

Re-mapping the U.S.-Mexico Border

High Agency, Everyday Region-making, and Lived Spaces of The
U.S.-Mexico Border in Tijuana

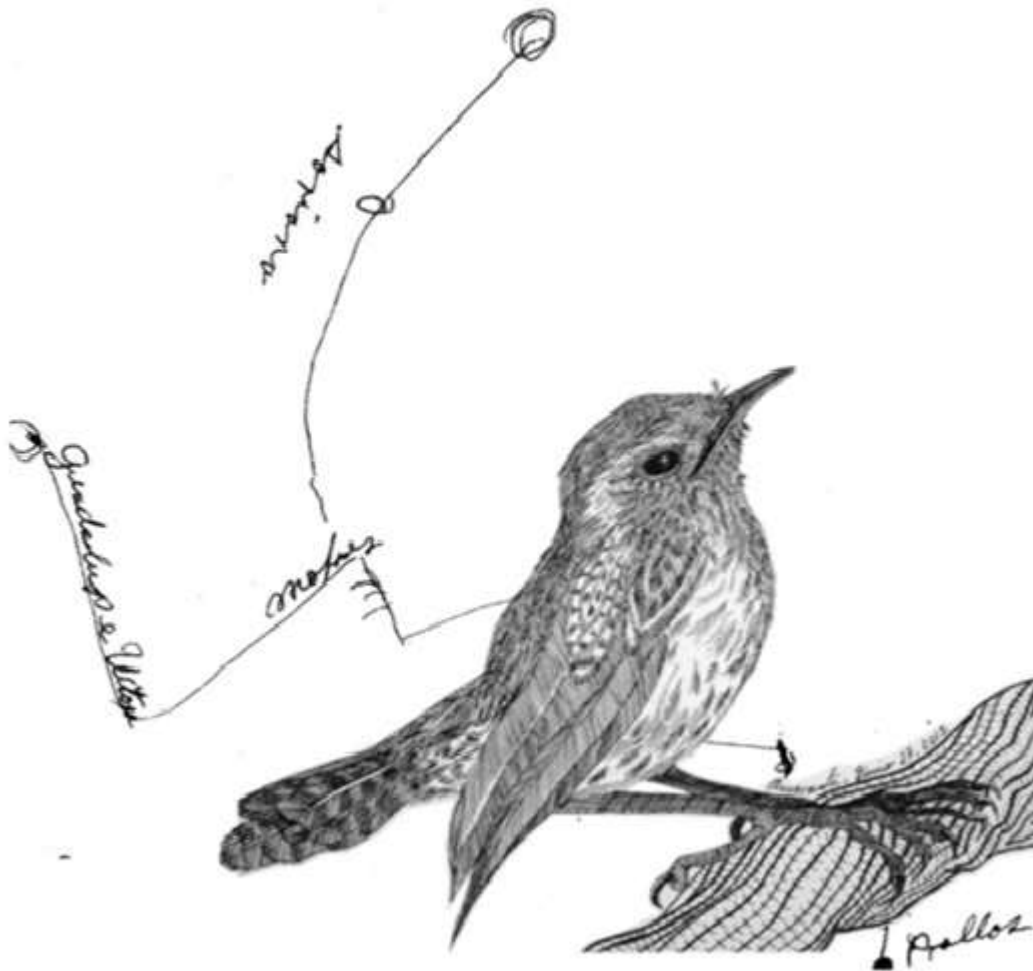


Illustration: Amaranta Caballero Prado
Map credit: Señora Paz, Tijuana, June 2013

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A Thesis

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I would also like to dedicate this work to all the people I met in Tijuana and to all who experience borders as places of transformation and who continue to transform the meanings of borders. The birds part of this work are part of a collaboration with an artist based in Tijuana, Amaranta Caballero Prado, through whom I found a metaphorical symbol, medium to express my inspirations from the people I met and the experiences of my fieldwork in general. Amaranta Caballero Prado is a bird-woman, artist, poet, writer from Guanajuato and based in Tijuana, working on an Auto-Doctoral thesis of drawing 1000 birds titled 'mil pájaros mil'. Why Pájaros? Why Birds? Birds fly beyond human borders, and in this border place people find ways to fly. This work is then for all border birds-people with unending capacity for self-organisation and flying imaginings that cannot be stopped by fences or walls.

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And to mummy, pati, papa, pooj, bhava, uncle and aunty for unquestioningly accepting my choices.





Tijuana tongues

ಈ ಮೂಲೆಲಿ I speak many languages
en esta esquina yo hablo muchos idiomas

ಈ ಮೂಲೆಲಿ otro mundo is hidden
In deze hoekje een andere wereld is verborgen

Mummy, ನಾ ಇಲ್ಲಿ ತಿರ್ಗಿ ಹುಟ್ಟಿದೆ
Mummy, I am born here again

In this corner, there are no doors only windows
ಈ ಮೂಲೆಲಿ ಬಾಗಲ್ಲೆಲ್ಲ ಬರೀ ಕಿಟಕಿಗಳು

And when I look out of my window today and start walking,
I am lost...
...lost because I have no songs of places I belong to
Coz that's what they sing here, en esta esquina

¿Dónde están mi Mexicali y mi Ensenada?

But I also find my voice here
Una voz que habla muchos idiomas

ಈ ಮೂಲೆಲಿ I speak many languages
en esta esquina yo hablo muchos idiomas.

- K.A. Tijuana, México, 2013













ABSTRACT

The US-Mexico borderlands are the grand stage for geo-political experimentations of our times. Paradoxical developments such as bi-/inter-national agreements of economic integration and cross-border regional co-operation unfold alongside militarisation of these border regions. These developments are argued as linked to global forces of neoliberal capitalism and militarisation of security measures alongside criminalisation of migration intermeshed with the global war on 'terror'. Further, rapid urbanisation processes of these borderlands have triggered heated debates around whether or not visions such as 'twin cities', 'transborder metropolis', 'postborder city', apply to these regions. While indeed such bi-/inter-national and global perspectives highlight the larger macro-context of these regions, they tend to cloud or marginalise forces of everyday lived space.

This global or 'bi-national' stage, I urge, is also an everyday lived space operating with its own dynamics and power towards producing these border regions as diverse and rich in meanings by those living here. I argue that understanding these borderlands from the ground/bottom-up is urgent. Although much interesting work has been done on the US-Mexico borderlands (at Tijuana/SanDiego regions) from this perspective, there is also a surprisingly lack of rigorous literature that centralise the meanings given by people living here towards (re)conceptualising 'the border' and envisioning lived regions.

There is then a need to 'decolonise' the conceptual space of these borderlands from the 'bi-/inter-national' perspectives towards centralising everyday lived space. To this end, this thesis approaches the US-Mexico border via the mental maps of everyday trajectories of people living in Tijuana, (Tijuana/SanDiego borderlands), thereby attempting at re-mapping these regions as being made every-day in practices, and meanings associated to 'the border' in relation to the same. Based on this I argue that any vision of these regions ('shared region', 'separate', 'bi-/inter-national region', 'twin city', 'militarised zone') will remain utopian unless they centralise the complex subjective mappings of those living and producing these regions every-day.





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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands at Tijuana, SanDiego regions have been heavily debated, theorized and envisioned from the urban perspective to be a 'single region' against separate urban regions, and from (geopolitical) border studies perspectives studied as mainly being produced from (inter) state policies and interventions. However, these theoretical visions attempting to give meaning to these borderlands at the scale of state or bi-national or global levels continue to marginalize lived spaces of these borderlands and the centrality of the same in producing these border regions in their own ways. Not only do these visions have implications on how public policies come to view and influence everyday life at these regions, but most importantly have implications for how knowledge of these regions comes to be constructed. In centralizing everyday lived space I call for the need to view these urban borderlands as most importantly lived spaces. I then approach my study of these borderlands via mental maps of those inhabiting and producing these spaces. While this thesis itself is also inevitably a conceptualization, that representations and articulations of people in relation to their everyday life at, across, within, around these borderlands are central to the analysis serves to highlight the complex yet critical role of everyday lived spaces to comprehending these urban border spaces.

The text is organized into four main chapters. In Chapter 1 I critically review selected, relevant literature that attempt to give meaning to the Tijuana SanDiego borderlands from the urban, cultural and border studies/geopolitical perspective, towards clarifying my position in relation to these debates. In Chapter 2 I clarify the main methodological framework guiding this research. In Chapter 3 I unfold my main fieldwork analysis divided further into sub chapters classified on the basis of my analysis. And finally in Chapter 4 I outline concluding reflections and point to possible directions for future research based on my analysis.



*La fe es el pájaro que siente la luz y canta
cuando el alba aún está oscura.*

Rabindranath Tagore

*Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings
when the dawn is still dark.*

Rabindranath Tagore



CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing ‘Border thinking’ and ‘Region-making’ in conceptualisations of U.S.-México (Tijuana SanDiego) borderlands

- I.** Urban approach
- II.** Cultural approach
- III.** Border studies approach

The main objective of this thesis is to explore how people living in Tijuana, across Tijuana, SanDiego borderlands, ‘make regions’ based on their everyday practices and discourses, and how they narrate, experience and map ‘the border’ in their everyday life. Given the strong structural conditions influencing everyday life at these paradoxical borderlands of US-México, I am interested in understanding to what extent people have agency in giving diverse meanings to ‘the border’ and how they experience and ‘produce’ these regions in their own ways in and of the everyday.

The literature I briefly review in this chapter is selective based on their relevance to my topic, objective and methodology, rather than being exhaustive. I classify this literature as belonging to three broad approaches, namely: the urban approach, the cultural approach and the border studies approach. The first body of literature belongs to research that views these regions predominantly through the urban lens. The second body of literature is that which apply the cultural lens as an entry point. And the third body of literature is that which adopt an explicit border studies approach. This classification is based on the main research perspective as adopted in the literature, rather than on any rigid understandings of disciplinary field. However, in most cases the approaches overlap, and therefore serve here as only starting points to organise this section. I believe that my research sits somewhere in the middle of the



urban and border studies approach, however in centralising local discourses of everyday life the ethnographic-cultural approach is nevertheless also relevant for the methodological framework.

The main relevance of the works reviewed here to my thesis is that each of them are concerned with or address (directly or indirectly) ontological issues around how best to ‘conceptualise’ Tijuana SanDiego region(s), and thereby inevitably ‘conceptualise’ (directly or indirectly) ‘the border’ in relation to the same. Each of these works relies on specific spatial imaginaries of these borderlands that are central to the debates around how best to conceive these regions. I review these bodies of literature, weighing their strengths and weaknesses, mainly towards building the seeds of my theoretical and methodological framework that will be elaborated more in chapter 2.



I. Urban Approach:

¿Utopías of urban metaphors?

¿Utopías de metaforos urbanos?

“...cities are as poems, you cannot reduce the poem to its meaning or to its material properties – for instance, sound – the poem is more than a text, more than a texture; it is a body. The semantic space of the city is not only a system of meanings-plaza, church, palace, brothel, university, jail, gardens. They are configurations of signs, but whether they are made of stone walls, and wood, or brick, they are bodies. And bodies will radiate meanings and images, or, to use the modern parlance, they emit not only denotations but connotations; they cannot be reduced to concepts only. A city is a metaphor, and it is built on a metaphor.”

– Octavio Paz (1972)



Introduction

In the wake of paradoxical institutional policies and arrangements of border industrialisation (in the 60s) and cross-border economic integration (NAFTA agreements in the mid-90s), alongside border militarization (traced back to U.S. immigration reforms since 80s and Operation Gatekeeper of 1994, and further accentuated by 9/11 events) influencing the dynamic urban landscapes of the U.S.-Mexico border regions, the urban lens has served central towards debates on how best to conceptualise and envision these regions and ‘the border’. Specifically the SanDiego Tijuana regions have attracted much scholarly debate because of the relatively high population of these cities along the U.S.-Mexico border (Alegría, 2012).

The central debates of conceptualising these border regions has recently been around conceiving Tijuana SanDiego as a single/transborder region, (Dear et al, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2010, Herzog, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1997) versus opposing visions that argue for ‘separateness’ of these regions (Alegría, 2002, 2006, 2012). Most importantly, a struggle of urban visions to give meanings to these urban border spaces can be seen as a central thread running through these debates. I then critically review this literature and the visions underlying these theorisations via concerns that I draw from the trialectical constellation of Octavio Paz, Angel Rama, Henri Lefebvre each of whom underline the significance of ‘lived everyday realities’ in relation to utopian visions of the city in their own ways, while clarifying my own position in this research.

Paz, Rama and Lefebvre, being critical urban thinkers of the 20th century, form an interesting constellation in their shared concerns of underlining the continued relevance of dynamics ‘from below’ often erased in visions ‘from above’ or idealised urban visions that are blind to the same. Interestingly, the Mexican poet, writer Octavio Paz and French



sociologist, philosopher Henri Lefebvre developed a friendship during their time that also reflected in Lefebvre's seminal work *The Production of Space* (1991) drawing on Paz's metaphoric space of the city through "signs of the body" (Merrifield, 2006). Lefebvre even quotes one of Paz's poems as the epigraph to this book. Further, Lefebvre's spatial trialectical relationships between 'conceived-perceived space' and 'lived space' introduced in this book nevertheless also resonates with Rama's foundational work "La Ciudad Letrada" (1996) that underlines the continuous struggles between the 'ideal city' and the 'real city' in the historical colonial-modernisation contexts of Latin American cities.

In their own ways, each of these writers is concerned about the utopias of idealised conceptions of urban space that is distant to real lived social realities. Utopia in the way I use the term is in relation to such tensions between idealized space and lived space. Foucault for instance describes the term as "*Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical*" (Foucault, 1966, p.xix). Utopias are situated in the non-localities of idealized visions of the city in which all the messiness of lived spaces is cleaned up relying only on imagined spaces to provide any permanence or consolation to such visions. Heterotopias however have a place. "*Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy "syntax" in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to hold together*" (Foucault, 1966, p.xix) It is these lived heterotopic spaces that resonates, I believe, with what Paz calls city of 'bodily connotations' (1972), with what Lefebvre refers as 'lived space'



(1991) and with Rama's 'real city' (1996). I then critically review the urban literature conceptualizing Tijuana SanDiego regions towards arguing for the relevance of everyday lived heterotopic spaces of region-making and border-making to expand the horizons of urban and border theorizations attached to the U.S.Mexico borderlands of Tijuana SanDiego.

A. Locating Borders of Urbanism and Urbanisms of Borders:

“Bajo el lema dos ciudades una región, llevamos dos años tratando de potenciar lo que nos une. Nuestra relación comercial es como una puerta giratoria”,

- Carlos Bustamante, Mayor Tijuana,

“Under the slogan two cities one region, we have spent two years trying to enhance what unites us. Our business relationship is like a revolving door,”

- Carlos Bustamante, Mayor Tijuana,¹ (quoted in El Pais Internacional, May 15, 2013

“Dos ciudades, pero una region – we are two cities, but one region,”

“We need to make the border the center, not the end – but the biggest problem we have is not security, it is openness and communication,”

– Mayor SanDiego Bob Filner, (quoted in NY Times, May, 12, 2013²)

¹ http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/05/15/actualidad/1368650688_933889.html (viewed 2/9/2013)

² http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/us/san-diego-mayor-building-economic-bridges-to-tijuana.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (viewed 29/8/2013)





Illustration: Leslie Herman, In Article by Nathan Fletcher, SanDiego Magazine, July 2013³

The persistence of utopian hopes and dreams of ‘making’ one region of Tijuana SanDiego within political circles, recently gained a new dimension in all the circus around the idea of bidding together to host the Olympics 2024 as a ‘bi-national region’ (initiated by the mayors of SanDiego and Tijuana), that was nevertheless aborted before its birth (by the U.S. Olympics committee). Amidst such regular political and media frenzy, around how best to ‘conceive’, promote and indeed ‘make’ these regions, debates of urban scholars, both critiques and supporters of such visions of ‘one region’, continue to acquire renewed significance.

Equally interesting is to also simultaneously reflect on the ‘border thinking’ underlying and emerging from such urban conceptualisations of these regions. Conceptualising these regions inevitably implies simultaneously giving meaning to or defining ‘the border’ in relation to the same. As can also be observed from the above quotes

³ <http://www.sandiegomagazine.com/San-Diego-Magazine/July-2013/Lighting-the-Torch/> (viewed 6/9/2013)



of the Mayors of Tijuana and SanDiego, referring to Tijuana SanDiego as “*two cities but one region*”, also means ‘re-making the border’ as “ *the center, not the end*”, and when seen through desired geo-economic relationships, as symbolic of a “*revolving door*”.

Academic literature analysing these regions through the urban lens also inevitably produce ‘border’ meanings and metaphors abundantly. From the perspective of critical geopolitics, then these conceptualisations, though not solely deterministic, are nevertheless understood to be a critical part of processes of ‘bordering’ discourses, perceptions and practices producing ‘the border’, and ‘making’ these regions, in their own ways (directly or indirectly) (Kramsch, Houtum, Zierhofer, Werlen, 2005).

The list of urban metaphors applied to these regions within academic circles vary from ‘international region’ (Lynch&Appleyard, 1974), ‘transborder metropolis’ (Herzog, 1997, 1991, 1990), ‘postborder city’ (Dear & Leclerc, 2003), ‘bi-national region’ (Bustamante, 1981), ‘binational space’ (Ganster & Valencio, 1992; Gildersleeve, 1978), ‘twin cities’ (Kearney & Knopp, 1995), to ‘city pairs on either side of national state borders’, ‘border-crossing cities’ (Buursink, 2001), ‘two cities divided by an international boundary’ (Sparrow, 2002), and ‘two adjacent but different urban units’ (Alegría, 2012). As will be seen below, these urban metaphors encapsulate differing spatial imaginaries of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that are part of an ongoing struggle on either side of the boundary line to give meaning to these border spaces.

The struggle for appropriate nomenclature towards conceptualising urban relations and processes of Tijuana SanDiego regions can be seen as a struggle for metaphors - metaphors being the very basis for building cities, as Paz reminds us (1972). Nevertheless, urban metaphors remain hotly contested as they give name to spatial imaginaries that often collide with not only ‘other’ imaginaries, but most importantly when they unfold in real space. In his



historical analysis of the power of the written word in the formation of Latin American societies beginning in the colonial period through to the 20th century, Rama (1996) powerfully calls attention to the hegemonic influences of ‘lettered’ metaphors in ideal visions of the city being in constant tension with messy social realities of the urban masses. In Lefebvre’s (1991) terms we might call this the constant struggles between conceived space and lived space.

In the context of 21st century urban borderlands of Tijuana SanDiego, we can nevertheless question the relevance of ‘lettered’ metaphors emerging from the rationalising urge within academic literature in truly grasping the messiness of social realities as a critical point of concern. The distances then between what Paz refers as the semantic space of ‘signs’ (1972) resonating with Rama’s ‘ideal’ city (1996), and Lefebvre’s conceived space, in relation to the meanings resonated by ‘bodies’ (Paz, 1972), linked to what Rama refers as ‘real’ city and Lefebvre’s ‘lived space’, remain critical to any debates on how cities are and/or can be made.

In what follows, I sift through this literature to briefly reflect on how these urban border spaces are theorised, idealised and imagined while critically exploring their distance with or limits towards comprehending lived, embodied, real spaces of these borderlands. I also try to address the issue of ‘where’ of these theorisations given the centrality of the same within current debates, towards clarifying my own (geographical-theoretical) position in this thesis.

‘Bi-national region’ making and bordering:

While Jorge Bustamante very early on introduced the relevance of ‘everydayness’ (*‘cotidianidad’*) and ‘everyday drama’ (*‘drama cotidiano’*) to these borderlands (1981, 1990), the concept of ‘binational region’ introduced by him is part of an early thread in envisioning urban metaphors beyond national societies for these regions. The ‘bi-national region’ notion



continues to be used in political and academic circles till today. Bustamante very early on in 1981 applied this concept to the U.S-Mexico border areas, Tijuana SanDiego included. He defined it as, “*geographically demarcated by the empirical extension of the processes of interaction between people living on both sides of the border.*” (Bustamante in Tito, 2012). In his definition however cross-border interactions per se are understood as producing one bi-national region without considering the lived context of such interactions. Also ‘the border’ is understood as objectively separate to social processes of interaction uniting the region, rather than as also being produced in and through everyday practices, interactions and social processes of state and non-state actors.

To Jan Buursink however, who has also theorised on border cities in general, a ‘sense of belonging together’ felt by people inhabiting these spaces is central for conceptualising a ‘bi-national city’ (Buursink, 2001). Mental and emotional meanings of borders and how people experience them in their daily life is seen as important. Building on this, Ehlers, Buursink & Boekema (2001), argue that unless people are involved in real interactions and the border does not remain a real barrier for interaction one cannot speak of bi-national city region. They argue that for realising any top-down bi-national city concept, the involvement of the population is of major importance. Using these criteria for assessing the relevance of such concepts to these urban space(s), Sparrow (2001) argues that Tijuana SanDiego regions are neither twin cities nor a bi-national city because of lacking this aspect of ‘sense of belonging’.

Though the subjective meanings given by inhabitants is seen as important, in such conceptualisations of bi-national region, the idea of a region is nevertheless that of an objective, pre-existing entity that is then brought together by people through a sense of



belonging, rather than being produced in and of the same. Also, the underlying ‘border thinking’ tends to eventually hand over the ultimate power to the state in ‘reducing’ or ‘increasing’ barriers to interaction, leaving little room for including strategies of resistance, agency, appropriation and improvisations at borderlands as also making regions in their own ways.

This approach is also to some extent limited in being unable to recognise subtle everyday processes of living and producing ‘the urban’ that might possibly contradict or emerge as beyond bi-polar notions of ‘separateness’ versus ‘unity’, and ‘belonging’ versus ‘non-belonging’ existing at borderlands. Their concept remains an objective vision of urban space(s) ‘from above’ that tries to include the ‘local’ scale, which, though important, is not enough towards breaking the dead-end that seems to have been reached in ‘envisioning’ urban border metaphors for the Tijuana SanDiego border spaces. Therefore, while I try to centralise the meanings of people to my analysis, I also attempt to do so by centralising ‘region-making’ inherent in these meanings, experiences and practices of people.

Border of Hopes and Dreams

Probably the earliest in the academic band of utopian visionaries of Tijuana SanDiego as ‘single region’ have been Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, who already initiated this idea in 1974 in their own unique way, while nevertheless acknowledging the high degree of hope and dream associated with such conceptualisations. They urged that the two cities of Tijuana and SanDiego share a common natural environment therefore requiring strong joint institutional action (social, economic, political). They push forth the idea of making ‘Tijuana/SanDiego region’ into an ‘international region’, naming it dreamily as ‘SanDiego de



Baja California', in hopes that 'the border' will transform into a 'place of confluence' rather than what they saw as abruptly cutting through the landscape and hindering joint action.

Lynch and Appleyard (1974) view these regions through the evolving relationships of land and human settlements (historical, geopolitical, economic, urbanisation, suburbanisation processes). A main concern for them is how to work along with the natural landscape towards making SanDiego more liveable and sustainable. It is only their concern for preserving the natural landscape that brings Tijuana to their attention, given the rapid growth of this city sharing its natural base with SanDiego. Interspersed with map-drawings of mental images of SanDiego and of regularly visited areas made by inhabitants of SanDiego but also by some inhabitants of Tijuana regularly visiting SanDiego, alongside their own beautiful hand-drawn maps of the valleys, canyons, creeks, they suggest concrete steps towards planning the built environment in relation to the natural landscape and people's usage and 'images' of the city (of SanDiego).

Given the centrality of the natural and social landscape that they acknowledge to spill across the international boundary, they see here a metropolitan region of SanDiego/Tijuana. Cross-border commuters, migratory movements, flows in the forms of piped water systems, sewage, smoke, dust, money, goods, floodwater alongside shared natural landscape, are strong reasons according to them, for joint coordinated urban planning. They see both shared problems and opportunities requiring joint institutional action across 'the border'. In this hope to strengthen what they see as 'one metropolitan region' they envision indeed 'making' these regions as 'the center' of an 'international region' rather than two separate cities at the 'end' of state 'line'. This vision of making these borderlands the 'center' continues to resonate with the recent slogans of the Mayors of these two cities, though in very different ways. The spaces of 'the line' are envisioned by Lynch and Appleyard as sites for grand projects of an



international airport, free trade zone, bicultural institutions, international universities, ‘the border’ dreamt to become a place of confluence where two cultures meet towards ‘making’ a bicultural metropolis sustained by local resources.

While academics and policy-makers are still struggling with these visions, both in theorising and realising them, an important methodology used by Lynch & Appleyard that has been relatively ignored among urban circles in studying urban processes is of taking into account mental maps of inhabitants and how they use, perceive and produce urban border spaces. Though the vision and dreams of Lynch and Appleyard are futuristic, while nevertheless based on the concept of ‘regions’ as pre-existing objective entities, what is more interesting in relation to existing approaches is their methodology of incorporating mental maps of people living here towards ‘envisioning’ urban metaphors. In my thesis I will revive this methodology of applying the concept of mental maps towards exploring how people ‘make region(s)’ based on their everyday geographies, arguing for the urgency of looking into or studying ‘visions from below’ rather than being caught solely in ‘visions from above’ which seems to currently be heavily imbalanced in the debates so far, favouring more the latter.

Further, Lynch and Appleyard’s report were mainly concerned about SanDiego and therefore their survey of mental maps was biased towards people living in SanDiego, while accommodating a few of those living in Tijuana but regularly visiting SanDiego. I will however approach people living in Tijuana and those living in SanDiego but regularly visiting Tijuana, to balance this perspective. Indeed from ‘where’ one looks at ‘the border’ towards conceptualising ‘region’(s) makes a difference more so today as the U.S.-Mexico borderscape continues to mark its own territories of militarised fear and immobilities. What appeared to



Lynch and Appleyard as a ‘shared region’ in their wanderings and explorations based in SanDiego in the 70s, is bound to shift when approached from Tijuana anno 2013, which I attempt to do.

Further, while to Lynch and Appleyard ‘the region’ is demarcated by natural and social landscapes in my approach ‘regions’ come to be made in everyday practices and meanings people attach to their environment rather than existing as permanently demarcated. I follow the definition of ‘everyday regionalisations’ by Werlen and Lefebvre’s notion of space as socially produced. Werlen describes everyday regionalisations as “*the many ways in which human beings mark out – through their ideas and practices – what they evidently regard as, and act upon as, meaningful places or ‘regional’ entities, or nation-states perhaps, in the course of which they lend a constructed reality to such ‘regions’ within the conduct of their everyday life*” (Werlen, 2009, p.1) – arguing that the only reality possessed by ‘regions’ is as thought-and-practiced constructs of people. And to Lefebvre, space is socially produced (1991) rather than purely a pre-existing objective entity. From this lens ‘regions’ are being made by people through perceptions and practices, rather than pre-existing as an objective fixed entity. This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2.

‘Postborder’ing

More recently, to Michael Dear and his colleagues Leclerc & Lucero (1998, 2005), significant agglomerations and flows (of people, money, capital, goods) across this part of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, are part of a global trend of rapid urbanization pointing to a shifting world order predicted to be principally driven by what they call ‘mega-cities’. According to them nation-state structures and institutions are ill-equipped towards facing global trends of (economic) globalization, information-based network society, social polarization, cultural



hybridization and environmental sustainability, with urban agglomerations, such as those across this international border, offering alternative spatial scales more relevant for such analyses.

Urbanisms in these regions are for them exemplary of such global processes, borderland spaces being concrete manifestations of an emerging global space (Dear & Leclerc, 1998). They see here a mega city region spanning across Tijuana, SanDiego, Tecate, Rosarito and even Los Angeles, which they assertively and rather provocatively name Bajalta California, where the international boundary between USA and Mexico is seen as ‘scarcely visible’. Searching then for a metaphor to symbolise this ‘invisibility’ or blurring of state borders at these regions, understood to be part of a global phenomenon, they introduce the term ‘Postborder city’ – as *“a collection of two or more urban areas that exist in relatively close geographical proximity and are bisected by an international boundary, yet they function as a single integrated urban agglomeration”* (Dear and Lucero, 2010, p.135)

Focussing on cross-border urban interactions and flows from socio-cultural perspectives against the backdrop of forces of economic and political globalisation, they assert that this has led to the integration of cities across the border. In viewing these regions from this global lens, their analysis zooms out so far away so as to become blind to the continued presence of state borders in influencing everyday urban interactions and producing these regions, despite paradoxically defining postborder cities as ‘being bisected by an international boundary’. Given the rather significant shifts in the urban border landscape mediating cross-border interactions and (im)mobilities across Tijuana SanDiego, (more so since Operation Gatekeeper of 1994 (Nevins, 2002) and subsequent militarizations accentuated by the global war on terror since 9/11, not to forget the violences of drug wars occupying these spaces), that the border spaces appear invisible to Dear and his colleagues,



and 'the border' merely '*happens to be*' in their meta urban analysis is rather ironic. Rather than being critical to transformations of urban conditions, social practices and meanings in relation to shifting roles of state borders, that are far from disappearing both here and globally, their arguments rather easily deduce that macro-interactions at and across state borders results in weakening of 'the international boundary'. Just as most terms of the 'Post' order tend to do, the 'Postborder' city concept tends but to overlook the continued significance of the 'latter term', in this case of state 'borders', in influencing human movements and interactions and vice versa. Further, in envisioning a 'world city of global and international significance', 'regions' are understood as socio-spatial entities produced purely by specific cross-border flows (such as import of consumption practices, formation of cultural hybridities, and linguistic adaptations) which are not deeply dealt with in terms of 'how' or the context and structural conditions behind such flows. They assume such flows to disrupt modern notions of homogenous national societies whose socio-cultural-spatial boundaries are supposed to have previously coincided with state borders, while nevertheless relying on fixed understandings of culture attached to the same. The indifference to the presence of state borders in influencing and being influenced by the kinds of socio-spatial interactions and non-interactions, mobilities and immobilities, flows and non-flows occurring here is startling given that the authors claim to have intensively travelled along these borderlands.

Thus, the postborder lens in focussing on specific large-scale, macro-strategies and socio-spatial processes of hybridity and flows as central to producing regions, does so at the risk of overlooking not only 'other' macro-strategies of the state and political-economic conditions such as militarization and (in)securitisation of borderlands alongside hegemonic forces of neoliberalisation, but also micro-strategies of everyday practices and discourses, producing these regions in very different ways.



‘Transborder’ing

Herzog introduces the concept of ‘Transfrontier Metropolis’ to study urban processes at these regions. Though Herzog appears to be relatively more aware of the presence of the international border to these urban spaces, the metaphor he uses also suggests urbanisms transcending ‘the border’. He sees heightened transborder interactions between U.S. and Mexican border cities as transcending the international border, thereby fusing towards forming a single functional spatial domain that nevertheless retains elements of nationally derived structures.

There are, however, some troublesome notions in this idea despite providing some interesting perspectives on human connections across these border urban spaces. His idea again single-mindedly ‘visibilises’ cross-border flows and interactions based on socio-cultural-economic activities that involves movements of people, goods, and capital ‘crossing’ the border on a daily basis, combined with ecological linkages that are seen to spill across the political boundary, while inevitably making ‘invisible’ non-flows, immobilities and non-interactions. Strangely though, in focussing on activities that apparently ‘transcend’ the border, he nevertheless reproduces state thinking in focussing purely on ‘crossing’ activities as central to border thinking. Herzog refers to the border as ‘the line’ that accentuates ‘north’ and ‘south’ (1990) without being critical to these dogmatic spatial concepts that has long blinded critical thinking in geography.

‘The border’ to Herzog is mainly the political boundary seen to interrupt social, economic and ecological space, rather than seen as being produced also in and of all these inter-related processes. Further, it also remains problematic that relations between these regions are not seen through activities, perceptions, practices and processes that are not



necessarily directly involved in crossing as also important to producing these regions. In remaining separate yet highly connected spaces in his vision, he sees a process of evolving regional integration without considering the context of interactions and non-interactions influencing such processes of possible integration or disintegration.

‘State’ing the border

Interestingly, where urban theorists are located, or the geographies of urban theory itself seem to matter also for these border regions, more so in recent debates. While most literature on ‘post-border’ and ‘trans-border’ appears predominantly to be located within U.S. academia, opponents to such urban visions of whom most recently urban theorist Tito Alegría is a strong voice based in Tijuana, Mexico. By grounding his opposition to these perspectives of transborder metropolis and postborder city in empirical data that shifts away from transborder flows to assert difference, Tito Alegría’s approach (2006) is based on a comparative study of structural conditions in the two cities of Tijuana and SanDiego, such as economic, demographic structures, and urban form generating mechanisms (based on land use patterns (residential and tertiary)), to determine whether or not Tijuana and SanDiego are a single or separate urban unit(s). In looking at these structural conditions argued as necessary to be similar in order to function as one urban unit, and proved in his analysis to be different, he asserts that Tijuana and SanDiego cannot be considered as one unit for studying urban processes. ‘Difference’ is also asserted by Alegría in critiquing Herzog’s vision of transborder metropolis as being blind to historical, cultural influences and appropriations of Latin American cities, while viewing agents in the ‘south’ as passive adopters of cultural patterns absorbed from the recent flow of trade and investment from the ‘north’. Alegría’s research amidst all the hue and cry of trans-/post-border urbanisms, re-centralises the significance of



state borders as political administrative institutions in producing these urban regions as adjacent but different.

However, for Alegría, the definition of ‘the border’ is fixed to the meanings intended by the state – “*the border is the boundary of the territorialized power of a nation-state, the boundary of the exercise of its practices of social reproduction*” (2012, p.157). While indeed borderlands are also, though not the only places, where the territorialised power of the nation-state in regulating social production of space is asserted, nevertheless in Alegría’s approach there is no scope for including also diverse meanings associated to this state boundary in and by practices of people living, appropriating and producing this space. His research is based on objectified notions of region, space and distance, which is unable to take into account subjective spaces of urban form and region-making, while building arguments to defend the ‘separateness’ of these objectified regions based solely on an analysis that studies these regions as separate from the beginning. Regions are but fixed spatial units that exist objectively in his analysis.

Yet, an important contribution of Alegría’s research is in grounding these urban debates by highlighting the stark spatial structural discontinuities and differences (such as access to cross-border mobility, wages, prices) as central to understanding the **kinds of transborder interactions** and non-interactions linking these cities, rather than assuming similarity or integration based solely on transborder flows or interactions, which most of post-/trans-border literature does.



Geographies of theory

In light of these recent debates, here it is useful to reflect a bit on the issue of ‘geographies of theory’, especially because of the centrality of notions of ‘difference’ (both geographical and urban theoretical) to these debates. While this issue is raised by UC Berkeley urban theorist Ananya Roy (2009) in asserting the significance of ‘where’ to urban theory, her arguments towards centralising experiences of ‘the Global South’ as a starting point for 21st century urban theory nevertheless remain highly contested in light of these recent urban debates of SanDiego Tijuana regions between Alegría, Herzog and Dear et al. In looking for ‘non-eurocentric’ visions from the ‘South’ to fill gaps in current theory as Ananya argues for, would Alegría’s perspectives and theorisations being based in Tijuana address the same? If so, the grand irony is that Alegría is most likely to reject Ananya’s approach for all its essentialisms of ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ understood as historically isolated entities and currently placed in a hierarchical spatio-temporal system of the ‘South’ needing to catch up with the ‘North’ (in producing locally based, universally applicable urban theories). This is in fact the very basic departure point of Tito’s counter-argument to U.S based academics such as Herzog and his conceptualisations of Tijuana as ‘the South’ seen as now ‘integrating’ with the ‘North’ due to economic globalisation and transborder interactions.

In light of these urban debates situated on either side of a border line that continues to represent to many academics as the border where ‘North’ meets ‘South’, some important critiques can be raised to Ananya’s propositions, such as, what is the ‘Global South’? Who speaks for the ‘Global South’? Is it the case that the ‘Global South’, if at all this exists, has always already been part of the ‘Global North’ and vice versa, or did they come to be produced so? If so, how does reinforcing or re-underlining these gaps help us understand critical differences between places and positions of theorisations? ‘Difference’ in the way of



understanding geographies of theories in terms of ‘South’ versus ‘North’ only further underlines the same in a narrow, dogmatic vision of the world of theorisations rather than critically engaging with the same.

Inevitably then my thesis becomes part of this struggle as I try to find my own voice and ‘place’ in relation to the same. In grappling with ‘difference’ at multiple levels I locate my theorisations neither in the ‘north’ nor the ‘south’, but in the streets of Tijuana, libraries in COLEF, Tijuana and Radboud University, Nijmegen (reading works of Henri Lefebvre, Tito Alegría, Angel Rama, Kevin Lynch, Benno Werlen, Jorge Bustamante, Michael Dear, Lawrence Herzog, Laura Velasco and Oscar Contreras, Olivier Kramsch, Martin Van Der Velde & Ton van Naerssen, Amaranta Caballero Prado and more), and my own complex moving, embodied geographies of identity (Bangalore, Amsterdam, Groningen, Nijmegen, Tijuana) that inevitably influences my approach to this topic and my fieldwork, all coming together in the space of my fieldwork and thesis. Rather than difference being neatly aligned to some space of north and south, differences such as linguistic, ideological (theoretical), cultural, and experienced in the dynamics of everyday space(s) located across Tijuana, Nijmegen, that I encountered during the process of working towards this thesis not only provided me with critical linkages to my methodological approach, but also continue to influence my being both within and outside academia.

One starting point to push the boundaries of geographies of urban theory ‘within’ the so-called ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’, it can also be argued, is to move beyond ‘capital cities’, ‘global cities’ or traditional hubs of modern political-economic networks that have long been the ‘center’ to urban theory, to the relatively marginalised ‘border cities’. If urban theory has always located itself in cities central to colonial-metropolitan trade networks such as New York, Chicago, London, Berlin, Johannesburg, Cairo, Amsterdam, Paris, Mexico city,



Rio de Janeiro etc (despite the hierarchies and bias amongst these cities) where state-centric imaginaries continue to appear secure today, it is more urgent to centralise border cities where the realities of drawing that line in sand imagined from distant metropolitan centers were and continue to be contested today, towards expanding the horizons of urban theory beyond rigid understandings of ‘the city’.

From utopian visions of urban ‘region(s)’ to everyday heterotopias of region-making and border-making?

On one hand, the scholars arguing for SanDiego/Tijuana as ‘twin cities’, ‘transborder’ or ‘postborder’ regions tend to overlook the structural, institutional, and highly militarised geopolitical conditions imposing hierarchies and restrictions in the kinds of everyday interactions that take place across these regions, while relying on utopian visions of purely socio-cultural interactions, as somehow isolated yet consequent of economic conditions of privatisation and globalization processes being capable of overcoming ‘the border’ as a dividing force envisioned and enacted by states. Structural conditions such as unequal legal statuses of border communities on either side with respect to right to cross-border mobility, and access to resources, or hugely unequal wages for the same work (Alegría, 2012, 2002), among others, are critical to the kinds of hierarchical interactions and certain ways of non-interactions between peoples in these regions, that are largely ignored in these conceptualisations of ‘transborder’ ‘postborder’ urbanism.

And yet, the state sovereignty centric perspective adopted by Alegría in opposition to the postborder, transborder discourses is also problematic. Not only does a state-centric ‘vision’ epistemologically exclude the ‘illiterate’/‘writings of the urban masses’ and ‘lived



spaces', but powerfully constructs urban-spaces based on ideal urban metaphors far from the lived metaphors of everyday life. A region rarely emerges as 'transborder'/'separate' purely based on objective conceptualisations. Feelings, attachments, associations, perceptions, practices of inhabitants also play a central role towards producing region(s). In these academic discourses of theorising and understanding border cities as 'post-border'/'transborder'/'bi-national'/'separate'/'adjacent but different' urban regions, dynamics of regions and borders as actual personal, social, affective, lived and imagined spaces of people tend to take a back seat. They are either zoomed out into larger macro socio-cultural processes that are blind to everyday lived spaces of interactions and non-interactions, or objectified into non-subjective units.

Though bottom-up movements have been an important aspect of urban development in Tijuana as is the case of the historical development of colonia Libertad (Bustamante, 1990) (also referred in more detail in Chapter 3), the urban metaphors discussed above nevertheless render 'the city' as 'lettered' (Rama, 1996) while marginalising 'lived spaces' (Lefebvre, 1991). Coming back to Paz's (1972) observation on cities being built on metaphors, it can be argued that state-centric and 'trans-/post-border' metaphors produce utopias of urban metaphors that are blind to lived spaces. While the heterotopias of everyday lived space might undermine language, escaping structures of logical theorisations, and providing disturbing connections among the seemingly unrelated, as Foucault (1966) describes, yet there is an urgency to enter this messiness. What are equally critical to these debates are the voices of people in relation to their everyday practices, and how they indeed live and make 'the border' and 'region(s)' via the same.

Everyday life then offers a central critique to these spatial imaginaries of utopian 'postborder' 'transborder' region of cross-border flows as well as state-centric visions that



continue to be blind to the ‘subjective writings’ of everyday life, in producing these border spaces in ways that are hard to box as neatly fitting onto either of these debates. Situated predominantly as a critique to postwar consumerist society in France and the modernising state of 20th century Europe, Lefebvre’s earlier work *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1958-1981) urges for the need to study everyday life in light of its transformative potential. In the context of decolonisation of European powers, Lefebvre saw everyday life in France as colonised by consumerism. Yet everyday space he argues is what is open for an *auto critique* towards becoming a space of resistance and transformation (vol. II, 2002). While the context in which he wrote these works is situated in an ‘other’ time-space, nevertheless the call for paying attention to the transformative power of everyday life cannot be more relevant today. As everyday rhythms continue to be disrupted in cities against atrocities of rulers and states from Paris to Tehran to New York, Lefebvre’s urge to study the resistance power of everyday life is only more relevant.

While metropolitan city centers were to Lefebvre the central ‘sites’ of his urban thinking and conceptualisations, one might then argue that today’s centers of transformation are indeed border cities given the centrality of borderlands as renewed strategic sites for states and supra-state interventions. As borderlands continue to become colonised by the ‘security’ and surveillance industry via political trends of criminalisation of immigration and even global trends such as the fight against ‘global terror’, everyday life at borderlands become critical spaces for alternative visions of re-worlding and re-spatialising such colonising practices. Borderlands, in this case along the U.S.-Mexico border, however geographically distant from conflicts such as the 9/11 attacks in New York, are places of transformations by state and inter-state interventions with immediate implications on changes in everyday life for the people at these borderlands. Then borderlands, rather than only metropolitan capital cities,



are highly dynamic spaces requiring attention in how agency grapples with the strong structural conditions driving transformations.

In centralising the meanings associated to ‘the border’ as perceived from everyday spaces towards understanding region-making processes, I hope to contribute to these debates from an everyday-(urban-border)-geography perspective. Understanding the role of agency in the articulations of this ‘grand global, bi-national border’ becomes ever more urgent. Chambers powerfully argues that the classical colonial/modern modality of impositions from the center on the periphery through the direct imposition of a singular power and authority now gives way to an altogether more **diffuse appropriation** (Chambers, 2012, p.x), calling for more nuanced conceptual approaches to how we study the order of power as articulated, inscribed and becoming in multi-dimensional space. The order of power, I argue, then also lies in the multi-dimensionality of everyday space where the rigidities of state borders multiply into flexible geographies of resistance and agency equally crucial to producing and reclaiming border spaces. By adopting the lens of everyday, I wish to highlight the urgency of centralising the power of lived mentalities to producing border spaces, and making ‘legible’ what are often rendered ‘illegible’ within academic, political and policy circles conceptualising these border-spaces.

Further, the idea of ‘region’ in all the above debates tends to cling on to traditional conceptions of space and region as objective entities constituted by classificatory activities that can be objectively rationalised and analysed. The ‘regionalising’ processes adopted by agents based on their practices and the subjective experiences and meanings of the same in relation to their everyday life remain critical and tend to be often ignored. Also, in the above debates, regional identities and relationships of what is a ‘city’/ ‘region’ is constantly being constituted in relation to the ‘other’ based on ‘difference’ versus ‘similarity’, ‘nearness’



versus ‘distance’, ‘integration’/‘oneness’ versus ‘separation’/ ‘adjacency’, ‘connections’ versus ‘disconnections’, all the while producing and ‘region making’ in their own bi-polar ways. However, how might these metaphors that tend to ‘objectify’ cities translate or not when brought down to the ground into the subjective, lived everyday realms of people inhabiting these spaces, and producing these regions in their own ways? Should the debate on urban processes producing these regions, necessarily be divided on such extreme grounds of ‘separation’ versus ‘integration’? Is the meaning of an international boundary limited to being ‘divisive’ or understood as ‘invisible’? Should region(s) be envisioned always from the eagle’s eye view or can people embody urban metaphors and ‘make region(s)’ in his/her own ways through the lived spaces of everyday? These questions cannot be fully explored unless one enters into the nuances of everyday lived space.

“The everyday space is the space in which dialectical movement advances or comes to a halt, in an unpredictable blend of opaqueness and transparency, of clear-sightedness and blindness, of determinability and transience.” – (Lefebvre volume II, 2002, p.10)

Everyday geographies lie precisely at the conjunctions of structure and agency that only heightens at these dynamic borderlands. This is a central driving force to my attempted contribution to these debates. I attempt to contribute to shaking these bi-polar debates of post-border urbanisms versus ‘separateness’ by exploring the role of everyday lived spaces to ‘region-making’ and ‘border thinking/-making’, towards introducing an alternative ‘vision from below’ as equally important. I believe that theorising on ‘region-making’ can be fundamentally re-visited from the spaces of everyday, despite all the challenges, messiness and risks from doing the same. For a deeper understanding of social processes, as argued by Werlen (2009), a focus on subjective understanding and a social explanation of everyday



geography-making is useful rather than departing from the notion that regions, borders, spatial patterns are pre-given and fixed. This might productively open more nuanced discussions on these regions beyond the current status of bi-polarity, towards broadening the horizons of urban theorisations of these borderlands.



II Cultural approach

¿Cultural Borders?

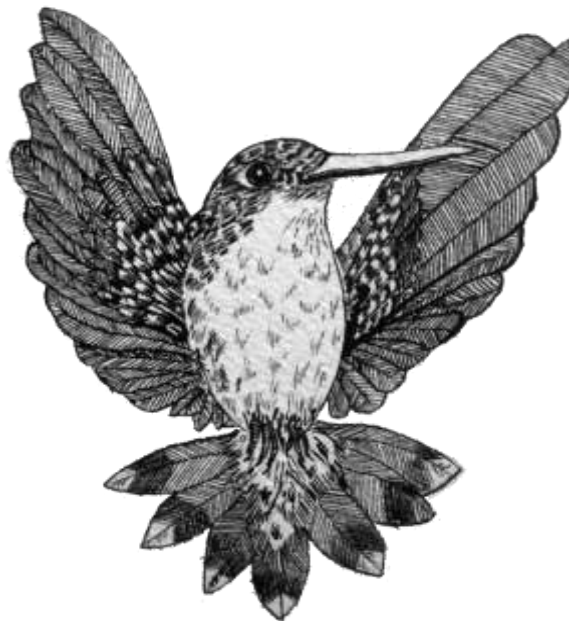
¿Border Cultures?

“...La transculturalidad, o la transciudad, o transfrontera fue sobrevalorada. Existe más como un circuito que como un espacio, más como posibilidad de un intercambio constante y fluido, a veces muy entorpecido, que como una cultura compartida. Cuando uno pasa de Tijuana a San Diego o de San Diego a Tijuana, inmediatamente percibe las diferencias en la escenografía del espacio, en el cuidado de los jardines, en la circulación por las calles.”

- Néstor Garcia Canclini (2009)

“...Transculture, or trans-city, or transfrontier was overrated. There very much exists a space as a circuit, more like a possibility of a constant fluid exchange, sometimes very hindered, rather than a shared culture. When one goes from Tijuana to San Diego or San Diego to Tijuana, immediately one perceives the differences in the scenery of space, in the care of the gardens, in the circulation in the streets.”

- Néstor Garcia Canclini (2009)



Introduction

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands have also served as critical sites (both symbolic and physical) for conceptualising border cultures and identities. A consistent thread to these cultural debates mainly emerges around cultural hybridity (Anzaldúa, 1987, Gomez Peña, 1996, Canclini, 1989) and, more recently, around cultural identity resistance and separation (Vila, 2000) (Heyman, 2012), among others.

Heralding Tijuana as a laboratory of postmodern hybridity in 1990, anthropologist Néstor Garcia Canclini, however, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, reflects on the hindrances to a ‘shared’ border culture and the stark differences in everyday urban experience of moving from Tijuana to San Diego or vice versa (2009), as referred in the above quote. The ‘hybrid shared border culture’ lens is indeed under siege amidst paradoxical processes of violence, separations and militarization alongside continued hierarchical interactions occurring at these borderlands. However, what Canclini’s reflections might also suggest, apart from the need to rethink dynamics of cultural hybridity, is the continued relevance of lived spaces to understanding these borderscapes.

The cultural lens provides some rich insights with respect to borders as lived spaces. In sifting through selective literature that theorise U.S.-Mexico borders from the cultural lens that is relevant to my research, in what follows I try to shell out ‘border thinking’ and ‘region-making’ as conceived in these texts towards building my own position in this research.



A. Locating Border cultures:

Theorising on border cultures and ethnographic work at Tijuana SanDiego regions have received relatively lesser attention in comparison to other border regions along the U.S.-Mexico border (Alvarez, 2012). Nevertheless, Tijuana SanDiego regions have served as central sites to locate conceptualisations of cultural voices and creative artistic endeavours reflecting on symbolisms of borders. The stark borderscape of the metal fence running into the powerful and endless Pacific Ocean, and the urban dynamics en ‘*esta esquina*’ (*‘this corner’*)⁴ have served as fertile ground to artists and cultural theorists.



“*En Esta Equina*”-Urban-Border writings, Playas de Tijuana Source: Author

⁴ Tijuana was often referred to as ‘esta esquina’ by many people I came across, making this indeed a powerful metaphor in visions of this border space as ‘the corner’ by the ocean and ‘the corner’ of Mexico but also Latin America.



As the fence gets tighter and more locked, artistic practices open up, becoming ever more present and constantly nudging and mocking the intended oppressive narratives and practices of state borders. Artistic practices then emerge as transformative everyday practices that actively continue to alter the everyday production of these border spaces. Indeed, during my own three month stay at Playas de Tijuana there was an artistic performance-demonstration that I witnessed where musicians and dancers on either side of the ‘closely gridlocked fence’ transformed these fence spaces with vibrant singing and dancing, challenging the rigid intentions of the fence.



Artists performing at the fence in Playas de Tijuana and Friendship Park, San Diego on May 25th, 2013
Source: Author

Esta esquina is also where boundaries between border ‘states’ (as state of mind) and state borders become blurred. ‘The border’ is a voice, ‘the border’ breathes, ‘the border’ is an open wound ‘*una herida abierta*’ (Anzaldúa), ‘the border’ talks back to the ‘migra’ (border patrol)



and ‘the border’ is suspended in time when the ‘migra’/border patrol agent himself takes a snack-break across ‘the border’.



*U.S. Border Patrol agent taking a snack-break in Tijuana
Photo credit: Eduardo Jaramillo (agencia Notimex)*

‘The border’ as lived space and lived space as ‘borders’ multiply in meanings endlessly. In what follows I look at some important literature that conceptualise borders and envision these border regions through the cultural lens, to reflect on ways of ‘border thinking’ and ‘region making’ emerging from the same.



Border States... State borders....

The biggest contribution to border studies of the U.S-Mexico borders has emerged in the literary and artistic fields rather than mainstream academic border scholarship. Emerging in the late 80s, Anzaldúa and Gomez Peña, through their bi-lingual artistic and literary works, paved the way for conceptualising and expressing the complex human conditions of this shared border, and Peña moving even further in linking this to a global border consciousness, thereby inspiring a range of new scholarship towards theoretical contributions within the fields of anthropology, cultural and ethnic studies, in re-examining “national” identities and symbolisms of borders (Coplan, 2010).

“1,950 mile-long open wound

dividing a *pueblo*, a culture,

running down the length of my body,

staking fence rods in my flesh,

splits me splits me

me raja me raja

This is my home

this thin edge of

barbwire.”

- Gloria Anzaldúa (1987)

To Gloria Anzaldúa borderlands are not only physical political spaces of contradictions and negotiations, but also cultural, metaphorical, psychological, personal, lived, imagined spaces of freedom and struggle, of structure and agency, of power and resistance constantly tugging on one another. Being at ‘cultural borderlands’ means the freedoms and struggles that come with being denied from ‘going home’ (metaphorically by the dominant culture ‘in’ which one



does not totally fit into) and claiming one's own space – always making a new culture. Psychological borderlands are spaces of hiding and looking at one's fears and shame in the eye. Journeys of borderlands are also journeys of personal consciousness and transcending personal boundaries of sense-making that is not only about 'crossing-over' but one that makes connections in renewed consciousness. The psychic borderland is a state of unrest and creativity. Most importantly, the contribution of Anzaldúa's poetic analysis to border thinking is in pointing to the significance of metaphoric thinking to conceptualising 'border' and 'region' as being made in lived experiences and imaginations. Her voice continues to remind us that 'States' of mind and consciousness of and at borderlands are hard to contain within lines.

Guillermo Gomez Peña is also an important voice to conceptualising these borderlands mainly through the powerful medium of multi-disciplinary performative arts, and bi-lingual literary works. Guillermo's work is considered important in academic and public debates about globalization, transnational flows of cultures and persons, and multiculturalism in nation-states. In terms of border theory, he has introduced a five worlds theory that challenges the first world/third world theory in arguing that there is emerging a fourth and fifth world. The fourth world is defined as a "*conceptual place where the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas meet with the deterritorialised peoples, the migrants, and the exiles*" (1996, p.7) – who are linked by their non-national understandings, this fourth world space being also linked to a fifth world that is described as "*Virtual space, mass media, the U.S. suburbs, art schools, malls, Disneyland, the White House and La Chingada*" (1996, p.245). This theory emerges mainly as a critique towards the nationalist model implicit in the three worlds theory that attempts at naturalising a particular concept of space as bounded territory and a hierarchical time-space ordering of societies (Foster, 2002). The fourth and fifth worlds of Peña embody a



concept of spatial relations defined in terms of flux and motion. Borders and regions then are made in this flux rather than as specific sites. Gomez Peña declares, *“For me, the border is no longer located at any fixed geopolitical site. I carry the border with me, and I find new borders wherever I go”* (2003, p.751).

His work remains relevant for inter-disciplinary work on borders, migration, globalisation, transnationalism and more. While with Peña’s conceptualisations flux and motion overrides national identities, and with his five worlds theory the significance of geopolitical site appears to be losing relevance, nevertheless the developments along these borderlands in terms of the increasing trend of militarisation and barriers for movements of people making its way into the first two decades of the 21st century calls for a renewed significance of geopolitical sites to border studies.

Building on in this direction of the significance of symbolic borders to borderland identities, Laura Velasco & Oscar Contreras in their recent book ‘Mexican voices of the border region’ (2011) powerfully argue that regardless of whether one physically ‘crosses’ the border or not, the structural dimensions of ‘the border’ are nevertheless lived by people in diverse manners, acquiring multiple meanings. Based on rich, in-depth, first person narratives of individuals with diverse migratory routes, experiences and associations to ‘the border’, they shed light on the complexities of border identities and personal trajectories that are being constructed around shifting legal and structural conditions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Calling for the need to comprehend how social and cultural differentiation processes linked to physical borders between nation-states in a globalising world operate in people’s lives, they urge for re-locating border research in this relationship of how ‘global forces’ of the geopolitical border operate within ‘local lives’.



Velasco and Contreras' approach in viewing this border through the voices of people and their personal migratory trajectories also resonates in some aspects with Van Der Velde and Van Naerssen's 'model of thresholds' (2010) for cross-border migratory behaviour. In their model Van Der Velde & Van Naerssen speak of thresholds of mental distance, locational factors and trajectory factors influencing cross-border spatial migratory behaviour. As the narratives in Velasco & Contreras' book reveal, internal migrations 'within' Mexico of personal individual trajectories leading to the Mexican borderland produce the Mexican border region also as a place of mental and locational threshold, among others. Given the opportunities of employment, housing and government supports available at the Mexican border region, border crossing is then understood only as a vague distant notion to some. Like Van Der Velde and Van Naerssen assert, Velasco's agential narratives also underline the significance of transborder family networks to cross-border migration decisions that facilitate crossing and employment opportunities.

However, the complexity and diversity of the narratives and trajectories analysed in their book also introduce aspects that go beyond the model of Van Der Velde and Van Naerssen towards understanding (im)mobility at borderlands. While in Van Der Velde & Van Naerssen's model mental thresholds coincide with cross-border immobility, Velasco's analysis reveals that to some migrants mental thresholds remain even after physically 'crossing' or migrating across the international border. Further, thresholds are but only one aspect of the diverse factors influencing cross-border mobility in Velasco and Contreras' analysis. For instance, as they point based on their in-depth interviews, the 'crossing experience' itself becomes part of one's personal history and identity that is retained by some migrants, while others are dependent on daily 'border crossing' for their very livelihood. Here then 'border crossing' is not a finished ambition or one step in the process of decision-making



in migration but becomes a central aspect of one's everyday life and identity. Further, their analysis also reveals a crucial aspect that Van Der Velde & Van Naerssen's model is limited to take into account - that crossing an international border does not end the migratory process, but is an ongoing struggle with one's shifting status of illegality and legality that continues even after the migrant reaches one's so-called 'destination' place. Most importantly, Velasco & Contreras' critical ethnographic analysis reveals that people produce these borderlands in highly diverse ways as much as being a product of multiple structural conditions that calls for re-looking migratory 'models' to understand cross-border spatial behaviour.

In centralising people's practices and agency in my research, I wish to contribute to Velasco and Contreras' call for the need to study lived spaces of 'the geopolitical border', however from a border studies and urban geography perspective that allows for an alternative yet complementary approach. Also, I draw much inspiration from Anzaldúa's and Gomez Peña's works in that the objective of my research is indeed to explore voices of agency that dare to give diverse meanings to this over-represented border. However, due to the heavy time constraints in relation to my own personal conditions as a visitor/outsider to these borderlands and related choices of methodology and theoretical framework, this research cannot and does not aim to achieve the ethnographic depths that such works urge for. Nevertheless, I wish to contribute to such debates and conceptualisations of borders and regions as lived spaces rather than objective entities.

Transborderism

Since Canclini and Anzaldúa, researchers have also embraced the notion of border regions as highly transited spaces of hybrid cultures and identities. People's perceptions, practices and experiences of cross-border activities are seen as central to producing these border regions. In



this regard border regions and border cultures are seen to challenge notions of ‘one society one culture-one state-one territory’, and as transcending ‘state borders’ and nationalist feelings, through ‘crossing’ the border (Heyman,2012), thereby leading to processes conceived as ‘transborderism’.

Iglesias-Prieto (2008) provides an interesting framework for studying transborderism in relation to people’s practices. She conceives transborderism as a process linked to levels of interaction influenced by aspects such as frequency, intensity, directionality, scale of crossing, type of material and symbolic exchange, and the social and cultural meanings attached to such transactions. While these are important aspects in influencing perceptions and experiences of individuals, however, the framework assumes that ‘crossing’ and active interaction across borders is inherently relevant to all peoples in these regions which is not the case. While crossing experiences are important to the dynamics of interactions across these regions, I am also interested in perspectives of people who have never crossed ‘the border’ physically but are nevertheless impacted by and participate directly or indirectly in the divergent, unequal and hierarchical interactions and non-interactions linking these regions, as strongly urged in the works of Anzaldúa and Velasco & Contreras. Perceptions and practices in border regions influence and are influenced by ‘the border’/bordering practices of states, regardless of whether one physically ‘crosses’ or not.

Further the obsession with focussing on only cross-border commuters to understand social processes producing border regions comes from a narrow understanding of space and region as somehow static container-entities. By including people who never cross ‘the border’ but nevertheless produce ‘the border’, I hope to broaden our understanding of borders as beyond a line to be crossed, as nevertheless being filled with diverse meanings via crossing as well as non-crossing practices.



Border Resistance and Othering

The U.S-Mexico borderlands have also been theorised as places of cultural resistance and identity-building based on Othering, as much as places of hybrid cultures. In this regard Pablo Vila's work has been seminal. His work asserts that at borderlands processes of identity resistance, polarisation and separation get reinforced, rather than being blurred or transcended. According to Vila, though based on his research in Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, borderlands become places where complex processes of identity construction acquire unique articulations (Vila, 2000). In his ethnographic approach, however, 'region', similar to Anzaldúa's conceptualisations, is understood as not coinciding with a fixed geographical area but is rather a symbolically understood space that varies with each individual. The significance of Vila's work is in grounding cultural and identity construction processes to symbolic spaces of borderlands/border regions that nevertheless emerge from such social constructions. The theoretical conception of everyday regionalisations, and 'lived space' of borders and urbanisms (Lefebvre, 1991, Werlen, 2009), does share ontological grounds with Vila's ethnographic approach in the conceptions of 'regions'.

Borders, Othering and mental maps: Another relevant article related to my research methodology is a recent work by Delgado (2012) that uses mental maps to study identity construction processes based on *othering* at border cities of Tijuana, México and Tecun Uman, Guatemala in relation to those 'on the other side'. Though mental maps have not been used much within methodologies of urban analysis applied to Tijuana, her work however uses mental maps from an anthropological perspective. Delgado uses mental maps and urban imaginaries to understand '*othering*' processes adopted by youngsters in border cities of Tijuana, México and Tecun Uman, Guatemala in relation to those 'on the other side' of the border. Her research points to the significance of everyday practices that endow the border



with meaning, while also highlighting the relevance of the materialised lived border as central to ‘*othering*’ processes adopted by these young men and women towards those on ‘the other side’ and in constructing their own identity references. Her work also underlines the relevance of spatial references to identity reference constructions.

However, in the predetermined, explicit focus on ‘*othering*’ processes at borderlands, based on an analysis of explicit drawings of ‘the border’ asked of people (given that people are explicitly asked to draw ‘the border’ in her research), there is the danger of steering the response of people already in a certain assumed position with respect to ‘the border’ as directly linked to ‘*othering*’ in relation to ‘those on the other side’, thereby re-producing state-centric perspectives of Us-Them related to Here-There relationships coinciding with national territories, rather than allowing for more subtle narratives and imaginaries to emerge. Further, regions are assumed as predetermined fixed entities coinciding with state borders that do not then allow for narratives of symbolic region-making.

While my work also uses mental maps as a methodological tool, it differs not only in its objective but also in the theoretical and methodological ways of working with the same conceptual tool of ‘mental maps’. Rather than explicitly asking for mappings of ‘the border’ I use this conceptual tool from an everyday urban-geography perspective, to gather mental maps of ‘everyday trajectories’ of people, to then reflect on the same through a critical geopolitical and urban lens, in the kinds of border references expressed explicitly or not, with the aim of gathering more nuanced visual imaginaries and narratives of regions and borders as envisioned by individuals to be part of their everyday movements. This will be more elaborated in the following chapter.



From reinforcing versus transcending borders to remapping borders?

The cultural approach in comparison to the urban approach tends to focus relatively more on the agency of people as central to theorising border regions, viewing regions primarily as human spaces rather than purely objectified urban/economic units of analysis. Nevertheless, in terms of conceptualising borders, the cultural approach (with the exception of Anzaldúa and Velasco & Contreras) tends to also be caught within binary border geographies of representations - of movements versus resistance around conceptualisations of either Us-Them, Here-There mentalities; or as hybrid non-geographical spaces of flux and motion and spaces of transborderism emerging from crossing practices that is unable to acknowledge the renewed significance of place and site to living geopolitical borders. The most important challenge for ethnographic and anthropological studies of borderlands then, as urged by Alvarez, is indeed to redraw the border of conceptual cultural areas (1995).

While drawing inspiration from the cultural approach in the importance given to symbolisms and social constructions of borders and regions, my research however, does not follow the detailed ethnographic descriptive approach, but rather searches for mappings, narratives and symbolisms as emerging from everyday lived spaces of these urban-border landscapes, and in that sense relies more on critical geopolitical and urban geographical approaches, with the aim of following ‘lived mentalities’. I hope that this endeavour might possibly shed more light into the improvised nature of living at/across/within/over borderlands, alongside ways of dealing with structural conditions/agency in ways that might (or not) challenge binary understandings of regions and borders. This lens I believe will provide me with a more inter-disciplinary approach that is needed, as urged by Chambers, to read the mobile textures, grammar, and unfolding languages of contemporary Tijuana (2012), which I will elaborate more in Chapter 2.



III Border Studies Approach

¿Whose border is it?

¿Who is the border?



“....If legally rigid, borders are historically fluid and socially complex: for some they represent simply stamps on a passport, for others an apparently impossible barrier, yet every day they continue to be crossed, and hence simultaneously challenged and confirmed, in both legal and illegal fashion.”

- Iain Chambers (2012)



Introduction:

Border scholarship on the Mexico-U.S. border, as Alvarez rightly notes (2012), in its single-minded geopolitical focus has also re-produced the U.S.-Mexico border and the field of border studies itself as state-centric. He argues that despite scholars challenging the power of the state's enactments in measures of security and commercialisation, the scholarly focus on immigration controls, anti-terrorism, and other state-based policies have in fact re-inscribed the nation-state on the border and in border studies. While it would be impossible to review all the vast literature under this approach, I choose some important works that are representative of trends in border scholarship of the U.S.-Mexico border regions, most importantly San Diego Tijuana, for unfolding border-thinking underlying in these texts. Border-thinking in the way I use it refers to the ways in which 'border' is viewed, conceptualised, given meaning, analysed and comes to signify in this literature. The question being pursued is really what borders do we 'enact' through our writing (as academics) and from what politics of location and points of departure.

Borderings of border scholars

The grand U.S-Mexico border with heightened fencing, policing, militarisation and criminalisation processes around the war on drugs, war on terror, and illegal immigration alongside economic integration policies, has caught the attention of most border scholars towards underlining these paradoxical state policies and practices as central to understanding borders.

Among border scholars approaching the U.S-Mexico borderlands from such a strong geopolitical focus Coleman, Nevins and Andreas are some important authors. To Coleman (2005), the U.S-Mexico border is mainly produced by U.S. statecraft. Tracing developments



in congressional immigration reform efforts towards immigration policing in the U.S.-Mexico border region (since the 80s till 9/11 and post 9/11), alongside U.S state policies towards economic developments/geoeconomic strategies at border regions (since 1965 till 9/11 and post 9/11), he argues the border to be produced in a security/economy nexus as part of a long-standing geopolitical frontier regime driven by U.S. statecraft. Despite problematising the contradictory and incoherence of such geoeconomic and geopolitical state policies, in its primary focus around immigration reforms, securitisation and militarisation policies implemented by the U.S. state, Coleman's work nevertheless re-produces borders and border regions through state-centric perspectives. Though he tries to raise the issue of challenges at local levels towards implementing such incoherent policies emerging themselves from anti-geographical, non-locally produced strategies that are inherently obscured to local place-based realities, in its fixed focus on the state-scale Coleman's analysis is not able to move beyond understanding borders and regions as produced in and through state-centric perspectives.

Andreas' (2000) analysis also approaches the U.S.-Mexico border as produced in practices and politics of state policing around flows of drugs and immigrants. In focussing on policing trends of (U.S. and Mexico) state policies at the border, Andreas argues that the escalation of territorial border policing has been less about deterring drugs and illegal migration and more about image crafting. According to Andreas the border functions as a kind of political stage for state practices towards projecting images and messages to various audiences intended to shape their perceptions rather than actually addressing issues of deterrence of illegal immigrants and drug trafficking. Here again despite pointing to the performative element of borders, the drama, failures and loopholes of state policies towards actually 'securing' the border and as aimed mainly to alter perceptions of strategic audiences,



Andreas' approach nevertheless re-produces borders as state-driven in its fixed focus on state policing trends, being unable to imagine this grand political stage for state practices as nevertheless having specific local coordinates, voices and forces.

To Nevins (2002), the U.S.-Mexico borders are strategic sites, symbolic and territorial, for constructions of social differences, especially between citizens and 'aliens', woven by diverse individuals, social agents and state institutions, which he argues to be crucial to facilitating the emergence of the Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, which according to him stands for a significant shift in U.S. state border strategy towards deterrence as opposed to a traditional border policy of apprehending and returning migrants who cross the border. Looking at the developments of SanDiego Tijuana regions as a specific case, to Nevins, the historical context of the U.S-Mexico war, the designation of the boundary in 1848, the gradual incorporation of SanDiego into the national political economy of United States, and the context of historical, political and social geographic developments concerning the U.S.-Mexico border and politicisation of immigration as part of the same argued as facilitating the implementation of the Operation Gatekeeper, are central to producing the border.

Despite recognising the importance of historical, social, cultural, geographic, urban, regional, geopolitical developments to his analysis of U.S. public policy regarding the south western border, Nevins' analysis nevertheless strengthens and re-inforces divisionary imaginaries and epistemologies of borders given the ultimate goal of studying state-centric visions in this case of the Operation Gatekeeper. Given this epistemological understanding of borders as mainly made by states as a starting point, his analysis inevitably traces and brings to fore divisionary practices and imaginaries linked to boundary-making, reflective also of a strong Marxist analytical framework adopted by Nevins.



From re-producing state borders to re-searching borders?

As evident from the above brief review, the underlying dominant ‘border thinking’ and ‘region-making’ mentalities of important border studies literature on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands tend to eventually re-produce state borders in their single-minded focus on state policies, (re/de)territorialisation, and regulatory measures, despite challenging and highlighting their contested natures. Amidst this over-representation of the U.S.-Mexico borders from state-centric perspectives, there is then an urgency to re-conceptualise (Alvarez, 2012) and reconstruct the fundamental ways in which we imagine borders; to re-think the epistemology of borders, in order to be able to adopt dynamic methodologies that allow for a refreshing new way of ‘seeing’ borders. How we define borders and therefore how and where (Mignolo, 2000, 2006) we look for meaning as border scholars is central to the kinds of knowledge produced through such endeavours.

Most importantly, in the above border literature agencies of people living and producing borders become silenced or marginalised with regard to being understood as powerful in producing borders as actual lived spaces of everyday negotiation. In the single minded geopolitical focus on immigration laws, economic integration policies, policing trends, and state ‘operations’ around ‘securitisation’ and ‘militarisation’ of borders, border scholarship seems to have reached a dead end in being unable to see ‘otherwise’.

Is it possible then to re-look/re-search for productive ways of imagining and studying borders? Is there a problem in ‘where’ we are looking, and how can this be addressed within new research? Who do we consider to be powerful in producing borders? These questions will be addressed in the theoretical and methodological chapter (Chapter 2) that follows.



La Tierra-mi ropa

La Tierra es libre

La Tierra flows here at the border

But Me, I wear la tierra like a saree¹

Adorning myself with borders

I tuck the parts with no borders deep inside

Until La gran frontera curves diagonally onto my chests,

Climbing proudly over my left shoulder and spiralling down my back.

ನನ್ನ ನಡೆ ಹೆಮ್ಮೆಯ ನಡೆ

Cuando camino, el mar se ríe de mí

My footsteps are washed away by migrating voices

Oh Dear ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ ದೇಹ, BodyNation,

La Frontera es tu templo, ನಿನ್ನ ಗುಡಿ

Years have passed

And I now lie weak

Clinging onto tattered borders

Sleeping only to the sounds of sirens under the light of surveillance cameras



- K.A., Tijuana, 2013



CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALISING MY THEORETICAL APPROACH WITHIN THE BORDER STUDIES LITERATURE AND OUTLINING THE METHODOLOGY

I. Linear mentalities, mentalidades lineales

Most of traditional modern geopolitical thinking emerging since the late 19th century, as Kristof (1960) observes, has concentrated on geostrategy and foreign-policy implications of geopolitical decisions, largely driven by aspirations to map shifts and transfers of imperial state powers, (of both present and future), at the ambitious scale of ‘the world’. This was obviously characterised by a (world) view that the rise of a single world power could be aspired and achieved. State territorial boundaries were understood as “natural” associated with two important “founders” of modern geopolitics, Kjéllen and Ratzel who, despite acknowledging agency of actors, nevertheless understood states as self-sufficient organisms competing with each other (Ratzel, 1896, Kjéllen, 1917). Moving to early 20th century dominant geopolitical scholarly imaginations, British imperialist geographer, Halford McKinder (1904/1998) in his essay of 1904, reinforced the significance of historical-geography and visual representations (maps) to predict future, so-called natural, ‘pivot’ areas of power in the world, underlining the centrality of “geo”graphy in the political. Another central figure for German geopolitics, Karl Haushofer (1942/1998), advocated the notion of boundaries as natural and organic, ‘linking people to soil’ that were nevertheless important ‘problems’ needing constant attention in order to seize opportunities of recovering so-called ‘lost ground’ in a fight for seats of power. Most importantly, a red thread running along these spatial imaginaries is that state identities and boundaries were assumed to be linking ‘people’ and ‘soil’ that was worthy of attention, viewed as something to be protected from or achieved at the expense of ‘Other’ competing peoples/states.



Notions of connections, bridges, and interdependence between and beyond ‘nations’ and ‘peoples’ of many ‘soils’ or imaginings of all peoples as part of one world ‘soil’, are hardly part of historical modern geopolitical imaginings despite the expanding scales of political power and economic activities during these times. Though boundary tradition in political geographic studies has witnessed changes in focus and meanings, ‘methodological nationalism’ has mired geopolitical and social scientific thinking till the late 20th century state-centricism (Agnew, 1997, Newmann&Paasi, 1998).

Imaginariness of the world made up of (inter)national borders as dividing lines separating so-called homogenised entities continue to dominate geo-political thinking even in the so-called globalised world of blurring boundaries or network societies (Ohmae,1995, Castells,1996, Amin 2002). That movement of peoples continues to be even more monitored, ‘securitised’ and controlled by states and private corporations, stands as a strong paradox to the borderless world we are told we are living in (Newman 2006). Despite borders in terms of ‘checks’ of ‘identities’ and behaviours now understood and agreed upon to be spreading to ‘anytime-anywhere spatio-temporalities’ that are not necessarily strictly situated at only physical national borderlands but also city centers and everyday public space (Rumford, 2008, Houtum, Kramsch, Zierhofer, 2005, Balibar, 1998, Sassen, 2001), the ‘line’ continues to occupy spatial representations and geo-political framings of assumed collective socio-cultural identities not only by state institutions and even so-called ‘transnational’/global industrial corporations (despite relying on ‘flows’ between nations), but also, and most importantly, within theoretical framings. Further, homogenising metaphors such as ‘global north’/‘global south’, continue to underlie political and theoretical framings of the ‘world’, even within



discourses around apparently ‘new’ phenomena such as ‘globalisation’ (Sassen, 2004), and trans-border urbanisms (Herzog, 1990).

La Linea - the Line - the foundational ‘modern’, so-called ‘rational’, assumedly ‘enlightened’ imaginary, supposedly representing human geographies, despite all its ambiguities in translating onto social realities continues to frame understandings of socio-spatial identities. A ‘line’ is understood to be representative of different identities ‘on either side’, but also assumedly always in opposition to the ‘Other’ side. And yet despite crossing ‘the line’, territorial, cultural, ethnic ‘roots’ of one’s ‘socio-spatial category’ is assumed to remain static and always attached to fixed notions of territories and identities who become further categorised to the status of ‘minority’/ ‘migrant’ amongst a majority national identity. Binaries. Always ‘this’ Or ‘that’.

The US-Mexico border stands as such a static border par excellence. It stands as representative of not only dividing ‘United States of America’ from ‘Mexico’ state’, but also as representing all the spatial simplifications projected onto this divide, as that between the global ‘North’ from the global ‘South’, the ‘First’ world from the ‘Third’ (though some scholars might recognise that the ‘Third is already in the ‘First’, categories remain stubborn), the ‘developed’ from the ‘developing’, ‘modern’ from the ‘traditional’- brimming of abstract binary oppositions that nevertheless have real-world harsh consequences (Doty, 1996). As Doty rightly argues, while there is nothing natural, inevitable or arguably even useful about these divisions, they remain widely circulated and accepted as legitimate ways to categorize peoples and regions of the world. It highlights the arbitrary, constructed, and political nature of such oppositions through which “knowledge” of the world and its peoples is constructed and continues to underpin practices and policies. Rather than revealing or unpacking complex realities, such homogenising concepts inevitably become part of the politics of framing



identities of people, and regions constituted in such binary representational practices by scholars, journalists, policy-makers and the like that mark and de-mark, include and exclude peoples.

As argued in the previous chapter, urban scholars seem to have reached a bi-polar dead end in terms of coming up with urban metaphors towards understanding the complex urban processes producing these border regions, while border scholars appear to be caught within the very frames of the borders they study, being unable to move beyond imagining borders from state-centric perspectives. Most importantly, urban and border scholarship of the U.S.-Mexico border at Tijuana SanDiego tend to predominantly marginalise agencies of people as central to producing borders and making regions, in their conceptual framework of borders and regions. So how does existing theory in border studies address this lacuna in border scholarship towards incorporating/centralising agency? In looking at the ontological shift from borders to bordering within border studies which is heralded as a major shift towards multi-dimensional border theorising, I grapple with this question in what follows.

II. From Borders to B/Ordering: Moving beyond Ordering/Othering discourses

The field of border studies has undergone a renaissance (since the 90s), it is argued (Newman, 2006; Newman & Passi, 1998), in terms of a renewed interest in borders as well as the ‘inter-disciplinary’, (academic) ‘border-crossing’, ‘multidimensional’ avatars they are taking on. This is attributed to a number of trends, namely, the metaphorical productivity induced by ‘borders’ for significant works of social theoretical inquiry (Houtum, Kramsch & Zierhofer, 2005), the increasing relevance of critical social and cultural theories, amongst others, to border studies, the ‘borderless world’ discourse within the globalization discourse (Newman, 2006), and simply the institutionalisation of such studies (Newman & Paasi, 1998). With the



postmodern turn, geographers have gradually begun to position boundaries and territories through other socio-political theoretical constructs, though traditional political geographic perspectives persist. Borders are understood as active, social processes, rather than existing as absolute total lines accurately separating peoples (Newmann, 2006; Newmann& Paasi, 1998). Border studies today undoubtedly stands at the cross-roads of geography, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, literary studies, economics, and law, along with border practitioners engaged with the practical aspects (Newman, 2006), emerging in fact as a challenging field of ‘academic borderlands’.

However, at the core of these trends lies a significant ontological shift or one can say a “squint” both within the field and in how ‘borders’ have been mobilised to serve other fields of academic inquiry. It is a squint that comes from a cross-eye view deviating from a straight line, running obliquely in search of that which does not always meet the eye. In more simple terms, rather than border as a static line or object, border is seen an active verb. From an almost blinded focus on lines through its history, contemporary border studies slowly squint towards processes, symbolisms, practices, narratives and discourses behind, part of, and beyond these lines.

In what follows I delve into some of the recent theoretical discourses and debates in border studies to understand the meaning of border as a verb towards weighing its relevance for my research. I first briefly provide a historical background to the ontological shifts or transformations from border as static line to border as an active verb, understood to be as a critical ‘bordering’ turn in border studies. I then move on to discuss some key meanings around border(ing) emerging from these debates and discourses. And finally, I reflect on its implications for epistemologies of borders and its relevance to my research.



Borders to B/Ordering

Boundaries have been traditionally studied in the field of political geography departing mainly from the scale of states (Newman & Paasi, 1998). The history of boundary studies in geography is seen as largely descriptive, relatively non-theoretical, and rather functional, engaged in definitions, differentiations (of borders from borderlands, political frontiers from settlement frontiers) (ibid), categorizations and typologizations of border types (Newman, 2006; Paasi, 1998). Border scholars during the first half of the 20th century understood borders as pre-given categories, constituting no more than the physical and static outcome of a political decision-making process. Geographers and political scientists of the 30s and 40s while still uncritical of state boundaries further became engaged in mapping what they called ‘natural’ borders (Newman, 2006), whose deterministic approach however, would soon be rejected. Moving to a functionalism in the 60s, notions of ‘closed’ and ‘open’ boundaries, ease or difficulty of crossing borders becoming central to boundary enquiry, signalling an initial interest on trans-boundary relations albeit at a highly functional and simplistic level (ibid). It is only since the late 20th century that processes part of the postmodern academic discourse triggering the erosion of disciplinary boundaries and facilitating some highly productive cross-fertilisations based on exchanges of notions of boundaries, territories and identities between geographers and other social science disciplines (Newman & Paasi, 1998) that paved the way for critical boundary thinking more crucial to the ontological shift towards the ‘verbing’ of borders. Geographers began embracing the social and cultural meanings of boundaries, and critical geopolitical enquiry began challenging ideas of a fixed, territorially bounded world. This meant a strong rejection of what Agnew calls ‘methodological nationalism’ (Agnew, 1997; Paasi, 1998) seen to have hindered traditional boundary studies.



Nevertheless, boundaries remained relatively under theorised during the 90s (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Paasi, 1998) with the exception of David Sibley. Sibley, it is argued, introduced the notion of ‘**purification of space**’ where rejection of difference stays central to boundary maintenance, an aspect largely ignored in geography till then (Houtum & Naerssen, 2002, Newman & Paasi, 1998). Postcolonialism additionally contributed significantly to border studies in centralising the issues of ‘otherness’, viewing borders as a product of human imaginative geographies rather than as anything natural (Said, 1984/1998), and most importantly in highlighting the centrality of geographical imaginations to configurations of power (Gregory, 1994). And not to forget the significant works of Walter Mignolo who wishes to adopt a ‘de-colonial’ optic rather than ‘postcolonial’ urging for centralising the dialectics of modernity/coloniality for border-thinking – in terms of thinking from the dichotomies of modernity/coloniality. He urges for thinking ‘*from the border*’ rather than studying ‘the border’ (Mignolo, 2006, 2000). Mignolo’s call is provocative and one can possibly also address modern/colonial dialectics of borders through de-constructing the appeared stability of state borders via geographies of everyday life, which this thesis aims to do.

The relevance of everyday life to critical geopolitical thinking has been long argued by feminist geopolitics (Dowler & Sharp, 2001) though less acknowledged within political geography. As Dowler and Sharp argue, grounding geopolitical discourse in practice linking international representation to the geographies of everyday life is critical in terms of a feminist geopolitical lens. They call for a broadening of the methodology of critical geopolitics towards an ethnography of international relations for understandings of the complex local embodied geographies that reconstruct the nation and the geography of



international relations, often ignored in the single-minded focus on grand state-centric narratives and scale (p.171-172).

In this rather brief overview we see that notions of borders as objective lines, pre-given and fixed, as if existing somewhere ‘out there’ to be mapped, categorised and typologized that occupied most of traditional border studies, gradually diffuses towards understanding borders as social processes (Newman, 2006). Despite the ontological shift away from materiality, state borders remain central to contemporary border studies. Contemporary border scholars challenge the notion of reduced significance of states due to globalisation by underlining their continued power in policing boundaries of territories (Paasi, 1998). The persistent phenomenon of borders and boundaries in regulating movements of ‘men and things’ (Foucault, 1991), though always changing in meaning, even in the so-called age of ‘space of flows’ and network society we are supposed to be living in (Castells, 1996), continue to challenge notions of a ‘borderless world’ of the postmodern globalization discourse. Rather than seen as persistent stable, fixed lines and products of a modernist project they are viewed as human **social processes** existing in socio-cultural action and discourses. Borders become active and seep into the everyday rather than serving as an infrastructural objective entity meant to protect assumedly natural societies. State borders then intersperse with all other b/order(ing)s.

B/orders are seen as manifestations of social practice and discourse. Narratives, from ‘grand’ scales of inter-state to ‘micro’ levels of everyday that shape meanings gain significance. B/orders, then, do not exist only in a ‘border area’ per se but manifest in a range of symbols, institutions, knowledges, narratives, practices and discourses that nevertheless territorialise identities and memories (Paasi, 1998). Territory itself is understood as part of wider socialization narratives, emerging from ‘territorial socialization’ and the meanings



attached to it, rather than existing naturally or physically static (Duchacek, 1970; Newman & Paasi, 1998).

The objectivity of borders claimed by states is seriously challenged from this perspective. Houtum urges that borders are to be understood (Houtum, 2010) as a continual space-fixing process which gives the impression of a finite physical process as if it concerned a physically identifiable entity with objective and unchangeable borders. B/order as verb is understood as part of relations of identities and boundaries. Identities are understood to be produced through boundary-making, mostly tending to be represented in terms of a difference (not necessarily as oppositional) rather than something intrinsic to a certain group, and boundary-producing practices rather than boundary objects per se become central.

B/order as a verb acknowledges the relationality and significance of multiple contexts and scales to processes of boundary construction, from the global, to the state, to the everyday and beyond (Newman & Paasi, 1998), as opposed to the ‘methodological nationalism’ limiting previous understandings.

While not totally rejecting the physical boundary per se, this shift emphasises the need for studying the physical in relation to the institutional, symbolic, imaginary, social, personal, boundaries in a holistic manner (ibid). Borders are understood as expressions of power relations emerging from historically and geographically specific social practices continually negotiated, rather than being fixed and asserted by a dominant group/entity per se. As Houtum & Naerssen (2002) interpret, “*Bordering is an ongoing strategic effort to make a difference in space among the movements of people, money or products.*” From this perspective then, not only do people cross borders, but also borders cross people.

All these can be seen as attempts to de-construct the signified ‘border’ of lines, barbed wires, objects and non-processes, to reconstruct it as ongoing social processes. B/ordering



space is also understood more importantly as Ordering space in that borders are understood to exist in the multiple practices of spatial ordering that produce precisely the same. More than borders of lines, it is the meanings attached to lines manifesting in social action and discourse that has immense power, from the perspective of the ‘b/ordering’ shift. Dividing lines can potentially become lines of play. National symbols such as maps used to justify crimes on the *Other* become ‘empty signifiers’ of multiple meanings (Wallach, 2011). A highly visible Separation Wall becomes elastic, extra-territorial, rhizomatic networks of power (Pallister-Wilkins, 2011). If a border is a wound to one (Anzaldúa, 1987), it is embodiment to some others (in the case of border residents in the Yoruba-speaking Shabe region along the Bénin-Nigeria international border, who declare, “We are the border” (Flynn, 1997)). If, to a geographer, a river separates people ‘naturally’, to the people living on either sides of its banks it is what unites (ibid). If a barbed wire is preventing for one it is home for another (Anzaldúa, 1987).

If the world consists of many borders today, the b/ordering shift urges us to look at the multiple meanings they continue to acquire rather than assuming them as fixed, primordial or always separating. This ontological shift that conceptualises borders as human processes confronts. Borders demand introspection. While this ontological shift in border studies from the focus on physical/objective borders to “b/ordering” practices is seen as radically moving beyond state-centric perspectives in understanding borders as a social process, recent research from such theoretical perspectives nevertheless continues to focus on grand scales and narratives of socio-spatial processes (Paasi, 2003, 2008, Newmann & Paasi, 1998, Anderson & O’Dowd, 1999) such as the nation-state. Though such analysis is important in its own ways, by focusing only on grand narratives, border scholarship re-“presents” and re-“produces” ‘the border’ as the state’s border, largely ignoring alternative or more complex



representations, meanings, agencies, micro-narratives and discourses that are nevertheless equally critical to sense-making and social processes of lived borderlands.

Further, while I understand this shift from borders to b/ordering as a critical turn in border thinking, there also simultaneously emerges a slight discomfort with the implications of applying or using this term towards fully understanding meanings of borders from agential perspectives. Does 'b/ordering' as a term and concept, despite challenging static, objective views of state borders, continue to imply epistemologies of borders along territorial terms and processes of spatial intent of cleansing and difference-production as understood through state-centric perspectives? While territoriality and difference making, or differentiating is a central aspect of boundary-making, meanings of state borders also emerge from socio-spatial practices, imaginations and discourses that are not necessarily explicitly territorial in the way of possessing direct spatial strategies of 'cleansing' and 'differentiating' or intent towards '*othering*' in the sense of state practices or other boundary-making practices, or of regulating movements of people and goods, while nevertheless producing and reacting to practices of state borders with such intent. As Dowler and Sharp (2001) argue, what might seem in grand representations such as anti-british graffiti, political demonstrations, political murals in Irish West Belfast as reinforcing an image of national solidarity, (also seen through the B/order as verb optics as b/ordering practices), nevertheless the concerns of women who wondered what affects reunification with the Republic of Ireland would have on their daily lives become eclipsed. Thus the B/ordering optics tends to eclipse 'other' narratives, practices equally important to producing border-spaces. Thus there lies a danger in projecting b/ordering practices of states onto non-state actors and agents who might not always possess spatial and territorial intentions (as directed towards specific physical space/place) in the same way as we



understand territoriality and practices of b/ordering space from state-centric perspectives towards marking/othering/differentiating/cleansing.

‘B/ordering’ as an ontological term is currently limited to practices inherently linked to ordering space, which then limits one from looking at ‘other’ ways of seeing, and understanding borders via practices that might not necessarily intend in themselves in ‘ordering space’, that nevertheless, in an intended or unintended way, actively ‘produce’ borders, border spaces in their own ways. What I am trying to say here is that there lies a slight danger in how one uses the ‘B/ordering’ concept to study borders, in terms of where and how we look. The question is if we then only focus on practices that re-enforce state-centric visions of borders, territoriality, identities, regions and border regions, at the cost of ignoring practices, discourses, that challenge the dominant state-centric visions of border spaces.

Sifting through current conceptualisations within European border studies towards setting an agenda for future research, Kramsch finely argues that they ultimately continue to support an understanding of borders that re-inforces state-centric perspectives in border studies (Kramsch, 2010), despite acknowledging the relevance of local scales of everyday life and fields of force at the border that place state power in question. Kramsch then calls for a refreshed ‘optic’ which he metaphorically names ‘the Rabelaisian optic’, based on the French historian of the Annales School of History - Lucien Febvre’s analytical approach towards studying the figure of François Rabelais and the Rhine (two central symbolic figures for nationalistic imaginations in the context of French-German antagonism during the time of his approach between the early to mid 20th century) from non-nationalist perspectives that is argued to be based on de-essentialising the notion of ‘natural’ national frontiers, and linear conceptions of history, through an approach of visual attentiveness to the **lived space of**



borders and frontiers. This way Kramsch reminds us, interestingly through the optic of historian Febvre's approach, the urgency for centralising agency and everyday mentalities of those inhabiting lived borders to epistemologies of borders. Though his paper is largely focused on European border studies, the concern of limitations of border epistemologies and theorisations that re-enforce state-centric perspectives at the cost of marginalising agencies of lived spaces of borders, nevertheless also applies to contemporary U.S.-Mexico border studies, as argued in the previous chapter.

III. Looking for spatial conceptualisations of agency towards non-state-centric epistemologies of borders

In this search for concepts that centralise agency to study bordering, a fundamental revisiting of how we understand space becomes urgent. Henri Lefebvre comes back as an important figure as he has indeed conceptualised a very sophisticated theory of space that nevertheless serves useful to fill the gap of agential concepts in border studies. To Henri Lefebvre spatial forms and patterns are mainly social and relational rather than absolute and rational (Lefebvre, 1991). Therefore, instead of human activities taking place “in space”, space itself is seen as constantly “being produced” through social processes. From this point of view it is hard to separate ‘space’ from the context and social processes through which they come to be produced. So, for instance, rather than people's everyday activities taking place ‘inside’ ‘Tijuana’, or ‘SanDiego’, or ‘United States of America’, or ‘México’, these spaces of ‘the United States of America’, or ‘México’, are always being produced through multiple social processes of institutions, but also everyday practices, perceptions and conceptions, the physical aspects being just one dimension to production of spaces and places.



Lefebvre's "spatial trialectics" model includes three fields namely 'perceived space' (Spatial practices, or physical space), 'conceived space' (representations of space, or mental space) and 'lived space' (spaces of representations, or social space) that are in constant interaction with each other thereby creating and producing what comes to be space itself and the patterns that follow. (Soja, 1996)



Source: Soja, 1996, Thirdspace, p. 74

To Lefebvre, our perceptions, conceptions, everyday improvisations, emotions, feelings, abstractions, symbols are all, at one and the same time, crucial to producing space and the meanings we attribute to it in the process of living and interacting with each other and our environment. In this model, the dynamics between the fields of physical space, mental space, and social space all together impact socio-spatial patterns. Physical space (perceived) refers to the materiality of social interaction in terms of the tangible sensory aspects of life that we can touch and feel. Mental space (conceived) includes all the specific abstractions we attribute in our attempts to suitably reflect over material (spatial) reality, be it artistic representations like



photography, painting, sketches or scientific tools such as maps, graphs, theoretical models, plans, or cultural ritualistic or symbolic abstractions etc. And finally, social space (lived) is the lived space of people with all our lived out imaginations, feelings, fears, emotions attached to space/place (Harvey 2004, on Lefebvre). These three fields in relation to each other contribute to what he calls production of space. At the same time, Lefebvre insists that each of these “fields” of human spatiality be seen as simultaneously real and imagined, concrete and abstract, material and metaphorical (Soja, 1996, p.65). He insists the model does not end, but is continuously open to expansion of spatial knowledge (Soja, 1996, p.61). Though not claiming to be all-encompassing, this model still offers a dynamic and inclusive framework to begin understanding the complexities of spatial patterns of human activities at multiple and simultaneous levels.

Indeed with regard to borders, as argued in the introduction of the book *B/ordering space*, the material physical dimensionality of borders or in Lefebvre’s terms ‘perceived space’ has received the most attention in wider discussion within academia and political circles, but also in the case of the U.S.-Mexico border at SanDiego Tijuana, top-down ‘conceived space’ has also received much attention with regard to the single-minded focus on immigration policies, statecraft etc. However, ‘lived space’ continues to be a challenge for border studies despite widely acknowledged as important, which I wish to address in this thesis.

Also, the turn to agency, if not in border studies, has nevertheless emerged within the broader field of social sciences and human geography with the turn towards action-, agency-, practice-, and discourse-centered perspectives in the last decades of the 20th century (Houtum, Kramsch, Zierhofer, 2005). Connecting this turn to indeed border studies in his chapter ‘Regions and Everyday Regionalizations’, Benno Werlen (2005) calls for looking at



bordering practices through the lens of everyday spatializations of actors. As argued so far, the very fundamental ways in which border ‘regions’ are conceptualised by urban scholars fails to incorporate the role of subjectivities and agency as a central aspect of processes producing regions. Regions are understood as tangible entities that exist on the basis of objectively identifiable socio-spatial processes and patterns in which voices of subjectivities are understood as but unreliable and unimportant or as part of macro/global processes. Binary geographies of space such as ‘space of flows’ versus ‘static space’ come to be produced in these conceptions of regions, while possibly both of such spaces and many more often co-exist emerging in ways that are not necessarily always competing with each other, towards producing regions as ‘lived’ space.

In Werlen’s conceptions of ‘everyday regionalizations’ regions are conceived as produced and reproduced by social practice. The term ‘regionalization’ implies that spatial structures are established or transformed by way of functional, symbolic, signifying, and normative attributions, as well as in the course of intentional acting (Werlen, 1987, 1995, 1997) rather than as an objectified entity. He calls for geographical thinking to shift analysis of regions from spatial descriptions to more subjective understandings and social explanations of everyday geography-making. According to Werlen, the study of ‘bordering of spaces’ needs to be understood through the lens of everyday activities. This lens indeed serves productive towards building border epistemologies that centralise everyday spaces of agents through this concept of ‘everyday regionalisations’ that potentially acknowledges and challenges the material conditions of state borders, but also moves beyond spatialities of state-centric perspectives. Through the lens of studying everyday processes of region-making of people inhabiting lived spaces of borders, in this case of the U.S-Mexico border in Tijuana, an optic of borders that centralises agency emerges. From this perspective, regions are produced



through social actions ‘shaped’ by social and material conditions, but that also ‘shape’ the social and physical conditions of such action. Werlen’s argumentations of space from an ‘action-centered’ perspective then does not deny the role of physical, material and structural conditions but mainly argues for the rejection of ‘objectified’ space as determining social actions. Materiality emerges as meaningful mainly through actions rather than having a meaning in and by ‘itself’.

Most importantly, the contribution to epistemologies of studying space and borderings in Werlen’s theorisations of regionalisation is in the emphasis on processes of ‘*appropriation*’ rather than pre-existing ‘*spatial delimitation*’ (2005). Then agential practices at lived spaces of border regions are studied in terms of actors’ appropriation or how they ‘make’ regions and produce spatio-temporal dimensions as frames of references for different kinds of activities and practices, rather than understood through purely on the basis spatial demarcation. This for me is a significant step forward towards building epistemologies of borders beyond the state-centric ‘linear mentalities’ argued in the first part of this Chapter.

In my research then I define borders, based on the above theorisations, as understood in the relationship between everyday lived spaces, practices and discourses, and structural/state-institutional practices of b/ordering. B/ordering practices of state institutions then are understood not as existing by themselves or as producing these regions in and of themselves, but emerging as meaningful mainly in relation to meanings, actions, perceptions and practices of people inhabiting, using and producing lived spaces of borders. The most important clarification is that rather than departing from the meaning of borders as emerging from state-institution(s), I will centralise meanings of people living border regions and their struggles, discourses, actions, associations in relation to the b/ordering practices of state institutions as experienced in the everyday. Everyday spatialisations of agents and lived



mentalities serve central to my analysis. Here it becomes important to clarify that everyday regionalisations are not necessarily progressive by definition, and can also be exclusionary in that individuals or collectives can possibly demarcate space in ways that are intended to exclude, such as gated communities or the SanDiego minutemen who take the task of preventing ‘illegal immigrants’ as one of their aims. However, lived mentalities emerging from everyday practices not focussed on explicit exclusionary bordering, possibly produce space in more subtle and complex ways that equally need attention and could possibly point to progressive ways of imagining border-spaces, which is where I look to in this thesis.

IV. Outlining a methodological framework

Site of fieldwork:

Though my objective is to explore how people ‘make regions’ based on their everyday practices and discourses, and how they narrate, experience and perceive ‘the border’ in their everyday life, my theoretical and methodological approach does not aim to achieve this at the cost of being totally oblivious to the continued importance of ‘where’ to social theorisations and geopolitics of borders today. As Tito Alegría points(2012), between peoples in Tijuana and SanDiego, the transborder exchanges can be interpreted very differently, given the importance of the geopolitical institutional border and structural conditions that operate very differently towards flows of people from one side and the other. While most of the transborder discourse tends to come from the SanDiego side, it is then interesting to position these debates from Tijuana. My fieldwork will therefore be situated in Tijuana, though it would be impossible to limit fieldwork narratives, practices, discourses of people to an objective region ‘Tijuana’ and will inevitably include people living in Tijuana, Tijuana San-Diego borderlands.



The fieldwork was conducted between the months of April to July, 2013 for a period of 3 months. This is an important aspect to my methodological aims since being physically present at the borderlands was important given the centrality of everyday lived spaces to my analysis. As Mignolo (1999) famously writes, '*I am where I think*', for me, thinking from being in Tijuana was important.

Research Question

Having outlined the appropriate theoretical tools based on my epistemological concerns about current (urban-cultural-border) scholarship and conceptualisations of space/regions in studying the U.S.-Mexico border at Tijuana SanDiego, my main research question is:

In what ways do people in Tijuana map, narrate, experience and perceive 'the U.S.-México border' and make 'region(s)' in relation to their everyday life?

Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and theoretical arguments made so far, the U.S.-Mexico border needs to be understood as an everyday lived space operating with its own dynamics and power towards producing these border regions as diverse and rich in meanings by those living here. I believe that understanding these borderlands begins from starting the ground/bottom-up. As argued in Chapter 1, there is then an urgent need to 'decolonise' the conceptual space of these borderlands from the 'global'/'bi-/inter-national' perspectives towards centralising everyday experiences of people living here. Such global and bi/international perspectives tend to cloud and marginalise bottom-up narratives, practices and discourses in ways that reproduce certain colonial-modern ways of conceiving space and borderlands as empty of



lived mentalities. Therefore I use the term ‘decolonise’ towards recentralising lived mentalities to these discourses. My hypothesis then is that people make regions and perceive ‘the border’ based on their everyday practices, experiences and discourses, though this is bound to be influenced by structural conditions, rather than the other way around.

Research Design and Methodological tools

Conceptual models and research design

A study of everyday lived spaces of borderlands most importantly requires a qualitative research approach. Clifford, French and Valentine describe qualitative methods in geography as, “*a set of techniques that are used to explore subjective meanings, values and emotions such as interviewing, participant observation and visual imagery*” (2010, p.3). Given the importance of qualitative aspects of everyday life, perceptions, narratives and experiences to studying ‘everyday mentalities’, as outlined in this chapter so far, a combination of visual imagery based on mental maps and narratives based on interviews will be the primary data for this research.

While Lefebvre and Werlen offer strong conceptual theorisations around space as socially produced and the relevance of ‘everyday space’ to study urban border spaces, in terms of methodological tools their theorisations nevertheless remain ambiguous. How does one practically go about studying ‘lived mentalities’ and such processes of ‘everyday region-making’ at borderlands, which I aim to do?

A related theoretical and methodological tool that is useful to approach lived mentalities of everyday life comes from the urbanist Kevin Lynch, who as previously mentioned was nevertheless also interested in the role and influence of state borders to urbanisms at Tijuana, SanDiego regions, with the concept of ‘mental maps’. Lynch came up



with this concept in his search for ways to study how a city's image(s) might be made more vivid and memorable to its inhabitants based on how people make their way through the complex social and material conditions of city-life (Lynch, 1960). In fact, Werlen's notion of space as a reference to everyday actions does resonate in some ways with the way Lynch attempted to understand the relationship between material space and people's actions, and perceptions, through this concept of 'mental maps'. Lynch, also like Werlen, centralises agential mappings of space and place to envisioning/understanding urbanisms. Though mental maps have yet to be thoroughly explored within urban circles, they are nevertheless also applicable to urban border regions such as Tijuana San Diego towards understanding everyday mentalities and region-making in relation to borders as lived everyday space that is indeed the objective of this thesis.

'Mental maps' for studying everyday urban-border trajectories:

Latour (1990) argues that all scientific discipline relies on invention of a visual and written language allowing it to break from the past. Maps have been and are a central visual 'language' on which the geographical discipline relies. However, cartographic maps have specifically played a central role in the construction of knowledge of space within modern-colonial contexts. As Harvey notes, rooted in renaissance revolutions in concepts of space and time the modernising project took the conquest and rational ordering of space as an integral part to celebrate the liberation of 'Man'. *"Maps, stripped of all elements of fantasy and religious belief, as well as any sign of the experiences involved in their production, had become abstract and strictly functional systems for the factual ordering in space"* (1989, p.249).



Maps, most importantly, are representations of space rather than real space. However, they do reflect a certain knowledge or understanding of space behind such a representation. A cartographic map of a nation-state is not itself objective space but a subjective representation of a certain socio-spatial ideology based on lines, difference, and demarcation. While modern cartographic maps tend to claim objectivity and neutrality, they are nevertheless subjective representations of space and place. A modern cartographic map is nevertheless also a mental map representing spatial imaginings emerging from modern-colonial endeavours. A map can also be understood as a cultural text as Harley notes, (1996, p.432) given that there is always an act of interpretation involved in its analysis. Jensen and Richardson (2003) further argue that the cultural significance of maps lie in their ability to capture and frame ideas about space, and carry them from one mind to another, in a field of discursive struggles over meaning and interpretation (p.11). If indeed ideas of space and society based on rational lines and spatial demarcation from techniques of cadastral surveying (Harvey 1989) have been made to appear as common sensical knowledge of space while legitimising the violence behind 'demarcating borders' in real space, there is then an urgency to capture and spread 'other' ideas of space emerging from lived spaces.

Mapping can also be seen as a way of representing processes which are believed to exist and affect one's everyday socio-spatial behaviour beyond state-centric processes and perspectives. They are also described as hypothetical constructs having an allegedly real status, referring to underlying entities and processes that there is reason to believe do exist, which are in principle observable. Thus, mental maps give a peek into non-observed processes and organisations of elements of knowledge (Moore & Golledge, 1976). They are a way to structure and store socio-spatial knowledge at all scales (Kitchin, 1994). In that sense all maps



are mental maps, emerging from commonly understood symbols and shared perceptions, or in the interaction of differing perceptions.

Tuan has hypothesised that cognitive maps also act as imaginary worlds, as mental descriptions of places even if we have never been ‘there’ (1975). This means then that even if one has never physically crossed ‘the border’, all the narratives, and imaginaries of ‘the border’ tend to nevertheless become part of one’s mental maps. I am then interested in understanding the imaginings and meanings given to ‘the border’ departing from people’s everyday socio-spatial perceptions and experiences. Perceptions of space are highly subjective, but nevertheless play a crucial role in influencing individual and collective behaviour and therefore cannot be ignored. While it is still debated whether our perception of the environment is experienced purely through rationalised forms of space and place such as cartographic maps, mental maps are nevertheless a useful tool to gain further insights into alternative spatial imaginings of regions based on every day practices. Cognitive maps present an important theoretical concept and methodological tool for gaining insights into lived mentalities of one’s environment in relation to everyday perceptions and experiences. Mental maps of agents represent the silent geographies that re-spatialise power geometries unfolding at borderlands in often complex ways.

Though the concept of mental maps is fuzzy, and there are several definitions and disagreements around what are and are not mental maps, to Kevin Lynch however ‘the city’ is perceived through mental images that are at once public and individual that each of us refer in order to operate successfully within the urban environment and to cooperate with fellow people (Lynch, 1960). Each person makes one’s own mental map yet bases it on some common or shared images.



Restricted purely to the effects of physical, perceptible objects Lynch's analysis classifies five elements that influence people's image of 'the city', namely paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. A path is defined by Lynch as the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally or potentially moves. He points that we observe the city while moving through it, and along these paths the other environmental elements are arranged and related (Lynch, 1960, p.47). While it is hard to separate "the city" from "the path" as might seem from this definition, one cannot ignore the role of movements and (im)mobilities so crucial to sense making and perceptions especially at these borderlands. Rather than occasional paths as Lynch emphasises, I centralise regular/everyday paths (within which cross-border (im)mobility might play a central role) as central to perceptions of these regions. Further, the border-crossing itself can be a central aspect of 'passing through' or an important 'path' at these borderlands. But also non-cross-border trajectories influenced by such crossing rhythms as producing these border regions are equally important. Thus in my analysis paths or trajectories become a central aspect of my analysis out of which I draw aspects of 'border thinking' and 'region making'. One's everyday or regular trajectories (and thus practices around the same) are understood as playing a central role in how people conceive 'the border' and 'region(s)' and in how 'the border' operates in everyday life, also understood from Werlen's definition of everyday region-making.

Though in Lynch's model 'the city' is the focus of study, in my research, 'the border' and 'regionalisations' in relation to 'everyday routes' (that are not restricted to 'the city' given that at these borderlands everyday routes also entails cross-border routes) is central. Further, passages/pathways/routes are central to my methodological approach because the experience of passage is an important aspect of experiencing space, especially in this case of urban-



border spaces of SanDiego Tijuana where everyday crossing rhythms among other rhythms are also central.

Sennett underlines the significance of pathways to urban conceptions and perceptions.

“I’d like to describe in some detail the experience of passing through different territories of the city, both because that act of passage is how we know the city as a whole, and also because planners and architects have such difficulties designing the experience of passage from place to place.” (Sennett, 2006, p.3).

Everyday Routes or trajectories are indeed central to how we come to understand, perceive, live and produce space. This is then a central concept to how I use Lynch’s methodological tool of mental maps, of following everyday trajectories at these urban-border spaces. This means that I adapt his model to study mental mapping of everyday urban trajectories rather than limited purely to ‘the city’ as a coherent objective unit.

Edges according to Lynch are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by observers. They represent the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity, lateral references, or can serve as barriers more or less penetrable closing one region off from another. Edges, notes Lynch, serve as important organising features in holding together generalized areas such as the outline of the city by water or wall (Lynch, 1960, p.47). While the tendency might be to think of fences of inter-state borders as stark edges, as will be seen in the analysis this is not necessarily always the case. Nevertheless, the concept of ‘edges’ serves as an important aspect to the analysis in terms of what are perceived as limits/barriers/boundaries part of daily routes at these borderlands.

Another element in Lynch’s analysis is nodes, explained as points or strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is travelling. They could range from junctions, a crossing or convergence of paths, or simply



concentrations which gain their importance from being the condensation of some use or physical character such as a street corner hangout or a square (Lynch, 1960, p.47). Nodes in the case of borderlands could in fact also be the border crossing gates or fast lanes linking border cities rather than purely based ‘within’ a city, though not always the case.

Further, a district Lynch defines as the medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having a two dimensional extent which an observer mentally enters inside of and which are recognisable as having some common identifying character. Here again at borderlands the stark difference in everyday socio-spatial landscape on crossing ‘the border’ can itself underline the mentalities of perceptions of entering inside of a recognisably or identifiable space, though not always the case.

And finally, Landmarks are according to Lynch, point references considered to be external to the observer that are simple physical elements which may vary widely in scale. Singularity is the key physical characteristic of this classification based on being unique or memorable to the context in which one singles a landmark out. Landmarks then could also spill across cities at these borderlands of Tijuana SanDiego in the case of cross-border routes.

Thus, in the context of my research it is important to re-contextualise Lynch’s ‘city-based’ approach to a ‘borderlands’ approach. It is also important to link what are seen as purely perceptible objects to the subjective associations people give to them as central to producing ‘space’ rather than understanding the environment as understood from ‘objective’ images of ‘the city’. So, the tool of mental maps alongside interviews, will serve as the methodological base towards gaining insights into how people perceive-conceive ‘the U.S-Mexico border’ in their everyday life. To successfully investigate everyday lived spaces and mentalities of people living at these borderlands, mixed research methods are applied. Data



from mental maps and narratives from interviews are combined and analysed as complementary to each other.

I will also try to build on Lynch's conceptual tool by looking for possibly more elements or socio-spatial representations emerging from the maps. Also in my case since I am interested in exploring how people 'map' 'the U.S-Mexico border' (or not) as part of their everyday imag(e)ings of these urban spaces in relation to their everyday practices and 'everyday regionalisations' I will use Lynch's elemental tools only as a starting point during my interviews, rather than as an end in itself in applying these elements to my final analysis.

Narrative Analysis and Interview Method

The study of narrative analysis does not neatly fit into any field of scholarly research. Constructing narratives based on other narratives is what we constantly do right from a very young age. We create order and build arguments in relation to particular experiences and contexts. Telling stories about everyday life or past events is what most of us do and know to do despite the diverse experiences and conditions each of us face. Part of sense-making is narrating our life experiences. In qualitative interviews stories emerge from question-answer exchanges. Further, individuals give value to certain experiences and create an order from what might be disordered experiences through narratives. Narratives here become important meaning making structures and can provide deep insights into people's perceptions and mental maps of place and space. This approach gives prominence to human agency which is very aligned to my research question and objective (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis is recognised as a means of examining the ways in which individuals make sense of their lives within a changing sociohistorical context (Phinney, 2000). They then offer us insights into the lived realities in relation to structural processes. By starting from a bottom up perspective of



individuals and peoples living in these border regions and placing central their experiences, perceptions and narratives, it is possible to link them then to larger structural issues.

The interviews part of this research were conducted in an open-ended manner in which interviewees equally led the directions of the conversations as much as my questions set the tone of the same. This is based on a feminist approach to qualitative research that is sensitive to power relations between the researcher and ‘researched’ and calls for a more participative role of interviewees. Especially in face-to-face fieldwork, as is the case here, the researched are not passive but are knowledgeable agents accepted as ‘experts’ of their own experience. Feminist researchers then consciously seek interaction and research relationships based on empathy, mutuality, respect. And rather than imposing one’s explanations feminist researchers focus on the informant’s own understanding of their circumstances and the social structures in which they are implicated. This means that a flexible approach to question asking, and shifting the direction of the interview according to what the interviewee wants to or is able to talk (England, 2006). Thus the questions from the Sample Questionnaire(see Appendix 1) served more as starting points rather than limiting the interview sessions in which interviewees equally participated in guiding the direction and content of the interviews.

Narratives from interviews alongside the mental maps serve as the central ‘data’ or material for my analysis. Narratives are analysed in relation to everyday perceptions and mental representations of ‘the border’. Mental maps being powerful representations often capturing non-verbal socio-spatial knowledges based on lived practices, alongside narratives that voice experiences will serve to complement each other in my analysis whose aim is to understand if and how people indeed ‘make’ regions based on their everyday practices, on the basis of which I argue for re-conceptualising these regions and ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’ from agential perspectives.



Table 1 Theoretical framework and research methodologies

Type of Space based on Lefebvre's model	Type of practice	Definition	'translation'	Research concepts	Research methodology
Perceived space	Spatial practice	Daily routines and interactions with the routes and networks of 'urban reality'	Routine, material engagement and experience of being in and moving around	<p>Everyday region-making: How do people perceive everyday spaces of regular (cross-border) daily routes?</p> <p>Perceptions: What are the immediate border associations? [Common Question to interviewees: What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say La frontera/The Border?]</p>	<p>Interviews: conversations about personal migratory routes, perceptions of everyday trajectories, practices of cross-border (im)mobility, legal access to cross-border mobility, purpose of everyday (cross-border) routes, social networks (family, friend, work) straddling the border (or not), shifts in experiences of cross-border (im)mobility, and everyday experiences of being and moving at these urban border spaces. (See sample questionnaire attached at the end. The Questionnaire only served as a common starting point for conversations rather than a limiting factor). - Analysis of narratives in relation to mental representations of 'the border'.</p>



Lived- Conceived Space	Space of representation	‘As directly lived through... images and symbols’ expressed in symbols and signs	Expressions of place qualities and spatial meanings	Everyday routes: Common question to interviewees: “Can you make a rough imaginary map of your regular (cross- border) route, for instance, yesterday? What are some of the important and regular streets/paths, landmarks or buildings, centers/markets, limits/references, part of this daily route?”	Mental Maps: Analysis of mental maps in relation to visual representations of ‘the border’.
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Modified from Werlen (2005, p.53), Healey, 2007 & Van Duppen (2010)

Tentative focus groups:

The most important question behind spatial representations such as maps is whose map is it? The U.S-Mexico border stands as the most represented border in terms of the ‘Triple Fence’. Classical geopolitical maps of United States and México are plentiful with cartographic representations of a line dividing the two nation-states through the modern geopolitical imagination, and the Tijuana SanDiego regions as ‘bi-national’ – ‘separate’ regions within academic, media and political circles. However, mental maps of people inhabiting these spaces and producing these spaces, on the other hand might possibly re-present the same space in very different ways (or not), which is what makes it interesting for such a study and endeavour towards ‘re-mapping’ the U.S.-Mexico border.



In this case the tool of mental map will be useful towards tapping into the subjective perceptions of people who live 'the border'. The dominant focus on cross-border or 'trans-border' flows of peoples and exchanges tends to ignore the perspectives of those who live the border while having never 'crossed the border' physically, who will also be considered in this study. How much of their place cognition is influenced by b/ordering practices of the state (especially the U.S.-state) as well as produced in the practices, interactions and discourses of 'crossings' and 'exchanges' they are bound to nevertheless be surrounded in? How do they perceive their (im)mobility around, across 'the border' in relation to various interactions marking their environment? These will also be some aspects I wish to explore towards broadening the debate beyond borders as 'lines that are crossed'. Therefore, in choosing whose mental maps I follow in this research it becomes important to outline tentatively a framework/classification that includes those who also do not 'cross' this most-crossed border.

Given the objective of exploring how people 'make' regions based on their everyday practices and discourses, rather than basing my focus group only on cross-border commuters, I choose to do it on the basis of diverse relationships of peoples' legal possibilities and their everyday practices. Considering the option of moving across the Tijuana/SanDiego border regions entails having the legal possibility as one among the many crucial factors thereby influencing perceptions, practices, discourses and meanings of borders. While legality does not necessarily prevent all actors from adopting practices limited/dictated by the same, this nevertheless plays a big role in the kinds of practices and perceptions and everyday regionalisations in relation to the same and vice versa. Thus it is important to consider agents/individuals based on their everyday practices in relation to legal possibilities. Though aspects of class, gender, age, profession, race, culture, ethnicity, colour, nationality are important elements to mental maps and more importantly also at state borderlands,



nevertheless this study does not depart from a predetermined ‘social group’ or ‘socio-cultural aspect’/ ‘category’ based on any of these aspects for focussed analysis, but rather departs from ‘practices’ of people since this is most suitable to my research question and hypothesis that centralises agency and everyday practices of lived space.

In looking for people with diverse practices in relation to the ‘structural border’ in terms of legal access to mobility across these borderlands, I began my fieldwork based on the following very broad and tentative classification:

<u>Those who cannot/do not have full legal possibility for everyday cross-border practices:</u>	<u>Those who can/have the full legal possibility for everyday cross-border practices and:</u>
Do not conduct cross-border practices (also including those who might have ‘never’ done so)	Do not conduct cross-border practices
Do conduct cross-border practices	Do conduct cross-border practices

Frequency of border crossing as argued by many scholars is indeed an important aspect to everyday border life. However, rather than classifying on the basis of the ‘number’ of times people cross or how often or for what purposes, I wish to focus on the ways in which everyday actions and practices conceive these regions and ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’. My departure point for the classification here again is on the basis of (cross) border practices of people in relation to their legal status rather than the ‘number’ of times they cross ‘the border’ or not. Also, it is important to note that this classification served simply as a starting point rather than being based on some causally related hypothesis of linking (il)legal conditions of people with the kinds of everyday practices based on number of times of ‘crossing’ and ‘perceptions’ etc. It served as a starting point in terms of looking for people with diverse



struggles/agencies in relation to the ‘structural/institutional border’ of states. However, I must also mention that as I began my fieldwork this classification became more and more complex in terms of being strict categories, and people and their practices, mental maps, discourses tended to burst out of categories. As will be seen in the chapter that follows, following everyday mentalities is complex but is nevertheless an endeavour that is even urgently needed in order to expand the horizons of border studies.

Scientific Relevance

As mentioned before, this research will be part of debates around whether to conceive these borderlands of Tijuana SanDiego as ‘one region’ or as separate, as well as part of border studies debates specific to these border regions, but also to larger debates in critical geopolitics around epistemological concerns of how we understand borders today.

Concerning the debates in urban and border studies literature on conceptualisations of these borderlands, this research finds its niche by focussing on the meanings of everyday spaces (both material and mental) of these borderlands, as a starting point. As argued previously most urban literature tends to view agents as part of larger socio-economic, geopolitical, cultural trends and lack the perspectives of agents themselves. That urban border spaces are most importantly lived and perceived is marginalised in these debates. And within border studies literature, the over-emphasis on state policies and interventions tend to only reproduce the meanings of borders from state-centric visions thereby ignoring critical spaces of everyday life.

The results will contribute to the discussion by providing an in-depth analysis based on everyday mental maps of those inhabiting Tijuana, Tijuana-SanDiego borderlands thereby highlighting the various everyday regionalisation processes and diverse ‘views’ and meanings associated to ‘the border’ emerging from below or what Rama calls ‘*the labyrinth of streets*’



(Rama, 1996, p.28). It thereby questions the bi-polarity of current debates within urban literature as well as the narrow visions from border studies approaches by shedding light on the diverse spatialisations and meanings emerging from everyday lived spaces and narratives, calling for opening a new space to these debates. The mental maps then become testimonies to people's everyday regionalisations and diverse ways of perceiving and producing these borderlands. The methodological approach is distinctive in that the concept of mental maps introduced by Lynch has not so far been critically applied, especially to the contexts borders and to everyday spaces of Tijuana.

Societal relevance

The relevance of this thesis lies in the illustration of the complex lived mentalities that produce, perceive and experience these borderlands, providing a new 'optics' to view these regions. This then has direct implications for issues of spatial and cross-border governance both at a local level as well as bi-national level. Public policy as well as public-private partnerships might perhaps become more sensitive towards the urgency for centralising lived, bottom-up imaginaries of these regions. Planners might become interested in ways of reading everyday spatialisations, regionalisations, thereby influencing how they come to think of these urban border spaces in relation to everyday practices and imaginaries of those inhabiting these spaces. Maps might come to be seen as multi-dimensional and meaningful representations emerging as extensions of lived everyday spaces rather than objective representations of urban units. Borders rather than neat lines differentiating rationalised objective units might come to be acknowledged as most importantly lived places with multiple meanings and associations. Material from this fieldwork is possibly also of interest to artists, architects, community workers, NGOs, grappling with issues of everyday life at these dynamic urban borderlands.



Body of a researcher

My body wanders afloat everyday

Looking for friendly eyes and open tongues in a new place

I hold my file tight under my arms to signal the purpose of my wanderings

The dusty streets and warm songs drown my theoretical frameworks

A bus leads to a house

A house leads to a friend

A friend leads to a story

A story leads to a map

A map is *becoming* a poem

- K.A., Tijuana, México, 2013



CHAPTER 3

EVERYDAY URBAN-BORDER GEOGRAPHIES:

FIELDWORK MATERIAL AND ANALYSIS



*Following everyday
'hidden mentalities'*



Introduction

While preparing my proposal for fieldwork in Tijuana sitting behind glass windows of calm university life in Nijmegen, my ideas of ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’ and SanDiego, Tijuana regions were rather far-fetched from the local dynamics of these borderland(s). Sifting through academic and journal articles of this over-represented border I often felt even guilty for not opting for a state-based view argued by most authors as needing much attention because of the paradoxes and atrocities behind U.S. state policies targeting this so-called ‘southern border’, especially since Operation Gatekeeper and post 9/11, not to forget the conflicts of Mexican and U.S. state interventions in relation to the violent workings of drug cartels straddling these border regions. Further, with my own personal experience of the U.S. state border closing in on me behind glass doors of the U.S. embassy in Amsterdam where I was denied a visa, it was all very tempting for me to focus on the multi-dimensionality and multi-sitedness of b/ordering practices from state-centric perspectives.

Arriving in Tijuana, however, though the fence is hard to miss since it runs alongside the routes to and from the airport, it took me only a few days to be struck by the normality with which everyday urban-life unfolded and often even ignored the militarised presence of the ‘Triple Fence’ and border patrol surveillance running through the urban landscape. ‘The militarised U.S.-Mexico border’- ‘the physical fence’ seemed to melt and become buried in the hustle and bustle of everyday urban life, despite now and then attractions or movements of people toward the fence (people being curious to ‘look over’) and very rarely, everyday confrontations between people and border patrol agents (in ‘talking back’ to each other). I had to ask myself what happens to a researcher such as me coming all the way from Nijmegen to Tijuana, explicitly looking for ‘the border’ at this so-called ‘militarised border zone’, when



one is confronted with the ‘hidden mentalities’, ‘indifference’ to ‘the border fence’ in the everyday dynamics of living at the borderlands. I took this as a sign to shift my gaze ‘away’ from the ‘fence’, however difficult that was given the powerful visual imagery and ‘attraction’ of walls and fences towards producing ‘hot’ and simplistic stories/arguments for border studies. I must also admit that before arriving in Tijuana, the lens of ‘everyday’ was still not part of my ‘border optic’, but rather emerged as a relevant lens only after being there, a lens through which I felt I could productively enter into the diverse mentalities and agencies of those inhabiting and producing these borderlands. On first sight, the ‘everyday’ space might seem banal and mundane; however, ‘everyday’ space is where all the challenges of rigid linear-border mentalities come face-to-face with the complex *hybrid* lived mentalities of inhabitants and the *becomings* of border spaces.

“Linea Libertad.....Linea Linea...Linea Libertaaaaaad”

A strong impression that influenced me to adopt an ‘everyday’ lens for my research did not come solely from academic readings but emerged from my initial wanderings in ‘el centro’ Tijuana. As I passed by one of the bus stop pavements on a bright sunny early afternoon, I came across the musical callings of what I guessed to be an everyday practice but nevertheless caught my attention since I was hearing it for the first time. The calling of - “*Linea Libertad.....Linea Linea....Linea Libertaaaad..*” by a man ushering passengers into a bus. Though I was then still in the very initial stages of learning Spanish, I did understand these words (‘Linea’ meaning Line, and ‘Libertad’ meaning Liberty or Freedom), and became intrigued by what might be behind the paradoxical meanings of these everyday callings. In reality, the bus which he was ushering passengers into was headed to ‘the Line’ or one of the gates of border-crossing, and was also making a stop at Colonia Libertad, one of the oldest



neighbourhoods of Tijuana, which the callings meant to communicate. However, the relationality of **‘the Line’** – [that line in Sand that came to justify all the atrocities of U.S. annexation of territories with the defeat of Mexico and the subsequent treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 that ‘lawfully’ allowed U.S. occupation of what is today the southwestern United States (Chambers, 2012)], with **‘Liberty’** – [standing for all the struggles for rights, freedom and agency in relation to a dominant neighbour] to the historical making of ‘the U.S.-Mexico Border’ in Tijuana cannot be ignored in contemporary studies of agency and domination occurring at, across, within, through these borderlands. Interestingly, the history of the making of colonia Libertad embodies this very relationality, that I would like to briefly begin this chapter with, that I believe pushes one to re-conceptualise border epistemologies in terms of ‘whose border is it?’, (Chambers, 2012) and where the power of borders come to be negotiated, articulated and produced.

The history of colonia Libertad is a history of struggles against oppression, inequality and discrimination inevitably linked to the making of the U.S.-Mexico border. Through workers’ resistance movements that involved strategically occupying lands in Tijuana close to ‘the U.S.-Mexico Border’ as part of fighting for worker rights, Colonia Libertad was established, Bustamante (1990) notes, as an urban expression of a truly bottom-up workers conquest. A conquest against their adverse conditions emerging from American capitalistic ventures of the 20s and 30s driven to capitalise on the physical proximity and legal distances of these borderlands, while violating most laws recently established under the Mexican constitution. It is also not a coincidence that the slogan **‘Tierra y Libertad’** of anarchist movements in Russia and later emerging as a slogan among anarchists of the Spanish civil war, also resonates with the slogan of the Mexican revolution, and the naming and making of colonia Libertad in the struggles of which returning Mexican revolutionaries (who made their



way back to Tijuana when deported from the U.S. under police raids, after having fled to the U.S. during the end of the Mexican revolution) participated. Most importantly, this relationality of 'la Linea' with 'la Libertad' forces one to conceptualise the order of power at these borderlands beyond the modern-colonial lens of power as emitting from 'core' to 'periphery' or from state-capitals to the border regions (Chambers, 2012), but through the *becomings* of power in the voices of agency and resistance at borderlands.



Everyday Urban Border Mapping and Region-Making

In Tijuana/ Tijuana-SanDiego borderlands



Illustration: Amaranta Caballero Prado

In what follows, I explore aspects of agency, everyday region-making and lived spaces of people in Tijuana by sifting through the mental maps of ‘everyday trajectories’ and interview material that I gathered over the period of three months. In doing so, I try to pull out very broad patterns in terms of border associations and ‘region-making’ emerging from the same (while trying to still do justice to the diversity of responses), which I underline to be reflective of the **lived mentalities** of people living and producing these borderlands. Based on this I argue that people ‘make regions’ and produce ‘border spaces’ despite or in spite of being influenced by structural conditions. These lived mentalities, I finally urge, need to be



centralised for any conceptualisations or understandings of regions of Tijuana SanDiego as well as ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’. I base my typology/broad classification on Lefebvre and Werlen’s theorisations on space and ‘everyday regionalisations’ through the tool of ‘mental maps’ of Lynch, by centralising ‘lived mentalities’ based on ‘lived space’ and everyday ‘lived practices’ of those inhabiting these border regions.

As will be argued below, every day practices of people produce mentalities of ‘regions’ in very different ways and incorporates ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’ also in multiple ways, that nevertheless emerge within some broad patterns that serve here to organise and reflect on processes of everyday region-making and production processes of border spaces. From this departure point I classify my fieldwork material into four broad groups, namely

- A. Absent Border Mappings: Border as ‘Life in Tijuana’?**
- B. Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’: Border as socio-spatial reference?**
- C. Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’ but parts of SanDiego and Tijuana on different pages”: Border as part of two regions?**
- D. Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’ but parts of SanDiego Tijuana on the same page”: Border as part of one region?**



I. Absent Border Mappings
Border as ‘Life in Tijuana’?
Frontera como ‘Vida en Tijuana’?

Introduction

In following the mental maps of everyday trajectories of people at these borderlands, the most interesting set of mappings emerged from those who simply did not refer explicitly to ‘the border’ in their mental maps regardless of whether their everyday routes entailed ‘crossing the border’, or whether they are living or often passing very close to the border fence regularly. Some in this group also simply did not and could not refer to SanDiego in their mental maps despite regularly visiting SanDiego. This does point to complex socio-spatial perceptions in relation to practices straddling the border and subsequent images and mental associations to ‘the border’ that blank out to and highlight certain aspects.

Apart from the aspect of ‘no border’ reference in their mental maps, another striking commonality amongst the people in this tentative group is their strong association of ‘the border’ to aspects of life in Tijuana rather than as solely structural. It was hard for these people to detach notions of ‘the border’ as simply a structural/legal/physical objective aspect from all their subjective aspects of living at ‘the border’, despite being confronted with the structural aspects as part of their border life such as the emergence of a triple fence, increasing traffic, regular passport checks at the border-crossing, increased surveillance, price-differences, wage-differences, the struggles of obtaining a visa, being unable to access a visa, or saving up to get a visa etc.



What follows is a brief peak into these mappings and narratives towards reflecting on the diverse perceptions, meanings and representations of these border regions, emerging from these set of individuals.

A. Border (Tijuana) as place of life-improvement:

This map below is a mental map of a regular everyday route of an inhabitant as drawn/represented by her. Now, despite the person regularly crossing to SanDiego and interacting across 'the border' for various reasons of shopping and for family visits, that there is absolutely no reference to SanDiego or 'the U.S.-Mexico border' is interesting. The space is represented by the inhabitant in that the map is a mental map of her everyday route as imagined and mapped by the person, but it also draws from her physical experiences. The map refers to the experiential, perceived space as represented by the inhabitant. The steepness of the roads she walks on everyday is much more of a central and strong experience in her drawing, than any reference to the border-crossing experience or the interactions across SanDiego. The only street name in her entire map is the one where her house is located. As she explained to me while drawing the beautiful sharp lines and curves, they run so because she takes a very, very steep road every day. She has but few landmarks, referring mostly to places of functional use such as her regular supermarkets (Commerxial, Soriana), but also shops close to her home that she passes-by every day - a car repair shop (mofles) near her house and a chicken-shop (pollos) down the steep road. Further, in this case despite her interactions across the border, and occurring across a larger physical scale, her mental map blanks out to SanDiego or other parts of Tijuana. She was unable to refer to SanDiego, even when I softly nudged her if she could do so. To quote her referring to SanDiego- *"It's a nice place to visit, but to live, no...rather than be locked in a car there, it's better here."* This only points to the significance of the recognised difference, in the socio-spatial landscape as a



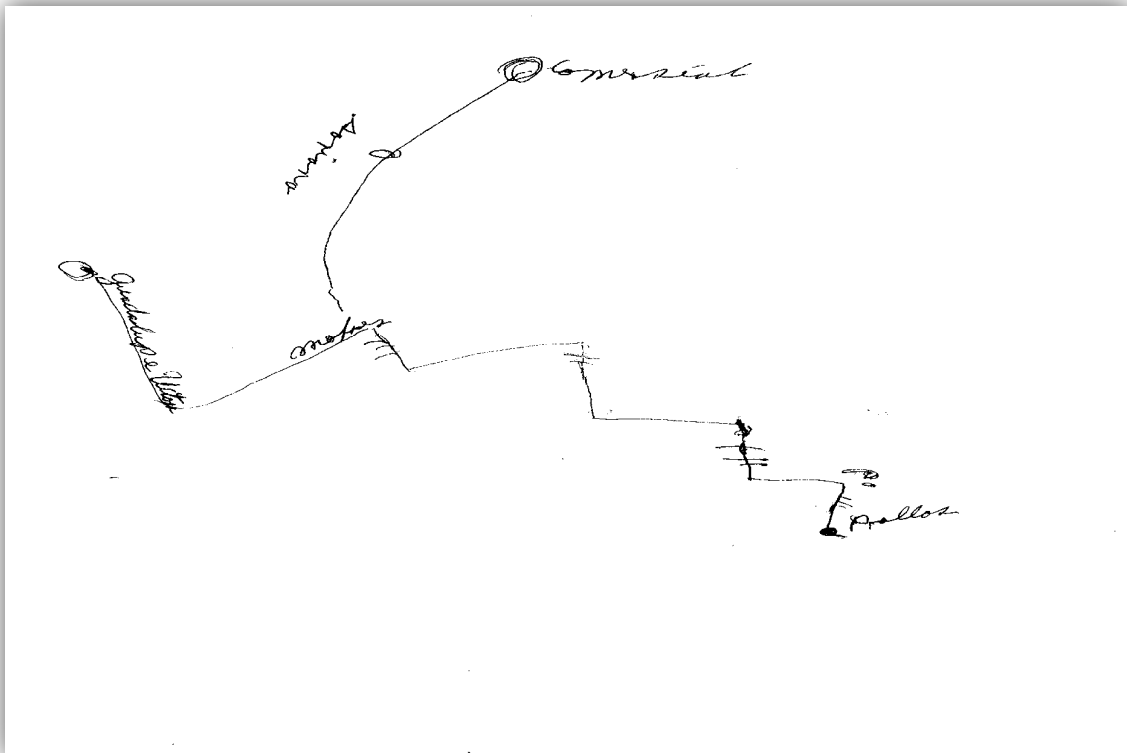
central aspect of conceptualising these regions in relation to one's everyday life. However, despite not wanting to live in SanDiego, she admitted that “*we still like to go and spend our money there*”.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
‘the border’?

***Tijuana, Work, Improvement, Have my own house,
and...Retirement***

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo “la
frontera”?

***Tijuana, trabajo, superarme, tener mi casa propia, y...
jubilarme.***



**Map 1: Mental map of ‘daily route’ made by an inhabitant of Tijuana, who regularly visits
SanDiego**



Having made her way from Guadalajara with her initial 7 children and husband to find work and live in Tijuana (after which she had 2 more children), she expressed the strong sense of solidarity that she experienced with her newly developed social networks in Tijuana who helped her build her life here, right from building her home to finding ways of earnings, and improving the road infrastructure in her neighbourhood, etc.

Regarding cross-border (im)mobility and everyday practices, this has been a shifting relationship over the years influenced by shifting conditions of (il)legality but also in relation to her own shifting life conditions with respect to her work. What was in the late 80s and early 90s only barbed wires over which she easily crossed, for instance to buy stuff in the supermarket across the border with no documents and no surveillance, gradually shifted in the coming years as becoming more and more rigid (physical) space of emerging metallic bars and of heavy surveillance.

The inhabitant currently has a tourist visa and is able to regularly visit her sister across the border and also for the regular shopping visits to buy socks, shirts, clothes that she sells in Tijuana. However, it took her a long time to obtain this tourist visa. Obtaining a tourist visa entails providing documentation that is proof of having an official, stable job in Tijuana recognised by the U.S. state, which took her some years to gather. It was only after she began a small business of selling drinks to athletes at a sports complex near her house, and paying regular money to ‘hacienda’-the tax office for 3 years that eventually served as a proof of her stable working status in Tijuana, that she was able to obtain a tourist visa. Before this she had a humanitarian visa for a short period that allowed her to cross ‘the border’ purely for medical emergency purposes. To this inhabitant then, rather than a world of open borders, globalisation of the 90s brought a world of surveillance and increased documentation for



access to cross-border mobility. This also highlights the close links between one's personal life choices such as work being linked to structural access to cross-border mobility. Nevertheless there is a constant struggle between structural conditions and individual agency of borderlanders such as this lady who continues to view mobility across border regions as a resource for everyday life improvement and to gain access to commodities across 'the border'.

Despite all the struggles of managing her family of 9 children on her own, after divorcing her husband for personal reasons while working very hard in domestic help and struggling to access the benefits of cross-border mobility, 'the border' nevertheless continues to mean 'life in Tijuana', as a place that offers one many possibilities for building one's life here. When I asked her what are the first (five) words that come to her mind when I say 'la frontera'(the border), she did not take too much time to reply,

“Work, life improvement, having my own house, and....and...finally retirement!”.

Border-place here is linked so closely to her own personal life chances and processes of finding work, building her own house, a sense of experiencing life improvement, and finally her last wishes to retire (since she felt that she needed some spare time to dedicate to her other professional hobby of athletic long distance running). Who might appear in media accounts as a vulnerable single woman with 9 kids caught at the 'border region' looking for work and struggling to make ends meet, appears in my interview as very different. 'The Border' acquires meaning from her life experiences, as a place of empowerment, solidarity, of life improvement, self-organisation, a sense of fulfilment, all giving way to a strong sense of attachment.



As we walked down the very, very steep road from her house to the bus stop, she told me that she helped in the construction of this road and raising funds for it, since there was a poor road connection to her house when they initially moved in. This sense of attachment to the place, her home, these roads she helped build, into which she has invested 28 years of her life and feels like she has received back the returns of the same, is ‘the border’ - is Tijuana, is where she feels she belongs.

“No donde naces sino donde la pases” – (*“Not where you are born but where you spend time”*), she quoted a ‘dicho’(a saying) when I asked her where she feels like she belongs to. She told me that here she knows people from all over the world, and if they live here they are then Tijuanaense. Here then borders emerge not as places of exclusionary *Othering* but of constantly embracing the challenges of life through forging social networks based on solidarity that emerges from unfamiliarity, alongside acceptance of the unfamiliar with a sense of living in the same space.

B. Frontera como (colonia) Libertad? Border as (colony) Liberty?

Being born and growing up at these borderlands also means being witness to the changes in articulations, forms and architectures of (state and capital) power, but also entails developing a strong sense of attachment, agency and resistance to border life especially if one cannot and/or does not wish to move anywhere else. As Anzaldúa famously writes,

“This is my home...this thin edge of barbwire.” (1987).

Growing up in colonia Libertad, Tijuana inevitably means growing up to ‘the border’, and being part of the struggles and opportunities, restrictions and freedom that come from its border location. Being connected to SanDiego before it was connected to Mexicali and other cities in Baja California, the history of Tijuana and especially colonia Libertad has witnessed



the harsh consequences of U.S.-immigration policies and deportations, but also the continued interconnectedness of many of its residents to ‘the other side’, irrespective of whether one regularly or rarely ‘crosses’ or not (Bustamante, 1990).

Modern state bordering practices might not make sense from the perspectives of local everyday geographies that often view regions on the basis of accessing resources within physical proximity, rather than viewing regions within high end state-centric perspectives of sovereignty, nationalism, legality, “*othering*” etc, and even more so at borderlands given the distance to national centres and the proximity of so-called ‘foreign territory’.

American entrepreneurs very early on saw an opportunity from this perspective and did not hesitate to capitalise on the ‘grey zones’ of legality at these borderlands. At the same time, Mexican patriots, revolutionists, labourers, and nationalists fought for their rights and freedom from foreign entrepreneurs seeking to re-assert ‘the borderline’. However, for individuals with less resources and less political or collectivist motives who are looking for opportunities, borderlands continue to be seen as places for individual explorations in search of resources, work, and opportunities, despite state restrictions that often criminalise or hinder the same.

The proximity of houses in colonia Libertad to the ‘fence’ alongside the stark emptiness of urban-human life marked solely by border patrol agents only a few meters away, might reinforce ‘the border’ as ‘difference’ in everyday social-urban landscape, but can also be viewed by the residents of colonia Libertad as a ‘daily drama’ (Bustamante, 1990) rather than something that represents a natural limit of interaction and movements.





Hill top view of the urban-border landscape from colonia Libertad (Photo: Author)

Most importantly, ‘the border’ and ‘colonia Libertad’ become inseparable to those born and growing up in this colony. As an inhabitant born in colonia Libertad and living in Tijuana for 48 years responded to the question of “What are the first words that come to your mind when I say ‘La Frontera’?”

“La Linea, som barrios, colonias, Tijuana, Libertad”

“The Line, some neighbourhoods, colonies, Tijuana, Liberty”



‘Libertad’, in this case, means the colonia Libertad but also the sense of freedom experienced on this side of ‘the border’. His two attempts to brave through the rough and dry landscape of these borderlands without documents, amidst bushes, stones, and rough climate in search of work underline the effects of borders as barrier experienced by him not only in the crossing but in those around working conditions in SanDiego. Being vulnerable to the complex conditions of labour demand for ‘migrant workers’ in Californian agricultural fields, to eventually shifting to working for making Christmas decorations in ‘el otro lado’(the other side) which was seasonal and not year long, he revealed to me that he finally chose for voluntary deportation back to Tijuana. Though he would like to work in SanDiego with his taxi-driving work because of the attractions of higher income, he currently cannot and does not cross as he does not have a visa, and so ‘the border’ is a real barrier and obstacle to access resources and opportunities. However, ‘la frontera’, he tells me, is where he was born, is his home. I was taken by his sense of attachment to this border-place despite being denied access to cross-border mobility as well as the harsh conditions he went through in the two times he attempted to cross. In this case the international border is a legal institutional barrier that nevertheless serves as a real threshold to his spatial behaviour and practices.

After working as a taxi-driver for almost 20 years here, he is very attached to this border-place. As can be seen in the map below, his everyday routes emphasises various colonias/neighbourhoods given that taxi routes are mainly organised around colonias in Tijuana. Few boulevards (referred as blvbal in the map), some landmarks such as what he referred to as the ‘Twin Towers’-the twin buildings of the Grand Hotel (one of the big Hotels in Tijuana), Stadium Hipodromo, and a node -‘cuartel’ are mapped as part of the routes taken mostly with his taxi. There is no reference to ‘the border’ or San Diego given that ‘the border’ comes to mean life in Tijuana and is not part of his everyday conceptualisations of space.

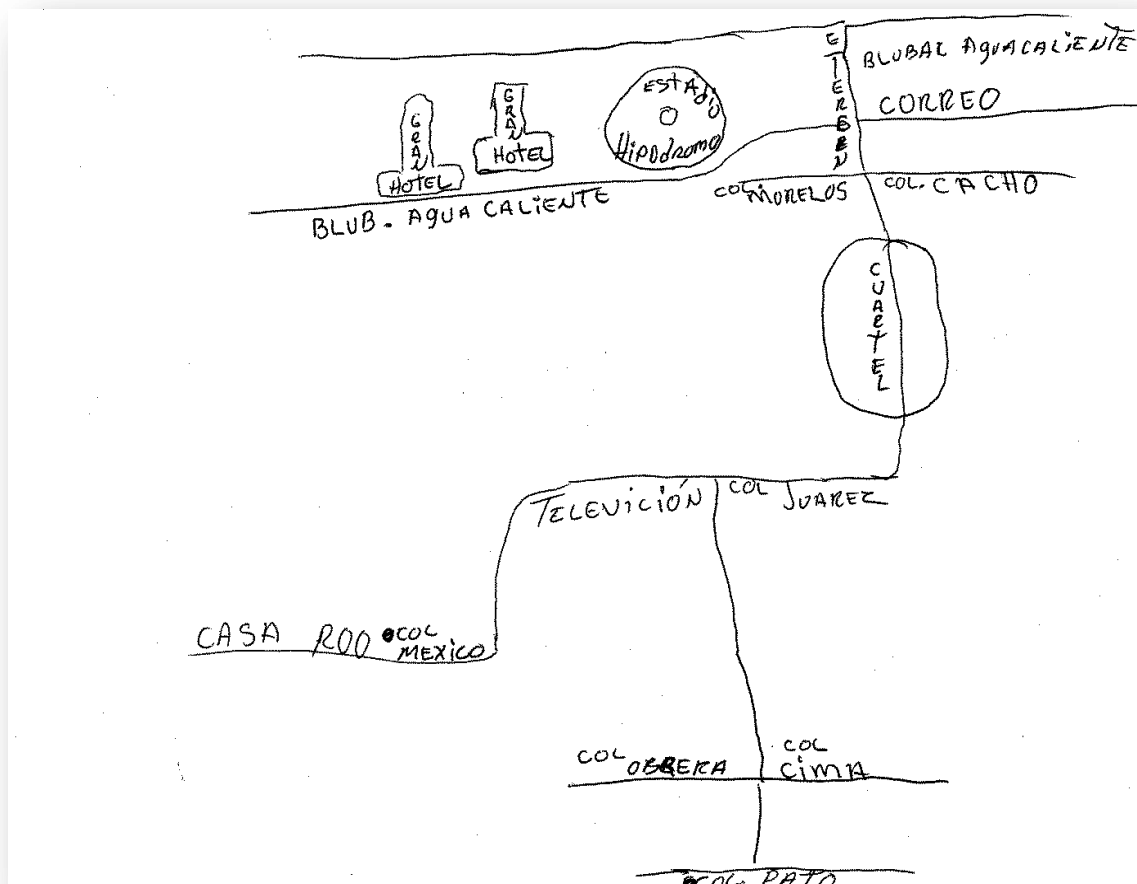


What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

*Border, The Line, some neighbourhoods, some colonies, Tijuana,
Liberty*

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo
"la frontera"?

Frontera, la línea, son barrios, colonias, Tijuana, Libertad...



Map 2 *Mental map of 'everyday (taxi) routes' of an inhabitant of Tijuana who cannot and does not cross to SanDiego*



C. No Border? ‘Timing the line’ for (monetary) profit:

For this couple living in Colonia Libertad, cross-border mobility is most importantly a resource for making profit and benefitting from the differences in prices and goods available on the two sides of the U.S.-Mexico border here in SanDiego and Tijuana, as most often state borders are to many, although only few are linked with such vast structural differences as the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

The husband speaks English while the wife does not. However, they function well as a couple when they go for work together to SanDiego scouting to buy second-hand furniture for re-sale in Tijuana at a ‘Swap Meet’. The Swap Meet is a big phenomenon at these borderlands given the huge differences in goods and prices on either side, bringing together all the formal and informal flows. The wife selects the design for the furniture and the husband speaks to the sellers. They tell me that they buy mostly from rich families in the north of SanDiego and not near the border where there are poorer, mostly ‘Mexican’, families as its better for his business. And for this they have to ‘time’.

“Mostly from rich people... I buy a lot of stuff from the rich people. All, you know, in the top probably, not medium, upper than medium and you know they move from California to another state in the United States. And they, well... for them, it’s you know, it’s cheaper to sell the stuff and buy another stuff over there where they move, than take it all the way. So that’s why it’s where I do my business coz they sell for a good price for me. So I can make a little money for myself to bring it here. That’s what I do, I time. I wake up at three in the morning the Saturdays to go and cross the border. Coz it takes you a lot of time and then you have to be like around 6 in the morning down there to get good stuff. If you go late you don’t get nothing... few things are not good stuff.”



Speaking of their relationships across the border, it is mostly professional they tell me since they are charged money every time they cross with their big van so they are very focussed in doing business and not on recreation and socialising. Apart from the cross-border trade of buying and selling furniture, the husband is also busy with breeding dogs for selling on the ‘other side’ or to people in Tijuana who wish to sell ‘the other side’. When I asked him whether this is a big profit business, he replied,

“Hmm..It’s alright, but mostly if you sell the dogs in SanDiego, you make a lot of big profit than selling here. I perhaps sell one of my dogs here for a 1000\$, in SanDiego the lowest I sell is like for 1500-so you know like 1000 and a half...just to take it down the border-you know.. It’s also to do it easier you just sell it here if you have somebody to buy. There’s a lot of people who buy it here from me and sell it over there”

And indeed this business-like relationship to ‘profit’ from the differences in prices of buying and selling furniture and dogs across ‘the border’ is what drives their relationships with SanDiego. As can be seen in the map below (made by the wife) there is no explicit reference to ‘the border’. The mental map even stops running at USA despite the interviewee crossing ‘the border’ regularly. USA is mapped as an ‘edge’ at which her mental map blanks out. Very few references or landmarks exist on the map except for casa/home, some tiendas/shops, a bridge and the palacio. There are absolutely no references to street names or junctions or intersections. Like in the case of Map1, this mental map does not have any references of SanDiego despite being representative of a regular ‘cross-border route’.

Further, ‘Border’ associations are also mostly to food, the beach, and ‘illegals’ associated to Tijuana. This does reflect a stronger association to everyday life in Tijuana and a more functional relationship with the proximity of ‘the border’ as a structural differentiator in prices and kinds of goods available for buying and selling to be profited from.

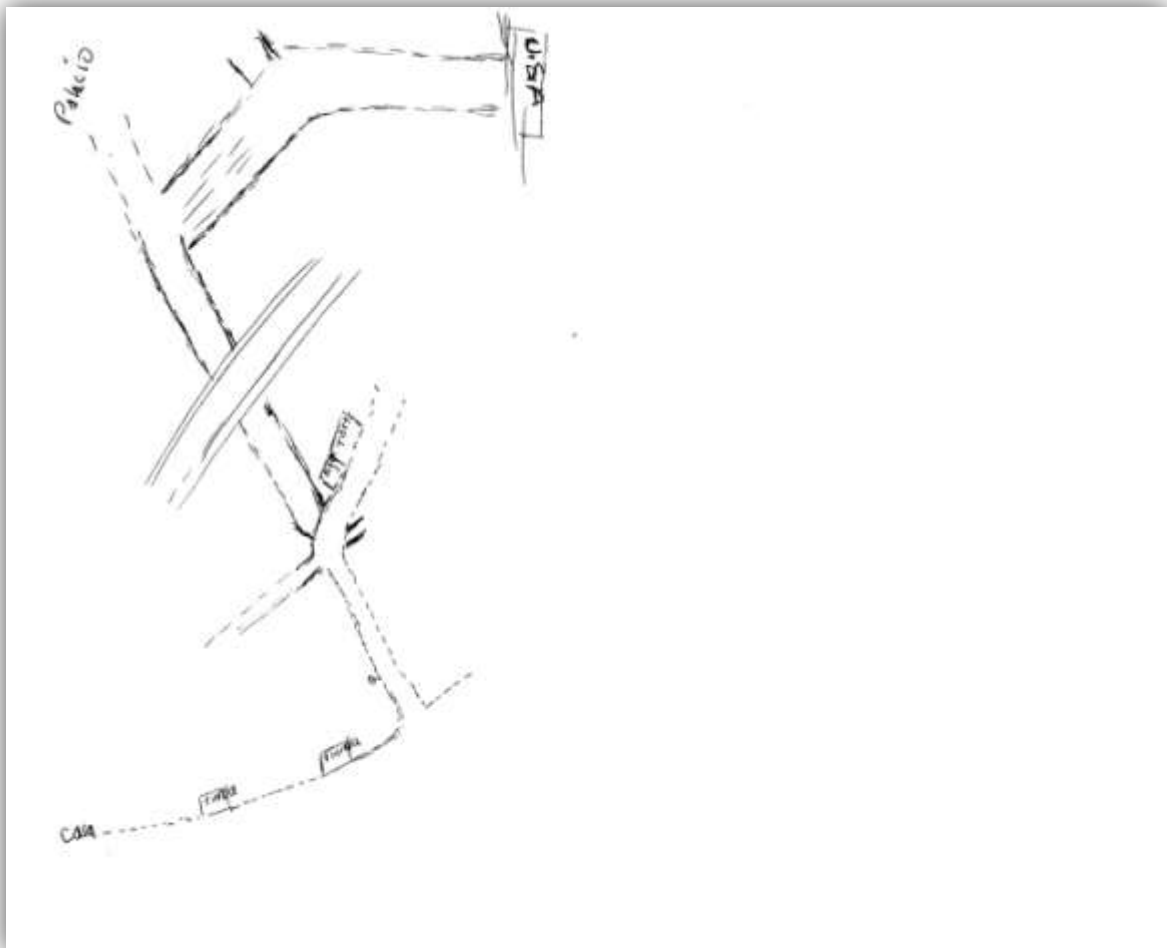


What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

*Tacos, Food, Illegals, the Beach, Mexican food, Tostadas,
Chinese food*

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo
"la frontera"?

*Los tacos, la comida, los ilegales, las playas, comida Mexicana,
las tostadas, comida China*



*Map 3. Mental map of 'everyday route' of 'crossing' the border by an inhabitant of Tijuana
who regularly crosses for business to SanDiego*



However, despite having no strong personal relationships across the border in SanDiego county there is yet also a sense of being close to SanDiego. As the husband tells me,

“For a long time that we are here we didn’t even knew the Mexican money, we only use American money here...Coz we’re more kind of in SanDiego California than in México”

Despite having no references to SanDiego or ‘the border’ in the map, their perceptions of cross-border mobility seen as a resource to profit from the huge structural differences at geographic proximity nevertheless connects them to SanDiego in specific ways that are complex. On one hand, the husband tells me that his heart is in Tijuana and he is from here, and yet that he is transfronteriza.. *“I have both type of life..and even ..coz I studied in there..I have a lot of from them too... That’s why probably am different from average people here in Tijuana or in México.”*

Though ‘the border’ emerges here as a resource for profit based on structural differences such as prices of goods and through cross-border mobility and subsequent exchange of goods and money, there is also a sense of attachment to these borderlands as being different from the rest of the country and therefore feeling closer to ‘the other side’. Thus, it is also hard to argue that ‘the border’ emerges solely as difference based on hierarchical interactions occurring at these borderlands which is not always the case.

D. No Border? Border of home, family, shopping and commodities

To this resident of Otay, Tijuana who lives close to ‘the border-wall’, and only a few minutes away from the border-crossing gate at Otay, there is no reference to ‘the border’ in his mental maps of everyday routes in Tijuana or crossing routes to SanDiego. ‘The border’ is simply



where they live, of home, family but also the everyday traffic that they inevitably witness given the location of their home near the main border-crossing gate.

Given that he is an architect his mental maps reflect a planner's orientation of mapping space in a rather homogenous, uniform way. Nevertheless the elements chosen, alongside the spatial arrangement of the same in terms of what elements are 'above' and 'below' reflect subjective aspects of mapping. In map 4a it is interesting to note the North-South orientation given that E.U (Estados Unidos/United States) is 'South' to his home and activities. The center of Tijuana, the Tijuana airport, the school of his grandchildren, the school where he teaches, the local park, all the important landmarks and nodes of regular activities that are central to his everyday life are 'above' and E.U (United States) is 'below'. This everyday map nevertheless challenges spatial imaginaries of 'north' and 'south' as fixed in highlighting the highly relative aspects of these orientations in relation to one's perspectives and practices. His home is an important node in both maps of everyday routes in Tijuana as well as route to SanDiego, with no reference to 'the border' or 'border-crossing' experiences. Activities in Map 4b- of regular crossing routes to SanDiego are mainly focussed around shopping and recreation, such as IKEA, Swap Meet, Factory-Volkswagen, and commercial markets. He currently crosses twice a month mainly for shopping although he used to cross almost daily before 9/11, he tells me.

“Por necesidad...por comprar algo para la casa, mis hijos, mi ninieto..para mi esposa algo..por los precios logicamente..mas accessible del otro lado que este lado. Sí.”

“For necessities...for buying things for home, my children, my grandchildren..for my wife..for the prices logically...its more accessible on the other side than on this side. Yes.”



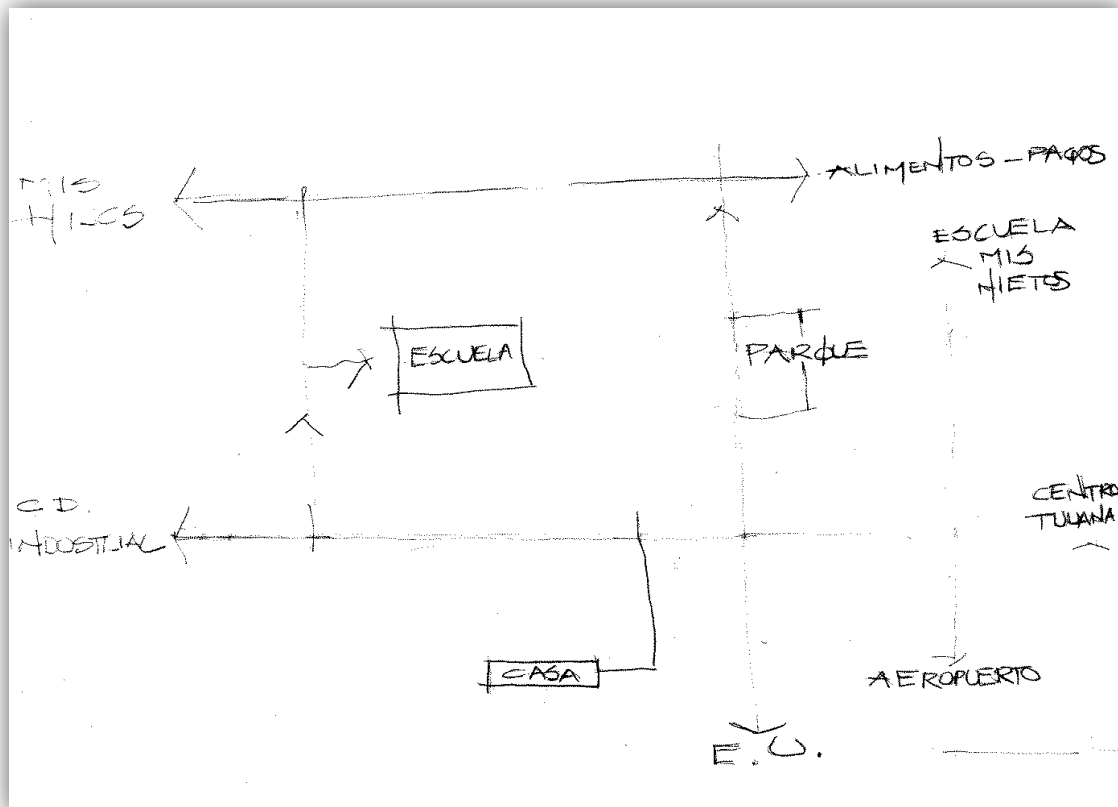
He expressed his strong affiliation to Tijuana, and México – as “mi tierra”, “My land”, the relationship with ‘United States’ as however purely based on access to commodities. He does not want to move anywhere for the rest of his life, and wishes for his ashes to be thrown in Rumarosa – on the way to Mexicali. This also reflects his strong territorial attachments to these borderlands. ‘The border’ then in this case does embody a marker of ‘my land’ to which he is attached.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
‘the border’?

Home, My work, Traffic...spending time

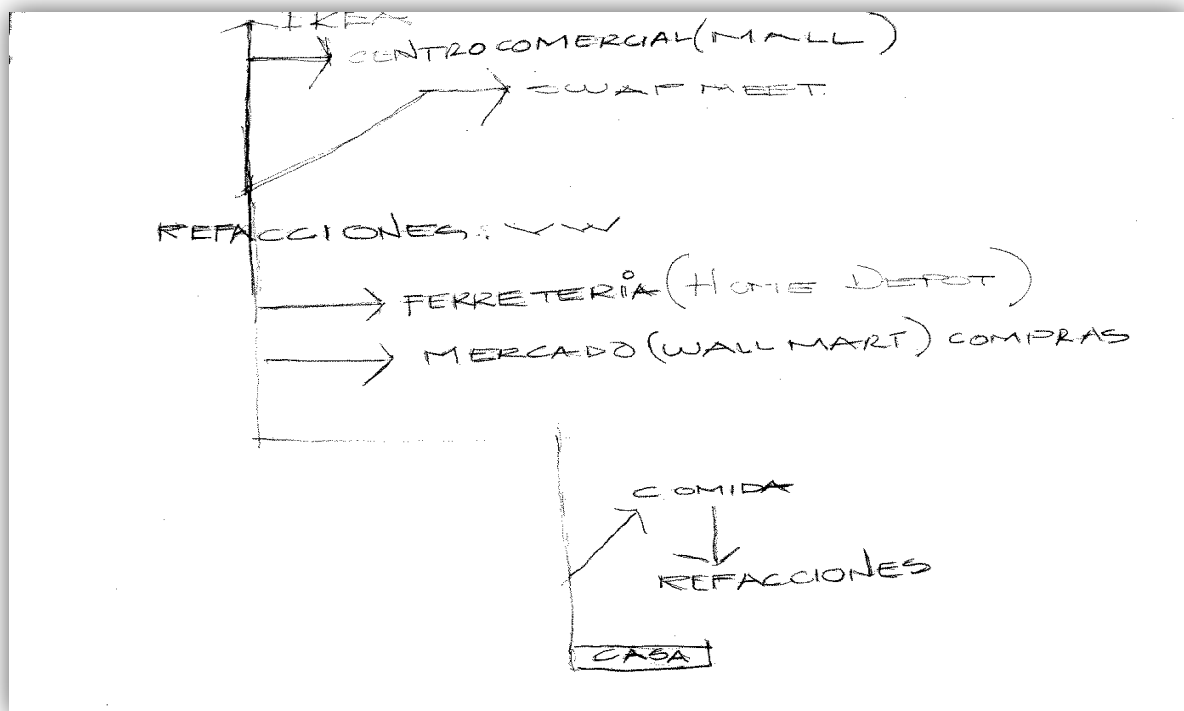
¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo
“la frontera”?

Casa, mi trabajo, el traffico...estaria tiempo



Map 4a. Mental map of ‘daily route’ by an inhabitant of Otay, Tijuana





Map 4b. Mental map by the same inhabitant of Otay, Tijuana of regular ‘crossing route’ to SanDiego

While he lived and worked in Tijuana earlier, his wife is from D.F(Mexico city) and they moved to Tijuana permanently only after their marriage, 32 years ago. They tell me that they have seen their neighbourhood (Otay), as well as ‘the border’ associated as ‘Tijuana’ change dramatically over these years – in terms of the number of television channels that has increased, the foods they get in Tijuana that has increased in diversity, the number of universities and schools that have increased and greater diversity of people from different parts of Mexico. Interestingly, alongside the triple fence at ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’, they tell me that the fencing around their own house has also simultaneously increased due to the increasing crime rates in the neighbourhood and from feelings of insecurity. While to them ‘the border’ means home they are also sometimes confronted with the globality of their



neighbourhood that represents home, especially after 9/11. For instance, there was once an incident when there were the military and police from both Mexico and U.S. and heavy media coverage that zoomed in on their neighbourhood. As they sat to have dinner they were watching their neighbourhood being framed by the television channels as ‘Danger zone’. The police had discovered a person stuck in a sewage pipe as part of a network of people being transported across to SanDiego without documents right here very close to their house. They were at once startled and very sad at this situation. So being close to the highly publicised border-zone also entails being confronted with the atrocities and loopholes of this shared border of U.S. and Mexico.

However, not visiting SanDiego is not an option they would like to give up given the proximity of United States and the options of everyday access to commodities and recreation this offers. The wife is very excited about crossing to SanDiego and only needs an excuse to do so. The purposes are mainly recreational and to spend time shopping and going out with her children and friends. However they tend to keep their activities not very far from the border crossing.

Most importantly, despite the strong attachment to Tijuana as ‘the border’ and to ‘the land of México’, to these border-residents cross-border mobility is nevertheless a central aspect of family life in Tijuana. Living at the border-Tijuana means also access to a border life of crossing for recreation and shopping to United States, which they have always been able to access and practice and do not wish to forego.



E. No Border? Border of work and shopping

To this cross-border worker living in Tijuana and working for two families in SanDiego in domestic help, cross-border mobility is a resource for access to work and shopping. Travelling on a tourist visa, what takes her to SanDiego on a regular weekly basis is mainly her domestic cleaning work in SanDiego. However, she tells me that she has never had problems crossing as she always answers the ‘migra’ that she is going for shopping or for exchanging clothes. Though living in Tijuana for more than 25 years, she has only since the last 2 years been crossing to SanDiego having now a tourist visa. Despite visiting SanDiego regularly she cannot live there she tells me.

“(SanDiego) It’s beautiful but living is very boring... I go to sandiego and I live here for 3 days because my husband has a cousin in sandiego. But I am bored and I say I go back. I don’t like it. Here in Tijuana, I feel free... I can go everywhere, but in SanDiego I don’t feel well-oh no...I don’t have anything there. It’s because all people are closed in their house. And here in Tijuana I go here and there, and I see people. I miss Tijuana. Here I go out and say hello how are you. When I don’t see people for a long time, here I sometimes I find them in the tianguis and I speak with them.”

The alienation experienced in everyday life of SanDiego from lack of people in public spaces in relation to experiences in Tijuana makes this inhabitant less inclined to live for a long time or migrate to SanDiego. Further, that she does not know many people and her only social networks are her employers and one cousin of her husband in SanDiego, makes her less connected to SanDiego. These borderlands then give her access to choose between the opportunities and ‘push’ factors or deterrents spread across these urban spaces - of working and shopping in SanDiego while choosing to live amidst the ‘livelier’ public life of Tijuana.



Shopping however is indeed a big family event in that she goes with her family twice a year to SanDiego especially the day of the thanksgiving, and her children are very excited since they save money the whole year to go shop across ‘the border’.

Yet, cross-border mobility is a resource that they (she and her husband) choose to use only for limited purposes. Despite having been offered by her husband’s sister of - what is perceived as ‘an opportunity’ i.e. of the possibility to give birth to her children in SanDiego, she and her husband decided not to use this since they want their children to be born in ‘Mexico’.

“The cousin of my husband asked for my children born in USA but I say no. My husband said ‘No! My children are Mexicans and my girl will be born here.’ I have this opportunity but I don’t want.”

Rather than any strong experiences of ‘crossing’ or ‘security checks’ or strong language barriers (given that she her employers speak Spanish) across these borderlands, the differences in everyday lived space then reinforces the divide between ‘Mexico’ and ‘United States’ for her. Given that she works few days in the week in SanDiego, she made two regular routes, one when she does not have to cross ‘the border’ and one when she does. In her mental maps of cross-border routes there is no reference to ‘the border’ or to ‘border checkpoints’. Her mental maps simply run through her everyday cross-border routes without marking ‘the border’ though spread over two sheets. Since she has not been to school she was hesitant to ‘write’ all references. But the curves of her lines and markings of important nodal points of her trolley stops, routes of the trolley, and shopping places of ‘Bazaar’ are clearly central aspects of her map.



Interestingly in the map of (not cross-border) everyday route (map5a), she maps herself moving through these spaces while in the maps of regular cross-border routes (map5b) this is missing possibly reflecting a sense of impersonalised experience of space in relation to what she mentioned earlier of feeling less connected with SanDiego. Nevertheless, cross-border mobility is also a central resource and also the central aspects associated with perceptions of 'the border'.

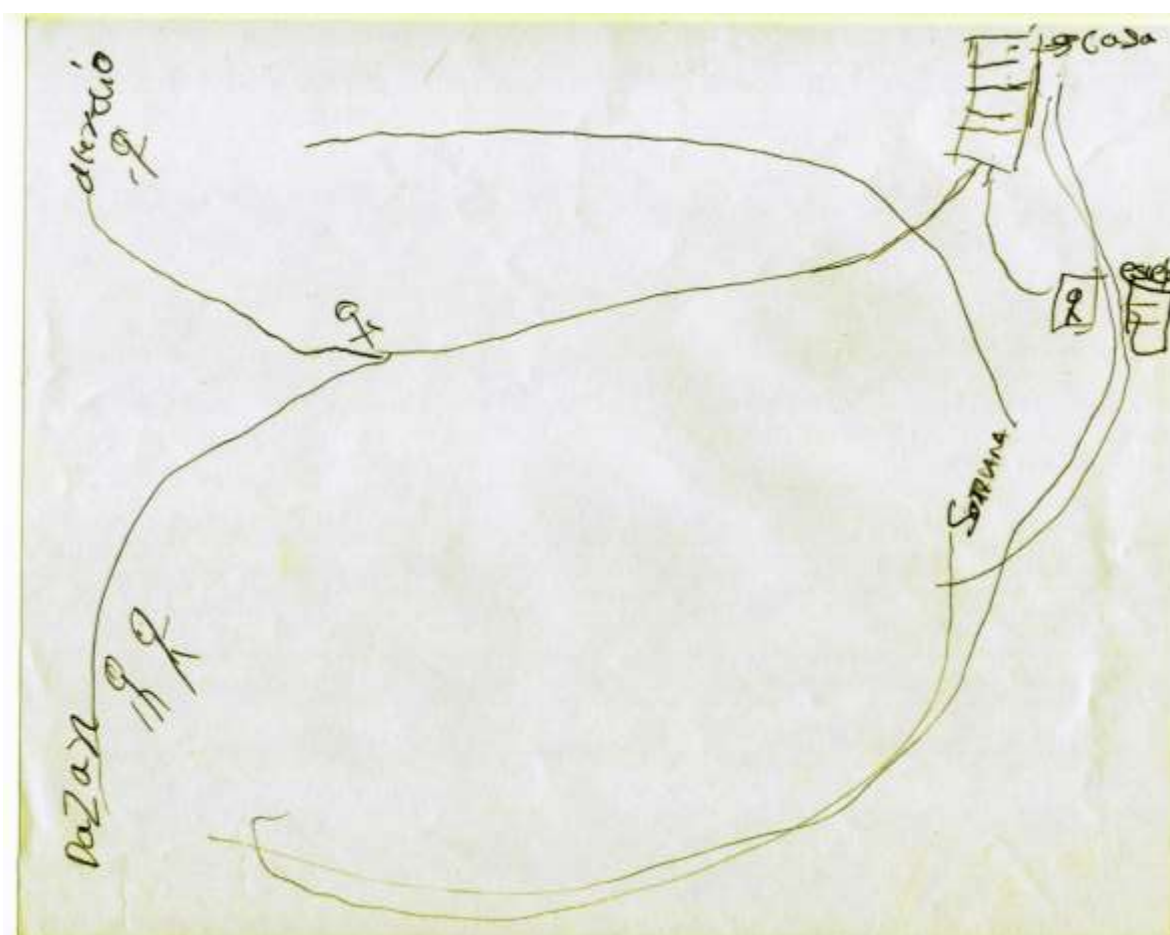


¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo “la frontera”?

Estados Unidos, cruzar Estados Unidos, ir de compras, se divide México y Estados Unidos

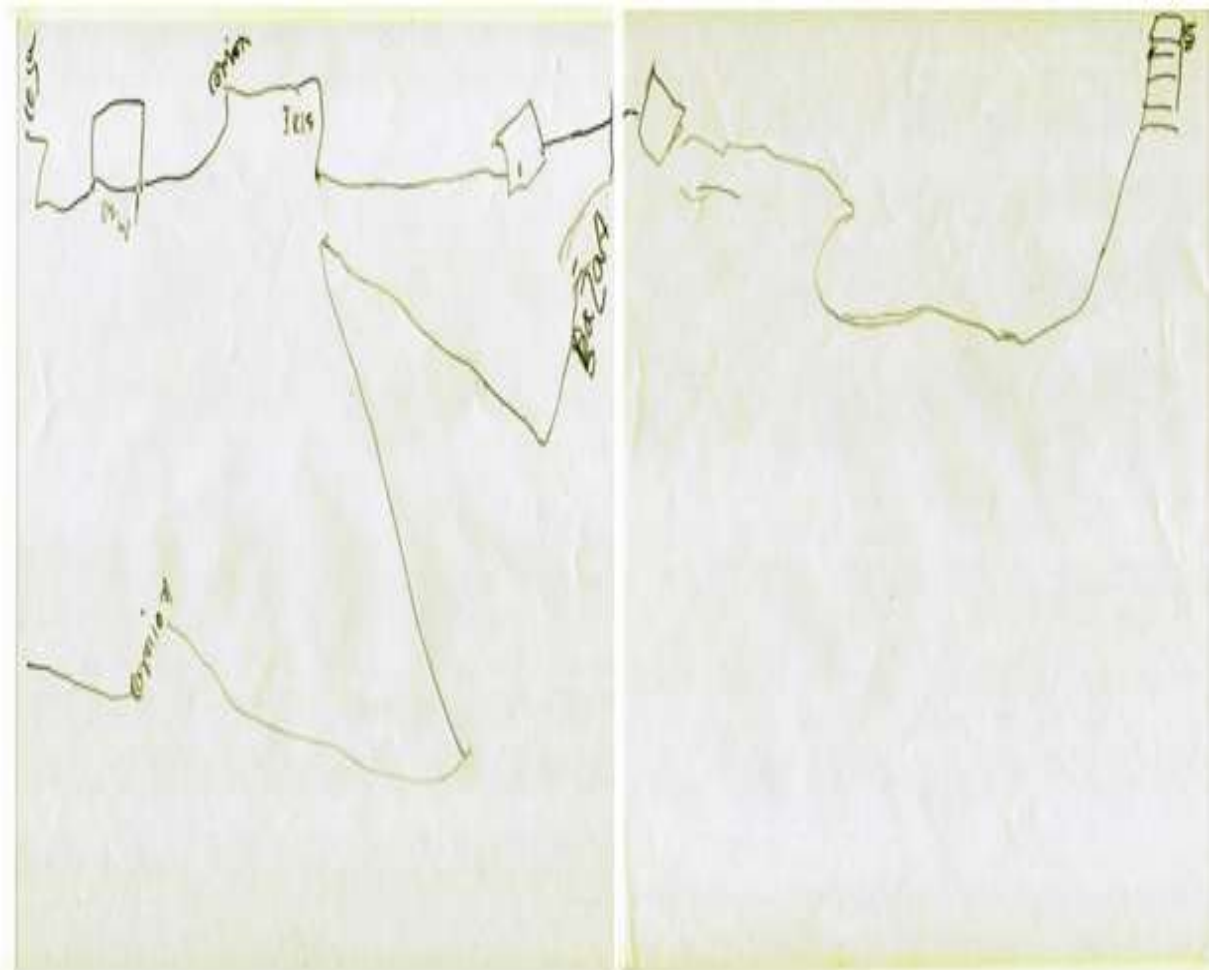
What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say ‘the border’?

United States, cross to United States, go for shopping, what divides México and United States



Map 5a. Mental map of regular (not-cross-border) route by an inhabitant of Tijuana





Map 5b. Mental map of regular cross-border route by the same inhabitant of Tijuana

Thus in this case the differences in everyday public life in SanDiego and Tijuana in relation to her own social network concentrated relatively more in Tijuana, reinforces ‘the border’ as marker of difference and divide between ‘Mexico’ and ‘United States’. Nevertheless cross-border mobility is an additional resource for work and shopping that connects. Living at these borderlands then provides this cross-border worker the option of choosing to do away with the alienation in public space experienced in SanDiego while nevertheless benefitting from the greater choice of consumer goods available there in relation to Tijuana. Thus rather than a natural limit borderlands emerge as horizons of choices.



F. Border of maquillaisation, Frontera de la maquillasacion

The maquiladora phenomenon or the growth of the manufacturing sector meant for foreign markets at the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands has been theorised heavily for its inhuman and exploitive conditions. While this is undoubtedly urgent, there is however relatively less work that attempts to centralise agential meanings and practices of the workers themselves. Given the centrality of this phenomenon of maquiladora to the production of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, practices and perceptions of maquila-workers to the production of these border spaces becomes central. To this end I got the opportunity to dialogue with some maquila workers, mostly women (which is not surprising given the explicit demand for ‘female labor’ considered to have more ‘agile hands’ as suitable for the kinds of industrial labor required in these factories). All these interviews were conducted in the house of a community leader in colonia Latino, Tijuana that is close to one of the industrial parks hosting these factories. This made a big difference to the comfort levels of the interviewees as opposed to interviews conducted in their working environments where they are often time-bound and have less time and are less comfortable with in-depth interviews. Each of their narratives and mappings serve central to this section on border as life in Tijuana.



F1. Border as work, work and more work

Cross-border mobility as newly desired resource

Having built a family now in Tijuana and even recently having bought a house, to this inhabitant, who made her way from Oaxaca with her sister to Tijuana, ‘the border’ means work, work and more work. Looking to move away from the hardships of agricultural work and small errands that she attempted in Oaxaca, she decided to head to Tijuana. After working for other maquilas, now she has been working for 9 years in the current factory where she does the work of wiring for semi-conductors. This requires that they work in what is commonly referred to as “*cuarto limpio*”/“*clean room*” where they cannot wear make-up and have to wear a complete protective suit in which they jokingly refer to each other as ‘astronauts’ because it covers head to toe, even their mouths. Given the structured and repetitive patterns in the maquila compared to everyday life outside work, for this inhabitant, an everyday map of activities at work was much easy to make than the map of her everyday routes outside.

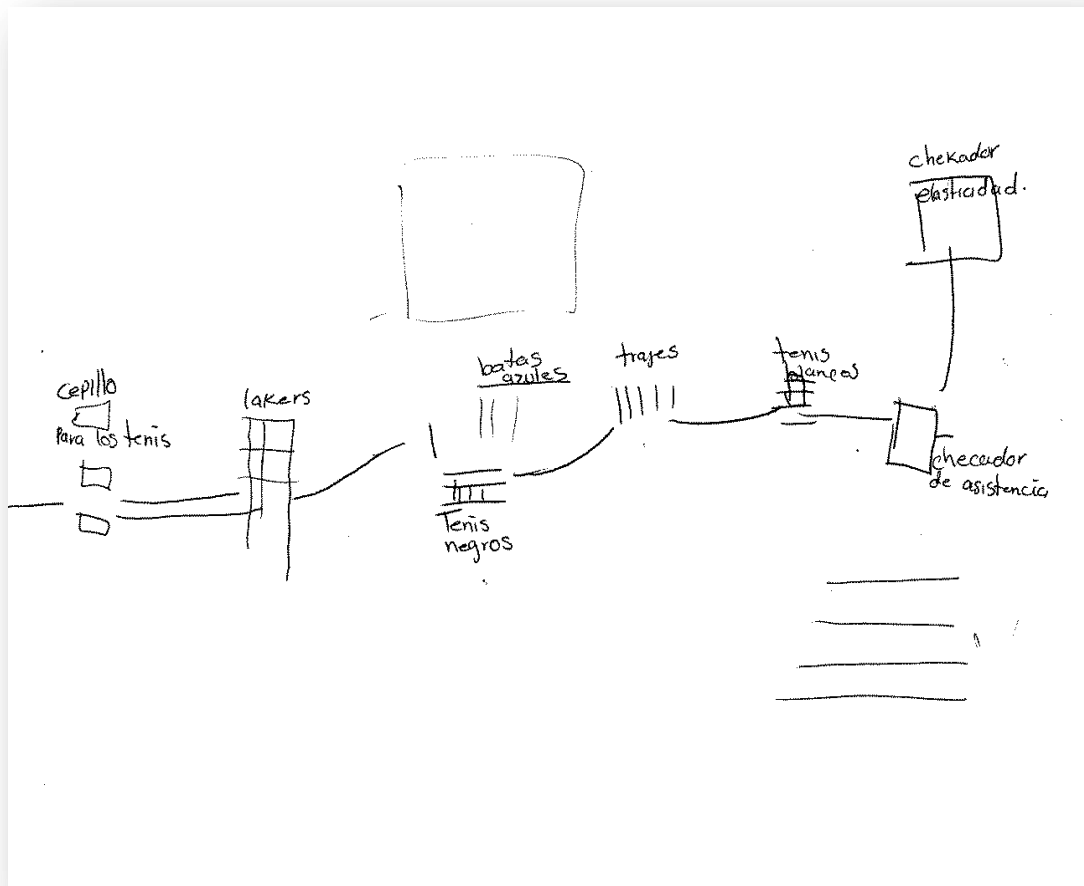


What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

Work, Work... and more Work

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo
"la frontera"?

Trabajo, trabajo...y más trabajo



Map 6. Mapita/little map of everyday activities at work (in a maquilladora) of an inhabitant of Tijuana



“you get to a door and change into tennis shoes.. and then a small thing to cover-like a work shirt...you come to the clean room and there’s something on the floor that whatever you have in your shoes sticks to it..and you have all the hangers....so you take your tennis shoes off and then you put on other tennis shoes...then there is a guy checking...that checks that you come to work...then there’s another guy who checks the uniform or what you’re wearing..and you put on a sort of heel thing that you tie to your shoes and it produces static electricity...and then we wear here the astronaut thing...then you go like into an air bath...and you walk into the cuarto limpio and there’s a lot of machines on line for work..and when you go out you repeat the whole thing again...”

Working for 9 years at the ‘cuarto limpio’ and living in Tijuana for 15 years now, she tells me that she never felt the need to ‘cross’ the border.

“Mmm... bueno, antes no quería...antes no quería y decía: !No, pues ¿para qué?!, y ahora sí, ¡sí quiero!, de hecho ya andamos viendo eso, porque pues es un poco caro, e igual te la pueden negar y andamos en eso, mi esposo quiere que sea así como familiar y es más dinero.”

“Mmm..well, before I did’nt want to..before I did’nt want to and said, No! for what?, and now yes, yes I want to! In fact we had a look at it, because it’s a bit expensive and also its possible that they reject, and we are trying to look at it and my husband wants to make it a family thing because it costs much money.”

Following this remark I was curious what made her change her mind regarding her wish to cross ‘the border’, to which she responded that this is mainly for shopping because it’s very cheap, and she is thinking of buying clothes there to sell here, but also, very importantly, for her kids because they would like to. Earlier she did not have a reason because she was



working and her children were not with her. Now, the children want to go there and this gives the motivation.

‘The border’ emerges as Tijuana and mainly as a place of *work, work, and more work* which she repeated every time I probed her to respond to what ‘la frontera’ means to her personally. Nevertheless, cross-border mobility emerges as a newly desired resource in relation to her changing family conditions of buying a house, building a home, living independently with her husband and children and having a job, and mainly in relation to the wishes of her kids who would like to ‘cross’ for entertainment purposes. Cross-border mobility emerges as part of a family planning process given that obtaining a visa is expensive. This also then highlights the significance of mental thresholds as shifting processes rather than being fixed aspects of decision-making processes of cross-border (im)mobility. What was indeed a mental threshold when she moved to Tijuana for work, soon shifted into a newly desired resource alongside her shifting family conditions.

F2. Border as mental threshold

Looking for ‘*divertida*’ (enjoyment) at work

The popular impression especially from the American media that all peoples at Mexican border cities are desperately wanting to “cross-over” the U.S.-Mexico border for a better life and for the ‘American dream’ and do so either legally or illegally is often not grounded in the contextual realities of the dynamics of these places themselves. Alongside crossing dynamics co-exist non-crossing dynamics, at this so-called one of the “most-crossed land border” at Tijuana. There simply exists no reason for many people to do so, and hearing negative stories on television and word-of-mouth regarding the ill-treatment of people of “Mexican-origin” in the U.S. does not help to overcome this mental threshold (Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2010) that the border comes to embody. This is a perception influencing one of my



interviewees to whom ‘the border’ represents a perceived difference in working conditions regarding discrimination towards people of “Mexican origin” on “the other side”, despite having never experienced this herself and having never ‘crossed’ the border. Living in Tijuana now for 17 years after moving from Sinaloa, for this inhabitant working in a maquiladora (factory), there simply is no reason to cross.

“La frontera?....es...otro lado cruzar, crusa los migrantes, las tienda, el trabajo por que los dollars, los güeros, los gringos.”

“The Border?...is... crossing to the other side, migrants crossing, shops, work for dollars, güeros, gringos.”

Some border associations for her are ‘crossings’ that mostly migrants and others do (not her), the shops (at the border-crossing gates), work related to making dollars, and finally all the stereotypes of ‘gringos’ and ‘guerros’ referred to “Americans” and fair-skinned people.

We eventually ended up speaking more about her work because this is a central aspect of her life given that she is a single mother of two children and needs to work to keep the family running. She currently works in a factory that manufactures medical equipment (Flex Medical), and indeed the route from her house to work is a central aspect of her everyday life which she outlined in her map. Though she currently lives quite far from where she works, the good thing for her, she tells me, is that the company pays for the transportation which was not the case with previous factories. Given the highly improvised nature of urban infrastructure in Tijuana there are very few specific landmarks in her map, except for the building IMSS-the government-led social security services, Calimax (supermarket), and the Parque Industrial La Mesa (the industrial park where she works), which are hard to miss. Road names were extremely difficult for her to remember since they do not serve as a reference for her everyday



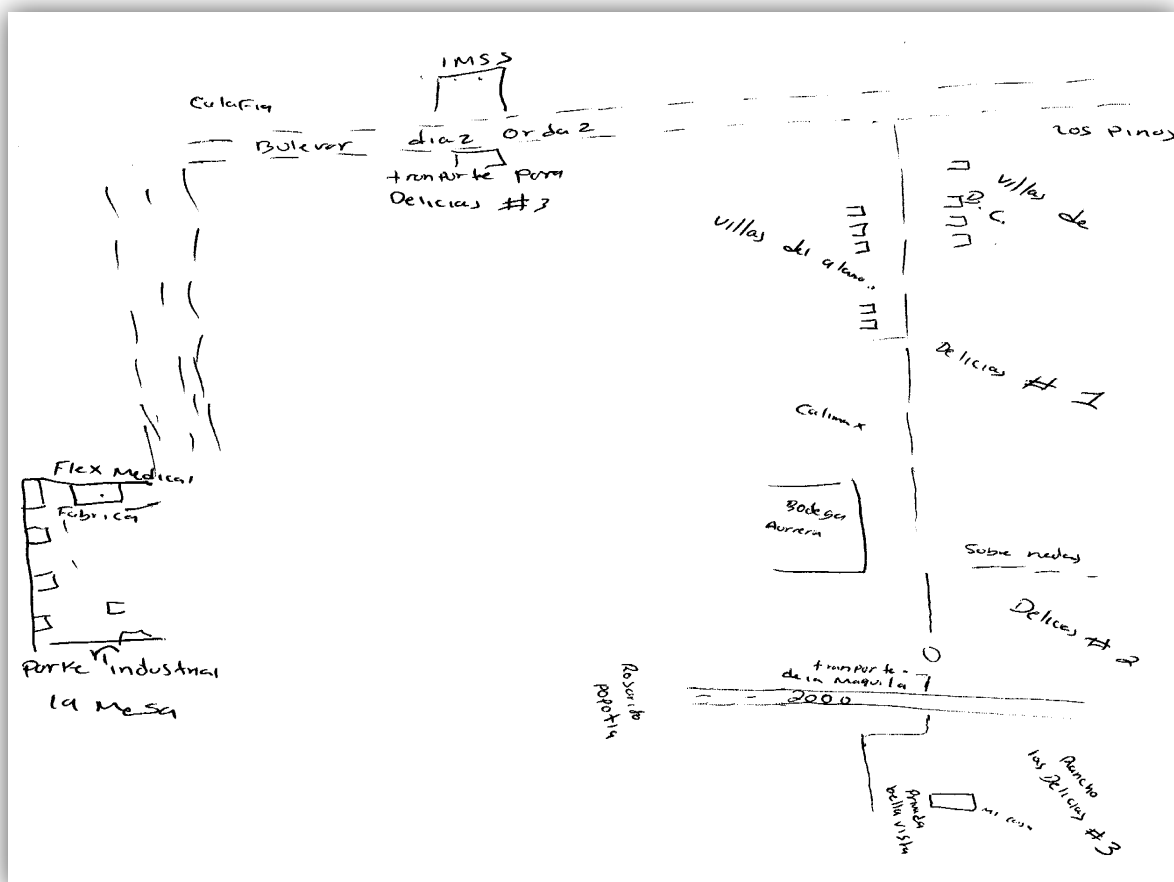
orientations, except for the bigger boulevards. Mostly her bus stops and the colonias are the other spatial references for orientation.

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo “la frontera”?

“La frontera?....es...otro lado crasar, crusa los migrantes, las tienda, el trabajo por que los dollars, los güeros...los gringos..”

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say ‘the border’?

“The border?....It’s...cross to the other side, migrants crossing, shops, work for dollars, the ‘güeros’, the ‘gringos’.”



Map 7. Mental map of ‘everyday routes’ from home to work of an inhabitant of Tijuana working in a maquiladora



The coming Tuesday she told me she would be completing 7 years at this factory and she was excited. By now they even switch her around with different processes at work because she is familiar with most of them. She previously worked in two other factories, Sony and Pioneer, which she quit, each after 2 years. In Sony she was working for making plates for televisions however she had to quit because it was very far from where she lived. Later she worked in Pioneer also for 2 years for making speakers. She quit this job as well because it was very dirty as they had to pour oil that would squirt and make her clothes rather dirty, which she did not like. Now with the current Flex medical she does not have these problems. But most importantly, she tells me that she can also enjoy here at this work even if it pays less.

“lo que me gusta es que esta tranquilo alli donde estoy..por que..no ganamos mucho pero como nos divertimos ..no pagan mucho..pagan poco pero como nos divertimos..se pasa rapido la noche..contando chistes... pero hay otras fabricanas que no los tienen trabajando y con camaras..y nosotros no..esta relajando..y que si me canso me estan mesajeando ay masajito ...me gusta ahi..porque no dice nada la supervisora no nada..”

“I like this place which is more relaxed, now where I am...because...well they don't pay much here, but its more enjoyable..they don't pay much, they pay less but it's more enjoyable...the night passes real fast..with chattings..but there are other factories where there are cameras and with us no..here its relaxing..and if I get tired we massage (each other's shoulders) ..I like it here because nobody says anything and there is no supervision no nothing..”

While the common perception is that women working in maquilas do so solely for the money coming from desperate conditions, and hardly have any agency in the choices that the low wages and poor working conditions these factories offer, from the narratives of this inhabitant we do see that money is not always a motivation but other factors such as transportation, type



of work and most importantly, working conditions that are perceived to be relaxing and enjoyable, - without too much surveillance. Further, these narratives also point to the significance of agency, and indeed affirm that transnational companies need to adapt to local conditions in this case if they want to attract local labour by paying attention to making working conditions ‘relaxed’ and ‘enjoyable’ with less surveillance, for instance.

F3. Border-spaces of opportunities and freedom: Everyday geographies of a single mother

Though my research is not specifically departing from feminist and gender studies, in some cases it became hard to ignore the role of gender and family relations in the context of everyday geographies producing these border spaces. To this single mother of five children, everyday mobilities is restricted within a limited spatial scope around home, work and the school(s) of her children, as can be seen in the map below, being mostly covered by foot or by bus. Her important landmarks are mainly home, schools of her children (primary school (escuela primario), ‘*kinder*’ for her younger children), the supermarket Soriana, her previous maquila ‘*fabrica*’ or factory in parque industrial la mesa (which is 10 minutes by bus), and finally the places based on everyday activities such as *vendo ropa* – *selling clothes* at the ‘*tianguis*’ (referred to the flea market/swap meet). The map branches out like a cross, up-down and sideways, as a closely knit network of landmarks and activities linked to her children, work and home. The street of the school of her children emerges as the heart/the central street – Calle Haitiano of her map, her home and work being above and below this street.

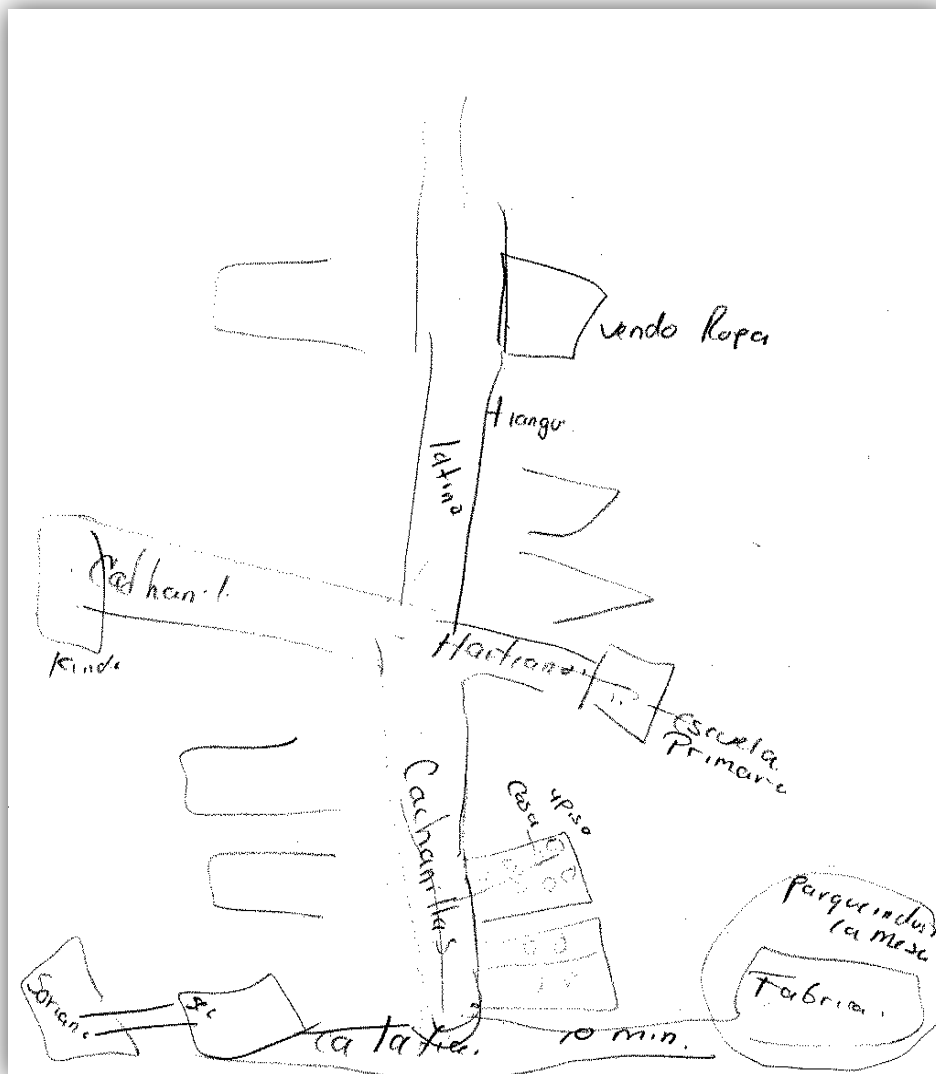


What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'the border'?

Work, Improvement, having many opportunities, Liberty, many things...

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo "la frontera"?

Trabajo, superacion, tienes muchos oportunidades, Libertad, muchos cosas...



Map 8. Mental map of 'everyday routes' of a single mother of five children



Being born and living in Tijuana for 32 years, there has never been any reason she tells me to ‘cross’ the border, and also, applying for a visa is expensive for her. Thus the border is both a mental threshold (Van Der Velde and Van Naerssen, 2010) and a barrier to cross-border mobility. Now, being a single mother of 5 children she prefers to stay in Tijuana where she feels there is everything that is needed - like work, more freedom and opportunities. ‘The border’ is absent from her map but nevertheless emerges from her narratives as Tijuana where she feels there are more opportunities and freedom, for instance, that here in Tijuana transportation runs during the day and night, which is not the case in other places in Mexico that she has been to. This according to her gives one the liberty and flexibility to work and move around during the day and night. She tells me that she cannot be too long away from Tijuana because she is too used to it by now.

She is currently working for maquila rights and campaigning for community development, apart from selling donuts and clothes along with her father in the neighbourhood. She recently quit her factory work at the Hyson Company because she was literally losing her voice from the risky working conditions. The elections were nearing during the time of the interview and she was really busy campaigning for community development projects and approaching political parties. “*The government has to give because it’s ours*”, she asserted.

Here again, her narrative is reflective of ‘high agency’ with respect to overcoming her struggles emerging from living at this side of the borderland where cross-border mobility is a hierarchical resource, work-place protection issues have to be fought by mobilising the community, apart from taking responsibility of her own personal condition of having to raise 5 children as a single mother. In transforming her struggles into resistance produces this



border-space of Tijuana as one of opportunities and freedom as much as struggles. Further, mobility issues at borderlands as can be understood from these narratives, are not solely about cross-border mobility but indeed around access to resources and opportunities in relation to one's personal life conditions that might or might not entail considerations of physically 'crossing' the border regularly or migrating across borders. While state borders do indeed serve as a barrier to mobility in this case given the monetary barrier of a visa required to crossing as experienced by my interviewee, however, border-spaces continue to be transformed in meanings not always in relation to access to cross-border (im)mobility but in this case based on agency.

Conclusions

Migrations of workers (seasonal and permanent) from Mexico to the U.S. to fill the insatiable labour demands of U.S. and especially Californian fields, farms, and domestic services has been a central feature of the era of the "Bracero Program" (1942-1964) and also later, invariably influencing the 'flows' at U.S.-Mexico borderlands. However, since the Border Industrialisation Programs of the 60s and subsequent signing of NAFTA agreements to facilitate cross-border trade, Tijuana has been, like many Mexican border cities, also attracting people from the rest of México to work in its consistently growing manufacturing sectors (Alegría, 2012), and other related sectors. As Alegría argues, while San Diego's economy has been largely driven by national forces and state restructuring, for Tijuana's economy the border location has been central to the growth of maquiladoras/manufacturing sector attracting investment from American and Asian companies. This also means that 'the U.S.-Mexico border' comes to acquire and to be produced in very different ways based on this direct relationship of the opportunities for work to the presence of an international border in



Tijuana. Meanings of borders and border spaces emerge in the context of work, and building a life and ‘making a home’ at these regions.

As can be seen from the above narratives and mappings, life in Tijuana or border-life entails cross-border mobility for profit, shopping and recreation, and as a ‘newly desired resource’, but also of non-crossing experiences of freedom and opportunities for life-improvement. ‘The border’ is colonia Libertad and La Libertad is ‘the border’. ‘Border’ means work, work and more work, but also ‘The Border’ is a mental threshold. However, and most importantly, all these meanings emerge from everyday practices and a process of everyday region-making in which it becomes difficult to argue for the one-ness or separateness of Tijuana, SanDiego.

Further, crossing practices do not always coincide with references to SanDiego or ‘the border’ or ‘border-crossing’ experiences in their mental maps, as can be seen in Map 1 and Map 3. This underlines the complex perception geographies that are central to these lived spaces.

Also, those who explicitly did not make any references to ‘the border’ are not necessarily always those who do not ‘cross’/have never ‘crossed’ the border, as can be seen in the cases discussed above. This does challenge the association often made to ‘border crossers’ as the ones feeling and living ‘the border’ the most.

As can be seen from the maps and narratives, the regions Tijuana and SanDiego, Mexico and United States, emerge as both near and far, as ‘this side’ and ‘that side’, but also as connected, ‘desired’ and also not desired. Mainly they are being made and re-made in these everyday urban-border narratives and practices in constant negotiation with structural conditions influencing the same.



II. Mappings of visual reference to ‘the border’

Border as socio-spatial reference?

The following set of mappings, though much lesser in number compared to other groups of ‘mappings’, are those that refer visually to ‘the border’ as a socio-spatial reference. While this group does not dramatically differ from the previous group in terms of associations to ‘the border’ linked mostly to their life in Tijuana, that there exists an explicit visual reference to ‘the border’ via explicit symbols and references in their mental maps is what differs. These mappings are also extremely interesting because indeed these visual references to ‘the border’ though in various forms and meanings (as landmark of limits and as spatial reference), are part of everyday routes in Tijuana rather than part of ‘crossing’ routes, given that these individuals rarely or currently never visit SanDiego. Here again, ‘the border’ is nevertheless both structural and personal at the same time. As will be soon seen, these individuals do explicitly acknowledge the presence of a structural, legal, physical border in the form of references to ‘the borderline’, ‘the barbed wire’, and in terms of being confronted with issues of visas, ‘traumas of crossing the line’, etc. Nevertheless, ‘the border’ continues to also be life in Tijuana.



A. Border of limits and interactions

Border of paradoxical emotions?

"I was 26-27 and I didn't have my son yet...and I was very emotional because to be in the line you are alone for like 3 hours sitting there and then the moment when you cross the border with all the questioning of where are you going..and bla bla everyday (by the police).. I mean I can imagine if you only go like on weekends or something for shopping. But when you do it very much it becomes....ahmmm...you feel...you don't feel...it's not a good sensation that I have to come every day and you ask me everyday...that I have to go through this ritual.

You cross the border ... I cross the border... the streets are... there's nothing...it's all highway. Not here. You go out you see tacos, dogs, people. I got to this point that it was so big! I had no friends... I mean I did meet people but it was only in the moment of the classes and everybody goes to some other class. I was alone everyday. So I would cry all the time. And my mom said oh come back home and I went home and... wanted to come home... And I would do this everyday... It's not like I was living there. I would come and go but still I missed the afternoons and the mornings here. So no I couldn't get used to that. I was very ... I'd become very aware of my family, and my friends when I was at school. I would sit there with a coffee and say and oh I miss my friends, I miss my mom, I wanna go home, I wanna go eat food, I wanna have, you know I wanna watch tv with my family. I became very emotional...."

...When you're coming back there's a big sign that says Welcome to Mexico-and it's with the colours of the flag and every time I saw that... I saw it and I was like ... oooooohhh yess! The moment I crossed it was like Woaaaa... like they took a rock off my shoulders! It was like... I even thought I smelt tacos... And you know there's lots of food stands... You could smell everything and I was like oooooooooohhh great! I just drive more relaxed with my body and



everything. And I always wanted to cross that sign. Since that experience I don't go to the US that much."

The 'trauma' of 'making the line' (often referred to 'crossing the border') everyday, alongside the emotions of coping with a new university/school culture, to this inhabitant become inseparable as expressed in the above texts. The crossing experiences, in this case, reinforce differences in her social networks and everyday life thus making her more emotional and attached to her home 'on this side'. Everyday trauma of 'making the line' - a central pathway of her everyday routes, experienced in the questioning of the police, traffic, waiting, while at the same time being confronted with differences of urban infrastructure, life on the streets, foods, smells, etc. at such a proximate scale spills into her experiences of university life in San Diego of having fewer friends, feeling lonely and homesick, and underlining her attachments to her family and life in Tijuana.

"So close but still the feeling of very far...Yes, and the difference is so immediate... You're like on this side, nothing is clean. There, the air smells like nothing. And the minute, I don't know if it's something I had in my imaginary mind, the moment I crossed I saw so many colours..I saw the smells, and saw lot of people... And I remember like the yellow taxi cab. Oh yes! the taxi cab... people driving all like chaotic... there you have to drive straight and everything...so it's wonderful(here)! The sensation of passing back home is much better than going. You talk to the US officials, you're tensed and you cross and then you're like... "oh I crossed it, and it was no problem"... and when you're going back home it's like oh my gawd!"

Almost dreaming to cross?

"Yes yes yes exactly yes...That's why I don't go to the U.S."



Given her traumatic experience of ‘making the line’ everyday, she currently prefers to cross very rarely, despite having the resources to do so. However, from this traumatic crossing experience emerged her interests and decision to study the phenomenon of transborder families which she is currently busy with in COLEF, Tijuana. Despite her father coming from North America and mother from Chihuahua and having family on either side, she tells me that she was more used to the way of life on the Mexican side in Tijuana. She is currently a single mother living with her mother and son. With her father recently passing away in the US, she now has only her half brothers and sisters in the U.S. who live quite far from the border here, and so she does not have the motivation anymore to cross regularly.

Although she does not ‘cross’ regularly now, she tells me that she nevertheless likes living at ‘the border’.

“... I like being next to... I like to live in the border... I don’t know why... I don’t cross it, but I just like what happens here....

.... I wouldn’t like to live in a place where there’s no ocean or not next to another country. Because you can’t know about it, meet different people, know about some different things... because everything around you is the same thing...”

This narrative interestingly resonates with Gomez Peña’s recent reaction on evictions occurring in the Mission district in San Francisco. In relation to current trends of cleansing the neighbourhood of the diverse communities and practices, attributed to the rising wealth concentrated in the hands of few people in the city⁵, he remarks, “*One day they will wake up to an extremely unbearable ocean of sameness*”. In relation to this, Tijuana is precisely the opposite to this borderlander – a horizon of diversity.

⁵ (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/25/us/backlash-by-the-bay-tech-riches-alter-a-city.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0&hp) viewed on 22/1/2014



All these paradoxical emotions, I believe come somewhat together in her mental map as seen below. The ocean and the physical border understood as limits/‘edges’ but also as connecting/linking elements, though in very different ways, are central aspects of her map that keep appearing in different parts of her routes. Her house (in the lowest left corner) is from where she started mapping, moving from thereon up and sideways - somewhat spiralling upwards. Her house (in the lowest left corner) and her workplace (the building at the end of the bottom row to the right) are connected in the map with the ocean, which she underlined as a central aspect of her life.

“... You know the ocean is important for me, because I’m so used to looking at it, that when I go to places where I can’t see the ocean I feel weird. I’m like where’s the ocean because it makes me feel like it’s open, the outside air comes in.”

Continuing her map, she refers to an important landmark, the ‘Torreo’ or the bull-fighting ring that is very close to the ocean at Playas de Tijuana and also close to the border fence that runs into the ocean. The ocean at Playas de Tijuana is where she often spends time with her son who loves playing here and which is experienced as a horizon. She constantly referred many of her ‘landmarks’ as also symbolising ‘limits’. The El Farro/or the lighthouse that is bright at night in Playas for her is also a sort of limit or symbolic of spatial demarcation. Another symbolical limit for her is the crosses on the border fence that she regularly passes by in her car. And as she drives often to go to Plaza Rio, she passes the fence where U.S. border patrol agents are strolling that is also mapped below, also a symbol for a limit. Further, the people waiting along the Tijuana river channel are an important part of the everyday urban-border landscape that is also mapped below. This is the part of the Tijuana river channel close to some parts of the fence that is dried up and is mostly used by the homeless and migrants (often in the hope of crossing the border) who often do not know anyone in Tijuana and do



not have many resources to move anywhere else after being either deported from the US or simply arriving newly to cross the border. She tells me that when she sees them here she often thinks to herself how they are going to be able to cross this seemingly impossible fencing. Here she sees a double limit of double fencing and later when she drives further, she sees the triple fence, also central to her mappings.

When she goes to Plaza Rio which she often visits, another big landmark is the big sculpture that is popularly referred to as ‘the scissors’ because of its shape (this is the figure to be found in the center of the top most row in the map below). She tells me that it symbolises the meeting of two cultures-Mexico and United States - a landmark signifying interaction and meeting for her. Along this route is also the big building of Cecut (the cultural center) that she maps as a big round shape at the left upper most corner of the map, where there are often traffic jams during the weekends because of the number of cars driving to cross the gate at San Ysidro passing by here, which she tries to avoid. Indeed the everyday traffic flows are a central aspect of experiencing the presence of an international border regardless of whether one is ‘crossing’ or not. And finally, she maps the figure of the Cuahquemoc on the right most upper corner – this is a figure at a prominent roundabout that is a governmental monument of the last Aztec emperor during the Spanish conquest. To her this monument is also a reference to most manifestations and protests in Tijuana that occur here. She herself has also participated in some protest marches here, and so this landmark serves as a meeting point/node.

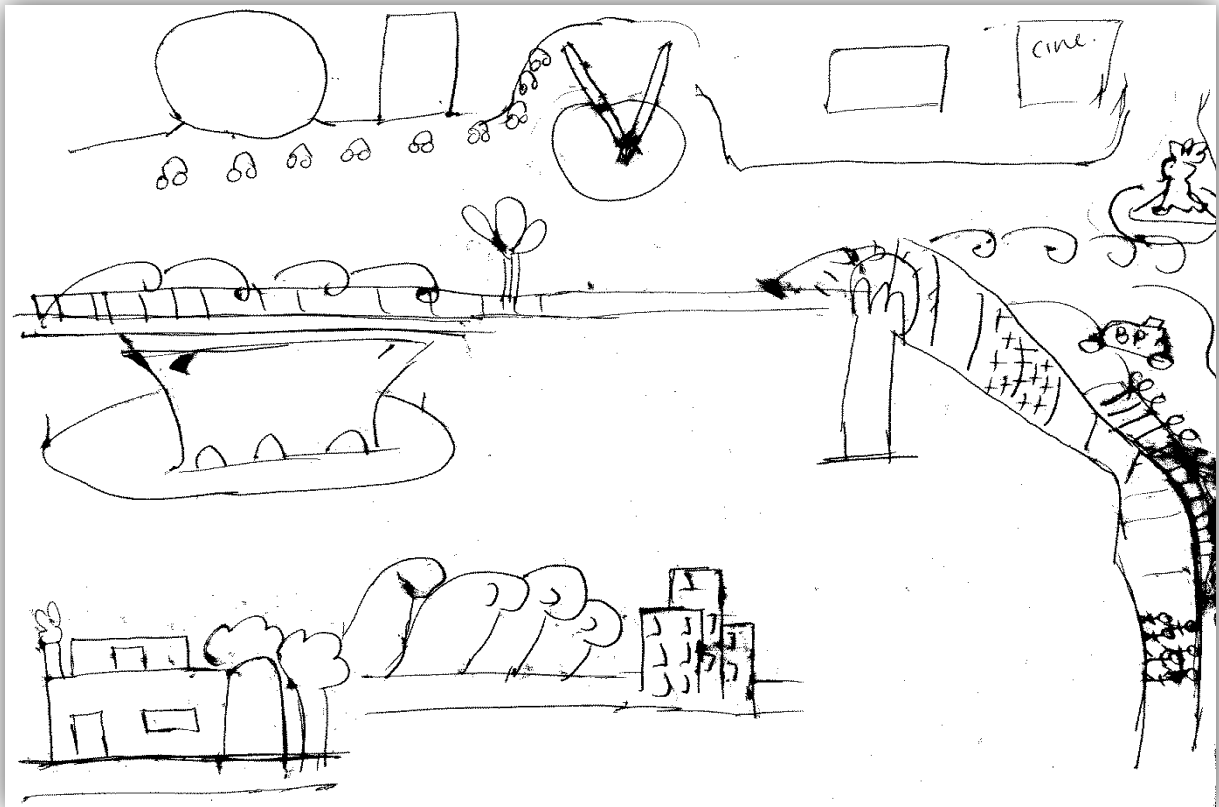
On the whole, the map conveys all the paradoxes of her narratives above, weaving together intermeshed visual references of landmarks, nodes, pathways associated with ‘limits’/ ‘edges’ but also to ‘interactions’ or as a ‘meeting place’. The map is mostly based on images and symbolic landmarks and there are absolutely no name references to any streets or



pathways. 'The border' emerges as a place of limits and interactions, separations and closeness, differences and dreams and hope.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'the border'?

Separation, differences, closeness, interaction, dreams, hope.



Map 9. Everyday Urban-Border Geographies: Mental map of everyday routes of an inhabitant of Tijuana



B. Border as socio-spatial reference

Border as nothing special

To this elderly woman living in Tijuana for more than 60 years, having moved here from San Louis Potosi with her family when she was very small, ‘the border’ has always been there and is associated with life in Tijuana. ‘Crossing’ the border was something normal to visit family, for shopping, for recreation. However, after 9/11 came some major changes which impacted her own mobilities across these regions.

“Antes era más facil (para crasar). Ahora más dificil” (“Before was much easy (to cross). Now it’s more difficult”)

While the lady herself did not reveal this incident to me, her grandson however later revealed to me that her visa was not renewed after the 9/11 events. He told me that she had once, long before 9/11 (so long ago that she herself did not remember when exactly) had helped some people to ‘cross’ the border without documents for reuniting with their family ‘on the other side’. This action was later (post 9/11) used by the U.S. immigration officials as the basis for rejecting the renewal of her visa. He tells me that even though his grandmother herself had forgotten about this long ago help that she had rendered, this was now well documented in the U.S. databank as ‘illegal’, and when she went to renew her visa was reminded of the event. This indeed reflects the notion of memory in relation to state borders and especially in relation to storing ‘data’ of individuals that creates its own memory-line of an individual’s identity based on certain actions considered to be critical to ‘state security’ despite this being possibly forgotten by the agent herself. This previously forgotten event for the lady of helping undocumented people cross the border to meet family however becomes reminded and stored in the memory bank of U.S. immigration institutions. Nevertheless, the elderly lady herself did not show any major sense of frustration of feeling immobile because of not having a visa.



Her life in Tijuana is built around her family and her work in the park where she has a stall for selling ‘Tosti Locos’ (a very popular dish with lots of fruits, nuts, pig skin, and hot sauces sold in public spaces. Since I am vegetarian, she made me a version with just fruits, nuts and the sauces, which was delicious!). Though she does have a brother in Los Angeles, he regularly visits her here and so she does not have a major urge/need to ‘cross’ the border. As can be seen in the map below, her everyday routes are indeed around her house, the park where she works and a market and a stall where she stops to buy vegetables and candies. Since she could not draw she made a list of her everyday activities and her grandson translated this onto a visual map version. Since her grandson was drawing this map, he inevitably chose to add elements to it that his grandmother did not explicitly guide him to. He chose to draw the borderline of USA to the west of the map (which he explicitly referred as ‘the border’ to me while drawing this line though not marking it on paper). This borderline is drawn as a limit attached to downtown Tijuana linked to Boulevard Insurgentes (a route that he himself often takes). He also added a landmark on the map of a hill (which reads ‘Jesus Cristo es el Señor’ – a sign painted on the hill that can be seen from the park where she works). The borderline emerges then as a spatial reference to everyday orientations. Apart from the landmark references of the borderline and the hill, the market place where she regularly buys vegetables is an important node, and some important paths are the boulevards which most people often mapped with relative ease rather than specific streets, given that street names are often not marked or not so important for everyday orientations.

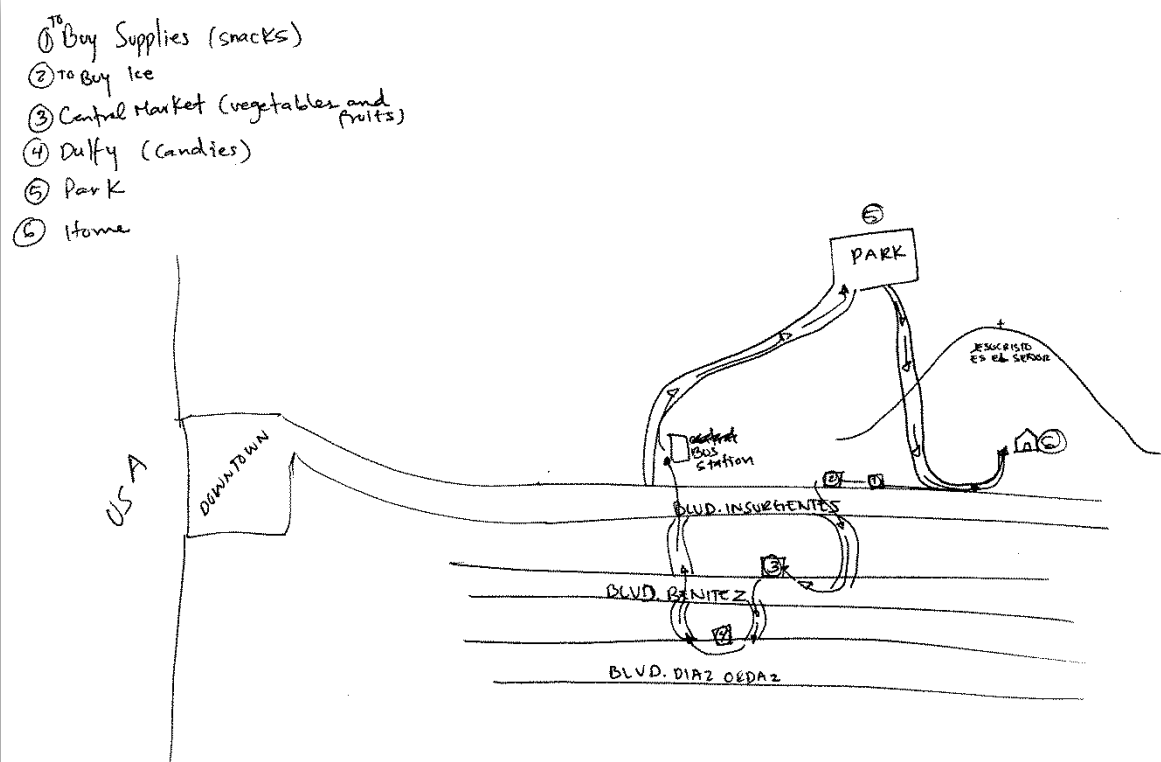


What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

Crossing to United States, shopping, visits, Disneyland, traffic

¿Cuáles son las 5 palabras que vienen a tu mente cuando digo "la
frontera"?

Cruzar a Estados Unidos, compras, visitas, Disneylandia, tráfico



Map 10. Mental map of everyday routes of an elderly woman (inhabitant of Tijuana who does not and cannot cross 'the border') drawn by her grandson



When I asked her the question of what are the first five words or associations that come to her mind when I say La Frontera/The border, her immediate reaction was that she doesn't think of anything special, because she has always lived at the border and so this is nothing special for her. And when her grandson nudged her softly to think a bit more about what her perceptions are of 'the border', she came up with "*crossing to United States, visits to family, shopping and Disneyland, and finally traffic*". Thus cross-border activities are central to her perceptions, despite referring to 'the border' as life in Tijuana and despite not practicing these cross-border activities anymore. And finally, to the question if she considers herself 'transfronteriza' (transborder person), she replied,

"Yo soy de Tijuana.. Aqui..Tijuana, Cienporcient Tijuana"

Conclusions

As can be seen from the above two cases of varied narratives and mental mappings, emotional geographies of excitement, anxiety, loneliness, social distance at physical proximity, hopes, dreams, separation, interactions become inevitably attached to the physical socio-spatial landscape of landmarks, pathways, nodes/meeting points of this urban border landscape. Experiencing everyday differences in urban infrastructure and social landscape at physical proximity underlines and reinforces attachments to the familiar. Symbols of what might be theorized as 'banal nationalism' such as national flags and signs of 'Welcome to México' at border gates (Billig, 1995), in the case of Map 9, take on personal meanings of relief, excitement and are associated as an end to a traumatic experience.

Further, the presence of the ocean to experiencing this border-space is central to the first individual, given that the ocean alongside the border fence/landscape gain meanings of both limit and openness, separation and interactions, possibly paradoxical but nevertheless



meaningful to her. Border-place emerges as a meeting place of different cultures but also as a limit with the ocean and the fence and other everyday actions, landmarks, references reinforcing limits.

Finally, with Map 10, the border emerges indeed as everyday rhythms of life in Tijuana crossing being a natural aspect of the same. However, state borders also become reminders of forgotten events that take on their own meanings towards regulating cross-border mobilities of individuals, as experienced by interviewee of Map 10.



III. Mappings of Visual reference to ‘the border’

Border as part of two regions?

Introduction

The mental maps that follow in this section do indeed differ from the mental maps analysed so far in that these maps present visual references to ‘the border’ alongside conscious mappings of everyday activities in SanDiego and Tijuana on separate sheets. And yet, despite conceiving these mental maps of everyday routes of SanDiego and Tijuana as separate, another important aspect of these mental mappings is also the inevitable connections mapped across these regions though in diverse ways. Further, mental mappings of SanDiego and Tijuana by these individuals do not necessarily mean that all of them are currently regular cross-border commuters, although some are.

These set of maps especially have important significations for the debates on SanDiego and Tijuana as ‘one region’ or ‘separate’, in that from the mental maps one can decipher the complexity of the issue as experienced by the people whose lives spill across these urban-border spaces in many complex ways.



A. Border-home of here and the other side:

Through a chance meeting on my way back after a day of wanderings in 'el centro' Tijuana, I met M⁶ who happened to be the taxi-driver of the taxi I got into. On seeing that I was struggling with my Spanish he immediately switched to English in asking me where I would like to get off. I was very relieved to speak in English and began to chat with him despite the taxi being rather crowded and regardless of the chaotic traffic and hilly roads calling for his concentration. When he revealed to me that he had spent most of his life in SanDiego and Tijuana (20 years in Tijuana and 25 years in SanDiego though always crossing back and forth) I expressed my desire to have an interview with him, which he more than willingly accepted. What started as a chance meeting, developed into a friendship that I cherish.

During the time of my fieldwork, M was living with his sister and her family in Tijuana as he was deported from SanDiego more than 2 years ago. He was waiting for the term period of ten years to be completed, which was declared by the judge as the duration after which he can re-enter United States legally. His children and ex-wife were still in the U.S. though his children came regularly to visit him.

These borderlands he tells me are more familiar to him than the rest of Mexico, although he recalled some beautiful moments during his youth when he used to drive around in Baja California. However, like he often repeated, he has always lived here and on the other side and he knows these places more than any other parts of Mexico or United States. He recalled that he and his friends used to simply cycle past 'the borderline' in Playas over to SanDiego when they were young, and some policemen would casually chase them back.

⁶ It is hard to refer to this interviewee objectively since we became very good friends. However he also requested me to maintain privacy of his identity and so I think it is best to use 'M'.



“When I was small, the fences fall down... I can pass through the fence through my bicycle, over the fence...was here in playas...was on the dirt roads...the immigration ...watch us...we don’t go anywhere we don’t want to go there... And they know..they know that after one or two hours, we come back. They say us hey kids, ok... go back. Ok... no problem.. nobody... no too much problems.”

However, his personal life trajectory has been influenced by the shifting structural-legal conditions at these borderlands.

“Like I told you I was born in Ensenada but when I came to Tijuana I have like 5 years old. So, I stay here from 5 to 25 years. Then I left to the USA and I was living there for like 25 years-like 3 years no legal and 22 years legal.”

What was introduced as the Simpson Rodino law in the U.S for farmer workers became an opportunity for him to legalise his status in SanDiego. Then he spent 7 years to do the paperwork to get his wife legal after which their children were easily granted legal status. Indeed building a life that straddles ‘the border’, and wanting to move and work across regularly entails going through legal barriers.

Coming from a poor family, M began working at a very young age but also started doing drugs very early. His previous struggles with drug addiction and related actions has often led him to many situations of spending time in jails, deportation centers, rehabilitation centers, all this being related to shifting life conditions and shifting legal conditions around his ‘criminal activities’ and his ‘migrant status’. He tells me he wears mostly full-sleeve shirts to hide the wounds in his body. M has also had some near-to-death experiences due to his drug addiction. However, he tells me that it was in fact easier for him to get drugs in



SanDiego than in Tijuana because he had more money and the culture of drugs is more organised there.

“Because I was doing drugs... And I get into trouble... When we were growing up here in colonia obrera-primera seccion---when I was 12 years I was doing weed and drinking alcohol—everyone my age were doing it...and it was easy...but I bring back money to my parents and they don’t ask nothing. When I was 12 years I was a mechanic helper. I was doing weed, taking pills—and my one sister was 12 years older than me and she was married...we don’t go to school because was easy to get jobs and make money-the work opportunities were good—I like school pero many work opportunities—but I get back and finish till middle school –in my neighbourhood was only two people, me and another. I like school... I am intelligent.

... In the 90s was more easy to get drugs...also in SanDiego.... Was more easy to get drugs in SanDiego because I have more money there. People were selling drugs at home, through a hole. There was also home delivery. When cellular phones came was easy to get because you can just call and get it at home.”

Indeed his drug connection to these borderlands also maps a geography where his socio-economic conditions links to usage of drugs at an early age while increased socio-economic status achieved in SanDiego also brought with it a drug culture that further encouraged his addiction. He tells me that it was only after he was deported to Tijuana that he is now able to get a hold of himself and has stopped with alcohol and drugs since 2 years.

Having lived all his life at these borderlands, M’s mappings are rather unique though overlapping in some aspects to other mental maps in this section. Like some other



interviewees in this group, he clearly mapped his activities in Tijuana and SanDiego on two separate sheets, unable to conceive them as part of the same space-page. More interesting however is to note that despite having lived in Tijuana and SanDiego for equal number of years the ‘international border’ is mapped only as part of everyday routes of Tijuana and does not appear in the mental mappings of (past) everyday routes of SanDiego. Indeed the possibility of passing by or living close to the physical fence is much lesser in SanDiego than in Tijuana and this could be one of the reasons. But nevertheless that the ‘international border’ appears in the Tijuana map and not the SanDiego map is interesting to understand where the presence of the ‘international border’ is more felt. The ocean is the northern most limit in both maps while the international border is also an eastern limit in map 11a.

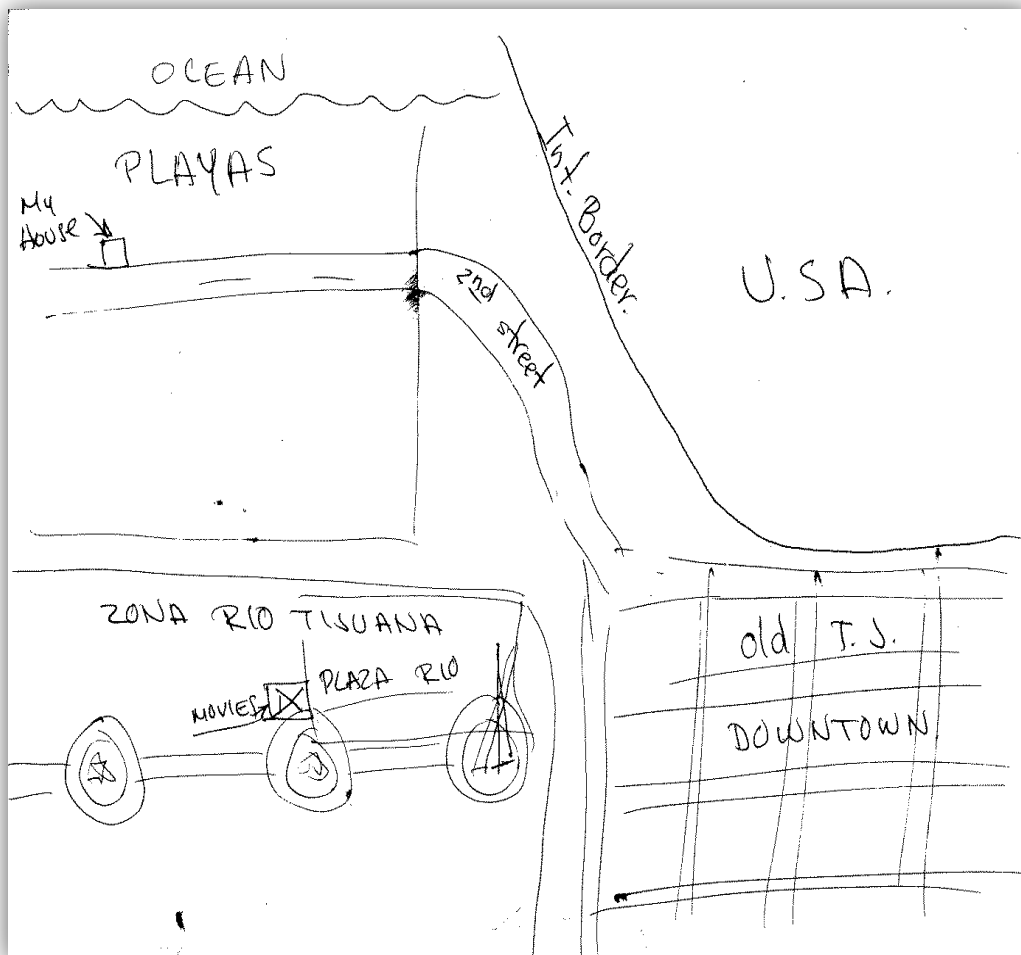
Further, even though mapped on two sheets, the conceived space of these two maps (Map 11a and Map 11b) does share a similar conceptual base in that he chooses to map the two spaces in very similar ways. Both mental maps have a downtown and the ocean, the neighbourhoods/colonias are drawn as square blocks, the streets are numbered and places of recreation (Balboa Park, Museums, SanDiego Zoo, Movies at Zona Rio) and home are central to both maps. This does nevertheless also reflect a conceived space of seeing these regions from the same lens.



Mental maps of daily routes in Tijuana and SanDiego by an inhabitant currently living in Tijuana (being recently deported to Tijuana), and who has lived mostly in SanDiego and Tijuana

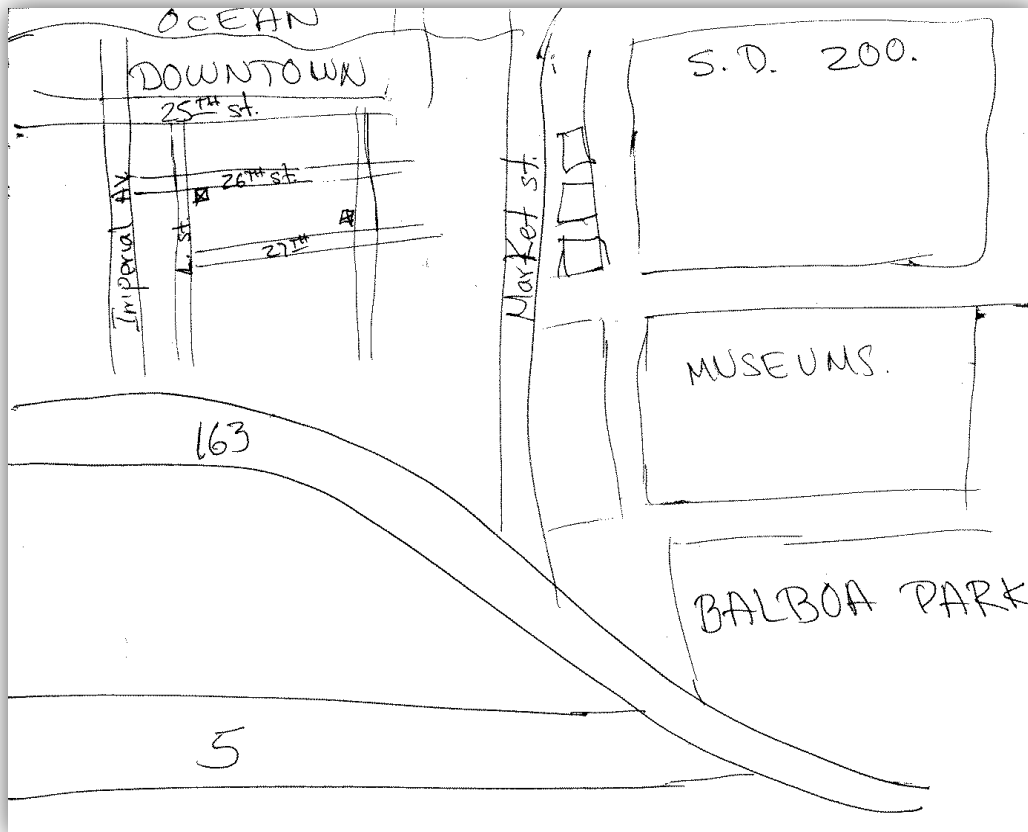
¿What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
“the border”?

*For me is like my place, my home.. All my life I live here and in
the other side...so, my home*



Map 11a. Mental map of everyday routes of Tijuana





Map 11b. Mental map of past everyday routes of SanDiego by same interviewee

Given that he currently cannot and does not cross to SanDiego, he in fact showed greater interest to recall his good times there. Especially heightened was his enthusiasm about the San Diego wild animal park where he used to take his children regularly and wanted to map this for me (refer to Map 11c)

“The name is SanDiego Wild Animal Park. This is more big than balboa park...It’s a big..like one city or two cities together... and you can go into the train.. like this...[draws] you know like a trail..and the animals here are free. They are left there wild...They are hunting too..like they don’t give food to the lions..they have to go hunting..its good..pero nobody can shoot them..nobody can hunt the animals..only they are hunting for food..I have a membership...I



buy a membership for the whole year... I can go anytime-SanDiego zoo and the other park... like 60\$ a year. I had to make one for my wife and one for me and the kids for free.”



Map 11c: Mental map of San Diego wild animal park

M's mental maps then reveal the inevitable connections across these border regions based on his personal, lived memories. His mental maps reveal a certain way of viewing these regions as separate and yet the same. To him 'the border' is associated with his life on this side and the other side where he continues to build and re-build his life regularly. Legal time-lines intercept with his personal time-lines of aspirations and changes, but are also forgotten in the light-heartedness with which he leads his every day. Simply claiming his space at these contrasting and difficult border regions, and building his way through the ups and downs of



poverty, early financial independence, regular upward and downward mobility in socio-economic status, the struggles of drug addiction, of processes of legalizing all his family members alongside his own, and of facing regular criminal punishments and deportations, this border-space is nevertheless home. He exhibited a sense of pride in his ability to regularly maneuver the structural conditions of these difficult border-spaces in relation to his own shifting socio-economic, psychological conditions.

B. Border of different regions?

For this inhabitant of Tijuana, SanDiego and Tijuana are clearly different regions. They are not the same region, according to him, and more so in recent years from the perspective of decreasing ease of cross-border mobility as experienced by him and as his family living here.

“Yeah! They born in United States they are US citizens, so they see Tijuana SanDiego the same region the same place... What can I say? What can I say? At this time.. at this time, it’s not. At this time, because the problems now are different. The only time probably was the same region is the time to spend to cross the border (when it was less).

The water contamination, the air contamination, because if you see that region from the airplane, you say you know what it’s the same region-same vegetation-so what makes different? Just political division makes different, the way of life, the cost of life, So, ok... Now is not the same region. That’s what I got in mind. And we try to resolve some together problems-like water for example, it’s a very dry region..it’s a...we need water..they already got more more water than us..there is more people living in sandiego than mexico side....we need the water and they already got almost 90% of the water they got...we got same issues..so...”



For this inhabitant, spending time on the line reinforces the current distance between the spaces of SanDiego and Tijuana which was not experienced so previously.

“Ahmm. In the past I cross almost every day. For different stuff... just go put gasoline to my car, just to get diapers of kids, just to get milk for the kids. After 2001 our life change, our way of life change, and was very difficult to cross the border. Even because in the past if you wanna glass of milk, you say, “you know what I don’t like the milk from Mexico, just I want from another brand in the supermarket from United States”. So we get our car cross the border, go for your gallon and just come back.”

To this inhabitant living here the tangible shift in the urban-border landscape since the 90s and exacerbated conditions since the overnight shift triggered by 9/11 are directly linked to the increased ‘perceptual’ distance between SanDiego and Tijuana based on increasing crossing time.

Working as an entrepreneur in the export-import business, he has his own office in Tijuana, but his work also entails visits to warehouses in SanDiego close to the border. Regarding his interaction for work across the border he had this to say,

“Because it’s a different country, there are different rules and it’s kind of..it’s kind of weird because they are Mexicans, you know they are from Tijuana and they speak Spanish, but they try to speak always in English, even if they know Spanish. They know Spanish and you know they are from Tijuana. And they try to be more strong on the policies of the company. In Mexico to be on a warehouse you don’t need to get a safety equipment for example in a warehouse, and if you are going to walk (there) in a safety area they immediately say, you know what you cannot walk inside if you don’t have the equipment, the right equipment to do this. And I say, Oh come on you’re Mexican, you know that in Tijuana we don’t need it. And they say, but this is not Tijuana, put it on! So they are more straight... the way they handle the



business. If you say you know what I need to make some inspection of this merchandise but I'm going to need your help to get the parts down and to get a knife and open it and then close again, Mexico has the mentality to say ok don't worry-let me do it, I open it and just seal it again. But they say ok sure, just to get the box coming here we charge you 5 bucks and to open it 2 dollars more and to seal it-we charge you for the type we use. Do you agree with that? I say I have to do that. If I have to do that you do what you want to do. I need to sign this registration. Sure..and you follow the rules for the other country..basically we are the same people from Tijuana or Mexicans or Americans it doesn't matter-the policies are very strong there..And I say, oh come on guys! you throw the trash in the street in Tijuana here, and in SanDiego just because you cross the line it changes. Oh come on! I cannot do that. Let me find a trash can to put it...oh! why you don't do this in Tijuana? It's the same place! So it's... you can find a difference-you can find a little bit difference."

These everyday differences in ways of interaction and behaviour inevitably influenced by differences in structural-legal conditions such as work policies, road laws and public space cleanliness etc rather than inherent cultural differences does reinforce differences in socio-spatial conditions across the border. This is also reflected in the following mental maps of his everyday routes in Tijuana and his most recent route for work to check merchandise just across the border. While map 12a of his everyday routes in Tijuana emerges as a circle with many landmarks connecting his home (top left most corner) to his office place(near Avenida Revolucion), Map 12b is only of straight paths/lines and mostly empty with only the warehouse and border check points as the major landmarks marked. The Border is marked as Border USA and Frontera Mexico, each with their checkpoints. Beginning from his house and the trees around his house, in Map 12a, he refers to a number of landmarks on his daily path,

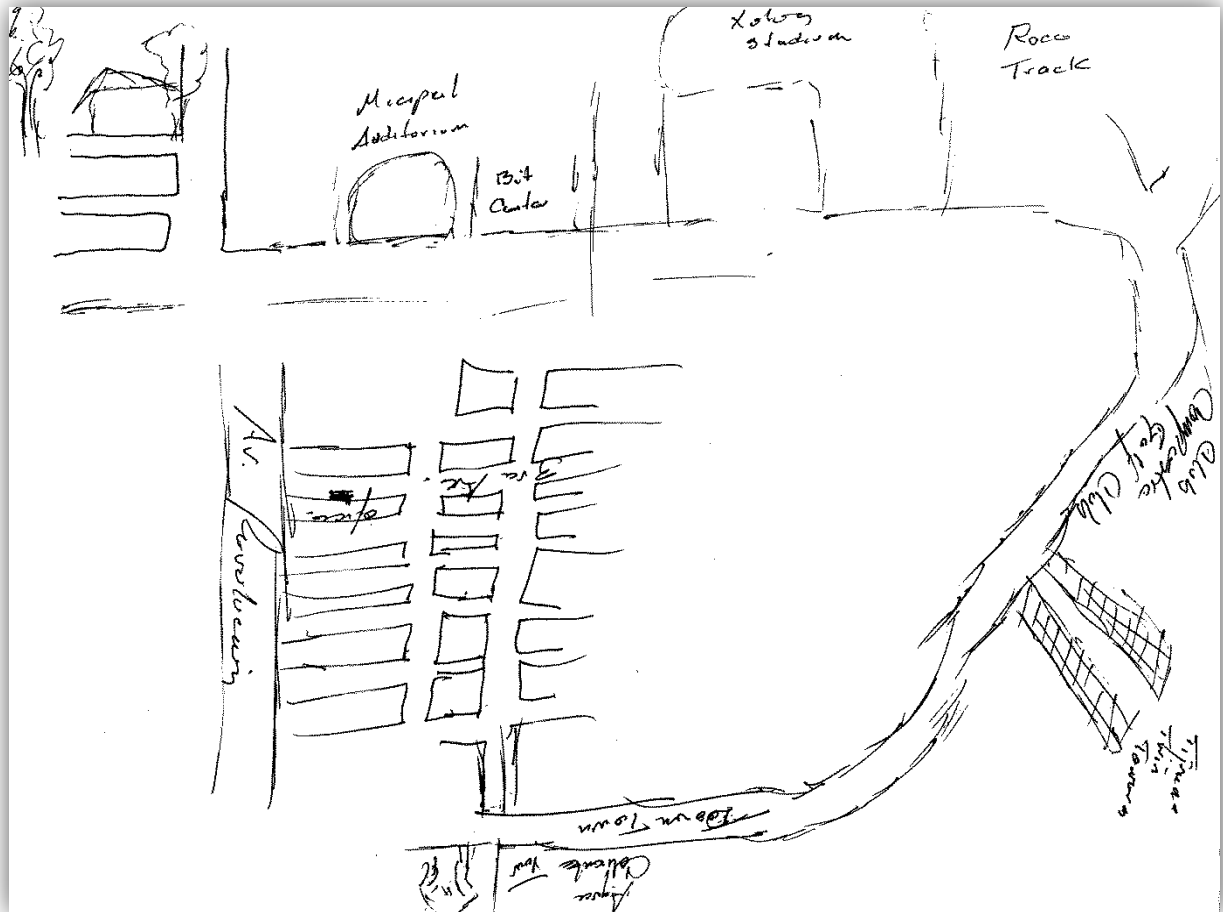


the Municipality auditorium, the Xolos stadium, the race track, the Tijuana Twin towers, the Golf club. The only district or neighbourhood reference is to Aqua Caliente and the only street name in the map is La Avenida Revolucion. On the contrary, Map 12b is totally empty of references with the warehouse, Border USA, Frontera Mexico and check points in Otay being the only markers. This does reflect a certain imbalanced perspective of identifying aspects of everyday routes. While frequency might be an important aspect in that the mental map 12b reflects an irregular route/less frequented route compared to map 12a, the ‘distanced-functionality’ with which his interaction occurs (as pointed in the above quote part of the interview) across the border is reflected in the map.



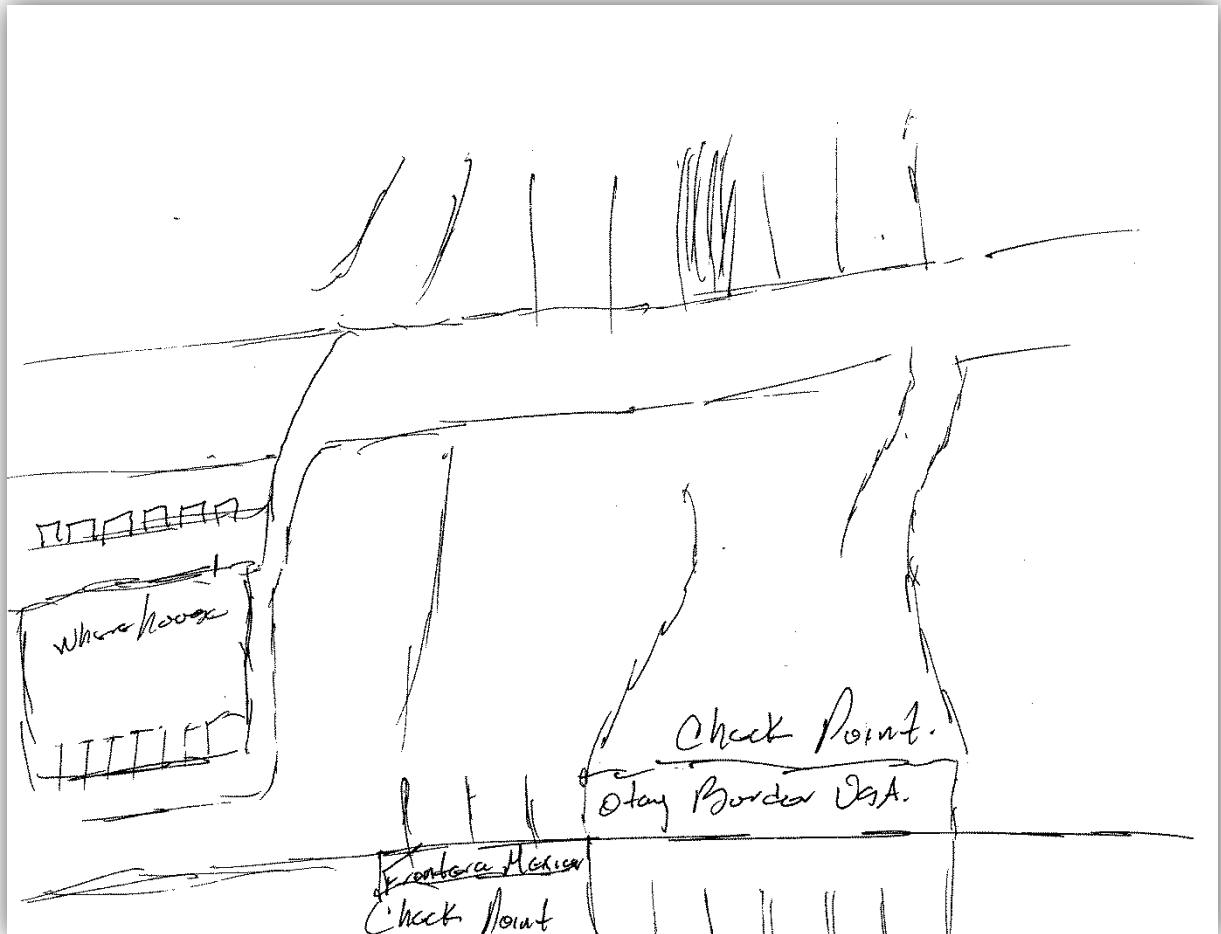
What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

Spend time on the line



Map 12a: Mental map of 'everyday routes' by an inhabitant of Tijuana





Map 12b. Mental map of last crossing route to SanDiego for work by the same inhabitant

To this inhabitant of Tijuana then, ‘the border’ means ‘spending time on the line’ that reinforces the non-oneness of these regions. Further, the differences in cost of life, way of life, ways of interaction (as experienced in his work interaction across the border in SanDiego) and the political division in terms of decisions of resources reinforce SanDiego and Tijuana as different regions to this interviewee.



C. Living in two places at the same time

Given that legal (national) identity is quite directly linked to place of birth, at borderlands then decisions of where or which side of the border or which country to give birth to one's child becomes a strategic aspect of family planning. To this interviewee, the duality of border identity becomes quite literally made right from his birth in being born both in Mexico and the U.S as reflected in his legal identity. His parents decided to give birth to him in a SanDiego hospital while also registering his birth in Tijuana.

"... That's right. So I can get the American citizen. So they do it because you have more opportunities and stuff and you can choose if you want to live here or go over there. So that's the way it works. I was born over there but they brought me over here and they registrated me here. So it's like I was born here in Mexico and in US at same time. So I have two birth certificates, one for Mexico and one for US So I have two nationalities."

Though he has never had a house in SanDiego per se, he is used to commuting everyday across to SanDiego since his high school and currently for his work as a plumber. Thus commuting across the border checkpoints is a central aspect/ 'important pathways' of his everyday life. Given the increased 'lines' of traffic flows to cross the border checkpoints he recently bought a bike for himself to beat the traffic.

"The reason that I have the bike, it's because I don't know if you know that it's a big deal to cross the border. It's a big line all the time. It usually takes you at least one hour... from one hour to 3hours on the normal days from Monday to Friday. On weekends it depends if there's an event on this side it just goes crazy... takes you like 3-4 hours to cross the border. That's the reason that I... as soon as that I can afford a bike I bought a bike... I just start crossing the border with the bike because it's easy just go between the cars. You don't have to do line-so it



takes me like 5 minutes to cross the border. So I just drive my bike to the work truck, because I have a work truck on the other side. The bike takes me to my working truck and I pick up my working truck and I start working.”

When I asked him if living in SanDiego might be an option, he replied,

“Ahh..It’s cheaper living here (Tijuana). It’s cheaper. It’s more expensive to live over there. If you ask me to choose where I want to be in, of course, if I have the money I’d live over there. But I will always come here on the weekends... I mean I was raised here. So I like TJ but.. probably in the future if I can I’ll move.. Its like a 50-50 thing. I’m ok here.. Also.I’ve never lived there on my own.”

While his family is dispersed across Tijuana, Rosarito, Las Vegas and Los Angeles, most of his friends, he tells me, lead a similar lifestyle as him of living in two places - Tijuana SanDiego. This means choices of where to do what is nevertheless part of this duality of place(s) of dwelling.

“If I need money I cross the border and get some money. If I want to buy beer... because it’s cheaper on the other side. You don’t pay taxes when you buy... there are some stores you can buy liquor and you don’t pay taxes if you come to Mexico. So let’s say it’s a weekend and we’re with friends and family and we’re drinking sometimes I cross just to buy liquor....”

“...I party on this side. I spend the nights on this side. So most of the times I go out it’s at night and I’m on this side. I still have friends on the other side. Its just-more difficult to drink or and all the stuff in the US because you get in trouble you know drinking and driving... In Mexico it’s different you can get out... with some money... if you are drinking and driving if you have money you can get out of that... so less risk partying in Mexico than in the US... like getting in trouble with the law... because me my work gets me driving all the time... I’m



driving all the time. If the cops pull me and stop me and am drinking they're gonna take my license... My work is gone... I lose my work."

Here indeed price differences and differing legal practices influence his choice of location of activities across Tijuana and SanDiego. At the same time, given that crossing has been and is such a central aspect of his everyday life in distributing activities across these border regions this also means simply living in two places at the same time.

"A lot of people ask me where do you live... I live in two places at the same time....because half of the day I am on the other side of the border on the US side, and other half of the day I'm on Mexico side. So that's the way it has been."

This "50-50 thinking and being" is reflected in most of his interview responses as well as in his mental maps seen below. In Map 13a, the details with which the border checkpoints are mapped reflect the centrality of this pathway to his everyday life. In the detailed demarcations of Gates 1,2,3,4 the Senti-line (fast lane border-crossing line) and the path for the tram, it is clear that these lines and routes at checkpoints are an important aspect. Central landmarks in this map are the roundabout with the statue of Padre Kino⁷ and the Pemex gas station. Further, the only street name in Map-13a he mentions is indeed where his house is located (Canada norte). On the other hand, in Map-13b avenues (orange avenue, napa avenue) and freeways (FWY 5, 54, 805) are marked quite prominently. Chula Vista, National City, and Spring Valley are also marked as prominent sub-regions/ districts based on his truck route on highways and exits. Here again Chevron and Shell gas stations are central landmarks given that he is always on his bike or truck.

⁷ Padre Kino was a Jesuit priest who was sent on a mission to Baja California as part of New Spain missions.

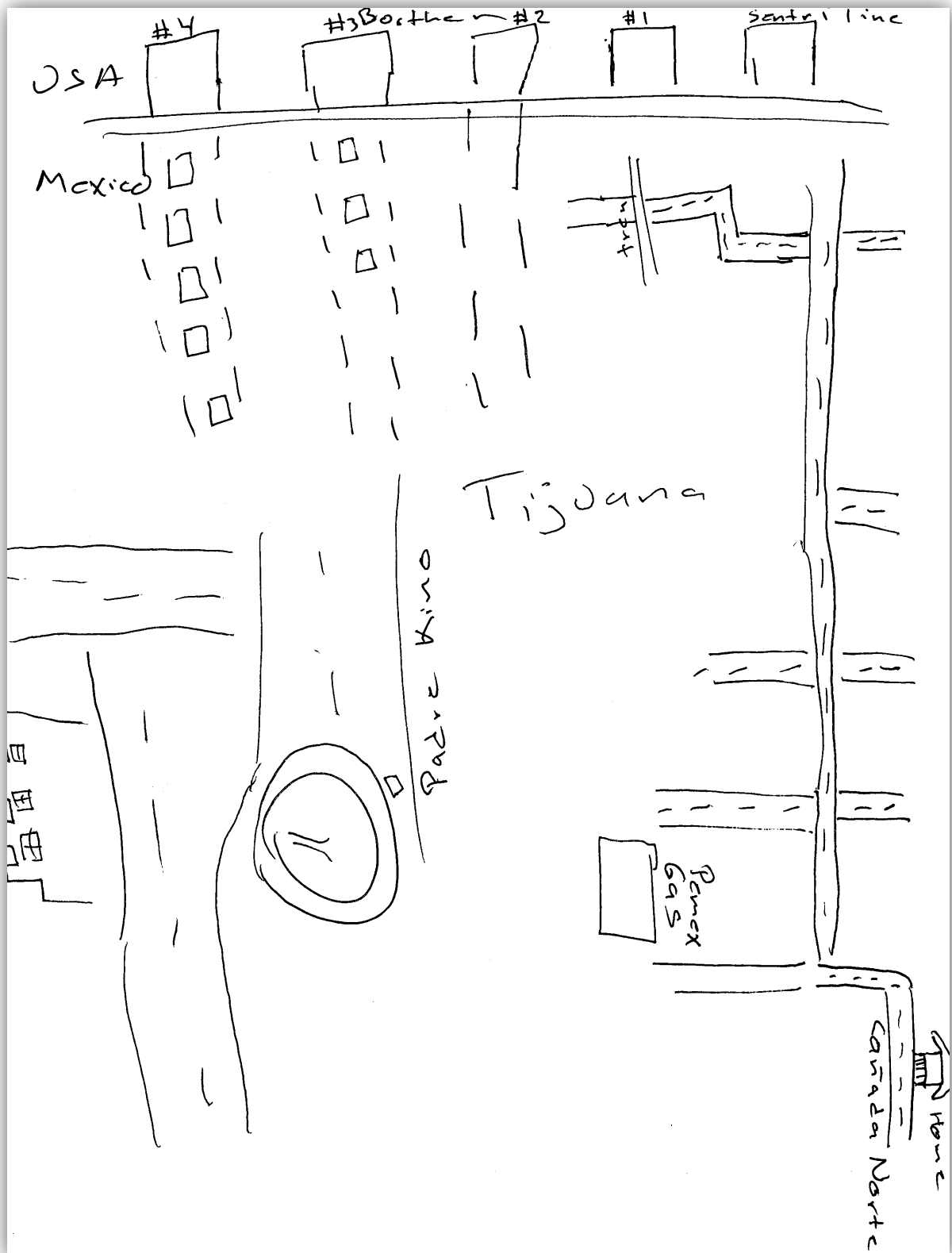


It is interesting to note that in both his mappings “Mexico, USA” is named and marked together, yet Tijuana is marked only on map-13a and SanDiego only on map-13b. This only further underlines his dual-dwelling status and identifications. It is clear that Tijuana SanDiego are two space-places. However, the dotted lines that run across both the maps (13a & 13b) mark his movements along the regular paths that do not stop in either of the maps and nevertheless connect the two maps and therefore SanDiego Tijuana.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
‘the border’?

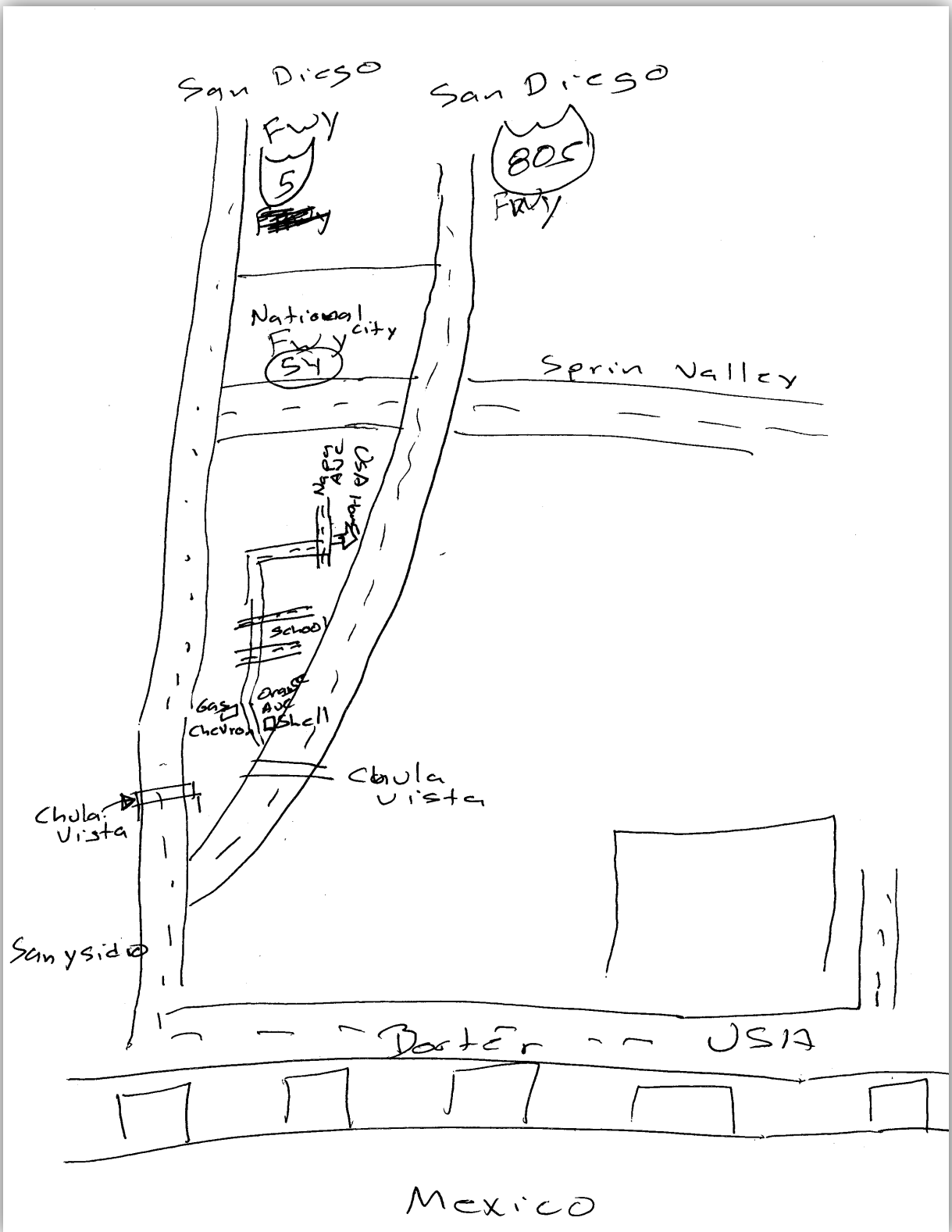
Party, tacos, women, work, drugs.





Map 13a. Mental map of everyday routes Tijuana





Map 13b. Mental map of everyday routes San Diego



His border associations reflect a mix of both popular associations to these regions, especially to Tijuana - of “drugs, women, party”, alongside his own personal associations such as “work, party”.

Overall, based on the mental maps and narratives, the one liner - *‘living in two places at the same time’* captures in a nutshell the complex everyday geographies and identifications of this individual who is a U.S citizen and a Mexican national, born in SanDiego and also registered in Tijuana, parties here and works there, buys alcohol there for drinking here etc., all the while producing these border spaces as separate and connected at the same time.

D. Border of empathy and connections

To this inhabitant of Tijuana who regularly commutes across to SanDiego for visiting family, her relationships in Tijuana and SanDiego are central to how she understands these regions. Visiting family in SanDiego was a normal regular aspect of growing up here, and she tells me that as a child she understood this to be the case for all the people around her. However, it was only as a teenager that she realised that this was not the case:

“When I was a child I thought that all the people can cross to United States. I thought that and well, you’re a child so I thought all the peoples cross because they want to visit their family. For me it was only that... for me it was normal, like oh I went with my aunt with my cousins so you do that also because you also know the people... I have a friend who is brunette and he... I think he’s like you..and when we were teenagers he told me, “You know...ahh..the gringos are very rude, I don’t like that kind of situation”..and I was like what are you saying and I was like I have good memories... in just simple words, he felt



discrimination...and that made me to start thinking.. So I start to look at other people and well... then I knew that not all the people visit their families...

... But I never thought in that you have to present the papers... that you have to have a job if you want a visa... you have to study... so for me was very simple because my dad did that for me when I was just a baby. So I was growing up and because of my friends' comment I was starting to thinking... and yes, when my visa ended... my permission to cross united states ended when I was 15 years old... So my dad told me if you really want the visa you are going to do it by yourself. So I was like ahhh I'm not interested... in that moment... so the years pass and I was like missing the city of SanDiego...And I was like oh, I miss my family and they... they were in a party and I was here in Tijuana... for me was like, that's not cool...so and that's when I was 20-21 years...few years ago. I was like ok I'm going to start the procedure for the visa and then this was like you have to present a lot of papers. I was like...it's a lot..then..and they told me now you have to pay more..what..what was that like 140 dollars... for me was like 140 for a visa? And I start to think about the poor people who want to cross... so I yes I pay the visa... and you pay but it's not... but that doesn't mean they are going to give you the visa... So, well I did it. They give me the visa very simple, very fast."

Despite herself not having a problem with getting a visa and having the necessary resources to cross to SanDiego, that not all of her friends are able to access the same mobility to visit their family across the border does nevertheless remind her of the differences in cross-border (im)mobility existing at these border regions. However as is also reflected from these narratives the need to regularly visit her family is a strong reason for applying for a visa, despite all the bureaucratic hurdles. She currently crosses once a week and if she is really busy then once in 2 weeks. Though her immediate family is in Tijuana she has many aunts, uncles and cousins in SanDiego. One of them is her favourite aunt with whom she often stays



with when she crosses to SanDiego. Her family connections are what mainly connect her to SanDiego.

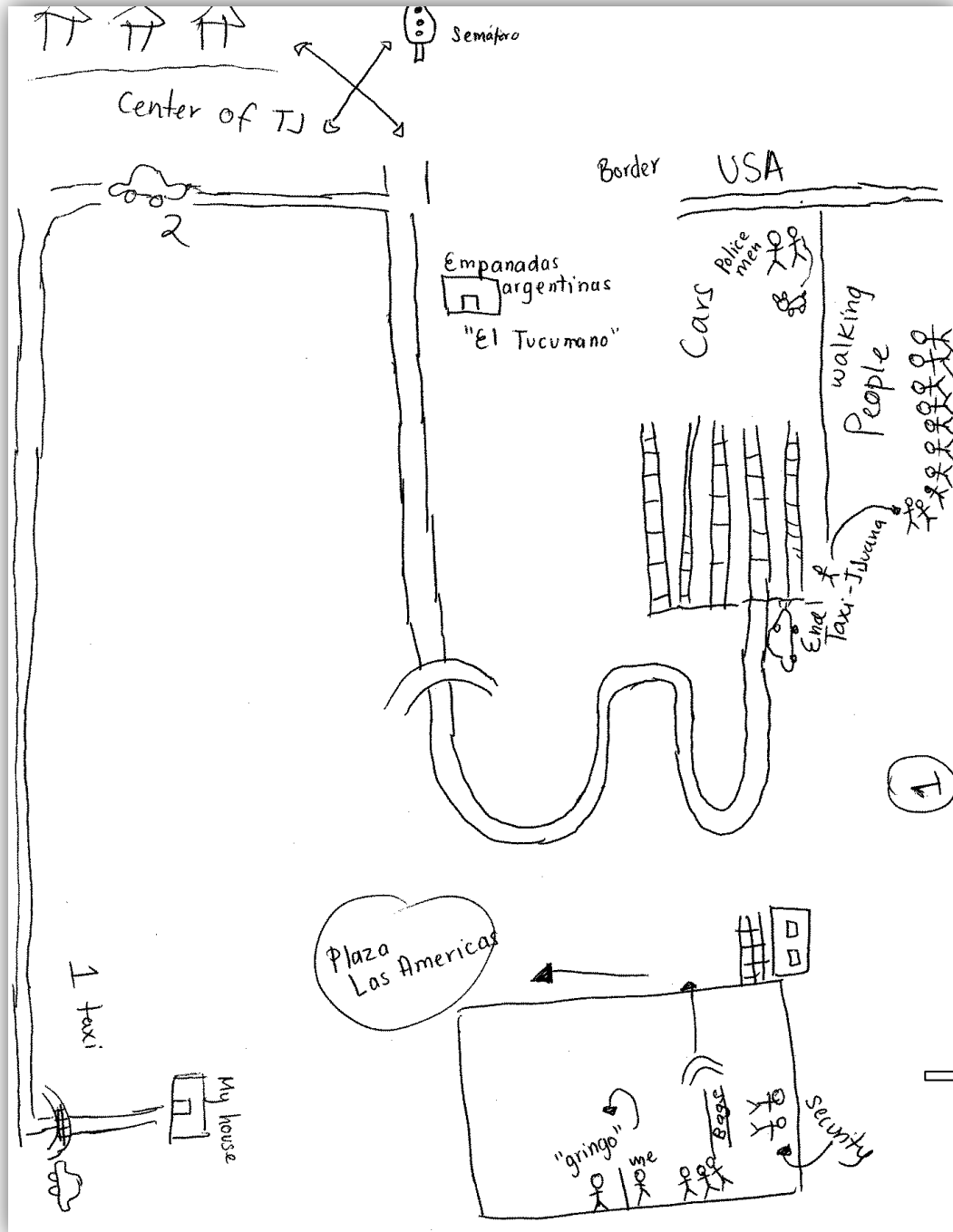
As reflected in the mental maps below, the crossing experience itself is an important aspect of her regular route. Unlike the previous maps in this section, it is hard to conclude a clear separate mapping of activities in Tijuana and SanDiego as can be seen below, since the crossing references to the “security check”, trolley path, and landmark of Plaza Las Americas appear in both Map14A and map 14B.

Map 14A: As she tried to explain to me while drawing Map 14a, starting from her house by walk she crosses a railway track and takes her first taxi in which she passes a long boring boulevard. On reaching the center she points to some houses and where she takes her second taxi to ‘the Line’ (border-crossing gate). On the way, sometimes she stops by a restaurant that is owned by her friend from Argentina where they sell empanadas. This serves as both a landmark and a node as she stops by to see her friend and chat a while sometimes. It is called el tucumano because the owner of the restaurant is from tucumano, argentina. There are some bridges that serve as important pathways for her. Since she travels by public transport(taxi) the stops of the taxi are the more important ‘landmarks’ for her. Finally, she arrives at ‘La Linea’ where there are a lot of cars but since she is walking she joins the walking people line (represented as many dolls in the map). Detailing her ‘crossing’ experiences, she maps the policemen always with a dog. Here, at this part, she wanted to further zoom in on the security-check activities (and since there was no more space on the page on top, she mapped it below, at the right bottom corner: See Below). Indeed the pathways leading to the border checkpoints and pathways passing through the border checkpoints are important elements in her map 14a, though there are absolutely no street names marked.



What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'the border'?

People, money, memories, family, difficulties.



Map 14a. Mental map of regular cross-border route Tijuana-San Diego



“I will write in here like a zoom-so this is the part you are crossing and this is the part the revision, the papers... of things like when you have to take a flight and you have to put in your things in a thing... the security! yes...so this is that part..So this is the man, the... I don’t know... I’m going to put the “gringo”... so maybe this is me. So this is the part I give my visa, he will say oh it’s ok you can cross bla bla bla. I always say like good morning... I don’t know, I want to be educated so I can cross. If I don’t have nothing... If I don’t have a bag I cross just straight... But I always carry something like my bag... So because when I cross to united states I like to stay there like maybe two days three days... So this is the security..you put the bags here. There are other men here... Am going to call them “security”... This is not a bridge but i don’t know... And you have to pass.. Then finally... I’m here in United States and this is the trolley.”

As she aptly refers, the security checks at these urban borderlands do not differ much from airport security checks from the perspective of users/passengers who are required to and also perform as docile, obedient bodies. Policemen, security-scans, dogs, questioning are part of the security landscape of borders that now multiply across and beyond the territorial inter-state borderlands but nevertheless do not disappear here at these borderlands. Also interesting to note that in the drawings of the security-check activities, she draws herself alongwith the policeman. That she participates in this question-answer and security checks is an important part of her map. Thus she is highly aware that she tries to follow the rules and act ‘educated’ to avoid getting in trouble with the policemen. Emerging at the security check activities this figure-‘me’ that represents her, emerges in the next Map 14b as well.



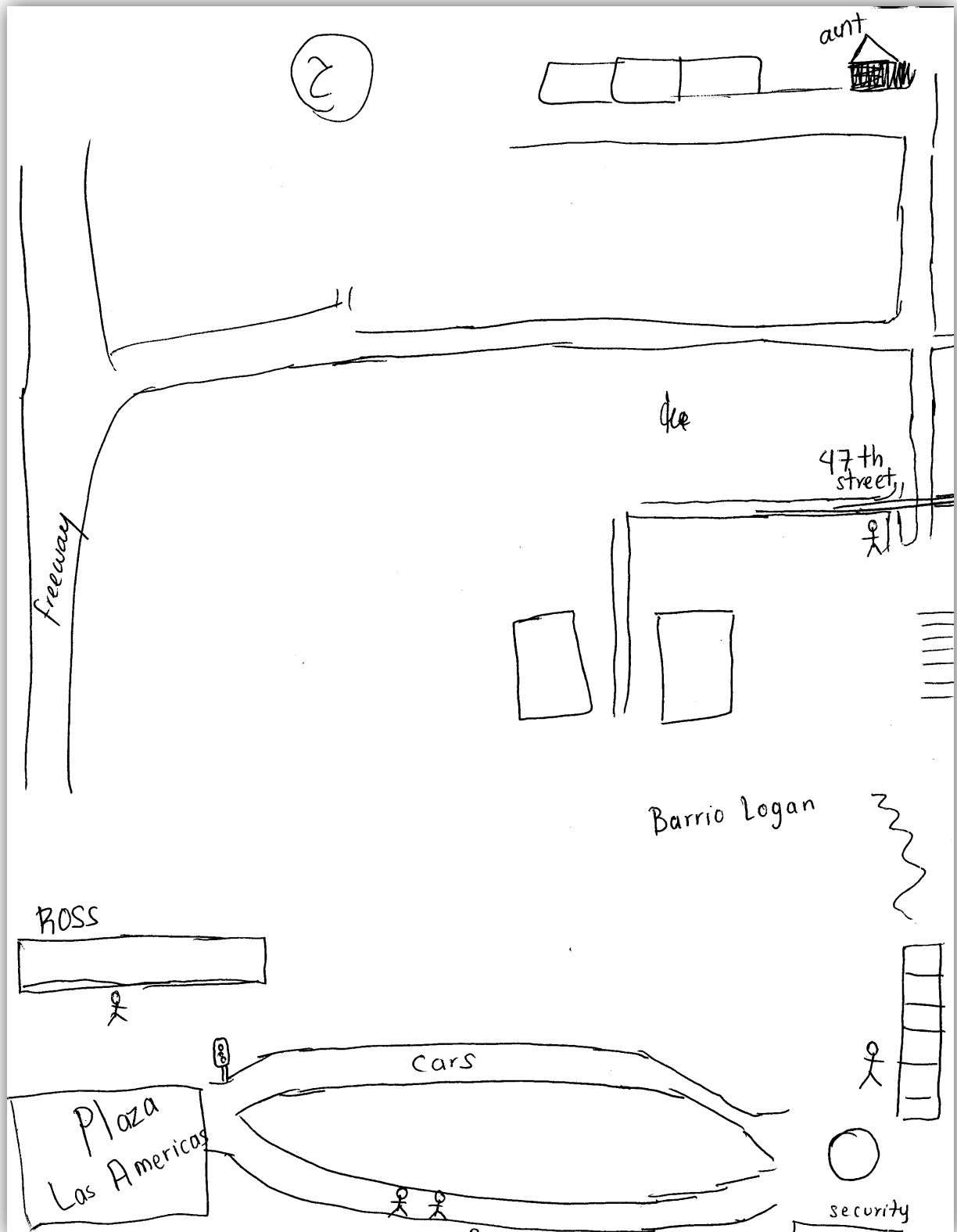
Map 14b:

Map 14b begins with the references to security, the trolley, some people walking and Plaza Las Americas that are part of her first impressions and landmark after the security check. She sometimes takes the trolley or strolls around to shop mostly in a shop-Ross where the clothes are cheaper than in Tijuana. Further she points that the bridges in SanDiego are much bigger than in Tijuana and so maps them in relative size as much bigger than in map 14A. On taking the trolley she knows that she has to get off at one stop after Barrio Logan so she often waits to hear the announcement in the trolley for the stop of Barrio Logan which is played in both Spanish and English. After getting off the trolley she tells me that she has to walk quite some distance before she reaches her main destination, the central node-her aunt's house. Here again she notes that streets are much bigger in SanDiego and this means she has to walk quite a lot.

“here in Tijuana two streets are not very far but that in sandiego... three streets is long..”

Since her aunt's house is in the corner she is happy that she has to walk less. Interesting is that she sees herself walking on these roads and therefore maps herself as 'me'. Thus this doll that represents her movements from Map 14a to map 14b nevertheless links the two maps. The main streets marked on the map are indeed the ones leading to her aunt's house (the freeway and the 47th street).





Map 14b. Mental map of regular cross-border route Tijuana-San Diego

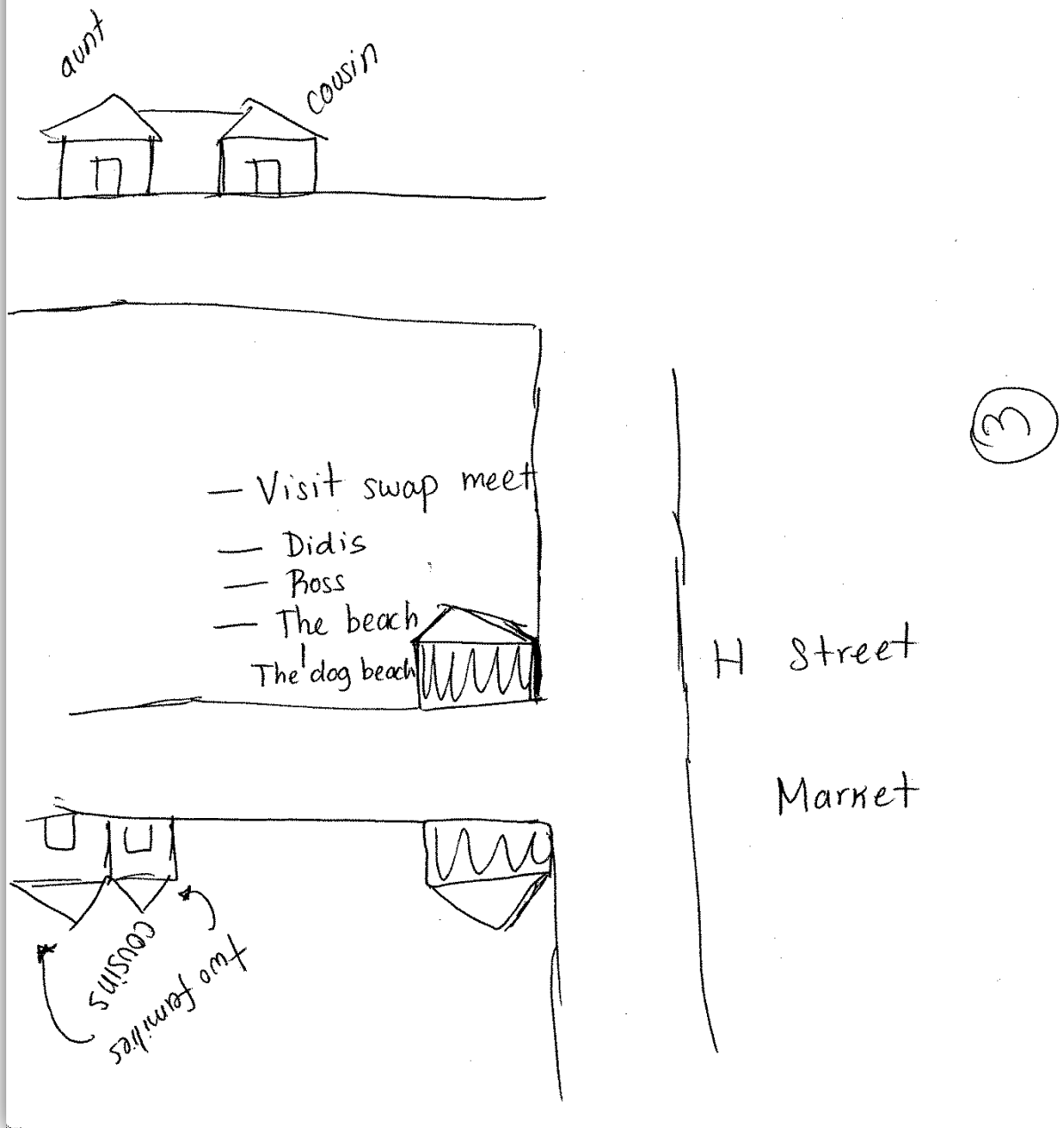


Map 14c:

Since her aunt's house is so important to her experiences of SanDiego she wanted to make another map with a zoomed in version of her aunt's neighbourhood. Here is where she spends a lot of time. There are two more families that live in the same neighbourhood and on the same street, so this neighbourhood is associated with family. She mostly spends time with her favourite aunt also because she had kids who are her age and they hang out together. They also do things together like visting the swap meet, taking the dogs for a walk, shopping or visiting the dog beach. The dog beach is also an interesting contrast of public space laws and practices:

“there are some laws in SanDiego that they are like ridiculous because you see like the...boards that says - not permitted balls...we are in a beach and you don't permit balls?... Tijuana you can do everything you want..you can bring the beer, the ball... the food..you cannot do that in SanDiego in some places of the beach..So for me it's like funny and it's stupid in the same time that kind of rules.. And the dog beach is like you see just dogs..so thats the cool part..”





Map 14c. Zoomed in mental map of aunt's neighbourhood along with list of regular activities they undertake together



As reflected in these above mental maps, her family relationships straddle the border and this makes her view these regions as connected in her crossings for family visits, despite mapping her everyday routes in Tijuana and SanDiego on separate pages. When I asked her if she feels like a transborder person/‘transfronteriza’, she only underlined her sense of belonging to Tijuana, while emphasizing her empathy with SanDiego, and in fact also a distance to south of Mexico emerging from this belonging.

“I see the border...it’s very clear for me. Very, very clear. For me exists the border... economic, social, political... there’s a border for me. And I don’t feel like I belong to SanDiego. I belong to Tijuana. But I have a lot of empathy or connections with SanDiego, but only SanDiego. Not SanFrancisco, Los Angeles... but SanDiego yes...I am from Tijuana and I feel like I am from Tijuana and I confirm that when I travel to the center of Mexico to the south of Mexico.”

So belonging to Tijuana emphasizes her connections with SanDiego while at the same time underlining the social distance to south of Mexico. Despite being connected to SanDiego from her close family relationships to this inhabitant of Tijuana this is not a borderless-single region. It is clear that she ‘sees’ ‘the border’ as a marker of differences (economic, political, social) and as a barrier to mobility of people despite the fact that she herself commutes across these regions regularly. The crossing experience in her case as well reinforces the differences between the regions, but also everyday differences such as big roads, big bridges, legal rules around public space behaviour underline the same. Most importantly, despite all these differences her connections and empathies link these regions.



Conclusions

All the above set of mental maps and narratives in this section display complex socio-spatial relationships that straddle ‘the border’ thereby producing ‘the border’ in different ways. While majority of the individuals in this group [that visually refer to ‘the border’ while mapping activities in Tijuana and SanDiego on separate pages] are regular cross-border commuters not all of them are.

If to one, ‘the border’ emerges as a place where one simply has been living all of one’s life – here and the other side, to another ‘the border’ is associated immediately to ‘spending time on the line’ with reference to the traffic lines and waiting lines that have only been increasing since the 90s.

Another interesting aspect in the mental maps of M(Map 11a&11b), is that ‘the international border’ appears only in the map of daily routes of Tijuana and does not appear in the map of activities of SanDiego. However, for those who currently cross the border checkpoints regularly, the crossing experience and the border landscape at these checkpoints are a central aspect in their mental maps as seen in mappings of clear demarcations of checkpoint Mexico, checkpoint USA(map 12b), in the detailed mappings of the multiple queuing lines at these checkpoints(map 13a), and also in the depictions of policemen, police dogs, security checks(map14a).

Further, differences between Tijuana and SanDiego are not perceived solely based on the physical fence or long waiting lines but also through differences in ways of behaviour that shifts with differences in legal rules, work policies. Legal structures have a significant impact on the recognisable differences in socio-spatial behaviour of people which is a greater marker



of difference than the physical fence itself as emphasised in their narratives and mental maps – for instance, interactions at work, public space behaviour on roads, parks etc.

The diverse perceptions and conceptions of these regions based on their own lived experiences are reflected in these phrases - “*All my life living here and the other side*”, “*living in two places at the same time*”, “*for me is not one region*”, “*I belong to Tijuana but have a lot of empathy or connections with SanDiego*”. These narratives are further underlined in the mappings that show clear aspects of differentiating/separating everyday routes in Tijuana from everyday routes in SanDiego but nevertheless most maps also provide clues of connections, imaginations, lived experiences that link these separate mappings.



*IV. Mappings of Visual reference to ‘the border’, with parts of Tijuana,
SanDiego on the same page*

Border as part of one region?

The last set of mappings elaborated in this section stand out rather clearly from all the other mappings so far in that everyday cross-border routes across SanDiego and Tijuana are not conceived as separate space-pages but rather as paths part of the same space-page, despite visually referring to ‘the border’ in these maps. This again has implications to how these spaces are perceived by these individuals who strongly centralise their cross-border everyday routes as central to conceiving space, rather than isolating routes ‘in Tijuana’ from routes ‘in SanDiego’, unlike previous mappings. Further, most interesting is that cross-border distances are relatively shrunk compared to previous mappings i.e. what appears as a long route in the mental maps of previous cross-border routes because of the detailed references or distances imagined (requiring more than one sheet) in these mappings appear much lesser/ appear shrunk. Another prominent feature is that all those under this pattern of mapping have fully legal documents to cross, which is not always the case in all the previous groups. Further, most of these interviewees either referred themselves as ‘transborder’ persons, or did not express a strong attachment to either SanDiego or Tijuana unlike previous groups in which this was not such a unanimous feature.



Having always lived at these border regions, to this interviewee the realisation that there exists ‘the border’ came only when she moved to Mexico City for a few years.

“And I think the border was for me like... I don’t know probably when I was born I have a passport and within a few months I cross the border...and I used to go for vacation with my family in LA every year for a month the summer vacation since I was one or so... I didn’t realise it was there until I moved from here and started reading about it and it came to me that it’s there! It’s really there!”

Indeed access to cross-border mobility as well as growing up in the context of cross-border family networks, alongside regular cross-border visits and practices, as a central aspect of one’s life, like for this interviewee, ‘normalises’ the crossing in a way that could make one less sensitive to the real presence of an international border as a legal institutional border-barrier to mobility.

Further, legal borders/rules are often stronger influences on everyday life than physical border fences/walls in that they are more central in regulating the kinds of everyday (im)mobilities and ways to access resources, which links to legal status. To this interviewee, despite always having legal access to cross-border mobility and actively conducting cross-border practices, her shifting legal status also meant a shift in behaviour and attitude towards her everyday crossing practices, the immigration police at the border checkpoints, and her perceptions of ‘the border’,

“I mean my legal situation what gives me like the right to come and go it has changed. Well for me yes, personally it has changed...when I cross with my passport for the first time that I



don't remember... the first time that you have to cross to see your family... But when I was growing up I used to go like for shopping or to meet my family or travels from school... all of that...museums and all of that... But when I got my (U.S.) residency it was very different because before of that I used to be very, very ..ahm..when they ask me like where you're going... because when you cross the border they always ask me where are you going and what are you doing there and all of that..and I started noticing that what I was answering and how I felt about it started changing because before that when I had only my (Mexican) passport it was like ok I have to be very nice because they can tell me not to cross..coz some people tell you... And when I got my green card I used to cross drunk... I was in university I was very young so I used to cross drunk... midnight I was drunk... sometimes I didn't have the papers of my car... ok a lot of irregular situations and they didn't say anything... If they talk back to me I will answer back... So in that way yes it change for me... my relation to the people that are there(border police)..ahmm..and so I feel very..if I see something that I don't like I feel that I can say things to them.. you know like, "What you are doing... I don't think it's ok... I'm not saying that you should stop or whatever but I'm just saying that you should have like an awareness that it's not ok what you're doing"... and they will listen and they say oh yeah whatever bye bye."

While her legal status is important in relation to her crossing experience, her social networks that straddle across these border regions remain central to her perceptions of these regions in relation her own transborder identity. Despite the fact that she currently lives in Tijuana and does not regularly visit SanDiego regularly, nevertheless that her family networks straddle these regions makes her attached in ways that make it hard to imagine these regions as



separate or isolated spaces. When I asked her if she would call herself a ‘transborder’ person/ ‘transfronteriza’, she replied,

“Ahmmm yes, probably yes, because I mean even though I’m not crossing now everyday I’m in phone or skype with my mother and I know what she’s doing... I’m just lazy to go visit her. I would be lazy to visit her even though she was here. But yes, I’m not passing everyday now but yeah..I’m still connected to that side.”

Her grandfather was in the Bracero Program which drove her father’s family to migrate to Tijuana from Guanajuato in search of him and eventually towards settling here when they found him. And her mother’s family too moved here from Guadalajara because of her grandfather’s work. Her mother however remarried an American Citizen which is when she lived in SanDiego for some years and got her U.S. residency. Migratory movements and everyday cross-border practices being a central aspect of her family history and her own life at these border regions, then makes her reflections on what ‘the border’ means to her very interesting.



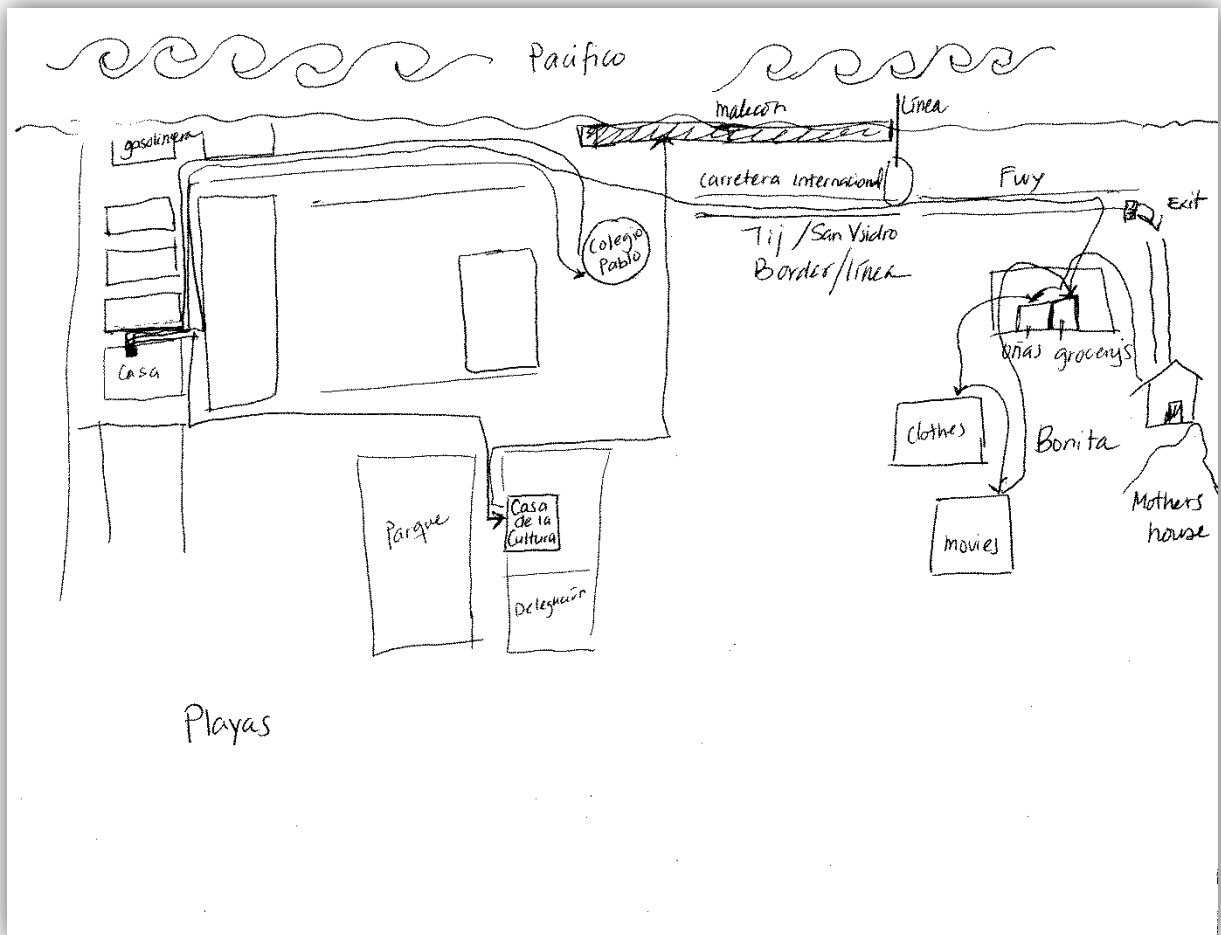
What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
'the border'?

*"...the Border...well..the **metal** because it's there...*

*Border as the **language**...*

Yes..what is the border? I mean beyond the physical border that is here..yes we know its here...but it's more than this idea that we have of what is the border..because ultimately it's crossing...it's like movement...yes it's here (the physical border) that we see here (referring to the fence in Playas to which we were very close)..but I have more images than words that come to my mind..of crossings....crossing walking..crossing in the car...the dynamics of crossings...everything that I do while crossing...all the adventures while crossing...also simply talking with the policemen or with the people who are here everyday and you cannot fight with the people who dedicate their everyday here [selling stuff] and you just continue to cross."





Map 15. Mental map of a regular cross-border route

As Chambers powerfully argues,

“If legally rigid, borders are historically fluid and socially complex: for some they represent simply stamps on a passport, for others an apparently impossible barrier, yet every day they continue to be crossed, and hence simultaneously challenged and confirmed, in both legal and illegal fashion.” While the border might mean a limit to one (for instance, Map 9), to this interviewee ‘the border’ is immediately associated with crossings and movements. In her above reflections she begins from the more tangible aspects of the ‘metal’ [associated to the



fence] and language, to moving beyond them in centralising ‘movements’ and ‘crossings’, associated with ‘the border’. A Border most importantly, brings to her images of movements and different dynamics of crossings. This conception is also reflected in her mental map in which her cross-border routes around her son’s routine, visiting her mother in SanDiego and their collective activities are more central to her conceptualisation of this map as a single space-page. The mental map also reflects the continuation of the ocean ‘Pacífico’ that is a powerful limit located ‘north’ of the map as waves (mapped as ‘above’ her everyday activities), and also connecting the border spaces (beyond ‘carretera internacional’, ‘linea’).

The map stands itself for a space of everyday activities with the two main neighbourhoods/districts of her house (casa) and her mother’s house, and the pacific ocean as the three main external limits of the map, and therefore central rather than ‘the border’ as a determining reference to the conceptualisations of the map.

No streets are marked except for a freeway that leads to her mother’s house and neighbourhood. The main landmark references are around her family (mother’s house, Pablo’s colegio (son’s school), Malecon (this is both a path and landmark, where she goes with her son by the beach), Casa de la cultura (where her son goes for art lessons), recreational (Parque/Park, movies, nails/uñas, clothes) and functional (gasoline, grocery). Her paths (marked as curvy arrows) to and from these landmarks are what links the two neighbourhoods and produce the map as one coherent space.

Although the pathways through the border checkpoints are not explicitly referenced in the above map, this is nevertheless an important aspect of living at these border regions. As she draws the map she tells me,



*“...most of the time I cross in SanYsidro and I think it’s faster and they have food. So I, yes..I like to take pictures of the curios... because they change a lot and I think they are very funny so I like take pictures of that... and the vendors... and I like the burritos, **burritos from the border**. Yes I buy food there... the food they sell there, my mom doesn’t like it all... she asks me how can you eat food from the street and all of that... but it’s kind of my ritual...burritos in the border. That’s the reason why I like more the SanYsidro linea...and the way for my mother’s house is just like..I don’t know have you crossed the border?”*

Most importantly, in all these narratives and the mental map it is clear that ‘the border’, despite all the associations to the physical border and the crossing experiences itself, is most importantly that ‘to be crossed’ standing for movements and various dynamics of crossings.

Just happens to be two countries where I live

I am a Border Dog

From an environmental perspective indeed these border regions are theorised as a shared region, as also done by Lynch and Appleyard who were concerned with working alongwith environmental conditions of these regions in planning these regions. Working for an NGO based in SanDiego towards addressing bi-national environmental issues, to this interviewee living across Tijuana SanDiego these borderlands are ‘one region’. Though he moved to Tijuana SanDiego region(s) only 3 years ago, his work involves actively building networks between government agencies, civil associations, NGOs, local communities in SanDiego and Tijuana. His mental map then reflects his vision of ‘the borderline’ from an environmental perspective as cutting through the ‘naturally’ shared elements of these spaces such as the Tijuana River and Estuary, while stopping at the ocean. His tone of *‘just happen to have two*



countries where I live’ does resonate with Dear et al’s *‘just happens to be an international border’* given that he personally has no problem moving across these border spaces.

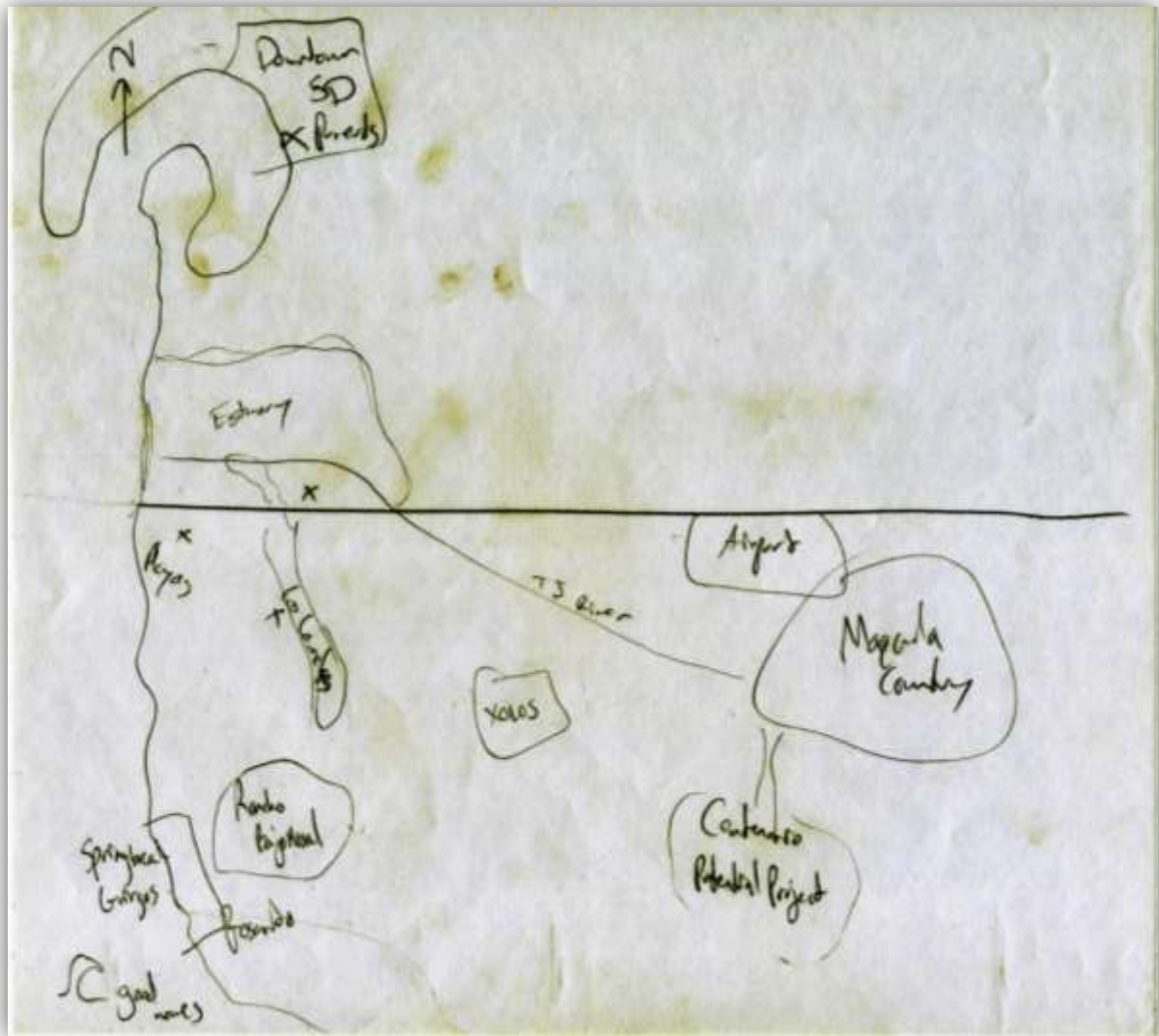
“For me I cross so often... I have to be a community in so many different arenas..its really weird but...it’s just where I live... I just happen to have two countries where I live.”

The mental map in fact (also partially in line with Dear et al’s conceptualisations) conceives Rosarito, Tijuana and SanDiego as one page-space, the ocean waves as a central connecting element. Further, the ‘north’ ‘south’ orientation is similar to most cartographic maps of this region with ‘SanDiego’ in the north. Apart from his work sites as central nodes marked as ‘projects’, the Tijuana airport and xolos stadium serve as important landmarks to his routes. ‘Maquilla country’ is a ‘district’ he associates to the industrial area or where many factories are located close to the Tijuana airport.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say
‘la frontera’/ ‘the border’?

*Stop, hate, unreasonable, archaic, unnecessary.. evil..its just
there I don’t know.*





Map 16. Mental map of regular (cross-border) routes

The mental map underlines his perceptions of ‘the border’ as ‘just happens to be’ in all the linkages he makes across these border spaces, although ‘the borderline’ is a strong clear line in the center of the map. He tells me that ‘the border’ is unnatural to these regions in the context of European colonisations.

“For me, the last three years I’ve been crossing regularly... the line imposes that feeling (of separation) upon you. I studied biology, and to me, international boundaries and borders is



what Europeans brought here. It doesn't belong here. It was never like that here. We're a part of the earth so, there's no reason why I shouldn't be able to walk right over there, you know (pointing in the direction of the fence in Playas)."

Seeing environmental and human suffering as directly linked, to this environmental activist the environmental degradation issues and pollution at the shared estuary region is directly linked to the poor living conditions of people inhabiting these spaces in Tijuana. His organisation is therefore trying to address this issue by working to repurpose the polluting material collecting at these borderlands into sustainable building material as a possible way forward in developing collective ownership across 'the border' towards the environment.

In response to my question of if he would call himself 'transfronteriza' he interestingly responded,

"For sure... I call myself a border dog actually. There are like certain dogs that go back and forth looking for food and stuff. So I call myself a border dog for sure."

His narratives and mental map then reflects a strong imaginary based on moving back and forth connecting these border regions actively viewing these border regions as a single shared region from an environment perspective.

Border as time-consuming, anxiety-producing

Despite having a SENTRI-pass (short for "Secure Electronic Network for Travellers Rapid Inspection" or the fast-lane pass for crossing the border checkpoints), to this inhabitant of these border regions with dual citizenship (Mexican and American), crossing 'the border' is nevertheless associated as 'time-consuming', 'anxiety producing'.

"Oh it's always a problem to cross... Always time consuming, anxiety producing. You never know from here to United States... never know how long. Even with sentri, you never know



how long you're going to spend in the line. If there is going to be a line... a long line, a short line... It's never easy."

'Inhabitant of these border regions' in this case means living on both sides as she puts it, "I live in both. I work on one side live in the other. I have lived on both sides really...work on both sides... yeah.... I use both sides of the border."

This conception of living and using both sides of the border continues in her mental map of her regular daily route in which 'the border' as a line is marked in the centre and all her activities are marked above and below the same. As she explained to me while drawing the map,

"So the border here... So I would go cross the border. Here's the border, and here I come down here. There's playas.... then here's COLEF...then here is the center...rio Tijuana..river zone..ahmm... So I do errands here... I sometimes go to the older section, not often. I go more here and then I go up here..to the casa del migrante..ok?"

"That's the border... let's see on this side I go home... Sometimes to north county..twice a month I go downtown..and I have friends and activities here..family here, further north..and then..yeah that's it. And I teach here..."

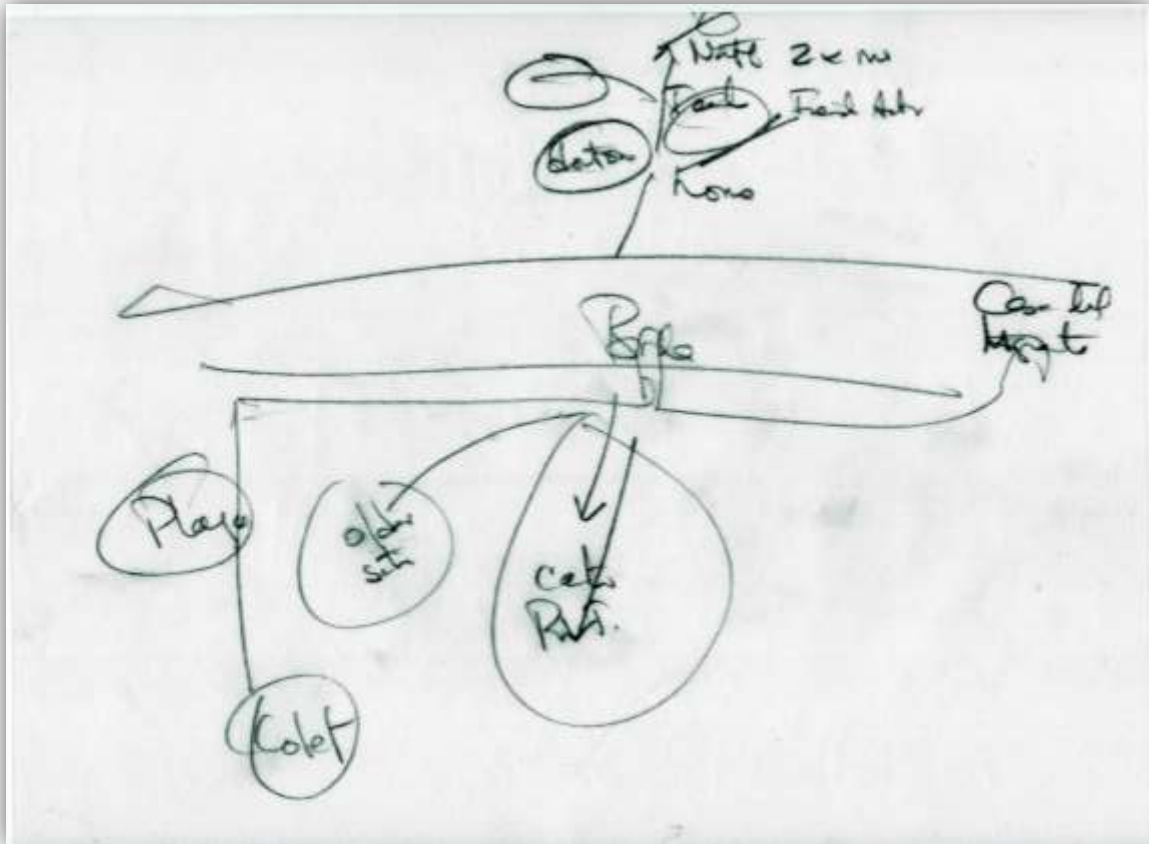
In these narrations it is clear that 'the borderline' is a central aspect of the conceived space of the map. First 'the borderline' is mapped and then her activities on either side, rather than 'the border' simply being one among the many references. Nevertheless, unlike mappings in group C, distances on either 'side' of the border are relatively lesser and become part of a single space-page. My next question to her was if she perceives these regions as 'one region', to which she had the following to say,

"No they are two regions connected by people who cross and not everybody can cross. They are very different areas."



What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say ‘the border’?

The border, immigration, Mexico, United States, conflict



Map 17. Mental map of everyday routes

Her narratives reflect the complex geographies of difference and connections between these regions – “two regions connected by the people who cross, yet not all can cross so they are very different areas”; “living on both sides of the border, using both sides” and yet ‘the border’ is associated as “anxiety-producing and time-consuming.”



Border of two neighbourhoods

Border region of big trucks

To this interviewee with dual citizenship (Mexico, United States) who has been living in Chula Vista, SanDiego county for more than 20 years and currently working in SanDiego and Tijuana, she is so used to ‘crossing the border’ that she sometimes even forgets that there is an international border. As she puts it,

“Sometimes we forget we are crossing an international border and we see it more like two different neighbourhoods. So I see it(Tijuana SanDiego) close. Also, it’s evident that crossing is becoming more and more difficult but, for me Tijuana, Chula vista, are... more or less the same region. That’s the way that I see it.”

Rather than family networks, in this case her work networks straddle these border regions playing an important role in her perception of these regions and ‘the border’. In this case, that she has regularly been used to commuting across these regions with relative ease inevitably influences her perceptions of these regions as connected and as ‘one-region’. Her everyday activities link these spaces. While from the above narrative it might seem that to this inhabitant there is ‘no border’ or that she does not ‘see’ ‘the border’ as part of her everyday lived experience, nevertheless ‘the border’ emerges in her mental map as the first visual reference - as a ‘line’(U.S.-Mexico Border) around which she organises her mapping of everyday routes:

“Ok, so let’s say that this is the border...this is my home...I always use highway 805 and after I cross I take the road to... this is Tijuana....so this is Avenida internacional. After that I take the toll road, Autopista Tijuana-Ensenada and so I will take the road... then stay at COLEF... sometimes I visit Tijuana also... playas... and I like to go sometimes to commercial Mexicana-that’s not there in Chula vista. So there are certain products that I like to buy over there.



Centro comercial... and sometimes I go to the bank-bancomer..and this is more or less... I go back and forth. When I return I use the same, street..this is the place I use on a daily basis. Sometimes here in Tijuana... sometimes I go and visit the Avenida Revolucion, zona del rio, commercial Mexicana.”

Most of the paths are highways mainly the cross-border highway (Highway 805 and Avenida internacional) given that the car is her main mode of transportation. Some important landmarks are home, work (COLEF), shopping (commercial Mexicana) and the bank-Bancomer. The main districts/neighbourhoods marked are Chula Vista, Zona del Rio and Playas de Tijuana. These neighbourhoods are the ones that are familiar to her and she tells me that she always restricts her activities to these familiar neighbourhoods. And as her narrative expresses then ‘the border’ of the cities Tijuana and SanDiego are indeed challenged given that for her passing through from Chula Vista, SanDiego to COLEF, Tijuana appears like passing from one neighbourhood to another. Thus people’s everyday networks and practices rather than official state/city boundaries it can be argued need to be the starting point for urban theory, given that people continue to connect spaces and ‘make regions’ based on their everyday practices rather than strictly adhering to city limits as natural edges/boundaries/limits.

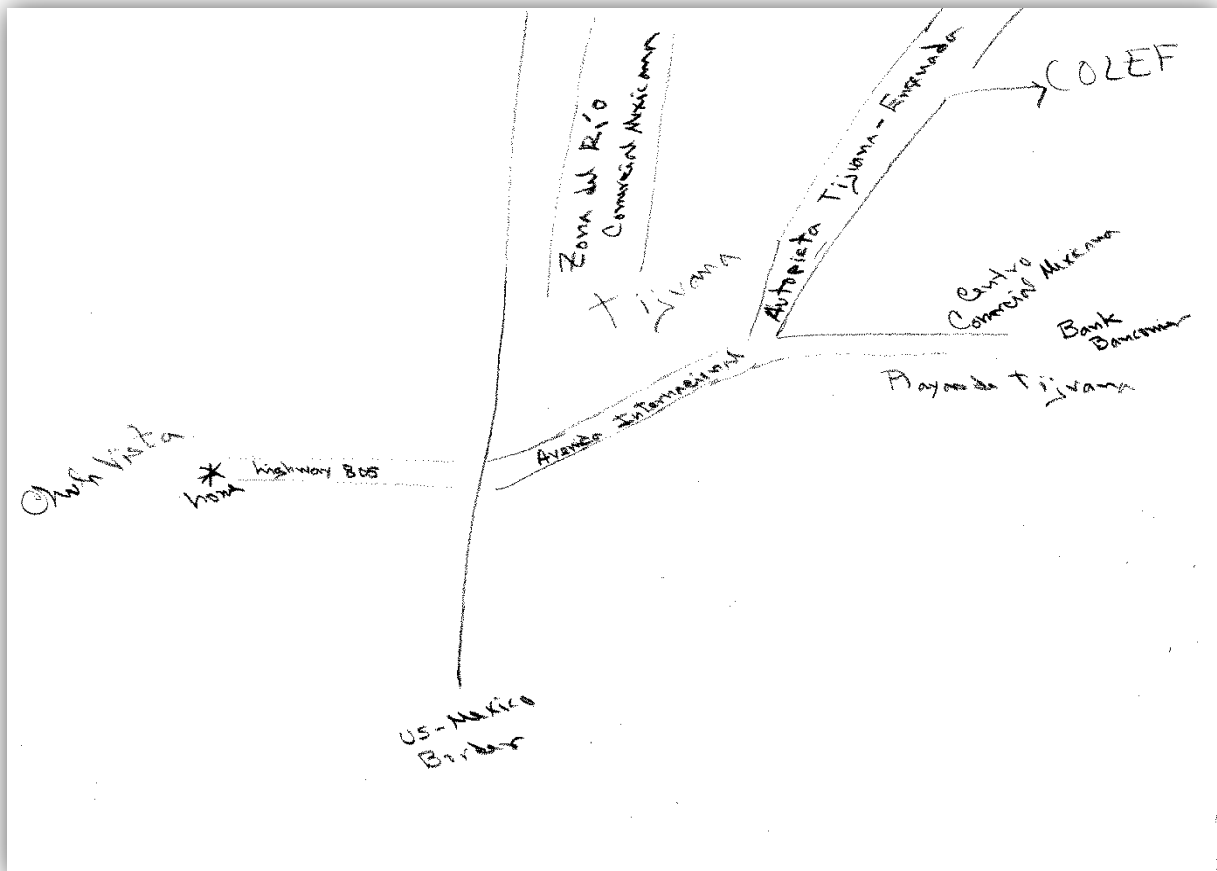
Further, rather than located ‘north’ and ‘south’ of ‘the border’ her mappings are spread to the ‘east’ and ‘west’ of ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’. Also the centrality of the highways to this map links to the narrative of perceptions of moving from one neighbourhood to another. ‘Crossing the border’ then possibly is perceived as moving from one highway to another – from 805 to avenida internacional. Her home appears connected through these highways to her place of work and other pathways for everyday activities rather than interrupted by ‘the



border’.

What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say ‘the border’?

Ok, well I see border patrol, so the agents checking documents and doing regulation. Also I think always about two languages, like kind of bi-lingual region. I also think about extreme differences like poverty. There is poverty in both sides but it's obvious one side is wealthier than the other-so it's like social inequality. And also something that I think is positive is like more choices. You have more choices precisely because you can cross in either direction and go into a different shopping center, different styles and furniture and clothes so, I like that. And something that I also think when I think about frontera is, well, maybe because frontera of Tijuana... it's kind of funny I think about people who have big trucks. That's something that I notice that when I go more into Mexico or more into United States, I don't see so many big cars as in this region.



Map 18. Mental map of everyday (cross-border) route.



Thus despite experiencing Chula Vista and Tijuana as different neighbourhoods of one region, ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’ is nevertheless a spatial reference to her ‘mental mapping’ (see map). Further, when asked to reflect more on her immediate associations or perceptions of ‘the border’ (see blue box above map) many aspects of ‘differences’ are referred that are nevertheless seen as part of ‘one region’ such as, ‘bilingual region’, ‘more choices because you can cross on either direction’ ‘not so many big trucks... as in this region’, and extreme socio-economic inequalities. While she does recognise differences across these border regions, nevertheless in her everyday mapping of these spaces, they emerge as ‘one region’ despite ‘the border’ and despite extreme socio-economic differences that she recognises. Further, the ‘checking of documents of agents’ is simply understood as part of a normalised routine of moving across these spaces rather than a reminder/reinforcer of difference or separateness of what is to her ‘one region’.

This perception of ‘one border region’ also links to her perception of her identity as ‘transfronteriza’,

“I think I am a transfronteriza. Not a person born as fronteriza... I think I became fronteriza because I go back and forth. There is an organisation in SanDiego State University- it’s an organization called border scholars... No, scholars without borders like the doctors without borders. So they call scholars without borders. So I feel like I am a scholar without borders. So yes definitely I will say I am a transborder person.”

However, this does not mean that she is attached to this place or her core identity belongs to this ‘region’, as she clarifies,

“I always feel that I have a kind of luxury that I can cross and I can accomplish a mission that is, my job is to educate, to do research, to inform, to create information about the region. So I



have a privileged position to obtain information from both sides, to create information about what is going on in these regions and also to teach, I can communicate in both languages. I know the culture in both sides and I would like very much to help the young people who is born here or arrive here very young, to understand the region and to see it as a nice place to be and to do things... with this kind of collaboration. So that's what maybe I feel comfortable with scholars without borders. It's like I have the opportunity to do my job, with young ones that belong to two different countries and to teach about each other and they can share to become like an international community... I like that. But I don't see myself as a border person because I arrive here when I was 34. So I was totally socialised... my perceptions... I am not a product of the region. I arrive here and I adapt, and I found a role for me and in that respect I'm a transborder person but I don't see myself as a real fronterizo. If I leave tomorrow and I go to live other parts of US or other parts of Mexico, I will remember the place and I will be nostalgic but I think it will not necessarily affect me in my identity... it's kind of weird... that's the way I see it."

Thus it emerges that her work relationships that straddle 'the border' are also actively focused on linking these regions as 'one region' in relation to which she perceives herself as a 'transborder' person or 'scholar without borders', rather than personal attachments to these spaces or based on strong personal family networks. This also gives rise to more objective associations to these spaces as 'bilingual region', 'region where there are big trucks', 'extreme poverty', with the shopping aspect being the only personal association to 'the border' as a region of more choices. Further, her mental map indeed produces one space-page of Chula vista(SanDiego) and Tijuana with 'the U.S.-mexico border' as a reference rather than a natural indicator of distance, or limit or difference between Chula vista and Tijuana.



Two nations but one region

Border of ‘más divertida’

To this interviewee currently living in SanDiego but whose work, family and friends’ networks straddle Tijuana SanDiego, Tijuana SanDiego are perceived as ‘one region’,

“Totally, it’s one region. I believe... and of course one region with too many differences, problems and barriers, but I feel like one region. For me, it’s like one region not two countries. I know its two countries but living in a daily basis is one region for me because I’m commuting.”

Though he lived in SanDiego and Tijuana before, the fact that he has been more often commuting has shifted his perception of SanDiego Tijuana as ‘one region’. Having lived previously for around 10 years in Tijuana, while also visiting SanDiego, it was only when he moved to SanDiego, he tells me that he began to understand more the Tijuana SanDiego region.

“Living in SanDiego allow me to understand more the US-Mexico, I mean the Tijuana SanDiego region. At the beginning...well when I move here to Tijuana, for instance, for the first 10/15 years I feel SanDiego... I use SanDiego basically for shopping. I mean it’s a typical Sunday trip with my family and for pleasure... pleasure mean parks, going to beach. Basically it’s a nice place for that and that’s it! That’s it! That’s it! Not for other aspect. So in that sense, you feel that yes its part of the region, part of one resource, living here you can cross and use it. But you feel a little far on the one hand. And on the second hand, sometimes... a friend of mine said an interesting thing. Because as soon as I cross to Mexico I used to feel more safe rather than being in the States in the past. Then he told me “oh! It’s incredible that you think like that!” And after talking, it’s simple. We know the codes, we know the rules. If you know the rules and the codes and culture then it’s easy for you, you feel



safe. Even though it's an unsafe place you feel safe. But on the contrary in the US you don't know some rules and especially, you know that there are lot of forbidden things and the policeman is very aggressive, and with huge penalties. And you cannot control this, because you don't know. Here you know how to deal with the policeman and blah blah blah blah. And so you feel more unstable and unsafe there (in the past). But this perspective has changed because I live there (United States)... because I have the green card. I know the rules. But of course always, always, there is always a small feeling of unstable, because something happen they can take my greencard and that's it. While in Mexico no! You are Mexican. They cannot kick your ass and send you to other place... No no you are from here... so that's a big issue. But so since I live in SanDiego yes it change my mind not just because living but because my wife works in SanDiego as a professor and she study the border so we discuss a lot. I hear a lot about the border and so, now my perspective is one region divided by two administration. Two nations but is one region."

There are many points made in these narratives regarding factors or aspects influencing one's perceptions of Tijuana SanDiego:

- i) of the importance of the kinds of cross-border relationships,
- ii) the significance of legal status,
- iii) the importance of social codes

That not only living in SanDiego Tijuana, but also the familiarity one develops over time with respect to the different social codes in Tijuana and SanDiego, influences his perceptions of feeling comfortable perceptions of 'safety'. However, he is also cautious to point that despite having a green card he is aware that in United States he can always be sent 'out' while in Mexico since he is a Mexican citizen this will not be the case. So, legal status is an important



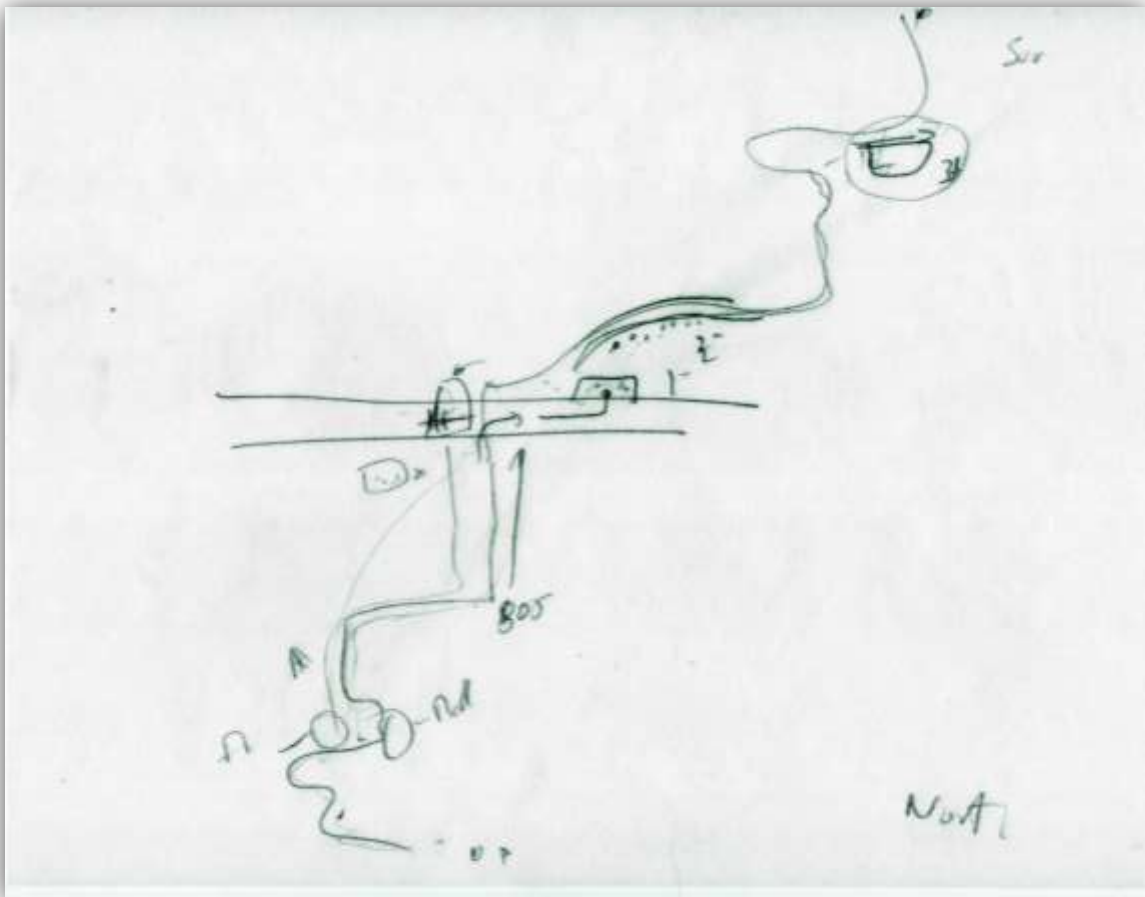
factor. Further, that he now spends a lot of time thinking and actively discussing about ‘the border’ and has professional and personal motives towards building more links between Tijuana SanDiego also influences his perceptions. Finally, his shifting perceptions are also linked to the ‘kinds’ of cross-border interactions/activities. Previously living in Tijuana and crossing to SanDiego purely for pleasure made him perceive this as one region but solely in terms of access to resources based on the possibility to cross and geographic proximity, while SanDiego still appeared far. But this shifted when he moved to SanDiego, built a family, home and a more extensive cross-border network, as well as being more busy with actively thinking about ‘the border’, thereby bringing Tijuana and SanDiego more closer in his eyes. This also influences his feelings of safety. And so in light of his current relationships, legal status and familiarity with Tijuana SanDiego he frames these regions as ‘one region divided by two administration’ - ‘two nations but is one region’.

When asked to make a mental map of his everyday routes he was very hesitant because of privacy issues. He tells me that having had some experiences of being robbed and escaping a gun-shot targetted at him, he and his wife are always a bit cautious and alert, though not in a state of panic, regarding private information that goes into the public domain. Given this he made for me a not very detailed map as can be seen below but accompanied with a descriptive narrative that makes it more legible.



What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'the border'/'la frontera'?

La frontera? Well, shopping, asymmetry, Mexico, unsafe, and also enjoyable-divertida..not the concept of party. Divertida is more 'enjoyable' for living. There are many things happening, it's nice... So it's more enjoyable. The other side is more pleasant..but this is more... mas divertida. You can enjoy more here. Ya thats...when I say border I never think in US side, usually I think Mexico side... which is my values, right?



Map 19. Mental map of everyday (cross-border) route for work



The visual mental map is empty of any clear landmarks, references, street names, but nevertheless roughly sketches his everyday routes. Interestingly as he noted while making his map, to him, Tijuana is 'north' of SanDiego, with his orientation beginning from his home that is mapped south.

"So something like this..this is..it's interesting because for me this is the south and this is north. For me this is my home, so I just took few blocks from my home and then I am in a kind of avenue and I go through some here some mall, small shopping mall and then take the 805 and then the 805 is just straight and the big issue is to cross to the border. So this is..if you ask me what are the references, this is a big reference - to cross the border and see what's happening with the controls. Usually always are green but this is a random system and then..this is also some reference for me because I always think and I see a lot of very poor people, potential immigrants or poor people living here. It's supposed all of them are migrants or people coming back who knows, but always there are some walking on the opposite direction to the road. Today was one with her bag, another one no leg... So always is an issue for me to see those people because how different is the life for others and for us or for me. And then I just took the..the other is the playas..to see how is playas..usually I stop in playas always stop in playas..when I come at the beginning or end..for visiting family, for gas purpose, today was for bank..so usually I stop here and then go to colef.

... and from here no reference at all. I mean see people running..see how the move in the malls...basically..so in that sense is very bore..the crossing..here(in tijuaan) is more interesting for sight seeing..but this is typically...and the coming back is exactly the same but as I mention usually I stop for 2/3 reasons..dining or have lunch with colleagues or with family..today I go to see my mom and maybe if i put gas in car..and coming back and the main



issue is close to the border in order to see how big is the line..this is the big issue for me..to cross the line-point of reference to cross in the line and sometimes many many cars..more than 100 or sometimes no and finding the best route and then everything is simple and usually I also stop sometimes for changing money in SanYsidro..basically and the going to home. This is a daily route. If I am for work..ok? for work."

As he points the border crossing pathways and experience is still a major reference to his everyday cross-border work route. The issue of passing the border checkpoints and the immediate confrontation with 'migrants' walking in the opposite direction of the road once he crosses the checkpoints, are two strong experiences and references. As he also points the SanDiego side is more boring with only people running and moving in the mall, whereas Tijuana is more dynamic for passing through. More interesting however, are his immediate associations to 'the border'. 'The border' he notes, is immediately associated with Mexico (see blue box above map) and not to the United States. Thus despite perceiving Tijuana SanDiego as 'one region' nevertheless 'the border' is associated with Mexico. This then brings in the association with 'divertida' or enjoyment that there is more enjoyment on the 'Mexican' side. Shopping is linked to the possibility of accessing diverse commodities on either side, and asymmetry is linked to his narrative above of being confronted with the socio-economic differences on passing 'the border' everyday. Feeling unsafe is also associated in this case more to Tijuana, although he recognises that there are parts in SanDiego that he also avoids for these reasons:

"In Tijuana many and in SanDiego, I know there are places where I can feel unsafe but because I never visited I don't know... The thing is the places where I visit in SanDiego is always the same, so are very safety place. I don't go to some part of East. I know there are



some communities very dangerous or risky but I never go there. I don't know. And here(Tijuana) the same, I never visit the risky places but the difference is even in Zona del rio, Playas... even in safe zones you can have some problems sometimes here. That's the main difference."

Despite showing an inclination with respect to his value system to Mexico, when asked if he feels transfronteriza he replied in full affirmative.

"Yes I am totally. Because I use the border for living, for work, for... I don't care if I'm going a party here or there... Or if it's some, I mean for going to doctors here or in both sides... I really don't care... don't care in the sense that I don't think that I need only to do some things only in US or Mexico. No. I try always to see the best in both and I use both for many reasons. So I'm feel totally transborder guy. And I would like to promote more, not only the transborder phenomena or transborder things but mainly in Tijuana also. Tijuana has a strong emphasis for me in terms that I would like to see more development in a real sense in this area and connecting to US side. But I feel transborder guy. I am. Of course!"

Thus his active motivation for linking these border spaces, alongside lived practices of everyday choices spread across Tijuana SanDiego produce his perceptions of 'one region'.



While to this inhabitant crossing ‘the border’ has been always a part of living in Tijuana, this has not led to any blurring of ‘the border’ or of forgetting ‘the international border’. Her regular experience of ‘making the line’ is an important pathway and experience. While it is often said the personal is political indeed in this case the geopolitical (border) is personal because she immediately associates pain in her body to crossing ‘the border’.

“My experience is the same. It’s a long, long line. It’s a pain in my back... my legs. Because always a long line... about three or five hours always...in a car. Because I don’t have a SENTRI line... SENTRI-line is a new card if you have to cross the border like a poom-like a 20 or 15 minutes. But I don’t have it right now. So for me it’s very tired cross the border with the car.”

Nevertheless, unlike interviewee X (Map 8), the crossing experience does not influence her perception of SanDiego as being far.

“Yes (SanDiego) is very close, very, very, close. It’s like Rosarito. No, less! I think I prefer SanDiego to Rosarito... with the visa, SanDiego is more easy for me... more easy for me.”

Shopping has been a central aspect binding her to SanDiego ever since she was a kid, and more recently her love relationship with a musician living in SanDiego is a central aspect of her cross-border relationships.

“Always I really love the shopping! Everybody love shopping, every woman!”

As can be seen in the map most of the important landmarks and routes are around shopping and recreational centers in SanDiego, such as Plaza Outlet Mall, Plaza Las Americas, Hill Crest breakfast, Sea World, Horton Plaza. Nevertheless, her boyfriend’s house emerges as a

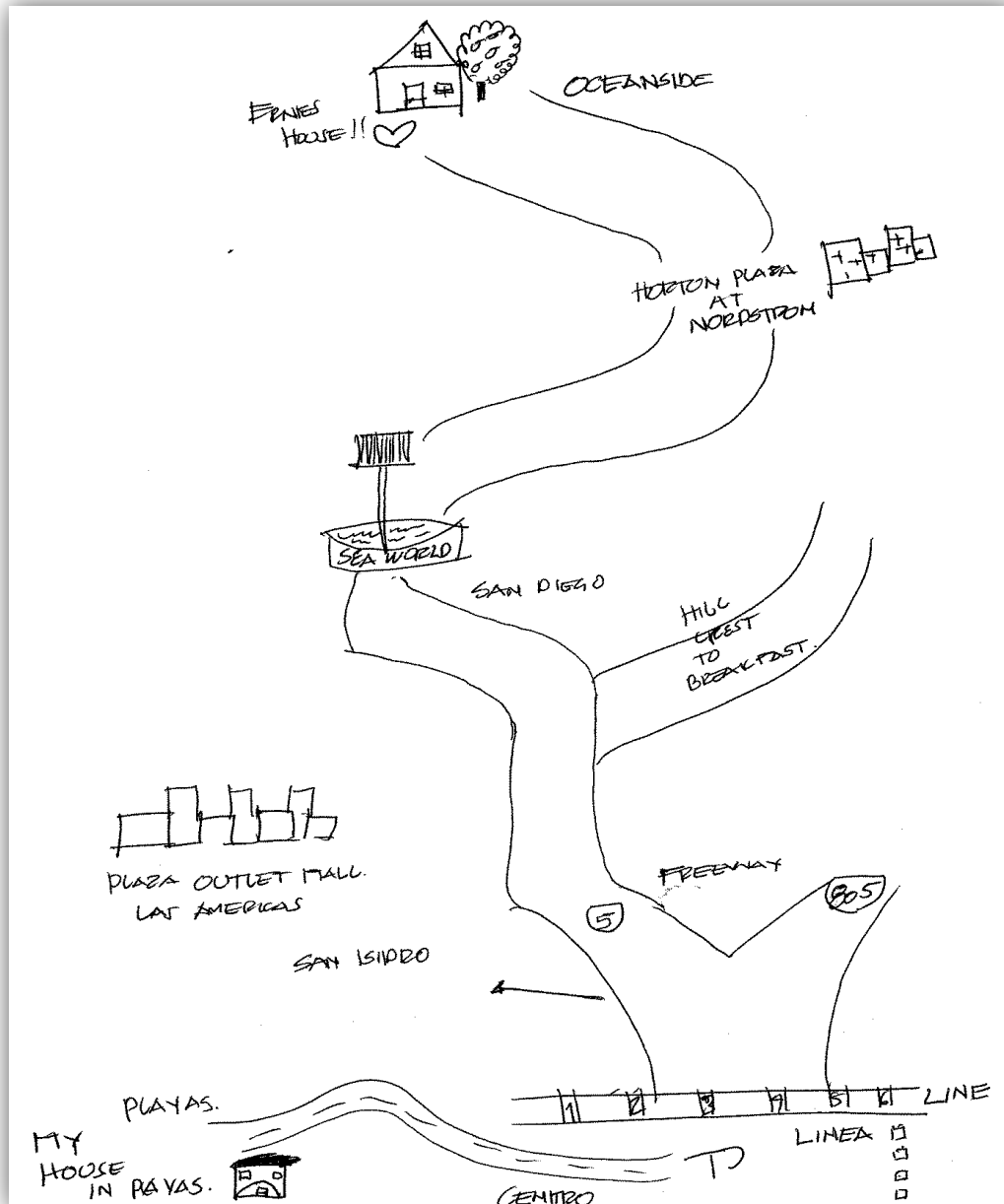


central landmark but also as an important limit/end destination of her route marked as 'Ernie's House' with a heart. The main pathways marked are only the freeways 5 and 805. Despite most of the map-space being disproportionately dedicated to pathways of shopping and her boyfriend's house, the border checkpoints are nevertheless marked with detail as numbered into the different gates. Also interesting however, is that 'the border' is named as 'Line' 'Linea' rather than as 'U.S.-Mexico border' or 'the international border' like in other mental maps. Thus the queuing is an important aspect that is associated with waiting in 'Line' for crossing. The main neighbourhoods are that of her house (Playas), centro Tijuana (on the way to 'the line'), all the shopping and recreational places (SanYsidro, SanDiego, HillCrest) and finally her boyfriend's neighbourhood (Oceanside). Most interesting is that the map starts from her house at the bottom and grows upwards/northwards ending with her boyfriend's house.



What are the first five words that come to your mind
when I say 'la frontera' / 'the border'?

*Immigrants, sad, dangerous, poor and no knowledge
about the dangers to cross the border.*



Map 20. Mental map of regular cross-border route



Though her mental map represents her personal associations part of her regular cross-border route with ‘the border’ represented merely as a waiting line, when asked to explicitly reflect on ‘the border’ her associations (see blue box above map) are mostly in reference to experiences of ‘others’ mostly to undocumented ‘migrants’. She tells me that she worked for a year at the National Institute of Immigration, Mexico in Tijuana where she saw many people without papers who had been deported by the CBP, U.S.

“Actually I was working in immigration - National institute of immigration, for about one year very close to the line. And everyday I saw the people. People who have no papers, ‘illegals’... always... who were about 25 years, 30 years with family, with works, with studies, but illegal... all the night.. one day CBP..one day cbp take her and say show me your papers...what papers? I don’t have papers... Ok! out of the country... and then the people cross here to Tijuana... These people are like oh my god, now, what can I do? Because I don’t have here family, money, work, studies... I don’t know nothing.”

Thus ‘the line’ is associated with ‘a pain in my back’ – something personal, but also to ‘undocumented migrants’. Overall it is however clear that despite living in Tijuana, crossing to SanDiego is an important of her everyday life. This relationship with crossing ‘the line’ then affirms her ‘transborder’ identity.

“Yes. Transfronteriza... I like transfronteriza... I like... I depend I don’t know to the line... transfronteriza.”

Currently working as a television anchor, the audience of her show are nevertheless spread across SanDiego Tijuana where the show is aired. This ‘dependence to the line’, as she frames



it, is not only with shopping and her personal relationship, but also with her work though she does not travel often on work to SanDiego.

La Pinche Linea

To this inhabitant of colonia libertad with dual citizenship (U.S.-Mexican), crossing ‘the line’ has always been a pain although quite a normal and natural aspect of living in these regions. Having started his high school in SanDiego after 9/11, he recounts that some days he had to wait 5 hours in the line before getting to school. He is currently studying telemedia and communications in Chula Vista after which he plans to move to Los Angeles to find work since there are more opportunities for him there. He has already played some minor roles as a background actor in some big television shows part of the industry in Los Angeles and he looks forward to making a career in this industry. He is also currently working at a fast food joint (Jack in the Box) just across ‘the line’. Thus his school and work require him to cross ‘the line’ everyday, even on Sundays currently.

Most of his immediate family are in Tijuana although he has some extended family in the United States. He tells me that he is the only one who wants to live in the United States within his immediate family.

It becomes clear from the map that his everyday routes rather than ‘the border’ serve as a natural limit and are central to conceiving these spaces. ‘The Border’ and ‘U.S.’ is but south to his home rather than being ‘north’ as often mapped in official maps of these regions. The main landmarks are Home, MacDonald’s, UETA (a duty-free shop just across ‘the line’), Jack in the Box (where he works), and the church. The border station and trolley station are important nodal references in his everyday travel given that his main modes of transportation

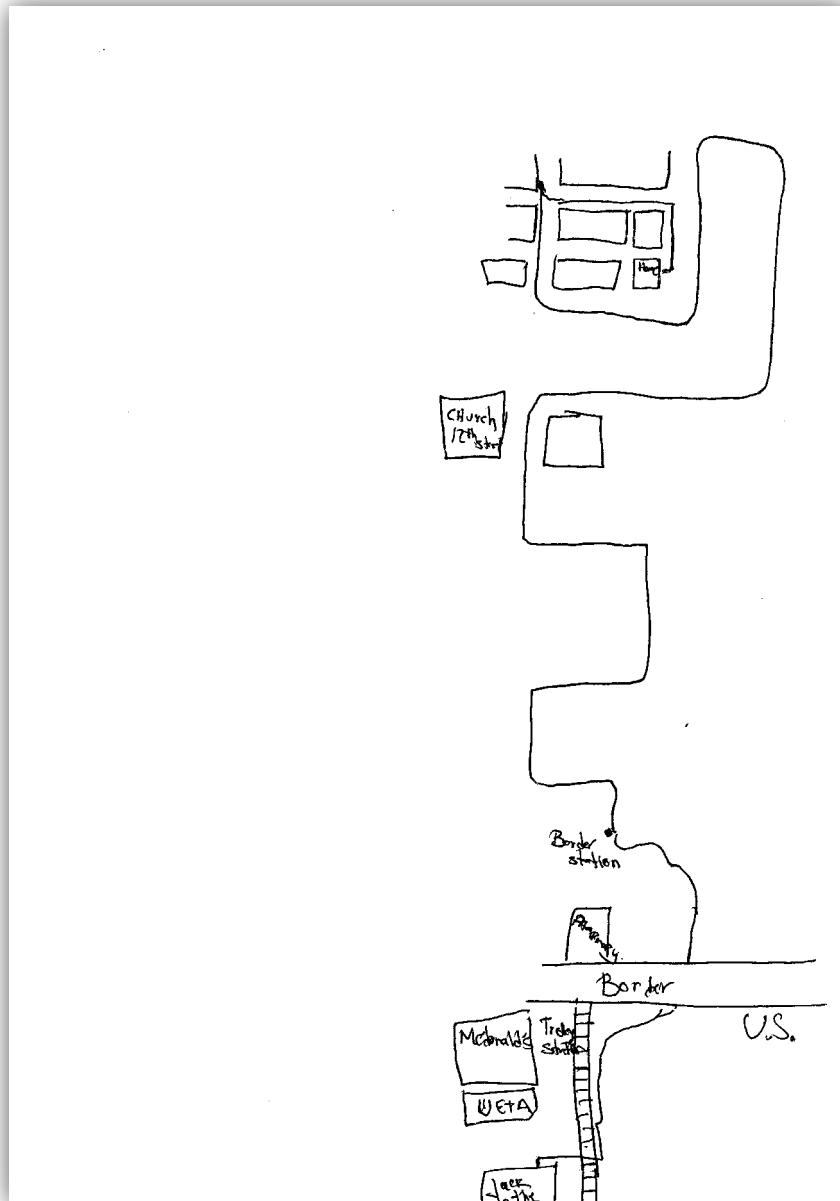


are by foot or public transportations (taxi, trolley). Further, most of his activities are concentrated very close to the 'the border checkpoint' and so most references become concentrated at 'the Border'. The only street or pathway named is 12th street, but also the daily trolley trail is marked. Interestingly however, for all the references he makes to 'the border' as 'the line', this mental map of his everyday route is also organised in a vertical lineal fashion, moving from up (home) to down (work in Jack in the Box).



What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'la frontera' / 'the border'?

La pinche linea. (the fucking line)



Map 21. Mental map of everyday (cross-border) routes

“La pinche linea..-the fucking line because a lot of people cross the border... so, ahmm... when it’s a bad day in the night you have to wait like 3 hours. So it’s the pinchi linea.”



Thus ‘the line’ and waiting at ‘the line’ is such a central path of his everyday routes that this influences his perceptions of these regions/spaces.

Conclusions

From these mental maps of regular cross-border routes with relatively shrunken page-scale emerge many interesting and diverse perceptions of ‘the border’ and ‘regionalisations’. The presence of active cross-border social (family and/or friend and/or work) networks that all interviewees are part of is central to these set of mappings and in influencing perceptions of distances and ‘region(s)’. While some clearly articulated that they experience these borderlands as ‘one region’ based on their everyday practices, routes and perceptions despite acknowledging the presence of strong state institutions regulating their cross-border mobilities, to some others their cross-border mobility is not enough to perceive these borderlands as ‘one region’. “One region and two nations”; “two regions connected by the people who cross, yet not all can cross so they are different areas”; “one bi-lingual region”; are but some narratives underlining diverse perceptions.

Despite strong cross-border social networks, the experience of passing through their everyday cross-border routes is associated as “anxiety producing and time consuming”, while to another this is associated with pain in her back and legs that she experiences every time. The experience of passing through cross-border routes everyday entails also being confronted with difference in dynamics of public space, socio-economic inequalities on a regular basis, but also as to one of the interviewees simply means passing from one highway to another. The ocean emerges as an important limit and a connecting element in maps (maps 15 and 16) part of perceptions of these borderlands as ‘single’ region’ and as connected. Further,



possessing legal documents or legal identity related to cross-border mobility is also further differentiated (citizenship, visa, permanent resident, green card, sentri-pass) that nevertheless influences one's cross-border practices and attitudes (interviewee IV.A).

Thus, although all the mental maps highlight the significance of regular cross-border routes as being central to everyday 'regionalisations', nevertheless perceptions of 'the border' vary and the experiences of everyday trajectories itself are diverse. However, a central common aspect is that all of these individuals whose everyday cross-border routes have been mapped as relatively 'proximate' in a single space-page have indeed fully legal documents in comparison to the rest of interviewees. This does underline the significance of legality in relation to cross-border mobility as closely linked to perceptions of distances across these borderlands, here perceived as relatively less distant.



AQUÍ ESTOY

Estoy aquí
ahora, en este momento
con todo mi ser.

Entiendo
que aquí puedo vivir,
escucho los corazones
que tocan cada vez a mi puerta
diciendo muchas veces
que estamos conectados
de maneras en que son regalos
para mí, en un nuevo lugar.
Sonrisas que brotan desde lugares familiares,
las bendiciones de los taxistas,
palabras de dios transmitidas por seres humanos.

Sí, entiendo que
estoy invitada.
Que puedo tomar mi asiento en la vida de otro.
Que sí podemos compartir juntos
los sabores de la vida.

Sin saber
llego a un lugar donde
entiendo que el amor es para compartir,
que compartir es encontrar algo.
Eso es el significado de la vida.

Aquí estoy en este momento, ahora,
con todo mi ser.

Bulbul



CHAPTER 4
EVERYDAY URBAN BORDER MAPPINGS: A SYNTHESIS
TOWARDS A BORDER OPTICS



*CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS
AND A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE
FUTURE*



In this chapter I firstly reflect on my subject-position part of this thesis, and moving on I bring together the research findings discussed in Chapter 3 to reflect on the implications of the same in relation to broader debates on urban border region(s). I urge for expanding urban theorisations of border regions by centralising the study of everyday urban trajectories that might or might not coincide with official city/state boundaries while nevertheless being sensitive to the various ways in which such boundaries are lived and mapped by agents. In highlighting the complex notions of sense of place emerging from my research, I underline the relevance of relational thinking advocated by Massey to urban studies. And yet, rather than a postborder lens that is blind to the presence of an international border at these urban border regions, I propose for a Border ‘Optics’ that is sensitive to the relevance of lived border spaces, but one beyond ‘Othering’ discourses often adopted in border studies, while also problematising state-sovereignty based thinking argued in recent urban debates around these borderlands. Further, rather than migratory models that attempt to predict spatial behaviour as rational I urge for centralising everyday lived spaces and shifting personal conditions of agents to any study of migration in relation to cross-border (im)mobility. Finally I reflect upon the border views emerging from this research to envision a world through the same.



Honing my own Border-Optics and some reflections on my subject-position

In the process of conducting this research ‘I’ was nevertheless a central part of this thesis. That I myself did not and could not ‘cross’ ‘the border’ to SanDiego during my fieldwork at these borderlands, did influence my own perceptions and approach to the thesis. Unlike my initial perception that I might feel ‘the border’ as barrier given that I myself could not ‘cross’, this was not how I experienced these border spaces. I experienced ‘the border’ as a journey rather than a fixed place of immobility within the framework of this thesis. Further, despite never crossing over to SanDiego, I experienced SanDiego in Tijuana via all the narratives of the people I met and my own experiences of this borderscape. SanDiego seemed very near on some days given that I lived in Playas so close to the ocean where one can ‘see’ ‘the other side’. And yet SanDiego seemed very far on other days. ‘The Border’ for me emerged as a place of movements where I was happy to take roots, even if for a short time, and experience myself changing colour (given that I was building new social relationships), adopting new tongues, and being exposed to various ‘views’ of living. Of course that I was based at COLEF and was so warmly welcomed by Tito and the academic community there made a big difference to this experience.

Further, like any fieldwork process ‘I’ was observed as much as I was the observer which influenced the kinds of responses I received from the people I interviewed. That I come from India made people curious about me and in some cases I was also interviewed by them. Despite my poor Spanish language skills, I felt that I developed a comfortable bond even if for a short time with each of the people I interviewed. Also, I was always conscious of the rather awkward framework of research itself that tends to (perhaps falsely?) convince the researcher that he/she has a right to ask people questions and demand answers from them in the name of ‘science’. However, I was very conscious of the same and was always thinking of



‘why’ people might answer my questions for this research, and this also made me adopt my subject-position as a nomadic self-reflective curious wanderer looking for interesting conversations and diverse experiences of living at these borderlands. When people asked why I chose Tijuana I had no clear answers except that I was simply drawn to it in my search for meanings of borders. Further, that I myself depart from the perspective of a ‘migrant’ or someone on the move not strongly attached to a fixed place identity, I believe influenced my approach and my relationships with the people I dialogued with.

Final reflections

This thesis started out with the hypothesis that people make region(s) and perceive ‘the border’ based on their everyday practices, experiences and discourses, though this is bound to be influenced by structural conditions, rather than the other way around. The objective of this thesis has been to explore how people living in Tijuana, across Tijuana, SanDiego borderlands, ‘make regions’ based on their everyday practices and discourses, and how they narrate, experience and map ‘the border’ in their everyday life. A critical review of current literature reveals that urban visions applied to Tijuana SanDiego regions tend to marginalise lived spaces of these borderlands, while literature from border studies tend to only further reinforce state-centric visions in the single-minded focus on state policies and interventions while ignoring the realities of everyday lived spaces. Arguing for the relevance of a study of everyday life and lived spaces of urban borderlands from concerns raised by Octavio Paz, Angel Rama, Henri Lefebvre, as well as from a critical review of current literature in border studies, this study has attempted to open a new space in the debates surrounding Tijuana SanDiego borderlands by centralising lived mentalities or views emerging from what Rama calls the ‘*labyrinth of streets*’ (1996, p.28).



In following the research question, “*In what ways do people in Tijuana map, narrate, experience and perceive ‘the U.S.-México border’ and make ‘region(s)’ in relation to their everyday life?*” via narratives and mental maps of everyday trajectories, diverse narratives and mappings have emerged reflecting dynamic processes of everyday ‘region-making’ and perceptions of these borderlands spaces based on everyday practices. There emerges broadly four everyday urban Border ‘Optics’ that have served as an entry point to organise the fieldwork material, namely, “Absent Border Mappings: Border as ‘Life in Tijuana?’”, “Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’: Border as socio-spatial reference?”; “Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’ but parts of SanDiego and Tijuana on different pages: Border as part of two regions?”; “Mappings of “Visual reference to ‘the border’ but parts of SanDiego Tijuana on the same page: Border as part of one region?”. However, every single of the map-narratives also produces its own powerful Border Optics. The narratives emerging from each of these broad groups are diverse and touch upon various aspects of viewing ‘the border’ and ‘region’(s) in relation to everyday practices that make it hard to strictly categorise the same. But most importantly they are reflective of processes of re-worlding of ‘the border’ from below (drawing from the word ‘mondialisation’ of Lefebvre (1977), thereby underlining the continual process of space-making and border-making). These aspects of re-worlding from below of the ‘U.S.-Mexico border’ come alive in each of the map-narratives revealed in Chapter 3. In what follows I argue then that such processes of re-worlding persistently problematise modern border-thinking in their (symbolic) ‘crossings’ (beyond fixed conceptual (urban and border) theorisations), that can be productively reflected upon towards a renewed Border ‘Optics’ of viewing the world from border spaces. Re-worlding then is also understood from a Heideggerian sense of “*not a view of the world but the world understood as a view*” (Heidegger, 1976, p.350).



The messiness of entering everyday lived spaces and lived mentalities of border spaces as is reflected in the diverse and multi-dimensional mappings and narratives dealt with in Chapter 3, nevertheless provides a productive ‘Optics’ to reflect on the relevance of spatial imaginaries behind migratory ‘models’, urban metaphors and b/ordering discourses that are currently debated towards understanding border spaces. From this everyday urban, Border ‘optics’ one becomes sensitive to the multiple and dialectical ways in which state and city borders both produce as well as are being produced in everyday lived spaces and mentalities of people inhabiting these spaces in ways that call for attention. This ‘Optics’ also productively points to the inevitable ‘spillages’ and also ‘situatedness’ of everyday trajectories of people in ways that are hard to comprehend solely within spatial imaginaries of state-centric or postborder visions, pointing to the continued urgency for re-looking at the limits of urban theory and border theory.

Following mental maps of everyday trajectories to redraw boundaries of urban theorisations of border regions

As is evident in the narratives and mappings, border ‘regions’ come to be conceived and perceived via everyday mentalities very differently and divergently to how urban, border-regions are often imagined, conceptualised and mapped within state-centric visions. The grand ‘U.S.-Mexico border’ is simply absent in some mental maps (of group I) despite some among them living very close to the ‘border fence’ and regardless of whether they ‘cross the border’ or not. This reflects a certain everyday ‘indifference’ or ‘blindness’ to ‘the physical border’ (despite the fence and border infrastructure multiplying in the last decades) in relation to one’s everyday life activities, among others. In another instance however, the ‘international border’ is mapped as part of everyday routes of Tijuana while this is simply missing in the



mappings of everyday routes in SanDiego(map 11a, 11b), reflecting the ‘difference’ in borderscape experienced by the individual on either side. While in one set of maps (of group IV) everyday cross-border routes spatialise these border regions as connected and proximate and in some cases as ‘one region’, in another set of maps (of group III) Tijuana SanDiego are perceived as two places intercepted by ‘the border’ (in terms of geopolitical, legal, socio-economic conditions linked to everyday aspects of cross-border mobility, differing prices of commodities, differing wages, access to work, legalities around everyday practices in public space, to name some), to some of whom the ‘crossing’ experience itself also further increases perceptual lived distances. These diverse mappings reflect the complex socio-spatial relations, practices and imaginings producing these urban border spaces in ways that are hard to be solely captured within strict categories of rationalised urban units based on official state or city boundaries or in visions such as ‘postborder’ that overlook the continued influence of state borders to everyday life.

In following everyday lived spaces of people at these borderlands, one inevitably steps between and beyond official city and state borders, while also stumbling ‘within’ public-private spaces such as the work spaces of a maquila worker for instance. There is then a need to approach mental maps not from pre-given city/state borders or based on images associated to a pre-given ‘city’ as Lynch proposes, but rather via everyday ‘urban routes/trajectories’ that might or might not coincide with official city/state borders to be able to allow everyday lived space to speak out. Then rather than an either-or debate between ‘one region’ versus ‘separate regions’, urban-border processes of these borderlands can come to be theorised as open and relational and yet as embedded and situated (Ward, 2010). Everyday personal trajectories at and across these borderlands point to the diverse socio-spatial mappings reflecting both



entangled connections as well as adjacent differences across Tijuana SanDiego in ways that challenge traditional approaches of studying cities as independent, objective units.

It is also interesting to note that spatial orientations of ‘north’ ‘south’ ‘east’ ‘west’ rather than being based on fixed points as is often represented in cartographic, state-centric maps, emerge in these mental maps as shifting orientation points in relation to one’s home base (a central node to one’s daily routes) and paths taken, but also based on differing perspectives and ways of connecting to one’s physical, socio-spatial environment. For instance, if Estados Unidos (United States) is mapped ‘south’ to center Tijuana, the Tijuana airport, the school of one’s grandchildren, the school where one teaches, the local park, and all the important landmarks and nodes of regular activities that are central to one’s everyday life in map 4a, in map 15 the ocean is marked ‘north’ in relation to everyday activities mapped as east and west of ‘the U.S.-Mexico border’.

Mental maps that have emerged from this fieldwork also reflect complex and diverse spatial imaginings, orientations and conceptualisations. Despite mapping ‘objective’ elements of one’s everyday routes (such as landmarks, districts, nodes, paths, edges etc) the meanings and experiences attached to these perceptible (physical) spaces are highly subjective thereby influencing how these elements are chosen and organised in the mental map, representing complex spatial imaginaries. For instance landmarks marked as part of everyday routes are also associated with symbolisms of ‘limit’ and ‘interactions’ linked to one’s subjective experiences such as trauma of daily ‘crossing’ as well as excitement of ‘living in the border’ where interactions among diverse peoples is experienced (para II A).

Also street names, though a small aspect in larger socio-spatial processes, nevertheless provide a simple entry point to analyse the role of the same in mental mappings of these borderlands via everyday trajectories. In his book ‘La Ciudad Letrada’ Rama (1996) cites an



example of people of Caracas city stubbornly retaining a custom of referring to intersections of historical reference as important names rather than the carefully ‘lettered’ street names emerging from colonial urban planning, pointing to the significance of lived mentalities of people in everyday life.

In my fieldwork it was hard for most interviewees in general to remember street names especially of Tijuana (though some streets were eventually marked), while names of streets of SanDiego were relatively easier to remember. Also, there are diverse manners in which street names have been referenced (or not) in these maps. For instance, in map 1, except for the street where her house is situated no other streets are named. Then directions or references part of her everyday routes that are stronger are the ‘*mofles*’ shop (car repair shop), the ‘*pollos*’ shop (chicken shop) at the turnings of the streets rather than the street name itself. In map 9, the perceptual aspects of passing through streets associated with the physical urban landscape being more central, there are absolutely no street names. Here, pathways are marked as passages of experiences rather than objectively named in this map. However to the single mother of five whose everyday geographies are closely concentrated within her neighbourhood, street names, especially the ones where her children’s school, her work (where she sells clothes) and home are located, are central and are clearly named and marked (map 8). For a regular cross-border worker, on the other hand, the main highway 805 connecting to the Avenida internacional along the border-crossing to Tijuana from SanDiego emerge as important and are the only pathways named (Map 18) in the map. In map 14a and 14b, there is absolutely no street names referenced part of routes of Tijuana while important streets are named part of routes of SanDiego-mainly on the way to and where her aunt’s house is situated. In map 15, there are no street names at all in her mental map of regular cross-border route except for the freeway exit to her mother’s house highlighting the personal



significance to this particular exit. For the regular cross-border worker living in “two places at the same time”, pathways are an important aspect of his mental maps, however the pathways marked part of routes of Tijuana are not named except for the street of his home, while mostly freeways and exits are named and marked as part of routes of SanDiego (maps 13a, 13b). In general Avenidas and Boulevards were relatively more commonly marked and named as part of routes of Tijuana while smaller street names have been less named.

What these diverse ways of perceiving streets reflect is that streets being so central to one’s everyday routes become part of subjective experiences rather than objective static spaces of rational associations/references unless this is easy to remember based on size (boulevards, avenidas), or from clearly marked signs or boards such as in the case of freeways and exits of SanDiego that one inevitably looks at everyday, or simply in relation to a closely knit network of streets that are central to one’s everyday geographies (map 8).

Another important element to some mental maps was the presence of the Pacific Ocean to how they perceive these urban-border spaces as part of everyday life, though mapped in diverse ways. In two mental maps (maps 15 and 16) that spatialise everyday ‘region’ based on their regular cross-border trajectories, the ocean emerges as a central connecting or common element rather than an edge or limit. However, in maps 11a and 11 b, though the ocean is a common element marked in separate space-pages of Tijuana and SanDiego, the ocean is also mapped as intercepting with ‘the international border’ as part of everyday trajectories of Tijuana, emerging as a limit. While, in map 9, ‘the ocean’ is symbolic of an experienced open limit in relation to experiencing Tijuana as a borderland, as a place of limits and interactions. Thus references to ‘natural’ elements rather than objective, static elements are perceived in relation to subjective associations and perceptions in relation to one’s everyday trajectories.



Time is another element that emerged as an important factor more in a relational context linking past and present lived spaces. For instance, mental maps of lived spaces of the past, of SanDiego, that is currently not accessible because of legal issues (deportation) nevertheless are important imagined spaces attached to current lived spaces of Tijuana, such as map 11a, 11b and 11c. His maps are particularly revealing in pointing also to the relevance of comparative analysis of mental maps of ‘two’ spaces-places mapped on the basis of different lived time periods but with clues of how these spaces might still be represented as connected despite being perceived as ‘separate’, such as via common ‘symbols’ (in this case for example grid lines for ‘downtown’ Tijuana and SanDiego were mapped in a similar way as if they were similar spaces), or similar spatial elements referred (example, the ocean, given that the ocean is seen as connecting though intercepted by ‘the international border’ in the map of Tijuana).

Additionally, while Lynch’s model is based on mental images of ‘forms’ of ‘the city’ he does not reflect on the form of the mental map itself, which can also be an interesting aspect in analysing mental maps. For instance, the ‘cross-like’ form emerging from the centrality of the streets of her children’s school and her everyday street of home and work (of selling clothes) reflected in map 8, and the ‘tree-branch like’ form of map1 (also used for the title page image) that can be read as an open-ended representation of everyday trajectories mostly determined by curves based on physical elements such as turnings and steepness of streets.

Another aspect is scale. Cartographic scale has always been understood within traditional geography as fixed metric. A dictionary definition of scale in relation to world maps reads, “A *proportion used in determining the dimensional relationship of a*



representation to that which it represents”⁸. However, the ‘proportion’ allotted to the dimensional relationship of a representation to ‘that which it represents’ in the case of maps, is clearly at the autonomy of the ‘maker’ of the map. Geographical scale however is socially constructed. The mental maps of everyday routes analysed in this research reflect a view of scale in relation to how one experiences physical, socio-spatial elements part of conducting everyday activities. For instance, scale emerges relative to one’s mental threshold to those unable to make any personal references to certain lived spaces despite conducting everyday activities, while scale also emerges as relative to one’s perceptions of distance in relation to the degree of importance of one’s social relationships. For instance, that to the last set of mappings, the importance of work and family relationships straddling ‘the border’ leads to a diminished scale of space in their mental maps.

Finally, perceptions of everyday urban trajectories at these borderlands are inevitably also linked to perceptions of ‘the border’. Diverse aspects of everyday life have been expressed in answer to the question of “What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say ‘the border’?” as well as part of narratives in relation to one’s everyday experiences of these border spaces.

‘Border’ associations have been made to: Everyday socio-spatial aspects (traffic, barrios/districts, colonias/neighbourhoods, tiendas/shops, big trucks, two languages), landscape (beach, los cerros/the hills), Everyday things (dollars, food, tacos, comida china, burritos, comida Mexicana, tostados), Personal life choices (life improvement, work, acquiring one’s own house, my place, family), body politic (“pain in my back and legs”, “spending time of my life in the line”), geopolitical (divide of Mexico and United States, Mexico, United States, conflict, immigration, the line, immigration, border patrol), Physical

⁸ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/scale> (22/11/2013)



border (metal fence, malla/mesh, el cerco/siege, border patrol, fence), People ('guerros', 'gringos', 'illegals'), crossing rhythms (crossing to 'the other side', movement, traffic, spending time on the line, migrants crossing, images of crossings, people walking, crossing by car), Emotional geographies (hopes, dreams, closeness, so-close-so-far, interaction, division, conflict, unsafe, asymmetry, more choice, divertida(enjoyment), sad, dangerous, difficulties, memories, cross-border mobility as newly desired resource, separation, hate, enjoyable, unreasonable, sad, dangerous, unsafe). Most importantly, these diverse associations reflect the central aspect of 'everyday' experiences to border associations.

Sense of place at borderlands:

It is also important to reflect on the notion of sense of place from the mappings and narratives of everyday lived spaces of these borderlands, that evidently reflect diverse and complex notions beyond a sense of place often attached to experiences 'within' or of 'the city' and yet do not necessarily always mean a sense of 'blurring borders' attached to cross-border mobilities and flows in postborder visions. Massey's (2005) call for looking at place as made of interrelations exemplifies in specific ways in the narratives and mappings part of this research. For instance, everyday processes of working and living across Tijuana SanDiego borderlands creates a notion of place based on "*living in two places at the same time*". The very real lived spaces of SanDiego and Tijuana intercepted by 'the border' as legal institutional barrier (in the case of this interviewee facing deportation from United States) that separates, nevertheless gives rise to a sense of place as "*for me is like my place my home... All my life I live here and on the other side.*"

And yet as Lefebvre's model underlines, perceived (physical) and conceived space (representations of space) are not the only aspects that produce space, but also lived space



referred to all the attachments and feelings. This is reflected in the mappings and narratives of some interviewees which reveal that conducting regular cross-border practices through certain spatial trajectories do not necessarily lead to a sense of place or attachment. For one interviewee sense of place is attached (para I.A) to Tijuana in relation to one's personal experiences of life improvement, more opportunities for work, to name some, despite conducting regular cross-border practices. While to some others, a central aspect of a sense of place attached to Tijuana lies also in the attachments associated to regular cross-border practices linked to SanDiego for shopping and family visits (paragraphs I.D, III.D, IV.F). That regular mobilities across the border to 'there' SanDiego are nevertheless central to a sense of place of 'here' Tijuana expands the notion of sense of place to being based on inter-relations rather than fixed to some local community or objective urban unit.

To the single mother of five (para I.F3) a sense of place emerges from everyday practices revolving around her work and family around a closely knit network of streets restricted to her neighbourhood as well as perceptions of relatively more opportunities and freedom attached to 'the border' as Tijuana. While, to another interviewee (para IV.A) a sense of place emerges simply from the strong cross-border family networks straddling the border despite admitting that she currently does not 'cross' the border regularly.

A sense of place emerges simply from moving back and forth across Tijuana SanDiego on a regular basis for one interviewee (para IV.B), while to another (para II.B), simply "*living in the border*" associated with limits and interactions, rather than crossing, is central to her sense of place being built on "living next to the ocean" and "next to another country".

Most importantly, it is hard to limit the notion of a sense of place at these border regions to an objective urban unit or limit.



Lived border spaces beyond Othering discourses:

Lived mentalities in '*esta esquina*' also challenge the notions of borderlands understood as solely places of Othering, spatial ordering or differentiating. 'The border' referred to life in Tijuana emerges as a place of solidarity (para I.A), while borderlands emerge as spaces of possibilities for explorations in search of work, opportunities, and resources to another (para I.B, I.C, I.E.). Despite expressing strong attachments to 'mi tierra' (my land), cross-border mobility is a central and regular aspect of everyday life that one is attached to and does not wish to forego (para I.D.). The B/ordering discourse often attached to state-centric practices of ordering and othering then marginalises these lived, everyday experiential spaces.

Rather than associated with Othering, these border spaces are simply attached to work, work and more work (para I.F1), while to a single mother of five, border spaces of Tijuana are experienced as offering relatively greater opportunities and freedom (para I.F3.). The significance and meanings attached to 'the border' in relation to family visits, empathy, fun (*divertida*) and connections (para III.D., IV.A., IV.E) also challenge head-on the discourse of Othering so easily projected onto border spaces.

What might appear as 'banal nationalism' and everyday 'Bordering' or *othering* attached to national symbols such as flags etc., the board of 'Welcome to Mexico' becomes symbolic based on everyday lived trauma experienced in crossing and alienation in everyday social interactions rather than notions of Othering (para II.A).

The single-minded focus on tangible 'evidences' of B/Ordering – Ordering space attached to borderlands such as fences, checkpoints, surveillance etc tends to ignore the complex experiential imaginings of borderlanders, for instance, the duality experienced of borders as places of both limits and interactions (para. II.A). That the grand Pacific Ocean



flowing across these spaces is experienced as a limit in itself but an open limit, while similarly these border spaces are experienced as a meeting point of different peoples as well as a limit/threshold is telling.

And yet what is often represented in the media, academia and political circles as ‘hot’ border spaces of triple fences, high-tech 24/7 surveillance, human smuggling, drug wars etc., also appears as ‘not so special’(II.B), and rather mundane (IV.G) to some living here for a long time or crossing on a daily basis.

The messiness then of not being able to provide rational models and patterns to explain the complexity of spatial imaginings emerging from everyday lived border spaces, only productively forces one to go deeper into these meanings and spatial mentalities while stubbornly resisting any kind of ‘boxing’ that might simplify.

Continued relevance of lived border spaces: Problematising the ‘post’ in postborder urban metaphors

Rather than a world of flows and mobilities, the globalisation processes since the 90s only brought increased surveillance, reduced and more restricted cross-border mobilities as underlined by some interviewees. The structural conditions of obtaining a visa to access cross-border mobility is a real barrier that becomes part of long term adjustments and choices one makes, for instance of working many years and paying the tax/hacienda (para I.A.). Rather than cross-border urban flows leading to urbanisms of blurring borders, experiences of barriers to cross-border mobility then situates meanings of ‘the border’ in specific places such as colonia Libertad but also the meaning of ‘the border’(Tijuana) comes to be associated with La Libertad or Freedom ‘on this side’. Rather than cross-border flows leading to a strong sense of ‘postborder single region’, interestingly some mental maps of cross-border routes



simply stop at USA or simply blank out to SanDiego despite crossing the border regularly (map 1, 3).

‘The border’ is also a real mental threshold to a maquila worker who hears of discrimination of Mexican nationals in the U.S. (para I.F2) and ‘the border’ multiplies given that forgotten, past actions are ‘re-stored’ in the memories of border control databases post-9/11 (para. II.B). Further, everyday geographies at these border spaces are not always focussed on cross-border mobility, for instance, to the single mother of five (para I.F3), bringing change in her neighbourhood, colonia, and community is more a priority than any change that cross-border mobility is understood to bring to her life.

The long traffic lines, the trauma of daily crossing, the centrality of the crossing experience, and ‘spending time on the line’ underlines and reinforces to some the distance between Tijuana and SanDiego (para IIA,III.B, IIIC). What might seem to Dear et al as a border that just ‘happens to be’, to the family of a maquila worker the newly desired resource of cross-border mobility comes with its price that requires family planning and saving efforts (para. I.F1). Legal identities both matters (such as the shift in attitude with shift from Mexican passport to US residency card {para. IV.A.}, as well as reflected in the shrunk scale of cross-border routes in group D all of whom have a fully legal identity) and yet is not enough to overcome anxieties experienced in ‘crossing’ (IV.C).

Beyond barriers to cross-border mobility that reinforces distance, immobilities and non-interactions across these borderlands, social distance comes to be located also in behavioural shifts from differing organisation rules across these border regions rather than differing cultural identities (‘one of us’ behaving differently on ‘the other side’), as well as in the experiences of everyday public life, that make it hard for spatial imaginings of ‘one region’ to be lived. Thus, far from ‘postborder’ urbanism, ‘the border’ comes to be lived and



perceived in multiple ways linked to both structural and experiential aspects of everyday urban life.

And yet, alongside experiences that underline difference and distance across these border regions, voices that underline the insignificance of ‘the border’ to everyday life along lines of Dear et al imaginings also emerge. As one interviewee articulates, “*It just happens to be two countries where I live*” (para IV.B), and as another interviewee quotes “*sometimes we even forget we are crossing an international border...it feels like crossing to another neighbourhood*”. However, they both have fully legal documents (a highly differentiated resource) among other important aspects influencing their perceptions of these border regions.

De-stabilising state-sovereignty urban metaphors

Like Alegría (2012) argues, the hierarchical interactions occurring across these border cities does not allow for deep social interactions such as the case of interviewees who ‘time the line’ for profit(para I.C), or cross solely for shopping and work (I.E). Nevertheless, one of them (I.C) also reveals the relatively greater attachment to these borderlands of SanDiego Tijuana compared to the rest of Mexico highlighting the role of difference associated to also ‘other’ spaces ‘within’ Mexico. Memories and lived experiences that spill across ‘the border’ both separate and also link spaces of SanDiego and Tijuana for interviewee M (para III.A.), while the dialectics of everyday time-space experiences straddling these borderlands is expressed as ‘living in two places at the same time’ (para III.C). Cross-border routes around work, family, social life, as reflected in the mental maps of the last group (of group IV) come to be a central aspect around which people nevertheless conceive, perceive and live these border spaces as connected, and that some even perceive to be ‘one region’ based on their everyday cross-border lived experiences.



This then reflects the limited scope of a vision that views these borderlands from a state-sovereignty perspective of difference and separateness in explaining the many varied lived connections that nevertheless produce their own kinds of attachments to space and place not always solely based on adjacency but based on simply living at and/or across these spaces.

Pushing conceptual thresholds of migratory models

The notion of mental threshold at these borderlands operates in various ways with respect to the choices that people make in relation to cross-border mobilities and practices rather than operating as a fixed threshold of immobility assumed in the model of Van der Velde and Van Naerssen (2010). As in the case of interviewee I.A., despite regular cross-border mobility the mental threshold of not wanting to live in SanDiego though wanting to ‘spend money there’ is expressed and further complemented in her mental map (map1) that blanks out to SanDiego. Also rather than mental threshold being related to immobility at borderlands, the ‘trauma’ experienced from regular cross-border mobility can also lead to a mental threshold of reduced mobility and non-migratory choices (II.A).

Further, spatial behaviour at border regions are not solely based on thresholds and rational choices that remain fixed. For instance, what was a mental threshold was overcome towards viewing cross-border mobility as a newly desired resource based on her changing family conditions and wishes of her children (I.F1.). And rather than ‘crossing’ as one of or the final step in migratory choices, crossing itself emerges as a central aspect of one’s border life (III.C).

The diverse narratives and mappings in this research urge for pushing the boundaries of migratory models assuming rational behaviour of agents. I then argue in what follows, for a Border ‘Optics’ that is sensitive to everyday lived spaces and shifting conditions influencing



choices of behaviour around cross-border (im)mobility that can possibly shed more light on the same.

Limitations of my research

Maps, however insightful they have been to this research, have strangely also been a limitation in a way. That maps are eventually two dimensional and are unable to capture the many dynamics of lived space continue to be also underlined in this research. The maps do not work in themselves and therefore need to be seen as story-maps alongwith the narratives. These maps are always becoming in that they are bound to be changing and therefore though as part of this thesis might appear as stable, fixed images they are not so.

Also, my thesis lacks the perspectives of people who are forced to live at this borderland and do not have any close social networks at these borderlands to rely on, which is not very uncommon in Tijuana given that many people are deported on a daily basis and/or arrive here to find themselves stranded in what to them is an unfamiliar place. The reason for this is that it was difficult to access these people. Further it was also very difficult to interview or speak to these people as often everyday life is traumatic and is possibly consumed by other issues of getting by or getting across 'the border' or around other concerns. However, their perspectives on these borderlands and mental maps of everyday trajectories are bound to be insightful, and possibly very different from those who have familiar networks they can rely on. Most of the people interviewed part of my fieldwork indeed expressed currently having family or close social networks in Tijuana and/or SanDiego.

Further, the perspectives of some institutional agents are lacking in my research such as border patrol agents. However, the explicit focus of this research has been towards acquiring perspectives of agents outside the context of institutional spaces that is heavily



lacking in current literature, given that there is already material around the ‘conceived space’ and perspectives of institutional actors, especially related to these borderlands.

A research agenda for the future

It is evident from the narratives and mental maps gathered in this research that each one makes one’s own ‘region’ around everyday practices, associations, usages, perceptions and attachments despite or in spite of being influenced by structural conditions of the geopolitical border, among others, in ways that challenge current border and urban theorisations. Further, it is also evident that everyday aspects of life at/in/across these urban borderlands are central to perceptions of ‘the border’.

This thesis has only been able to begin scratching the surface of the multiplicity of everyday lived spaces of these urban borderlands. The mental maps and narratives emerging from this fieldwork nevertheless stand as testimonies to the diverse ways of ‘mapping’ the ‘U.S.-Mexico border’ in relation to everyday lived spaces, urging one towards new directions in urban and border studies.

Border views from below in this research emerge as diverse and multiple in meanings underlining the role of agency in ‘mapping’ borderlands in ways that call for attention. It is not solely about ‘border crossings’ or ‘flows’ across state/supra-state borders or marking an ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ as much as it is about centralising the dynamics of everyday border life practices at the so-called peripheries, (if at all border regions were ever fully peripheral) to social theorisations. I then urge for a Border Optics that takes into account the dialectical relationship between the geopolitical and everyday life practices while problematising the narrow scope of migratory models, state-centric, or Postborder or Othering visions towards fully comprehending the social realities of border spaces. The mental mappings of these



borderlands emerging from this research then push us to reconceptualise spatial imaginings of the world and socio-spatial relations beyond the grids of nation-states, differential shadings of supra-states, and boundedness of cities, unravelling processes of ‘re-worlding’ from below that not only persistently problematise modern ‘city’ and border-thinking in its ‘crossings’, but offer a new ‘optics’ of ‘viewing’ the world from lived spaces of borderlands (Heidegger, 1976, p.350), and in this case a world view for theorising on borders and border regions.

From these border views from below one begins to see a world of border spaces and meanings that are far from being made of static, straight lines cutting neatly across space. We see a world of borders as horizons of opportunities and choices for life-improvement; of border as liberty and border places of work, work and more work. But also, a world of borders as magnetic centres to place-making and home-building; A world of borders of freedom and restrictions, limits and interactions; A world of borders of empathy and connections; A world of borders of *el metal*; A world of borders of movements and crossings; A world of borders as everyday waiting in the line; A world of borders as pain in one’s back; A world of cross-border love; A world where building cross-border bridges is time-consuming and anxiety-producing but nevertheless worth pursuing; A world where depending on one’s perspective ‘the border’ appears and/or disappears, crosses between neighbourhoods or between nations; A world of border spaces of ‘world-views’; A world urging for a renewed Border Optics in which borderlands rather than ‘peripheries’ emerge as critical ‘centres’ to imagining a new World-Space, a new Border-Space.



Dissemination events during fieldwork:

Conference at Colegio de la Frontera norte

Invitation:

El Departamento de Estudios Urbanos y del Medio Ambiente presenta:

Everyday Urban-Border mappings at Tijuana San Diego regions

By Kolar Aparna

Radboud University, The Netherlands

Friday, 5 July 2013, 11 am.

In aula magna R. Rangel, edificio 1, El COLEF en San Antonio del Mar

How do people living within and/or across the Tijuana-San Diego regions map 'the border' as part of their everyday routes? What images and associations do they give to 'the border' in relation to their everyday practices and experiences in and/or across these urban regions? How might these be related (or not) to aspects of socio-economic class, location of home, legal identity, duration of stay in these regions, perceptions of safety, purpose of (im)mobilities, presence of networks of work, family, friends within and/or across these regions? Using the concept of mental maps introduced by Kevin Lynch and based on material from 21 interviews during the fieldwork here in Tijuana the presenter tries to grapple with these questions during the presentation.

Mapas urbano-fronterizos de la cotidianidad en las regiones de Tijuana San Diego

Por Kolar Aparna

Universidad de Radboud, Holanda

Viernes 5 de julio 2013, 11 am

En aula magna R. Rangel, edificio 1, El COLEF en San Antonio del Mar

¿Cómo trazan 'la frontera' como parte de sus rutas cotidianas las personas que viven dentro de y/o entre las regiones Tijuana-San Diego? ¿Qué imágenes y asociaciones dan ellos a la frontera respecto a sus prácticas cotidianas y experiencias en y/o a través de estas regiones urbanas? ¿Cómo esas imágenes y asociaciones podrían relacionarse (o no) a los aspectos de clase socio-económica, localización de su vivienda, identidad legal, tiempo de estancia en estas regiones, las percepciones de seguridad, propósito de (in)movilidad, presencia de redes de trabajo, familia, amigos dentro de y/o entre estas regiones? Usando el concepto de mapas mentales introducido por Kevin Lynch, y basado en 21 entrevistas durante el trabajo de campo aquí en Tijuana, se intenta lidiar con estas preguntas durante la presentación.





Reflections on conference:

Though I was still in the process of my fieldwork the conference presentation nevertheless provided a platform to critically reflect and share my fieldwork material with a diverse group of interested academics, students, researchers who attended the same. Some critical issues were raised during this session such as the importance of perspectives from institutional agents in my research; the role of gender, socio-economic status and the duration of stay at these borderlands in influencing perceptions and mental mappings of interviewees; among others.



**Invitation for a reading event, organised in a public library in centre Tijuana for
interviewees and interested public**

As part of the fieldwork, a booklet was released in collaboration with Amaranta Caballero at a public library. Interviewees were invited for an evening of readings and discussion. [Aparna, Kolar & Prado, Amaranta Caballero. (2013) “Pájaro, ಪದ್ದೆ, Book-She, Boek-She, Libro-Ella”,

Ediciones de la Esquina, Tijuana]

Presentación de la plaquette

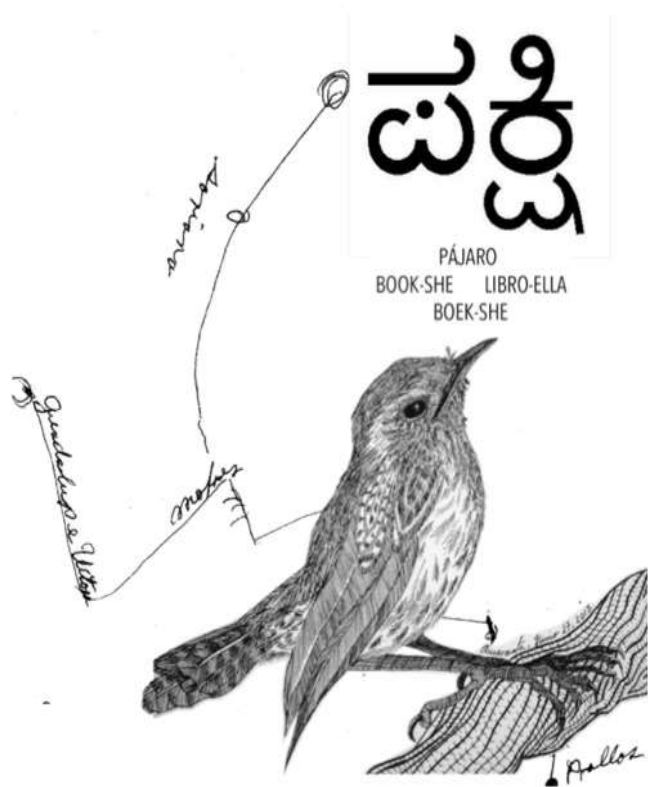
“Pájaro: Book-she:
Libro-Ella: Boek-she”

registro de ecos e imágenes en el
trabajo de campo realizado por
Kolar Aparna.

Presenta: Amaranta Caballero Prado.

Viernes 12 de Julio.
7:00 pm

Café-Biblioteca Juan Martínez
(Pasaje Gómez/Av. Revolución)



During this evening poems and interview material used in the booklet were read and finally the floor was opened to those present. Some interviewees reflected on the warm friendships that were made during this process, and some reflected on being more confronted with everyday life aspects of these borderlands that is often taken for granted.



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Appendix 1.

Sample Questionnaire:

Basic information: Common

1. Name of interviewee: (Anonymous, if requested)
2. Gender: male.....female.....
3. Age group:
15-20.....21-25.....26-30.....31-35.....36-40.....
41-45.....46-50.....51-55.....56-60.....61+.....
4. Do you live in Tijuana? Yes.....No..... (place/area of residence).....
5. How long do you live in Tijuana?.....
6. What are the important reasons for living in Tijuana?.....
7. What do you do for a living?.....
8. What is the most common mode of transportation you use everyday?.....
9. Do you cross the border? Yes..... No.....
10. a. If Yes, How often?..... Why?.....
10. b. If No, Were you crossing the border before? Why don't you cross now?
11. What legal document do you use?
12. Were you born here? (If so, refer to part I of next section; if not refer to part II)
13. Do you plan to stay in Tijuana or move? If planning to move, where to?

Introduction: [family-friends-work]

I. (If born in Tijuana)

1. Can you tell me a bit about your family?
2. Do you live with your family? If not, where are they? How do you keep in touch?
3. When did your family move to Tijuana? What were the circumstances in which they moved to Tijuana? Why?
4. Are you close to any family members living across the border? Where do they live? How do you keep in touch?
5. What about your friends? Where are they? How often do you meet? Where do you meet each other? When was the last time you met them?



II. (If not born in Tijuana)

1. Can you tell me about your life in Tijuana? What brings you to Tijuana? How did you come here? Why did you come here?
2. Can you tell me a bit about your family? Do you live with your family? If not, where are they? How do you keep in touch?
3. Are you close to any family members living across the border? Where do they live? How do you keep in touch?
4. What were the circumstances in which your family moved here or not or to someplace else?
5. Why did you move or not move (with them)?
6. What about your friends? Where are they? How often do you meet? Where do you meet each other? When was the last time you met them?
7. Do you have friends also in San Diego or Los Angeles? How do you keep in touch?
8. What about work: What type of work do you do?
9. Where do you work?
10. How do you commute everyday?

Common Mental map exercises:

Map of Everyday routes:

1. Can you make for me a rough map, an imaginary map, with the regular paths you take, or for instance, the routes you took yesterday? Could you reflect on the important **places** that are meaningful to you? Starting from home, could you mark all the important, regular paths/streets, the important **landmarks or buildings** you identify while taking these paths? What are some of the important **neighbourhoods, centers/markets**, and **'limits'/references** along these routes?

(Only for cross-border movers who have not marked activities in San Diego so far)

2. Can you add to this map what you did when you were last in San Diego?

Perceptions of 'the border'

1. What are the first five words that come to your mind when I say 'la frontera' / 'the border'?
2. What are the most important objects or landmarks or images that come to mind when you think of 'la Frontera' / 'the border'?
3. Has 'the border' changed in the many years that you live here?
4. Do you interact with people on the other side?
5. How far is San Diego for you?
6. Would you call yourself 'transfronteriza'?
7. Do you have any stories about when 'the border' was very strong in your life?

Final Questions

For those who follow cross-border practices

1. What kinds of activities do you have across the border? What is the purpose of these activities?
2. How often do you travel across the border on an average week?
3. Are your regular activities limited to San Diego or further?
4. How often do you visit San Diego/United States?
5. Are your interactions/activities limited to San Diego in the United States?



For those who do not follow (regular) cross border practices

1a. How often do you cross the border? For what purposes? Do you nevertheless interact regularly with people across the border? If so, what kinds of interactions do you have across the border? What is the purpose of such interactions? Are your interactions limited to San Diego, or further?

For those who have never crossed the border and do not conduct cross-border practices

1b. Why have you never crossed the border? Do you nevertheless interact with people across the border? If so, what kinds of interactions do you have across the border? What is the purpose of such interactions? Are your interactions limited to San Diego, or further?

