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Transdisciplinary Views on Boundaries

Towards a New Lexicon

Edited by
Luca Gaeta and **Alice Buoli**

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About This Text

What do researchers talk about when they talk about borders?
International debates on boundaries and borders have multiplied along with the global restructuring of the economy, the crisis of state sovereignty, and the increased migration flows from developing countries. Border studies have emerged as a field of study from the joint effort of geographers, anthropologists as well as political scientists to tackle the multifaceted complexity of borderland identities and landscapes. Nowadays, a trans-disciplinary approach more and more is replacing the affiliation of border scholars to separated fields of knowledge. However, as this convergence is far from complete, its potential for territorial development is limited. The book urges the need to apply trans-disciplinary methods in the making and management of boundaries. Though this can be done in multiple ways, the construction of a trans-disciplinary lexicon is key to facilitate a mutual understanding between researchers with different backgrounds, as well as between researchers and policy makers. However, such a lexicon also serves to "misunderstand" each other, unfolding the ambiguity of the border as a quality that cannot be eliminated in theory or in practice.

Transdisciplinary Views on Boundaries

Towards a New Lexicon

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Chapter 1
Borderscap-es/-ing: Reading the Moroccan-Spanish Borderlands Constellations

Alice Buoli

1.1. The relevance of the borderscap-es/-ing notion from a trans-disciplinary perspective

In the 2005 edition of the trans-border art festival *inSite*[1], the performative artist Javier Tellez[2] ended his action *One flew over the Void (bala perdida)* by firing and filming a human cannonball over the border wall at Las Playas in Tijuana. This defiant performance, a practice of transgression (both literally and figuratively) and disobedience against the social-political uneven interplays at the US-Mexico border, is situated within a "wave" of art-based research and debates on borderlands and border conditions that started to emerge around the mid 1990s inside artistic environments, activist and social movements and militant academia in many different geographical areas and disciplinary fields. In fact, a series of artistic interventions and cultural initiatives[3] at/on various "contested thresholds" of the so-called *Political Equator* (Cruz, 2008, p. 111) — spanning from the US-Mexico border at Tijuana/San Diego, to the Strait of Gibraltar and the Israeli-Palestinian border, till the Line of Control in Kashmir and the Taiwan Strait — has been contributing to shape and expand debates on the production of places and practices of exclusion imposed by contemporary political borders, as well as their potential as terrains of experimentation for acts of resistance and struggle (Buoli, 2015a,b).

Such ambivalent understanding resonates with a series of important shifts inside the academic field starting from the 1990s with a reconsideration of borders as "social constructs and processes rather than stable entities" (Paasi, 2005, p. 19) that are "socially produced and reproduced, and thus are always susceptible to be modified, transformed, erased, recreated, reimagined, transgressed" (Soja, 2005, p. 34). This crucial turning point inside border studies — the so-called "conceptual shift" or "bordering perspective shift" (Brambilla, 2015) — has moved the focus from a conception of borders as geographical and political peripheries and national "edge-lands" to one recognizing them as "new centres", "new beginning(s)" (Wilson and Donnan, 2012, p. 3; Eker and Van Houtum, 2013) and "spatial points of origin" (Schoonderbeek, 2014). Such epistemological move has paved the way for new conceptual perspectives and methodological approaches to study (and intervene on) borderlands. Among the most recent ones, the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion has gained particular interest and momentum in different scientific and creative fields.

1.2. Origins and understandings of the borderscap-es/-ing perspective

Rooted in "border landscape" research by scholars and activists concerned with international migration issues, "border struggles", post-colonial studies (dell'Agnese, 2014; Rajaram and Grundy Warr, 2007; Perera, 2007; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) and critical border studies (Brambilla and Van Houtum, 2012; Brambilla, 2015), the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion has not a univocal definition, but rather multiple meanings and uses in different disciplinary fields: "a portmanteau that combines aspects of 'landscape' and 'border' [which] brings with it all the unresolved ambiguities of the two separate notions and multiplies them" (dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary, 2015, p. 2), and a "kaleidoscopic" notion (Brambilla, 2015, p. 11) which has fostered "a new multisided organization of border knowledge, able to overcome binary oppositions".

The early use of the borderscapes notion reveals its relations to artistic research and critical (urban) design and spatial planning. Dell'Agnese and

Amilhat Szary (2015, p. 1) suggest that the term has been "coined by the performance artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes, who used it for the first time in the title of a performance in 1999: Borderscape 2000: Kitsch, Violence and Shamanism at the End of the Century" and shortly after used by Dutch urban planner and designer Arjan Harbers in the essay *Borderscapes, the Influence of National Borders on European Spatial Planning* (2003). The term has later been used by various scholars and artists among which geographer and anthropologist Anke Strüver in 2005, sociologist Prem Kumar Rajaram and geographer Carl Grundy-Warr in 2007, and by Elena dell'Agnese herself in 2006 in the cycle of conferences entitled Borderscapes[4]. Furthermore, it has been at the centre of a series of EU-funded research projects, among which the FP7 Project Euborderscapes[5]. More recently the term has been adopted by the ERC project Topological Atlas. Mapping Contemporary Borderscapes[6] led by Goldsmiths University (UK) and aiming at building a methodology for producing visual counter-geographies at border sites with case studies in UK, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan and India (Awan, 2016).

Three different and parallel understandings of the term "borderscapes", starting from the reading proposed by dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary, emerge from a rich trans-disciplinary literature.

A first meaning builds on the -scapes theory by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) who identified different "cultural dimensions" (ethno-, techno-, finance-, media- and ideo-scapes) through which examining and describing the fluid and fleeting nature of globalization processes or the "building blocks of the new transnational possibilities in modern society" (Eker and Van Houtum, 2013, p. 407). In this sense dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary (2015, p. 2) suggest an understanding of borderscapes as "circuits of images and ideas".

A second meaning, following Harbers' conceptualization, suggests to consider *borderscapes* as equal to sedimentations of political ideas in space, that can result both from natural or human delimitations, as well from differences in planning systems between two or more countries (Harbers 2003, p. 143).

Dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary (2015, p. 3) see as relevant in Harbers' contribution "the role of the nation-state in shaping and reshaping the area surrounding the boundary"; therefore borderscapes represent "the material output[s] of the difference in sovereignty marked by the international boundary". Such material outputs can be specific territorial / urban materials – for instance, free trade zones, international ports, logistic centres, nuclear plants, big infrastructure projects that other scholars have defined as "markers of a transnational landscape" (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002, p. 131) – or the borderlands themselves, namely portions of land surface influenced by the presence of an international boundary, as suggested by Dolff-Bonekämper and Kuipers (2004).

A third and last conceptualization is drawn on the meaning of the borderscapes notion suggested by Anke Struver: "a way of representing / perceiving the area around the border", a verb / process / practice (borderscaping) "through which the imagined border is established and experienced as real" (Strüver, 2005, p. 170). From a similar perspective, Brambilla (2015) addressed the operative nature and etymology of the *-scape* suffix, which is related to the verb "to scape", meaning "to give shape". Likewise, Van Houtum and Eker (2015, p. 101) observe that "scapes comes from the Dutch term 'Scheppen' (to create) and the past tense of 'Scheppen' which is 'geschapen' (was created), and the Dutch term 'Landschap', which means something like a created land". Again, dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary (2015, p. 5) stress the importance of border aesthetics which allow to "grasp both de- and re-bordering processes, allowing us to move away from all kinds of binaries that usually help to frame the understanding of limits of all kinds".

In addition to such three understandings, which meaningfully combine different epistemological and disciplinary perspectives, a further key reference in the field is the work of political philosopher and activist Sandro Mezzadra and cultural and social theorist Brett Neilson (2013).

The authors adopt the term from the work of cultural studies scholar Suvendrini Perera on the Australian borders (Perera, 2007), linking it to the work of architect and intellectual Eyal Weizman on the borders between the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. According to Weizman these are not fixed and rigid boundaries (despite the presence of the wall), but rather "they are elastic, and in constant formation. The linear border, a cartographic imaginary inherited from the military and political spatiality of the nation state has splintered into a multitude of temporary, transportable, deployable and removable border-synonyms – 'separation walls', 'barriers', 'blockades', 'closures', 'road blocks', 'checkpoints', 'sterile areas', 'special security zones', 'closed military areas' and 'killing zones'" (Weizman 2007, p. 6, quoted by Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). Such material and spatial solidifications of the Palestine-Israel frontiers appear close to a conception of borderscapes as "territorial materials" to which the authors add a fundamental variable and layer: political power. Indeed, the term borderscapes is used by them to identify "the simultaneous expansion and contraction of political spaces and the multiple resistances, challenges, and counterclaims to which they give rise" not only in spatial but also temporal terms (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013, p. 8).

In this sense, the understanding suggested by the authors of *Border as Method* resonates with the argument of Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007) who define borderscapes as a "fluid field of a multitude of political negotiations, claims, and counterclaims (...) of variated and differentiated encounters", and with Schoonderbeek and Havik (2014, p. 51) as "performative zones out of which several 'border conditions' emerge", and as threshold spaces "where spatial practices simultaneously confirm and resist social networks, juridical practices and political ideologies".

Bringing together these different meanings and uses of the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion and following the argument proposed by Gaeta in his most recent work, calling for the need to overcome the "monophysitism" of borders in their material / social articulations and determinations (Gaeta, 2018, p. 97-8), this chapter proposes an understanding of the term *borderscap-es/-ing* in its operative potential and "kaleidoscopic" character (Appadurai, 1996; Brambilla, 2015) to study and intervene on borderlands.

A trans-disciplinary methodological attitude (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) and empirical practice-oriented approach are adopted in order to unfold the epistemological and methodological potential of the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion as to conceptualizing, describing (and envisioning) other multidimensional images of contemporary border landscapes.

To this aim, the second part of this chapter is devoted to an exploration of one specific case, the everyday and trans-scalar networked border conditions across / at the North Moroccan-Spanish border, in the context of past and ongoing re-bordering processes at EUrope's borders in the Mediterranean and in North Africa.

1.3. Reading the North Moroccan-Spanish border through the borderscap-es/-ing lens

A field of overlapping boundaries at the Strait of Gibraltar

Seen as a dense point of concentration of the ongoing socio-spatial transformations of the European project, as a border between a European Union member state (Spain) and a so-called "third country" (Morocco), and an overseas territory (Gibraltar – UK), the Strait represents a "direct link between international geopolitics and local response" (Ribas-Mateos, 2005, p. 2) of contemporary bordering dynamics in the Mediterranean: a manifold territorial complex, where the simultaneous presence and agency of many different *boundaries* and *boundary-makers* has been producing, through time, differentiated and cross-scalar effects on both local / transnational landscapes and communities.

The political border between Spain and Morocco in particular represents a multiform bordering system itself comprised of a *sea* boundary at the Strait of Gibraltar (and the Canary Islands), and a *land* boundary along the perimeters of

the Spanish autonomous cities and enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and the *plazas de soberania* ("places of sovereignty"). The latters consist of a series of small archipelagos (Islas Chafarinas Islands, Islas Alhucemas) and peninsulas (Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera, Peñón de Alhucemas) located on the Northern Moroccan coast. The *plazas* and the enclaves are the final remainders of Spanish rule in North Africa after Moroccan independence (1956) and the end of the Spanish Protectorate (1912-1956). Considered by Spain as still part of its national territory for historical, political and legal reasons, Ceuta, Melilla and the other *plazas* have never been officially recognised by the Moroccan Government, with consequent territorial disagreements (Andalucía Libre, 2002) and main bordering entanglements in this area of the Mediterranean region.

In this regard, Ribas-Mateos (2011) proposes to consider the conditions of the Moroccan-Spanish border as comparable to the dynamics of "border reinforcing" (*ibid.*, p. 29-40) along the US-Mexico border. In particular, she stresses the "hardening" of the Spanish border surveillance implemented over the last two decades, showing similarities with the US approach towards migration and security issues. This is evident in the border surveillance measures and devices adopted by the Spanish government since the mid-1990s, following Spain's admission to the EU (1986) and to the Schengen Agreement (1991), when the border between Morocco and Spain began to be sealed off (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008) in compliance with EU migration policies and the implementation of the Schengen common borders.

This led in the years to the implementation from the Spanish side of a networked system of control, which occasionally materializes itself into physical barriers to unwanted mobilities. This is the case of the two Spanish enclaves, which between 1993 and 1998 began to be enclosed by two militarized barriers (*vallas*), further enhanced in 1999 (Ceuta) and 2007 (Melilla) with new technological equipment along the border fences to prevent irregular crossings and cross-border "smuggling" activities.

At a regional scale, along with the *vallas*, and in line with EU border policy and surveillance framework, in 1999 a high-tech Integrated Exterior Surveillance System (the SIVE — *Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior*) was set up on the Andalusian coast and, later, in the Canary Islands.

Despite the presence of these physical / digital and remote sensing systems of control, there is a widely held view that the Moroccan-Spanish border represents a permeable and selective "apparatus" (Castan Pinos, 2009; Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008, 2011) of control, which permits or hinders different kinds of mobilities and exchanges across the border. According to many border scholars the "Janus-faced" nature of the EU border (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002), which is concerned with both "development aid and humanitarian assistance and (…) security-obsessed economic and cultural comfort zone" (Van Houtum 2010, p. 961), is clearly expressed at the Moroccan-Spanish borderlands along the Strait of Gibraltar and in the Northern region of Morocco.

At the same time, in line with the *borderscap-es/-ing* conceptual and methodological framework introduced above, it is my contention to shift attention from a yet powerful double-sided reading of the border, to a multidirectional and non-linear reconstruction of the configurations of the Moroccan-Spanish borderlands. In order to do so, it is necessary to move the focus from the *borderlines* to the *border landscapes* (Brambilla, 2015), and therefore to larger territorial and socio-spatial fields, where a multiplicity of stories, experiences and human and political trajectories have crossed and shaped the borderlands.

In effect, as proposed by the Observatorio Tecnológico del Estrecho (Technological Observatory of the Strait) already in the early 2000s, the Strait represents "a multiple territory, both geographic and infographic, social and technological, that extends infinitely in four directions: to the South and to the North" (DeSoto and Monsell, 2006, p. 169). Through their collective artistic practices of radical cartography and construction of places of online/on-site encounter, the Strait is described as "a rhizomatic constellation of places, temporalities, spatialities and modalities of presence" (*ibid.*).

Following such understanding and adopting a *borderscap-es/ing* perspective, the chapter discusses a series of cross-scalar, trans-local and cross-temporal narratives around some peculiar hinge places and trails, as interconnected scenes between different time horizons and *constellations* at / across the borderlands and far beyond (Fig. 1.1).

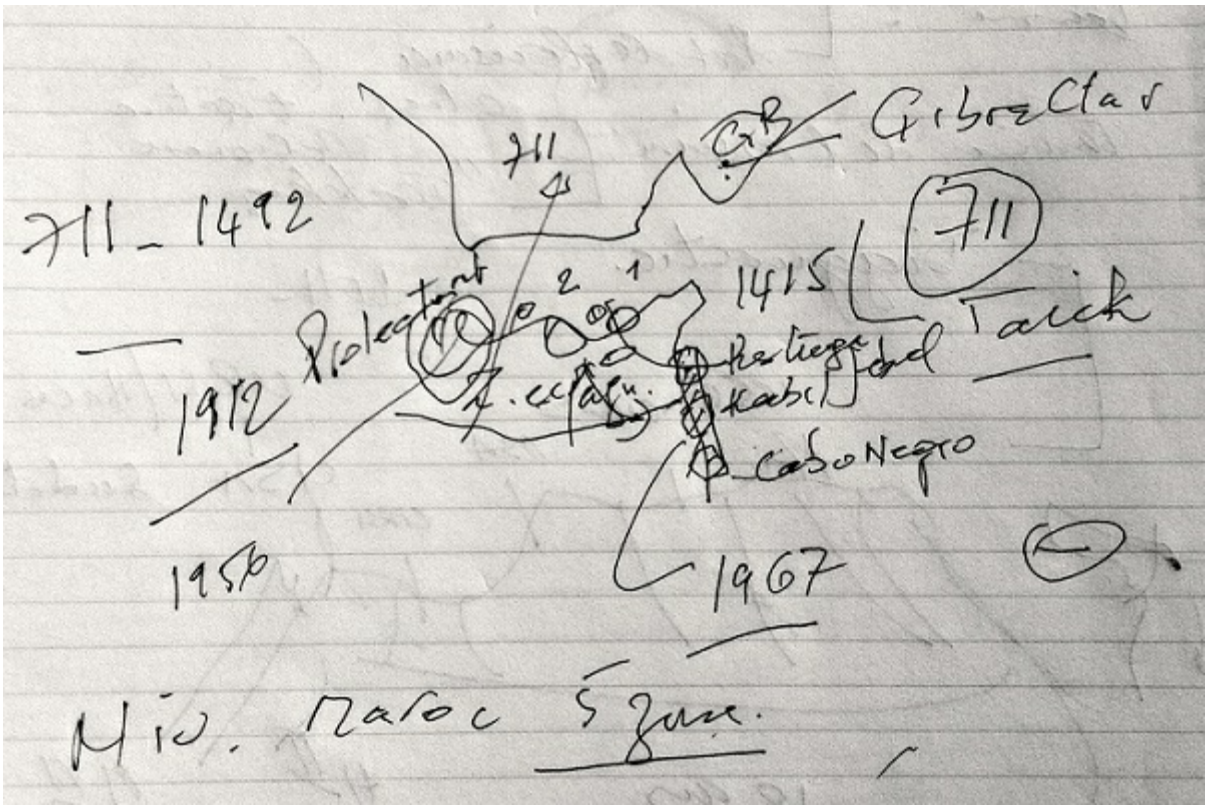

Fig. 1.1 - A conversation with prof. M. Hillali (Tangier, February 2014).
Source: Buoli, 2015

Three borderscapes constellations

Three interdependent meanings of the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion have been presented in the first part of the chapter: *borderscap-es* as a) circuits of images and ideas; b) physical landscapes marked by the presence of a boundary; c) spatial or networked sedimentations of power interplays and socio-spatial practices. By combining such different understandings, the following section presents a series of (ambivalent) images, landscapes and relational spaces that have been shaping and constituting the Moroccan-Spanish borderlands.

In order to put at play the *borderscap-es/-ing* notion and highlight its operative potential, three meaningful fields or constellations of borderscapes are addressed in their mutual articulations in time, space and society across the North Moroccan-Spanish border:

a) Border economies and transnational migration spaces

b) Colonial ruins and imaginations of connection: bridges, tunnels and air balloons

c) Transnational social spaces

a. Border economies and transnational migration spaces

The socio-economic conditions at the Strait of Gibraltar and in its overlooking regions are, to a large extent, due to the unique geographical and geopolitical position of the area and to the socio-spatial dynamics related to the presence of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta[7] inside Moroccan territory, an area of high concentration of a series of cross-scalar border dynamics, the origins and outcomes of which are related to broader territorial and political fields, beyond the enclave and the border itself[8].

The disputed character of Ceuta (together with Melilla and the other *plaza*), its special territorial status (as Spanish autonomous city), the concurrent absence of formal institutional cooperation and the presence of *de facto* informal cooperative interactions at a local scale (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2011), have been catalysts for a series of everyday cross-border, atypical, trade activities (Castan Pinos, 2009) since the mid-1990s.

These everyday practices of border crossing are made possible as a result of the "selective permeability" of the border and the historical and ongoing inter-dependencies between the enclave and its Moroccan hinterland (*ibid.*). Indeed, in

the Protocol of Accession of Spain attached to the Schengen Agreement it is stated that "the citizens from the Moroccan provinces adjacent to Ceuta (Tetouan) and Melilla (Nador) are exempted from visa requirements" (*ibid.*, p. 15[9]). As a result of such exemption, everyday from Monday to Thursday, around 3,000[10] *porteadores* (literally "carriers", men and women of all ages) can enter the city through the main border check-point, the Tarajal / Bab Sebta frontier post in the southern section to the city, heading to a contiguous large commercial site, the Tarajal trade area. Inside the *porteadores* buy a variable amount of daily use, food and technological goods and transport them to Morocco on their shoulders, exiting directly through a secondary gate inside the *valla* (meant only for outbound fluxes), the Tarajal II check point, and restarting their circular trail from Bab Sebta. The products are eventually sold outside the city's perimeter and introduced into regional and national trade circuits (Buoli, 2014).

The circular daily migrations of the *porteadores* have been producing since the opening of the Tarajal commercial area in 1995 direct and indirect cross-scalar effects on the economy and the urban development of the enclave, the bordering municipalities and the villages of the Prefectures of Fnideq-M'diq and Fahs-Anjra as well as the city of Tangier and the entire Tangier-Tetouan region (Fig. 1.2). Indeed, the lack of a formal framework, a kind of unwritten trade-off between local traders and border patrols[11] at a local scale, allows an estimated flow of goods worth around 6 million euro each day (El Abdellaoui and Chikhi, 2013).

According to both interviews undertaken locally and data collected in the area[12], most activities and settlements (e.g. farming, small real estate investments and informal housing) along the Ceuta–Fnideq–Tetouan littoral and its immediate inlands are related to the border economy. For instance, more than one-third of the active population of the small town of Fnideq (only 7 km away from Ceuta) is employed in cross-border commercial activities, while in the prefecture of Fnideq-M'diq, the number of employees in the trade field has been estimated at around 20% of the population which live directly on cross-border trade (El Abdellaoui and Chikhi, 2013).

The main markets of Fnideq, its hinterlands and the settlements along the littoral are devoted to products coming from Ceuta (*ibid.*, p. 88). Most of them are located on the littoral N13 route, which represents the main axis of movement for the *porteadores* and the products. These movements are largely by public transport (buses) or private means, mainly shared *petit taxi*. From this area the goods are transported to the main urban centers of the region, Tangier and Tetouan, and then distributed through local trade networks to other parts of the country.

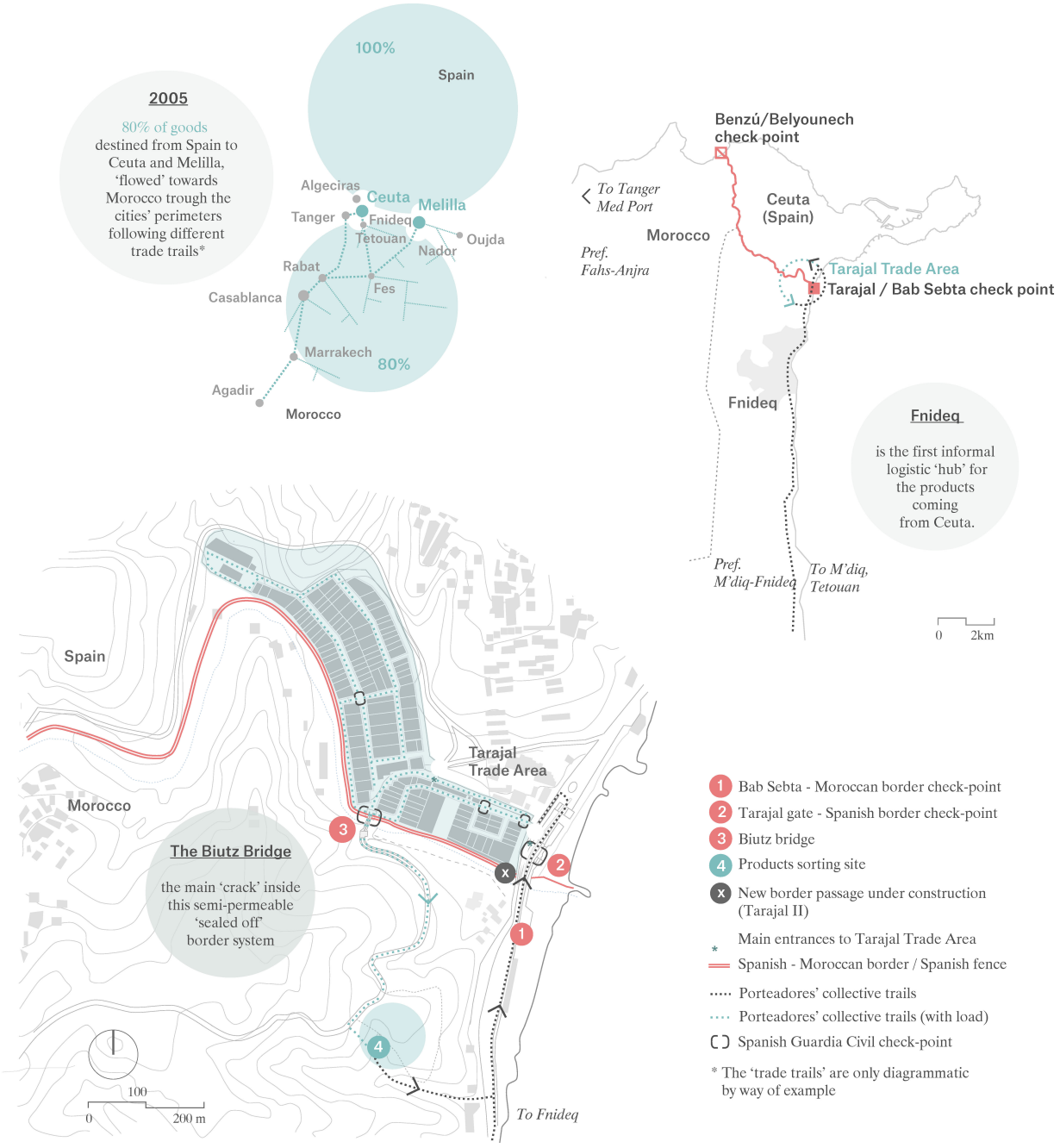

Fig. 1.2 - Informal trade dynamics at the Ceuta / Morocco border.
Source: Elaboration by the author (Buoli, 2014)

Along with the border economy dynamics, a series of spaces related to the transnational mobilities of different populations have been described by Ferrer-Gallardo, Albet-Mas and Espiñeira (2015) as "limboscapes". These are seen as elements of "a growing archipelago of centres that have been mushrooming across the EU and beyond over recent years" (p. 545), namely: "transitional spaces where (some) migrants must face the uncertain process of waiting on the EU law. (…) the grey zones where an essential part of the EU project is socio-spatially constructed" (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas, 2016, p. 530).

Some examples that have been brought to the international attention by civil and human rights organisations on both sides of the Strait, are for instance the CIE (Centro Internamiento Extranjeros – Foreign Detention Centre) of Las Palomas in Tarifa (Spain) (Fig. 1.3, 1.4) and the CETI (Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes – Temporary Migrants Detention Centre) of Ceuta. The latter has become in the years a kind of "magnifying glass" on the conditions of the enclave itself. Indeed, the CETI is not a closed centre: migrants can leave it and circulate in the city, which essentially functions as the centre's "backyard" (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas, 2016, p. 529).

Fig. 1.3 - The CIE (Centro Internamiento Extranjeros – Foreign Detention Centre) of Las Palomas, Tarifa (Spain).
Source: photo by A. Buoli, 2013

Fig. 1.4 – The entrance to the CIE in Tarifa at the meeting point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Source: photo by A. Buoli, 2013

Together with the presence of these and other *limboscapes,* data available about migration show that, despite the implementation of surveillance and remote sensing technologies (the above mentioned SIVE), the Strait is still the site of constant migratory routes.

Along with the CETIs and CIEs on the Spanish side, another kind of *limboscapes* are located in the woods surrounding Fnideq, Ceuta, the border village of Belyounech and the Jbel Moussa (Moussa Mountain) in Morocco. Here the migrant communities, grouped by nationality, build temporary shelters and prepare themselves for "the jump", waiting weeks or even months for a better moment. The majority of them are of sub-Saharan, Algerian and Asiatic origins[13], but as the civil war in Syria has worsened in recent years many Syrian

refugees are using the land trail to try to reach Europe. A large array of audio-visual research has been produced over the last decades on the Moroccan-Spanish border *limboscapes,* on the personal stories and living conditions of migrants attempting to cross the border. Espiñeira (2015) extensively addressed such (artistic) productions naming them "video-geographies": among many the pioneering video essay *Europlex* by Ursula Biemann and Angela Sander (2003) on the conditions of Moroccan female workers on the border.

b. Colonial ruins and imaginations of connection: bridges, tunnels and air balloons

A design contest launched in 2011 by Italian journal *Domus* and entitled *The Heracles Project* invited people from all around the world to propose "imaginative solutions" to bridge Africa and Europe across the Strait of Gibraltar[14]. The contest was inspired by an epistolary conversation between the Belgian philosophers Lieven De Cauter and Dieter Lesage, who reflected on the possibility of designing a bridge between the two shores of the Strait as, above all, "a beautiful artistic-political project" and a "concrete utopia"[15].

The conversation about the opportunity to connect Europe and Africa becomes an occasion to talk about otherness, identity, new forms of cultural domination and neo-colonialism ("Isn't it again indicative of Eurocentrism to think of the physical connection between Europe and Africa in terms of a European typology?" asks Dieter Lesage[16]) and power interplays across the Mediterranean.

The contest produced a large number of proposals spanning from complex mega structures (floating bridges and cities, tunnels) to minimalistic and poetic designs. Despite the imaginative outcomes of the contest, the solutions appear to be the less interesting products of this operation. Rather it is in the most critical proposals that bypass place-based or figurative representations and settings that one can find the most relevant meanings and outcomes of the competition.

This is the case with the proposal made by Asif Khan and Pernilla Ohrstedt, *The Fnideq branch extension*. The project assumes the expansion of the Northern Line of the London underground network with a branch line to Fnideq. According to the authors, the project intends to be an experiment on the concepts of topology and familiarity. "The premise is to play on the suspension of the distrust of the commuter so as to make familiar a possible connection with Africa through the underground. By tube, the markets of Fnideq are no more difficult to imagine than Highway Cockfoster, since there is a line that takes you there. After all, Fnideq is only a few stops away from Balham, and vice versa"[17].

Another thought-provoking project is the one proposed by Bjarke Ingels / BIG: the design of commemorative banknotes (of 1,000 AFRO and 1,000 EURO) celebrating the construction of the bridge which connects Europe and Africa.

In this context, it is worth mentioning how some of the projects presented and available on *Domus* website recall some of the ideas and proposals that have been designed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as possible connections between the two shores of the Strait. Again Ferrer-Gallardo, Albet-Mas and Espiñeira (2015) mention one of the most famous, *Atlantotropa*, designed by the German architect Herman Sörgel in the 1920s. The project, linked to a bigger vision of the Mediterranean, proposed the construction of a hydroelectric dam across the Strait, which would have connected Spain and Morocco and created a reduction in the level of the Mediterranean Sea and produced new drained lands. The authors underline the colonial and dominant perspective of the project, namely how "a tangible Euro-African linkage connection would have implied turning Africa into a huge physical but also colonial peninsula of Europe" (*ibid.*, p. 3).

The Spanish colonial government in Morocco made similar efforts, starting from the early 1910s, with a series of projects for the construction of a tunnel (or a bridge or both) connecting the two shores (Albet-Mas, 1999, p. 410). Some of the geological drills used for testing are still on site and have been photographed by Moroccan artist Yto Barrada[18] in 2002. The plan was developed and

disseminated to the public until 1935, when, due to political instability (the Spanish Civil War) and technical problems, the project was frozen[19]. Ferrer-Gallardo, Albet-Mas and Espiñeira (2015) highlight how the project of the tunnel keeps recurring, despite the economic and technical complexity of the infrastructural design and implementation. Indeed, again in 2003 "a joint Spanish–Moroccan technical commission – supported by both governments – proposed a tunnel as the best option to physically connect Europe and Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar" (p. 541-2).

This constellation of borderscapes includes a layering of different hegemonic visions and discourses in time and space. The Spanish colonial rule in the area, in particular, along with the projects for the Strait, has "dropped" a variety of different structures and buildings on the North Moroccan landscape, which are now in state of abandonment or vacancy, or have been converted to other uses.

Among the architectural and infrastructural leftovers of the first half of the 20th century, which have been the focus of various research trajectories[20], some examples are the eleven former railway stations of the Tetouan-Ceuta train line (Tetouan, Aviaciòn, Malalien, Rincòn, Restinga, Negro, Riffien, Castillejos, Miramar, Ceuta, Benzù) and the military outposts of Tlat Taghramt and Dar Riffien.

The Tetouan-Ceuta railway and its stations were inaugurated in 1918, with an overall length of 40 km connecting various small settlements along the coast and above all the two main cities of this section of the Protectorate, Ceuta and Tetouan. It remained in operation until 1958, when the tracks were completely dismantled and the stations have been in part demolished or left abandoned, and only recently recovered for other uses (Fig. 1.5, 1.6). This is the case for the renovation of Tetouan train station, which has been renovated and converted into a modern art centre (CAM) and re-opened to the public in 2012, thanks to a collaborative project between the Fundación Tres Culturas (Sevilla), the Junta de Andalucía and the municipality of Tetouan[21].

Fig. 1.5 - The former railway station of Castillejos (Fnideq), Morocco.
Source: photo by A. Buoli, 2014

Fig. 1.6 - The former railway station of Malalien, Morocco.
Source: photo by A. Buoli, 2014

c. Border inter-actions: "transnational social spaces"[22] and networks across the border

A third constellation regards the places of resistance and border struggles (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) which emerged not only as spatial coagulations of counter-hegemonic claims against the divisions and differences imposed by the border (De Lama, 2004), but also and especially as relational / networked spaces (Faist, 2000) in which local civil society organisations, activists, professionals, cultural institutions and citizens have found opportunities and chances for encounter, debate and collective agency. These social and relational spaces are made of ties and networks connecting, at different levels, international, North Moroccan and Andalusian collectives and individuals working on border issues with their political, academic and artistic practices (Fig. 1.7).

Civil society organisations in North Morocco and Andalusia are mainly concerned with migrants' and human rights protection. Groups such as the AMDH (Association marocaine des droits humains) and the GADEM (Groupe antiraciste de défense et d'accompagnement des étrangers et migrants) — often in cooperation with international organisations such as Migroeurope and APDH: Association pour la Promotion des Droits Humains — are active in the organisation of seminars, encounters and protests and in the dissemination of information on the conditions of migrants on the border, reporting abuses, shipwrecks and crossing attempts. Among many the Twitter and Facebook accounts of No Borders Morocco are active in reporting current news about the situation at the border, violence and aggression against migrants by both Spanish and Moroccan police, and successful crossings. The NGO Caminando Fronteras reports on a daily basis on the numbers of people (and deaths) at the border and gives support to people in distress trying to cross the Strait, in cooperation with Spanish and Moroccan "Search and Rescue". It is important to mention how these groups / collectives and many Spanish and Moroccan activists in the last years have gone through a series of legal actions by the Moroccan Government, often in "cooperation" with the Spanish authorities[23].

Together with civil society organisations, some Spanish newspapers have assumed a "civil role" in this sense, by producing reportages and implementing information platforms on this topic. This is the case with *Desalambre*[24], a section of the Spanish online newspaper *El Diario*, a space dedicated to human rights which reports information about the conditions at the border. *El País Semanal,* a weekly insert in *El País* one of the main newspapers in Spain, has dedicated two online platforms to the debate: *A las puertas de Europa*[25] a multimedia narrative about some of the main points on the southern Mediterranean borders, and *El desafio del Estrecho*[26]. In recent years also the online Spanish magazine *El Salto* has started to publish the blog *Frontera Sur*[27] which reports news and other contents on the Southern border of Spain.

The direct link between the social, digital and physical dimensions of cross-border networks has been anticipated in the early 2000s by the above mentioned Observatorio Tecnológico del Estrecho (DeSoto and Buoli, 2017).

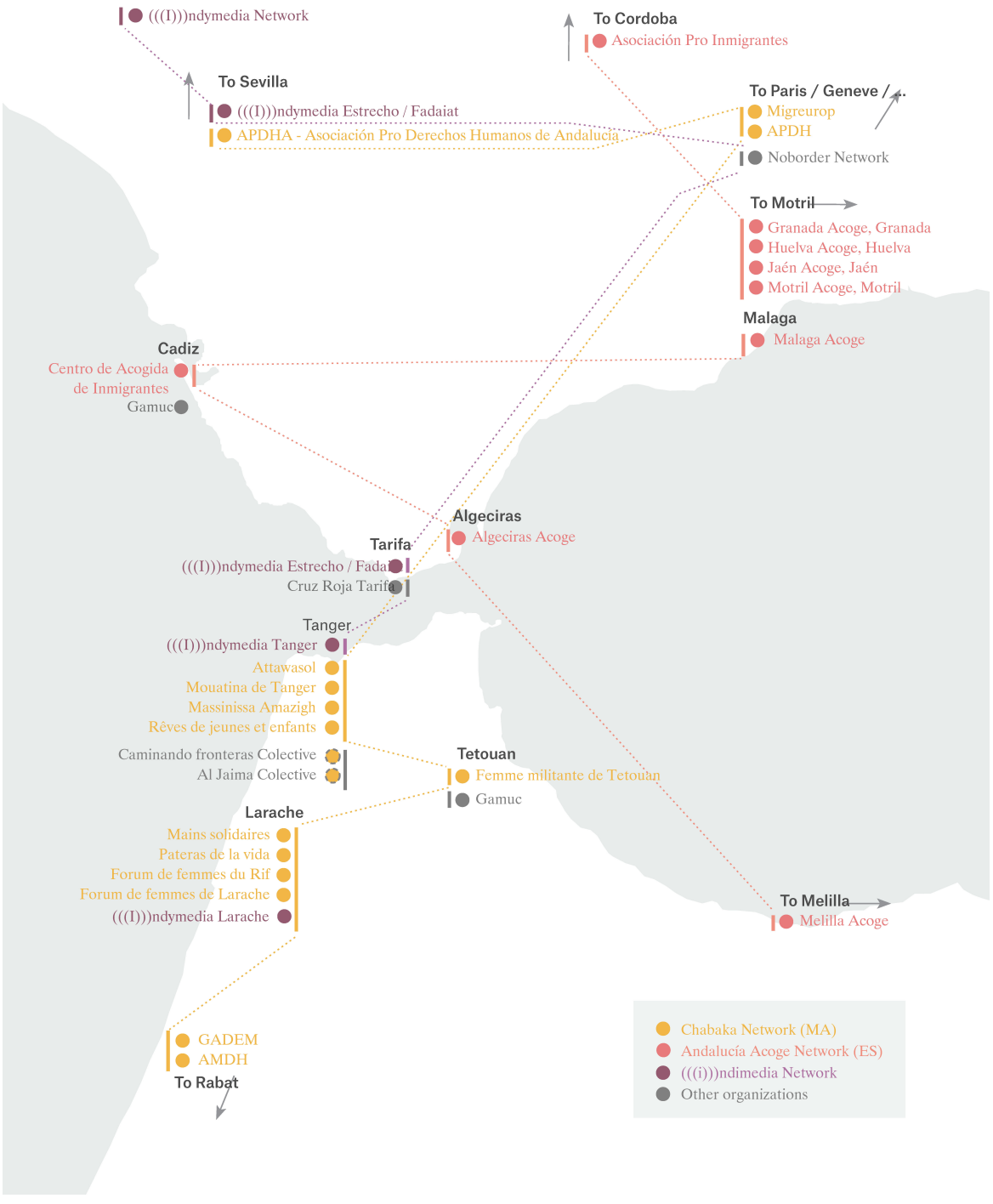

Fig. 1.7 – Transnational Social Spaces across the Strait of Gibraltar. Source: Elaboration by the author (Buoli, 2015)

Conclusions

The *borderscap-es/-ing* perspective, in its manifold understandings, has emerged since the early 2000s as a key epistemological and methodological framework in different interdisciplinary environments including artistic research, social sciences, political geography and philosophy, urban studies and design disciplines, among many others. This notion has indeed mobilized a variety of different meanings and uses to express symbolic and aesthetic values, material / spatial organisations and political power relations and social struggles.

As a verb at its progressive tense form *borderscap-ing* has been defined as a human / social border-writing practice and as a collective design thinking activity enabling new landscapes of images around borders to emerge. This chapter aimed at exploring such epistemological and methodological potential by first referring to a rich interdisciplinary literature and cultural production, and then by adopting such lens to explore a specific area, the North Moroccan-Spanish borderscapes, with a focus on the northeastern section of the Tangier Peninsula bordering the Strait of Gibraltar and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta.

This border complex has been assumed as a meaningful research scenario, as one relevant observatory of the past and ongoing re-bordering processes outside EUrope's borders in the Mediterranean and in North Africa, at the intersection between different political regimes and planning systems / cultures.

By addressing a set of emerging borderscapes constellations, seen both as diachronical narratives and trans-scalar socio-spatial fields, the chapter intended to interrogate the means through which different imaginaries of Spain-Morocco relationships are being constructed and communicated within the context of relational — and not only place-based — networks, everyday cultural images, social representations and artistic imaginations.

Despite and thanks to such epistemological complexity, and through the empirical exploration proposed, the *borderscap-es/-ing* perspective has proven to be a productive frame to work at / across different disciplinary fields and to

overcome conceptual dichotomies inside current debates on borders, bridging different fields of knowledge, research practices and modes of intervention on borderlands.

Acknowledgments

This chapter is based on research conducted by the author in the context of her doctoral dissertation *BorderScaping. An explorative study on the Moroccan-Spanish border landscapes*, discussed as part of the PhD Programme in Territorial Design and Government — DAStU, Politecnico di Milano (Italy) in June 2015.

Some passages of the chapter have been previously included in the article *Borderscaping: design patterns and practices on/across borderlands* published on *Territorio* 72/2015 and *Beyond the border: exploring cross-scalar socio-spatial dynamics of conflict, resistance and encounter at the Ceuta-Morocco borderscapes*, published in *Regional Studies, Regional Science* vol 1/ Issue 1, 2014

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1 inSite is a trans-border project in the field of public art initiated in 1992. It began as a bi-national public art project, commissioning works created for the specific transnational context between Tijuana, Baja California, and San Diego, California, with the aim to produce and exhibit relevant art works by early career artists from Mexico, the US and elsewhere, and activate urban spaces through collective artistic experiences and performances | http://insite.org.mx/wp/en/insite/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

2 https://www.guggenheim.org/map-artist/javier-tellez (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

3 Among many examples, a key experience has been the exhibition and cycle of events entitled Fronteres (Borders in Catalan), which took place at the CCCB of Barcelona (Spain) between 2004 and 2007 with the participation of Michel Foucher and Henri Dorion as curators, and contributions by prominent figures in the international debate of those years (such as Zygmunt Bauman, Eyal Weizmann, Tzvetan Todorov and Philippe Rekacewicz among many others). The exhibition focused on a broad and interdisciplinary reflection on the concept of the border and its physical and cultural outcomes in different geographical contexts, through different media (photography, mapping, videos, etc.) and political perspectives (Côté, 2007).

4 http://web.unitn.it/archive/events/borderscapes/index.htm (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

5 http://www.euborderscapes.eu (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

6 http://www.topologicalatlas.net/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

7 Ceuta is located on the south-eastern peninsula of the Strait of Gibraltar, 65 km east of Tangier, bordering the Moroccan Prefecture of Fahs-Anjra and the Prefecture of M'diq-Fnideq. The city occupies an area of 19.6 km2 (Ciudad de Ceuta, 2008), with a population of 84,144 inhabitants (INE, 2018). A 1987 census estimated that around 21% of the residents of the city were Muslim (Planet, 1996). However, the demographic composition of the enclave appears to be far more complex now, due to the presence of a mobile population of around 25,000 Moroccan citizens (El Abdellaoui and Chikhi, 2013) entering Ceuta on a daily basis for work purposes.

8 Research on the case of the Ceuta-Morocco border is broad and highly inter-disciplinary. In this context, the main scholars of reference in the Spanish and Moroccan academic and research arena in the field of political, physical and human geography (to which the author is indebted also in cultural and personal terms) are: Ana Planet-Contreras, Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo, Noureddine Chikhi, Natalia Ribas-Mateos, Albert Albet-Mas and Keina Espiñeira.

9 Quoting the Agreement on the Accession of the Kingdom of Spain (Declaration on the towns of Ceuta and Melilla).

10 https://elfarodeceuta.es/en-2018-salieron-27-075-toneladas-de-mercancias-a-traves-del-tarajal-ii/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019)

11 Due to the absence of an official customs checkpoint, goods are not subject to any taxation: the carriers can pass the products through the border check point as "personal belongings" and sell them in Morocco at a cheaper price.

12 Extensive fieldwork has been conducted in 2013 and 2014 in the area.

13 https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/12/10/eps/1544453965_487993.html (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

14 www.domusweb.it/it/search.html?type=tag&key=Project+Heracles (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

15 www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2011/05/03/project-heracles-a-eurafrican-bridge.html (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

16 *Ibid.*

17 www.domusweb.it/it/architettura/2011/08/29/project-heracles-5.html (Accessed: 24 March 2019) [Translation by the author].

18 Moroccan artist based in Tangler and New York | www.ytobarrada.com/index.php/bio/bio/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

19 www.enlacefijodelestrechodegibraltar.blogspot.it/2008/07/articulo-publicado-revista-aljaranda.html (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

20 Among which one the extensive work done by the Spanish architecture historian Antonio Bravo Nieto | http://www.abravo.es/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

21 www.comunicacionypatrimonio.com/portfolio/museo-de-arte-moderno-de-tetuan/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

22 Faist defines "transnational social spaces" as the "sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple nation-states, ranging from weakly to strongly institutionalized forms" (Faist 2000, p. 2).

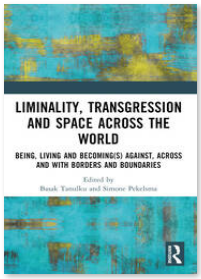
23 Spanish and Tangier-based human rights activist and researcher Helena Maleno, founder of Caminando Fronteras, has been under investigation by the Spanish National Police for her activities. Maleno has been recently exonerated from the charges | https://www.republica.com/2019/03/11/un-tribunal-de-tanger-archiva-la-causa-contra-la-activista-helena-maleno-por-supuesto-trafico-de-personas/# (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

24 www.eldiario.es/autores/desalambre/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

25 https://elpais.com/especiales/2014/europa-frontera-sur/el-relato.html (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

26 https://elpais.com/especiales/2015/desafio-estrecho/ (Accessed: 24 March 2019).

27 https://www.elsaltodiario.com/frontera-sur (Accessed: 24 March 2019).



Book

Liminality, Transgression and Space Across the World

Being, Living and Becoming(s) Against, Across and with Borders and Boundaries

Edited By Basak Tanulku, Simone Pekelsma

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ABSTRACT

This book analyses various forms of liminality and transgression in different geographies, demonstrates how and why various physical and symbolic boundaries create liminality and transgression.

Its focus is on comprehending the ways in which these borders and boundaries generate liminality and transgression rather than viewing them solely as issues. It provides case studies from the past and present, allowing readers to connect subjects, periods and geographies. It consists of theoretical and empirical chapters demonstrate how borders and liminality are interconnected. The book also benefits from the power of several photo essays by artists to complete the theoretical and empirical chapters: the visual contributions demonstrate the creation of liminality without words.

The book will be of interest to researchers and students working in the fields of urban and rural studies, urban sociology, cities and communities, urban and regional planning, urban anthropology, political sciences and migration studies, human geography, cultural geography, urban anthropology, and visual arts.

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11 Border research *from* design cultures

Cyprus Pavilions at the Venice Architecture Biennale as transformative proposals for Nicosia's borderscapes

Alice Buoli (Politecnico di Milano)

Introduction

Academic and cultural debates within the field of design disciplines on international political boundaries and border territories have seen a significant acceleration in recent decades, leading to inter-disciplinary streams of research focused on a crucial question: How to design for/with borders?[1]

The intersection between borderlands studies and design research – the main background and source of scholarship for this chapter – represents a growing interdisciplinary arena that has expanded since the late 1990s. Designers and researchers have contributed to building an "in-between" research space that includes interpretative methods to read and represent the spatial forms of geopolitical dynamics and design-oriented approaches to transform such spaces (Buoli, 2015). Among the most recent examples, the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale 2021 saw a remarkable presence of exhibitions devoted to margins, borders, and frontiers from various perspectives and scales (Sarkis, 2021).[2] Such a multiplicity of cultural productions and curatorial projects provided a fertile environment for the emergence of novel attitudes and methodological approaches towards border research from a transformative perspective by integrating multi-dimensional and provocative readings of border territories' spatial and symbolic dimensions.

This chapter examines an exemplary case study in border research: the divided island of Cyprus and its capital city, Nicosia. The spatial/symbolical partition that has cut through Cypriot landscapes and urban areas since the 1960s – the so-called Green Line – was explored through the lens of the curatorial projects for the Cyprus Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale between 2006 and 2021. These exhibitions are used as examples of how curatorial approaches – understood as possible "designerly ways of knowing" (Cross, 2006) – can offer fresh perspectives on the past, present, and future of divided territories.

The chapter particularly examines four different exhibitions – "Porous Borders" (2006), "Anatomy of the Wallpaper" (2014), "Contested Fronts: Commoning Practices for Conflict Transformation" (2016), and "Anachoresis, Upon Inhabiting Distances" (2021) – and discusses the (geo)political and material characteristics of the

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island and its border conditions according to powerful allegorical narratives and architectural archetypes.

These four curatorial projects offered multifaceted visions and representations of the island and Nicosia, critically engaged with their audiences, and provided platforms for the discussion with and the performative involvement of visitors and other designers and scholars. In this way, they created new co-produced meanings and images around the initial body of work displayed at the exhibition venues by activating different spatial scales and dimensions: from the geographical to the urban sphere, down to the 1:1 architectural detail exhibiting the inherently multi-dimensional spatial and trans-scalar nature of borders.

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first part is devoted to setting the main theoretical background related to the study of borders from the perspective of design disciplines. Secondly, it proposes a synthetic narrative of the socio-spatial conditions of Cyprus and Nicosia's everyday urban borderscapes – intended not only as spaces of conflict and resistance but also as places of imaginative exchange – that has emerged from recent fieldwork and academic research on-site.[3] Finally, the chapter engages with the main contents and outcomes of the Cyprus Pavilion curatorial projects reconsidered as transformative "scenarios" for the island and the Green Line.

1. Border thinking and design cultures

In the recent volume "Design Struggles", edited by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim (2021), a community of design educators, practitioners and theorists gathered to address urgent questions such as "How can we write design histories *otherwise*? How can we teach design differently? How can we think and practice design in new ways?" (Mareis & Paim, 2021, p. 19).

The editors began their collective conversation by providing an understanding of design as a powerful ontological tool that can transform social and cultural realities and shape human experiences, subjectivities, lifestyles, and environments (2021, p. 12). At the same time, design disciplines are currently undergoing a radical reconsideration (particularly in the academic sphere due to a growing critical discourse on persistent hegemonic power structures, such as patriarchal, Western, modern, white, etc.) that has extensively influenced design histories, pedagogies, and practices.

This has led to a growing demand for design to be substantially rethought to include other voices and other perspectives (indigenous, female, queer, etc.) that have historically been forgotten or explicitly excluded by the mainstream design discourses. These interdisciplinary movements are known as "decolonial design" or "critical design studies".[4]

As suggested by Eleni Kalantidou and Tony Fry, "[t]he creation and occupation of space by design cannot but be ideological and known in relation to other places, hence knowing where you are designing, or are going to design, is always geopolitical" (Kalantidou & Fry, 2014, p. 6).

The proposals emerging from the debates on decolonial architecture/design provide an invitation to re-start from the "margins" of the discipline and re-inhabit

them (Boano & Di Campli, 2022) and to adopt (geographical/material/symbolical) borderlands[5] as "strategically important spaces for the reconstitution of an ethics and praxis of care in relation to what ought to be designed and how" (Escobar, 2018, p. 312).

Within this realm, architectural and urban design disciplines retain a rather relevant role for the specific transformative function over space and society and for their role as *problem-defining* disciplines rather than *problem-solving* activities (Kalantidou & Fry, 2014, p. 5). Thus, designing *with/for* borderlands not only implies a radical reconceptualisation of borders themselves but also requires "thinking along, within and about borders" (2014, p. 6) in space and time. As an inherently "projective" practice, the design of space implies considering the *future* as a crucial variable that opens new possibilities of imagination and transformation over borders as potential sites of *pluriversal* visions (Escobar, 2021).

However, imagining alternative futures becomes particularly challenging in disputed or conflictual contexts, where the scope for transformative action is limited, and operating conditions are highly uncertain. Therefore, specific tools of strategic design and planning can be particularly effective from a methodological perspective as they can help deal with uncertainty by projecting certain trends or anticipating diverging events.

One such tool is scenario-building, which enables envisioning alternative trajectories of change and can facilitate collective discussions about potential visions for a particular space, territory, city, or neighbourhood.

Architect and educator Socrates Stratis (2016) argues for the role of architecture as a transformative practice over space with its political role as a tool for negotiation within a contentious arena. In this sense, architecture as practice "shifts the focus from the static object to the moving project, evolving around non-linear processes. It is about communication tools to adapt, means of representation, and regulations that are the baseline of negotiations among the actors' conflictual agendas" (2016, p. 16). Moreover, "controversy is a synonym of architecture in the making, pointing to a series of uncertainties that a design project, a building, an urban plan, or a construction process undergoes" (*ibidem*).

In the third part of this chapter, the "Hand-on Famagusta"[6] collective research-by-design project and interactive web platform, initiated and curated by Stratis and other Cypriot architects, is explored more in detail to understand the use of "controversies" as prompts for the development of alternative visions over a highly contested territory (the city of Famagusta in North Cyprus). Scenarios are used here instrumentally (and politically) to propose different futures for the city, providing the platform for a more inclusive debate among different actors across the divide.

From a similar perspective, architect and urban designer Anna Grichting (2015) has provided an understanding of borders, on the one hand, as the "scars of history" – especially those that have been sites of long-term conflicts, such as the Berlin Wall or the Korean Demilitarised Zone, and the Cyprus Green Line – and, on the other hand, as potential bio-diversity hotspots after decades of abandonment and consequent re-naturalisation processes of the "no man's land".

In this sense, borders are envisioned as ecological and cultural assets for implementing new visions for the future that can "induce positive developments between the divided communities" (2015, p. 110). This is the case of the German Green Belt that "has become the longest ecological corridor in Germany due to the value of the biodiversity that has emerged from its marginal conditions" (*ibidem*).

Long-term research conducted by Joshua Bolchover and Peter Hasdell on the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Frontier Closed Area develops a set of different strategies to intervene in the complex border ecologies of the buffer zone created in 1951 by the British. The project suggests a set of "tactical scenarios" to address current challenges and pressures in the area and to re-metabolise the existing cross-border natural, social, and economic interactions (Bolchover & Hasdell, 2017).

In this context, Cyprus and its partition represent a fertile terrain for borderland design research to examine the new imaginaries and narratives that architects, designers, activists, and citizens have (co)produced across the partition. The following section aims to provide a better framework for the trajectory that has led the Buffer Zone to its current state by highlighting a series of spaces and socio-spatial dynamics that characterise the Green Line when it intersects with the cityscape of Nicosia.

2. Nicosia's everyday urban borderscapes

Social anthropologist Yannis Papadakis suggests five paradoxes to reveal the socio-spatial dynamics occurring along the Cypriot partition, envisioning it as a site of division and contact, conflict and cooperation, security and anxiety, extreme expressions of nationalism and its contestation, and creativity and oppression (Papadakis, 2018, p. 288).

Embracing the paradoxical nature of the Green Line thus requires a "multifocal" interpretative approach that moves away from "binary" understandings to comprehend the complex realities that have been stratified around and across the divide.

The notion of borderscapes/borderscaping provides such a "kaleidoscopic" richness (Brambilla, 2015) and offers an operative framework to address the multiple dimensions of the "Cyprus problem".[7] Borderscapes, according to a broad multi-disciplinary literature,[8] can be synthetically considered through three main meanings as circuits of images and ideas about borders, sedimentations of political decisions in space, and ways of perceiving and representing the areas around borders (Dell'Agnese & Amilhat Szary, 2015, pp. 2–5).

In addition, Brambilla (2015) and Strüver (2005, 2018) emphasise the performative character of borderscapes in everyday practices that affect people's minds and lives on a micro-scale.

Combining all these connotations, the partition's socio-spatial, political, and symbolic effects on Nicosia's urban environment emerge as interdependent bordering dynamics in space, time, and collective imaginaries. In this context, public spaces offer a relevant terrain for observing such interactions. In the following paragraphs, I provide some personal notes about the city's borderscapes around and along the Buffer Zone.[9]

Cyprus' Green Line/Buffer Zone spans over 180 kilometres across the island, ranging from a thickness of a few meters to various kilometres and crosses rural areas, the city of Nicosia, and other medium-sized and minor urban centres on both sides.

The phrases "Green Line" and "Buffer Zone" are frequently used interchangeably in the literature to describe the line and land surface that divide the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Republic of Cyprus (RoC).[10] However, it is necessary to make clear that the Buffer Zone is made up of three lines, as pointed out by Bakshi (2017, p. 90): the Green Line itself, which has separated the island since 1963[11]; the cease-fire line (CFL) of the Turkish forces, and the Greek-Cypriot National Guard CFL. Following the 1974 conflict, both sides were prohibited from crossing the Green Line, and as a result, the military forces restricted access to their respective areas. Since the end of the armed conflict, the Buffer Zone has been controlled by the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), except for the British Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia (on the eastern side of the island) and the ghost town of Varosha near Famagusta, which is now under the control of the Turkish military.[12]

In Nicosia, the area where the Green Line is located used to be the city's main marketplace, Ermou Street, which hosted a mix of Greek, Turkish, and Armenian businesses (Bakshi, 2017, p. 89). The morphological configuration of the street was directly influenced by its former use as the bed of the Pedieos River, which once ran through the city centre but was later diverted by the Venetians when they built the city walls in the 16th century.

The area within the Buffer Zone cannot be accessed, except for occasionally with the authorisation of the UN. As a result, "buildings cannot be altered or demolished, and the effects of time can clearly be witnessed on their scarred figures" (2017, p. 89). Due to this state of "crystallisation", the built environment inside and along the Buffer Zone has been experiencing progressive material decay and frequent collapses over the years, which have recently been accelerated by seismic events.[13] Bakshi describes the current condition of the area within the Buffer Zone as "a place that has been 'set aside' from the life of the city" (2017, p. 140).

When walking along the Buffer Zone, the very notions and perception of "proximity" and "distance" are disrupted, along with the common sense orientation through points of visual reference. Such confusion can be experienced when looking at important landmarks in the city on both sides, such as the minarets of the Selimiye Mosque in the north or the new high-rise buildings in the Eleftheria square area in the south (see Figure 11.1).

As a result, navigating through the city's public spaces can become a complex and disorienting experience, as it is a process that requires constant revision and "re-drawing" of the observer's mental map.

This is the case of Victoria Street – now known as Şehit Salahi Şevket Sokak, on the northern side of the city – which used to run between Paphos Gate and the Arabahmet neighbourhood, one of the most diverse areas in the city. It was home to worship spaces for Catholics, Maronites, Armenian-Catholics, and Muslims, all located just a few meters away from one another. Although buildings still stand and

Figure 11.1 The new marketplace square in south Nicosia: the Selimiye mosque minarets, on the other side of the city, are visible in the background.

Source: Photo by Alice Buoli, 2023

are visually present, the physical connection and the richness of the social interactions that used to occur here have been completely lost.

Due to the effects of the partition – including controversies over property rights – buildings and plots located along and near the Buffer Zone have become less desirable to residents, especially those in direct contact with or cut through by its perimeter. Over the years, this has resulted in a progressive abandonment of the most central neighbourhoods. Although political reasons play a role, this process is rooted in the traumatic past of the two communities. The perception of the old town's spaces as a void, coupled with the ongoing heavy militarisation and feelings of a lack of safety reported by Cypriots on both sides, have contributed to the decay of the material heritage of the walled city (Casaglia, 2020, pp. 62–65).

Because of its reduced "desirability" and low real estate values, in recent decades, the city centre has been attracting populations in need of cheap housing solutions.

In fact, along with internal refugees' displacement that resulted from the conflict, Cyprus and Nicosia have become transit or arrival places for many international migration flows since the 1990s (Demetriou, 2021, p. 2). As mentioned, the impact AuQ13
of the migratory phenomenon over the city has primarily been related to the housing demand (Casaglia, 2020, pp. 60, 64) and the emergence of a network of temporary or more stable spaces and services devoted to asylum seekers and other populations.

These range from support facilities for refugees and migrants – managed by international and local NGOs and religious orders and groups – to a series of "transnational social spaces" (Faist, 2000)[14] in the city (shops, temporary markets, worship spaces, and internet cafes) that provide a network of services for a variety of different inhabitants.

Religious practices and social/commercial spaces are a significant presence in the city centre, where various groups on both sides of the city use a series of storefronts or vacant warehouses as spaces for cultural and social interactions and weekly rituals. The influx of "new" populations in some neighbourhoods within the walled city has changed not only their demographic composition but also their visual "landscape". This is also evident in the presence of non-Cypriot residents and cultures, such as the Filipino and Southeast Asian communities on the south-western side or the Turkish nationals[15] and sub-African university students on the northern side of the city.

One interesting example is, again, the area around Paphos Gate near the Catholic Church of the Holy Cross and the Maronite Church of Our Lady of Grace, where on Sunday mornings, Asian women sell typical products from their home countries both in the public spaces around the churches or in hybrid domestic-commercial spaces facing the main streets.

On the other side of Pafou Street, on the walls of the former UN 65 headquarter building (now abandoned), a series of posters advertise services and meetings for prospective entrepreneurs and for migrant women. Just a few meters away to the south, a billboard advertises the presence of a religious order, the Sri Lankan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Nicosia.

Outside the walls, the Nicosia Municipal Park has become a leisure meeting point for many international communities. They gather in the garden to enjoy food and other social activities on their only day off.

In this diverse urban landscape, the Venetian Walls[16] have become an important physical "platform" for a variety of different social interactions and spaces. They host along their 5-kilometre-long circuit a series of public amenities, both on top of the bastions or inside the moat, including football fields, parks and gardens, and playgrounds.[17]

Out of the twelve football clubs in the city, three are hosted within the spaces of the walls: Olympiakos Nicosia and Orpheas Nicosia in the south and Çetinkaya Türk Spor Kulübü in the north. Additionally, the moat between the Roccas/Kaytaz and Mulas/Zahra bastions, just behind the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing, hosts a new football field. Above the moat, on the northern side of the city, a row of newly opened cafeterias and restaurants occupy the ground floors of the recently refurbished, beautiful Ottoman-era houses along Zahra Street overlooking the Buffer Zone. This area is part of the Arabahmet neighbourhood, one of the city's most important architectural heritage sites. In recent years, the neighbourhood has been progressively regenerated within the framework of the Nicosia Masterplan.[18]

When walking to the end of Zahra Street, one can encounter the Sınır or Yiğitler Burcu Park – "sınır" means border in Turkish – which stands on the top of the Roccas/Kaytaz bastion.

Until 2003 – with the opening of the first crossing at the Ledra Palace hotel – the park was the only point on the whole island where Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots could look at one another from different viewpoints. Here, the Green Line between North and South Nicosia comes up to the city walls, where the Buffer Zone disappears for about 200 meters: this is the thinnest (almost nonexistent) section of the Green Line.

Along the walls in the opposite direction, towards Kyrenia/Girne Gate, the moat hosts a sequence of kitchen gardens, public promenades, and playgrounds.

On the eastern side of the walls in south Nicosia, close to Famagusta Gate, one can encounter the same sports facilities and gardens on top of and inside the moat.

Along Athinas Street, local coffee shops provide crucial social sites for inhabitants, especially older men and football fans.

Because of the opening of the first crossing of the Ledra Palace Hotel in 2003 and the bi-communal efforts implemented by the two city administrations leading urban regeneration projects under the NMP, the quality and level of "urbanity" of the public spaces and buildings in the areas along the Buffer Zone have started to improve – especially on the commercial north-to-south axis along Ledra street/Arasta neighbourhood. This improvement is also due to the presence of bottom-up and spontaneous renovation initiatives by local organisations or young entrepreneurs, which have started to re-claim the areas along the Buffer Zone on both sides.

These spaces are imbued with a variety of meanings, memories, and images that have suggested diverse uses and practices of habitation by Turkish and Greek Cypriots and non-Cypriot nationals. These range from small cafes and shops to spaces for creativity, artistic expression, leisure, and sports. The presence of these spaces and their progressive re-habitation by diverse populations can provide the foundation for everyday, ordinary encounters between strangers (Raco, 2018) to trigger mutual recognition and cohabitation processes. However, forms of "enclaving" between communities persist, which lead to the exclusion or self-segregation of certain populations.

3. Cyprus Pavilions at the Venice Biennale: engaging with the island's partition through architecture and urban design

The Venice Architecture Biennale has become, in the past five decades – starting from the first exhibition curated by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti in 1975 – one of the leading international platforms, forums, and institutions for contemporary architecture discourse. It engages from time to time with the most pressing disciplinary, social, political, or environmental issues and with the city of Venice itself.

As suggested by Brett Steele in his preface to the book "Architecture on Display: On the History of the Venice Biennale of Architecture" (Levy et al., 2010), published by the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, "The biennale has itself become a kind of living record – of architecture's own contemporary struggle as a form of cultural production on the one hand, and that production on (and not only of) display on the other" (2010, p. 7).

Table 11.1 Curatorial Projects for the Cyprus Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2006–2021).

Year	*Curatorial theme*	*Curators*
2006	Porous Borders. The Green Line of Nicosia	Morpho Papanikolaou and Irena Sakellaridou
2008	Relax in Cyprus	Sir Peter Cook
2010	Encounters: A Walking Movie	Christos Hadjichristou and Aimilios Michael
2012	Customizing Tourism	Spyros Spyrou and Charis Christodoulou
2014	Anatomy of the Wallpaper	Michalis Hadjistyllis and Stephanos Roimpas
2016	Contested Fronts: Commoning Practices for Conflict Transformation	Socrates Stratis
2018	I Am Where You Are	Yiorogos Hadjichristou, Veronika Antoniou, and Alessandra Swiny
2021	Anachoresis. Upon Inhabiting Distances	Marina Christodoulidou, Era Savvides, Evagoras Vanezis, and Nasios Varnavas

Along with the main curatorial themes assigned every two years to an outstanding figure in the field, national pavilions have become key moments of representation of participating countries' architecture culture and disciplinary debates and increasingly more frequently, key occasions for producing research and advancements in the architectural discourse.

Since 2006, the RoC has participated in the biennale with eight different curatorial projects (see Table 1) until the last one for the 2021 edition.[19]

Similar to other national participations, the Cyprus pavilion is commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the RoC and organised by the Cyprus Architects Association.

Despite being the institutional representation of the RoC and not of the whole island (and, thus, of the TRNC), the pavilion exemplifies an interesting observation on how Cypriot architects and critical thinkers have been engaging with the partition by addressing its spatial, material, and symbolic qualities – with different degrees of realism or utopia – to support or suggest other ways of inhabiting it.

Most of the proposals have adopted an "archetypical" spatial approach by referring to foundational elements of architecture or urban design: the wall, the table, the labyrinth, etc.

This is the example of the 2006 participation "Porous Borders. The Green Line of Nicosia", when ten Cypriot architects were asked to read the Green Line within Nicosia's walled city and interpret it through their projects. According to the curators of the pavilion, the proposal suggests

> an open, experimental approach of exploring the nature of the border and its dead zone, and the possibility of its negation by means of architectural projects that restore porosity. The scope of the proposal is to examine the

> intermediate space and its interfaces and to explore the competence of architecture in interpreting the dual, alternating character of the area, its exclusive idiosyncrasy as an urban reality and as the sole ground in the world map that offers such experience.[20]

Interestingly, the 2006 pavilion came shortly after a series of key events in the recent history of the island: the opening of the first border crossing in 2003, followed by the failure of the UN Annan Plan referendum and the joining of the RoC to the European Union in 2004,[21] which kicked-off a phase of growing uncertainty towards the (common) future of the island and the city. This period also marked the moment at which, according to Papadakis, the Green Line became the easternmost border of the European Union (Papadakis, 2018, p. 287).

The curators defined this newly reframed border as a space with a "double" nature where various contradictions coexist: "yesterday/tomorrow, two communities, presence/absence, city as a living reality/memory land, subjective/objective". Again, the words of Papadakis resound here: "in the border, one is in touch with both sides yet is located neither just in one nor the other" (2018, p. 298).

The spatial form that the curatorial manifesto adopted is the labyrinth, where different degrees of porosity and permeability, visibility and accessibility are explored through light paper walls to provide spaces in between to be inhabited by the visitors.

A similar approach was embraced in 2014 with the "Anatomy of the Wallpaper" exhibition curated by Michalis Hadjistyllis and Stephanos Roimpas. Here, the architectural archetype (or "fundamental" as per the main theme of 2014 biennale) adopted is the wall(paper) intended as a spatial device where different layers of meanings about the City of Nicosia and its spatial and visual identity ("a polyphony of diverse paradigms of architectural forms and cultures"[22]) are juxtaposed and then revealed through a collective imaginative and performative action.

The Green Line is here never explicitly mentioned but is allegorically narrated through the presence of a "character", the Wallpaper, "an immaterial and intangible element, to symbolise Nicosia's divisions. A crossing line, dated from the medieval to the contemporary period, keeps mutating in time, absorbing the city's history and collective memory."[23]

The first stage of the exhibition production was performed through the collection of an archive of images related to Cyprus's architectural culture. In this way, the pavilion also exposed the complexity of Cypriot national identity in architectural terms and particularly in its *modern* stage, in which the curators recognise "a single modern language, and a single repertoire of typologies, as the first moment when architecture in Cyprus was detached from the influential sphere of its rulers."[24]

The exhibition was built through a collective process of production of the Wallpaper in Nicosia by first layering the printed images to form a series of thick cardboard walls and later shipping them to and assembling them in Venice. The performative "revealing" of the images occurred during the exhibition opening and throughout the biennale. The image revelation allowed the audience to contribute to transforming the Wallpaper "into Space."[25]

The 2014 pavilion occurred ten years after the events previously mentioned, namely, the opening of border crossings and the RoC joining the EU. It also took place shortly after the global financial crisis and just a few months after the Cyprus financial crisis. All of these events formed the background onto which the pavilion was conceived and pushed the curators to deal with the financial collapse as a shock that could lead to a new phase in the history of the island: this is mirrored in the concept of the layered Wallpaper that could be scrubbed away to reveal something new.

In 2016, the curatorial project "Contested Fronts: Commoning Practices for Conflict Transformation", coordinated by Socrates Stratis, moved the focus from Nicosia to another city on the island's northeast side, Famagusta. Formerly a renowned tourist area till 1974, the city's territory is fragmented into different exclusive or forbidden "enclaves" because of the conflict.

The pavilion drew on the "Hands-on Famagusta" project,[26] a collective research project and an interactive digital platform curated by a team made of both Greek and Turkish Cypriot experts and activists, that aimed to provide "a smart archive that advocates the commons of a unified Famagusta by introducing a playful mode of designerly knowledge exchange. It introduces modes of reconciliation deep into potential urban reconstruction processes".[27]

The pavilion hosted different participations from other countries (Northern Ireland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, etc.) and for the first time, involved Turkish Cypriot architects, among which members of the bi-communal group, "Imaginary Famagusta", an informal team of architects and urban planners, committed to produce a new platform for the future of the city (which was more recently constituted in the "F.U.T-U.Re Famagusta" group, an acronym for the Federal Urbanism Team for Unified Reconstruction of Famagusta[28]).

The exhibition provided the testing grounds for three main processes at the core of the "Hands-on Famagusta" project: a) *Counter-mapping*, "involving the use of the mapping practice to problematise the civil society in regard to dominant, divisive, mental geographies"[29]; b) *Creating Thresholds*, concerning "practices of exchange across edges, transforming limits to alive thresholds, encouraging the opening up of urban enclaves to the city commons"[30]; and c) *Introducing Urban Controversies*, regarding the "unfolding of the positive aspect of conflict within the making of the architectural and urban projects where the urban actors are in constant re-alliance and dispute".[31]

The pavilion thus provided a repertoire of urban design tools and visions for Famagusta's common future by moving the focus from the current partition and fragmentation of its urban landscape to explore *pluriversal* scenarios (Escobar, 2018) in which the city would regain its relationship with the sea and its hinterland.

The 2021 pavilion, "Anachoresis. Upon Inhabiting Distances", was curated by an interdisciplinary team including Marina Christodoulidou, Evagoras Vanezis, Era Savvides, and Nasios Varnavas (Urban Radicals) (Christodoulidou et al., 2021).

The project started from the notion of *anachoresis* ("distance" in English), as adopted by Roland Barthes and used as the main topic of the 2021 biennale "How will we live together". According to the curators, "In the Cyprus Pavilion,

anachoresis is introduced as an act that takes place on the convergence of urban-public and domestic-private space, where the distance between the two is blurred and inhabited."[32]

The curatorial team envisioned and designed a composite and mobile *table* as a trigger for conviviality, juggling between proximity and distance and between urban-public and domestic-private dynamics, to become a "public place" for *serving* the diversity and complexity of the Cypriot landscapes. In this sense, the table – another archetypical element – was designed as a "portal" where distances can be inhabited, becoming "an open-source framework, with multiple departure points into new rhythms of sociality. The table's moving parts suggest a negotiation between cohabiting subjects, forming different proxemic patterns"[33] (see Figure 11.2).

The public quality of the exhibition was underlined by curators Marina Christodoulidou and Evagoras Vanezis[34] also in response or as an "antidote" to the conditions under which the pavilion was conceived during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this sense, the very meaning of "distancing" assumed a completely different connotation throughout the project.

"Inhabiting distances" thus became another productive paradox in relation to Cyprus's partition: this was particularly interesting during the biennale opening, considering the progressive fading of the pandemic-related restrictions.

Figure 11.2 Cyprus Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2021.

Source: Photo by Alice Buoli, 2021

Moreover, the pavilion worked as a space for hosting performative arts (dance and music) by interacting with and simultaneously activating, temporarily transforming, and adding new meaning to the spaces and objects of the exhibition.

The design process of the pavilion also becomes a kind of "proposal" for the Green Line, as suggested by curators, which is conveyed by the horizontality and eventfulness of the table as a device enabling sociability and bridging a multiplicity of landscapes, memories, and languages.

Conclusive remarks

The space and relevance that design disciplines are building within the large "family" of border studies are yet to be fully recognised inside and outside the academic arena. Still, the examples explored in the context of this chapter, as in the case of the curatorial projects for the Cyprus pavilion, demonstrate a rich and growing body of work that by starting from a genuine transdisciplinary curiosity, is bringing a viewpoint – one of scholars and practitioners engaged with the transformation of space, its shape and qualities – that has been scarcely influential in the consolidated debates within border research.

However, intervening in contested spaces that are either crystallised in the status quo or where the conflict is still ongoing calls for a profound reconsideration of the tools and the agency of design cultures to better frame their role in providing alternative viewpoints in such unstable and uncertain conditions.

The case of Cyprus and the design-based research produced by Cypriot architects and curators to envision alternative proposals and scenarios of change for the Green Line – which activate debates on potential new shared meanings and public uses for its borderscapes – provide a robust argument for the need to introduce "the future" as a transformative variable in the production of knowledge around borders, not only as barriers to be transgressed or erased but also and mostly as providing spaces for collective imagination.

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Notes

1 The reference is to the seminal book by Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press, 1969), recently recalled by Italian urban designer Paola Viganò in her lecture "Design with Territorial Fragilities" on November 22, 2022 at Politecnico di Milano (Italy). The key contribution of the "with" in the title is the recognition of the conditions from which any design operation is performed, accepting these conditions as inherently part of the context that are thus to be respected in any transformative process.

2 See also the statement by Hashim Sarkis, Curator of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition. Source:
Retrieved December 5, 2022, from www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2021/statement-hashim-sarkis.

3 Please see the "Acknowledgments" section for more details.

4 This multifaceted movement is led by prominent design educators and thinkers coming from contexts beyond the dominant "geographies" of design, particularly from Latin America and the African continent. For a more comprehensive discussion, refer to the essay by Arturo Escobar "Autonomous design and the emergent transnational critical design studies field" in Mareis and Paim (2021) (Escobar, 2021, pp. 25–38).

5 "Borderland" refers to a specific portion of land surface influenced by the presence of an international border. The term also relates to the tradition of cultural and social studies, which use it to define a specific identity found in border areas. This understanding draws on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa.

6 Source: Retrieved December 5, 2022, from www.handsonfamagusta.org/about-the-project

7 A proper literature review on the Cyprus case is not possible in this context. Among the most influential body of work produced on this case, I have mostly referred to Papadakis, 1998, 2006, 2018; Strüver, 2018; Casaglia, 2019, 2020; Bakshi, 2017.

8 For example, see Appadurai, 1996; Harbers, 2003; Dolff-Bonekämper & Kuipers, 2004; Strüver, 2005; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Eker & Van Houtum, 2013; Brambilla, 2015. Please, also see Buoli, 2015, 2020 for a more complete discussion on the interactions between border studies and design cultures.

9 The photographs presented in this chapter are not meant as professional images but instead as notes taken on site during two different visits to Nicosia in September 2021 and March-April 2023. Please see the "Acknowledgments" section for more details.

10 The TRNC is currently only recognised by Turkey. The RoC has been a member of the European Union since 2004.

11 The Green Line is in fact named after an actual line drawn by a British Major with a green chinagraph pencil on a map in 1963 (Strüver, 2018, p. 7). Initially conceived as a temporary measure to de-escalate ethnic clashes among the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities, once it was traced on the map, this line became permanent with long-lasting consequences (Bakshi, 2017, p. 120).

12 Source: https://unficyp.unmissions.org/about-buffer-zone#:~:text=The%20buffer%20zone%20%2D%20also%20called,is%20a%20few%20kilometres%20wide (Accessed December 5, 2022)

13 The tragic February 2023 earthquake in Syria and south Turkey also had broad psychological reverberations in Cyprus, without major physical damage.

14 Thomas Faist defines "transnational social spaces" as the "sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple nation-states, ranging from weakly to strongly institutionalised forms" (Faist, 2000, p. 2).
15 Due to its political relations with Turkey, the TRNC has focused on encouraging the resettlement of Turkish nationals since 1974. This policy has had a range of effects on Turkish-Cypriot society over time, leading to concerns and criticism from Greek-Cypriots. For a more comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon, please refer to Demetriou (2021).
16 Nicosia's walls were built in the 16th century by the Republic of Venice and designed by engineers Giulio Savorgnan and Francesco Barbaro. They are considered the most important common heritage for the city by both communities.
17 It must be mentioned, however, that the majority of the spaces around and on top of the walls is used for parking cars, which testifies to one of the most pressing common issues between the two sides of the city: traffic congestion.
18 Under the umbrella of the Nicosia Masterplan (NMP), a bi-communal initiative has been implemented since the mid-1980s by local and international technical teams to deal with common challenges for the city and to plan for a future reconciliation. This is one of the most relevant examples of technical cooperation on urban planning matters in a divided territory. The NMP allows for the cooperation between the town planning departments of North and South Nicosia on joint projects and gives priority to the old town and the rehabilitation of neglected historical neighborhoods inside the city's wall. The first implementation phase of the Masterplan started in 1986. This included twin projects for the rehabilitation of two areas located along the Buffer Zone: Arabahmet in the northern part of the city and Chrysaliniotissa in the south (Petridou, 1998).
19 The 2023 edition of the Biennale has yet to open its gates as of the time of writing this chapter.
20 Cyprus Pavilion 2006 – Press Kit. Source: Retrieved December 5, 2022, from www.artecommunications.com/images/esposizioni/2006/PRESS%20RELEASE_CPR.pdf
21 Anke Strüver clearly synthesised this chain of events: "While 65% of the Turkish Cypriots accepted the Annan Plan and thus voted in favour of reunification, 74% of the GC voted against it. One week later, on 1 May 2004, the RoC entered the EU without the TRNC – although Turkish Cypriots technically became EU citizens and their territory is now part of the EU" (Strüver, 2018, p. 8).
22 Cyprus Pavilion 2014 – Press Kit. Source: courtesy of the curators.
23 Source: See previous note.
24 Source: See previous note.
25 Source: See previous note
26 Retrieved December 5, 2022, from www.handsonfamagusta.org/
27 Cyprus Pavilion 2016 – Press Kit. Source: Retrieved December 5, 2022, from www.cy-arch.com/contested-fronts-commoning-practices-for-conflict-transformation/
28 Source: https://archive.cyprus-mail.com/2020/11/20/bicommunal-group-denounces-partial-opening-of-varosha/
29 Source: See note 27
30 Source: See previous note
31 Source: See previous note
32 Cyprus Pavilion 2021 – Press Kit. Source: Retrieved December 5, 2022, from https://cypruspavilion.org/
33 Source: See previous note. Proxemics is the study of personal space and the degrees of separation that individuals maintain among them. A seminal contribution in this field is the book "The Hidden Dimension" by Edward T. Hall, Anchor Books, 1969.
34 Based on a conversation between the authors and the curators in July 2022.

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