THE THEORY OF THE BORDER

THOMAS NAIL

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Theory of the Border

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Introduction

Moving Borders

We live in a world of borders. Territorial, political, juridical, and economic borders of all kinds quite literally define every aspect of social life in the twenty-first century.[1] Despite the celebration of globalization and the increasing necessity of global mobility, there are more types of borders today than ever before in history. In the last twenty years, but particularly since 9/11, hundreds of new borders have emerged around the world: miles of new razor-wire fences, tons of new concrete security walls, numerous offshore detention centers, biometric passport databases, and security checkpoints of all kinds in schools, airports, and along various roadways across the world.

Contemporary social motion is everywhere divided. It is corralled by territorial fences around our homes, institutions, and countries. It is politically expelled by military force, border walls, and ports of entry. It is juridically confined by identification documents (visas and passports), detention centers (and prisons), and an entire scheduling matrix of bordered time zones. Above all, it has become economically stretched—expanding and contracting according to the rapid fluctuations of market, police, security, and informational borders that can appear at any point whatever in the social fabric. Although there are many borders today, no systematic attempt has yet been made to provide a theory of the border that would be useful across such widely differing domains. This book aims to fill this gap.

This book provides a theoretical framework for understanding the structure and function of borders across multiple domains of social life. Borders are complex composites. Since each border is actually several

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borders, there is already quite a crowd. Not only is the indexical question "What is a border?" challenging enough to answer,[2] but the questions of how, when, where, and who makes the border are just as crucial and complex. Furthermore, historically the border has gone by multiple names: the fence, the wall, the cell, the checkpoint, the frontier, the limit, the march, the boundary, and so on. These are all distinct phenomena in social history, even if they often overlap with one another to some degree.

For all their differences, these types of borders also share something in common. "The border" is the name of this commonality. The border is "a process of social division."[3] What all borders share in common, following this definition, is that they introduce a division or bifurcation of some sort into the world. This definition I am proposing has four important consequences for a theory of the border that is further developed throughout this book. Thus as an introduction I would like to begin by elaborating each of these four consequences and outlining a methodology for their general application to the study of borders, or limology.

THE BORDER IS IN BETWEEN

The first consequence of a border theory defined by the social process of division is that the border is not reducible to the classical definition of the limits of a sovereign state, offered by many early theoreticians.[4] This is the case not only because the techniques of social division precede the development of states historically, but because even as a division between states the border is not contained entirely within states. The border is precisely "between" states. Just as the cut made by a pair of scissors that divides a piece of paper is definitely not part of the paper, so the border, as a division, is not entirely contained by the territory, state, law, or economy that it divides. While the technologies of division themselves may differ throughout history according to who wields them, when, where, and so on, the cut or process of social division itself is what is common to all of its relative manifestations.

This is an important consequence for a theory of the border since it means that the study of borders cannot be approached solely according to any one type of division or social force—between territories, between states, between juridical and economic regimes, and so on.[5] This is the case because what is common to all these types of borders is the status of the "between" that remains missing from each of the regimes of social power. What remains problematic about border theory is that it is not strictly a territorial, political, juridical, or economic phenomenon but equally an

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aterritorial, apolitical, nonlegal, and noneconomic phenomenon at the same time.

For example, take the border between states. The border of a state has two sides. On one side the border touches (and is thus part of) one state, and on the other side the border touches (and is thus part of) the other. But the border is not only its sides that touch the two states; it is also a third thing: the thing in between the two sides that touch the states. This is the fuzzy zone-like phenomenon of inclusive disjunction that many theorists have identified as neither/nor, or both/and.[6] If the border were entirely reducible to the two states, nothing would divide them—which can't be true. For example, if a piece of paper is cut down the middle, there remains something in between the two pieces of paper that is not paper and that divides the two pieces. Similarly, in between the two sides of the cut that touch each of the states is the division itself, which is not a state nor part of a state. Thus states infinitely approach the limit in between them in the sense best described by the mathematical concept of "limit" in calculus. States approach the limit (border) but never reach it or totalize it once and for all because the limit is a process that infinitely approaches the point of bifurcation, like the slope of a tangent. Border theory is the study of this limit.

However, just because the "cut" of the border is not reducible to any given regime of social force or power does not mean that it is in any way a negative process. The "in-betweenness" of the border is not a lack or absence. The border is an absolutely positive and continuous process of multiplication by division—the more it divides social space the more it multiplies it. It is thus important to distinguish between two kinds of division: extensive and intensive. The first kind of division (extensive) introduces an absolute break—producing two quantitatively separate and discontinuous entities. The second kind of division (intensive) adds a new path to the existing one like a fork or bifurcation producing a qualitative change of the whole continuous system. The bifurcation diverges from itself while still being the "same" pathway.

Although borders are typically understood according to the extensive definition, this is only a relative effect of the intensive kind of division. Borders emerge where there is a continuous process that reaches a bifurcation point. After this point, a qualitative divergence occurs and two distinct pathways can be identified. The result of this bifurcation is that the border is experienced as a continuity by some and as a discontinuity by others. For some people, such as affluent Western travelers, a border may function as a relatively seamless continuity between two areas. For others, such as undocumented migrants, the border may appear as a discontinuous division across which they are forbidden to pass and from which they are redirected.

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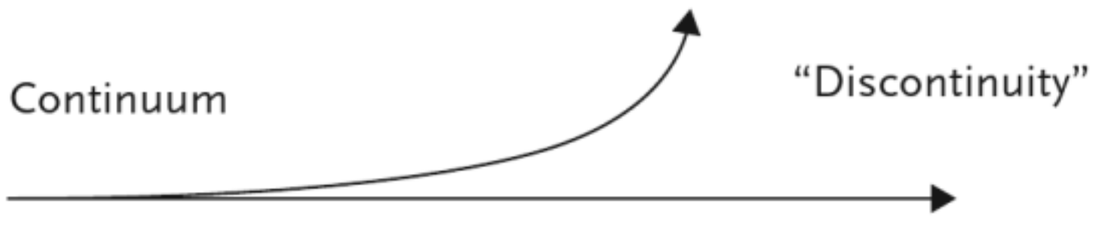

Figure I.1: Bifurcation.

In both cases what remains primary is the continuous process that actively maintains the border and enforces it as a filter that allows one path or road to continue on ahead and another to be redirected elsewhere through detention, deportation, or expulsion (figure I.1). In other words, the border is an active process of bifurcation that does not simply divide once and for all, but continuously redirects flows of people and things across or away from itself. The border or social division in between territories, states, and so on only appears as lack or discontinuity from the binary perspective of the presupposed social bodies that are divided. From this perspective, the border appears conceptually as a secondary or derivative phenomenon with respect to territorial, state, juridical, or economic power.

However, the problem with this extensive definition of the border is that it presupposes precisely what it proposes to explain. If individual societies are defined as delimited territorial, political, juridical, or economic fields of power, and borders are the various divisions these societies create, how did these societies come to be delimited or bordered in the first place? In other words, a border seems to be something created not only by the societies that divide them within and from one another, but also something that is required for the very existence of society itself as "a delimited social field" in the first place. In this sense, the border is both constitutive of and constituted by society.

A society without any kind of border, internal or external, is simply what we could call the earth or world: a purely presocial, undivided surface. Accordingly, society is first and foremost a product of the borders that define it and the material conditions under which it is dividable.[7] Only afterward are borders (re)produced by society. This is another important consequence for the theory of the border as a continuous division. If we want to understand the border, we should start with the border and not with societies or states, which presuppose its existence. The border has become the social condition necessary for the emergence of certain dominant social formations, not the other way around. This is not to say that *all* social life is the product of borders. There have always been social movements and communities that have been able to ward off social division and borders to some degree.[8] Indeed, since the continuity of motion is primary and bifurcation or division is secondary, the primacy of borders is only primary in relation to a certain set of historically dominant modes of social organization: territorial, statist, juridical, and economic. In this sense, the theory of the border

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developed here is not a universal theory of the border, but a *historical* theory of how the border has been made to work. The aim of the theory is to reveal the mutable and arbitrary nature of four dominant border regimes—not to impose them by reproducing them—but to destabilize them by interpreting them according to the very thing they are supposed to control: movement.

Material border technologies are the concrete conditions for the principles and ideas of social life. However, the border is not only in between the inside and outside of two territories, states, and so on, it is also in between the inside and the inside itself: it is a division within society. This is one of the key consequences of the in-betweenness of borders that has been important for recent border studies. As Chris Rumford points out,

> Border studies now routinely addresses a wide range of complex "what, where, and who" questions. What constitutes a border (when the emphasis is on processes of bordering not borders as things)? Where are these borders to be found? Who is doing the bordering? It is still possible to ask these questions and receive a straightforward and predictable answer: "the state." This is no longer a satisfactory answer. Seeing like a border involves the recognition that borders are woven into the fabric of society and are the routine business of all concerned. In this sense, borders are the key to understanding networked connectivity as well as questions of identity, belonging, political conflict, and societal transformation.[9]

Accordingly, recent border theory has become significantly multidisciplinary. As David Newman writes, "For as long as the study of boundaries was synonymous with the lines separating the sovereign territory of states in the international system, the focus of research was geographical. As our understanding of boundaries has taken on new forms and scales of analysis, so too the study of the bordering phenomenon has become multidisciplinary, with sociologists, political scientists, historians, international lawyers and anthropologists taking an active part in the expanding discourse."[10] However, as border theory has included new scales of analysis,[11] it has also, according to Newman, "experienced difficulties in fusing into a single set of recognizable parameters and concepts."[12] This book thus proposes a set of philosophical concepts that will allow us to theorize the border at many different levels of in-betweenness.

THE BORDER IS IN MOTION

The second major consequence of a border theory defined by the social process of division is that the border is not static. In part, this is a consequence of the fact that the border, as a continuous division, is in between and thus

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not reducible to any stable, fixed side. The practical consequences of this are that the border is a zone of contestation. The border is always made and remade according to a host of shifting variables. In this sense, the border should not be analyzed according to motion simply because people and objects move across it, or because it is "permeable." The border is not simply a static membrane or space through which flows of people move. In contrast to the vast literature on the movement of people and things across borders, there is relatively little analysis of the motion of the border itself. Even many so-called theorists of flows, fluidity, and mobility continue to describe the border in primarily extensive and spatial terms: as "borderscapes . . . shaped by global flows of people,"[13] or as "the material form of support for flows,"[14] whose mobility or fluidity is purely "metaphorical."[15]

The movement of the border is not a metaphor; the border is literally and actually in motion in several ways.[16] First, the border moves itself. This is especially apparent in the case of geomorphology: the movement of rivers, the shifting sands and tides along coastlines, the emergence and destruction of ocean islands, volcanic transformations of mountain ranges and valleys, the redistribution of the soil itself through erosion and deposition caused by wind and water, and even the vegetative shifting of tree lines, desertification, and climate changes. The border also moves itself in not so obvious ways, such as the constant state of erosion, decay, and decomposition to which every physical object on earth is subject to. This includes the crumbling of mortar that holds walls together, rains and floods that rot wooden fences, fires that burn down buildings and towers, rust that eats holes through fences and gates, erosion that removes dirt from underneath a building, and so on. Every physical border is subject to the movement of constant self-decomposition.

Second, the border is also moved by others. This is especially apparent in the case of territorial conflicts in which two or more social parties negotiate or struggle over land divisions; political and military conflicts over control of people, land, and resources; juridical repartitions of legal domains or police municipalities; and economic reforms that directly change trade barriers, tariffs, labor restrictions, and production zones. Borders with large zone-like areas may persist as sites of continual negotiation and movement, for example between Israel and Palestine. In a more restricted sense, this is the process that Jacques Ancel describes as *frontières plastiques*: an equilibrium between social forces.[17] But the border is also moved in not so obvious ways, like the continual process of management required to maintain the border. Without regular intervention and reproduction (or even legal or economic deployments), borders decay and are forgotten,

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taken over by others, weakened, and so on. Borders are neither static nor given, but reproduced. As Nick Vaughan-Williams writes, "None of these borders is in any sense given but (re)produced through modes of affirmation and contestation and is, above all, lived. In other words borders are not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives."[18]

The common mental image many people have of borders as static walls is neither conceptually nor practically accurate. If anything, borders are more like motors: the mobile cutting blades of society. Just like any other motor, border technologies must be maintained, reproduced, refueled, defended, started up, paid for, repaired, and so on. Even ethnic, religious, or national borders have their technologies: the control over who is allowed in what café, in what church, in what school, and so forth. Furthermore, this is not a new phenomenon that applies only or largely to contemporary life;[19] borders, as I hope to show in this book, have always been mobile and multiple. Management in some form or another has always been part of their existence.

Therefore the distinction between natural and artificial borders posed by early border theorists[20] cannot be maintained. This is the case not because borders today are radically different than they used to be, but because throughout history "natural" borders as borders were always delimited, disputed, and maintained by "artificial" human societies. A river only functions as a border if there is some social impact of it being such (i.e., a tax, a bridge, a socially disputed or accepted division). Additionally, so-called artificial borders always function by cutting or dividing some "natural" flow of the earth or people (who are themselves "natural" beings).

THE BORDER IS A PROCESS OF CIRCULATION

The third major consequence of a border theory defined by the social process of division is that the border cannot be properly understood in terms of inclusion and exclusion, but only by circulation. In part this follows from the movement of the border. Since the border is always in between and in motion, it is a continually changing process. Borders are never done "including," someone or something. This is the case not only because empirically borders are at the outskirts of society *and* within it, but because borders regularly change their selection process of inclusion such that anyone might be expelled at any moment.

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Furthermore, the process of circulation and recirculation performed by borders is not under the sole control of anyone, like the sovereign. The power of the border to allow in and out is profoundly overdetermined by a host of social forces: the daily management of the border technology (the motor), the social acceptance or refusal of the border (the drivers of the border vehicle), and the subjective whims of those who enforce the borders (to accept bribes, and so on). The techniques of border circulation only have the strength that society gives them.

In practice, borders, both internal and external, have never even succeeded in keeping everyone in or out. Given the constant failure of borders in this regard, the binary and abstract categories of inclusion and exclusion have almost no explanatory power. The failure of borders to include or exclude is not just a contemporary waning sovereignty of postnational states;[21] borders have always leaked. The so-called greatest examples of historical wall power—Hadrian's Wall and the Great Wall of China—were not meant to keep people out absolutely. Rather, their most successful and intended function was the social circulation of labor and customs.[22] Today this remains unchanged with the US-Mexico border wall.[23] In fact, one of the main effects of borders is precisely their capacity to produce hybrid transition zones.[24] Thus "it is the process of bordering," as David Newman writes, "rather than the border line per se, that has universal significance in the ordering of society."[25]

But border circulation is not just the ongoing process of dividing; its technologies of division also have a direct effect on what is divided. What is divided must be recirculated, defended, maintained, and even expanded, but at the same time what is divided must also be expelled and pushed away. Division is not simple blockage—it is redirection. What is circulated does not stop after the division—it comes back again and again. The border is the social technique of reproducing the limit points after which that which returns may return again and under certain conditions. The border does not logically "decide"; it practically redistributes. Since the border is never done once and for all with its divisions, some people who are expelled come back again from inside (undocumented workers) and others from the outside (border crossers). But since the border is not a logical, binary, or sovereign cut, its processes often break down, function partially, multiply, or relocate the division altogether. Instead of dividing into two according to the static logic of sovereign binarism, the border divides by movement and multiplication. The border adds to the first division another one, and another, and so on, moving further along. Instead of "the sovereign who decides on the exception," as Carl Schmitt writes,[26] we should say instead that it is "the border that circulates the division."

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THE BORDER IS NOT REDUCIBLE TO SPACE

The fourth major consequence of a border theory defined by the social process of division is that the border cannot be understood in terms of space alone. This consequence follows from the fact that the border is in between social spaces and states. In between two spaces is not another space—and so on until infinity. If this were the case, as Zeno argues, movement between spaces would be eliminated: there would be nothing but static space. Movement cannot be explained by spatiotemporalization.[27] Similarly, the border cannot be explained by states and presupposed spatial orderings. The border is not the result of a spatial ordering, but precisely the other way around—the spatial ordering of society is what is produced by a series of divisions and circulations of motion made by the border. The border defines society (from the Latin *finis*, boundary, limit), not the other way around.[28] Unfortunately, as Linn Axelsson observes, "there is a tendency to privilege space and spatialities in the geographical analysis of borders."[29] "The spatial turn," as Chris Rumford writes, "may work to subordinate borders to spaces, as if the former were somehow dependent upon a prior spatial ordering."[30] This can be clearly seen in the following geographical definitions of "borders as dividers of space,"[31] "bounding [as] drawing lines around spaces and groups,"[32] or borders as "the limits of state space."[33]

Social space occurs when the mobile flows of humans, animals, plants, and minerals stop and loop back on one another.[34] Society is not individuals ceaselessly moving on their own away from one another, but occurs when their motions reach a certain limit and return back on themselves in villages, cities, states, and so on.[35] In other words, social space is the product of a flow that has turned back on itself in a loop or fold (figure I.2).

The process by which these lines are multiplied and (re)circulated back on one another is the process of bordering that produces social life. Society and space do not preexist the delimitation of mobile flows. This argument requires further explanation and is developed in the next chapter.

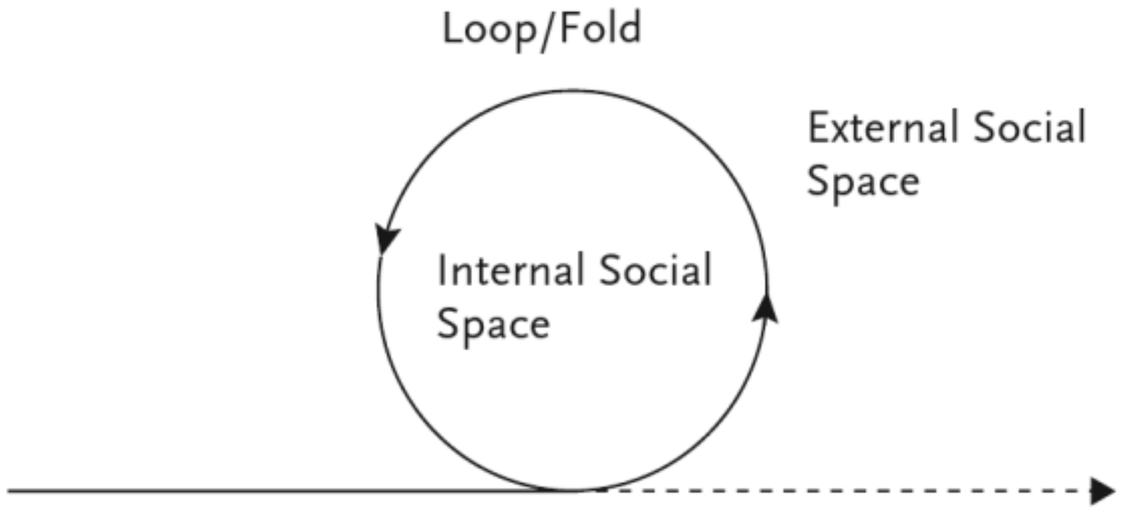

Figure I.2: Loop Space.

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These four consequences for thinking the border as a process of division are crucial. Methodologically, however, the multiplication of levels of border analysis continues to pose a serious challenge for any theory of the border. As Corey Johnson and Reece Jones observe, "the expansive understanding of borders and boundaries in recent scholarship has enriched border studies, but it has also obscured what a border is."[36] If, as Étienne Balibar states, "borders are everywhere," then they are also nowhere.[37] Thus Axelsson notes, "we should be careful not to call everything a border" lest we risk "the potential loss of analytical clarity if the border concept is used too broadly."[38] Therefore a significant methodological problem for a theory of the border is how to create a concept of the border that makes sense of multiple different kinds of borders, not just geographical ones. As David Newman observes, "What is sorely lacking is a solid theoretical base that will allow us to understand the boundary phenomena as [they take] place within different social and spatial dimensions. A theory which will enable us to understand the process of 'bounding' and 'bordering' rather than simply the compartmentalized outcome of the various social and political processes."[39] In other words, what is required according to Newman is a theory of the border as a primary process and not as a derivative social product.

However, not everyone agrees that such a "solid theoretical base" is attainable or desirable. Anssi Paasi states, "A general border theory seems unattainable, and even undesirable, for two reasons. First, individual state borders are historically contingent and characterized by contextual features and power relations. There can hardly be one grand theory that would be valid for all borders. Such a theory is not problematic because the borders are unique but rather because of the complexity of borders and bordering."[40]

Truly, each and every border in history is empirically unique and composed of a complex mixture of different types of power. Perhaps the explosion of new border theories in the last ten years has not given rise to "a catch all theory," as Passi says, precisely because such a theory would have to be void of any of the empirical content specific to each border, and in doing so would render itself inapplicable anywhere. On the other hand, perhaps the recent desire for such a theory of the border has emerged precisely because of a growing frustration that the singular empirical study of specific borders lacks any larger implications, concepts, or framework outside its own parochial study. Without a transferable conceptual framework of some kind, the empirical study of borders in all their historical uniqueness

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begins anew with each analysis, with no consequences for future studies or other disciplines outside geography. For example, according to this empiricism, those trying to understand the division of territory between the United States and Mexico are talking about a completely different border than those trying to understand the juridical borders of immigration enforcement inside the United States. However, the idea that immigration enforcement (juridical borders) and border patrol (territorial borders) have absolutely nothing in common seems absurd, especially after their political unification under the Department of Homeland Security.

With this in mind, I would like to propose an alternative to the debate between the catch-all and empirical theories of the border. Before I do so, however, it is important to qualify three points on the relation of theory to the border. First, the purpose of a theory or concept of the border is not to explain or predict every detail of empirical border phenomena; a theory of the border aims to describe the conditions or set of relations under which empirical borders emerge. Thus the theory of the border deals both with several general sets of relations common to many borders and with the specific borders that compose these relations. The theory of the border looks at common sets of relations across—not beyond—parochial and empirical geographies.

Second, a theory of the border and its common features does not render useless the empirical study of the particular. In fact, empirical transformations often give rise to more general transformations in certain recurring sets of relations or conceptual border regimes. Furthermore, both empirical and conceptual studies can be enormously aided by a knowledge of some of the most basic recurring historical formations. Thus a theory of borders cannot claim to be empirically descriptive of all particular borders. No matter what the theory of the border, empirical study is still required to understand the historical contingency and specificity of each border in all its unique hybridity and novelty. However, such a study would benefit greatly from a broader theoretical base to compare and organize the different border regimes across the disciplines and through history.

Third, the debate between grand theory versus scientific empiricism raised in the last few years of border theory is not a new one in philosophy. In the eighteenth century Immanuel Kant formulated a similar problem in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) between metaphysics and empiricism. On the one hand, "Metaphysics," Kant says, "is a speculative cognition by reason that is wholly isolated and rises entirely above being instructed by experience."[41] In other words, the knowledge of what the world is like in itself cannot have any foundation in our experience, and thus no application and no verification. On the other hand, empiricism

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it is a theory of the literal, material social technologies that produce social division.

Furthermore, this book does not develop a complete theory of resistance against borders nor a typology of the political subjects who have contested them. This is the case for several reasons; first, because such a theory is already developed elsewhere at length in my *Figure of the Migrant* and would be redundant to reproduce here. Furthermore, since the aim of the current book is to diagnose the historical conditions of certain dominant border regimes, and antiborder movements are not borders, they are not included in this book. The theory and history of political resistance requires the deployment of slightly different theoretical tools than those used to understand the operation of borders. A single book cannot do everything. I therefore ask the reader to forgive the arbitrary compartmentalization of border power and migrant counterpower that has resulted by not combining *The Figure of the Migrant* and *Theory of the Border* into a single six-hundred-page book on "kinopolitics," as it was originally conceived.

With respect to the present book, however, resistance still remains primary in the sense that social motions are always constitutive of borders in the first place. Social motion can never be completely or finally captured by any mixture of border regimes. All borders leak precisely because all borders are constituted by and through a process of leakage, which is only temporarily stabilized into border regimes. One important consequence of this kinetic point is that borders of all kinds have been under constant contestation and transformation by a number of different types of counter- and antiborder practices that rise and fall through history. I therefore urge the reader to supplement the present theory and history of the border with that of the migrant, developed elsewhere by myself and others.[45]

A border is not simply an empirical technology to be resisted or not; it is also a regime or set of relations that organize empirical border technologies. What I call a border regime does not transcend the material technologies that constitute it. It is their condition or relationship, not their cause, and it changes according to the way in which the material border technologies themselves are assembled. Thus the method of the present study is materialist in the sense in which it understands borders as regimes of concrete techniques and not primarily as ideas or knowledges that emerged independently from social and material conditions.

The theory of the border this book provides thus follows roughly in the critical tradition of philosophy in the following sense. There are conditions under which empirical borders emerge but, in contrast to Kant, they are not *possible* conditions; they are *real* conditions that are profoundly social and historical. In other words, there is not one universal set of a priori

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concepts that explains the existence of every border and all borders. There are rather several different sets of relations or regimes according to which most (dominant) social borders have operated. These logics are not transcendentally idealist in the Kantian sense of how they appear to consciousness, but neither are they purely empirical since they are not simply things or objects in the world. They are transcendentally empirical, historical, or material in the sense in which they describe how several groups of empirical border technologies are related and function as *regimes of social motion* and division. Thus we might call this method a "critical limology," or the theory of the real conditions for the production of social borders.[46]

I have divided this critical limology into two parts. First, I develop a formal or conceptual theory of the border as a kinetic structure in chapter 1. This is the most minimal theory of "what a border is," in its most abstract sense. Although this theory is presented first in this book for the purposes of helping the reader organize and define the different critical border logics that follow, this general theory of the border is practically last insofar as it is only discovered as the outcome of the critical study of border regimes as they have emerged in history. Once it is found, however, it can be seen at work throughout various different historical regimes. In this sense, it should be understood in a kind of conceptual future anterior, as that which will have been at work as the real conditions of territorial, political, juridical, and economic border regimes. In the second part of this critical limology I conduct a study of each of these four major border regimes as they have emerged historically and continue to coexist in contemporary border technologies. This second part constitutes the main body chapters of this book.

ON HISTORY

The history of the border has so far largely been a history of states.[47] In much of the scholarship and in popular discourse, borders tend to be defined as the outer territorial borders of states and identified with abstract lines and clearly demarcated boundaries. Not only is this untrue of premodern borders, but it continues to remain untrue for modern borders as well. The border as a social process of division is not reducible to state power, as was argued in the previous section, and certainly not reducible to an abstract line. Rather, the border is what divides. It is a process that states try to harness, but that often eludes them. Not only does the border precede the state historically since humans have been making borders for thousands of years before states existed, but it also precedes the

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state logically as the technical delimitation required in the first place for the social division called "the state" to exist at all. A history of the border cannot be reduced to the history of states or walls. Accordingly, there remains a rich history of the border that has been overshadowed or entirely ignored by the exclusive study of state borders and abstract lines.

This book thus provides a new history of the border. It is a history of social formations, including states, as the products of the bordering process. However, this book is not a universal history of the border that shows the vast intertwining of every type of border at every historical point and to every degree. It is also not able to be sensitive to every historically related term throughout.[48] The aim of this book is more modest: to provide an analysis of four major material border techniques during their period of historical dominance and to provide a conceptual, movement-based definition of them. It is not meant to be a representative or complete social history of power, movement, or all empirical borders that have existed. Rather, it is meant to be a philosophical history that extracts from empirical history the concepts sufficient to elaborate a critical limology useful for contemporary analysis.

Admittedly, this book presents a Western selection of this history. One of the unfortunate sacrifices made for the historical breadth of this book has been its geographical narrowness. By trying to theorize as closely as possible several major border regimes, I have had to reduce the study down to its most dominant expression in Western history. One of the consequences of this method is that it risks giving the appearance that these are the only manifestations of border regimes, the only ones that matter, or the only possible ones—none of which is the case. In fact, by focusing on the most dominant historical border regimes, my aim is to show the opposite: that since these regimes appear historically and not necessarily or developmentally, they could have been, can be, and might still become otherwise than they are—both historically and geographically. In this way the present work reveals the possibility of resistance to these dominant regimes, even if it does not recount all the major historical strategies of border resistance put forward in *The Figure of the Migrant*.

There are three major reasons for developing a theory of the border through a history of the border. First, doing so allows us to conceptualize the historical conditions under which different types of social border technologies have been produced. There is a tendency for border scholars to begin the history of the border in the nineteenth century when border studies began and to explain borders as the outer land limits of nation-states. However, borders did not originate in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, concepts of national and military defense offer little insight

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into the original division that produced the nation-state in the first place. The history of the border is more complex and goes by various names. The border appears everywhere that there is a material technology of social division. There are thus different types of borders at different times in history relative to the social conditions and forces specific to their division. This book presents a select history of four major types, their material conditions, and forces of social motion: the territorial, political, juridical, and economic forms of social division.

Second, the theory of the border and the history of its transcendental and technical emergence allows us to analyze contemporary borders. This is possible because the history of borders is not a linear or progressive history of distinct ages; rather, it is a history of coexisting and overlapping social forces of division. The borders of history do not simply emerge and disappear. As concrete border technologies, the basic technical structures of fences, walls, cells, and checkpoints persist, mutate, combine, and coexist in new social contexts and with new materials. As transcendental regimes, borders also persist, mutate, and combine to different degrees throughout history. Thus in order to understand contemporary borders and respond to them appropriately, we need to understand the emergence and coexistence of all types of borders and the conditions under which they emerged historically. John Williams describes something similar to this in his concept of "neo-Medievalism" in which the history of pre-Westphalian borders "may give us some clues as to what to expect" with respect to post-Westphalian borders, since many medieval borders were "social places that [existed] independently of sovereignty."[49] However, unlike a purely empirical and predictive method, this book is not looking to predict new empirical border technologies but aiming to understand the transcendental social conditions of past and present ones. Often what contemporary border theorists identify as new technologies and forms of bordering are simply recombinations of old regimes and technologies that have been around for hundreds or thousands of years.[50] A history of borders may keep border scholars from reinventing the wheel of border theory every time a so-called new technology comes out.

Third, the diagnosis of historical and contemporary border regimes also provides the strategic tools necessary for changing the current regimes. Understanding how a border works allows one to make more effective tactical interventions into its modification or abolition. The kinetic thesis of this book argues that borders have no ahistorical or universal social necessity and are thus open to further change or destruction. However, this book does not provide a normative theory of what we ought to do instead of creating these kinds of borders. Instead, its theoretical framework makes

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possible, only by contrast to these regimes, a kinetic study of the types of social alternatives possible.[51]

Transcendental "condition" does not mean causality or necessary determination. The analysis of contemporary borders that this book presents is not one of total causal explanation; rather, it is a transcendentally descriptive analysis. It begins with what has been produced and tries to understand its material and historical conditions. The aim is not to explain the causes of all borders, but to offer better descriptions of the conditions, forces, and trajectories of their historical emergence and coexistence in the present from the perspective of its bifurcating motion.

CONCLUSION

The theory of the border proposed in this book thus overcomes three problems. First, it overcomes the problem of statism that reduces all border phenomena to geographical nation-states, which ignores the constitutive and kinetic processes of social bordering. Second, in doing so it also overcomes the opposite multidisciplinary problem of dissolving borders entirely into society: "everything is a border." This book strictly limits its limology to the material technologies of social division. Finally, this book overcomes the third problem of limited historicity. If borders are not strictly defined as state borders, then the historical analysis of borders must begin much earlier than the nineteenth century, when national-state borders began to sediment. In response to this problem the present work provides a social history of borders beginning with the first human societies and leading up to the present. In fact, one of the central theses of this book is that contemporary borders are largely hybrid structures composed of a mixture of different historical bordering techniques.

This introduction has provided a general methodological orientation to the theory of the border. Chapter 1 begins with a more formal definition of what a border is. Once we understand what and how a border is, Part I of this book will be complete. We will then be prepared to develop a historical theory of the when and where of borders in Part II on limology.

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PART I

Theory of the Border

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CHAPTER 1

Border Kinopower

The history of the border is a history of social motion. Instead of defining the border as a secondary or derivative product of societies—primarily defined by states—in the introduction we defined the border by its primary features: its movement of bifurcation and circulation. Accordingly, if the border is not merely a derivative product but a primarily productive process, then a theory of the border also requires a reinterpretation of society itself as a process of movement and circulation. From border security and city traffic controls to personal technologies and work schedules, human movement is socially directed. Therefore the theory of the border is not a theory of the border *in abstracto* or derived from a presupposed notion of society, but a theory of social motion from which society itself is derived. Thus the history of the border is a history of vectors, trajectories, (re)directions, captures, and divisions, written exclusively from the perspective of the material technologies of social division. In other words, it is a "kinopolitical" history—from the Greek word κίνο, *kino*, movement. The kinopolitical analysis of the different types of social motion and their forms of circulation is the only history proper to the border as a form of motion since every other history reduces the border to a derivative phenomenon.

In particular, the border is defined by two intertwined social motions: expansion and expulsion. This chapter defines and lays out the logical structure of this social motion, while the chapters of Part II analyze the historical conditions that give rise to it, and Part III shows how the concepts developed in Parts I and II help us to better understand the complex dynamics of contemporary US-Mexico border politics.

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PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

Another possible way to conceptualize the idea of expansion by expulsion is as a radicalization of Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation." Marx develops this concept from a passage in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*: "The accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labour."[1] In other words, before humans can be divided into owners and workers, there must have already been an accumulation such that those in power could enforce the division in the first place. The superior peoples of history naturally accumulate power and stock and then wield them to perpetuate the subordination of their inferiors. For Smith, this process is simply a natural phenomenon: powerful people always already have accumulated stock, as if from nowhere.

For Marx, however, this quotation is perfectly emblematic of the historical obfuscation of political economists regarding the violence and expulsion required for those in power to maintain and expand their stock. Instead of acknowledging this violence, political economy mythologizes and naturalizes it. For Marx the concept of primitive accumulation has a material history. It is the precapitalist condition for capitalist production. In particular, Marx identifies this process with the expulsion of peasants and indigenous peoples from their land through enclosure, colonialism, and antivagabond laws in sixteenth-century England. Marx's thesis is that the condition of the social expansion of capitalism is the prior expulsion of people from their land and from their juridical status under customary law. Without the expulsion of the people, there is no expansion of private property and thus no capitalism.

While some scholars argue that primitive accumulation was merely a single historical event from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, others argue that it plays a recurring logical function within capitalism itself: in order to expand, capitalism today still relies on noncapitalist methods of social expulsion and violence.[2] However, the thesis in Part II of this book is notably different from these views in two important ways. First, the process of dispossessing people of their social status (expulsion) in order to further develop or advance a given form of social motion (expansion) is not unique to the capitalist regime of social motion. We see the same social process in early human societies whose progressive cultivation of land and animals (territorial expansion) without the material technology of fencing also expelled (territorial dispossession) a part of the human population. This includes hunter-gatherers whose territory was transformed into agricultural land, as well as surplus agriculturalists for whom there was no more arable land left to cultivate at a certain point. Thus social expulsion

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as the heavenly bodies always repeat a certain movement, once they have been flung into it, so also does social production, once it has been flung into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects become causes in their turn, and the various vicissitudes of the whole process, which always reproduces its own conditions, take on the form of periodicity."[3] According to Marx, every society, not just capitalist ones, engages in some form of social production. Like the movements of the planets, society expands and contracts itself according to a certain logic, which strives to reproduce and expand the conditions that brought it about in the first place. Its effects in turn become causes in a feedback loop of social circulation. For Marx, social production is thus fundamentally a social motion of circulation.

Part II of this book is a radicalization of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation and social periodicity under the concept of "expansion by expulsion." However, before we can elaborate on the consequences of such a concept for the phenomenon of historical and contemporary borders, it needs to be further defined according to the more general method followed by this book: the analytics of social motion, or "kinopolitics."

KINOPOLITICS

Kinopolitics is the theory and analysis of social motion: the politics of movement.[4] Instead of analyzing societies as primarily static, spatial, or temporal, kinopolitics or social kinetics understands them primarily as regimes of motion.[5] Societies are always in motion:[6] directing people and objects; reproducing their social conditions (periodicity); and striving to expand their territorial, political, juridical, and economic power through diverse forms of expulsion. In this sense it is possible to identify something like a political theory of movement. However, a political theory of social motion based on movement and not derived from stasis, time, or space also requires the definition of some conceptual terms important for this analysis. The core concepts in the definition of social motion are "flow," "junction," and "circulation," from which an entire logic of social motion can be defined and in which expansion by expulsion and migration takes place.

Flow

The conceptual basis of kinopolitics is the analysis of social flows. The key characteristic of flows is that they are defined according to their continuous

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movement. In this sense, the philosophical concept of flow parallels the historical development of the fluid sciences, aerodynamics and hydrodynamics.[7] In fluid dynamics, a flow is not the movement of fixed solids analyzed as discrete particles, as it is in solid mechanics; the presupposition of the fluid sciences is continuum.[8]

The history of the study of borders also developed through the study of flows. For early seventeenth-century demographers and even border scholars today, measuring the movement of human populations across borders is much more like measuring a continuous and variable process than it is like measuring a fixed solid body. This led many early border geographers in the nineteenth century, such as Friedrich Ratzel, Jacques Ancel, Thomas Holdich, and Charles Fawcett, to describe the border itself as a zone-like or plastic phenomenon shaped by and limiting human flows.[9] Modern demography, a branch of human geography, and the study of borders (political geography) were influenced by statistical science, which made possible for the first time the study of large amounts of variable data—often over time—based on theories of probability and chance. Statistics is the study of change and chance, of unpredictability. It is the science of making probable the unpredictable. Since the limits of a continuous flow cannot be totalized, flows had to be measured in an entirely new way: statistics.[10] Faithful to its etymological origins in the root (*stat-*), statistics emerged as the statist capture of human flows, and political geography as the study of the state's borders.

Beyond the birth of statistics and human flows across borders, we also find during the seventeenth century an explosion of scientific descriptions of flows of all kinds: flows of food, flows of money, flows of blood, and flows of air. In 1614 the Italian physiologist Sanctorius founded the study of metabolism, the science of transformative biological flows, recorded in *Ars de Statica Medicina*. In his 1628 book, *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus,* William Harvey conducted the first controlled experiments on and popularized the idea of pulmonary circulation as originating in the heart, circulation previously thought to originate in the liver.[11] In 1686, the English astronomer Edmond Halley published the first map of the trade winds in the southern hemisphere. In 1671 Isaac Newton invented a mathematics of flows in *Method of Fluxions,* now called differential calculus. Jean-Baptiste Moheau synthesized many of these studies in 1778 and brought them to bear directly on human mortality in *Recherches et considérations sur la population*. This was the century of the sciences of the variable, of the continuous, of flux.[12] This legacy continues today. Borders still define the limits and transition points of human flows. If the border is the political ground of our time, the flow is our conceptual starting point.

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