



Erasing the Line, or, the Politics of the Border

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abstract

In this collective effort, which follows our participation in the autonomous and borderless think-tank of the *ephemera* conference held on the Trans-Siberian train, we propose a politically efficacious way forward to create new forms of resistance. We attempt to test the power of the demand ‘No borders!’ by looking at a few key ways borders demarcate mobility and immobility today: in relation to the operations of contemporary capital; the control over migration and nation-state sovereignty; the patrolling of cultural borderlines; and the collapse of labour and leisure into a time of perpetual production. Our argument is that a specific political action to eliminate borders would mean a radical challenge, not only to the capitalist system, but, to our old views on a range of issues.

Introduction

In ‘The Politics of Utopia’, Fredric Jameson highlights the continuing practical-political possibilities of utopian thinking by putting forward what he takes to be “the most radical demand to make on our own system... the demand for full employment, universal full employment around the globe” (Jameson, 2004: 37). What such a demand reveals starkly is the shape and character of the contemporary political and economic structures that render any such demand unrealizable. The possibility for all individuals to engage in productive social labour simply cannot happen because of the structural need for a reserve army of labour, a need which takes distinct forms in different parts of the world. Such a direct, utopian demand creates productive political openings. By showing how so basic a right cannot be realized, the political returns as a general demand for a “society structurally distinct from this one in every conceivable way, from the psychological to the sociological, from the cultural to the political” (Jameson, 2004: 37).

In light of our journey from our home countries to Moscow and back from Beijing, as well as the collective trip taken by all those involved in the ‘Capturing the Moving Mind’ project across the Russian/Mongolian and Mongolian/Chinese border, we wish to articulate a similar demand with a similar aim: unfettered mobility for individuals and collectives, the dissolution of all borders that separate, isolate, contain, limit, enable

violent forms of extraction and injustice, and impede political imaginings and futures. In an era dominated by the discourse of mobility, the organization of movement and space through an older technology – that of border line, an entity as abstract and full of metaphysical subtleties as any other in the lexicon of human thought – remains essential to the smooth operations of capital. Without the border, there would be no differential zones of labour, no spaces to realize surplus capital through the dumping of overproduction, no way of patrolling surly populations that might want to resist proletarianization, no release valve for speculative access. The demand for free movement challenges not only the logics of contemporary economics, but also the operations of the political, which have long been premised on the establishment of zones of inclusion and exclusion, control over the legal status of citizen-subjects, practices of demographic accounting and management, and the mobilization of bodies for use in territorial expansion and war.

No borders! Or just as well: free movement! What insights does such a demand produce with respect to the key forms through which power and social control are exerted today? And what kind of political possibilities do these insights generate in turn? It is clear enough that the possibility of unfettered movement – a world without border controls, identity papers, fictions of national belonging, death and destruction over abstract geographies – would necessitate a social order radically different from every one hitherto imagined. The physical remnants of what we call ‘history’ are marked by the long human drama of the production and patrol of borders: cathedrals, castles, city walls and gates, districts, patrol towers, checkpoints – even the physical geography of rivers, bodies of water, and mountain ranges, transformed by their role as dividing markers. The streetscapes of modernity, pathways for the dreamy wanderings of the *flâneur*, are also designed with the aim of enabling the quick and efficient deployment of men and military equipment, both to manage unruly internationalists at home (communists, postcolonials, and the like) and to face the incursion of foreign armies across the sacred line dividing one nation-state from another. So we would also need new vernacular architectures, new cities, new modes of labouring, new economies, new cultures – a great many new things, and this just to begin with. One way forward might be to try to put everything on the table all at once and so participate in the kind of utopian constructions that Jameson suggests emerge whenever political energies are blocked. We propose a more politically efficacious way forward, testing the power of the demand ‘No borders!’ by looking at a few key ways borders demarcate mobility and immobility today: in relation to the operations of contemporary capital; the control over migration and nation-state sovereignty; the patrolling of cultural borderlines; and the collapse of the labour and leisure into a time of perpetual production.

1. The Myth of a Borderless Capitalism

In one of his last works, the Spanish sociologist Joxeab Berriain (2005) argues that human beings are constantly searching for meaning in a world where everything seems mixed up and in a total chaos. Things lack natural limits: it is the human mind that must create them. Berriain argues that, since the beginning of history, there have been attempts to explain everything that surrounds us, so our perceptions have to be

rationalized in one way or another through the use of limits. We can call something a 'tree' because we can separate its form, its shape, from the field in which it stands. Every human being does this with everybody and everything, even with his own body parts. Thus we divide reality into 'islands of meaning' which help to identify oneself, others and the things in the world. This division lies on principles of classification, which help us to build definitions. The verb *to define* derives from the Latin word *finis*, limit: to define something means to establish its limits. In the world, those limits are not solidly established before human beings specify them. All divisions are created by human minds to help to comprehend what surrounds us. Otherwise, everything would exist in an epistemological magma of confusion. Lines are necessary to divide, to define, to classify. We introduce a rationality that puts some control over our perception of the world, simplifying its information. But these limits are not simply part of us as individuals, but are established socially. Most of these lines, Beriaín explains, represent other invisible lines that separate social and mental entities. There are limits in time, but also in space – limits in space built to avoid a mix with Others. Therefore, limits are essentially social constructions, and are not given by nature.

This perspective can be criticized from perspectives that highlight the indeterminacy of meaning: nonetheless, these theories forget about how meanings have been reached historically and imposed through different social struggles. Some authors have also emphasized that modernity has repressed that indeterminacy through the needs of the productive system (Rullani, 1998). Borders seem to be the clearest example of a social construction that helps to create order in the world out of primigenous chaos. It is a pure social institution, in which open fields are suddenly turned into closed spaces. From the border I can define myself and the Other – a code of ownership and belonging. Borders were born alongside the ancient agrarian empires and became stronger with the rise of the nation-state. The philosophy lying behind borders has been developed in different socio-historical formations throughout history and has performed very different roles. But within capitalism borders have carried out specific functions – connected to processes of domination and exploitation – that have nothing to do with a rationalization of the world. Whereas in the origins of capitalism borders were essential to unify the national markets, today they are used primarily to prevent movements of the multitude. Once stability is reached and free trade takes place, there is no need for borders between traders. Nevertheless, it is compulsory to develop a barrier against those who have nothing to trade. This strategy is directly linked to the bureaucratic forms of identity developed by nation-states to stop the possibility of free movement (passports, *declaratsias*, visas, etc.). In the post-modern age of information technologies and knowledge economies, borders continue to perform a key role in the capitalist system. But is it possible to think about a borderless world when borders are so deeply embodied socially?

There is at present a significant debate on what modernity is and if we have moved beyond it to a new age called post-modernity, in which borders might play a different and minor role. While it is not easy to fully explain which phase we are in (isn't there here the hint of another border – that of time?), it is clear that capitalism looks stronger than ever and that new phenomena within it must be taken into account. Capitalism has been stable in the sense that it has always been defined by the way capitalist enterprises obtain profits through the selling of goods and services in the markets. It has always

depended on labour to do the work, rewarding it with salaries (however minimal), and obtaining surplus value to invest in new business and to increase capital. But we can also say that there has been a huge transformation of the character of capitalism during the past century, especially in the last decades. We are speaking here of what has been described as 'postmodern' capitalism, which has been described in classical works (Lash and Urry, 1987, 1993; Offe, 1985; Appadurai, 1996; Bauman, 2003). We can argue that there has been an historical transition from a stable corporate model of an organized capitalism to a sort of a disorganized one that exists in a 'liquid modernity' where the rules of rationality do not appear to work anymore, and where borders would seem to vanish due to the intensification of trade plus capital and labour movement. Societies today would be under siege: globalization has arrived. Markets are boisterous and in permanent state of change. Enterprises must become extremely adaptable. Governments prepare the conditions for their own loss of power: now international capital directly arranges economies through new global economic institutions in order to extend capitalism to every field of the world (Alonso, 2001). New information technologies have been decisive in accelerating these processes. Companies extend their customs and accepted business standards to most places in the world, as capital flows roam the world, rationalizing it in an instrumental way (and not in a critical-emancipatory way, as we can see: the standard shipping container, accounting practices, etc.) even as they disorganize it in other ways. Work occupied a central place in the phase of organized capitalism associated with solid modernity, but in liquid modernity it has become a commodity again in a new, intensified way. *Today we are living the real capitalism of which previous forms could only dream.*

Deterritorialization is one of the central trends in the (post)modern world: it moves a multitude of workers from their fatherlands to wealthier societies. The new discourse of capitalism also focuses on the power of new information technologies and the mobility of the new high-skilled workers. Freedom of capital is also supposed to be accompanied by the freedom of movement of workers. According to these discourses, this would be the reason why people from certain places of the world travel to Western capitalist countries: there are better opportunities and they are also required. Nevertheless, this freedom of movement is restricted, and borders still perform their classic function.

The interesting issue here is that both deterritorialization and information technologies would seem to require a borderless world to achieve the best results. Mass media and the Internet are supposed to reach the global village and connect everybody in a network of networks. A new space is created. It is a global space – a space of transits, transparent and virtual (Serres, 1995). There is also an interesting discourse on the new nomads, people who try to find new experiences and projects (Maffesoli, 2004) as well as project-seeking knowledge workers (Toffler, 1971). In a certain way, these discourses that emphasize the nomadic dimension of the global present seem to rely on the absence of borders: they are the proof of the crises of the nation-state. However, these discourses are in contradiction with what is truly happening. We have a discourse on movement, but the practice is radically different. There is freedom of movement, but with a clear restriction: only with respect of the needs of capital. The masses of low-skilled workers, the hungry ones, cannot pass through the border. And if they pass through, the border will still be present in one way or another. It still stands, and maybe it is just as strong as capitalism itself. Just as every social formation establishes its

limits and exclusions, capitalism produces its own. It acts essentially as a producer of separations. It reifies endlessly and transforms both labour product and workers into commodities. It introduces a social structure with clear barriers between those who have and those who do not, using anything possible to build hierarchies: education, skills, income, race, gender. Finally, it needs political borders to increase competitiveness among groups of workers and to obtain capital surpluses. The demand 'No borders!' can thus be seen as an attack on the very heart of the capitalist machine.

2. Sovereignty and Migration

Not many animals are put into cages in Australia, so why are these human beings kept so long in cages? Do they have less value than Australian animals? Once we asked this question from a DIMIA [Department of Immigration] manager. Her answer was that they [the animals] have not illegally migrated to Australia. Then we said although we have illegally migrated, we are still human, so we should have the right to get protection in a country under the United Nation conventions. (Message from Baxter immigration detention centre, Australia, in Baxter Detainees, 2003: 5)

Any discussion of borders today cannot ignore the existence of the increasing numbers of people who cross these borders without state authorization and the pressures this movement brings to bear not only on the 'capitalist machine' but also on the very sovereignty of nation-states.¹ In Australia, the connection between unauthorized migration, border control and national sovereignty became a key political issue in 2001 when the conservative government won a landslide election with the slogan "we decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come" (see Bennett, Newman and Kopras, 2001-2002). The election victory followed mounting political hysteria over the asylum-seeker issue, which culminated in the government's decision to use the military to prevent the *Tampa*, a ship that had rescued 433 asylum seekers, from entering Australian waters (Select Committee, 2002). What is the relationship between national sovereignty – and the exclusive right to determine cross-border movement as a key indicator of this – and unauthorized migration? In asking this question, we seek to situate the question of borders, and the possibility of a world without borders, in the realm of current human practice, rather than conceiving of the abolition of borders as a demand on the state or as a utopian scenario in a projected future. By examining the current significance of unauthorized migration – that is migration without state sanction – we suggest that the increasingly repressive nature of border controls is a reflection of the diminishing ability of such controls to secure for the state the 'monopolization of the legitimate means of movement'. To do this, we will examine the work of Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben on the refugee, and interrogate the extent to which the human who moves without state authorization

1 Given the illegalized condition in which many unauthorized migrants live, and the undocumented nature of their movement, it is difficult to provide precise figures for the numbers of such migrants. However, the International Organisation for Migration estimates that unauthorized migration represents a third to half of all new entries to developed countries, and has increased by 20% in the last ten years (IOM, 2003).

challenges human rights discourses by revealing the dependence of such discourses on the sovereignty of the nation-state.

The primary response to the existence of people who exist outside the frame of national citizenship, and therefore cannot rely on the rights available to citizens, has been to inscribe biological life itself in the realm of state power, through the assertion that inalienable rights are attached to the human in and of itself. In Australia – where all unauthorized boat arrivals are detained in desert internments' camps while their claims are processed – the vast majority of public and academic opposition to mandatory detention has utilized a human rights framework to justify its condemnation of this repressive policy (see RCOA, 2002 and McMaster, 2002). Yet a stark theme emerging from inside the detention camps is puzzlement at the lack of human rights that adhere to the human as such, and a desperate reassertion, to no avail, of a biological humanity, reminiscent of Antelme's statement "the negation of our quality as men provokes an almost biological claim of belonging to the human species" (Agamben, 1995: 58). "Is this human rights?" asked one detainee. "Is this Australia country's proud? Do they think we didn't make from meat, skin, bone?" (Anonymous, 2002: 7). As Arendt points out, "the conception of human rights based on the assumed existence of human being as such, broke down at the very moment that those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human" (Arendt, 1976: 299).

Arendt, and thinkers writing after her, have suggested that human rights are, in actuality, the rights of citizens, and that without the protection of a state, human rights cannot be assured. This reveals the first limitation of human rights as applied to the refugee: human rights require enforcement. In a world defined by state monopolization of the legitimate means of violence, refugees who have been expelled from, or lost the protection of, 'their own' nation-states and have found that no other nation-state will take up this role of enforcement, are left without rights. However, for Agamben the problematic nature of human rights doesn't stem only from their lack of enforceability, or the hypocrisy in their application. Rather, "declarations of rights represent the originary figure of the inscription of natural life in the juridico-political order of the nation-state" (Agamben, 1995: 127). Nowhere is this inscription of life in the order of the nation-state through declarations of rights clearer, as we shall see, than in the right to asylum and the system of refugee determination established in the wake of World War II.

The United Nations Refugee Convention was established in 1951 to regulate cross border movement by establishing a common definition of the refugee, and criteria for determining eligibility for asylum. In a context in which the Convention, and the right to asylum it grants, is being undermined throughout the world, it is often forgotten, by those who seek to oppose the exclusionary practices of nation-states, that the refugee determination system was developed not to facilitate free movement, but to constrain it. In an essay entitled 'Beyond Human Rights', Agamben suggests that "each and every time refugees no longer represent individual cases but rather a mass phenomenon (as was the case between the two World Wars and is now once again), these organizations, as well as the single States – have proved to be absolutely incapable not only of solving the problem but also of facing it in an adequate manner" (Agamben, 1996: 158).

In evaluating the success or otherwise of these humanitarian organization however, “we cannot, assume that the crucial task of the international refugee regime is simply humanitarian assistance” (Lui, 2002: 13). We believe, in fact, that these organizations *did* produce a solution to the problem of human movement, which, for many decades, was relatively successful in its aim of individualizing the grounds for human movement, and thus enabling this movement to be re-inscribed within a statist framework. In response to the existence in the political sphere of humans who had “lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human” (Arendt, 1976: 299), humanitarian organizations worked to provide a mechanism to ensure the containment of such people within the order of the nation-state. “The refugee regime”, as Lui points out, “is a form geopolitical humanitarianism that has as its ‘core business’ the preservation of the value of the nation-state form and the institution of national-citizenship” (Lui, 2002: 14). In its most recent form, this core business is conducted primarily through the work of the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and through the refugee determination system, which established a state-sanctioned demarcation between legitimate and illegitimate human movement. As the IOM describes, its mission is “to facilitate and control the number and composition of persons crossing international borders and the conditions under which entry is authorized or denied” (IOM, 2004).

Agamben argues that humanitarian organizations are unable to deal effectively with refugees at the point when they become a mass phenomenon. In reality the refugee determination system works to *foreclose* any understanding of human movement as anything other than an individualized phenomenon. The UN Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone with “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 1951: 16). While such a definition implicitly recognizes the collective and social determinations of persecution, in providing for individual assessments the determination system complicates the possibility of viewing human movement as a political phenomenon by treating refugee determinations as incapable of generalization. Further, the convention specifically excludes economic grounds for refugee status, thus de-legitimizing, and so effectively illegalizing, movement that is motivated by great economic inequality and the devastation produced by the globalisation of neo-liberal capitalism.

While the refugee determination system was successful for decades in mitigating the pressures on nation-states brought about by unauthorized migration, since the early 1990s this framework has been threatened by the increasing scale of unauthorized migration – “by far the fastest rising single form of migration during the past 10 years” (Papademetriou, 2002: 5) – which is at least in part a direct response to the ravages produced by neo-liberalism (see Colatrella, 2001). The increasingly repressive nature of state responses to unauthorized migrants reflects the diminishing ability of humanitarian organizations to produce a ‘solution’ capable of containing this movement within the framework of the nation-state. Insofar as national borders have traditionally existed to enable the state to maintain this very ability to demarcate its citizens from those of other states, unauthorized migration serves to undermine these borders by challenging the state’s ability to act as the final arbiter of the right to move. Behind the anxiety, expressed in the Australian election slogan about the ability to “decide who comes to

this country and the circumstances in which they come”, is the realization that this slogan is only a populist representation of the established principle that controlling migration is a crucial indicator of national sovereignty – or as Australia’s immigration department puts it “in terms of national sovereignty, the state determines which non-citizens are admitted or permitted to remain and the conditions under which they may be removed” (in O’Kane, 2002: 5).

By challenging this exclusive right of the state to determine entry, unauthorized migrants reveal the reliance of humanitarian organizations, and human rights discourses, on the sovereignty of the nation-state, with its assimilation of birth into nation and of nation into citizen. Agamben quotes the French ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen’ as an example of the ambiguity that surrounds the question of whether man has rights only to the extent that man is a citizen. The location of sovereignty in the nation, he argues, politicized immediately the question of birth, and necessitated the ability to decide who would and would not be considered as part of the nation. For Agamben, then, national sovereignty and declarations of rights were only the beginning of a process that would find its logical conclusion in the Nazi state, where life was entirely politicised and the question of nationality “coincides immediately with the highest political task” (Agamben, 1995: 130). In contrast, the refugee represents the severing of this link between birth and nation. Agamben argues that “the refugee must be considered for what he is: a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link” (Agamben, 1995: 134).

By challenging the unproblematic location of sovereignty in the life of a national people, the refugee becomes a problem, not just for the nation-state from which she seeks protection, but for the stability of the nation-state system. In the words of the *Noborder Network* “the political power of exodus and refusal is subverting the sovereignty of both the nation-states as well as the new regimes of hyper-exploitation on a global level” (Noborder Network, 2004: 1). Hence the response of the state to the refugee, who has not only disrupted the link between birth and nation, but attempts to enter a new nation without state authorization, must necessarily be brutal. Far from extending human rights to such people, the state’s primary concern is to maintain control over the construction of ‘the people’ upon which its legitimacy is grounded, by retaining the right to exclude. The declarations of rights, which apply to, and are enforced only for citizens, are therefore the flipside of the camps. Both play a crucial role in the construction of a people and the maintenance of the sovereignty of the nation-state.

In order to exist as a sovereign entity, the nation-state must maintain the ability to control its borders and determine the composition of its population. ‘No borders’, *as a demand on the state*, would thus effectively be a demand that the nation-state give up its own condition of possibility, and is thus a demand that can only be effectively utilized if the nation-state is assumed to be suicidal. Instead, those who wish to resist the regime of inclusion and exclusion produced by national borders should orient to those practices that are bringing pressure to bear on these borders by refusing to allow them to determine the limits of human movement. “Human mobility is developing a life of its own”, acknowledges the IOM, and this, again in the words of the IOM, is “curtailing

nation-state autonomy” (IOM, 2003: 4). To some, this is proof that, as the *Noborder Network* proclaims, “the autonomy of migration cannot be stopped” (Noborder Network, 2004: 1). Certainly it is true that people are, and will continue to, cross borders without state authorization. But as long as these borders exist, whether they are policed by a nation-state intent on constructing a ‘people’ in which to ground its legitimacy, or by organizations like the IOM in the interests of the segmentations and separations which are still crucial to global capitalism, they will be sites of violence and brutality. The essential counterparts of borders, as the migrant network Caravan reminds us, are the “countless thousands who drowned in seas en-route to Europe [and Australia] every year, who suffocate in containers of perishable goods that is on the roads for weeks, who died and are never reckoned (and are still dying) in North African deserts and forests, with Spain in view as a gateway” (The Caravan, 2004: 6).

3. Does Culture Need Borders?

Does culture need borders? Is it defenceless without them? Millennia of cultural interactions, borrowings, and transmutations, and a globe populated with hybrid forms whose real origins are likely impossible to map, suggest that culture is constantly on the move, always undergoing changes and transformations, happiest when it finds itself twisted into new shapes and practices. It is safe to say that culture *always already* exceeds those borders in which some have hoped to confine it – whether these are national borders or aesthetic ones (like the delimitations called ‘genre’). To talk about culture in reference to globalization – a time, we are constantly told, when movements of cultural ideas, forms, and practices have become if not more common then more rapid and extensive – would thus seem to require only the unlearning of the conceptual legacy of the past two centuries. It was during this time that ‘culture’ came of age as a modern concept (Williams, 1985) and was also partitioned off into the discrete, definable entities with which we still associate it – primarily into ‘national cultures’, but also into the spaces so diligently explored by anthropologists: the tribe, the village, the region, etc. “Every nation is one people”, Herder writes, “having its own national form, as well as its own language” (Herder, 1800: 166). We know that such sentiments, which continue to haunt our ideas about the proper space of culture, emerged less as a scholarly or taxonomic response to ‘real’ cultural divisions and more out of the need to lend support to the emerging political *techne* of the modern state (no doubt in conjunction with the limits on movements of peoples that we have been tracking thus far.) After all of the disasters wrought by the fictions of national belonging, we global moderns are more likely to heed Adorno’s warning about the borders erected around culture: “The formation of national collectivities ... common in the detestable jargon of war that speaks of the Russian, the American, surely also of the German, obeys a reifying consciousness that is no longer really capable of experience. It confines itself within precisely those stereotypes that thinking should dissolve” (Adorno, 1998: 205).

And yet: even as new technologies (like the Internet) make it all but impossible to patrol the spaces of culture, the idea that culture needs borders has been given new life. The especially harsh and unforgiving climate of the global economy has created conditions that seem to require that culture be sheltered if it is to survive at all. In the era of neo-

liberalism, the strain to make every dollar multiply has forced cultural practitioners to consider turning to the state for assistance – even if the state is well past the point of believing in ‘art for art’s sake’, or in viewing the university ideal as one of ‘ideal curiosity’ as opposed to envisioning it as an institution where knowledge is produced as a “merchantable commodity” (Ross, 2000: 3). Contrary to what one might expect at a time when financial borders have all but disappeared, national cultures and nationalisms are being taken out of the closet, dusted off and once again worn about proudly and without embarrassment, either as a supposed shield against a global neo-liberal cultural market that is assumed in advance only to produce cultural garbage, or, more recently, as a defence of the values of Enlightenment civilization against the Islamic hordes threatening to engulf North America and Europe (best exemplified by Huntington’s grotesque ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis.) Even in Germany, a nation that has developed an understandable wariness toward nationalisms of all kinds, it has become possible to openly discuss *Leitkultur* (dominant or hegemonic culture) and the need to ensure that immigrants absorb the ideas and ideals that (supposedly) define Germanic culture. Intellectual debates about globalization and cultural belonging might focus on cosmopolitanisms or a global ‘multitude’, or look to the myriad ways in which forms of alternative cultural productive have pushed the unlearning of the cultural borders we spoke of above. Everywhere else, it appears that not only has the nation-state survived globalization, but so too has the idea of the nation representing a people and a culture. And while such national-cultural-ethnic borders may not inhibit physical movement, they are certainly meant to block ideas, to define the formation of subjectivities, and to shape the identities and commitments of those contained by them.

An essential political act is to assert again and again and again that culture is and should remain unbounded. Cultural practices and forms have no ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ spaces: the idea that they do is conceptually specious and, inevitably, politically dangerous insofar as it plays a key role in enabling and legitimating the politics of inclusion and exclusion so central to operation of state sovereignty. And yet (once again): though it might be easy to challenge the regressive character of ‘cultural’ tests of citizenship (Gumbrecht, 2006), or of right-wing demands that immigrants of necessity assimilate appropriate ‘cultural’ values and traits (of the kind circulating in France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Hesse in Germany, and elsewhere), the idea that cultural expression needs protection and support in the age of globalization can nevertheless be a tempting one. The same nation-states that are running scared about the threat posed by the immigrant populations that they desperately need (for demographic and economic purposes) are also re-asserting the need for policies to foster and support cultural expression within their borders. In October 2005, member states of UNESCO voted overwhelmingly to support the ‘Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions’. The convention allows states to exempt cultural products from trade agreements and permits them “to maintain, adopt, and implement policies and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions on their territory” (UNESCO, 2005). The real intent of this convention is (to no one’s surprise) to put a break on US dominance of the international trade in the products of the mass cultural industries (film and television in particular). It also seeks to affirm the relative autonomy of ‘cultural expressions’ from the larger trade in goods, a separation that other US-led trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, have actively sought to

undo (Szeman, 1998). Can't we affirm the (apparently) productive impulses of the state to safeguard culture from the market, while rejecting and criticizing the uses to which national culture and its politics of belonging are being put? Can't we erect cultural borders in some places, while resolutely taking them down in others?

For those critical of the dominance of economic relations to the exclusion of all else in the world – something which neo-liberal globalization has achieved *par excellence* – it is hard to resist the idea that cultural expression and cultural autonomy need protection from the ravages of the market. And if not the state, then who? In the context of our current neo-liberal governments, the idea of the beneficent Keynesian or social democratic state casts a long political shadow out of whose darkness it has become difficult to move. But move out of it we must. There are numerous assumptions embedded in the idea of state protection of culture – which is to say: the establishment of borders for culture – that need to be carefully disentangled and assessed. Right off, the notion that the state that is intent on patrolling and maintaining existing forms of national culture should be charged with the task of protecting and promoting 'cultural diversity' is, at a minimum, problematic. 'Diversity' is a slippery word. The celebration of diversity against encroaching Americanism or market culture is one thing; enabling diversity within national borders quite another. The defense of Enlightenment values against outsiders and the protection of culture from the market seamlessly fold over into one another: the diversity named here is, for the most part, that of already established forms of national 'high' culture – opera, classical music, museums, the fine arts – which have long had an essential role in legitimating the sovereignty of the state over its borders. As both Roberto Schwarz (1992) and Malcolm Bull (2001) have shown in different ways, anxieties about the protection and promotion of forms of 'authentic' national culture are ones that emerge out of the interests of ruling and intellectual elites, and not from the broad masses, who have little investment or interest in safeguarding the link between culture and state sovereignty. Increasingly, even the impulse to support non-market cultures is done with economic goals in mind: the support of an essential aspect of the affective labour market; the creation of conditions for so-called 'creative classes' to flourish (Florida, 2004); and the establishment of cultural distinctiveness in order to fuel tourist economies organized around encounters with managed difference.

It is one thing to be critical and anxious about the impact of the market on culture; it is quite another to see the state – the funding source for the so-called 'public sector' – as heroically intervening to enable non-market social and cultural forms to flourish. The two impulses need to be disengaged. The dangers of giving states the moral authority to protect and promote culture outweigh the potential benefits, which might include strategic use of state funds by arts, cultural institutions, and so on, to engage in efforts to shatter cultural borders instead of assisting the state in reinforcing them. Documents such as the UNESCO Convention pretend to take on what Guy Debord described as 'the spectacle': that haze of mediation which has placed representation and abstraction at the centre of social life. In reality, they do nothing substantive to get at the heart of social drama of accumulation and 'separation' that Debord's concept of the spectacle is intended to capture. Remember: "The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Debord, 1995: 12). To no one's surprise, what is at issue in contemporary anxieties about cultural borders are political ones, whose real object is the maintenance of existing forms of power at all

costs. Culture has no borders, it never has. Why then respond to the threat of the market by giving into the fantasy of national-cultural borders, a fantasy which, as Adorno writes, goes against the impulses of cultural practice to attack and dissolve the stereotypes that contain us?

Every border erected for culture claims 'diversity' (from the market) or Enlightenment (against the unbelievers). We must refuse to operate within these borders and the easy stereotypes they offer, and direct ourselves to understanding and contesting the global political circumstances that continue to make such forms of reifying consciousness politically viable. No borders for culture! Such a call doesn't cause the threat of the neo-liberal market to culture to fade; it does, however, push us away from the false solution of cultural borders and returns us to the task of culture: the undoing of all borders, maybe even especially that singular psychic border of commodity culture, which transforms creative labour into dead things without origin.

4. To Free Time! Drawing the Line or Moving Beyond Borders of Production

It is well known that the anti-globalization movement – which we could just as well call the global movement against capitalist proletarianization – has, in recent years, demanded an end to transcendent borders such as those produced by nation-states. This demand is twofold: it calls for an end to the threats of a ceaseless spread of capital across extant spatial borders, while at the same time positing a new collective drape within and over this expansion.

Primarily, the discourses of globalization, on both the Right and the Left, are couched in terms of spatial demands. The former employs a strategy of strengthening laws against border crossings so as to maintain unsanctioned and non-remunerated labour flows in the service of capital. At other times, the Right demands an end to borders to open up an unfettered frontier for free market domination. From the Left, we hear a call to legalize and compensate labour that crosses borders without sanction. There is also a Leftist impulse to do away with any borders altogether, including that of the law, which often stands as a border against the potentialities of non-exploitative production. Thus, it could be argued that the discourses of globalization are predominantly based on addressing what are viewed as potential spatial hazards – either to Empire or the Multitude – produced by the growing and impending irrelevance of geopolitical borders.

These are real threats, albeit threats with generative openings both for and against capital. They are present today and growing larger with unprecedented speed. We have clearly entered a new historical era in which the call for 'No borders! Free movement!' in spatial terms has become increasingly urgent. However, by declaring 'No borders!' in relation to our post-Fordist (political) economy, we run the risk of overlooking the effects of a border that has *already* ceased to operate in the realm of *temporality* – the division between labour-time and non-labour time.

With the end of this temporal border, zones of differential labour and the realization of surplus-value remain intact, yet through a new model of overproduction that we might as well call reproduction. We now have a ceaseless 'production time' that includes 'non-labour time', unhinging qualitative differences in social time and refusing compensation for the free temporal movement that capital demands.

Time, for the contemporary worker, is no longer delineated along the lines of when we are working and when we are not. This is not because all jobs are characteristically the same. There remain clear differences between today's occupations. For example, the work of the professional never ends because of the constant need to reinvent herself as a malleable 'profile'. The factory worker's work time is still delineated by wage hours but depends on social cooperation outside of the workplace to produce opportunities for advancement. Academics, scientists and information technologists must always be working to produce the material results of their immaterial thought. Let us not forget, also, that immigrant labour finds itself working unthinkable hours in the most unregulated economic sectors – agriculture, construction, the service industry, etc. – precisely because *geopolitical borders* restrict easy entrance into the western world. As such, juridico-political borders of the nation-state continue to work in the service of capital – that is, according to an inclusive-exclusionary logic whereby the transgression of these borders is in its very interest. And while we might point to a general trend of labour mobility from the migrant worker to the multi-national C.E.O., we need to bear in mind that the fruits of this increased mobility are spread unevenly and unjustly.

The actions performed in these various forms of labour are very different. However, within real subsumption, these occupations have become qualitatively identical: as 'productive labour', they each serve to reproduce the society of capitalism as opposed to *directly* producing capital itself. That is because, as Antonio Negri notes, production has been 'subsumed within circulation' (Negri, 1996: 157). Additionally, in earlier stages of capitalist development, the social cooperation necessary for capital was produced by capital in the workplace. Today, as productive social cooperation is necessary *a priori* to production, the 'social worker is the producer...prior to any commodity' (Negri, 1996: 165). This form of social cooperation depends on what Marx termed the 'general intellect' – general human faculties that produce technological innovation and 'social combination'.

With capital now relying on a system of production that includes not only 'work time' but also the time that precedes and follows it – the time of social cooperation – the borders between time, life, labour have become irrelevant and the terms tautological. Measure in real subsumption now takes place in the *flow* between life and labour (Negri, 2003: 27). This flow also bears the name: life. If surplus-value is what results from surplus-labour, then the totality of life becomes surplus.

In *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Paolo Virno writes:

This evidence drives us to reformulate, in part or entirely, the theory of surplus-value. According to Marx, surplus-value springs from surplus-labor, that is, from the difference between necessary labor (which compensates the capitalist for the expense sustained in acquiring the labor-power) and the entirety of the working day. So then, one would have to say that in the post-Fordist era, surplus-value is determined above all by the gap between production time which is not calculated

as labor time and labor time in the true sense of the term. What matters is not only the disproportion, inherent in labor time, between necessary labor and surplus-labor, but also, and perhaps even more, the disproportion between production time (which includes non-labor, its own distinctive productivity) and labor time. (Virno, 2004: 105)

Virno's characterization produces a series of paradoxical questions: If afforded the opportunity, should we take on salaried jobs, which are in fact wage jobs that do not remunerate 'non-labour' time? Or should we stop producing altogether and thus devalue the very production of life that is now inherent in the tautology of labour-life-time? Are we all now 'unemployable', if "unemployment is non-remunerated labor and labor, in turn, is remunerated unemployment?" (Virno, 2004: 103). And finally, if biopower is now the force that makes time a fluid movement and allows capital itself to regulate the production of labour-power – the potential to produce – is there any sense in demanding an end to *all* borders and free movement?

We are at war, a war without borders. To utter a definitive answer to these questions draws a fixed line, a new border, to the battle already beyond borders that we face. We need not forget that our enemy – capital – seeks to confuse by simultaneously eliminating the need for borders and utilizing a rhetorical practice that is premised on regimes of inclusion and exclusion. Should we do the same by demanding an end to borders while casting ourselves as something fully inclusive or exclusive to capital? That, too, is confusing. In the words of Bartleby, '[We] prefer not to' – not to answer these questions, that is.

Rather, here we want to reframe and rename the global war that we face in a way that positions the demands of capital and its opponents as indistinguishable. We call this war 'The War To Free Time!' Each side requires time to be free by putting an end to abstract borders that differentiate the time of labour from non-labour time. Capital needs this line to crumble so as to abstract unfettered surplus-value from free time. We want our time to be freed from the regulatory mechanisms that capital uses to privatize not only our labours, but also the totality of the time of life.

To win this war, do we draw a line in the sand to re-instate this boundary whose dissolution now oppresses? Or can we today imagine a call to the political 'To Free Time!' that would stand in absolute opposition to the bygone terms of 'labour-time' and 'non-labour' time? If so, we would be required to unleash a hidden meaning to the term *production* – a meaning containing the freedom of movement to allow us to 'waste time' so that capital does not waste our time.

5. No Borders and the Possibility of New Political Forms

Our argument is that a specific political action to eliminate borders would mean a radical challenge not only to the capitalist system, but also to our old views on a range of issues. It comes as a constant shock to discover the limits of our political thinking, even when we set out to overcome them. When we imagine new ways of being and acting, ways that we hope will open up the all too-quickly foreclosed possibilities of the human, we often stop short at the barrier of this or that political concept, and most often

at those whose long existence have allowed them to engage in the always suspect change from concept to reality. The border is one such concept: an idea given physical, social, legal and cultural reality in such diverse forms as border crossing, citizenship laws and ethnic identifications. When dealing with such a concept-reality, politics must understand itself as attempting a process of sublimation: the direct passage of solid back into gas, reality into concept, without the intervening liquid moment of uncertainty, insecurity and instability. But exactly how is this to be accomplished?

Let's start again: No borders! The action to bring about the end of borders implies not separation, but inclusion. Our view of the world is hugely influenced by our existing understanding of the social, which includes that social formation known as capitalism. Whether we like it or not, capitalism shapes our views, including the view that makes inconceivable a truly borderless society. Dominant discourses give several excuses to the maintenance of borders: the survival of our cultural identity; that too many immigrants would destroy our economic and social welfare; that there is no room for everyone. But we need to think beyond the prism offered by capitalism. Borders are essential for capitalism to exist as such. It is the only way to increase competition among workers: countries try to offer a pacific and cheap workforce to attract capital flows. For the world's poorest subjects, borders mean a cruel destiny: the acceptance of low salaries and economic exploitation, or the necessity of leaving their countries in order to become illegal immigrants in western societies, where they suffer just as much, if in a different way. The process of primitive accumulation that kicks off capitalism and which has returned with such force in globalization can operate only by sealing off and distributing the commons as property.

As a social formation, capitalism traces limits everywhere. Borders are one of its most important weapons. They are necessary to the division of the multitude. What we want is democracy and inclusion of all – not in a nation, a state or an identity that always presupposes exclusion – but in a *life in common* (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Inclusion in this common life demands the elimination of borders and the possibility of total movement. Not just movement, it has to be said, on the ground, across those invisible little lines that demarcate spaces of political force and economic hegemony, but total movement – movement across all those borders at the multiple levels that are required in order to enforce (physical, political, psychic) enclosure. For this reason we have paid attention to the multiple ways in which borders function. We have explored how they maintain capitalism – the now fully realized form of capitalism that has emerged within globalization – through the division of the labour force, in spite of discourses on free mobility of capital and knowledge workers. We have highlighted the issues raised by migration and sovereignty through the refugees' situation in Australia, encouraging resistance to the state's tendencies to determine the composition of their populations and the limits of human movements. We have criticized those state interventions to reinforce borders in order to protect and promote culture, arguing that we must refuse to operate within these borders and the stereotypes they offer. And we have also described the new war on free time that we are facing against the capitalist efforts to obtain higher surplus-value through the privatization of the totality of our time – the time of our lives.

The new political form at work here might appear to an old one: the surpassing of borders, which is exemplified even in this collective work, which required overcoming

geographical borders, academic disciplinary borders, and the borders of intellectual belonging and separation. What we hope we've shown is the productivity of putting into question a political concept such as that of the 'border' across multiple registers that are often treated as distinct and separate – the migrant, for instance, crossing a border in search of the kind of labour that we reject as itself a border-limit, and thus having to manage the cultural borders on which we also want to cast suspicion. Let us hope that efforts like these may lead to a major dissolution of every separation and erase every line.

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