



Focus on International Migration n° 2

# The Mediterranean Rio Grande/Rio Bravo: envisioning global borders

Natalia Ribas-Mateos

(Visiting Fellow, Reconfigurations Network, U. Marburg/ CERAO, UAB)

# **THE MEDITERRANEAN RIO GRANDE/RIO BRAVO: ENVISIONING GLOBAL BORDERS**

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**Focus on international migration** és una col·lecció d'accés obert promoguda i coordinada pel **CER-Migracions** de la UAB, centre de recerca interdisciplinària per a l'estudi de les migracions internacionals. L'objectiu de la col·lecció és consolidar un espai online de divulgació acadèmica que permeti fer arribar a la comunitat científica i al públic general interessat, treballs inèdits individuals i col·lectius que suposin rellevants aportacions teòriques, empíriques i/o metodològiques per a l'estudi de les migracions internacionals.

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## The Mediterranean Rio Grande/Rio Bravo: envisioning global borders

In recent years borders have become an important concern in multiple fields of research. However, contrary to the vision of a borderless world some authors advocate a pronounced awareness of the increasing presence of borders. In this multiplication of borders (Ribas-Mateos 2015), Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) chart the proliferation of borders in a “fabrica mundi” which covers its implications for migratory movements, capitalists transformations and political life. Following such interest, this work attempts to achieve two main aims. One is to integrate the complexities of global border comparison and provide a framework for analysis by discussing the book “El Rio Bravo Mediterráneo. Las regiones fronterizas en la época de la globalización” (2011, referred to from here onwards as the RBM), edited by the author of this paper, which is a compilation of works by over 30 contributors. The second aim is to construct a strategic approach towards a new border exploration. This interpretative quest draws from various analogies between the Mediterranean and the US-Mexico border region, a topic which is hardly new but rarely tackled so systematically and from so many different angles as we have done in the aforementioned volume

(which comprises over 700 pages, with contributions from 37 authors).

The book is divided into eleven parts, each dealing with a different aspect of the topic. Part I sets the theoretical stage for contrasting borders. Part II focuses on macro-economic and micro-sociologic visions; Part III on border cultures, Part IV on their historical conditions, and Part V on border politics, followed by internal borders (meaning inside the Nation-state), forms of transit and circularity and different aspects of the vulnerability of crossing borders. Part IX concentrates on border casualties, followed by the conformation of closing spaces and the emergence of internal borders. Part XI is an attempt to answer these problems through border activism; it also pulls the themes of the volume together and points the way forward for future research<sup>1</sup>.

Our task, therefore, of drawing parallels between the situation in the Strait of Gibraltar or the Canary Islands –or in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or any other place in the Eastern Mediterranean– and the United States-Mexico border region is not really a novelty. In

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<sup>1</sup> For the different book launches in Mexico, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and the USA, see the RBM blog “elribravomediterraneo”.

one way or another, the mass media, certain academics and studies on migration and borders, as well as a less specialized audience, have already reported on the situation. In this article I will try to trace the direction of this topic, seen through the changes expressed by the two headings I present below: from the geopolitical line to the meaning of conflict in the globalization era and subsequently, through assuming a spatial reconfiguration of these changes.

As regards the notion of the “global border,” here it is constructed mainly in relation to three different dimensions: the existence of differentiated global mobilities (people, capital, commodities, information flows, etc.), industrial location in socioeconomic terms, and the changing role of the Nation-state through its problematization of space and sovereignty. However, through our line of argument we will see how this construction can be shown from many different angles.

This revision, which was born and matured over a span of four years of seminars, focuses on contemporary borders and their persistence. Although little has been studied within such a scope, this is an issue of great importance in the field of social sciences. The authors of the book embark on an ambitious approach that encompasses a wide range of processes of similarities and differences. The complex Mediterranean context –whose uniqueness is due to having the sea as its border– and the area between Mexico and the United States –that long terrestrial and fluvial border– may well represent the two regions of the world where the future of integration between countries’ processes is most explicit. In both cases, by taking different angles of investigation into the nature of border life, the configuration of regional spaces enables us to identify in detail what may be captured at the border. While the first case has usually been claimed as “the border” *par*

*excellence*, the Mediterranean is often evoked as a paradigmatic example and as one of the more harshly contrasting of the North-South imbalances in a globalized world. By following a Mediterranean itinerary we can review a convoluted geographical journey, all the way from the Alaouit cities of the Maghreb to the Syrian cities of the Mashreq, all of them in opposition to their nearby North. But the “cosmopolitan” Mediterranean is also a good example of the exploration of the dissimilar territorial levels set by formal and informal economic activities, as well as by the innovative social practices of migration, which have been much evidenced in studies in both regions.

The concept of border is complex. While on one hand it is conceived as a boundary or barrier (from being a space to conquer, in the sense of the classic American West, or as in the Balkans during the 1990s), it also leads us towards notions of exchange, contact, encounter and, especially, of cultural fusions that survive in the Mexican-American culture as well as in the nostalgic images of a number of “cosmopolitan” Mediterranean cities such as Tangier, Alexandria or Istanbul. Notwithstanding, critics of the culturalist approach to borders often adopt very different views of underlying social conflict in this region located at the heart of cultural boundaries.

In fact, the contemporary review of the transformation of capitalist geography (which until recently divided the world into centre and periphery), as well as the revision of the notion of the border as a social laboratory (such as the Chicago school unveiled with regard to their own city), were, among other reasons, some of the primary questions that made me open up just such a border debate. Hence, in this paper we will outline some of the ways these debates are developing, which concern not so much the collapse of borders, as their metamorphosis.

## 1. From the geopolitical line to conflict in the globalization era

In a classical sense, we understand borders as linear structures in space distinguishing a geopolitical discontinuity embodied in three main aspects: real, imaginary and symbolic. For Foucher (1991:38), borders operate within the delimitation of a state's spatial area, at the boundary between natural and artificial borders, between good and bad, colonial and national, between line and zone, and in the distinction between unique and diverse. However, in this work we will try approaching them another way, from the logic and contradictions encompassed by globalization. Thus, contrary to the classical geopolitical studies in which borders appear as inert study frames, in our ethnographic display borders are imagined as the expression of globally sophisticated socioeconomic processes. In general terms, the classical border concept takes a geographical notion which includes administrative boundaries in relation to the political and strategic functions of the state (Foucher 1991:9); that is why, even if we witness large transformations, the role of the state has been (and still is) analytically present.

From the *longue durée* perspective, we can understand how history has managed to form borders so that they become naturally entrenched and therefore difficult to uproot (Braudel 1993: 302-303). In spite of this, it does not mean we defend a naturalized border concept. These areas are much more than a pure border, they are reflected as strategic research sites, as a good telescope of how to look at the world today, as historian Pierre Vilar indicated when he noted that "the history of the world is best observed from the frontier" (Sahlins 1989: xv). And this reflection is never truer than when it represents the specific relationship between borders and the contemporary nation-state, as exposed through our selected regions. Besides, following Sahlins, it is at borders where the political context is most susceptible to political impact. It is certainly in just such a landscape where the nation-state can

reappear with a peculiar strength by flying the flag of national sovereignty, even in contemporary times. Resulting, on the one hand, in the use of its hard security arm to territorialize and protect its own sovereignty rights, while on the other –and very particularly in this period of globalization– in creating the ripe conditions for human rights abuses in border zones.

Consequently, viewed in this way, this type of border analysis overcomes the classical geopolitical approach and leads us to other complex realities specific to the study of international migration tools, such as social networks, the circularity of contemporary mobility and transnationalism. As an example, we can suggest how borders arise in some global city neighbourhoods where, typically, first world areas are adjacent to third world districts. During this process, economic or nomadic migrants settle on the same side of the urban border, borders that internalize the enmity found at the actual border, and feed into the creation or development of new minorities that inhabit those marginal border spaces. Such is the case of Los Angeles –and many other cities around the world– where communities co-exist side by side, in very particularly identified neighbourhoods.

We can see similar processes on the other side of the Atlantic. This construct of the foreigner as an enemy acquires a peculiar relationship when it's attributed to neighbours in Southern European countries, in this case to the South and to the East of the Mediterranean, and owes much to the concept of the *ante portas* foreigner as being those which threaten the safety of our own home (used by Quassoli, 2004, regarding the situation in Italy and evoking allusions to Bauman). In these cases, insecurity and uncertainty linked to globalization are expressed as a defence of our territory –our neighbourhood, our city, our apartment block– and devolves on complex paradigms around the stranger, the neighbour and the enemy.

In a contemporary sense, therefore, we conceive borders in our inter-regional exploration as being the nucleus of a global economy that augurs a new phase of capitalist accumulation and urban structuring, where an interpretive reading is guided by borders in specific regions. In our case, a particular interpretation evolves from observing space at the margins, or even between margins, at the borders of this global capitalism. In addition, if we go beyond portraying the border itself and strive to see further inside we find border life and transborder life. This type of cross-border life is not entirely new, but perhaps what is novel are the kinds of implications regarding contemporary mobilities. The identities of people who live along the border are in continuous reconstruction and today, more than ever, in the context of global capitalism. In this sense Staud (1998) tries to explain the case of the US city of El Paso, showing how at least one-third of the households located on either side of the border is engaged in informal work, shaping it as a crossing space in order to generate family income. For her, this context is well marked by a kind of typical global capitalism –with its porous borders, its free informalization– from the end of the 20th century onwards.

Even though criticized as ethnocentric, the United States-Mexico border region has been extremely influential regarding the historical context of borders, and continues to be so today since it is very useful in representing the paradigmatic example of the border crossing, of the types of circulation – and the multiplicity of cross-border circuits which are in evidence – of material mixtures with various forms of resistance that come into play (see also the case of Ciudad Juárez in Vila 2003b). However, from the perspective of North American cultural studies, work on the border has failed, to my mind, partly by overusing the metaphorical notion of the border and getting stuck on forms of cultural hybridity. These are mostly exemplified by the border metaphor and, in part, as Vila also indicates when he reviews current border studies that are tending towards two extremes – one that essentializes difference in any border meeting and the other that ignores any differen-

ces (Vila 2003c:213). By doing this the author criticizes an existing, more culturalist, type of literature which is closer to visions of a postmodern world one would describe as fragmented, in which one must overcome borders; a world where the migrant is located within processes of differential identity and of deterritorialization (Barrera 1995; cited in Vila 2003b: 310). In sum, it's a literature that positions the migrant "travelling acrobat" along borders, where he/she is located as a strategic subject of border studies, especially, as Vila illustrates, when he/she is bilingual. In reality, many Mexicans in the United States are not living in this bilingual world as they are mostly monolingual, as Vila specifies.

Finally, another interesting point about new configurations, which is still classical but nevertheless seems new, is the topic related to the experience of border conflict, where the idea of the border exemplifies open conflict in the global world; where the border is the ideal setting for a conflict or a potentially militarized conflict, or even low intensity warfare, based mostly on consistent estimates of border deaths. In this sense, the regulation of borders takes, in principle, a very physical form. The fundamental aspect of this framework is the impact of border control. Thus, there are multiple authors who frequently analyse police reports of undocumented migration that estimate the number, the causes and location of migrant deaths in the southwest United States. At these borders official deaths from hyperthermia, hypothermia and dehydration have presented a sharp increase over recent decades, corresponding with the strengthening of border control (Magaña 2011).

In the RBM book, Alonso Meneses (2011) writes about a search for comparative elements. In this work he concentrates on the risks taken at the border on both sides of the Atlantic. By excavating at this site, he discovers how Spain is going through the same series of chain reactions that resemble those that happened on the Northern Mexico border some years ago. When entry points used by migrants and coyotes are blocked off, new and potentially dangerous access roads must be found at any cost, even if



that cost is measured in human lives. When the United States closed their historical migration routes and entry points into California and Texas, the flow of migrants went instead to the deserts of Arizona and Sonora. When Moroccan and sub-Saharan migrants could not enter Ceuta and Melilla, or cross the Strait of Gibraltar, the bottle-neck caused a search for new routes from The Sahara and Northern Mauritania, implying a deviation of hundreds of nautical miles. However such transits do again reappear, if we think about the tragedies in the borders of Ceuta and Melilla during February 2014. In this high-risk business, Alonso Meneses also describes how the parallel services of coyotes and carriers are put in place, in America and in Africa. Given the risk of crossing, the author highlights the role of vulnerable actors. Women have been one of the most abused groups (see also Bejarano and Morales 2011), and human rights violation a constant, but the flows persist despite the known risks. Ferrer (2011) also addresses the implications and characteristics of the current model of border management at Ceuta and Melilla, emphasizing its symbolic dimension. The author traces a descriptive tour around the militarization of the border landscape, chronicling and interpreting the tragic events that took place at the perimeters of the Spanish enclaves in North Africa during the autumn of 2005 (the so-called ‘fence crisis’ in Ceuta and Melilla which also flared again during 2013), as well as the consequences.

Border conflict closely concerns the blockade on freedom of movement related to all forms associated with border closure (e.g. militarization, increase in the number of police officers, introduction of new technology, etc.). Thus if conflict used to be a classical element of border studies, today we reinterpret it as being linked to resistance. And by this we mean an affirmation that borders may also be conceived as forms of resistance to neo-liberal globalization. Consequently, the border city is a distinct place of resistance.

The study of the border theme in a global context repeatedly recalls metaphors of openness and crossing, especially of capital, and

of closing down towards specific population groups. However, it's rare that studies reassess the effects of mobility and this closing down as being a result of the unevenness of the capitalist system. In a way, this has already been indicated by Heyman and Campbell (2004), for example, when they debated their own results on the so-called “ports of entry” into the United States. Heyman, in many of his studies, refers to these ports as the nodal points of a world system. He also explains that the global world does not consist simply of an open field, but rather of a puzzle of uneven terrain where the complex pattern of manoeuvres put in place by those who cross borders and state controls provides us with some vital clues about the “making and remaking” of globalization. Borders today play a very broad role where control becomes ethically problematic and where borders follow filtering categories based on social inequality. He refers to unequal and differential mobility which makes us think about enclosure and mobility at the same time. By analysing this filtering process he puts the issue of scrutiny and profiling on the centre stage as people have a lesser or greater chance of being heavily inspected. Hernández (2011) also connects to this type of approach when she uses the criterion of ritual and classification of minors through a historical comparison in “El Paso del Norte” border.

Here, therefore, we face a transformation that goes further from the geopolitical line. To be more specific, we undertake a series of case studies that, to us, suggest that those processes exist in border cities thanks to a series of specific elements. In the cities we observed, such as El Paso, Tijuana, Tangier, Ceuta and Melilla, we were witness to a particular space where contradictions tend to appear in a very forceful way when concerned with the differences between a common life (similar patterns among everyday border practices) and the reinforcement of borders (Schengen 1991 and the construction of Fortress Europe): the deterioration of human rights conditions –especially from 2000 onwards– and the reinforcement of the border closure between the United States and Mexico after 9/11, etc.

## 2. A spatial reconfiguration

Globalization here is identified from a multiplicity of social forces. Any change would not be solely economic or technological. The globalists' conception denotes a set of processes that operate within the structures of social power (as well as military, political and cultural power). The processes are not globally homogeneous, however, since key processes of differentiation analysis demand a spatial analytical axis.

The interrelations between the different spatial hierarchies –through regionalization tendencies and the emphasis on locality– become, from this perspective, a breakdown of fluid and dynamic relationships. We are observing a reorganization of space and time into new patterns of social interaction, enabling new forms of transnational social organization as well as a reorganization of relations between the territory and the socioeconomic and political space. Notwithstanding, the prevailing vision concerning the literature on globalization conveys a very different impression of spatial issues. The debates about globalization constantly question time –the real time connection and transaction– when reference is made to the end of geography, the disappearance of borders, etc. However, when we emphasize borders as theoretical-empirical strategic sites we are reinforcing how significant space is. Our emphasis on the border, and especially on border cities, serves to strengthen our interest in recovering material places, which would be, in Sassen's terminology, a recovery of production sites and place-boundedness, key parts of economic globalization (Sassen 2000).

The literature on globalization emphasizes how deterritorialization and circulation (of capital, information, ideas and people's mobility) make spatial barriers irrelevant. Nevertheless, we continue to claim that space is still a paramount factor –and, thus, the border– and therefore this is why border research has become, to my mind, a subject that is so strategically relevant. This location allows us to reflect on the reinterpretation of spatial scales in the

framework of the transformation of global capitalism, and we should approach it from two angles, observing how global capitalism simultaneously reterritorializes and deterritorializes (Deleuze and Guattari 1980).

Thus I sustain a line of argument that would contain a vision of space in the globalization era where space is cartographically reflected, not in the more traditional sense of flat surface cartography, but in integration into a global mapping. From my point of view, it is especially at borders where we can better reach a deconstruction of the components of offshoring: from regimes aimed at national-level decentralization, privatization and the deterritorialization of institutions and places of production. In any case, we should be cautious with these statements; globalization does not imply a simple delocalization, but a reterritorialization conformed by original reconfigurations, as we will see when reflecting on the post-industrial location.

More precisely, changes related to globalization processes and the way they are spatially represented make us reflect on new theoretical and empirical issues and, more specifically, about the way in which economic and political processes territorialize in border areas. It is clear that borders are not in the same hierarchy of power as other global cities, but are connected to these and play a leading role in North-South relations and relationships that affect the processes of the global economy's triadization. Both old and new frontiers lead us to wonder about a redefinition of spatial scales across different parts of the world. It is not so much how to establish a comparison between such places as being able to appreciate their role as passages or obstacles to mobility, or both simultaneously. There are several authors in the RBM book who try to move closer to this reality from the following relations: new industrial relations affected by the informalization of the labour market and in particular cross-border trade; new labour patterns export

areas; the configuration of households affected by new patterns of international migration (i.e., feminization and “minorization” of migration flows, meaning more presence of children and young people), and the development of remittance-dependent economies; complex diversification in migrant typology, etc.

In one way or another all of the contributions relate to these phenomena and specific cases of inquiry in the study of global capitalism and its scales. Using its territorializing arm, global capitalism de-localizes and re-localizes, activating the links within commodity chains that go from the production of raw materials to the distribution of products, especially in the case of the textile industry and the automotive and computer-related industries. In addition, this global capitalism, which is always in search of profit and weakens trade unions’ influence, is typical of the very flexible *maquila* labour force (often classified within peripheral Fordism), that encourages strongly marked gender practices (which are also present in the forms of prostitution, sex tourism and mail-order brides), frequently found in border regions.

Against a background of common problems (very heterogeneous in terms of magnitude), socio-historical conditions, cultural context, etc., the scalar focus becomes even more complex. In other words, when we make an effort to understand globalization at the empirical level we face both problems, whether related to the comparative issue or related to scale, to the extent that regional macro indicators are only one part of our comparative problems. The same occurs when we look for visible scales at a micro-level. We will also seek here the way in which territorial scales can be used to explain global socio-economic dynamics and their interaction with local particularities.

In this constant observation of spatial scales we recognize at least three substantial forces. First of all, “triadization” points to the new centres of capitalist accumulation: the United States (South and West), Western Europe and Japan, as well as the newly industrial countries. Furthermore, the economic emergence of Brazil, India, and China and the con-

text of the Global Financial Crisis make for the very real possibility that the global economy’s centres of gravity could radically shift. This force gives us a pattern of global capitalism on a planetary scale.

Secondly, we locate regionalization, which gives us a context for evaluating economic and migratory restrictions in the light of border de-territorialization. On this scale, borders are also externally projected; they extend beyond their real space with specific forms of control and differentiation among populations. Regional action can be seen, for example, in the processes of European regionalization and bordering related to NAFTA’s economic processes. Under such global conditions, we should contemplate other central actors such as the International Organisation for Migration, private companies and non-governmental organizations.

The third theoretical influence concerns recognizing the significance of the urban scale when we explore specific processes as well as when we view their conflict at the heart of the local scene. In it, the urban question is presented as the most farsighted section in the study of globalization processes. Today, border cities illuminate our studies with contradictions and conflicts, in particular in their specificities: Tijuana, Tangier, Ceuta, and Melilla-Nador. In these cities, populations experience differences arising from both border crossing and border reinforcing. Examples of border crossing are, for instance, the cleaning ladies and care workers for the elderly, who commute daily to Ceuta and Melilla; the cross-border family networks between Tijuana and San Diego, Ciudad Juárez and El Paso; the smugglers of basic products who engage in long routes from Ceuta and Melilla, etc. Examples of border reinforcement are restrictions arising out of Schengen 1991; multiple blockade operations in both regions; the abuse of human rights of Sub-Saharan and Central-American populations; the reinforcement of the Mexico-U.S. border after 9/11, etc.

Is this then a redefinition or a spatial re-configuration? Through the many debates we had during the seminars, as well as through

my own research, we are witness to how we are living in a complex form of deterritorialization which we can make into the cornerstone that links borders and migrations; the new role of the nation-state –reproducing old roles and combining them with new administrative ones– as well as categories and subcategories that are used for classifying types of mobilities and types of populations.

Consequently, in the topographic and geopolitical sense of the term we go beyond the notion of border, which leads us to a conceptualization of the meaning of the externalization of borders (distinguishing between the different notions of transit and diversification of migrants' routes) as well as internalization (within the territory of the nation-state in a paradoxical fight against the irregular). Thus, in this process of externalization (by FRONTEX EU border security policy), sending countries interfere with the control effectuated by another nation-state. This process is also connected to a sophisticated and dispersed tightening up of control and surveillance inside and at the borders.

Indeed, there are many European borders related to mobility restriction that are not located on the classical sites of conflict of the

1990s, such as the Strait of Gibraltar or the Otranto Channel. Today, the list of sites is a good deal more complex: Lesbos; Malta; Lampedusa (especially after the 2013 tragedy); the Sicilian Channel and other borders of Southern Italy; Calais-Dover (with a Schengen border); the borders of the East, etc. We can say, however, that on many fronts, Spain is still one of the toughest countries in Fortress Europe, having become this iconic model over the past two decades. The changes are evident. Taking Spain as our example, we realize how those problematic borders have today been displaced from the Strait of Gibraltar and African enclaves to, more recently, the Canary Islands. On the one hand, the change is due to the effect of a reconstruction of the migratory routes and, on the other, to the displacement of border controls to the south. Today those controls descend into a country as geographically distant from old Europe as Gambia, and continue to develop intensively in the places of passage or transit (the Maghreb). What's more, such spatial redefinition of borders is in the armoury of migration control, which does not finish here. It also affects ports and airports, revealing Madrid-Barajas airport as one of the main gateways of Latin American migration into Europe.

### 3. Collecting the harvest of a debate

As mentioned, the RBM was basically the result of a debate that continued over almost four years (from 2006 to 2009, held in Aix-en-Provence, Tijuana, A Coruña, Tangier). Such an exchange provided a unique opportunity to share ideas, theories and transatlantic strategies in order to compose a border perspective from which to analyse the growing social problems related to the impacts of global capitalism.

We have also managed to delineate a re-interpretation of social processes, taking into

account the current dynamics of mobility and its representations in recent decades. In order to do so, the axis of the discussion has been located in the study of common phenomena in both regions of interest: transnational practices; relocation industry through the *maquiladoras*; the creation of “off-shore” zones; the emergence of transnational mobility; the increased passage of thousands of undocumented workers; the new role of women and border families' strategies; the representations and practices

of these spaces; the global meaning of border control; the persistence of the multiple material and digital types of wall; the symbolism of death in border spaces; the social position of minors and their lack of rights –all while taking into account the socio-cultural specificities of each region as a whole.

Very synthetically expressed, these seminars and debates basically provided us with three focal areas to which we can address our border vision. Firstly, they give us an axis of reflection on the articulation of the border (from where, from what kind of actor, from which framework of global interpretation), taking into account a historical perspective (with the weight of conquest and colonial occupation). We include the border concept and its typological variety as well as the infinite constructions of the border from the metaphorical and culturalist angle.

Secondly, these seminars have helped us to detail empirical processes on a global scale. We refer to those mainly linked to global mobility, the opening of transnational capital and the homogenizing economic forces of globalization, which lead us to rethink the articulation of convergent and divergent social processes. However, within these circuits linked to globalization are also forms of control and forms of transnational living of persons and capital as the analytical core of cross-border practices. This type of discussion also helped us move into our reflection on space, a crucial dimension in these contemporary approaches to globalization, becoming an essential focus of the comparison.

By addressing the content of the seminars retrospectively, we realized that right from the start there was a decisive prominence of comparative problems. The research questions arising from relating border to current forms of immigration control in different societies are powerful illustrations of broader problems related to contemporary mobility, and to the new role which the nation-state has to face in articulating global changes. From the modest research at our disposal and from the not-so-strong theoretical frameworks available in the

literature there is no serious comparison possible. Neither do we dispose of a set of systematic case studies which can bear comparison in fitting the proposed regional scales. Furthermore, we cannot remedy the imbalance of bibliographical production between the two regions. As a point of illustration, by using the key word entry “United States-Mexico border region”, we can identify a full catalogue in the United States Library of Congress, whereas we do not have such entries for Mediterranean borders. It is not my intention here, however, to offer a border *vade mecum*. I am fully aware of the limitations but seek to grasp the opportunity anyway, despite our own gaps. In the aforementioned book, for instance, there are two critical absences: a contribution on the impact of the wall constructed between Palestine<sup>2</sup> and Israel and a strong contribution about the border as it applies to the European construction.

Moreover, during the 1990s, one of the key features of the European Union’s immigration policy was the increasing integration of policy and border control techniques. According to Mezzadra (2005) we are at the limit of the so-called “non-democratic” democracy, a limit where control techniques would be against what the author called “diritto di fuga”, the right to escape, the right a migrant has to control his/her own mobility. Following this perspective we could also include a reflection on Europe from within its own borders. This European construction cannot be limited to Mediterranean borders although that does interrelate closely with the way they have been thought out in Eastern Europe, as Goytisolo sharply highlights: is there a beautiful and cultivated version of Europe, and another barbaric, Balkan one that we can ignore and remove from our consciousness? (Goytisolo 2003: 10). We should add at this point something about

2 In other works we have seen how such a contemporary border reference is set in the Palestinian case. The references to border theory from Vila, the references to Barth, Van Gennep, De Genova, Khosravi, Mezzadra, Neilson frames Navones’ fieldwork in the Sinai on the idea of crossing and reinforcing of borders, the establishment of ‘border devices’ filters, selections for rejection, slowing down, waiting and expulsions (Navone 2014).

the way they have been constructed; about how the border theme in contemporary Europe has been particularly persistent in the Balkan region, when the opening up of post-Communist countries is discussed. Such a notion of border in a country like Albania (see more detail in Ribas-Mateos, 2005), can serve as a paradigm after a long period of seclusion and isolation for the implications of various political crises. Without a doubt, this reconfiguration has opened Albania up to Europe and to the globalized world.

Underlining my own research, I have presented a perspective conceived from the dynamics in the Southern Europe border location (for a more detailed discussion, see the Mediterranean *caravanserai*, Ribas-Mateos 2001, and subsequently in Ribas-Mateos 2005). The old channel between Spain and North Africa, the Braudelian River, or even the Mediterranean Río Grande described by Russell King<sup>3</sup> (1998), may not be a natural border, especially when we recall that, at the beginning of the 16th century, the Strait of Gibraltar becomes a political border for the first time in history. Although its degree of permeability has been variable ever since, today it marks a political, economic and possibly ideological border.

The comparative challenge is decisive, especially when one bears in mind the similarities and differences in the framework of the transatlantic space, historical factors in the macro and micro approach to borders and the focus on units of analysis such as border cities and regions. However, the comparative challenge also includes multiple problems that exceed the space we have on these pages, problems such as whether the Mediterranean, from our perspective, is a good comparative framework or not. Arguments from this extensive debate can be found in Ribas-Mateos (2005: 6-10 and 25-27), but at this stage we can certainly make a number of remarks. According to Sempere, (A Coruña seminar) the border in the Mediterranean region is highly complex; it includes border wars –for example, the Sahara–

the historical role of harbour cities such as Marseille and Genoa, and the presence of multiple nation-states. In short, they are sharply dissimilar regions and do not even use the same concept to express the notion of region or regionalization (see in this sense, the classic work on the rescaling of Europe by Brenner, 1999). If we take a look at an example, the construction of the periphery of the Southern States in the US, for instance, does not involve the same construction of “periphery” as we find in Andalusia or in Northern Morocco.

On the other hand, a more or less comparative methodology gives us a complex terrain where we can locate an interesting conjunction of macro and micro, structure and agency, global and local analytical frames. The issue of the border in this double geographic pole provides us with a fruitful hypothesis and a theoretical source on where to engage in several levels of analysis: global, regional, urban and transnational. It also offers us a variety of disciplines and diverse approaches that are both cultural and socioeconomic in nature. “The border” is without doubt, fully immersed in a more contemporary socioeconomic context, which will be underlying throughout the article. Such contexts include the blurring of national borders, triadization and regionalization processes, deterritorialization and externalization of borders, relocation and industrial relocation and the emergence of global migrations. It is also a key issue for those who are interested in the use of interdisciplinary approaches.

It is clear, therefore, that we are talking about a type of border very different from the ones we were taught about back at school. Today borders are, in part, areas of strong attraction for immigration (key sites for internal migrations, waiting platforms for international migrations from Central American and sub-Saharan Africa, etc.). They are also stopping places, settling places and destination sites, a springboard for new migration routes. But they are also places of social vulnerability. By this I mean a vulnerability displayed in many different ways, whether urban, ecological, or through the increasing presence of specific ac-

3 King (1998:10) recalls the previous use of the Río Grande epithet in the context of the Mediterranean by Rufin (1991) and Montanari and Corsese (1993).

tors who are vulnerable in mobility standards, such as unaccompanied migrant children who, according to Jiménez (Tijuana seminar), are trapped between the protectionist logic of child protection (national and universalistic) and the expulsion logic of the criminalization of irregular migration, whether in Europe or in the United States – albeit it seems much tougher in the United States. She mentioned that whereas in the case of Mexicans, it's the children who are often the ones left behind, with Moroccans they are the ones who leave their families at their place of origin. Simultaneously, these are actors who emerge from social exclusion set up by a lack of social protection in public policy – an exclusion also affected by the feminization of poverty – and the relocation of production processes. Such vulnerability has been much researched in the case of the Pueblo Indians in the US-Mexico border region.

In any case, if the key of comparison when using fixed socio-economic indicators for each area to be investigated was difficult to detect, the RMB's authors think that we can focus instead on different ways of unveiling a specific social relationship by introducing the important social process underlying it. So, from here onwards, we appreciate an approximation of the sense of parallel processes between one region and another that we gain from the various contributions across the different seminars.

Firstly, we can indicate that there is a cultural representation of the border. We also intend to reach the border comparison by the way it is represented, since as Berumen noted (during the seminar in Aix-en-Provence), this is an integral part of its history. He spoke in detail about representation across a broad range of arts: from literature, film and media, from its oral source and from the music around it. He reviewed the metaphor of the open city, along with that of the border as the boundary between good and evil, relating it to the city of passage and the metaphor of the dumping ground. However, for us the open city does not mean a space outside regulation and restrictions such as in Berumen's Tijuana, but one that fits into the space of being a potential mix.

In this search for the Tijuana border condition, we can tackle commonalities with Mediterranean cities like Tangier. They share the presence of distinct populations who intend to cross the border, the multiple forms of transit and mobility; they are both holding bays for industrial relocation. Tijuana also “represents everything that is rejected, what can only be excluded and, so to speak, expelled or evacuated to the margins” in the same way as we have appreciated with the formation of Albania as a periphery of Europe (in Ribas-Mateos 2005).

Secondly, our research is concerned with comparative aspects between communities, notably those that emphasize migrant communities such as the Mexican community in Los Angeles and the Maghreb community in Marseilles. Much existing research on Mexican migration has focused on Los Angeles and on what this community means for new borders within large metropolises (Tijuana seminar). In Marseilles, there are also many studies that, over the past decade, have highlighted the importance of North African communities, Algerian in particular, that live in the centre of the city as well as at the periphery (Manry and Peraldi 2001, Peraldi 2004).

Turning to the Mediterranean side, Sempere (in the Aix-en-Provence and Tijuana seminars), draws our attention to the fact that millions of citizens of North African origin who have been living in Europe for decades have, over a length of time, acquired close ties of both a social and economic nature, while still maintaining family bonds within their regions of origin in the Maghreb. One of the main features of this community is the pendulum movement, all the coming and going of people, services and material and immaterial goods between the two regions. Spain plays a key role in this movement; the southern Spanish ports are the origin of shorter –and cheaper– routes to Maghrebian connections. This situation is accompanied by other aspects such as the improvement of infrastructures, the increase in ferry lines and the elimination of borders in the EU.

While Sempere focuses on the Maghrebian community in Europe, on the other side

of the Atlantic, Cruz (Aix-en-Provence seminar) highlights the role of Mexican migration. He does so from the study of two of the main migratory flows of greatest visibility and importance: the international migration of Mexicans to the United States and the migration from rural or urban areas towards the large urban areas of Mexico, which underlines the migration to the border cities of the north of the country. These two migration processes have set the pattern for strong social and economic transformations in Mexico.

Thirdly, we could speak of a deterritorialization process regarding the border not only in relation to the textile industry but also around intensive agriculture. We articulate this deterritorialization in the sense that globalization forces do not only restructure the industrial labour force but also build a complex internal delocalization within the world of agriculture. As surely as this happens in California regarding the Mexican labour force in agriculture, in the book Potot makes it clear through sociological research into the “plastic” agriculture is not only a Californian phenomenon, as it occurs in Andalusia in Spain and in Bouches du Rhône in France as well. They are close to borders through which new migration flows occur, flows characterized by the presence of men and women as well as by a very pronounced geographical mobility. We outline here the itineraries of highly globalized migration flows coming from a multiplicity of geographic areas, not necessarily those local to the place of work.

Fourthly, we can say that one of the comparative themes that appears most forcefully throughout the seminars (and would later be reflected in the book), comes from those contributions that chose the *maquila* as their main focus of border research, contributions such as the ones from Barajas, Lopez, Kopinak, Mercier, Nair and Solis (presented across

various seminars). In various ways, their contributions often revolve around the question of whether the classical model of exploitation –using cheap and unqualified labour– is still alive. Most authors would point out how the Mexican *maquila*, typical of the first generation of the 1970s garment industry, is the same model found today on the other side of the Atlantic, in the Maghreb. Nowadays, the third generation of the garment industry is characterized by a process of Mexicanization –that is, strong integration into a local model, the use of advanced technology and men’s entry into the labour force.

Fifthly, the phenomenon of border deaths is set as a common axis of perspective, present throughout all our seminars. The theme of death is always related to a change of routes. The increased danger in the desert crossing, a longer sea journey (e.g. Canary Islands instead of through the Straits of Gibraltar), the vulnerability during crossing and major human rights violations – these are all reasons for a spike in numbers of border deaths. The majority of contributors also highlighted how this change in routes has reached Kafkaesque proportions (according to the conclusions of the debate at the Seminary in Tijuana).

Sixth, and lastly, an analogy of roles between Mexico and Morocco was always present in the background research, especially with regard to specific topics such as child migration, the *maquila* as an icon or the diversification of migratory routes. This border reflection also demonstrates that there are a number of intermediate-level countries (located in the nexus of the North-South relations), that acquire a considerable role in industrial relocation and migration issues. At any rate, the comparative range, or rather, the range of parallel processes that translate more or less throughout the book, has been articulated through many other elements which we discuss next.



## 4. The fruits of the book: an itinerary

### (a) On contrasting borders

To start with, I should mention that border contrasts are established upon a series of problems in terms of historical concepts: border terminology, use of a vocabulary related to migrations and comparative problems in social sciences. Heyman (2011) emphasizes how mobility inside and outside the space of national control is basic to the study of contemporary borders, and he indicates at least four perspectives:

- i. On mobility at borders, indicating how contemporary borders sort or filter people (here using the classifying effort of ‘sorting’, which becomes the axis of his ethnographic studies from recent years) into different types of people and goods, based on a complex set of social, economic and cultural inequalities. The author delineates privileged actors as more likely to espouse liberal cosmopolitanism in favour of open borders, an ‘imagined community’, and part of a prosperous globalism. The equation is not as simple as one might think –it’s a dilemma between the opening up and closing down of borders. Heyman noted how contemporary borders in this form of differential mobility are not only open or closed, but can display a simultaneous nature. The author concludes that borders are both open and closed, then introduces the idea of mobility filters marked by social inequality.
- i. The second perspective is on ethnic/national separation,
- ii. The third covers border symbolism, in line with Mary Douglas’ categorization (1966) about the existence of all sorts of “external borders”, from bodies to caste, and,
- iii. Border cultures and identities through the relationship between populations on

different sides of the El Paso border are examined, using the border identity in Vila’s ethnographies as a framework of analysis (2000, 2005).

A second line of thought developed by Garcia Sánchez (2011) invites us to a theoretical reflection on borders and on the thresholds of urbanity. This text provides us with an interesting way to contemplate the contemporary socio-spatial phenomena located in areas where borders are vital to analysing social life, segregation, vulnerability, provisionality and the hospitality related to territorial openings. In this chapter we appreciate a good group of terms that are very useful in the terminology of this border revision. He uses valuable analytical concepts which cover our contrasting border concepts, such as the in-betweenness of urban life; the concept of contiguity; and the idea of the global city – key in technology changes. In the concept of the “foreigner” as the “alien” and the stranger in the city, this relates to the notion of the stranger or outsider, and is connected with hospitality as well as with a Simmelian conception of urban populations. Garcia Sánchez looks at the idea of vulnerability, understood here within the scope of risk and vulnerability, thus being deployed as a category of (inter) action which facilitates the understanding of subjects, objects and relationships, which are featured in a heterogeneous composition and dissymmetrical nature. For our part, in the RBM book we have employed the notion of vulnerability to focus on specific border area social population groups, which tend to be children and women, where we understand implicitly the identification of groups with an absence of rights.

The author also draws our attention to the concept of the gated community. He points out its existence in cities which are composed of enclaves of gated communities (security zones as contemporary zones of segregation and a form of privatizing space within the new market of surveillance). Gated communities would

be in contrast to other areas of security, to the “sensitive areas” as they are designated in France, when naming peripheral neighbourhoods. These and many other concepts are linked directly with the conceptual terms of our border perspective: the notion of ‘community’ (different from the classical one relating to Barth’s ethnic, and Anderson’s imagined, communities); the idea of filtering and asymmetric filters (also connected with Heyman’s contributions); the concept of the asymmetry of power, making the territorial imbalances visible or asymmetries (as other authors do, especially in US-Mexico border region studies); and the concept of temporality in the provisional city, related to the waiting place commonly encountered in borderlands and to the contemporary concept of transit-countries.

In the third part of this section, Bejarano and Morales (2011) draw their arguments out with a regular but uneven comparison (of the South of the United States-Northern Mexico and Spain-Morocco), creating a concept of social vulnerability in global borders, expressed through multiple systems. This concept has already been used by Garcia (2011), who also attaches the sense of risk to it in identifying these populations which lack human rights protection.

These authors locate a revolving-door type of border in those places, which are also obstacles to mobility (for example, in relation to border militarization) in the so-called new economy. In order to do so they review a range of contextual elements such as colonial histories, forms of migratory movement, export zones and narratives about violence and drug trafficking. Within these elements they include the experiences of vulnerable populations, especially women. In addition they locate what they call the BSC (Border Sexual Context) in a scrutiny of marginal regions suffering from economic exploitation, subjugation of place and sexual and gender violence based on race and class. In their approach, gender interlocks with the structural systems of oppression and it is also related to recent research into femicides. Yrizar (2011) also makes an attempt to engage in a comparative approach, in this case

in the policies of countries of emigration which are at the same time border-countries, especially Mexican policies, and itemising some comparisons with Morocco.

### (b) Macro-economic visions of regions, micro-sociological impact

In this section our analytical effort is to cover the global consequences in border scenarios seen from macro, meso and micro perspectives.

Unlike the rest of the authors, the role of Mendoza’s contribution (2011) is to remind us of the existing border asymmetry using a macro-economic approach. His starting point is the global stage. Trends in the globalization of economic relations and regional economic integration have enabled not only the increase of trade between countries and financial flows, but also intensification in border crossing by a growing number of migrants. The study of the economic aspects of migration in the context of globalization requires a combination of explanations in response to the different dynamics connected to the flows of people from demographic, social and economic points of view. Processes of economic, political and social integration in the context of technological advances make the existence of international economic globalization possible, as well as incorporating them into new areas of the migratory process. The author establishes two variables that attempt to explain the regional scale: economic integration and migration.

In this way, the author gives us to understand that there are migratory similarities –in terms of the type of flows to Europe and to the United States, with respect to the “lack of control” over undocumented migrants– but there are particular differences in relation to the stages of economic development and integration. The tendencies of economic globalization in these regions, within the framework of globalization, have had a decisive impact on the redefinition of the characteristics of labour flows, on the reception countries and on the sending countries.

Murphy (2011) also deals with the processes of globalization, but delves more deeply into the processes of regionalization in border areas. In this sense the articulation of NAFTA through horizontal and vertical features seems to be the main hypothesis of this work. It is also interesting to reveal how NAFTA has marked restrictions on who can cross the border, when and where, thus linking this observation to Heyman with regard to the “sorting” or categorization of the populations. According to the author, in their daily lives those who live and work along the US-Mexico border complement the horizontal movement with other more circular ones, through a life that circulates in the highly criticized space of the “twin city.” The author deals with decisive topics that are taken as fundamental to the development of a bi-national agenda, such as immigration, environmental issues, labour conditions and international trade intensification in the place where there is the most contact between countries: the border.

Barajas (2011) continues the endeavour of describing the processes of economic globalization in the supranational border regions, but here they are addressed through the prism of the bi-national relations that take place between two countries. These relations are set in a domination logic which in turn drives the economic transformations in the United States-Mexico border region. The problems facing local governments on border co-operation mainly result from the migration process and environmental concern (deportation, repatriation of the sick, unaccompanied minors, imprisonment of Mexicans who lose their residence, etc).

Another much echoed issue raised in this border space is related to the *maquiladora* border icon, taken from the exploration of women’s identities (in the form of everyday resistance in the workplace) and the global industry at the United States-Mexico border, as proposed by Lopez (2011). He includes a discussion on border capitalism and the vision of the female victim within the border space. To examine this type of criticism on border

femininity, the author revises the ideal of the *maquila* worker as the antithesis of traditional Mexican femininity, by overcoming the idea of the victim, and by underlining the contrast between the victimization that border academics like to prove and the women’s own self-perception. The production line thus becomes a battlefield for the justification of what represents a good woman or a good man, a good mother or a good father. Furthermore, female participation in the assembly industry and the tensions generated by it are the two phenomena that one could place on both global and local scales.

### (c) Culture at the border

Photographs, paintings, videos, songs and so on are the basis of the cultural production at the border which leads us into a controversial debate on whether or not there is a cultural form of being, speaking, feeling, imagining, and self-identifying in border areas.

Humberto Félix Berumen (2011) reminds us that knowledge of borders should be complemented by the study of how they are imagined, symbolized, practised and lived, since geopolitical borders are also drawn from social representations and symbols that have been configured through the weight of the “imaginary border” (or the symbolism indicated earlier on by Heyman). In this way, the text includes ten reminders of how we can capture the imagined borders, (i) borders are built and imagined, (ii) “bordering” processes make up the set of material practices, discourses and the senses giving body to the border as a recognizable entity, as a process of radical alterity in cultural differences (the North Mexican border), (iii) borders are practised and lived, the border experience is an everyday construction, a relational reality rather than a territorial delimitation, (iv) borders are built and processed using different social practices, narrative, beliefs, stereotypes, metaphors, conceptual categories and cognitive maps that project within cultural representations, (v) borders use discourses elaborated at different levels of analysis.

And he follows a second line of questioning, addressing literary borders, (vi) related to the extensive fiction produced about the U.S-Mexico border, dividing it into an inner and outer vision. Here he underlines the heterotypic border (presenting a place of passage or political boundary, mainly constructed from the centre of the country). (e.g. as with the novelist Carlos Fuentes), (vii) the border as a problem, the scar not fully healed, as in the version of Anzaldúa, (viii) on the dispute about its nature and the way it is represented in the wider social imagination, (ix) the vision from *corridos* and drug trafficking, and (x) the migrants' border: the adventures of Ulysses.

If the previous author offered us a panoramic view on border studies' cultural dimension, Georgieff (2011) moves to the heart of Tijuana to talk about a specific case of border identities: an artistic project carried out in a colony - the Federal colony - in the city adjacent to the border strip. In the process the existence of multiple grades of classical otherness are revealed: *fronterizo*-the neighbours on the other side, the clashes between the outer-inner visions of the border, etc. Starting with an illustration from an anthropological Chronicle, the author embarks on a discourse analysis of "the old Tijuana", the one that is hidden behind the postmodern discourse on the border. It's an enquiry that contradicts many academic views of the border, the so-called land of the "pochos", "tough", or "hybrid" populations, and ends by looking critically at the notion of the border as a transforming laboratory of globalization.

Thirdly, we introduce Suzanne (2011), with his perspective on 'border art,' an issue that virtually none of the other contributions in the volume address. His aim is to combine the art world with that of contemporary mobility, a path opened up by the description of certain forms of social and territorial organization, in being able to discover how the border is less a line or rupture that divides the globalized and globalizing, and more a space of transnational development of artistic phenomena. It uses the Moroccan art scene and its border extensions, in the context of cross-border connections of

Moroccan migration, in networks where art leads to economic, urban and social involvement. Lastly for this section, Alarcón opens up an original topic on the study of language and border themes in the socioeconomic sphere of El Paso. In these relationships, different groups establish monopolistic language rules as their way of controlling resources.

#### (d) A persistent colonial presence

An exploration into challenging border study is incomplete without an understanding of the role that colonial legacies continue to play. Unfortunately, however, we were not lucky enough to obtain content in the RBM book that would review historical border memory, something that would have helped us understand "colonial and postcolonial baggage," when one ponders the lineal delimitation of borders established by imperial powers. We will include here a brief itinerary from the Strait of Gibraltar to Istanbul, then down to Syria and Palestine.

Middle Eastern countries were divided up as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, whereas in the Strait of Gibraltar the process was radically different, the ancient "plazas" were established as borders afterwards, which these days are somewhat anachronistic. Of strategic, geopolitical importance since ancient times, the Strait today has one of highest volumes of maritime traffic in the world.

Even if we only cover cases about the Mediterranean, that does not mean the historical background of the United States-Mexico border is irrelevant, simply that there were no historians attending the seminars who dealt with that area. However, while we have not featured it, we must not forget the existence of an extensive bibliography on the impact of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 whose signing established the border between Mexico and the United States.

De Madariaga (2011) draws attention to the historical vision of borders "between civilization and barbarism", a division which has long prevailed in the Spanish mentality. She elabora-

tes a reconstruction of the geopolitical borders and cross-border relations between Spain and Morocco. In it she underlines the theme of the Spanish possession of the Moroccan Rif from the 18th century onwards, and even traces it back to the Spanish occupation in the 15th century and the presence of the enclaves in Morocco. Those enclaves were perceived as a continuation of *La Reconquista* on the other side of the Strait, therefore shifting the border between the *Dar el Harb* and *Dar el Islam*, which was divided under classical Muslim law. Her contribution provides us with a particular historical contextualization of the relations between the population of the *cabilas* and the military zones, which has a reflection on contemporary economic relations between the enclaves and their neighbouring areas, even if they are bisected by borders.

Aziza (2011) also includes the concept of border in the same region and starts by analysing the development period from the 15th to the 19th century of a static ideology. Both Spain and Morocco conveyed a perception of the border as if it were a dividing line between civilized and under-civilized populations, a barrier between two spaces of political and religious sovereignty. Additionally, he reveals a search of the Mediterranean as being the natural border between Europe and Africa, as well as a study on the role of military bases in the occupation of the Moroccan North by the Spanish Armada. Since time immemorial, they have also been solid poles of commercial attraction.

Returning to this historical perspective and including the Eastern Mediterranean, it is imperative not to ignore the Palestinian case, understood here from the Syrian border and through the eyes of Palestinian refugees (where a new condition of refugee has emerged since the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011). Specific policies remained in place during the last century which devised the segmentation of “historical Syria” into countries controlled by the colonial powers of Britain and France. Particularly, it was the British presence which planted the seed for another type of colonization to grow out of Zionism, with the creation of the State of Israel on Palestinian land. Gijón (2011)

addresses the situation of the population who have suffered greatly from the imposition of geopolitical borders in the Eastern Mediterranean using on a historical perspective. In addition to its past condition stands the breadth of the Palestinian diaspora. In this sense the author provides some precise notes about the evolution of the Palestinian population in pre-war Syria by dividing its development into two parts. To start with, she gives a historical “before and after” account, deepened in the transformational sense of the territories. She researches on the Palestinian refugees’ forced migration in a contemporary sense to convey the notion of border in pre-war Syria.

Sümer (2011) focuses the border notion on a particular historical moment: the exchange of population between Turkey and Greece between 1923 and 1925. These exchanges have affected half a million Orthodox Christians in Turkey and half a million Turks from Greece. The argument that holds the case, according to the author, is the “right to have rights” as the basic principle of cosmopolitan citizenship. He notes that, in order to understand contemporary borders between Greece and Turkey, the conflict in Cyprus, the Kurdish question and the forced migration of Kurds in Turkey, the phenomenon of population exchanges and conditions under which they were made must be permanently and fully revised. Sümer also stresses chief colonial and neo-colonial factors, for example, when he lays emphasis on how the British Empire’s imperial policies were used to create a religious identity between the modern nation-states. Apart from the fact that we think of the Mediterranean as a melting pot of civilizations, thanks to works like Sümer’s, we also realize the significance of religious affiliation in the Mediterranean as both a community liaison and a burden on the construction of otherness.

### (e) Border policies

To open this section we begin with an enquiry into the parliamentary political discourse in

Spain in relation to border control over the past nine years. Fernández (2011) problematizes on the implications of the political discourse-building on immigration in Spain as an incipient process that emphasizes defensive arguments, i.e., those who understand immigration as a problem to solve or a reality on which they must act.

Secondly, unlike the rest of the authors, the work on the Ceuta-Fnideq (also named Castillejos) border by Ferrer (2011), sets research on a contemporary geopolitical scale. The author discusses the problematization of the inter-state classical national borders and the EU perimeter. It is thought-provoking research, in which Ferrer looks at the overlapping of territorial lines to reflect common elements between the colonial border landscape and the postcolonial, showing more detailed similarities between (i) the Spanish *lebensraum* (national) in North Africa in a colonial context and (ii) Euro-Mediterranean political-economic space (setting in motion the Barcelona process and the European neighbourhood policy), which is EU-driven.

Third in this section, we examine the Eastern Mediterranean border on the Greek side, which adds another case to the complex puzzle of coupled situations, such as the Canary Islands and the Strait of Gibraltar or Tunisia-Lampedusa. From the discourse of “urgency” (especially during the summer of 2009) concerning clandestine migration, Sintés (2011) highlights this concern on the border of the Aegean Sea, portraying the situation in cases of countries like France and Italy, which are on the frontline in terms of clandestine migration.

#### (f) “Paper walls”

Here we call for the use of the expression “paper walls” as used in the chapter by Potot (2011). This author describes the situation of foreign people living on the border beyond its physical delimitation, in relation to their situation of being “sans-papiers”; hence the occurrence of “paper walls”, metaphorically playing on the

obstacles within a certain country that may depend on the administrative situation of the foreign person. In this case, Potot highlights that an external control is not always the sole control in place, as is the case of the “sans papiers” in France, where control is imposed not only by the nation-state, but can also come from within, in connection with the labour market or in relation to residence status. This work reminds us that nearly 15 years have gone by since Europe started carrying out such studies into the field of irregularity and of how this has led to people being criminalized. The author designates the category of “sans-papiers,” implying the situation of those people who have been confronted by heavy-duty red tape and multiple police controls.

In our opinion, this “paper wall” is one of the fundamental contributions in the RBM book, along with the consequences of the construction of a wall in the Mediterranean. It is also inserted into a line of work that in one way or another tries to assess how the new role of the state is located in a global context. Thus, the role of state as controller of immigration flows is not relegated to the sovereignty of its actual borders, but is exercised as a way of internal control.

An illustration in the form of sociological research that goes beyond the stage of the physical border is the study at Barajas airport in Madrid, which integrates the migratory strategies of Latin American women (Oso 2011). This border reconstructs the entire migration project, from activating all sorts of migration strategies (borrowing the money for the trip, debt planning) as well as strategies to avoid border control, and finally, strategies that plan the links with the host country.

#### (g) Transit and circularity

In this section three contributions revolve around the Moroccan reality. Firstly, Peraldi’s works have, in recent years, provoked a genuine rupture with the classical construction of contemporary migrations. In this case Peraldi and Rahmi’s purpose (2011) goes beyond a

view on the victimization of migration when exemplified through the discourse analysis about the boats called *pateras* (later including *cayucos* and toy boats). They do so by criticizing the dichotomies surrounding the vision of the *clandestino* as the anti-hero or the adventurous hero and opting for a different analysis, that of the transnational approach of Moroccan migration through Mediterranean borders.

Next, and linked to Peraldi's critical approaches to overcome classic migrations and introduce the analysis of contemporary forms of circularity, Sempere (2011) engages in a descriptive narrative on the circulations over the Strait of Gibraltar passage by the Moroccan population residing in Europe, "la Operación Paso del Estrecho".

Thirdly, Afailal (2011) outlines the vision of global scales descending to the Jebala region, a mountainous border region in North Morocco. He particularly examines the role of remittances and their impact on home and community development in rural areas through the breakdown of patterns in sending and management, as well as the use of remittances and the economic status of women. In this chapter, we have been able to understand the role played by the women left behind. In the Jebala region, rural women assume all responsibilities, domestic and outside the home, all year round. In the case of the spouse who remains in the field, their responsibilities simply multiply.

#### (h) Vulnerability at the crossroads

We open this theme by observing it through the eyes of the migrant minor and their lack of rights protection, through discussions around the concept of childhood and forms of childcare, and by introducing an understanding of the family phenomenon that is behind each case, where families are often characterized by being of mixed migrant status.

There are two chapters that revolve around this recurrent theme of the concept of childhood: the first case is from a temporal perspective, and the second from the perspecti-

ve of a comparative approach between the two regions. Hernández addresses the issue from the border region of Ciudad Juárez-El Paso, using a temporal scale, a historical perspective from the 1920s. She does so to discern the institutionalization of migration as reproducing asymmetries between countries. This historical perspective gives us a proven view of minors' arrests at the border during two different periods, characterized by both their common and their divergent elements: "If in the old days, deportation was the response to an unanswered question, today, it is a form of punishment," she indicates.

Following this particular topic we can relate it to Jiménez and Vachiano's chapter (2011). They underscore the newness of the phenomenon –migrant children as a brand new migratory subject– taking as an analytical context migration in the Western Mediterranean and looking at a specific type, autonomous migration. The challenge of understanding new migrant subjects comprises, according to the authors, a series of efforts that are listed here: understanding their autonomy; their decision-making role; their role in the migration project; and how those efforts link with their family realities. They also underline the role of their peers as well as the character of agency in children's networks. In doing so they do not only highlight forms of agency but also forms of abuse.

Yet not all vulnerability cases are governed by age. On the basis of gender, Kastner (2011) exemplifies this through what she calls "piggybacking the border," as in the case of Nigerian migrants looking to cross the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco. Her work highlights the influence of biopolitics in new border approaches. More specifically, the nature of the crossing, in terms of vulnerability, may really be appreciated from very different angles and, as the author does, is taken here from bio-politics and the impact on linguistic registers in closed border situations. In this way of life, a life of waiting, women create a specific vocabulary that reflects the conditions of secrecy, transition and hope, from their experience lived mostly on the southern shores of the Strait of Gibraltar. Being reduced to no more

than one's body enables a discovery of one's own limits, as in the idea of the naked life (like in Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*), which alludes to both the victims of the Holocaust and to contemporary refugees. The body is, at the same time, medium and object, an object of violence as tackled by Kastner. We can also connect this with Magaña's contribution (2011), which exposes how the search for migrant corpses reinforces and renders the desert visible as a border and as a space of exclusion. More accurately, the practices of counting, locating and categorizing these corpses, as well as their repatriation, make visible the relation between the border space, the state, the subject and the body.

### (i) Death at the border

Apart from the persistent efforts to count and recount the number of migrant deaths as a form of rendering danger visible, the commodification of people as well as the construction of exploitable and missing bodies has served as a strategic location for the analysis of border regions. Similarly, we can grasp this reality through the killing of women in Ciudad Juárez (the well-known femicides, see more detail in Bejarano and Morales 2011), or in bodies going missing in the Arizona desert, and how they are indicative of the absence of human rights protection. In these regions the central social imbalance will surely pass through mobility, and there is a clear-cut divide between those who do not enjoy the privilege of free movement and those who do.

Alonso Meneses (2011) contemplates the two regions under study in the RBM book, which according to the author, are where the world's highest numbers of undocumented migrant deaths take place. The main difference between the two regions, again according to Alonso Meneses, is that the borders of the south of Spain are mostly maritime and the United States-Mexico border is half terrestrial, half fluvial. Another fundamental difference is the age of the migrations themselves, since the Mexico-United States migration dates back

more than 100 years and probably started the very day after the border was drawn up. Crucial to his understanding is the way in which international clandestine migratory movements use organized crime intermediaries, leaving migrants more exposed to risks and liable to pay more expensive fees for border crossing. Alonso reflects on the Spanish case in light of the experience in the United States-Mexico region. He mentions how on the Atlantic side there is greater involvement and investment in the infrastructure and technologies of migrant control/repression, while on the migrants' side, they are exposed to higher death rates in border regions.

Following the thread of our subject of death at the border, Magaña (2011) discusses a piece of fieldwork that takes a theoretical-empirical inside to the migration situation in the Arizona desert. From her perspective, the phenomena linked to globalization and transnationalism have simultaneously caused the relaxation as well as the tightening of the borders and have also become a great focus of attention for academics, politicians and the general public. In this context, the author emphasizes the complexity of border areas and their role as focus of attention and source of inspiration for the conceptualization of postmodern and intermediate spaces. They manifest as both conflicts and as possible responses to the challenges of a present marked by a fluidity of capital, ideas, goods and people on the one hand and, on the other, walls affected by the implementation of control strategies and a rigidity of social exclusion. The efforts of recovery and repatriation of human remains are articulated by the author as three topics: (i) death as disappearance, (ii) death as technocratic handling of human remains and (iii) the efforts of search and recovery of corpses by citizens as a subversion of the border space.

### (j) Spaces of closure or enclosure?

The construction of borders and the installation of "camps for foreign-nationals" (meaning here all existing types of detention-retention



camps), are considered a form of power. Such camps are configured neither as a “space apart,” which is neither outside (abroad) nor inside (the national space).

Lurbe and Enjolras (2011) provide us with a successful introduction to the scenario of the confinement of the contemporary, indicating the establishment of a variety of places of internment with different characteristics: some closed, whose operation is assimilated into the penitentiary environment, others in an open regime but no less urgent and unavoidable; some institutionalized, others quickly improvised by the unexpected arrival of an influx of migrants; some fixed in time and space, others more ephemeral. Likewise, areas of isolation appear at border crossings (airports, ports, customs), detention of foreigners, (forced) stay centres, temporary centres for migrants and asylum seekers, humanitarian emergency aid camps, etc. All of them serve as illustrations of these new contemporary closures.

These forms of closure seek devices for filtering and confining foreigners, institutionalized police practices that fully fail at the locus of the border closure; they are merely trying to patch up a porous border. Thus the internment of “expellable” immigrants institutes a bundle of border locations within the nation-state, as a kind of internal Schengen border. These locations comprised more than two hundred internment centres for foreigners during the EU-27 period. They are forms which, according to the authors (and following Bietlot 2005), derived from the emergence of a political and globally symbolic order, one which Bietlot called the neo-liberalism of public security.

While these authors highlighted the issue in France, Puga (2011) then moved it to the Canary Islands. She points to the idea of the existence of the internment centres with the suggestive title of “the elephant in the room,” alluding to what is really evident and yet still not ‘seen.’ The theme of the centres again removes the very current questions and relates the concerns of the RBM book about the shift of control in spatial terms. Consequently, making a connection then with the reconfiguration of

border spaces, their relocation is conducted through various means: moving towards the South, thus reinforcing them as transit areas, and articulating a diversification of migratory routes. She helps us to recognize the “outside inside”: in other words, the symptom of a global external space (see Puga’s allusion to Raholas’ theoretical antecedents), the expression of the displacement of the formal border in transit, the symbol of a blockage zone inside countries.

### (k) Arenas of resistance

Finally, it felt essential to conclude this work with the issue of border activism. Forms of resistance imply in most cases the defence of human rights in all their forms, as in the case against deportations in the *colonias* in border regions (US-Mexico), recognizing the fundamental human right to family unity. We can mention various forms of resistance and micro-resistance, which has a more religious connotation in the Mexico-US border than in the Mediterranean, as has been shown in “The Posada” case by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011).

In the Tangier seminar some interventions alluded to the following topics: seeking strategic litigation for sub-Saharan cases in transit to stop the repatriations of minors to Morocco; militancy against border deaths caused, for example, by poor healthcare (such as lack of water aid in the desert); establishing networks of female solidarity against violence (especially in Ciudad Juárez), either as the creation of ways of condemning female vulnerability or as cooperative actions among women working in cross-border labour movements.

It is within this form of activism that we can locate Solis’ work (2011), through fieldwork in places as distant and disassociated as Factor X in Tijuana and *Atawasoul* in Tangier, consisting of groups of women working in factories operating within the framework of industrial relocation. The author points out that a substantial part of these organizations’ strength comes from their links with organizations in the

United States and Canada in the case of Tijuana, and with Spain, France and Italy in the case of Tangier, as well as with other organizations within the country of origin. In this fieldwork, Solis underlines conditions of vulnerability at work but points out the efforts to organize a discourse of resistance, going beyond their integration in social development and linking them as citizens. They do, however, encounter problems of leadership and financing which constitute serious limitations.

Finally, research conducted by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011) offers an original ethnography around the “La Posada (or Inn) Without Borders,” as a type of border dispute via political spirituality. It is an elaborated work, as the author says, on one of the most dangerous

frontiers in the world, the United States-Mexico border. The Inn Without Borders is a hybrid event combining political protest and religious ceremony and it provides people with an educational experience about boundaries and identities, as well as a reaffirmation of the spiritual. Through ethnographic research, the author reveals a “personhood” universal discourse, expressed in the form of a “claim.” A claim is understood as a right, applied not only to the discourse of ethnic solidarity or human rights in a post-national analysis (along with Soysal’s line of analysis), but also to a discourse based on the idea of belief, be it religious or moral; a belief built up as an experience and promulgation of a politicized spirituality in a border region.

## 5. Conclusions

Different perspectives from a range of authors have been brought into play to try to find a collective way to organize the border case while also establishing an encapsulated, isolated empirical viewpoint. These cases have all had one thing in common – that of seeing the old view of the border as an asymmetrical relation, which extends out in broad and complex ways. In the case of the EU, for example, we could even map a vision that stretches from Nouadhibou to Cyprus.

In second place, another important view of this network of authors and their mesh of ideas is that the border cannot be analysed in isolation. Neither is it frozen in time – the abrupt changes to the south and east of the Mediterranean since 2011 have added new, unexpected challenges to the global notion of border. Here we have in mind the example concerning the emergence of the southern Turkish border as an entry point for Syrian refugees (see Özden 2013).

However, one of the main results of this effort is the capacity to display a scalar view of the border, a “scale interplay” often avoided in other border studies. Consequently, when we trace back the spatial reconfiguration in globalization studies, underlined at the beginning of this paper, it seems the strongest result follows this line of reflection. Although we call for regional scenarios, we do not insist on a new way or on strict regional comparisons.

Finally, drawing on theoretical resources critical to the understanding of globalization we come to terms with spatial categories. There are at least six elements which are central to our line of reflection throughout this paper, as follows:

- i. regional scope is not shown in a classical geopolitical way, but as the basis for discerning the relational view of the border;
- ii. the emergence of the post-industrial space which brings the transformation of factory life to the forefront;

- iii. the routes and itineraries activated by migrants in a network of global logics, the influence of control routes and new external controls;
- iv. the configuration of the inside-outside, the camps inside the nation-state, the control of people inside the nation-state;
- v. the construction of new entities related to border research as the concept of the border/desert, and
- vi. the concept of spatial mobility as a key border resource and as an identity particular to the *fronterizo*.

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