed for a major study of bunkers, Concrete Mushrooms (Stefa et al. 2012, 26) recalled,

> The bunkers weren't built to defend from outsiders, but to communicate to the people of Albania that everything we do, we do it to defend our people against all. The bunkerization was political force in action under the guise of nationalist interests, when in reality it was wasting precious resources as propaganda to keep people convinced that the country was powerful.

The regime intended that the bunkers, starkly visible across Albania's landscape, would imprint themselves into the public consciousness. They were not hidden as military fortifications in other countries such as Switzerland, for instance, where the national defense doctrine still rests on popular mobilization supported by extensive underground fortifications (Nullis 2002; Reichen 2016; Hunt 2017). Thus, while Hoxha's regime has been gone for three decades, the continuing presence and visibility of thousands of bunkers prompts reconsideration of their evolving relationship with the public.

Figure 8. Toppled bunker near the former Communist Party/ Party of Labour youth camp, Dajti, 2017. Photo: authors.

2. Albanians' Contemporary Relationship with Bunkers

Following the fall of the communist regime, Albania's bunkers lost their association with a fear of war and government repression. Many quickly became obsolete, with people ignoring them or more proactively destroying them. Others were repurposed and invested with new meanings. The sudden shift in attitudes towards bunkers mirrors how similar constructions in other countries have been transformed following regime change and/or the end of the war.[5] For instance, in France, a Vichy-regime era bunker in the town of Sainte Bernadette-du-Banlay has been turned into a church, while in Germany, a Nazi-era bunker has been turned into a climbing playground (Virilio 1991; Morgan 2017).

Professor of architecture Jason Payne (2014) offers a useful typology of Albanians' evolving attitudes with bunkers within post-communist society, on which our research builds. He argues that bunkers may be appreciated as ruins, adapted for practical reuse, exploited for consumerist reuse, or reinterpreted either through a "self-reflective institution" or as a place

that fosters distance and commemoration (Payne 2014, 165). Drawing on our ethnographic observations and interviews in Albania, we suggest the following typology. First, bunkers may become the object of total indifference, which may result in their destruction when deemed necessary. Second, they may become the object of derision once painted or graffitied. Third, they may become converted and reused either ad hoc or more deliberately transformed in order to commodify them. Fourth, they may become commemorative markers to reflect upon the past. While these categories are distinct, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Figure 9. The Pyramid, downtown Tirana, in 2007. Photo: authors.

Figure 10. The Pyramid, 2015. Photo: authors

2.1. Bunkers as objects of indifference

Numerous bunkers have been destroyed for a variety of motives. One involves seeking revenge against the former communist regime.[6] Another is reclaiming land for local use, as is the case with farmers who consider the bunkers in their fields to be nuisances, locals, and entrepreneurs with businesses on beaches that promote of tourism (Informant 3, Tirana, 2015). This undocumented destruction does not seem to have sparked any serious public debate, which contrasts with discussions over the fate of larger, more visible communist landmarks like the Pyramid in Tirana, inaugurated in 1988 and initially designed as a museum of Hoxha's legacy which meant to glorify the communist regime (Figure 9). Now largely derelict and vandalised (Figure 10), neither the municipal nor central government has a plan to destroy or restore it, partly due to the protracted public disagreement as to what to do with the monument (Myhrberg 2011; Iacono & Këlliçi 2016; Iacono & Këlliçi 2017).

Destroying a concrete bunker is a costly undertaking for any individual who tries to remove one, which partly explains why so many still dot the country. Given the expense, bunkers may be more casually reused, for instance as ad hoc toilets (Informant 4, Dürres, 2017) or as a place for teenagers to "behave promiscuously" (Galaty et al. 1999, 203). Even when sites are redeveloped, such as an amusement park opened in 2017 on Dajti Mountain north of Tirana, close to one of Hoxha's countryside residences, bunkers are often left undisturbed (Figure 11).

2.2. Bunkers as objects of derision

While the financial outlays to destroy bunkers in the aforementioned amusement park on Dajti Mountain may have been prohibitive, another possibility as to why the bunkers have remained is that the park's owners may feel that their presence can add a touch of kitsch and serve as a reminder of what the place once was. More

Figure 11. Bunkers near Enver Hoxha's mountain residence, Dajti, 2017. Photo: authors.

sarcastic and derisive attitudes towards bunkers emerge through their commercialization, too. Commenting on the sale of burgers and souvenir pillboxes shaped like small bunkers, social anthropologist Helen Regis argues that bunkers "are being employed to communicate a very different message: a self-depreciating, post-communist kitsch aesthetic which recuperates the past as "heritage" through the idiom of mockery" (Regis, personal communication, quoted in Galaty et al. 1999, 209). The bunker-shaped pillboxes, ashtrays and pencil holders are on display in souvenir shops for the passing tourist.[7] One bunker souvenir was promoted with a message to buyers: "Greetings to the land of the bunkers. We assumed that you could not afford to buy a big one" (Shenon 1996, S1, p.4).

Another form of appropriation that is equally derisive is the painting of bunkers found along coastlines or in urban centers. Some bunkers have been painted with bright colours with a view to making their presence more aesthetically in line with spaces of leisure (Pike 2013, 59). No official municipal program promotes this act of bunker transformation, so it is likely these paintings are the initiative of "locals or students," as one informant surmised (Informant 2, Tirana, 2012). At the same time, the painting of bunkers signals a desire to transform the outward meaning of their continued presence: after all, they could have been destroyed or removed (Figures 12, 13, 14, 15).

2.3. Bunkers as sources of income

Many bunkers have also been reappropriated and turned into sources of income, especially in relation to the country's growing tourism industry. Once foreign tourists and journalists began entering Albania in the late 1990s, their fascination with this unique feature of the Albanian landscape spurred entrepreneurs to transform bunkers into restaurants, bars, and hotels. To enterprising Albanians, bunkers represented a resource to be put to use rather than an eyesore (Pike 2013, 58–59). This trend is exemplified by the aforementioned project Concrete Mushrooms, initiated by two professors at the Politecnico Di Milano in Italy, which led to the publication of a book (Stefa & Mydyti 2012) and the creation of a website (ArkiNet Blog 2009). The objective of the project was to bring a reflection on these inherited concrete bunkers scattered across the country and how different looks could be given at them. The architecture students behind Concrete

Figure 12. Painted bunker, Ksamil, 2010. Photo: authors.

Figure 13. Painted bunkers on the beach in Ksamil, 2010. Photo: authors.

Figure 14. Painted bunker inside a hotel and restaurant complex, Dajti, 2012. Photo: authors.

Figure 15. Painted bunker, downtown Tirana, 2017. Photo: authors.

Figure 16. A bunker transformed into a bar near Durrës, 2018. Credit: Rémi Bourdillon, Le Devoir, June 16, 2018, https ://www.ledevoir.com/vivre/voyage/530305/des-bunkers-aux-balkans (with permission).

Figure 17. Restored bunker, downtown Tirana, 2017. Photo: authors.

Figure 18. Bunk'Art 2 bunker, downtown Tirana, 2017. Photo: authors.

Mushrooms now promote the financial benefits of converting bunkers into bars, restaurants, and small hotels. Similar initiatives include "Bed and Bunkers" (Anonymous 2012; Bed and Bunkers, 2015), a project launched in 2012 to turn PZ bunkers into hotel rooms, especially in spots with scenery attractive to tourists (EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture 2015; see also Geoghegan 2012). Converting large PZ bunkers into tourist infrastructure is easier than with smaller QZ bunkers, which lack enough space to be exploited in a similar manner.

The trend towards commodifying bunkers, especially in combination with their painting, has led Albania's capitalist government to perceive them as tourism assets. Western and Albanian private agencies helping to develop tourism have also strongly encouraged the adoption of these new "bunker mentalities" (see for example: TripAdvisor 2017; Albanian Tourist; and Albanian Trip). Ironically for infrastructure that once formed part of the concrete defense fortifications of the communist regime, the bunkers are now part and parcel of the capitalist tourism industry's infrastructure (Figure 16). Moreover, just as there are precedents for building bunkers for defense, there are precedents for using old bunkers for tourist purposes, too. Such fortifications have already been put to economic use in Israel (Gelbman 2008) and in France with both the Maginot Line (Gordon 2018) and the Nazi-era Atlantic Wall (Loizeau & Leleu 2019). The rapid commodification of the bunkers in post-communist Albania, perhaps, given the country's wholesale political and economic transformation, is arguably all the more striking.

2.4. Bunkers as reminders of the past

Finally, bunkers have more recently been preserved and restored as testimonies of the past. This restoration points to a desire among historical associations or municipal authorities to have the bunkers encourage reflection regarding the communist regime rather than to solely reappropriate and monetize obsolete infrastructure. Nevertheless, the preservation of bunkers as sites of remembrance, as has been done in Tirana (Figure 17), can also overlap with capitalist motives, especially with regard to heritage tourism (van der Boon 2019; Azizaj 2020).

One key example of the transformation of a bunker into a site of public remembrance is the first Bunk'Art location, opened in 2014 in northern Tirana. Here, 24 rooms of the sprawling concrete shelter, which was intended to protect Hoxha and his cabinet in the event of a nuclear attack, have been turned into a mixed-use art and culture center featuring a history museum and contemporary art gallery (Figure 18). Bunk'Art 2, opened in 2016, turned a former shelter in downtown Tirana designed to safeguard elite police and interior

ministry staff from nuclear catastrophe into a museum documenting the political persecution perpetrated by the communist regime (Eilers 2016: Bourdillon 2018). Yet alongside these efforts at public communication and commemoration from the Albanian government evinced by these museums, a more derisive attitude can be found among the public. As one Bunk'Art guide explained, "For you to visit our bunkers, it is a good way to punish the dictator. He must turn around in his grave knowing that you, the "capitalists", have fun invading them!" (Bourdillon 2018).

Conclusion

Fearing an invasion from outside, Hoxha's isolated communist regime promoted narratives of a state under siege by NATO, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union and its allies. The Albanian military responded to these fears of invasion by frantically constructing bunkers—with the mandated assistance of the entire population—across the country from the mountains to the coast in an effort to fortify its terrestrial and maritime borders. These bunkers generated a pervasive atmosphere of fear among the public. At the same time, these worries were ultimately rather surface-level, much like the bunkers themselves. Once the communist regime collapsed in 1991, a range of new bunker mentalities quickly developed, ranging from indifference to derision, commodification, and commemoration.

As in much of the world where military infrastructure no longer serves its original purpose, many bunkers in Albania now lie derelict. While stripped of their initial military or political purpose, these abandoned artefacts still vividly and inescapably testify to the past. Bunkers were built out of both mortal anxieties (Bennett 2011) and, more specifically in Albania, the totalitarian desire to instill terror into the population. Within a relatively short period of time, Albanians' relationship with the bunkers has shifted from one characterized by fearful distance to a range of other attitudes and practices. This evolving relationship evinces a reappropriation of the bunkers (Morgan 2014) signifying how Albanian society is gradually coming to terms with the painful heritage of its communist past. Further research can investigate what place bunkers will occupy both in public space and public imaginaries going forward. Will the trend towards destruction prevail, will bunkers increasingly be turned into productive assets, or will they gradually fade away from the landscape and memory, as our conversations with numerous locals hinted? Several narratives and potentialities are at play. How they will materialize and affect the tens of thousands of bunkers still imprinted upon Albania's territory remains to be seen.

Notes

1 The Republic of Albania was proclaimed on April 29, 1991.

2 See the website Mapping the Rapallo Border fortifications: https://www.rapalskameja.si/zemljevid/; see also Soca Valley, https://www.soca-valley.com/en/in-search-of-adventure/culture/2021011821175101/the-rapallo-border/

3 See the website Mapping Linea P: https://lineap.spiki.org/

4 In a socialist economy, services are not taken into account and only material production is considered in the calculation of domestic economic production.

5 Like the modern church in Sainte Bernadette-du Banlay, Nevers, France.

6 Other infrastructural relics of the regime that were destroyed included railway equipment and irrigation canals in rural areas, which now lie derelict and useless (Informant 1, Tirana, 2010).

7 As we witnessed in several locations; also Informant 4, Durrës, 2017: "It is not uncommon to find souvenirs and gimmicks using the concept of bunkers" .

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PORTFOLIO
Chief Editor's Choice

The Social Life of Images

Mario Jimènez Dìaz

Mario Jimènez Dìaz
Photo: @mcervantina

Artist statement:

Emerging around the turn of the millennium as a multidisciplinary study from such diverse fields as art history, aesthetics, film theory, cultural studies, media theory, visual culture, postcolonial studies, and gender studies, visual studies *respond to the need to analyze an area of growing importance in contemporary societies: that of visuality. Therefore, I try to account, without disciplinary restrictions, the processes of production of cultural meaning that have their origin in the public circulation of images. I could, thus, describe my work as investigations into "the social life of images", analyzing the processes of the cultural construction of visuality.*

Artist biography:

Originally from the Mexican town of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mario Jimènez Dìaz lived his first years under the influence of a hybrid environment resulting from the mixture of cultures typical of border regions. His early experiences were coloured especially through mass-media exposure to North American pop culture. He completed his professional studies at the School of Visual Arts of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, obtaining a Bachelor of Visual Arts with a specialty in Production of audiovisual languages, which led to experience in various production houses in the city of Monterrey and later at the Tecnológico de Monterrey System as an audiovisual producer of educational materials. At that time, he carried out his first plastic experiments, discovering oil painting, the ideal medium to transmit and communicate his ideas. He later moved to the city of Barcelona, Spain, where he obtained a Master's Degree in Advanced Studies in Art History from the Universitat de Barcelona. With more than 20 years of professional experience, he currently divides his time between work as a visual artist, an art director for various film productions, and a professor at several educational institutions in his native hometown.

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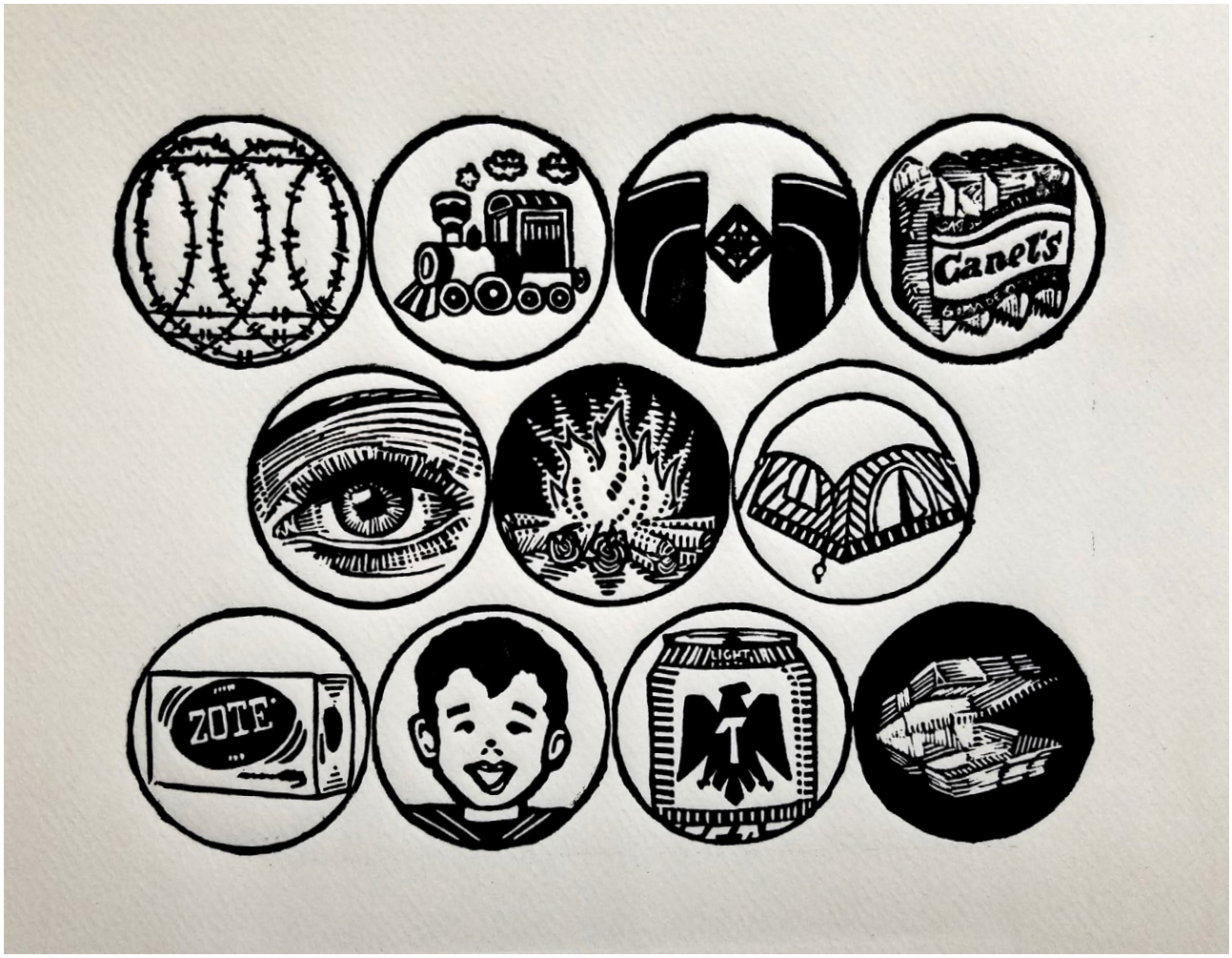
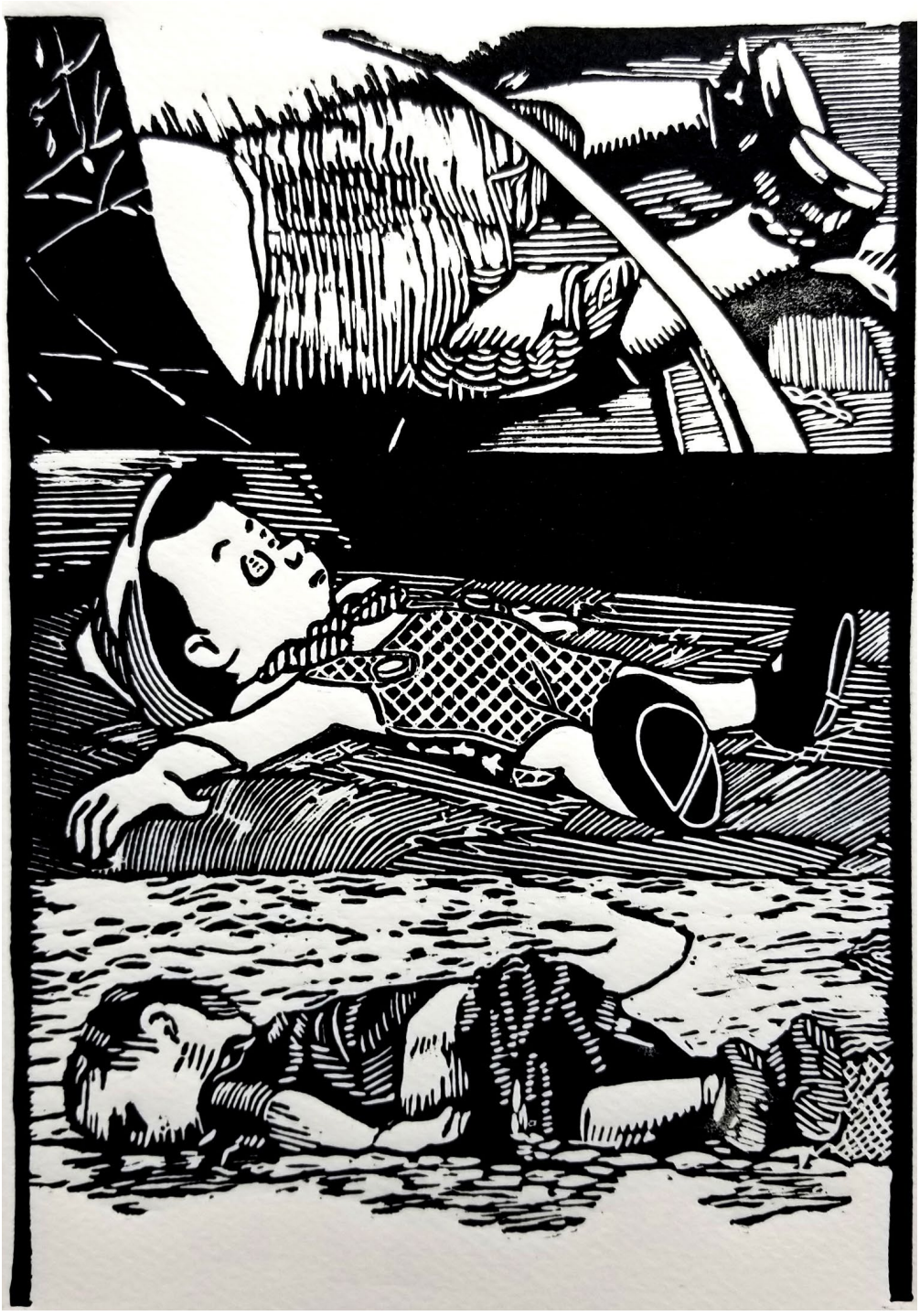
"Twin cities torn apart" Oil on canvas, 2020



"Migrants 01" Linoprint, 2020



"Migrants 02" Linoprint, 2020

"Migrants 04" Linoprint, 2020

"Ninth November night 01" Oil on canvas, 2019

"Ninth November night 02" Urban Mural (Matamoros, Mx), 2021

"Sonso ladeado" Oil on Wood, 2022

"The garden of early delights" Oil on canvas, 2018

"The last supper" Oil on canvas, 2018

POETRY

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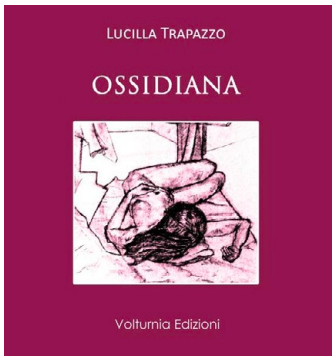
POETRY

A Gesture of Salt: Three Social Poems

Lucilla Trapazzo



Book cover, *Ossidiana*, 2018

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The three poems presented here meditate in verse on the concept of migration as a consequence of war, poverty, neo-colonialism, and exploitation of the environment. "**In Absence**", with its simple and composed structure, is a silent cry of hope. The poet describes one night on a refugees boat in the Mediterranean: one of many journeys of hope tainted by the shadows of future hardships and the sorrow of the memories left behind. Under it all there is the sea, the big mother and never sated monster.

Today our cities are a melting pot of races and languages. Among the tangles of the urban landscape, the most fragile are often lost, forgotten. "**Beyond the Gaze**" offers a symbolic portrait of a neglected humanity, the migrants living too often at the borders of society with their crosses of wars and horrors on their shoulders (there is a hint to Jesus and mother Mary, for those who understand). Over this forgotten humanity, our distracted eyes barely notice anymore the TV news recounting other existential tragedies.

From the first steps of mankind, people migrated, scattering around the world, mixing and differentiating themselves in different cultures and customs. "**Transhumance**" is a sort of laic prayer and a quiet reflection on migrations, crowds, loneliness, nature, and human landscape. The poems come from the Italian book *Ossidiana*, published by Volturnia Edizioni in 2018 (translations into English by the poet).

Lucilla Trapazzo is a Swiss-Italian poet, translator, artist, and performer. After years abroad for studies and work in the DDR, Brussels, Washington DC, and New York City, she now lives in Zurich, Switzerland. Her activities range from poetry, theater (workshops in Italy and abroad, directing, acting), installations, translations, and literary criticism. Editor of the poetry section of *MockUp Magazine*, Italy, and of *Innsaei Literary Journal*, India, co-editor of several international anthologies, she is a juror in international poetry competitions and has co-organized and moderated poetry events, international festivals and art exhibitions for international associations. Many of her poems have been translated into other languages, and she has won numerous prizes and awards, including first prize poetry, La Nicchia, Rome, 2018; first prize poetry, Isolimpia, Napoli, 2019; first prize best poetry book "I Murazzi" Torino, Italy, 2019; Best Poem, Cape Comorin Club Awards, India, 2020; first prize Civil and Philosophical Poems, XI Checkhov's Autumn International Festival, Crimea, 2021; Gold medal for Outstanding Poet, Yan'an Award, Peoples Republic of China, 2021. Avid supporter of human rights and the planet, her social and feminine point of view is reflected in many of her writings.

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In Absence—a Boat named Hope

No moon tonight. The voracious belly
of the sea nurses on dreams
and flesh. A boat forgiven
is tainted by shadows
while furrowing the waters.
The promised destiny is distant.
A woman's face is suspended
in absence. Yesterday
the taste of home and native land.
Disdainful beaches
tomorrow.

In assenza—una barca di nome speranza

Niente luna stanotte. Il ventre
vorace del mare si nutre di sogni
e di carne. Una barca graziata
si tinge di ombra solcando le acque.
Distante è il destino promesso.
Un volto di donna sospeso
in assenza. Alle spalle sapore di casa
e terra natale. Spiagge sprezzanti
domani.

Beyond the gaze

Shattering is the misery of an injury
bound to libations of silence.
Mournful sum of time and space,
returns the migrant mother of the son
crucified to the disdain of crows
and torn apart between night and day
without ending nor beginning. Inhabiting
streets and houses abandoned to the memories,
in the magazines appear only photograms
or distracted words of news bulletins
in the evening on TV - just hollow noises
and frills of conscience in dissonance.
Sweet denial follows compassion.

*Ego absolvo te a peccatis mundi. **

* Latin Catholic formula to absolve sinners

Oltre lo sguardo

Urlante è la miseria di uno squarcio
avvinto a libagioni di silenzio.
Somma dolente d'ogni tempo e luogo
torna migrante la madre del figlio
al ludibrio dei corvi crocifisso
dilaniato tra notte e giorno senza
fine e inizio. Abitando le strade
e case abbandonate alla memoria
nei rotocalchi solo fotogrammi
parole di distratti notiziari
la sera alla TV, vacuo frastuono
e orpelli di coscienza in dissonanza.
Dolce il diniego segue compassione.

Ego absolvo te a peccatis mundi.

Transhumance

At the crossing of rivers intertwining
scarves, people migrate and birds
camels, elephants and jute sacks.
Under harsh shadows of torn skies
women carry in baskets
the cries of the fathers and knives
in the eyes of the children. Replicating
traces of love in a different horizon
on the route of far away delusions.
History is a meandering vein, digging
craters on the face. An offering
of lotus flowers to extinguish the mark
of angular horror, and we harvest dreams
poured on sand. A wrinkle in the wind
leaves no trace.

Transumanza

All'incrocio dei fiumi intrecciando
le sciarpe, genti trasmigrano e uccelli
cammelli, elefanti e sacche di iuta.
All'ombra dura di cieli strappati
portano le donne nelle ceste
il lamento dei padri e coltelli
negli occhi dei figli. Replicando
orme d'amore in un altro orizzonte
sulla rotta di abbagli lontani.
La storia è vena vagante solcante
crateri sul viso. Offrire foglie
di loto per estinguere il marchio
di orrori angolari. Poi cogliere
sogni versati su sabbia. Un solco
nel vento traccia non lascia.

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POETRY

The Border of My Body

Dubravka Djurić

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With my husband Miško Šuvaković, I spent October 1998 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It was a time when Serbia expected a NATO intervention, which happened in the spring the following year. I was intensively reading the selection of Slovenian poetry translated into Serbo-Croatian by the Slovenian-Bosnian poet, Josip Osti. As someone raised as a Yugoslavian by nationality, the wars in Yugoslavia were a personal drama. Inspired by Osti's translations and the political situation, I wrote fourteen poems titled "Eseji o slobodi kretanja" ("Essays on the Freedom of Moving"). At the centre of most of these poems were the questions of borders in materiality and in our minds, and of the impossibility of moving through the new countries' borders that appeared during and after the Yugoslavian wars. The emotional relationship to the war as well as the geopolitical and geocultural changes in this region are at the center of these poems. The two poems presented here were published in my collection of poetry, *All-Over* (Belgrade: Feminist 94, 2004).

Dubravka Djurić (1961, Dubrovnik, Croatia), lives in Belgrade, Serbia. She received her M.A. at the Department of General Literature, Faculty of Philology and Literary Theory, University of Belgrade, and her Ph.D. at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. She is Professor at Singidunum University's Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. With Miško Šuvaković she co-edited the critical book, *Impossible Histories: Avant-Garde, Neo-avant-garde and Post-Avant-Garde in Yugoslavia* (The MIT Press, 2003). She is co-editor and translator with Vladimir Kopicl, *Novi pesnički poredak: antologija novije američke poezije* [*New Poetry Order: An Anthology of New American Poetry*] (2002). With Biljana D. Obradović she co-edited *Cat Painters: An Anthology of Serbian Poetry* (Dialogos Press, 2016). She was a co-founding co-editor of *ProFemina: Magazine for Women's Literature and Culture* (1995-2011). She writes and performs poetry and has published eight collections of her own poetry. Her poetry has been translated into English, Polish, Italian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian, Albanian and Hungarian languages. With Biljana D. Obradović she is working on an English translation of her selected poetry. She translates American poetry, with her primary focus on Language poetry. She has translated books of poetry by American poets Charles Bernstein, Bob Perelman, Rosmarie Waldrop and Jerome Rothenberg, as well as Canadian poet Joe Blades.

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Border

Everything is in perfect order—it is not in order
Sea within easy reach of the index finger
—salty, sweet, unpleasant, tiring
Within reach—Fiume [1]
In the curvy ride of the Istrian karst
—pathways and smells
  grass, feces, bug, dog
a crowd can be anywhere
it waves in the wind
Izola [2] exposed in its wasted wandering
immediate experience of branching
Borders that are not crossed
Of brain cuvatures
Within reach—Fiume
On the flying aerojet without a helsman
on the ship released down the water
it's gone—the memory of the present
eats its very own existence—
the stone sways, gives way
to pressure
Dizziness of a glamorous inscription
Mystic night drinks
Confronted with transience—the body gr(l)ows
A movement, throaty sounds
Scream on the stage
for you

Translated by Biljana D. Obradović

Notes

1 Poem is written in Ljubljana in 1998. *Fiume* or *Rijeka* (depending on the local or Italian spelling)—a city on the Istrian Coast of the Adriatic Sea, in Croatia. Author's note: The poet uses the Italian name for a Croatian city pointing how the city she came to for her teenager time became a foreign city, because of the breakdown of Yugoslavia.

2 *Isola* or *Izola* (depending on the local or Italian spelling)—a city on the Istrian Coast of the Adriatic Sea, in Slovenia.

The Border of My Body [3]

I ask myself what happened with the European Heritage
and the Latin Middle Ages by Ernst Robert Curtius [4]
as I sit in the studio apartment on the outskirts of Ljubljana,
reading Bodies of Modernity by Tamar Garb
and Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry in the Material World by Michael Davidson
I think of Nostalgia [5]
about the passage of time
about the welfare of moments
in which the body and mind are relaxed
of the synthesis of points of view
of the broken mirror into which
a Narcissist-woman looks at herself
about the calmness and speeding up of changes
of stasis that constricts us
The body of the hypertext
Friends, old and new
Cryptotext in the background of a different culture
Theat deals with pornography, with interruptions and details
with continuity, with new beginnings with
the newly constructed "pasts"
In anticipation of Kulik's [6] performance
In anticipation of Vlasta's [7] performance
While speeches are being made one after the other, monologues, dialogues
in which the quiet female poet paints reality
without stress, without fear
Pyrotechnicians still are doing their jobs well
And that's not yet the end
Nor is that the end of meticulousness

Translated by Biljana D. Obradović

Notes

3 This poem refers to a University Law from 1998 by which Milošević's government intended to abolish the autonomy of the university and to remove all nonobedient professors. All of Djurić's professors that taught at the Department of General Literature and Theory of Literature were suspended, with some even fired.

4 Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956) was a German literary scholar, philologist, and Romance language literary critic, best known for his 1948 study *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, translated in English as *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. The reference to Curtius's book is the reference to the socialist time when Djurić studied General Literature and this book was an important for that program. In the new political circumstances of the 90s, this book for the poet referring to the European heritage became even more important than ever before. Garb's book refers to her feminist position, and Davidson's book, she bought at Ljubljana's University used bookstore, and refers to her interest in Language poetry.

5 *Nostalgia*—a café in the center of Ljubljana.

6 Oleg Borisovich Kulik (b. 1961) is a Ukrainian-born Russian performance artist, sculptor, photographer and curator. He is best known for his controversial artistic performances in which he acted like a dog.

7 *Vlasta Delimar*—Croatian performance artist.

ART & BORDERS

BIG_Review publishes art features, including orginal artworks, essays, and interviews related to the world of borders—whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual. The Art & Borders Section is edited by Dr. Elisa Ganivet, and, like all *BIG_Review* publications, is available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.

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Sarah Trouche, Performing Borders

Sarah Trouche, performer les frontières

Madeleine Filippi *

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This essay discusses the performative work of Sarah Trouche, whose meticulous field approach and bodily involvement at the edges of borders questions cultural rooting and geopolitical hazards.

Cet essai traite des performances artistiques de Sarah Trouche, dont l'approche de terrain méticuleuse et l'investissement corporel autour des frontières questionnent l'enracinement culturel et les tensions géopolitiques

Since earning a Masters degree in Art History and Cultural Engineering at La Sorbonne in 2011, **Madeleine Filippi** has been an independent curator and art critic. She directs her research along the following lines: Archive(s)—memory(s)—language(s), within public and private cultural institutions (Beirut Art Fair, Colombo Art Biennale, Frac Champagne Ardenne, National House Museum Bonaparte etc.). She has been co-chief-editor of Diapo magazine, specialized in performance, director of the Vanessa Quang gallery (Paris, France), and appointed responsible for collections of private collectors, as well as the Zinsou Foundation (Cotonou, Benin). Since 2018, she has initiated several projects around the video medium as an artefact of our contemporary society (France—Romania 2019 Season, Frans Krajcberg Foundation, etc.) and contributes to various magazines and exhibition catalogs. She also teaches art market at the University of Corsica and continues to collaborate with Altaïr ThinkTank on promoting culture, media and digital technology. She is a member of the board of directors of CEA (Association Française des commissaires d'exposition, a platform promoting and organizing projects, and reflecting upon the curatorial practice) and AICA France (International Association of Arts Critics).

Diplômée d'un Master en Histoire de l'Art et en Ingénierie culturelle de la Sorbonne, **Madeleine Filippi** est depuis 2011 commissaire d'exposition et critique d'art indépendante. Elle oriente ses recherches autour des axes : Archive(s)—Mémoire(s)—Langage(s), au sein d'institutions culturelles publiques et privées (Beirut Art Fair, Colombo Art Biennale, Frac-Champagne-Ardenne, Musée National de la Maison Bonaparte etc.). Elle a été co-rédactrice en chef de la Revue Diapo, spécialisée dans la performance, directrice à la galerie Vanessa Quang (Paris, France), et nommée responsable des collections de collectionneurs privés, ainsi que de la Fondation Zinsou (Cotonou, Bénin). Depuis 2018, elle initie plusieurs projets autour du médium vidéo comme artéfact de notre société contemporaine (Saison France—Roumanie 2019, Frans Krajcberg Foundation, etc.), et contribue à différents magazines et catalogues d'expositions. Elle enseigne également à l'Université de Corse le marché de l'art et continue de collaborer avec Altaïr Think Tank pour la valorisation de la culture, des médias et du numérique. Elle est membre du conseil d'administration de C-E-A (Association Française des commissaires d'exposition) et de l'AICA France (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art).

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At a time when geopolitics is strained in many regions, the notion of borders has never been more questioned and challenged by artists. To these international stakes is often added a vision of the world and the history of the borders which structure it. Between political agendas and poetic visions, even utopian, contemporary artistic approaches interrogate boundaries political and natural.

Since 2000, as a visual artist and performer, Sarah Trouche moves between several fields of representation of the border. First, she appears in a more poetic register, even aesthetic, as shown for example by her performance "Pont de Seine", during which she jumped naked and then remained suspended from a bridge. There is little record of this action, a subtle omen that the stakes are elsewhere. We detect in this performance—which she prefers to call "action"—the original posture of the artist facing the border. The bridge is not an urban element without symbolic value. It is a disguise to join together what is not connected, a place of movement intended for a gateway to another territory. The border becomes a space of possible mediation of relations with others.

Sarah Trouche's performative work was initially concerned with notions of resistance, balance and obstruction. It was not until the turn of the 2010s that the paradigm of the border took on a real commitment. In numerous actions since then, the artist engages the public about borders and their failures. She offers to the audience a real cartography of the current geopolitical conflicts. Like an explorer, she travels the world. She goes to meet the Other, a country, a culture, a history. In total immersion, these works are the result of exchanges and different views on the same territory. From the Republic of Macedonia, to the DMZ in Korea, the Palestinian West Bank, Kazakhstan, and more recently the Arctic. There she elaborates performances in which the notion of border coincides with a socio-cultural repair.

In 2012, Sarah Trouche testifies, for example, to the absurdity of the new borders within the countries that make up the former Yugoslavia. In "Action for Tetovo #1" (Figure 2), the artist returns to the remnants of the war in Kosovo. She learns through various interactions with the local population that the situation of this predominantly Albanian and Muslim town is landlocked within the Republic of Macedonia. Despised and neglected by the latter, the inhabitants of Tetovo are considered traitors because of their history. It is this feeling of rejection that the artist wished to highlight, when she decided to install herself naked at the top of a mountain overlooking the city. On her back, she draws an imaginary cartography of Tetovo, as well as two doves in reference to the Albanian flag and the symbolism of peace conferred to the bird since antiquity. Sarah Trouche likes to play with symbols. Marked by war and violence, the two countries are united here on the same plane—the body of the artist—in order to show this complex situation. It is not about denouncing, but to put in light the anomalies and failures of the human borders. She creates a space for possible dialogue.

Figure 1. Sarah Trouche portrait.
Courtesy the artist.

À l'heure d'une géopolitique sous tension dans de nombreux territoires, jamais la notion de frontière n'a été autant questionnée, malmenée par les artistes. À ces enjeux internationaux, s'ajoute bien souvent, une vision du monde et de l'histoire des frontières qui la compose. Entre engagements politiques et visions poétiques, voire utopistes ; les démarches artistiques contemporaines n'ont de cesse d'interroger les démarcations politiques et/ou naturelles.

Plasticienne et performeuse, Sarah Trouche, elle, oscille entre ces différents champs de représentation de la frontière au sein de sa démarche depuis les années 2000. Aux prémices, elle apparait en filigrane dans un registre plus poétique, voir esthétique comme en témoigne par exemple sa performance « Pont de Seine », lors de laquelle l'artiste nue a sauté, puis est restée suspendue à un pont. Il reste peu de trace de cette action, subtil présage déjà que l'enjeu est ailleurs. Impossible de ne pas déceler dans cette performance—qu'elle préfère d'ailleurs nommée usuellement « action »—l'origine d'une posture de l'artiste face à la frontière. Le pont n'est pas un élément urbain sans valeur symbolique. C'est un subterfuge pour réunir ce qui ne l'est pas. Un lieu de mouvement destiné à un passage vers un autre territoire. La frontière devient un espace de médiation possible de relation avec autrui.

Le travail performatif de Sarah Trouche relevait au départ des notions de résistance, de jeux d'équilibre et d'entrave. Il faudra attendre le tournant des années 2010 pour que le paradigme de la frontière prenne une véritable envergure d'engagement. Depuis, l'artiste interpelle le public dans de nombreuses actions sur les frontières et leurs défaillances. Elle offre aux spectateurs, une véritable cartographie des conflits géopolitiques actuels. Telle une exploratrice, elle sillonne le monde. Elle part à la rencontre de l'Autre, d'un pays, d'une culture, d'une histoire. En immersion totale, ces œuvres sont le résultat d'échanges et de regards différents sur un même territoire. De la République de Macédoine, à la DMZ en Corée du Sud, en passant par la Cisjordanie, le Kazakhstan ou plus récemment encore en Arctique. Elle y élabore des performances dans lesquelles la notion de frontière coïncide avec une réparation socio-culturelle.

Figure 2. "**Action for Macedonia #1 — Tetovo, 2012**". Photography of performance.

In "Action for Tetovo #2" (Figure 3), she settles in the ruins of a Christian church located in a former Albanian territory and decides to break eggs on her naked body in reference to the causality paradox of the chicken and the egg. The artist in this violent and symbolic gesture testifies to the udicrous situation of this city trapped in history.

From her trip to South Korea and the DMZ, Sarah Trouche elaborates several actions. The demilitarized zone separates South and North Korea by only four kilometers (Figure 4). This is *no man's land* where many people come to gather themselves and place wishes on ribbons symbolically sent to their loved ones on the other side. During her stay, the artist discovers a natural maritime

Figure 3. "**Action for Macedonia #02 — Macedonia, 2012**". Photography of performance.

En 2012, Sarah Trouche témoigne, par exemple, de l'absurdité des nouvelles frontières au sein des pays qui composent l'ex-Yougoslavie. Dans « Action For Tetovo #1 » (Figure 2), l'artiste revient sur les vestiges de la guerre du Kosovo. Elle apprend à travers différents échanges avec la population locale, que la situation de cette ville majoritairement albanaise et musulmane est enclavée au sein de la République de Macédoine. Méprisés et délaissés par cette dernière, les habitants de Tétovo sont considérés du fait de leur histoire comme des traîtres. C'est ce sentiment de rejet que l'artiste a souhaité mettre en lumière, lorsqu'elle décide de s'installer nue au sommet d'une montagne surplombant la ville. Sur son dos, elle dessine une cartographie imaginaire de Tetovo, ainsi que deux colombes en référence au drapeau albanais et à la symbolique de paix conférée à l'oiseau depuis l'antiquité. Car Sarah Trouche aime jouer avec les symboles. Marqués par la guerre et la violence, les deux pays se trouvent ici réunis sur un même plan—le corps de l'artiste—afin de donner à voir cette situation complexe. Il ne s'agit pas pour l'artiste de dénoncer, mais de mettre en lumière les anomalies et échecs des frontières humaines. Elle crée un espace de dialogue possible.

Dans « Action For Tetovo #2 » (Figure 3), elle s'installe dans les ruines d'une église chrétienne située dans un ancien territoire albanais et décide de casser des œufs sur son corps nu en référence avec le paradoxe de l'œuf et la poule. L'artiste dans ce geste violent et symbolique témoigne de la situation ubuesque de cette ville prisonnière de l'histoire.

border that exists between the two countries, linked by mud at low tide. In this highly guarded area she buries ribbons so that they may have a chance to be recovered by inhabitants of the North. She then continues this action in Paris, where she presents herself with her skin covered with earth, with metal anchors attached to her head via hair extensions. From Korea to France, the artist creates a dialogue between territories in order to question the concept of border in an act of resilience.

To understand how Sarah Trouche "performs" the border, we must look at the etymology of "*performare*". It indicates the action of giving a form, of representing; figuratively it means: "to instruct". Thus, the ritual aspect which emerges from the works of Sarah Trouche takes a particular direction. The choice to show her naked body, which engages and confronts audiences and renders herself vulnerable, becomes a living receptacle of the history of a territory in the service of potential dialogue between peoples and temporalities. Past and present are

De son voyage en Corée du Sud, Sarah Trouche élabore plusieurs actions après sa découverte de la DMZ. Cette zone démilitarisée qui sépare de seulement quatre kilomètres la Corée du Sud et du Nord (Figure 4). Ce *no man's land* où de nombreuses personnes viennent se recueillir et y déposer des souhaits sur des rubans symboliquement envoyés à des proches restés de l'autre côté. Lors de son séjour l'artiste va y découvrir une frontière maritime naturelle qui existe entre les deux pays, reliée par la boue à marée basse. Dans cette zone très surveillée elle va enterrer des rubans afin qu'ils puissent avoir une chance d'être récupérés par les habitants du Nord. Elle poursuit ensuite cette action à Paris, où elle se présente la peau recouverte de terre, avec des ancres métalliques accrochées à sa tête grâce à des extensions capillaires. De la Corée à la France, l'artiste fait dialoguer ici les territoires afin d'interroger le concept de frontière dans un acte de résilience.

Pour comprendre comment Sarah Trouche « performe » la frontière, il faut se pencher sur l'étymologie « *performare* ».

Figure 4. "**Action for DMZ, I saw you screaming — South Korea, 2012**". Photography of performance.

combined through the body of the artist on which she adds indexical color. Indeed, color has an important role in the performances of the artist. Directly affixed on her body or through symbolic objects, it colours the discourse she takes up in her art.

In the series of actions that she conducts between Israel and Palestine, she is interested in the situation of the landlocked territories, starting from the contradictory symbolism of the olive tree. This tree is a reminder of colonization for the Palestinians and not of peace. In "Action for Cisjordania" (Figure 5), crowned and blinded with a can of olive oil, her ambition was to go barefoot and sightless as far as possible into the desert to metaphorically break down borders. We also find this approach in "Swinging Territories", where the artist still with oil can on her head operates a swing, a movement which for the artist echoes again colonization, a morbid game between recoveries and losses of territories.

Sarah Trouche uses her body as a mediation tool in a process of resilience of peoples in the face of geopolitics. The use of color, the naked body, symbols and repeated gestures generate a discourse. Repetition of the artist's actions on the same territory is also part of the process of resilience and of the dialogue she sets up in an effort to repair.

The paradigm of passage which takes shape from work to work is a fundamental element in the actions of Sarah Trouche. Like a real Ariadne's thread, her connection with

Il indique l'action de donner une forme, de représenter ; au sens figuré il signifie : « instruire ». Ainsi, l'aspect rituel qui se dégage des œuvres de Sarah Trouche prend un sens particulier. Le choix d'exposer son corps nu, qui s'engage, se confronte et se met en danger, devient le réceptacle de l'histoire d'un territoire au service d'un dialogue possible entre les peuples et les temporalités. Passé et présent se conjuguent par l'intermédiaire du corps de l'artiste sur lequel elle vient déposer de la couleur indicielle. En effet, la couleur a un rôle important dans les performances de l'artiste. Directement apposé sur son corps ou à travers des objets symboliques, elle donne une indication au discours à l'instar des objets qu'elle utilise.

Dans la série d'actions qu'elle mène entre l'Israël et la Palestine, elle s'est intéressée à la situation des territoires enclavés en partant du point de départ de la symbolique contradictoire de l'olivier. Cet arbre est symbole de la colonisation pour les Palestiniens et non de paix. Parée d'un bidon d'huile d'olive, dans « Action for Cisjordania » (Figure 5), son ambition était d'aller pieds nus et privée de la vue le plus loin possible dans le désert pour métaphoriquement abattre les frontières. Une notion que l'on retrouve également, dans « Swinging Territories », où l'artiste toujours avec son bidon d'huile sur la tête actionne une balançoire. Un mouvement qui pour l'artiste fait écho là encore à la colonisation, ce jeu morbide entre récupérations et pertes de territoires.

Sarah Trouche fait de son corps un outil de médiation dans un processus de résilience des peuples face à la géopolitique. Le recours à la couleur, au corps nu, aux symboles et les

Figure 5. "**Action for Cisjordania #1 — Israel, 2010**". Photography of performance.

the notion of border is undeniable. It is then necessary to look at the question of insularity. Actions on islands are numerous: Martinique, the Jinmen Islands, Japan, etc. Over the years, a second aspect of the treatment of the subject of the border in the artist's approach goes further, which is clearly seen since her trip to Benin, and her discovery of Ganvié, a floating village which means "the place where we are saved". The border then becomes a space of transfiguration. It is now evoked by the artist in a more symbolic way through a rhyzomic vision of the world. This coincides with the introduction of the mirror in the artist's performances and with the reflections around the cycles of the sun and the moon which take an increasingly important place in Sarah Trouche's approach. For example, her action of searching for the last rays of sunlight before the polar night on the Arctic island of Svalbard (Figure 6)—today a barometer of global warming—resonates with the same game of mirrors in Ganvié, Benin, by capturing the common sun and ignoring borders. Progressively, we observe that the solar and lunar lights serve as a link between performances and places.

Moreover, Sarah Trouche began performing with several people. This is a mark that resilience can only be achieved by working together and through dialogue. Indeed, the artist regularly invites other performers and sometimes even the public to shared performances. This reflects the artist's desire to invite the human to join and share what we have in common. In the artist's recent actions, the relationship to the border partakes in mystical tradition. She acknowledges inspiration from the Fezan lunar calendar, in which there is the possibility during certain cycles to cast spells and connect with others regardless of territorial distance. She tries to show that the human being is not at the center of the story and to reintegrate us into the cycle of life.

Sarah Trouche's paradigm of the border is protean. Whichever aspect seduces you the most, she manages to compel you to look beyond the borders. She pushes for dialogue and acceptance of the Other and our common histories. Her artwork is a journey of initiation, a game of echoes where oppositions disappear so that the territories are brought together. In the eyes of the artist, the border no longer has any meaning in relation to the urgency of the fight against global warming. It is time to let go of divisions and to understand the world through the prism of the living and the poetic in order to create connections.

gestuelles répétées génèrent un discours. La répétition des actions de l'artiste sur un même territoire relève également du processus de résilience et de ce dialogue qu'elle met en place pour opérer une tentative de réparation.

Ce paradigme du passage qui se dessine d'œuvres en œuvres, est un élément fondamental dans les actions de Sarah Trouche. Véritable fil rouge, son lien avec la notion de frontière est indéniable. Il faut ensuite se pencher sur la question de l'insularité. Les actions sur les îles sont nombreuses : Martinique, les îles Jinmen, le Japon, etc. Au fil des ans se manifeste un second aspect du traitement du sujet de la frontière dans la démarche de l'artiste, que l'on constate nettement depuis son voyage au Bénin, et sa découverte de Ganvié, un village flottant qui signifie « le lieu où nous sommes sauvés ». La frontière devient alors un espace de transfiguration. Elle est maintenant évoquée par l'artiste de manière plus symbolique à travers une vision rhizomique du monde. Cela correspond à l'arrivée du miroir dans les performances de l'artiste et aux réflexions autour des cycles du soleil et de la lune qui prennent une place de plus en plus importante dans la démarche de Sarah Trouche. Ainsi par exemple, son action de recherche des derniers rayons soleils avant la nuit polaire, dans l'île de Svalbard en Arctique (Figure 6)—aujourd'hui baromètre du réchauffement climatique—rentre en résonnance avec le même jeu de miroir à Ganvié au Bénin, afin d'attraper ce soleil commun et faire fi des frontières. Progressivement, on observe, que les astres solaire et lunaire vont servir de trait d'union entre les performances et les lieux. Par ailleurs, Sarah Trouche s'est mise à performer à plusieurs. Signe qu'un processus de résilience complet ne peut s'effectuer que par un travail collectif et par le dialogue. En effet, l'artiste invite régulièrement d'autres performeurs et parfois directement le public, à des performances communes. Ce qui reflète la volonté de l'artiste d'inviter l'humain à se joindre et à faire en sorte de partager ce que nous avons de commun. Dans les récentes actions de l'artiste, le rapport à la frontière s'inscrit dans une tradition mystique. Elle avoue être très inspirée par le calendrier lunaire Fêzan, dans lequel il y a la possibilité lors de certains cycles de jeter des sorts et de se connecter avec les autres quel que soit le territoire. Elle cherche à montrer que l'humain n'est pas au centre de l'histoire et de le réintégrer au sein du cycle du vivant.

Le paradigme de la frontière chez Sarah Trouche est protéiforme. Quel que soit l'aspect qui vous séduit le plus, elle parvient à vous contraindre à regarder par-delà les frontières. Elle pousse au dialogue et à l'acceptation de l'Autre et de nos histoires communes. Les œuvres de Sarah Trouche sont un voyage initiatique. Un jeu d'écho où les oppositions disparaissent afin que les territoires soient rassemblés. Aux yeux de l'artiste la frontière n'a plus de sens par rapport à l'urgence de la lutte contre le réchauffement climatique. Il est temps de lâcher prise et de comprendre le monde sous le prisme du vivant et du poétique afin de créer du lien.

Figure 6. "**Action for for Svalbard #2 — Cascade, 2020**". Photography of performance.

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Trois Régimes de Murs

Three Regimes of Walls

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Nous présentons[1] ici à titre cartographique, une approche de nos murs actuels, suggérant trois types de murs de notre vie quotidienne qui obéiraient chacun aux divers régimes qui les soutiennent.

This essay[i] is a cartography, an approximation to our current walls, a postulation for the existence of three types of walls present in the quotidian, that comply at the same time with the diverse regimes that support them.

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Il faut limer le mur parce que,
si l'on n'a pas un ensemble d'impossibilités
on n'aura pas cette ligne de fuite,
cette sortie qui constitue la création

— Gilles Deleuze, Pourparlers

Or comment une muraille qui n'est pas construite
en continuité pourrait-elle offrir cette protection ?
Non seulement un tel mur est incapable de protéger,
mais sa construction est elle-même sans cesse menacée.
Ces portions de muraille, abandonnées au milieu de régions désertiques
peuvent facilement être détruite par les nomades

— Franz Kafka, *La muraille de Chine*

Nous sommes entourés de murs que nous ne remarquons pas, des murs qui ne sont pas visibles nous traversent et nous emportons des murs avec nous. Les murs actuels sont multiples et présents, ouverts et constants. Parfois, nous les percevons « s'édifier », mais la plupart du temps, leurs actions nous submergent. En raison de leur proximité et de leur transparence, ils deviennent simplement « normaux ». Ils sont dans chaque espace. Ils prennent tout, non seulement le discours politique, celui du néo-conservatisme et des exclusions exacerbées, mais aussi celui des différents recoins de la vie quotidienne. L'ensemble des programmes institutionnels, les ordres et les logiques urbaines prennent le relais ; ils s'approprient les dynamiques et les débordements de l'inégal et, plus récemment, s'approprient les logiques et les subjectivités des sujets et de leurs informations. Ceci dans la mesure où ils sont introduits simultanément à différents niveaux de la production de la vie.

Nous présentons ici, à titre cartographique, une approche de nos murs actuels, suggérant trois types de murs de notre vie quotidienne qui obéiraient chacun aux divers régimes qui les soutiennent.

Dans un premier temps, il y aurait les « *murs portables* », correspondant à ces dynamiques qui configurent les objets technologiques dans les subjectivités des sujets. Ce sont les murs du *régime informationnel*, relatifs à l'information. Deuxièmement, il y aurait les « *murs transparentés* »,[2] qui sont ceux qui occupent physiquement notre environnement et qui correspondent au *régime institutionnel*. Ceux-ci sont conçus pour diviser spatialement les sujets, tout en (re) marquant les différences symboliques qui sous-tendent la justification politique de leur existence. Ce sont des murs tellement ancrés dans la vie quotidienne qu'ils semblent devenir « imperceptibles ». Nous les avons standardisés au point de les rendre « transparents ». Enfin, il y aurait les « *murs factuels* », qui renvoient aux débordements et aux tensions non résolues au niveau du *régime socio-économique*. Ces murs font référence à l'état de ségrégation constante et de l'inégalité croissante dans le cadre du système idéologico-économique actuel.

You have to work on the wall,
because without a set of impossibilities,
you won't have the line of flight,
the exit that is creation

— Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*

But how can a wall that is not continuous be a defence?
Indeed, a wall like that is not only unfit to be a defence—
the structure itself is in constant danger.
Those sections of the wall standing in desert places
can of course be destroyed over and over again by the nomads

— Franz Kafka, *At the Building of the Great Wall of China*

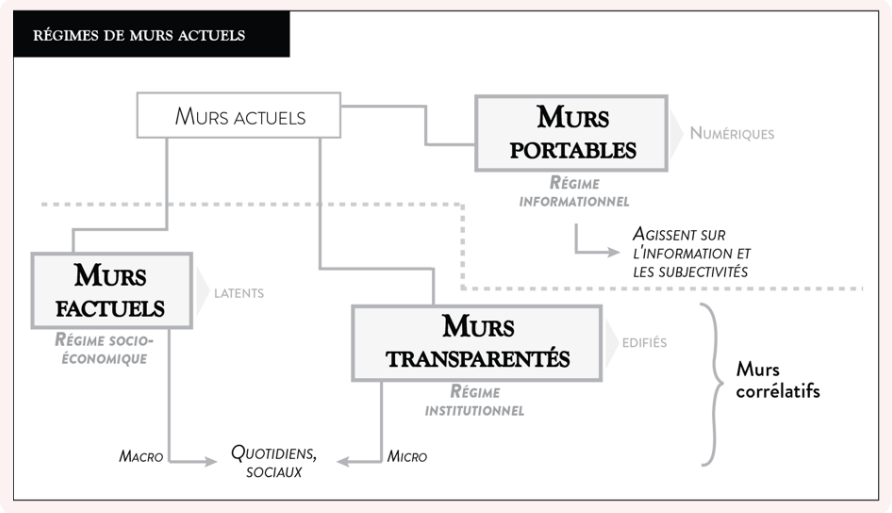
We are surrounded by walls that we don't notice. We are pierced by invisible walls. We have walls within us. Today's walls are multiple and present, open and constant. Sometimes we sense them being "built", but for the most part their power overtakes us. Because of their closeness and transparency they simply become "normal". They are present in every space. They capture all that is around and inside them. Not only the political discourse of neo-conservatism and exacerbated exclusions, but the different corners of quotidian life, too. They capture the institutional pragmatics, the urban orders and logics; they capture the dynamics and overflows of the unequal, and they capture, more recently, the logics and subjectivities of subjects and their information. All, while simultaneously introducing themselves in the different levels of the production of life.

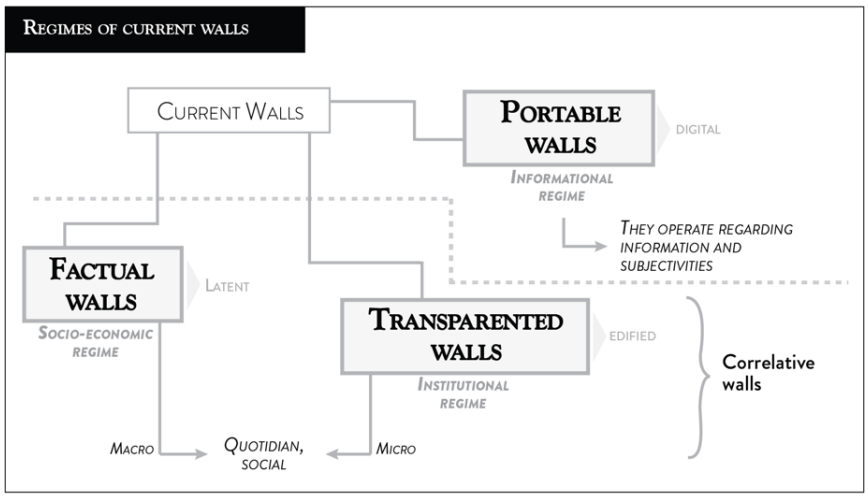
This is a cartography, an approximation to our current walls, a postulation for the existence of three types of walls present in the quotidian, that comply at the same time with the diverse regimes that support them.

First, the "*portable walls*", the ones that correspond with the dynamics that configure the technological objects and the subjectivities of the subjects. These are the walls of the *informational regime*. In second place, the "*transparented walls*", those that physically occupy our surroundings and correspond with the *institutional regime*. Conceived to spatially divide subjects while (re)marking symbolic differences that underlain as a political justification of their existence. These are the walls so inserted into the quotidian that they seem to have become "imperceptible", normalized to the point of "transparency". At last, the "*factual walls*", they refer to the unresolved overflows and tensions in the plane of the *socio-economic regime*. These walls refer to the constant state of segregation and growing inequality within the framework of the current ideological-economic system.

De telle sorte que le regard proposé ici renvoie aux manières dont notre existence est constamment « emmurée ». Alors que le premier mur est abordé avec plus d'emphase, les deux suivants sont présentés comme corrélatifs, comme deux faces adjacentes d'une logique ancrée dans le social. Il s'agirait ainsi de dresser un bilan, d'établir une cartographie en relief des événements, après avoir cru que la grande muraille de Berlin s'était effondrée en 1989, alors que la tournure prise a été complètement différente. Le sens ironique de l'histoire est que ce sont précisément les implications de cette chute (avec la configuration de la forme actuelle du Capitalisme et de son modèle culturel hégémonique) qui finiront par déclencher la « construction » de nos différents murs contemporains. Des murs qui s'alignent aux régimes précités, qui opèrent à différents niveaux d'ordres sociaux. Alors que le *régime informationnel* affecte les pratiques (et les subjectivités) des sujets, le *régime institutionnel* renvoie aux logiques qui façonnent le quotidien le plus immédiat, tandis que le *régime socio-économique* répond à la mise en ordre du système néolibéral et de son ordre culturel dans son ensemble.

The proposed approach at these regimes makes reference to the ways in which existence constantly "walls" itself. While the first type of walls is emphasized, the following two are presented as correlatives, as two adjacent faces of a logic embedded in the social. Thus, it is a question of making a balance, of making a cartography of the *territoire* constituted by the assumption that the great wall of this era collapsed on November 1989 in Berlin. The ironic sense of history suggest that it was precisely the implications of that fall (with the configuration of the current version of Capitalism and its cultural model as hegemonic) that would end up triggering the "building" of our various current walls. Walls that correspond with the regimes mentioned previously, that operate at different levels of social orders. While the *informational regime* affects the practices (and subjectivities) of the subjects; the *institutional regime* refers to the logics that shape the most immediate quotidian dimensions; while the *socio-economic regime* responds to the order of the neoliberal system and its cultural order as a whole.





Murs Portables

Il y a des murs qui enferment le sujet sans le séparer physiquement, des murs qui circonscrivent les subjectivités. Ces murs sont infimes et portables, ils ne s'élèvent ni s'affranchissent. Des murs de poche. *Des murs-objets,* à travers lesquels de plus en plus de portions de nos vies voyagent volontairement. Des murs dans lesquels nous nous insérons et qui nous traversent. Des *murs portables* qui font partie de toutes les dynamiques et des échanges.

Ces murs nous bloquent et nous isolent à l'instar du mur des prisons d'un régime politique, seulement ils le font sans confinement. Mais en fin de compte, ces murs appartiennent également à un régime. Celui qui, à la différence des régimes plus institutionnels ou plus politiques, fonctionne de manière *ténue* mais dont le retentissement des effets connait moins d'opposition.

Les murs portables sont des murs du *régime informationnel* contemporain. C'est celui qui se délimite dans la dynamique des systèmes d'information du numérique. Régime basé sur la vitesse et la saturation de l'information maximale. Régime caractérisé par une quantité d'informations qui sature le sujet de manière inopérante, le laissant extatique devant le débordement informationnel. Face à une telle quantité d'informations, il ne peut que les faire circuler, ajoutant à l'extase d'un flux sans précédent. Disons que face à tant d'informations, le sujet n'a d'autre choix que de faire circuler, propager ladite information comme seule réponse, comme la seule action possible.[3]

D'une part, il y a trop de choses avec lesquelles les sujets peuvent opérer. D'autre part—et à cause de ce qui précède—, les utilisateurs n'ont pour ressource que leur circulation à vide, ajoutant au maelström d'information de la société. Aussi, les innombrables supports qui soutiennent ce flux dans la sphère sociale fonctionnent tour à tour comme des murs qui nous enferment et nous circonscrivent dans ces logiques de régime, qui deviennent aussi les logiques de raisonnement et les subjectivations des sujets eux-mêmes.

En ce sens, ce sont *des murs-miroirs*—pour reprendre l'analogie de Jean Baudrillard (cf. 1990)—, qui nous fascinent non pas par notre image (cf. le miroir de Narcisse), mais par le reflet dynamique de nos processus mentaux, ouverts/exposés sous nos yeux. Il s'agit de la manière dont nous sautons/coupons/collons, de comment nous partageons, *relions*, participons au *flux*. Le sujet se retrouve finalement dans cette sorte de circuit fermé dans lequel il est connecté à lui-même. Circuit fermé de la fascination extatique de ses processus mentaux s'écoulant et se connectant avec le maelström de la circulation opérée sur les écrans.

Cependant, ce *mur-miroir* est généralement positionné à la place de l'ouverture—toujours positive—qui permet la connexion. « Fenêtre ouverte » plutôt que mur, dirait-on. Mais c'est précisément ce rôle de « fenêtre » qui aboutit

Portable Walls

There are walls that enclose the subject without physically separating them, walls that circumscribe subjectivities. These walls are miniscule, minimal and portable, they are not erected and they do not evince themselves as insurmountable. Pocket walls, if you so wish. *Wall-objects*, through which more and more portions of our lives voluntarily circulate. Walls in which we insert ourselves and that also cross us. *Portable walls*, part of all dynamics and exchanges.

They block us, they isolate us, like the prison wall of a recognizable political regime would, only they do it without confinement. Ultimately, these walls also belong to a regime. One that, unlike the more institutional or more political tenor regimes, operates in a tenuous way but with more resounding effects and with a lesser chance of opposition.

The portable walls are walls of the current *informational regime*, which is the one outlined by the communicational dynamics of digital technology. A regime that is based on speed and the saturation of information as a maxim. A regime that is characterized by an amount of information that saturates the subject until it is inoperative, by leaving it ecstatic through the informational overflow. When given this amount of information the subject can only circulate it, adding to that ecstasy of overflow. Let's say, given so much information, the subject has no choice but to circulate it—to flow—such information as an answer. As the only possible action.[ii]

On the one hand, there is too much for subjects to operate with it. On the other—and because of the above—users only have their empty circulation as a resource, adding to the informative maelstrom of society. The innumerable gadgets that sustain this flow function as walls that enclose us and circumscribe under those logics of this regime, which also become the logics of reasoning and subjectivization of the subjects themselves.

In this sense, they are *wall-mirrors*—to continue with the analogy of Jean Baudrillard (cf.1990)—which fascinates us not with our image (as was the case with Narcissus' mirror), but with the dynamic reflection of our mental processes, open/exposed before our eyes. How we jump/cut/paste, how we share, link, flow. In the end, subjects end up in that sort of closed circuit in which they are connected with themselves. Closed circuit of the ecstatic fascination of their mental processes flowing and connecting with the maelstrom with which everything circulates on screens.

However, this *wall-mirror* is usually put in the place, instead, of the opening that allows connection—always seen as positive. "Open window" rather than a wall, it would be said. But it overlaps precisely that "window"

à l'exercice débordant et métastatique d'une saturation des sujets. À travers la fenêtre toujours ouverte des ports de flux numériques, trop de contenu, trop d'informations, se faufilent. Le sujet finit par être déconnecté par hyper-connexion. Comme Baudrillard l'indique lui-même : ouvrir et donner tous les moyens d'accéder à tout est le meilleur moyen de censurer quelqu'un (on le mure par l'ouverture). Cette méthode est plus efficace que la suppression de certains accès et choses.

Ainsi, nos *murs portables* « enferment ouvertement » les sujets : soit comme un *mur-miroir* qui les place dans le circuit fermé de la fascination par ses propres processus mentaux de flux et de connexion,[4] ou comme le *mur-fenêtre*, qui implique l'assujettissement hypertélique de l'information et qui correspond à la saturation dans laquelle s'inscrit un sujet inopérant. Sujet qui ne pourrait tout simplement pas traiter autant d'informations qu'en s'insérant aussi dans la dynamique du flux.

Or, le fonctionnement de ces murs numériques et portables repose aussi sur la dynamique entre les sujets, d'une part, et entre les sujets et leur expérience du monde, d'autre part. Ainsi, la *déconnexion due à l'hyper-connexion* engendrée par leurs formes d'emploi et leur logique tendent à isoler l'utilisateur dans la fascination de ses opérations à l'écran. En ce sens, l'image de l'isolement des sujets malgré leur présence est déjà courante aujourd'hui.[5] Comme le souligne l'anthropologue français Marc Augé dans une récente interview, désormais nous transportons le *non-lieu* avec nous, tout le temps. « C'est paradoxal : les réseaux sociaux détruisent les relations sociales » (cf. Geli, 2019). En fin de compte, ces *murs portables* nous enferment dans un *non-lieu*, si une telle chose est possible. Ils nous enferment—avec une ironie tragique—dans *le réseau* (qui se caractérise par l'ouverture qui a conduit à la connexion de ses nœuds) ; ils nous enferment dans *le nuage* (dont la figure évanescente aurait plutôt tendance à le placer du côté de ce qui n'est pas figé).

C'est ce que réalisent nos *murs-écrans* : nous enfermer dans ces *non-lieux* « ouverts », au prix de nous soumettre à leur logique et à l'impossibilité de la déconnexion. Ils nous enferment en nous enrôlant de force dans le *régime informationnel* et ses logiques. Ainsi l'enfermement de la connexion exacerbée et tyrannique nous éloigne des autres sujets, dans un isolement numérique dont on a beaucoup parlé et dont les effets et symptômes quotidiens ne font qu'augmenter. Mais le fonctionnement de ces murs ne s'arrête pas là. Il implique aussi l'isolement de l'expérience elle-même, que les sujets vivent grâce au filtre de leurs écrans.[6] Avec cela, une autre dimension du même mur est construite. Celui qui s'installe entre les sujets et leur expérience dans le monde. *Mur virtuel*, car il traduit *toute l'expérience dans sa version virtuelle et informative*. Expérience « dans le potentiel de » se convertir en information et—plus important—de circuler et de s'insérer dans la dynamique extatisiée /extatique de la circulation et des flux excessifs. Elle n'est pas vécue si l'expérience n'est pas donnée « à travers » l'écran, en quelque sorte.

role that culminates in the overflowing and metastatic exercise of a saturation of the subjects. Through the always open window of digital stream ports, too much content, too much information is sneaked in. The subject ends up disconnected through hyper-connection. As Baudrillard himself points out, it is really the best way to censor someone (to wallow him by openness): to open and provide all the possible ways to access everything. It is even more effective than suppressing access to some things.

So, our portable walls "openly enclose" the subjects. Whether as a *wall-mirror* that places the subject in the closed circuit of fascination for its mental processes of flow and connection[iii]; or as the *wall-window*, which implies the hypertelic information overflow to which corresponds the saturation in which an inoperative subject is added. A subject that simply can't deal with so much information if it is not inserted into the dynamics of flow.

However, the operation of these digital and portable walls, also has an impact in the dynamics between the subjects and between the subjects and their experience of the world. Thus, the disconnection through hyper-connection generated by its forms of employment and logic tend to isolate the user in the fascination of their operations on the screen. In that sense, the image of the isolation of the subjects is already common today despite being in company.[iv] As the French anthropologist Marc Augé points out in a recent interview, now we carry the non-place all the time (cf. Geli, 2019). Finally, these portable walls enclose us in the non-place, if such a thing exists. They enclose us—with tragic irony—in the network (which was characterized by the opening that led to the connection of its nodules); they enclose us in the cloud (whose evanescent figure would tend to place it on the side of what isn't fixed).

That is what our *wall-screens* achieve: to lock ourselves in these "open" non-places, by reason of submitting to their logics and the impossibility of disconnection. They lock us up by necessarily enrolling in the *informational regime* and its logic. The closure of the exacerbated and tyrannical connection walls us from the other subjects, in a digital isolation of which much has been said and of which the daily effects and symptoms are only increasing. But the operation of these walls does not stop there. It also implies isolation from the experience itself, which subjects experience thanks to the filter of their screens.[v] This builds another dimension of the same wall. One that is installed between the subjects and their experience in the world. *Virtual wall*, while translating all the experience in the virtual and informational version of it. An experience with "the potential" to be converted into information, and, more importantly, to circulate and insert itself into the ecstatic dynamics of circulation and excessive flows. In a way, you don't

Ces *murs omniprésents, murs portables*, parviennent à porter les enfermements à des niveaux insoupçonnés, jamais prévus ni projetés par les régimes de confinement les plus répressifs. Ce sont précisément ces *murs ouverts* qui caractérisent les *sociétés de contrôle* contemporaines que Deleuze avait déjà annoncées et celles qu'il caractérisait précisément par la présence de « machines informatiques et ordinateurs » (1990, 144). Comme le philosophe l'a indiqué, au lieu de l'enfermement, l'ouverture et la modulation s'installent. La *paroi omniprésente* module alors la dynamique, elle favorise les flux jusqu'à leur excroissance, ou les limite. Toutes ces opérations sont également traversées par une autre fonctionnalité : convertir tous les recoins de la vie en matière marchande, *marchandisée*.

Enfin, dans le contexte actuel, outre la dynamique de vitesse et de saturation, la possibilité de transformer toute l'information en circulation en matériau marchand et rentable est également palpable. Dans le régime informationnel actuel, tout doit être transformé en information et toute cette information doit aussi constituer du matériel mercantile. Aujourd'hui plus que jamais, les données constituent un matériau marchand de base, une sorte de *marchandise* autour de laquelle s'articulent les opérations commerciales. C'est donc un sujet soumis à tant de tensions qu'il y a beaucoup de discussions en vogue autour de l'utilisation des données par les entreprises et à qui l'information des utilisateurs est vendue (ou pas). Alors, les habitudes, les données personnelles, les logiques de consommation, les préférences, les routines, etc., font aujourd'hui partie d'un ensemble d'informations *commercialisables*.

Nos objets de connexion, nos *murs omniprésents et portables* nous laissent aussi enfermés à la merci du marché. Nous sommes des sujets soumis à la marchandisation de toutes les données que nous produisons et consommons, que nous diffusons à travers nos médias. À cet égard, on pourrait penser que la déconnexion ou le rejet de l'usage de ces supports (ces *objets-murs numériques*) pourrait constituer une option, une sortie valable (voire possible) du sujet. Mais la vérité est que nous sommes déjà arrivés à l'apparition imminente d'un type d'objet qui rendra une telle option aussi difficile que possible.

La prochaine étape de l'objet numérique massifié est celle qui correspond au paradigme de l'*Internet-des-objets* (IoT pour son acronyme en anglais *Internet of Things*), ce qui signifie finalement que beaucoup de nos objets du quotidien seront en capacité d'être connectés à Internet via leur adresse IP. Cela leur permettra de collecter, de stocker et, surtout, d'assembler et d'exploiter les informations que les utilisateurs produisent constamment en les utilisant. Ainsi, toutes les fissures et recoins anodins de notre expérience physique dans le monde sont aussi « enfermés » par les logiques du régime informationnel, ils sont aussi soumis à la merci d'une éventuelle commercialisation totale de celui-ci.

live if the experience doesn't happen "through" the screen.

These *ubiquitous walls, portable walls*, manage to take confinement to unsuspected levels, never predicted or projected before by the most recalcitrant confinement regimes. It is precisely these open walls that characterize the contemporary control societies that Deleuze had already announced and which he characterized with the presence of "information technology and computers" (cf. 2006). As the philosopher indicated, instead of confinement, opening and modulation are strengthened. The *ubiquitous wall*, then, modulates the dynamics, promotes flows to their excrescence or limits them. All these operations, in addition, are traversed by another functionality: converting every corner of life into marketable merchantable material.

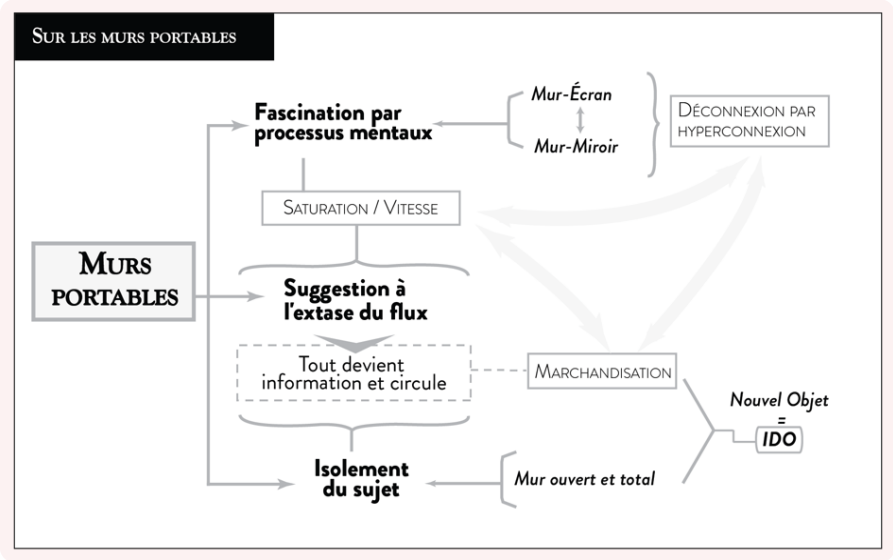
Finally, in the current context, in addition to the dynamics of speed and saturation, the possibility of transforming all circulating information into market and profitable material is also palpable. In the current informational regime, everything must be transformed into information. All that information must also constitute marketable material. Today, more than ever before, data constitutes a basic market material, a kind of commodity around which commercial operations are articulated. Hence why this matter is subject to so many tensions and is so in vogue the discussion about the use of data by companies and to whom the users' data is sold to (or not). Today, habits, personal data, the logic of consumption, preferences, routines, and more, are all part of a set of merchantable information.

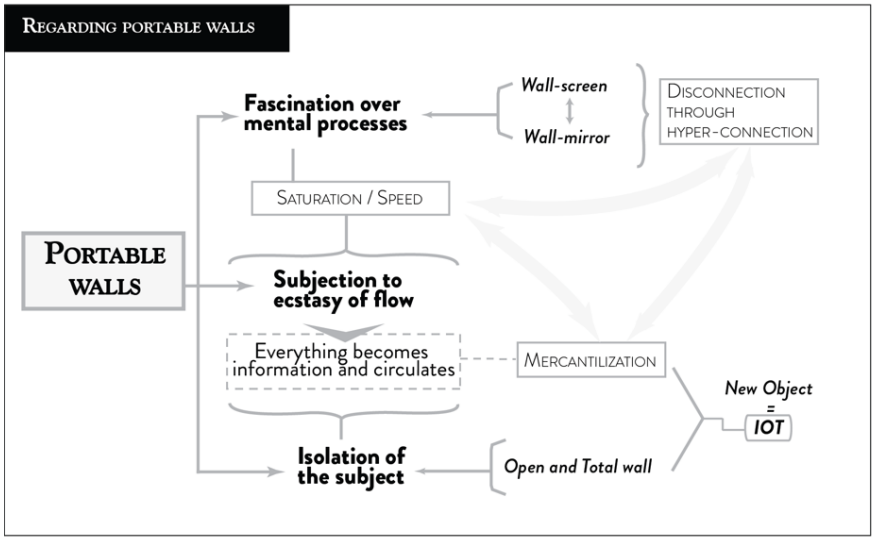
Our objects of connection, our *ubiquitous* and *portable walls* also leave us locked at the mercy of the market. We are subjects that are subject to the commercialization of all the data we produce and consume, which we circulate through our media. In this regard, one might think that disconnection or rejection of the use of these supports (these digital *wall-objects*) could be an option, a valid (or even possible) exit to the issue. But the truth is that we have arrived to the imminent appearance of a type of object that will make such an option considerably difficult.

The next stage of the mass digital object is the one corresponding to the Internet of Things (IoT) paradigm, which ultimately means that a large number of our quotidian objects will be able to connect to the internet through their own IP address. This will allow them to collect, store and above all, collate and operate with the information that users constantly produce through its use. Thus, all the cracks and anodyne corners of our physical experience in the world are also "locked" by the logic of the *informational regime*; they are also subject to the mercy of a possible total commercialization of it.

Les aspects les plus « communicationnels » de nos vies ne deviendront pas seulement des informations (c'est-à-dire tout ce que nous produisons via les réseaux sociaux, les *applications*, les supports conçus pour la dynamique sociale, etc.), mais ce sera l'ensemble de l'expérience (y compris la dimension la plus physique de celle-ci) qui sera soumis à cette même logique. C'est à ce moment-là que la nouvelle étape du mur-objet numérique aura fini par nous enfermer dans des logiques de circulation exacerbée et excessive. Le mur, donc, traversera tous les recoins de notre quotidien, inséré depuis la dimension « la plus micro » de nos existences connectées. Le mur ouvert, *le mur total* des ports et des connexions, sera finalisé lorsque tous nos objets recueilleront les activités les plus diverses et les transformeront en informations circulantes et *commercialisables*. Et nous serons enfermés, emmurés, en marge du contrôle numérique.

It will no longer only be the most "communicational" aspects of our lives becoming information (that is, everything we produce through social networks, apps, media made for social dynamics, etc.), but all the experiences (including the more physical dimensions of them) subject to the same logic and dynamics of the informational regime. When this ends up happening, the new stage of the digital wall-object will have ended up enclosing the logic of exacerbated and excessive circulation. The wall, then, crossing every corner of the quotidian, inserted into the "micro" dimension of our connected existences. The open wall, the *total wall* of the ports and connections, will be settled when all our objects collect the most diverse activities and convert them into circulating information that is also marketable. And we will be locked, walled in the margins of digital control.





Murs Transparentés et Murs Factuels

C'est une dualité de murs mutuellement correspondante. Les deux habitent le social et sont profondément corrélés. Commençons par les *murs transparentés*. Ce sont les murs qui sont dans le monde, élevés, tangiblement construits. Construits ou constitués. *Des murs officiels*, disons, devenus « transparents » dans la mesure où nous les affrontons au quotidien et que nous les avons intégrés *au* paysage *commun*. Leur transparence vient justement du fait que l'on s'est habitué à ce qu'ils représentent, ainsi que de leur présence quasi indiscutable dans certains espaces. Ce sont les murs qui divisent (ordonnent, diront certains) les *territoires* du social, en même temps qu'ils se dressent sur le *sol*.

Les *murs transparentés* sont ceux qui habitent les recoins de l'extérieur et le plus proche au quotidien, qui dessinent (et brouillent) l'espace public dans les villes (surtout en Amérique latine) et *entourent mais séparent*[7] les territoires nationaux, sous la programmation frontalière de leurs États dirigeants.

Il est « normal » pour nous de voir des frontières clôturées, délimitées (clôtures, contrôle, enceintes, mur lui-même, grillage, etc.), autant qu'il est « normal » que nous marchions dans la rue en voyant le mur dans chaque coin (mur des maisons, mur extérieur, clôture électrique, portail de quartier, etc.). La *présence* du mur quotidien le plus proche est devenue transparente et avec elle aussi son *essence*. Le sens et la force symbolique du mur, parce que nous nous sommes habitués à sa *présence*, finit par se normaliser et par s'inscrire dans le menu des dynamiques sociales. Ainsi donc, comme pour les premiers (les murs habituels de nos villes), il serait possible de commencer par observer ce qui se passe sur le continent américain. En l'occurrence en Amérique latine où le scénario du phénomène suscite généralement l'étonnement. Il s'agit du choc de la misère avec celui de l'opulence. C'est le face-à-face de réalités très contrastées et très proches (mais jamais « voisines ») dont témoignent nos villes. Au Brésil, à côté d'une favela, un quartier de luxe ; en Argentine, Villa 31, l'un des plus anciens bidonvilles de la ville, avoisine les quartiers les plus en vue (cf. Veras Mota, 2019) ; au Pérou, sur les deux versants d'une même colline, se jouxtent le quartier le plus riche de Lima avec celui où l'eau potable est absente (cf. Pighi, 2015). Au milieu : un mur. Un bâtiment intimidant et froid. Indiscutable. Mur qui se souvient qu'il y a un « nous » et qui semble vouloir oublier qu'il y a aussi un « autre ». En fin de compte, si les personnes ne sont pas vues et qu'elles ne peuvent traverser, alors elles n'existent pas. Ce sont les murs d'une privatisation généralisée de l'espace public. Des murs qui montrent que l'appropriation de la rue passe déjà loin de toute dimension de construction de la citoyenneté. Au contraire, aujourd'hui l'espace public est privatisé par ceux qui en ont les moyens.

Ces *murs privés* font alors de l'espace d'échange—de (re) connaissances entre sujets—un forum fermé, sur la base

Transparented Walls and Factual Walls

There is a mutual duality corresponding to these walls. Both inhabit the social and are deeply correlated. Let us start with *transparented walls*. These are the walls that are in the world, built, tangibly. Built or constituted. *Official walls*, we could say, that have become "transparent" to the point that they have become part of the quotidian landscape of that which is normal (or, simply put, the landscape). This transparency comes from the fact that we have become accustomed to what they represent, as well as their almost unquestionable presence in certain spaces. They are the walls that divide (order, some could say) the territories of the social, while they rise above the ground.

The *transparented walls* are those that inhabit the corners of the external and closest quotidian, those that draw (and blur) out the public spaces in cities (specially in Latin America) and those that enclose (but do not bring closer) the national territories, subject to the pragmatic frontiers of their ruling States.

It is "normal" for us to see fenced, bounded borders (fences, control, barbed wire, walls in the full sense of the word, etc.) as much as it is "normal" for us to walk on the street while looking to at the walls of every corner (house walls, electric fences, neighborhood gates and fences, facades, etc.). The presence of the nearest quotidian wall has transparented and with it, so has its essence. The meaning and the symbolic strength of the wall, because we have become accustomed to it being there, becomes normalized and part of the menu of social dynamics. Thus, in regards to the former (the usual walls in our cities), we should begin with observing what is happening in our continent. Latin America is characterized for being the scene of a phenomenon that usually awakens amazement. It is the curling of misery with overwhelming opulence. The face-to-face (but never "neighboring") of very contrasting realities that our cities witness. In Brazil, next to a favela, a luxury neighborhood; in Argentina, Villa 31, as one of the oldest *villas* in the city, next to the most sought-after neighborhoods (cf. Veras Mota, 2019); in Peru, on the two slopes of the same hill, on one side is the wealthiest neighborhood of the capital, and on the other there is no drinking water (cf. Pighi, 2015). In the middle: a wall. An intimidating and cold edifice. Imputable. A wall that reminds us that there is a "we" and that seems to forget that there is also an "other". In the end, if we cannot see them, and they cannot cross, they practically don't exist. These are the walls of a general privatization of public space. Walls that expose the appropriation of the streets that goes beyond any dimension of the construction of citizenship. On the contrary, today, who has the resources privatizes public spaces.

These *private walls*, then, convert the spaces of exchange—of (re)knowing[vi] between subjects—in a closed jurisdiction, on the basis of a supposed search

d'une soi-disant sécurité et du fantôme constant de l'*autre* comme menace. Si à l'origine les villes étaient murées pour protéger leurs membres de l'inconnu (en insistant sur le sentiment d'*appartenance* partagé entre leurs habitants), maintenant les murs qui habillent nos villes (*murs intra-urbains*) servent à nous protéger—dit-on—précisément des autres habitants de notre même espace, de notre même partie de la ville. « L'enfer, c'est les autres », disait un personnage du théâtre sartrien. Aujourd'hui plus que jamais. L'enfer, c'est la rue et le « voisin » indésirable.

Le mur s'insère alors au cœur de nos espaces les plus proches, dans les rues où jadis se partageaient les jeux, où se configuraient les relations de quartier (et civiques) les plus élémentaires. S'instaurent aujourd'hui des murs qui se fabriquent au quotidien. Des limites de statut au niveau micro, qui montrent clairement que l'espace public n'est plus une telle chose.

Ainsi, on peut dire que ces *murs transparentés* sont en bonne partie des *murs institutionnalisés*, soit par la praxis des sujets, soit par un appareil plus formel, comme une commune, une municipalité ou un certain type d'appareil gouvernemental. Précisément cela : un dispositif dans les termes proposés par Foucault. Un *discours* qui valide la logique du pouvoir institutionnel formel (l'insécurité citoyenne, traduite en chiffres ou en statistiques,[8] par la démographie, la répartition des espaces, le taux de migration, etc.), suivie d'une *pratique institutionnelle* qui traduit un tel discours en logique (politiques d'application d'une certaine organisation ou d'un gouvernement quelconque), pour finalement traduire en *opérations* plus « micro » sur les *subjectivités* des sujets : construire l'appartenance à l'espace clos de l'espace privatisé, au moment où se construit la subjectivité aussi exclue par le mur (étranger, différent, inconnu). Et c'est que, finalement, le mur fonctionne—comme toute limite—comme une porte va-et-vient. Le mur ne détermine pas seulement quelque chose de surélevé, mais il configure à la fois tout le spectre de la séparation : *mur-va-et-vient*.

Dès lors, les *murs transparentés* de ceux qui s'installent expressément dans le monde physique et proches des sujets sont traités. Des murs s'élèvent pour laisser quelque chose clairement indiqué sans frontières tacites, pour exprimer la division, impliquant la place de l'exclu et de celui qui exclut. C'est le mur qui borde certains quartiers, un *mur-porte* qui ferme l'entrée des rues, un *mur-clôture* d'une urbanisation qui limite la libre circulation, un mur qui ronge l'espace public comme espace libre de développement citoyen. Finalement, si le mur exprime quelque chose, c'est que nous habitons le mandat de la suspicion et de la peur. Le mur est le monument à la paranoïa de la société et l'indicateur de son débordement constant latent, le *mur-peur*. C'est le monument à la paranoïa de ceux qui peuvent se permettre le mur pour faire face non seulement à la différence qu'elle rend compte, mais aussi à la possibilité même d'exprimer cette différence.

for security and the constant ghost of *the other as a threat*. If at the beginning cities were walled to protect its citizens from the unknown (emphasizing the shared sense of belonging among its inhabitants), now the walls that dress our cities (*intra-urban walls*) are there to protect us—it is said—precisely from the other inhabitants of our same space, of our same plot of the city. "Hell is other people" said a character from the Sartrean theater. Today, more than ever, seems to be the case. Hell is the street and the undesirable is the "neighbor".

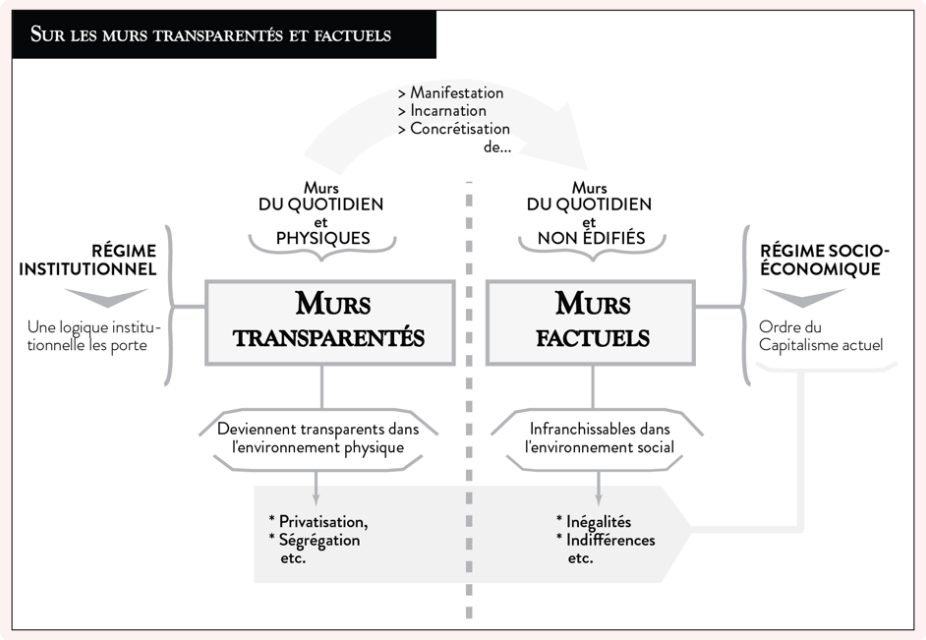
The wall inserts itself, then, in the heart of our closest spaces, in the streets where we once shared games, in which the most basic neighborhood (and citizen) relationships were configured. Today, walls are so introduced that become quotidian. Frontiers of status at the micro level, that make it clear that public space ceased to be such a thing.

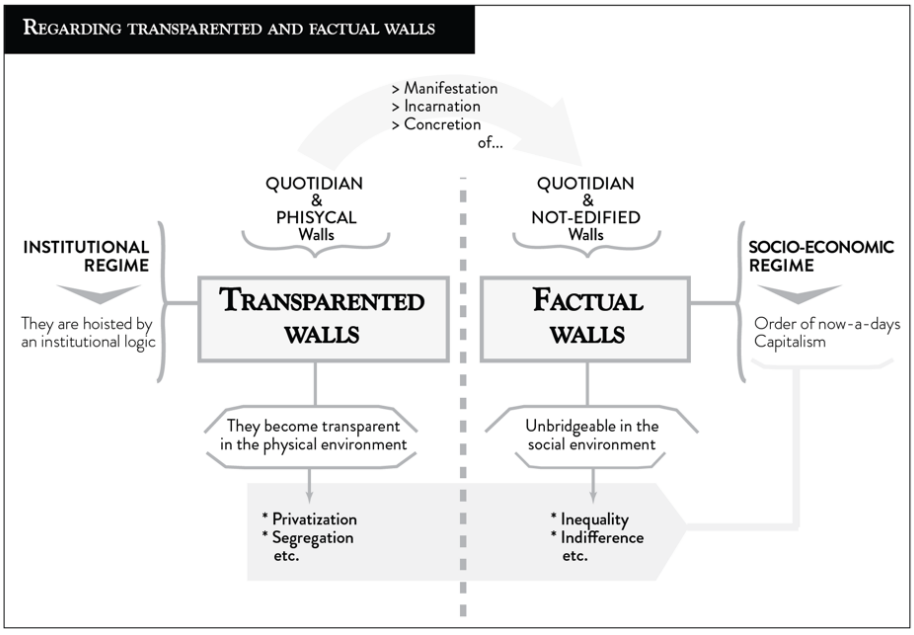
It can be said that these *transparented walls* are on good account *institutionalized walls*, either by the praxis of the subjects or by a more formal apparatus, as commune, a municipality or some type of government device. Precisely that: device in the terms outlined by Foucault. A discourse that validates the logics of a formal institutional power (citizen insecurity, translated into figures or statistics[vii], demography, distribution of spaces, migration rates, etc.), followed by an institutional practice that translates the discourse into logics (application policies determine organization or governance of some kind), to finally translate it into more "micro" operations, on the subjectivities of the subjects: build the belonging to the closed space of privatized areas, while at the same time building the subjectivity of the excluded by the wall (foreigner, different, alien). And, finally, the wall works—like any limit—like a swinging door. The wall not only determines something on the raised side, but it configures both, the entire spectrum of the divisive: wall-sway.

We are talking, then, about the *transparented walls* of those who are expressly installed in the physical world and close to the subjects. Walls that are raised to leave something clearly indicated and without tacit edging, to express their division, implying the place of the one who excludes and the excluded. It is the wall that borders certain neighborhoods, *wall-grating fence* that close the entrance to the streets, *wall-gate* of a residential area that limits free transit, walls that eat away the public space as the space for free development of citizenship. If the walls reveal something, it is that our society inhabits in the mandate of suspicion and fear. The wall is the monument to the paranoia of society and the indicator of its latent constant overflow, *wall-fear*. It is the monument to the paranoia of those who can afford the wall to reproach not only the difference that this marking makes, but the possibility of expressing such a difference.

Et, dans le cadre d'un ordre dans lequel ladite prudence-peur s'est installée comme d'*habitude*, ces murs sont devenus transparents car ils nous habituent à leur présence quotidienne et se sont institutionnalisés, devenant partie intégrante du *régime institutionnel*. Ce sont donc ces murs qui correspondent aussi aux frontières nationales : murs filtrants, clôtures électrifiées, clôtures frontalières ou délires de murs en béton imbattables, comme celui proposé par l'administration Trump aux États-Unis. Les *murs transparentés*, dans leur vie quotidienne, suppriment les zones d'ombre, pour rendre les divisions explicites, pour ne laisser aucune place aux doutes ou aux plaintes.

And, within the framework of an order in which this precaution/fear has been installed as the normal, these walls have become transparented because they accustom us to their daily presence and they have been institutionalized, being part of the *institutional regime*. They are, then, walls that correspond to national borders, too: walls that filter, electrified fences, frontier fences or delusions of concrete, unbeatable, such as the one proposed by the Trump administration in the United States. *Transparented walls*, in their quotidian presence, suppress the grey zones to explicitly state the divisions, so as to not leave room for doubts or claims.





Mais intéressons-nous maintenant à ses murs corrélatifs : les *murs factuels*. À la différence des murs précédents, rendus invisibles parce que toujours vus, ces derniers *murs factuels* ont une dérive inverse : ils sont perceptibles précisément parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas être vus. Ce sont des murs qui n'ont rien de nouveau dans le monde social et qui déclenchent à bon escient les innombrables tensions et débordements que suppose le *régime socio-économique* actuel. Ce sont d'autres murs avec lesquels nous vivons au quotidien et qui parfois se manifestent en murs bâtis (qui doivent devenir transparents) ou qui glissent à travers nos *murs-objets portables*.

Les *murs factuels* sont ceux qui appartiennent à l'ordre impitoyable des sociétés du capitalisme actuel, qui sert de base aux grands écarts, aux désaccords et qui construit/moule l'indifférence comme norme de subsistance. Ces murs présentent des divisions encore plus infranchissables que ces murs physiquement construits, qui peuvent traverser des territoires, des espaces, mais qui sont futiles pour rendre compte de leur division même. Nous parlons donc ici des murs de l'inégalité régnante, de la mobilité sociale infructueuse, du mur de la discrimination, du racisme, du mur du développement éternellement promis dont le dessein est de n'être précisément jamais atteint, du mur dans l'espoir d'une vie plus digne.

Les *murs transparentés* de la vie quotidienne ne sont que des étapes de manifestation de ces *murs factuels*, qui les soutiennent, qui les cimentent vraiment. Le mur que le migrant franchit n'est en réalité pas ce mur frontalier « officiel » (même—on le sait bien—la plupart du temps il ne franchit même pas celui-là). Par contre, le mur qui traverse est le *mur-bien-être*, le *mur-espoir* que suppose le départ ; le nouveau départ, la promesse de meilleures conditions de vie. Au final, le migrant part du *mur-sous-développement*, du *mur-pauvreté*, dans lequel il est enfermé, contenu et jeté à son destin de survie. Il y a un mur officieux, mais plus fort, beaucoup plus fort, à ce passage à travers le mur officiel (et maintenant presque transparent) du contrôle des frontières.

En fin de compte, la clôture de la frontière (comme le mur de quartier exclusif) se révèle être « normal » en raison de l'habitude, invisible pour la plupart. Mais le *mur factuel*, ce qui est révélé dans ce fil de fer barbelé, peut difficilement être négligé. Dans l'ordre actuel, dans le régime socio-économique qui entoure tout, ce *mur factuel* est plus lourd, plus fort et plus insurmontable que toute masse de béton, de barbelés ou de granit. Même les champs de mines, qui « protègent » les frontières comme des murs explosifs, ne sont pas aussi incendiaires que l'inégalité ou la différence à l'accès aux conditions minimales d'une vie digne ou à l'éducation nécessaire pour traverser les murs.

Contrairement aux murs du régime susmentionné, ceux-ci ne peuvent être rendus transparents. De plus, il s'agit de

But let us move on to its correlative walls: *Factual walls*. Unlike the previous walls, which have become invisible because of their everlasting presence, these last factual walls have an opposite drift: they are perceptible precisely because they are not seen. They are the walls that are not new in the social world and that on good account trigger the innumerable tensions and overflows that the current *socio-economic regime* supposes. These are other walls with which we live daily and sometimes manifest themselves in built up walls (which have to become transparented) or slide along our portable *wall-objects*.

The *factual walls* are those that belong to the merciless order of societies in the current capitalism, which serve as the basis of all overflows and dis-encounters, and that build/shape indifference as a norm for subsistence. They are the walls that present divisions more insurmountable than physically built walls, which can cross territories and spaces, but do not need them to show its divisiveness. We are talking about the walls of unconcerned unfairness, of unachieved social mobility, discrimination, racism, wall of the always-promised development that is precisely never achieved, wall against the hope for dignified life.

The *transparented walls* of quotidian life are nothing more than stages of manifestation of these *factual walls*, they sustain them, support them. The wall that the migrant crosses is not really that "official" border wall (as we know, in many occasions they don't even cross that one). On the contrary, the wall crossed is the *wall-welfare*, the *wall-hope* that the departure implies: the new beginning, the promise of better living conditions. In the end, the migrants leave from the *wall-underdeveloped*, in which they are locked, contained and casted away to their own luck at survival. There is an unofficial wall, which is harder, much harder, to cross through than the official wall of border control (now almost transparent).

In the end, the frontier wired fence (like the wall of the exclusive neighborhood) is "normal" by consequence of habit, it makes itself invisible to most. But the *factual wall*, which is revealed in that wired fence, can hardly be overlooked. In the current order, in the socio-economic regime that circumscribes everything, that *factual wall* is heavier, stronger and more impassable than any mass of concrete, barbed wire or granite. Neither the minefields that "protect" borders as *explosive walls* are as incendiary as inequality or the difference of access to the minimum conditions for a dignified life or as the access to education necessary to cross those walls.

Unlike the walls of the regime mentioned above, these cannot become transparent. These are walls that manifest themselves regardless of land or conditions. They can be installed along deserts, rivers, seas. The Sonoran desert wall or the Rio Bravo wall, the Arauca river wall, the

murs qui se manifestent quels que soient le terrain ou les conditions. Ils peuvent être installés le long des déserts, des rivières, des mers. Le mur du désert de Sonora ou le mur du Río Bravo, le mur du Río Arauca, le mur de la mer Méditerranée, réclamant leur part de vies chaque année, ne sont que des terres habillées de *murs factuels*. Si le paysage est devenu territoire symbolique, c'est parce qu'un *mur factuel l'a* traversé. Ce sont des terres qui incarnent ce régime de murs. Enfin, il s'agit des murs par lesquels la Modernité invente ses exclus (cf. Bauman 2006 et Wacquant 2007), ce sont les murs qui veulent éloigner les *fantômes* et protéger les *fantasmes* qu'une classe se construit vis-à-vis d'une autre, qui s'expriment dans ces autres *murs-statuts* transparents dans la fermeture d'une rue « exclusive ».

Les *murs factuels*, en revanche, sont ceux contre lesquels les sujets se retrouvent lorsqu'ils tentent de sortir d'une survie. L'ordre néolibéral justifie cette survie. En effet, chacun est sa propre ressource et l'État se convertit en une sorte de régent de la dynamique des sociétés transnationales. Les sujets étant jetés à leur sort au cœur de leurs villes. Ainsi, à la croisée des chemins du désert, l'espoir cherche à franchir ce *mur-égoïsme/ mur-abandon* imposé par les logiques du capitalisme. De même, dans le mur de la mer Méditerranée, on se faufile à la recherche d'un meilleur moyen de continuer à survivre, pour peu qu'on l'appelle humanité.

Ce serait ainsi : le *mur factuel* est celui qui interdit de jouir des mêmes niveaux d'humanité. Les *murs factuels* (qui ne se voient pas, mais se sentent) sont précisément ceux qui opèrent à ce niveau de division. Le délire de Trump avec sa convocation au *mur-monstre* qui habitera le désert ne sera rien d'autre que la manifestation physique du *mur factuel* que Sonora habite depuis longtemps. Trop longtemps. Mongin disait bien que « le grand vide du désert est une peau bigarrée (...) le désert est un pays sans nom, une terre qui ne mène nulle part » (1991, 31-33). Ce mur délirant rendra évident et littéral ce *mur factuel* qui a traversé ce territoire pendant des décennies.

Les *murs factuels* de nos inégalités constituent ce grand *mur mondial* qui se construit brique après brique, jour après jour avec les cartes postales honteuses du garçon syrien noyé sur les rives de la Turquie (cf. Jofré 2018) ou des corps de la fille de 23 mois à côté de son père, noyés tous les deux sur les bords du Rio Grande (cf. Ahmed et Semple 2019), ou les visages déconcertés des migrants vénézuéliens au nord du Pérou lorsque—intempestivement—s'est imposé le *mur-Visa* de ténor diplomatique, ou encore des visages de migrants subsahariens, qui sautent par-dessus la clôture à Gibraltar et qui crient à l'unisson « Victoire » lorsqu'ils parviennent à franchir le fil de fer barbelé (cf. Méndez Urich 2018). Du fil de fer barbelé qui, en fin de compte, est la manifestation bien moins puissante que le *mur factuel* de ce besoin qui étouffe ceux qui risquent de le franchir. Ce sont les *murs-tension*, qui lorsqu'ils deviennent réels peuvent finir par

Mediterranean Sea wall, claiming their share of lives each year. They are nothing but terrains dressed as factual walls. If the landscape became symbolic territory, it is because it was crossed by a factual wall. They are lands that embody this regime of walls. Finally, these are the walls through which Modernity invents its own outcasts (cf. Bauman 2005 and Wacquant 2011). These are the walls that want to leave out the ghosts and protect the fantasies that a social class builds regarding the other, that are revealed in those other transparented *wall-social status*, expressed in the closing of an "exclusive" neighborhood.

The *factual walls*, on the other hand, are the ones which subjects find themselves against when they try to leave the indifferent survival in which the current economic system inscribes us. The neoliberal order, for which everyone is his own resource and in which the State ends up being a sort of regent of the dynamics of transnational corporations and of the subjects thrown to their own luck in the heart of their cities, legitimizes that survival. At the crossing of the desert, hope seeks to cross that *wall-egoism/wall-abandonment* imposed by the logics of today's Capitalism. Similarly, on the Mediterranean Sea wall, one sails in search of some better way to survive, the minimum of that which is called humanity.

The *factual wall* is the one that forbids the enjoyment of the same levels of humanity. The *factual walls* (the ones we can't see but do feel) are precisely those that operate at that level of social split. Trump's delirium with his summons to the *wall-monster* that will inhabit in the desert will be nothing more than the physical manifestation of the factual wall that already inhabits in the Sonoran and the Chihuahuan desert from long ago. We could remember Mongin when says that "the great void of the desert is a motley skin (...) the desert is a country without a name, a land that leads to nowhere" (1993, 27-28). That delusional wall will make evident and literal that factual wall that underlies that territory for decades.

The *factual walls* of our inequalities constitute that great *global wall* that is bridged day by day with the shameful postcards of the Syrian boy who drowned in the coasts of Turkey (cf. Jofré 2018) or of the bodies of the 23 month old girl and her father, drowned on the banks of Rio Grande (cf. Ahmed and Semple 2019), or from the shaken faces of Venezuelan migrants in the north of Peru, when—unexpectedly—they were imposed the *wall-visa* of diplomatic tenor, or, maybe the faces of sub-Saharan migrants, who jump the fence in Gibraltar and who shout in unison "Victory!" when they manage to cross the wired fence (cf. Méndez Urich 2018). Wired fence that, in the end, is the lesser powerful manifestation of the *factual wall* of the need that drowns those who risk of crossing it. These are the *wall-tensions*, which, when made real can end up

être transparents pour le quotidien mais qui, en tant que tension (en tant que *puissance*), nous crache au visage avec plus de force. Enfin, le mur édifié est le pouvoir, tandis que le mur factuel est la puissance.

Le reflet *micro* et quotidien de ce murage social, en définitive, se ressent aussi dans la dynamique de nos villes, où le mur de notre propre survie nous laisse nier la perception de la survie (et de la douleur) de l'autre. Mur, pour ne pas remarquer le déferlement incessant d'angoisse, de besoin et de prière de tous ceux qui sont démunis et précaires dans la même boue que la nôtre, mais avec beaucoup moins de chance que la nôtre. Le corrélat *des murs factuels* globaux est celui du *mur-égoïsme, mur-déni* que nous nous construisons—il faut de dire—pour rendre notre propre vie supportable au quotidien, que sans ces murs auto-imposés, l'angoisse serait insoutenable.

Il est ironique que l'arithmétique de cet ordre économique et idéologique se soit concrétisée précisément à cause de la chute de cette autre grande muraille, dont le démantèlement signifiait l'hégémonie incontestée du système économique actuel. Avec l'événement de la chute à Berlin de ce mur ignominieux qui a maintenu la ville divisée pendant une grande partie du 20e siècle, la tension historico-idéologique qui avait soutenu la dialectique du 20e siècle, selon les termes de Baudrillard, a également pris fin. Mais avec la chute du mur de Berlin, rien n'était plus éloigné d'une conclusion de l'histoire ou du projet moderne, conforme à l'optimisme naïf de certains (cf. Fukuyama et comparses qui répètent que nous nous retrouvons dans le meilleur monde vu à ce jour). On n'assiste pas non plus au projet d'une Modernité en attente de matérialisation ou de tension qui pointe vers une réalisation (dans la logique d'Habermas). Nous sommes, en revanche, après la chute du mur de Berlin, dans les méandres d'un monde où l'ordre économique néolibéral et son appareil idéologico-culturel de teneur informationnelle et technologique sont chargées d'ériger d'autres régimes de mur. Avant la chute, en 1990, de ce mur bâti, le système ne répondait pas par la dissolution générale des murs, mais par l'instauration d'une autre variété de murs, parfois plus impitoyables, qui opèrent à d'autres niveaux sur les sujets.

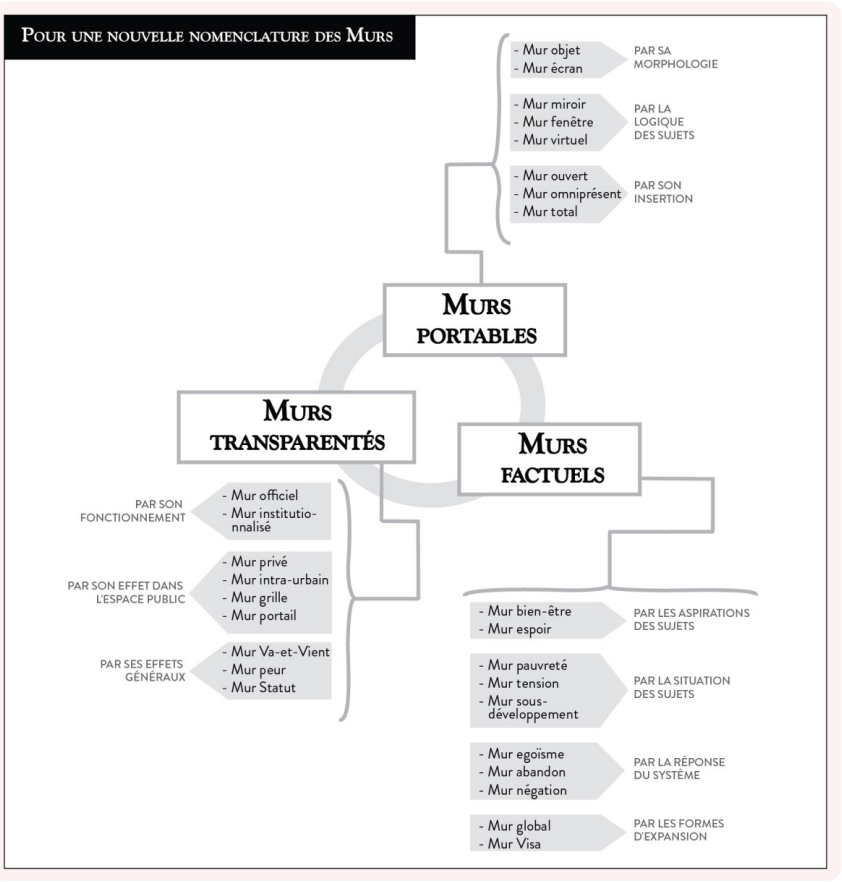
La tâche aujourd'hui, comme alors (et comme toujours), est de démanteler le mur (les murs). Démanteler non pas avec un ensemble de programmes (qui, au final, fonctionne aussi comme un mur, un « mur alternatif »), mais en recherchant les fissures dans les murs existants. La tâche est de tracer des fissures dans tous les régimes muraux, non pas en tant que « pouvoir alternatif » mais en tant que *puissance*. Creuser des murs, fissurer des murs, percer des murs. Rendre compte / annoncer les constructions des murs et les logiques de « murage ». Il y a déjà un travail incommensurable, à la lumière de ce qui se joue.

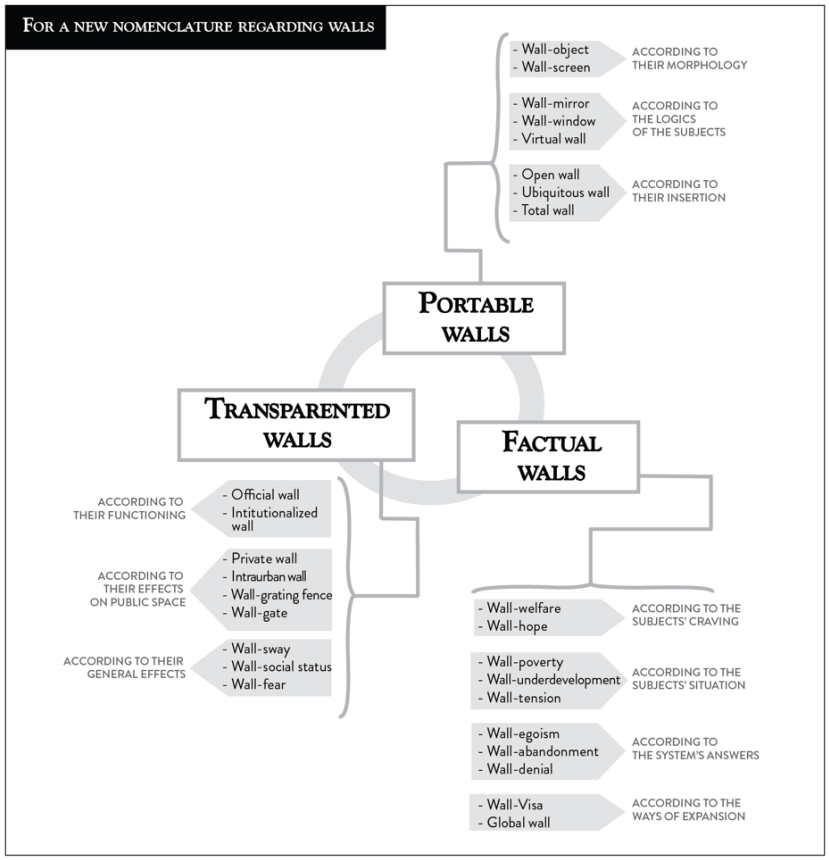
transparented to the quotidian, but which, as tensions (as potency), spit on our faces with greater force. Finally, a built wall is power, while the factual wall is potency.

The micro and quotidian reflection of this social walls, ultimately, is also felt in the dynamics of our cities, where the wall of our survival leaves us denied of the perception of survival (and pain) of the other. Wall, to not notice the endless spillage of anguish, of neediness, to not notice the plea of all who are dispossessed and precarious in the same mud as we are, but with much less luck than us. The correlative of the global *factual wall* is that of the *wall-egoism, wall-denial* that we build for ourselves—it is worth saying—to make our own life bearable, because without these self-imposed walls, our anguish would be unsustainable.

Ironically, it turns out that the arithmetic of this economic and ideological order has been concretized precisely because of the fall of that other great wall, whose dismantling entailed the uncontrolled hegemony of the current economic system. With the event of the fall in Berlin of that ignominious wall that kept the city divided throughout much of the twentieth century, the historical-ideological tension that had sustained the dialectic of the twentieth century, in terms of Baudrillard, was also over. But the truth is that with the fall of the Berlin wall, nothing was further than a conclusion of history or the modern project, in the same line of the naive optimism of some (Fukuyama and his progeny, who insist that we are in the best version of the world to have ever existed). Nor do we attend the project of a Modernity pending to be realized or of tension that point to a concretion (in the logic of Habermas). We are, however, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, on the rough tracks of a world where the neoliberal economic order and its ideological-cultural apparatus of informational and technological tenor were responsible for erecting other wall regimes. After the fall of that wall, back in 1990, the system did not respond with the general dissolution of walls, but with the institution of another variety of walls, sometimes more merciless, that operate at other levels on the subjects.

Today, our task, as it was then (and always is) is to dismantle the wall (the walls). Dismantle not with a devised program (which ultimately also functions as a wall, "alternative wall"), but looking for cracks in all existing walls. The task is to trace the cracks in all wall regimes, not as an "alternative power", but as *potency*. To hollow walls, to crack walls, drill walls. Denounce/announce the building of walls and logics of "becoming-wall". In light of present events, this task is already immeasurable.


POUR UNE NOUVELLE NOMENCLATURE DES MURS
- Mur objet
- Mur écran
PAR SA MORPHOLOGIE
- Mur miroir
- Mur fenêtre
- Mur virtuel
PAR LA LOGIQUE DES SUJETS
- Mur ouvert
- Mur omniprésent
- Mur total
PAR SON INSERTION
MURS PORTABLES
MURS TRANSPARENTÉS
MURS FACTUELS
PAR SON FONCTIONNEMENT
- Mur officiel
- Mur institutionnalisé
PAR SON EFFET DANS L'ESPACE PUBLIC
- Mur privé
- Mur intra-urbain
- Mur grille
- Mur portail
PAR SES EFFETS GÉNÉRAUX
- Mur Va-et-Vient
- Mur peur
- Mur Statut
- Mur bien-être
- Mur espoir
PAR LES ASPIRATIONS DES SUJETS
- Mur pauvreté
- Mur tension
- Mur sous-développement
PAR LA SITUATION DES SUJETS
- Mur egoïsme
- Mur abandon
- Mur négation
PAR LA RÉPONSE DU SYSTÈME
- Mur global
- Mur Visa
PAR LES FORMES D'EXPANSION


FOR A NEW NOMENCLATURE REGARDING WALLS
- Wall-object
- Wall-screen
ACCORDING TO THEIR MORPHOLOGY
- Wall-mirror
- Wall-window
- Virtual wall
ACCORDING TO THE LOGICS OF THE SUBJECTS
- Open wall
- Ubiquitous wall
- Total wall
ACCORDING TO THEIR INSERTION
PORTABLE WALLS
TRANSPARENTED WALLS
FACTUAL WALLS
ACCORDING TO THEIR FUNCTIONING
- Official wall
- Intitutionalized wall
ACCORDING TO THEIR EFFECTS ON PUBLIC SPACE
- Private wall
- Intraurban wall
- Wall-grating fence
- Wall-gate
ACCORDING TO THEIR GENERAL EFFECTS
- Wall-sway
- Wall-social status
- Wall-fear
- Wall-welfare
- Wall-hope
ACCORDING TO THE SUBJECTS' CRAVING
- Wall-poverty
- Wall-underdevelopment
- Wall-tension
ACCORDING TO THE SUBJECTS' SITUATION
- Wall-egoism
- Wall-abandonment
- Wall-denial
ACCORDING TO THE SYSTEM'S ANSWERS
- Wall-Visa
- Global wall
ACCORDING TO THE WAYS OF EXPANSION

Notes

1 Ce texte, inédit en français, a été écrit à la fin de 2019, dans un monde pré-pandémie et a été présenté à la *2ème Rencontre Internationale d'Objets et de Murs*, qui s'est tenue à Mexico, Bogotá et Berlin le 9 novembre de cette année-là. Publié en espagnol et en anglais (traduction anglaise par Alejandro Engelhardt) en 2020 dans les livres : *Objects Before and After the Wall* (Berlin : TIER) et *Objetos antes y después del muro. Investigaciones artísticas acerca de muros contemporáneos* (Mexico DF : Festina). L'auteur est très reconnaissant envers Guy Lagarrigue et Elisa Ganivet pour la relecture de la version française du texte.

2 Le concept de « *murs transparentés* » est proposé pour respecter le sens du concept espagnol « *transparentado* », qui renvoie au fait qu'un objet est devenu transparent sans l'être auparavant. C'est une notion différant de la transparence comme attribut, qui n'aurait pas forcément connu de transformation. « *Transparentado* » serait donc une mise en transparence.

3 Pour une étude plus large de ce qu'implique ce régime informationnel, voir : Pacheco Benites (2018).

4 Cela vaut la peine de penser aux heures réelles que les sujets « investissent » à « surfer » à la dérive à travers le réseau (ou le *cloud*), sans plus de spécificité que l'exercice du flux, que celle de s'extasier devant cette capacité illimitée de communication. Cela fait partie de la possibilité de naviguer frénétiquement d'un contenu à l'autre, en glissant (littéralement) à travers les flux privilégiés par le design des interfaces.

5 Même les personnes partageant une table ou un lit sont dans l'enfermement de leurs propres solitudes partagées, chacune à la merci de l'enfermement de ce mur omniprésent de l'écran.

6 Le fait que les gens apprécient un concert en direct, à travers les enregistrements qu'ils en font en temps réel à l'aide de leurs supports, ou que les expériences quotidiennes ou de voyage soient conçues précisément pour être converties en images pensées dans la circulation exacerbée des réseaux donne compte de la même chose.

7 Il n'est pas possible de traduire le sens de cette expression. Dans l'original en espagnol, l'intention est de jouer avec le sens et le son des mots *cercar* (enfermer) et *acercar* (rapprocher) en utilisant la construction *cercan (pero no acercan).*

8 Le savoir statistique sera considéré par Foucault comme le « savoir de l'État » par excellence et sera central pour configurer les logiques de *gouvernementalité* qui articulent et justifient les actions de l'État sur la société (Foucault 2004, 323).

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Notes

i Published in French for the first time here, the text was written at the end of 2019, in a pre-pandemic world and was presented at the 2nd International Encounter of Objects and Walls, held in Mexico City, Bogotá, and Berlin, on November 9 of that year. Published in Spanish and English (English translation by Alejandro Engelhardt) in 2020 in the books: *Objects Before and After the Wall* (Berlin: TIER) and *Objetos antes y después del muro: Investigaciones artísticas acerca de muros contemporáneos* (Mexico DF: Festina). The author is very grateful to Guy Lagarrigue and Elisa Ganivet for proofreading the French version of the text.

ii For a deeper study on what this informational regime implies, cf. Pacheco Benites (2018).

iii It is worth considering the amount of time that the subjects "invest" in "surfing" or drifting through the network (or the cloud), with not more aim than the exercise of flowing, than that of being ecstatic with that unlimited capacity for communication. It speaks of the same ability to frantically navigate from one content to another, sliding (literally) through the flows that privilege even the design of interfaces.

iv Even people sharing a table or a bed, are in the confinement of their own shared solitudes, each oat the mercy of the enclosure of that ubiquitous wall of the screen.

v That people enjoy a live concert, through the recordings they make of it in real time, or that the quotidian or travel experiences are conceived precisely in order to be converted into images intended for exacerbated circulation of networks point to the same observation.

vi TN: It is impossible to translate the sense of this expression. In the original, the intention is to play with the sense of the words reconocer (to recognize) and conocer (to know) using the construction (re)conocer.

vii Statistical knowledge will be considered by Foucault as the "knowledge of the State" par excellence, and will be essential to configure the logic of government that articulates and justifies the actions of the State in society (Foucault 2006, 320).

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El muro como objeto desde perspectivas Latinoamericanas

The Wall as an Object from Latin-American Perspectives

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En este texto, la coordinadora del proyecto internacional Objetos antes y después del muro presenta prácticas artísticas que *abordan de manera crítica el fenómeno de los muros fronterizos contemporáneos y los desplazamientos migratorios desde la caída del Muro de Berlín el 9 de noviembre de 1989, incluyendo perspectivas político-estéticas y el despliegue de nuevas identidades globales.*[i]

In this short text, the coordinator of the international project Objects Before and After the Wall introduces the reader to artistic practices that critically address contemporary border walls and migratory displacements since the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, including political-aesthetic perspectives and the deployment of new global identities.[1]

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Clara Bolívar (Mexico City, 1986) is a researcher and curator of contemporary art from a historiographic and cultural mediation perspective. She has collaborated in research and curatorial teams in Mexican public art museums. In 2020, she coordinated the publication *Objects Before and After the Wall: Artistic Research about Contemporary Walls*, by Festina Publicaciones and Tlaxcala3. In 2021 she curated the virtual exhibition "Follow the Dust" at Art at a Time Like This. In 2022, she participated in the "Encuentro Internacional Arte y Desindustrialización" in the Bío-Bío Region in Chile. Since 2019 she has been part of the GCAS Latin America collective. Her practice follows collaborative strategies in art, political histories of objects, contemporary walls, and materials in motion.

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Mi nombre es Clara Bolívar. Soy investigadora de arte y cultura. Nací en la Ciudad de México en 1986, un año después del gran terremoto que azotó México en 1985, tres años antes de la caída del Muro de Berlín en 1989, y ocho años antes de la firma del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (TLCAN) y del levantamiento del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional en Chiapas, México en 1994. Mi primer idioma es el español, así que, mientras escribo estas palabras para ustedes, pienso en el lenguaje como el primer muro entre nosotros.

Estoy aquí para contarles una historia de muros, una historia sobre objetos antes y después del muro. Durante el verano de 2018, llevamos a cabo en el espacio autogestivo de artistas Biquini Wax EPS un círculo de estudios titulado *Historias políticas de objetos*, el cual tuvo como objetivo establecer un diálogo "sobre objetos" y "con los objetos." En este ejercicio, nos acercamos a los "objetos" como cosas, pero también como "conceptos" y "problemas." Buscamos sus historias, sus transiciones y sus momentos. Realizamos también una presentación pública de esta investigación el 1 de septiembre de 2018 en el *1er Encuentro Internacional de objetos sin personas*.

Como se mencionó, el encuentro ocurrió en Biquini Wax en la colonia Buenos Aires de la Ciudad de México y se transmitió en espacios agenciados por artistas y gestores culturales en otras ciudades de México, tales como Deslave, en Tijuana; PAOS y Casa Vidrio, en Guadalajara, y No-Automático, en Monterrey. En otros países de América Latina, lo vieron también en el primer *Salón de Arte Chico de Buenos Aires*, Argentina; en Santiago de Chile en la Escuela C.A.P.A. (Crítica, Arte, Pensamiento y Acción); en Bogotá en Maleza Proyectos; en MANIFIESTO-ESPACIO en la Ciudad de Guatemala; y en Khora en Quito. En el viejo continente, se proyectó en el Instituto de Investigaciones Endóticas de Berlín.

Ese primer encuentro constituyó el cierre del círculo de estudios en el que participamos ese verano y, al mismo tiempo, fue el comienzo de una investigación compartida para seguir a los objetos en un compromiso a largo plazo. Para continuar la investigación, en el otoño de 2018, Alí Cotero y yo fundamos en el garaje de la casa ubicada en el número 3 de la calle Tlaxcala en la Colonia Roma Sur en la Ciudad de México, la Oficina de Acompañamientos Artísticos. Pronto, Lorenzo Sandoval y Benjamin Bush, del Instituto de Investigaciones Endóticas, nos propusieron continuar la colaboración a larga distancia sobre objetos—la cual comenzamos en el *1er Encuentro Internacional de Objetos sin personas* con una investigación que siguiera, en esa ocasión, únicamente un objeto: "The Wall–El Muro".

Estaba por comenzar el 2019, a casi treinta años después de la caída del muro de Berlín, y en el marco de los continuos anuncios de la administración del presidente Donald Trump para reforzar, en sus palabras, un "impenetrable, físico, alto, poderoso, hermoso, muro fronterizo sur" en la frontera entre México y los Estados Unidos. Paradójicamente, al mismo

My name is Clara Bolívar. I'm an art and culture researcher. I was born in Mexico City in 1986, a year after the Big Earthquake which struck Mexico in 1985, three years before the Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, and eight years before the 1994 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the rise of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in Chiapas, Mexico. My first language is Spanish, so, as I write these words for you, I think about language as the first wall we all share.

I'm here to tell you a story of walls, a story about objects before and after the wall. During the summer of 2018, at the art gallery Biquini Wax EPS in Mexico City, we conducted a study circle entitled *Political Stories of Objects*, which aimed to establish a common dialogue "about" and "with" objects. We approached "objects" as things, but also as "concepts" and "problems". We searched for their stories, their transits and moments. We publicly presented this research on September 1st, 2018, at the *1st International Encounter of objects without people*.

From Mexico City, the Encounter at Biquini Wax was streamed in self-managed artistic and cultural spaces in other cities in Mexico: in Deslave, Tijuana, in PAOS and Casa Vidrio, Guadalajara, in No-Automático, Monterrey. In other countries of Latin America, they saw it at the *first Salón de Arte Chico de Buenos Aires*, Argentina, in Santiago de Chile in Escuela C.A.P.A. (Crítica, Arte, Pensamiento y Acción [Critic, Art, Thought and Action]), in Bogotá, Maleza Proyectos, MANIFESTO-ESPACIO, in Guatemala City and in Khora in Quito. In the old continent, it was screened at Institute for Endotic Research in Berlin.

That first Encounter occurred as the closing of the circle of studies in which we participated that summer, and it began a shared research commitment to follow objects in the long term. Continuing the research on objects in the autumn of 2018, Ali Cotero and I founded in the garage of the house located at number 3, Tlaxcala Street, in the Roma Sur neighborhood in Mexico City, the Artistic Accompaniment Office. Soon, Lorenzo Sandoval and Benjamin Bush from the Institute for Endotic Research in Berlin propositioned us to continue the long-distance collaboration on objects—begun at the *1st International Encounter of Objects Without People*—with research following just one object: "The Wall—El Muro".

We were about to begin 2019, thirty years after the fall of the Berlin wall, amid the continuous announcements of President Donald Trump to build, in his words, an "impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful, southern border wall" at the border between Mexico and the United States. Paradoxically, at the same time, various caravans of migrants from Central America were crossing Mexico to reach the border, to try to cross that same wall, after traversing the Chihuahuan Desert or the Sonora–Arizona Desert. Many sought to reach the Rio Bravo–Rio Grande. Families were divided

tiempo, diversas caravanas de migrantes desde Centro América cruzaban México a pie para llegar a la frontera, a tratar de cruzar ese mismo muro, después de atravesar el Desierto de Chihuahua o el de Sonora–Arizona. Muchos buscaban llegar al Río Bravo–Río Grande. Había familias divididas por deportaciones o atrapadas en campos de detención en la frontera. Había niñes separades de sus familias. Había migrantes arriesgando y a veces perdiendo la vida en busca del sueño americano—una promesa de una mejor forma de vida, lejos de sus contextos precarios.

Desde México, el proyecto *Objetos antes y después del muro* recibió el apoyo de la Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo para investigaciones teóricas y curatoriales. Este beneficio hizo posible que de abril a agosto de 2019 realizáramos en Tlaxcala3 el círculo de estudio: *Objetos antes y después del muro*, en el que se presentaron una variedad de puntos de vista sobre muros contemporáneos, desde investigaciones artísticas, históricas y sociológicas.

Después de esa primera etapa, publicamos una invitación abierta en el Centro de Estudios de Cosas Lindas e Inútiles, tanto en inglés como en español, para creadorxs e investigadorxs de arte, a presentar experiencias de muros en el *2º Encuentro Internacional de Objetos y Muros* (Figura 1). Las experiencias se presentarían en la fecha exacta después del 30 aniversario de la caída del muro, el 9 de noviembre, como un posicionamiento crítico desde la perspectiva latinoamericana en la cual los muros no son temas del pasado, sino por el contrario, hay todavía diversos muros contemporáneos que nos rodean de formas silenciosas y violentas.

Las colaboraciones al encuentro fueron concebidas desde la perspectiva del *arte postal*, como una práctica política del arte desde América Latina. Por lo tanto, no había un sentido de "obras de arte originales" o "curaduría original," sino formatos que podían enviarse por correo electrónico e imprimirse, colocarse, y proyectarse al mismo tiempo en diferentes lugares. Además, cada sede invitó a artistas quienes, en sus contextos, tenían perspectivas críticas hacia los muros a realizar acciones, presentar trabajos o intervenir espacios el día del Encuentro.

César Espinoza establece que el correo puede funcionar en el sentido de un diálogo de larga distancia y largo plazo con colaboradores que buscan la comprensión y formas de solidaridad con otros contextos. También se hace énfasis en los problemas y circunstancias actuales: se ofrece la posibilidad de pensar más allá de los códigos académicos o del mercado. Recordemos que esta práctica tuvo un momento significativo en los años setenta, cuando América Latina enfrentaba regímenes dictatoriales. Por otro lado, nos encontramos en "centros" de arte—tanto la Ciudad de México como en Berlín—por lo que este modelo de colaboración nos permitió ensayar posibilidades hacia la descentralización artística y hacer consciencia sobre las desigualdades que el mundo del arte tiene y que perpetúa y continúa con sus modelos de trabajo vigentes. Al igual que en el *1er Encuentro Internacional de Objetos*

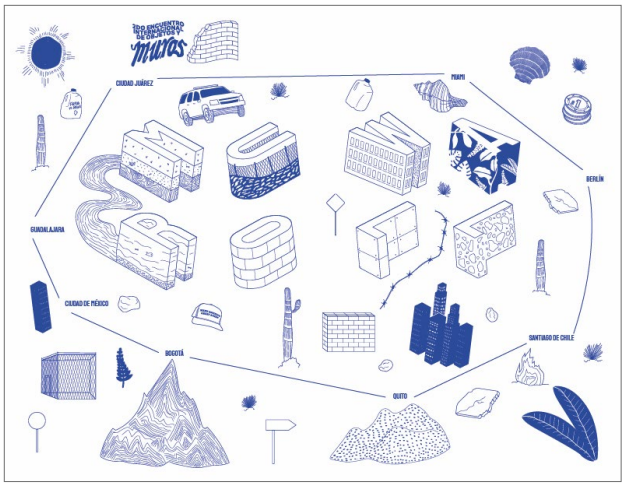
by deportations or trapped in detention camps at the border. Kids were separated from their families. Migrants risked and lost their lives in a search for the American dream as a promise of a better way of living far away from their precarious pasts.

In Mexico, the project "Objects before and after the wall" received support for Theoretical and Curatorial Research by Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo. This support made possible our Tlaxcala3 the study circle from April to August 2019: *Objetos antes y después del muro*, in which a variety of views on contemporary walls were presented from artistic, historical, and sociological research.

After that first stage, we published an open invitation at the Centro de Estudios de Cosas Lindas e Inútiles—both in English and Spanish—for artistic creators and researchers to present experiences of walls on the *2nd International Encounter of Objects and Walls* (Figure 1), on the exact date of the 30th anniversary of the Berlin Wall's fall, November 9th. We invited critical perspectives from Latin America, where walls are not relics from the past, but, to the contrary, surround us in silent and violent ways.

The collaborations to the Encounter were conceived from the perspective of *mail art*, as a political practice of art from Latin America. So, we had little sense of "original artworks" or "original curatorship", but formats that could be sent by email and be printed, placed and screened at the same time in different places. Also, each venue invited artists with critical perspectives on walls to present works or interventions at the Encounter.

Mexican artist Cesar Espinoza established during the cold war the way mail art can work in long-distance and long-term dialogues with collaborators seeking understanding and solidarity with other communities in other places. Also, mail art emphasizes current problems and conditions: it enables thinking beyond political, academic, and market structures. We recall that this



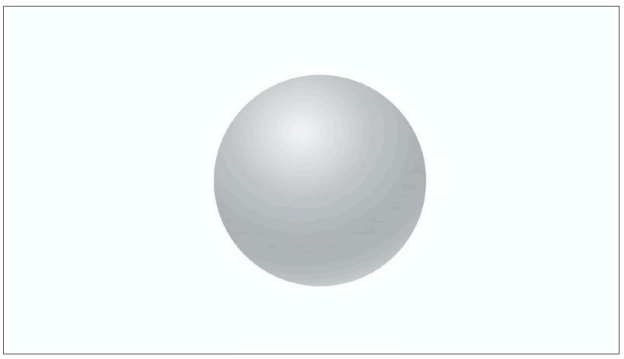
Figura/Figure 1. ***Mapa—Muro***. Donají Marcial. Ciudad de México, 2019. *Image courtesy of Festina Publicaciones*

sin Personas, hicimos nuevamente una invitación abierta a espacios de arte independientes y autogestionados. Así pues, el Encuentro ocurrió el 9 de noviembre en:

- *Casa Vidrio*, Guadalajara
- *Khora*, Quito, HORADAR
- *Maleza Proyectos*, Bogotá
- *Institute for Endotic Research*, Berlin, *Calentamiento global, reguetón y micropolítica emocional*
- *Casa Centrox16*, Ciudad Juárez, *Los muros no son para siempre*
- *Tlaxcala3*, Mexico City
- *Supplement projects*, Miami llevaron a cabo la edición del Encuentro el 24 de noviembre.

De esta manera, el 9 de noviembre, 30 años después de la destrucción del Muro de Berlín, las paredes y muros del Instituto de Investigaciones Endóticas en Berlín estaban cubiertos con muros impresos en papel, muros proyectados y muros en vitrinas, mostrando que, desde perspectivas latinoamericanas, los muros se hacen más presentes cada día en distintas variedades y formatos. Algunas de las colaboraciones presentadas ese día fueron:

- Desde Austin, Estados Unidos. Francisco González Castro, *Vagar por el muro / Capas de Desaparición: 1002 de 7000*
- Desde Cali, Colombia. Lorena Tabares y Diana Buitrón, *Foráneas: piedra blanda, tierra inmóvil*
- Desde Chicago, Estados Unidos. Jose Benavides, "Red Scare"
- Desde Ciudad Juárez, México. Maire Reyes, Nayeli Hernández, Iris Díaz, Ana Iram, Paloma Galavíz, Olga Guerra, Marcia Santos, Alejandra Aragón. *Los muros no son para siempre*
- Desde Estado de México. Javier Anaya, *Ensayo de un colapso inevitable*
- Desde Lima, Perú. Alberto Pacheco, *Tres regímenes de muros* [ii]
- Desde la Ciudad de México. Krisstina Reyes, *Polvo, atravesando muros* / Beatriz Millión, *Mediterráneo* / Germán Paley, *Instrucciones para armar y desarmar un muro* / Marisol García *Walls, Cartas de amor al muro* / Adriana Salazar y Víctor Navarro, *Concreto* (Figura 2)



Figura/Figure 2. *Concreto* ["Concrete"]. Adriana Salazar and Víctor Navarro. Ciudad de México, 2019. https://vimeo.com/victornavr/concreto. Image courtesy of Festina Publicaciones.

practice was significant in the 1970s, when Latin America was dominated by dictatorial regimes. And, recognizing that we work from art "centers"—both Mexico City and Berlin—this model of collaboration allowed us to extend possibilities for artistic decentralization, and also heightened our awareness of the inequalities of the art world itself with its current work models.

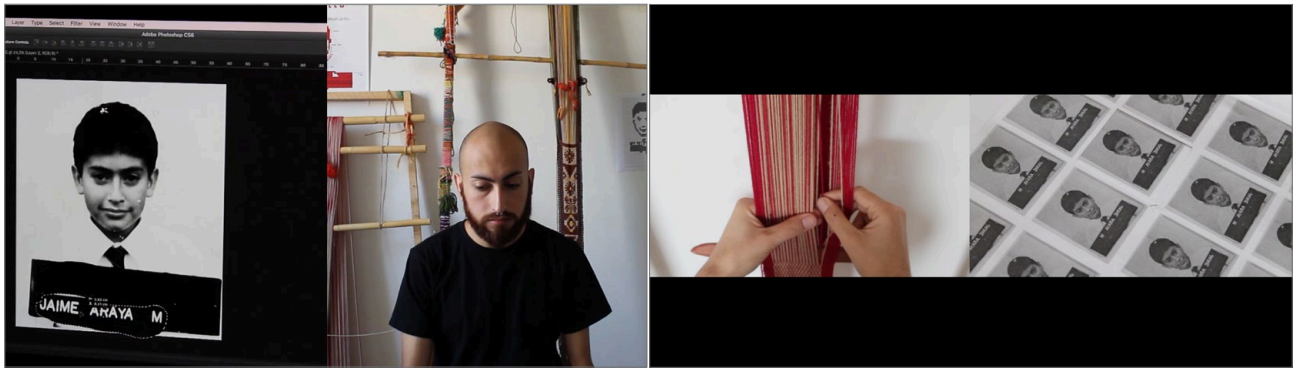
As in the *1st International Encounter of Objects Without People*, we again made an open invitation to independent and self-managed art spaces, so the second Encounter occurred on November 9th in:

- *Casa Vidrio*, Guadalajara, Mexico
- *Khora*, Quito, Ecuador HORADAR
- *Maleza Proyectos*, Bogotá, Colombia
- *The Institute for Endotic Research*, Berlin, Germany
- *Casa Centrox16*, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. *Los muros no son para siempre* [Walls are not forever]
- *Tlaxcala3*, Mexico City, Mexico
- *Supplement projects*, Miami, United States (joining the project on November 24th)

Also on November 9th, 30 years after the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the Institute for Endotic Research in Berlin was covered with paper-printed walls, screened walls, and walls in vitrines from Latin American perspectives, to show that walls persist in many forms today.

A selection of collaborations presented that day were:

- Desde Austin Estados Unidos. Francisco González Castro, *Vagar por el muro* ["Walk through the Wall"] / *Capas de Desaparición: 1002 de 7000* ["Layers of Disappearing: 1002 of 7000"]
- Desde Cali, Colombia. Lorena Tabares y Diana Buitrón, *Foráneas: piedra blanda, tierra inmóvil* ["Foreigners: Soft Stone, Still Land"]
- Desde Chicago, Estados Unidos. Jose Benavides, "Red Scare"
- Desde Ciudad Juárez, México. Maire Reyes, Nayeli Hernández, Iris Díaz, Ana Iram, Paloma Galavíz, Olga Guerra, Marcia Santos, Alejandra Aragón. *Los muros no son para siempre* ["Walls are Not Forever"]
- Desde Estado de México. Javier Anaya, *Ensayo de un colapso inevitable* ["Rehearsal of an Inevitable Collapse"]
- Desde Lima, Perú. Alberto Pacheco, *Tres regímenes de muros* ["Three Regimes of Walls"][2]
- Desde la Ciudad de México. Krisstina Reyes, *Polvo, atravesando muros* [Dust, penetrating walls] / Beatriz Millión, *Mediterráneo* ["Mediterranean"] / Germán Paley, *Instrucciones para armar y desarmar un muro* [Instructions for assembling and disassembling a wall] / Marisol García Walls, *Cartas de amor al muro* [Love letters to the wall] / Adriana Salazar and Víctor Navarro, *Concreto* ["Concrete"] (Figure 2)



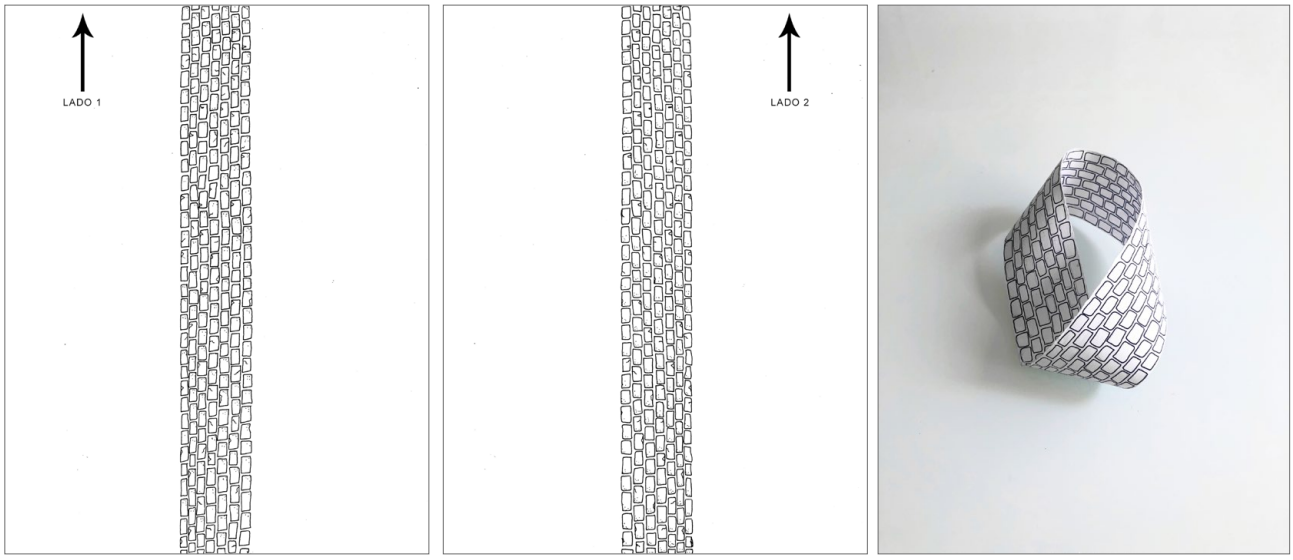
Figura/Figure 3. Stills from video essay *Famew Mvlepan Kaxvlew. Aquí estoy, río herido. Una pregunta por los límites de la indigeneidad* ("Here I Am, Wounded River. A Question about the Limits of Indigeneity"). Comunidad Catrileo + Carrión. Wallmapu, 2020. https://vimeo.com/218552387. Images courtesy of Festina Publicaciones.

- Desde San Antonio, Estados Unidos. Tomas Villalobos Moreno, "Possibility of the Impossible. Proposal for a Labyrinth"
- Desde San Diego, Estados Unidos. Comunidad Catrileo +Carrión, *Famew Mvlepan Kaxvlew: aquí estoy río herido* (Figura 3)
- Desde Sonora—Arizona. Miguel Fernández de Castro, "A Grammar of Gates"
- Desde Tijuana, México. Andrea Carrillo y Juan Antonio del Monte, "Only friendship"

Para la edición del libro en Festina Publicaciones, 2020, patrocinado por el Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Fonca), que recoge las colaboraciones, añadimos un anexo con reflexiones sobre el muro de la pandemia. Desde entonces, hemos seguido desarrollando colaboraciones (Figura 4) que demuestran que, aunque las necesidades globales han cambiado, los muros del

- Desde San Antonio, Estados Unidos. Tomas Villalobos Moreno, "Possibility of the Impossible. Proposal for a Labyrinth"
- Desde San Diego, Estados Unidos. Comunidad Catrileo +Carrión, *Famew Mvlepan Kaxvlew: aquí estoy río herido* ["Here I am, wounded river"] (Figure 3)
- Desde Sonora—Arizona. Miguel Fernández de Castro, "A Grammar of Gates"
- Desde Tijuana, México. Andrea Carrillo and Juan Antonio del Monte, "Only Friendship"

The collaborations are brought together in a 2020 book, published by Festina Publicaciones, with the support of the National Endowment for Culture and Arts, and for which we added an annex with reflections on the wall of the pandemic. Since then, we have further developed collaborative projects (Figure 4) that show that while global needs have changed, the walls of the world



Figura/Figure 4. "After we build it, we didn't know if we stayed inside or outside", Diana Cantarey. Ciudad de México, 2019. Images courtesy of Festina Publicaciones.

mundo siguen extendiéndose. Es por esto por lo que desde el punto de vista de las artes continuamos nuestra búsqueda para resistir frente a la dureza de los muros (Figura 5).

Notas

i Una primera versión de este texto se publicó originalmente en https://ceclirevista.com/2020/06/30/el-muro-como-objeto-desde-perspectivas-latinoamericanas-relatoria-2do-encuentro-internacional-de-objetos-y-muros/ con motivo de la presentación virtual del libro Objects Before and After the wall, http://theinstituteforendoticresearch.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Objects-Before-and-After-the-Wall-2020.pdf en el Instituto de Investigaciones Endóticas en Berlín, Alemania.

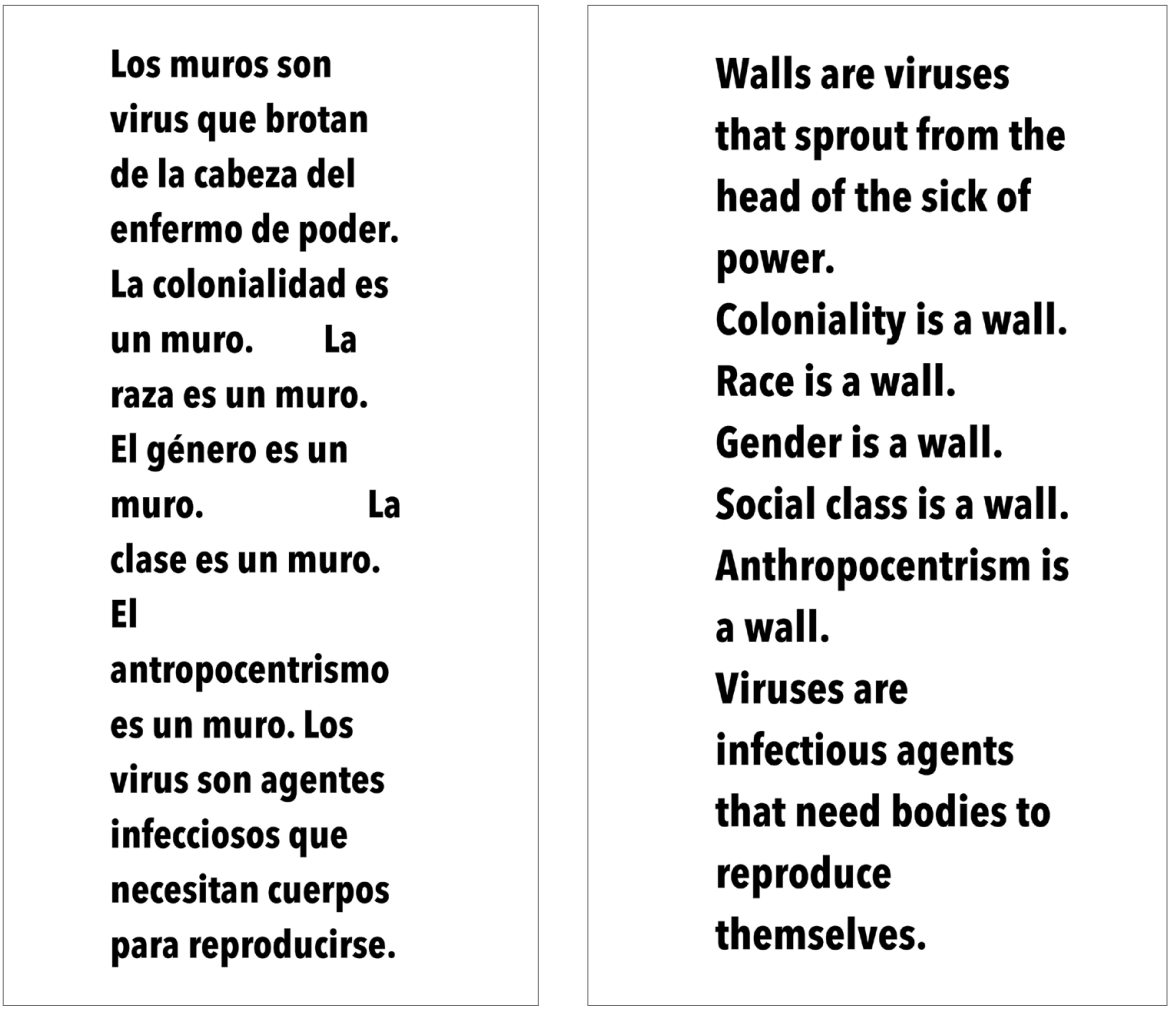
ii Las versiones en inglés y francés de este ensayo se reproducen en este número aquí: https://doi.org/10.18357/bigr32202220777

continue to expand. It is from the point of view of the arts that we continue our quests to resist the severity of hard borders (Figure 5).

Notes

1 A first version of this text was published in https://ceclirevista.com/2020/06/30/el-muro-como-objeto-desde-perspectivas-latinoamericanas-relatoria-2do-encuentro-internacional-de-objetos-y-muros/ on the occasion of the virtual presentation of Objects Before and After the wall, http://theinstituteforendoticresearch.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Objects-Before-and-After-the-Wall-2020.pdf at the Institute for Endotic Research in Berlin, Germany.

2 The English and French versions of this essay are reproduced in this issue here: https://doi.org/10.18357/bigr32202220777



Figura/Figure 5. ***Un virus de 500 años*****, María Sosa. Ciudad de México, 2020.** *Image courtesy of Festina Publicaciones.*

BOOK & FILM REVIEWS

In addition to book reviews of scholarly works in border studies, *BIG_Review* also publishes fiction reviews of both novels and films related to the world of borders—whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual borders. The Book & Film Reviews Section has been edited by the Chief and Managing Editors, as well as Dr. Kathleen Staudt and Dr. Christopher Sands. Like all content we publish, the reviews are available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing.

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FILM REVIEW

Propaganda: 'Wire Mesh are Edge Decoration of States'

Hakan Ünay *

Propaganda

1999

Directed and written by Sinan Çetin

Runtime: 1 hour and 50 minutes

Original language: Turkish

More information at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0216986/

Borders as a research area have been the subject of many academic studies. Borders have also been an important source of inspiration for films. *Propaganda* (1999), one such film, was inspired by the border construction process that took place in the Hislihisar village of Kilis in 1948 on the Turkish–Syrian border in 1948. In fact, the Turkey–Syria border was more permeable in those years. People living on the border, which cut through the town, could cross easily, and social and economic relations continued in their normal course. However, problems such as the sharing of water resources, terrorism, and smuggling, which started between the two states in the 1950s, reached the point where wire mesh was installed on the border and mines were laid. The last move of this process was the kilometers-long border wall that Turkey built to defend against security threats and irregular migration (Aras 2020; Oztig 2019).

The 1999 Turkish film *Propaganda*, directed by Sinan Çetin, deals with the wire-mesh stage of this border construction process in a tragicomic way. The fact that Çetin's hometown is the Bahçesaray district of Van, on the Turkey-Iran border, may be an impetus for making the film. Çetin says that he directed the film because states see borders as a tool of propaganda. Explaining that examples of this were encountered during the Cold War years, Çetin emphasized that although many states later gave up the propaganda of those years, Turkey continued to use its borders as a propaganda tool (Çetin 1999).

Focusing on real events that took place in Turkey in 1948, *Propaganda* is about the process of building wire-mesh fencing on the Turkish–Syrian border during the Cold War. The film tragicomically reflects the experiences of the local Customs Enforcement Director Mehdi, his

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best friend Rahim, and their two families, during the demarcating of the border with wire meshes. With the order from the state administration, measurements are made along the borderline and wire mesh is installed. In addition, a symbolic wooden border gate that could be opened and closed by hand was built. In his statement to the villagers at the opening of the Customs Enforcement Directorate, Mehdi defines the wire mesh as the "edge decoration" of states, emphasizing the beauty and necessity of wire mesh. In the same scene, there are articles on the importance, usefulness, and necessity of borders on posters hung in the village. Unable to foresee that the border will separate families, languages, cultures, and lovers, Mehdi is confident that his duty is to ensure the integrity of the state and protect the sacred borders.

The villagers, who lived without a border for years, oppose the fence, because it divides the village in two. Rahim, Mehdi's best friend and also the village doctor, is among those on the other side of the fence. Moreover, Rahim's wife is the village teacher, and Rahim's daughter is Mehdi's son's lover. Some of the villagers are suddenly surprised when they are asked to present passports in order to cross, which they thought was only necessary for foreigners. The astonishment of the villagers and the limits on daily life is depicted in many scenes in a tragicomic way. For example, the crossing of a teacher, an old man, and a shepherd who use the same road every day are now controlled by soldiers demanding passports. The imprisonment of one of the sheep after crossing the border without permission becomes a tragicomic example of the state's security practices against the now illegal border crossing. Mehdi is determined not to cross the border without a passport, out of respect for state authority, and applies this determination even in situations that are not logical. Even when his wife and children cross to the other side of the border, Mehdi still does not abandon his obedience to the state rules. Moreover, Mehdi's son, who stayed with him, wants to cross the border without permission when he realizes that he cannot be with the girl he loves. Mehdi realizes he is about to lose his family due to his duty as a director. He comes to a breaking point when he injures his son in the arm with a gun as he crossed the border without permission to prevent him from leaving.

While all this is going on, Rahim is sure that there is no longer a life to live on the other side of the border. He decides to emigrate with his family. Changing his mind after shooting his son, Mehdi decides to take off his director's uniform and crosses the border to meet Rahim. Both get into a truck with their family and start moving. At this point, the film reveals its stance against the use of borders by states as a propaganda tool with the final scene. The truck changes its route and moves towards the border and breaks through the wooden gate that was created earlier.

Propaganda is not the only film that focuses on the border, while tragicomically dramatizing the use of the border as a propaganda tool. *Hudutların Kanunu* (*The Law of the Border*), directed by Lutfi O. Akad in 1966, was shot in another border province, Şanlıurfa, and focused on the relationship between the state's military personnel at the border and smugglers. In many ways, *The Law of the Border* is the fulcrum on which much of modern Turkish cinema turns (Ebiri 2017). *Hükümet Kadın* (*Government Woman*) directed by Sermiyan Midyat and produced in 2013, is about the same border as propaganda. It takes place in a village of Mardin, another province on the border, and reflects issues such as smuggling and border crossing in a tragicomic way.

There are two points that distinguish *Propaganda* from other films. First, the construction process of the Turkey–Syria border is quite problematic as state policies ignore the sociology of the region, people's lifestyles, and cultural similarities which the film was able to convey. The second is related to the fact that the wire-mesh border fences, which the film focuses on, are being used as a widespread policy tool by states today, just as they were introduced as "edge decoration of states" 70 years ago. Today, states "decorate" their borders with wire mesh and walls, especially against migration, almost as if they are competing with each other.

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FILM REVIEW

Erasing Territorial Sovereignty: *Bacurau*

Caroline Schmidt Patricio [i]
Edgar Garcia Velozo [ii]

Bacurau

Written and Directed by

Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles

2019

Runtime: 2 hours, 11 minutes

Original languages: Portuguese and English

More information at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2762506/

Border scholars are predominantly aware of the geopolitical use of territory, i.e., using the territory, and especially its borders, as instruments of control. This strategy has historically been, and continues to be, used by leaders and heads of state to expand their domain and influence. In the film *Bacurau* (2019) we see this practice in action.

The Brazilian film, written and directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, raises timely themes about borders. Rebuffing a stereotypical appeal of the interior of northeastern Brazil as a space devoid of contact with technology, the feature begins with an unidentified flying object (UFO) that travels through the sky of the small town of Bacurau. The figure of the UFO is often linked to something extraterrestrial, an invader from another world and can be used as a symbol to reflect that the dangerous unknown may be closer than we imagine. In fact, the entire film exists in

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the shadow of mysterious strangers, predators who act as if they were a superior race.

We learn that this "superior race" is an English-speaking group of Caucasians who are hunting local Brazilians with their advanced, alien-like technologies. This terrorist group uses two main strategies in order to attack their victims. They erase Bacurau from the virtual map and block the satellite signal of Bacurau to other cities. As we can see, there is an ongoing representation of the group who has the technological means consequently also possesses the power of command.

When talking about territorial conflicts outside of fiction, such as the present situation in the Palestinian territory, it is common to see the movement of hegemonic forces within the current capitalist logic in which we live in; oppressing peoples and suppressing their territorial connections. In August 2020, the Google Maps platform, one of the most used worldwide for navigation and map searches, appeared to remove from its database the demarcations of the Palestinian territory.

With their film, Kleber and Juliano raise questions such as "what does it mean for a territory to be excluded from a map?" Most people do not have to worry about this, but erasure from maps is denying existence in space; this is the denial of sovereignty. The State of Palestine as well as Jammu and Kashmir are practically invisible from the US-dominated platform Google Maps. What is defined within the virtual map, using Palestine for example, is a dashed limit, a porosity, or an indetermination. Why are there states in the Middle East not recognized by a map, by people around the world, and by the great world leaders? Why is the sovereignty of these spaces not recognized?

As in Bacurau, it is certainly not by chance that maps gradually hide spaces that previously had political autonomy. Digital porosities are also physical and allow the power of economically dominant nations to enter regions considered peripheral with the sole objective of exploiting their natural resources and local labor.

In 2020, the CEO of Tesla, Inc., Elon Musk, declared on his personal Twitter account that he (as an American) would stage a coup wherever he wanted ["We will coup whoever we want! Deal with it" (reproduced below)] when asked about the 2019 US-backed coup against Bolivia that ousted President-elect Evo Morales. What is Musk's interest in destabilizing Bolivian democracy? Bolivia has one of the largest unexploited lithium deposits in the world, a vital component of modern technology.

With these comments and intertextualizations we intend to show that even a film about a fictional city in the northeast of Brazil can allude to situations present and pertinent. This speaks directly to border conditions around the world, where intercultural and dynamic spaces formed in border regions are marginalized, through the purely political and hegemonic thought of visualizing territorial limits as symbols of state power.

We should remain attentive to these movements and actions put into practice by international actors in order to realize how borders can be and are used in a hegemonic way and to seek fighting this improper and exploitative use of such rich regions. The film *Bacurau* also represents how the strength of the people, acting collectively, can fight and combat hegemony both on a local and global scale.

The post (https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1286866843307737088) was subsequently deleted but has been archived (e.g.: https://archive.ph/mIIRM).

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BOOK REVIEW

Of Connections and Flows: Homo Afghanicus is Homo Itinerans

Chayanika Saxena *

Homo Itinerans:
Towards a Global Ethnography of Afghanistan
By Alessandro Monsutti
Translated from the French by Patrick Camille
New York NY: Berghahn Books
2021
Hardback, 148 pages
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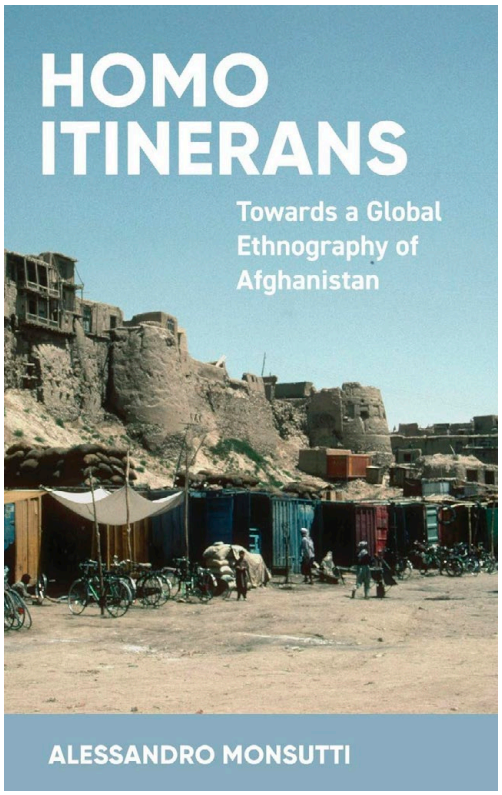
ISBN-13: 978-1789209297
Ebook ISBN: 978-1-78920-930-3
https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/MonsuttiHomo



"To each his own phobias, to each his own dreams" (94). Reflecting poetically on the simultaneous journeys of his own and those of the plethora of Afghan "mobile persons" (65) he had met in different parts of the world, including Afghanistan, the objective of Alessandro Monsutti's book is simple yet powerful. In his own words, it is an attempt to "cast an unconventional gaze" (7) on Afghanistan that positions it as integral to and not outside of globality and transnational networks and flows.

As an "outward-looking space" (2), Afghanistan to Monsutti is placed not just at the intersection of (competing) global forces but is a site that is perfectly positioned to reveal the shortcomings of the so-called emancipating ideologies. Far from being an intractable and incorrigible space of both colonial and contemporary chroniclers (8-18), the networks and flows that pierce through Afghanistan are a potent reminder of its inherently transnational character. Simultaneously, a study of its people's itinerancies, as Monsutti shows, can help inform and reform academic approaches and policies that continue to see this country as a graveyard of empires. In fact, by focusing on flights, flows, and other forms of mobilities practised by Afghans, the author makes sure to position the "incidental facts and routine events" (7) of the people to understand the "long-range

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structural changes" (7) and their absences thereof. Thus, instead of presenting a top-down assessment of Afghanistan, *Homo Itinerans* departs from the conventionally available narratives by looking at the "spatial mobility, political fluidity and socio-economic plasticity" (2) of Afghans. And in so doing, Monsutti seeks to show how the "imposed universalism that inspires re-construction effort of Afghanistan" (113) is not only replete with inequalities but that it might very well be "immoral" (101).

Divided over ten short but informative chapters, *Homo Itinerans* presents insights partly drawn from Monsutti's (auto)ethnographical vignettes of his experience as a researcher, academic and instructor both in and on Afghanistan. It comes as no surprise then that the book is loaded with self-reflexive content and discussions on positionalities, which can be of interest to post-colonial scholars of geography, in general, and border studies, in particular. These aspects, in fact, come across most effectively when Monsutti discusses how his presence in gatherings as a Persian-speaking "engrizi" (more generally a white European, 60) creates differential impacts. From helping him navigate heavily guarded compounds run by westerners to becoming a trophy acquaintance for his Afghan patrons, Monsutti demonstrates an acute awareness of his complicity in enacting, reinforcing and challenging the "power relations that take shape around Afghanistan" (2).

For that matter, Monsutti's reflections on the performance of internationally funded projects and programs like the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Community Development Councils stand in contrast to the international narratives generally peddled about them. Much to the discomfort of the transnational liberal elite, which is particularly peeved at the persistent failure of Afghanistan to transform itself into a viable state (6), Monsutti suggests that the donor-funded projects have themselves contributed to the further fragmentation of Afghanistan (27). As an "archipelago of sovereignties" (28), the lack of coincidence between state, territory and population in Afghanistan's case does not so much betray its shortcomings as a nation-state but the inviability of reproducing the Westphalian template in post-colonial contexts (37). Simultaneously, these so-called failures mirror the experiences of the Global North, where the rise of overlapping sovereignties between state and non-state players is for all to see (6).

Conjecturally then, it is possible to argue that borders, which are ostensibly meant to separate 'us' from the 'rest', cease to be sites embodying differences. Instead, to recall Heidegger, borders manifest themselves like horizons—that "from which something begins its presencing" (in Lems 2018, 13). Here Monsutti could have added an interdisciplinary touch to his work by alluding to concepts of relationality of space and thrownto-getherness advanced by scholars of geography like Doreen Massey (2005). After all, it is at/through/against/with borders that Afghanistan finds itself amid global structures and flows. Hence, it would have only been consistent with Monsutti's larger ethnographic arguments to mobilise the aforementioned ideas to show that borders are not simply (and erroneously) the agents of incarceration. On the contrary, they are that which open Afghanistan in to(wards) the world.

Having proposed that movements hold the key to re-imagining Afghanistan as a transnational space, Monsutti then goes on to suggest that the migration of Afghans to different parts of the world must also be seen as more than a mere reaction to negative push factors like internal conflicts and wars. In fact, he asserts that "Afghans are not powerless victims of events beyond their knowledge; they derive a certain advantage from their geographical dispersion and adopt different forms of mobility" (64). As such, their migration out of Afghanistan ought to be understood variously: it is at once a mitigation strategy (65); a rite of passage for young men (most often) into adulthood (108), and a way to diversify sources of livelihood and alliances (78). In more than one way then, the out-migration from Afghanistan, which was the highest in the world at one point in time, is more than a "strategic response to insecurity" (64).

Seen comprehensively, Afghanistan, to Monsutti, is not a static place on the face of a given political map. But, as he shows, this country has found itself made and unmade by concurrent, overlapping and connecting networks, which are commercial, humanitarian, migratory, and armed in their character (107). Contributing in their unique ways, all these networks and their corresponding flows play a role in determining the rhythms of power relations in and about Afghanistan. Placed within these assemblages, which make up what we know as globalization (111), the study of Afghanistan then must be seen as a venture within the field of global ethnography where issues jump scales, development is transnational, and politics is never entirely left to Afghans alone.

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BOOK REVIEW

Reviewing *Sanctuary Cities: A Suspended State*

Sam Kerr *

Sanctuary Cities: A Suspended State
By Jennifer J. Bagelman
New York NY: Palgrave MacMillan
2016
Hardcover: 166 pages
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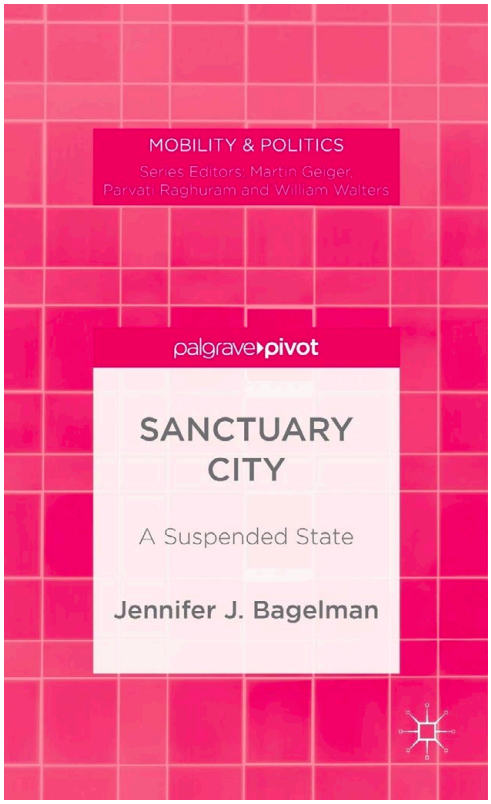
ISBN-13: 978-1137480378
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137480385



In *Sanctuary Cities: A Suspended State*, scholar of borders and lecturer at Newcastle University, Jennifer Bagelman examines asylum and how the problems facing refugees in the city mirror those facing displaced people in other contexts. Glasgow, according to Bagelman, occupies a place of conflicting status. On one hand, it has a reputation of providing pastoral care to newcomers, but on the other it normalizes deferral and deportation. According to Bagelman, sanctuary cities are not just about competing policies between municipalities and others forms of government, but they are also about temporal tension and conflict. Sanctuary Cities therefore reframes a way in which these cities are understood.

Bagelman begins Sanctuary Cities by arguing that the "three 'D's" of asylum, deportation, detainment, and dispersal, are in some way insufficient, and that the "three-pronged restriction regime" (2) is incomplete: according to Bagelman, deferral is the fourth and overlooked component of asylum that needs to be accounted for. After arriving in a sanctuary such as Glasgow, asylum seekers are welcomed by the "soft and seemingly innocuous hand of sanctuary" and the "well-intentioned forms of pastoral support or charity-like work" (6) but this welcome can be contrasted against the uncomfortable reality of waiting. With no clear path to citizenship and limited support, asylum seekers encounter the reality where they must "hurry up and wait" (6). This creates "hostile politics" for people seeking sanctuary, since waiting indefinitely is fundamentally opposed to well-intentioned charity. She notes that even while waiting,

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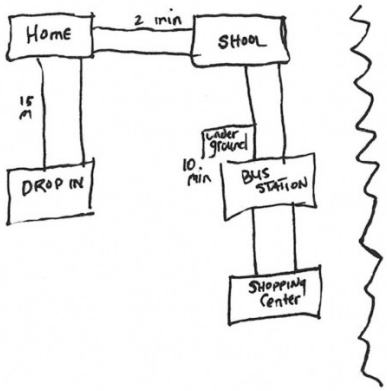
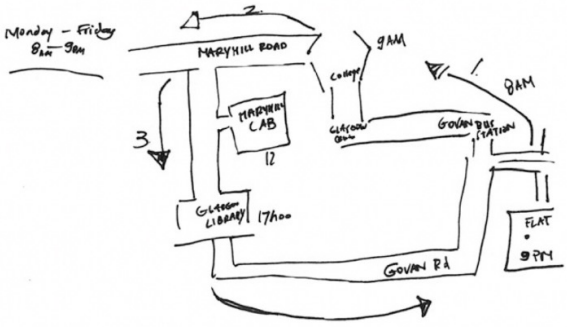
the state encourages asylum seekers to "become good, aspirational citizens" and that this creates a challenging contradiction (8). Her core argument in this chapter is therefore the idea that deferral is an overlooked reality of asylum.

Connected to Bagelman's use of deferral in *Sanctuary Cities* is the idea that sanctuary cities are part of a "venerable practice that boasts roots in ancient times" that cannot be reconciled with the reality of those facing asylum (46). According to Bagelman, these cities give way to "politics of ease" where the lofty goals of sanctuary assuage the realities facing migrants. To illustrate these problems, Bagelman includes four maps in her text that illustrate the spatial context of those seeking sanctuary (two of the maps are reproduced here). The first map demonstrates how one asylum seeker plans their day around five areas, home, a shopping centre, bus station, school, and drop-in services. The asylum seeker writes, "this is Glasgow" and notes that a jagged line on the map represents an area of the city where she does not go (50). Bagelman shows another map of an asylum seeker's route, which is centred around similar key areas, but includes departure times. The maps have asylum seekers planning their days around common areas such as libraries, drop-in centres, parks, and schools, which helps to illustrate the spatial dimension of asylum. Paradoxically, the maps seem to convey containment despite the idea of sanctuary cities as being a place of refuge and hope; asylum seekers are often "place-bound" upon arriving in their new homes.





Bagelman then adds to her argument on the spatial limitations placed on asylum seekers in Sanctuary Cities by discussing the historical tradition of the supplicant. Supplication draws on the idea of *hiketeia*, which originated in classical antiquity and involves those seeking asylum partaking in rituals. For example, a supplicant partakes in the practice of "kneeling at the altar of the image of a god holding a certain symbol identifying him as a supplicant" (80). Here, the supplicant becomes publicly visible as seeking refuge and adopts a lower status position to gain favour. This activity casts the supplicant as having limited power and acting as a "humble victim" (80). In Greek mythology, supplicants were portrayed as "sheep" that were waiting to be herded or a "flock of misery", similarly highlighting their vulnerable position. Bagelman notes that advocates for modern sanctuary mistakenly advocate for their existence based on their history of openness. However, sanctuary cities then are not drawn from a tradition of unconditional openness, but rather are based on the supplication. This discussion then highlights the historical basis of vulnerability in sanctuary.

Following the discussions of deferral, spatial maps, and the history of supplication, Bagelman then develops the idea that sanctuary cities are not fundamentally opposed to the state, but rather are one form of reproducing power. While sanctuary cities are often thought of as being opposed to central government, they reinforce state power by only bestowing token freedoms upon asylum seekers. Sanctuary cities invite those seeking asylum to become citizens, but also ritualize deferring citizenship. On this basis, Bagelman suggest that the salient discussion is not the tension between municipalities and the state, but rather about the temporality involved in how governments control their subjects. Bagelman quotes the scholar of sanctuary cities Saulo Cwerner who argues that those who study them "need to think more seriously about time" and the "time politics of asylum" (98). The state's power should not only be understood in reference to its spatial borders, but also its temporal borders. Sanctuary cities involve an important time component that cannot be overlooked.

Bagelman's *Sanctuary Cities: A Suspended State* examines challenges that are inherent in these cities and argues that deferral is a crucial component of sanctuary policy. To underscore the conditions and plight of migrants, the work includes sketches of the activities of asylum seekers and the limitations placed on their activities. Bagelman notes that the historical basis of sanctuary can be drawn from supplication and a precedent of accepting a lower position in the eyes of the host society. She contends sanctuary cities are not in tension with the state, and that in fact both ritualize deferral. *Sanctuary Cities* therefore challenges assumption about the key issues in these cities and suggests that the potency of deferral cannot be overlooked.

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About the Journal

Focus and Scope

Borders in Globalization Review (*BIG_Review*) provides a forum for academic and creative explorations of borders in the 21st century. Our interest is advancing high-quality and original works in policy, social sciences, the humanities, and fine arts that explore various aspects of borders in an increasingly globalized world. *BIG_Review* publishes scholarship (academic articles, essays, research notes, book reviews, and film reviews) as well as artwork (photography, painting, poetry, short stories, and more). The journal is committed to peer review, public access, policy relevance, and cultural significance.

Our starting point is that borders offer metaphoric-conceptual tools for the study of differentiation and integration. This perspective mandates a wide range of artistic, theoretical, and empirical explorations of borders. The journal is especially interested in advancing the study of the borders of globalization. New research is documenting a shift in the logic of borders from spatial and territorial to functional and aterritorial. This means that borders are increasingly detached from territory, operating as mobile and relational nodes in increasingly complex regulatory frameworks. For example, border screening often happens far from the border, and goods and people are increasingly bordered 'on the go' with microtechnology and biometrics. Simultaneously, global processes challenge the territorial foundations of borders, including subnational and transnational pressures, the virtual flows of global finance and big data, the spread of infectious disease, and the effects of climate change. These developments impact culture and politics, including understandings and contestations of identity, citizenship, law, nationalism, gender, and Indigeneity.

The borders of globalization are being established in a variety of spaces—not just in borderlands. Like a shifting puzzle, their infrastructures and institutions interlock in kaleidoscopic geographies and modalities across world, though not always visibly. *BIG_Review* offers a platform to visibalize, problematize, and discuss how these borders are changing and how they affect all other borders, physically, of the mind, of social groups, and across cyberspace.

The journal also advances original artwork related to borders. Borders capture the popular imagination and inspire creative works. Artwork reflects and influences the cultures that shape borders. Sometimes artwork is subversive of borders. *BIG_Review* connects artists to audiences around the world through wide distribution networks and open-access electronic editions. Our art pages showcase individual works as well as portfolios, including photos, paintings, poems, short stories, fiction reviews, and more. All art is published at no cost to the artists.

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Each academic article and essay considered for publication in *BIG_Review* undergoes at least two double-blind peer reviews from our international Editorial Board (board members are listed at the front of this issue and on our journal home page). In the event of a split recommendation, a third (and sometimes a fourth) review may be obtained. Publication decisions are based on these reviews.

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History

In 2018, Borders in Globalization, a Research Lab of the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, established *Borders in Globalization Review* (*BIGR/BIG_Review*) and the Borders in Globalization Book Series (BIGB/BIG_Books). Both publish online, open access, double-blind peer-reviewed manuscripts about the borders of globalization.

Funding and Support

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In order to continue publishing high-quality and open-access work in the absence of secure, long-term funding, *BIG_Review* aims to become self-sustainable through publication fees for academic submissions and advertising revenue.

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Inside back cover: full page = $500 (Cdn); half page = $250; quarter page = $125

Ad proposals should be submitted as PDFs directly to our Chief Editor. All inquiries welcome. *BIG_Review* reserves the right to reject ad proposals on any grounds.

Publication Frequency

BIG_Review is published twice annually: In spring/summer and fall/winter.

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The Editor in Chief is responsible for the final decision about the submitted papers and has the right to accept/reject any paper.

Editorial Notes and Corrections

BIG_Review is produced on Adobe InDesign.

The map series for Issue 2(1) were designed using National Geographic Mapmaker Interactive, Google Maps, Abobe Photoshop and InDesign.

The original publication of DOI 10.18357/bigr11201919259 from *BIG_Review* 1(1) was subsequently modified: an improperly reproduced map was replaced.

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For Contributors

Academic & Artistic Guidelines

BIG_Review publishes **scholarship** (academic articles, essays, research notes, book reviews and film reviews) as well as **artwork** (photography, painting, poetry, short stories, and more).

Scholarly submissions should present original research relevent to borders in the 21st century. Submissions should engage with the interdisciplinary research literature on borders, including, for example, borderlands, borderscapes, and bordering processes. We are especially interested in studies that go beyond the 'land image' by exploring borders as non-contiguous, aterritorial, globalized, mobile, electronic, biometric, functional, etc. We are equally interested in border studies from Indigenous perspectives, along with questions of sustainability, climate change, global health, colonialism, and subnational and transnational identities. Research questions might include: What are contemporary challenges to borders, internally and externally? How are borders adapting? What challenges do borders pose for communities and for people in transit or seeking asylum? How are cultures shaped by borders, and vice-versa? How are technologies shaping borders? We encourage innovative theoretical work and explorations of borders widely construed, as well as empirical and quantitative research. We welcome scholarly submissions from all disciplines and backgrounds.

BIG_Review also promotes **artistic submissions** pertaining to borders (borders understood broadly: political, social, cultural, metaphoric, personal). Borders capture the popular imagination and inspire creative works. Artwork can reflect and influence the cultures that shape borders. We promote small portfolios and individual works, including original poems, photos, paintings, short stories, creative essays, film and literature reviews, artistic commentaries, and other forms of art. Artists retain copyright of their work and benefit from increased exposure at no cost to them.

For technical submission requirements, see below.

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The editors notify authors as early as possible as to whether their paper has been accepted for publication. Selected manuscripts are assigned a member of the editorial team, who will work with the author to address any outstanding issues concerning style or substantive content prior to publication. Papers that do not abide by the publication's style guide may not be accepted. Once revisions have been completed, copy-editing and production are provided by *BIG_Review*.

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Academic Submission Requirements

Articles are long-form papers (7,000 to 11,000 words) that advance public knowledge about borders in the 21st century, presenting original research, data, analysis, or theory, and engaging with contemporary scholarly literature on borders. Authors should have a background in social sciences, humanities, law, or policy.

Essays are shorter-form papers (1,000 to 4,000 words) that advance public knowledge about borders in the 21st century, including literature reviews, persuasive writing, and opinion pieces, as well as short research papers.

Research notes engage concisely (750 to 1,200 words) with single concepts, terms, or debates pertaining to border studies.

Book reviews (between 800 and 1,100 words) summarize and analyse books (academic and fiction) relevent to contemporary border studies.

Film reviews (between 800 and 1,100 words) summarize and analyse film and television relevent to contemporary border studies.

Submissions must be written in English, though we also consider French and Spanish submissions.

BIG_Review **citation style** is very similar to Chicago "author-date" manual of style. This means all citations are contained inside parentheses within the text, listing author(s) last name, and the year of publication (and pagination when appropriate, especially following quotations). Complete bibliographic details of all references are contained in Works Cited at the end of the manuscript, listed alphabetically by author last name, with year of publication preceding work title. All references to academic journal articles must include **DOI weblinks or stable URLs** at the end of the entry. This increases the exposure of your work.

Quotations should not end with a period or a comma *inside* the quotation marks; periods and commas come after and outside the quotation marks. In the case of article titles in the Works Cited, these should be in quotation marks and follwed by no punctuation marks, neither commas nor periods, as in the following examples.

BIG_Review style **examples**:

> According to some scholars, borders raise normative imperatives as well as territorial considerations: "what borders do", for example, "should always be related to the overriding ethical concern that they serve and not undermine human dignity" (Agnew 2008, 176).
>
> Works Cited
>
> Agnew, John. 2008. "Borders on the Mind: Re-framing Border Thinking" *Ethics & Global Politics* 1(4): 175-191. https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v1i4.1892
>
> Andreas, Peter, and Thomas J. Biersteker (eds.). 2003. *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context*. London and New York: Routledge.
>
> Jones, Reece. 2012. *Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel*. New York and London: Zed Books.
>
> O'Lear, Shannon. 2016. "Geopolitics and Climate Change: The Case of the Missing Embodied Carbon" in Shannon O'Lear and Simon Dalby (eds.) *Reframing Climate Change: Constructing Ecological Geopolitics*. London: Routledge. 100-115.
>
> Shear, Michael, and Maggie Haberman. 2019. "Mexico Agreed to Take Border Actions Months Before Trump Announced Tariff Deal" *New York Times* (June 8). https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/08/us/politics/trump-mexico-deal-tariffs.html

All academic articles and essays must include an **abstract** (60 to 180 words) that summarizes the paper, including the main argument or findings, the disciplinary background or approach, and any research literatures or theories utilized.

Endnotes may be used for substantive observations but not for the purpose of citing sources (though endnotes may include citations). Endnotes must appear separately at the end of the body of the manuscript. We do not publish footnotes. Manuscripts with too many notes may be rejected or asked to revise.

All figures and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end (or markers are used within the text to indicate placement).

Submission files must be Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx).

All academic article and essay submissions must include two documents: a) an anonymized version (for prospective reviewers); and b) a separate copy of the title page alone with the submission title and author information, including highest degree obtained, job title, department, institution, and contact options (i.e., email and social media).

The submission has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another publisher (or an explanation has been provided to the editor).

Submissions are not guaranteed approval. *BIG_Review* reserves the right to reject submissions on any ground.

Make a submission: submit page.

Artistic Submission Requirements

Our electronic platform permits a wide range of media, from print to visual, video, animation, and interactive.

Prose (short stories, creative essays, film and literature reviews, artistic/critical commentaries) should be double-spaced and use a 12-point font. Length may vary. Accompanying photos and artwork are welcome.

Visual art (photography, painting, etc.) and other visual art must be high-resolution, BMP, JPEG, or PNG, including separate captions.

Poetry formats may vary (length, layout, font, font size, etc). Accompanying photos and artwork are welcome.

All submissions must be previously unpublished and not simultaneously before other publishers for consideration, unless other arrangements are made with our editors. Submissions are not guaranteed approval. *BIG_Review* reserves the right to reject submissions on any ground. To make a submission, follow the steps at Submit page.

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