

AGUIAR
BORDER POLITICS

BORDER POLITICS: PRACTICES OF
ZONING, EXPERIENCES OF MOBILITY
AND LIFE IN DISPLACEMENT
VIEWS FROM BRAZILIAN
CROSSROADS

By

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the political negotiations involved in border encounters, focusing particularly on mobile groups in border areas in South America. It discusses the connection between international and border politics, privileging a definition of the latter as the negotiation processes over the terms and modes of presence of the 'inter' of the international. The dissertation analyzes border politics from the perspective of three major tenets: displacement, practices of zoning and the construction of borders as sites of solidarity. I argue that in order to understand these processes we need to elucidate how the global politics of mobility is played out (or translated) in border crossroads and from a range of social groups that encompass not only the Nation-State, but also a myriad of actors that, despite having little or no say in the international framework of human mobility, perform bordering practices that are central to the enactment of difference as a primary trait of inclusion/exclusion from the political. These processes of political differentiation are reinforced but also contested by mobile groups, especially in relation to discourses that try to equate human mobility as a choice between freedom and protection. In important respects, their intervention attempts to problematize the dichotomous portrayal of freedom and protection as two irreconcilable dimensions of life in displacement, thus evincing the possibility that the 'inter' of the international can actually become a site of living, rather than a rite of passage.

I also argue that by incorporating the narratives of diverse social actors at these border crossroads we might come closer to displacing the politics of human mobility from one premised on a conventional reading of the international, as a strategy of separation, modulation and management of difference, towards a global politics of (dis)connections, in which mobile groups can become active participants in the framing of their lives possibilities. This moving-away from the international is always embedded in tenuous, dangerous and ambiguous exchanges about what constitutes mobility, how movement is to be interpreted, stimulated or prevented, where and when it can take place and under what conditions. The dissertation discusses these more theoretical claims in the context of refugee and migration movements in Brazil, particularly in relation to Bolivians, Africans and Colombians living in border zones. As such, this dissertation hopes to contribute to a better understanding of what is at stake in dealing with the border encounter from a political perspective and how different narratives on life in displacement can, in fact, indicate different paths of action and research, especially in the context of South-South circulations.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Border Politics in the making

I had been there, at the border between Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, for ten days. I would constantly surprise myself with the rhythm of this region. The signs of past prosperity were still there: the colonial houses and former mansions and buildings which served as the spaces for administrative presence alongside the Paraguay River in what used to be one of the most important harbour areas in colonial times. I could only imagine the busy traffic of people, the amount of merchandise, timber, silver, cattle, weaponry that used to circulate there. Now, all I could see was a group of elders playing cards, a father and his daughter playing ball and an empty harbour post, which resembled more an abandoned building than anything else. Up on the street, eight hundred and fifty men compose the *Pantaneiro Battalion*, a military headquarters established in a nice terrain with a privileged overview of the bay. They are the remnants of a long history of military presence there, part of what used to be a two-pronged strategy of the Brazilian state to secure its territorial integrity.¹ First, the military was used as a mechanism of settlement: soldiers moving with their families contributed to a controllable population in what was

¹ Perhaps, of most historical significance, is the strategic participation of this border outpost during the Paraguay War from 1864 to 1870. The War, which decimated almost one third of the Paraguayan population, was central in establishing the demarcation limits of this border area and in ensuring a hegemonic Brazilian presence as well. Corumbá was one of the central stages of this war, considered to be the longest and most violent conflict in South American history. A brief visit to the Fort shows how the memory of this war is treasured among the soldiers who currently live there, with paintings and mottos spread around the base.

perceived as a distant, unpopulated (despite the large indigenous presence in these borderlands) and dangerous area. Second, their presence would ensure military protection of the territory against potential threats to national sovereignty. Settle and protect: the dual function of military men and their families. And so I strolled around the bay, waiting for my first ‘official’ appointment.

That day I had been invited to a discussion on women’s rights, focusing particularly on a new piece of legislation that ensured protection against domestic violence, with a special emphasis on the situation of women at the border. Among those present, were the municipal police inspector, members of City Hall, members of local advocacy organizations, lawyers, ordinary women and, well, myself. I had been introduced to the organizers through the Social Pastoral of the Catholic Church as a researcher from a Canadian University doing work on the border and on migrants. As the discussion would almost certainly deal with the situation of migrant women they thought I could at least learn something from their perspectives, problems, and ideas for local solutions. And so I thought I would be there to listen and to learn from their experiences. The moment I arrived I was warmly greeted by some of the participants and I took my seat in the back of the room, waiting for a passive learning experience. The hosts gave a speech, later on women who held positions on rights advocacy spoke and all of a sudden the organizer called my name and asked me to say a few words to the audience about my research and my “Canadian” experience. Feeling a bit apprehensive about that sudden and unexpected opportunity, I told them briefly that I was a graduate student in International Relations doing research with different groups of migrants, refugees, social workers,

national and international officials on the politics of borders and the treatment granted to mobile groups. I was glad to be able to learn more about women's perspectives on the topics of violence and on the difficulties of living in a border region.

After everyone had made their statements, the organizer opened the forum for questions. Imagine my surprise when the first question was for me and it had nothing to do with the topic of the discussion or, at least, so I thought at first. One of the participants asked me how I was able to speak Portuguese so fluently; she had been living there for a while, though being Bolivian, and she found it very difficult to 'get rid' of the Hispanic accent (at that point, I was struck by her incisive concern with effacing her Bolivian origins, see chapter 2). A simple explanation sufficed: I was Brazilian after all, my 'Canadian' status, if it ever existed, was only temporary; I was in Canada with a study permit that would end pretty soon and then I would return to Brazil. I cannot put into words the atmosphere that took over the audience at that moment; a mixed feeling of disappointment (after all, 'white' foreigners who travel to the region, I imagine, would not be interested in participating in a women's rights debate, as many go for fishing tourism in Pantanal) and relief (accents are somewhat inevitable), but also an abrupt anxiety about my somehow uncertain position in that context, neither inside nor outside, a stranger yet so familiar. The meeting proceeded after that, and later on some of the women came to me to ask about the immigration procedures to Canada and my own experiences there.

In my visit to the refugee assistance center in São Paulo, I would constantly be asked about the Canadian immigration, how I got there (or here; locations keep changing

constantly), what are the requirements, whether I could help or sponsor applications. Many interviewees would highlight how many friends they had living in Canada (supposedly that would make it easier for me to help them come to Canada for they could resort to other local connections upon arrival) and, at times, I felt sure that for some to participate in the research interviews was seen as an opportunity to perhaps find another site for refuge or to open up new windows for escaping poverty.² While I found most of the interviews I conducted to be inspirational and filled with new and interesting life experiences, I could not help but feel the disappointment caused by my tenuous 'Canadian' credentials in many of them. These are, of course, my own perceptions, how my senses interpreted the processes of bordering involved in the traveling, translations and encounters that inspire and provide the basis for the pages that follow. I would probably have been less attentive or sensitive, or would not have even bothered to describe these situations, should this not be a work on border politics. I would probably never have encountered them would I have not been doing my graduate program at a North American university. I came to realize that research is an exercise in dealing with the unexpected and in upsetting preconceived notions about home, about otherness and

² The ethics of encounter described here shows that my partners in conversation also had their own agenda and interests in relation to the research and to my own position in these contexts. Therefore, their interpretations, and the interactions and dialogue that stemmed from these encounters, are far from neutral. The ethics of research is itself a political performance, embedded in mobile subjects' own expectations and hopes. Rather than perceiving these aspects as a flaw of research methodologies, I would argue that the acknowledgement of these imbalances and of these processes of negotiation is an important and essential step in terms of situating my own position as a researcher. It is also relevant to question the usual assumed innocence of participants and the fact that any research involves assuming risks and evaluating dangers. I would like to thank Marshall Beier for this insight.

how to bridge the two, if that remains a possibility. These encounters also showed how powerful global hierarchies are in framing and orienting social expectations and in the impact such expectations have in breaking down assumptions about where the subject of analysis begins and the object ends, and if such distinctions are even possible.

These anecdotes on the research encounter exemplify, in important respects, the politics of translation that lies in the heart of border crossroads. They show how identities and social positions constantly shift and are (re)taken depending on the interactive dimensions that prevail in such encounters. They also illustrate, perhaps more vividly, how any analysis or engagement with the border and its dwellers is necessarily a mode of border politics. The border is, in that sense, not 'primarily a place, but a process' (Aas, 2005, p.198). Borders, and the transversality of border experiences, notably through mobility and migration, are important sites where the 'double outsides' (Walker, 2002) of the international are continuously performed.³ Nevertheless, they also engender other possibilities for thinking about the encounter with difference through less exclusionary processes, as evinced in claims to hospitality and solidarity. In other terms, 'in noting the flexibility of the borders, one should also note that in the process people and their identities are deconstructed and rearranged as well' (Zuleik and Salter, 2005, p.2). And in

³ Walker articulates the double outsides of the international in relation to how modern subjectivities are constructed and premised on, first, a separation of 'modernity' from other possible worlds and, second, on the dichotomy between the production of subjectivity and its exteriority. This exteriority, he argues, 'must be excluded so as to permit the modern self to know itself in relation to its own understanding of what objectivity, indeed the world as such, must be' (2006, p.58). I resort to the idea of double outsides precisely to articulate how border politics is itself about the processes through which the construction of such exteriorities takes place. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which mobile subjects respond to these processes of inclusion/exclusion at the core of the international.

this rearrangement other worlds might be conceived that do not easily fit into the conventional boxes of international ‘orders’.

The main goal of this dissertation is to analyze these moments of border encounters for how they both relate to and reformulate the prevailing interpretations of the international, sovereignty, human mobility and resistance. The dissertation investigates how a global discourse on mobility becomes translated into specific border zones and how displaced groups reinforce, perform, and problematize different understandings of mobility. In other words, the research question can be framed as: *How is the performance of mobility constitutive of border politics and what are the implications of these intersubjective processes for (re)defining the ‘inter’ of international encounters?* Hence, this project is about the processes that constitute the border as a political site in which the ‘inter’ of the international becomes problematized, disciplined, reinforced and contested. I argue that the constitution of the ‘inter’ is one of the core aspects of border politics and a privileged zone from which to understand the (dis)connections between global and local, particular and universal, self and Other.

By framing the analysis around the idea of border politics, I have in mind two main objectives. The first is to understand how different experiences of mobility lead to different perceptions and representations of the border. I call these differences ‘topologies of otherness’ and I focus on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants as groups, traditionally constructed as significant others, for whom the border has become a life-defining moment/space, a condition of existence, a ‘place where one resides’ (Balibar, 2002, p.83). I also focus on the infrastructure of the border in its global/local dimension

as represented and reproduced by its institutional gatekeepers: state officials, border patrols, and international organizations. In that sense, I aim at contrasting or analyzing the dynamics between what we can frame as an overall institutional discourse on border management and the everyday experiences of persons living at or crossing borders. I hope such an analysis will allow for a better understanding of how border politics conflates the traditional spaces of the political (the global and the local, the national and the international, the inside and the outside) and elucidates the necessary interpenetration of those spheres in the constitution of social engagements and subjectivities in particular sites.

The second goal is to cope with the multidimensionality of the border and of border experiences. Examples of such dimensions include ideas of legality/illegality, or the juridical meanings and procedures of borderlands; ideas of mobility/fixity related to the coming across, into, up against the border; and the contact, engagement, and ways in which the experience of the border instantiates change/continuity for those who live it. I am particularly concerned with how different groups respond to the coming into contact with the border. I refer here to its institutional aspect, not only territorially but also through the border apparatus outside the traditionally defined territorial borders. On one hand, I am interested in how these different groups relate to the prevailing language of migratory practices, that is, a global discourse on migration and refugees, the definite grammar by which one makes sense of mobility and transversality. Engaging with multiple understandings of the border and with the mechanisms of translation and communication over those border experiences allows for the unveiling of such

relationships, and their multiple possible directions (transformative, reactionary, or conservative, to name just a few). I do this by focusing on the performance of 'global' notions of mobility in the everyday encounters with the border and the politics of 'friction' (Tsing, 2005) that arises from it. In addition, I aim at elucidating some of the mechanisms through which sovereign powers reclaim authority positions within border contexts and how the flexibilization and ubiquity of borders is somehow enacted in 'uncommon places' (Beier, 2005) and in unconventional terms. These places are usually disregarded in International Relations (IR) mainstream analysis as either being irrelevant or inconsequential to the politics of the international. After all, what can IR learn from a square block in São Paulo, a three block fair in Corumbá, a hair salon in Rio de Janeiro, or a street vendor in the harbor of the Amazon River? Part of the argument of this dissertation is that these sites are central to the enactment of sovereignty and also to articulating creative responses to the violences associated with a global ordering of human mobility, especially in the context of South-South (dis)placements. Therefore, these inconspicuous sites are highlighted as stages for performances of the international and for rethinking the amount of power and energy that it takes to present them otherwise.⁴ Many International Relations scholars have recently argued for such type of analysis and the growing number of contributions on border studies attests to the salience

⁴ My usage of the term 'international' as a noun relates to a particular reading of the concept, especially stemming from mainstream International Relations scholarship, in relation to the regulation and management of human mobility. One could speak then about the constitutive processes of the international *self*, as conveyed for example in Salter (2006). Part of the argument of this dissertation is that these performances of the international are directly related to borders and to the management of mobile bodies and subjectivities. I provide a more detailed analysis of its meaning in Chapter One.

of the issue of human mobility in relation to global (dis)connections.⁵ This dissertation hopes to contribute to such scholarly work, in particular by articulating some of their theoretical contributions to a context that is strikingly absent in the literature, notably of migration and displacement within the South American continent, and of South-South migration more generally.

The term mobility, rather than migration, is preferred because it allows me to include different experiences of transversal relations that put into question the traditional oppositions between migrants, immigrants and refugees within the overall context of a global migratory regime. The meanings of such terms are deeply contested, though routinely emphasized as a means of imposing a sense of ‘order’ on a politics that disrupts, through its dislocations and also relocations, notions of horizontal time and of spatially circumscribed territories.⁶ These notions inform the way we have conventionally ‘mapped’ realities and defined the language of migratory discourses in IR. This is not to

⁵ Among the many works that could be listed under the rubric of border studies in IR, I am particularly indebted to Doty (2006a, 2006b, 2007), Nyers (2003, 2006), Bigo (2001, 2007), Soguk (1999, 2007, 2008), Salter (2004, 2006, 2008), Walters (2004), Rajaram (2007), Schendel and Abraham (2005) and Weber (2008). Other theoretical interventions, only tenuously situated within the disciplinary boundaries of International Relations, have provided important insights and also avenues for exploring transdisciplinary articulations for the following pages. I am thinking in particular of the contribution of Anthropologists in the field of border studies like Rosaldo (1993), Ortiz-Gonzalez (2004) and Saldivar (1997), as well as anthropologists whose work tackles the politics of memory and of translocal connections like Chatterjee (2004), Ong (2004, 2006), Tsing (2005) and, one of the most intriguing and thought-provoking works I have read in recent times, Das (2007) – from which I draw most of my analysis in chapter 3.

⁶ My focus in the dissertation is to show how mobile subjects reframe and respond to these terms and the consequences that stem from being labeled as a refugee, a migrant or an IDP. I do not provide an alternative definition for these terms, but rather problematize, from the standpoint of varying narratives on international mobility, their meanings.

say that territoriality does not remain relevant and perhaps central to understanding mobility. Rather, it suggests that territoriality does not provide a sufficient marker for engaging with the complexities of displacements and the social practices associated with it in contemporary times. As Scholte (2002) states, territoriality is central, but territorialism is not. In order to tackle the complex attachment between borders, territory and mobility, I resort to an analysis of practices of zoning as a useful conceptual strategy to understand the ebb and flow of border politics.

These borders refer not only to what we conventionally identify as ‘territorial’ borders, but also to ‘cultural’ bordering and zoning practices notably related to identity, notions of belonging and becoming, of citizenship and status. In spite of analytical distinctions between bordering practices, they are mutually constitutive processes for one does not exist without the other. Ideas of nationality, for example, inform, partially but perhaps in most significant respects, definitions of self and other, and crossing borders involves a reconfiguration of these relations. Attributes of citizenship are predicated on both a territorial and cultural sense of bordering, the reason why I refer to mobility as always a ‘situated’ phenomenon or practice.

In sum, this dissertation revolves around some central conceptual claims. It draws on the core idea of **border politics**, in order to emphasize the multidimensional, ‘polysemic’ nature of borders (Balibar, 2002) and to stress the fact that borders are always and necessarily embedded, constituted and reproduced through and within political processes. It also points out to the need to further explore **practices of zoning** related to borders as important responses of governmental and international actors to the

statist claim to ‘the monopoly over the means of movement’ (Torpey, 2000) and, I would add, the violent exclusions and discriminations that stem from it. Finally, it underscores the salience of **mobility** and of **life** in order to reorient our attention to those who live within/as a border. It shows the preeminence that should be given in the research to groups and individuals traditionally framed as ‘transversal subjects’, such as refugees and migrants, for whom mobility has become a condition and whose life has been defined by the (im)possibilities of the border.

Methodological Considerations

In a sense, this project began with my own personal participation in the bureaucratic machinery of refugee protection in Brazil in 2004. I was then a legal assistant for a civil society organization responsible for refugee status determination and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Rio de Janeiro. I was, according to the problematic jargon of refugee regulations, a ‘case worker’. I became, with that experience, more familiar with the ongoing struggles of refugee and migrant communities in that particular context and also with the difficulties and gaps in translating national and international policies on the regulation of mobility to an overall condition of political abjection to which these groups were routinely submitted. I am greatly indebted to both the displaced community and to NGO workers for allowing me to participate in the refugee protection program at that time and for letting me further pursue a more critical analysis of the challenges faced in our daily encounters. This project is, therefore, an exercise in revisiting some of the questions that were constantly put before us back then,

but now with new inflections and perspectives that allow me to incorporate a dialogue between those inside the bureaucratic machinery and those who are subjected to it. The chapters that follow are thus a reflection on the relationship between displacement, borders and the regulation of ‘inter’national mobility from ‘inside-out and outside-in’ (Smith 1999, p.5).

From June to December 2007, I conducted visits to broadly defined border zones in Brazil. By border zones, I mean the sites in which bordering practices take place, where the instrumentalization of the international mobility discourse is performed and contested, even, and increasingly, when such zones are no longer situated at the territorial borders. These visits included the Tri-Border area between Brazil, Colombia and Peru, the Tri-Border area between Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, and the urban ‘borders’ in Manaus (Amazonas), Santos, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the latter two being the largest metropolitan centers in the country. I also went to Brasília, the national capital, twice, for interviews with government and international officials. The selection of these research sites was justified by two main reasons. First, Rio and São Paulo host the largest communities of refugees and migrants in the country and have the most structured networks of assistance and organization devoted to these groups. The Tri-Border areas are one of the main entry corridors for asylum seekers and migrants towards Brazilian territory and are one of the least researched and analyzed sites for the purposes of human mobility.⁷ These border areas have also started to receive increasing attention on the part

⁷ The main corridor though remains being Foz do Iguaçu, in the Tri-Border between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Movement of peoples and goods is intense there

of national and international organizations and are currently the subject of important diplomatic negotiations and regional struggles over integration, the fight against drug trafficking, and the implementation of alternative regimes for transborder dwellers in South America. They provide consequentially an interesting landscape to investigate how international politics is (dis)articulated with the border politics of mobility and displacement.

The representations and conversations portrayed in the following chapters stem from interviews that occurred during these visits (see Appendix I). I attempted to establish a broad dialogue with different groups of interlocutors involved in the conception, implementation and performance of mobility regulations. These groups included:

- Civil society organizations, mainly those articulated in the Human Mobility Network working both in the advocacy and assistance fronts with refugees' and migrants' populations. These organizations are usually associated with the Catholic Church in Brazil and to the overall structure of a Catholic transnational network of groups working with refugee protection and with the *Pastoral do Migrante*.
- National and international officials, both at the federal and local levels, specifically those involved directly with policies pertaining to the regulation and management of migration. Again, officials were interviewed both at the federal

and this is a border zone that has received more attention on the part of the literature, both in Brazil and also internationally. See Seri, 2004.

and local level and included representatives of the National Refugee Board (CONARE), UNHCR representatives, federal police officials and also border patrol agents.

- Displaced communities of refugees, asylum seekers, non-status migrants, permanent residents, internally displaced groups and transborder dwellers. Interviews and conversations included both individual experiences of mobility and also collectively organized strategies of association among displaced communities.

Throughout the dissertation, I have refrained from indicating the names or sources of information, in order to preserve anonymity of participants. When necessary, interviewees were assigned letters and information regarding the interviews is provided in Appendix I. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese and Spanish and, therefore, all excerpts transcribed are my own translation. Not all interviews were recorded and as such I reference interviews recorded in audio and transcribed as personal interview or interview; and my own travel notes and notes on interviews (not recorded) as personal notes.

An important source of inspiration and reflection were the more informal conversations that took place while I was in these sites. These are ‘documents that cannot be transcribed, knowledge that comes and goes, but remains with you and introduce changes in a given argument’ (Mignolo 2000, p.xi). This is the knowledge that cannot be quantified, that is memory and intuition, and that refuses the label of ‘verifiable data’ by any stretch of imagination. These are figments of life that are only tenuously shareable. In

important respects, this knowledge refuses the scientific pretense pervasive in social sciences and embraces a form of story-telling that is always personal and, for that reason, unverifiable. Increasingly, International Relations scholars are trying to intervene in the disciplinary dialogue by introducing new genres of research. Such trends involve a prioritization of poetry and other aesthetic forms as a mode of scholarly writing necessary for unveiling international politics beyond its apparent meanings. For others, the rhythm of research is based on a prose style as an attempt to conceive of the everyday life of those who constitute the not-so-marginal sites of international encounters.⁸ In either case, the attempt is to practice a method that destabilizes the conventional ways in which the discipline defines how one can approach the world (and speak about it) and what that world can in fact be. A different aesthetics of research is thus fostered as a form of critical engagement with the ontological and epistemological assumptions about what constitutes the ‘field’ of International Relations. I am indebted to such contributions, even if my own attempt at telling the stories I encountered might not be coherently defined as either poetry or prose, due to my own lack of writing skills and to the difficult task of translating these conversations (which were mostly conducted in Portuguese and Spanish) to a language (and a mindset that follows it) that is not my own.

If it is true that something is always lost in translation and that any form of representation is doomed to produce some form of violence to what is being said and to whoever said it, this dissertation is no exception. All I can do is alert the reader that the stories and interpretations provided here are reflections of my own perceptions of these

⁸ A good example of this genre of writing is Enloe (2004). For recent calls to a more poetical reading of international politics, see Soguk (2006).

border encounters and whenever possible I have attempted to be faithful to the words and rhythms of the conversations I had with my colleagues in this journey. As Roxanne Doty aptly describes when she reflects on the challenge of research in contexts of borders, displacement and crossroads of life/death:

I cannot claim that this story, which is ultimately my story, is the one *others* would tell were we to listen. I cannot pretend to know what *their* stories would be. For there are other unauthorized crossroads that snake through risky territory and these, too, must be considered. Crossroads between what we write and who we are. Between our words and our identities. I struggle because an ethics of encounter should include the ways in which we, as writers and human beings, confront what we write about and how we write, and there are no clear paths for doing this (Doty, 2006, p.3).

As such, I hope that the path chosen here is somehow honest in relation to the gap that exists between my own position and that of those who partook in this exercise. Accordingly, I should highlight what this dissertation does not aim to do. First, this is not a project on Brazil or Brazilian immigration and refugee policies. I resort to this context to illustrate and articulate the connections between theoretical statements and their implications to the everyday struggles and opportunities presented to displaced groups in the country. Even though I do hope the reader will leave with a better understanding of what these policies entail, they should provide more than anything else a stage for an assessment of global connections in their relation with borders and life in displacement. Second, I have avoided using the terms *ethnography* or *fieldwork* to describe the methodology of this dissertation for several reasons. Though this is, even partially, a dissertation influenced by ethnographic methodologies, especially in relation to how I attempt to present the border encounters and stories lived through during my visits, I do

not claim to present the type of ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) that is conventionally involved in such methodological approaches. Moreover, ethnography is, to say the least, a very loaded term with serious political and epistemological implications. Especially in relation to many of the individuals and communities who are discussed here, ethnographic research is simply another word for reasserting historical hierarchies and discriminations, of forgetting long settled memories of colonial imposition, of appropriation of knowledge and of a divorce between researcher and researched that is instrumental in securing the *world as it is*.⁹ As such, my own ethnographic inspirations can be better described as exercise in story-telling and in narratives, through a genre that is not fully divorced from anthropological concerns, but that departs from it notably in its central purpose, namely of articulating everyday life in displacement with ‘inter’national politics.

Nevertheless, I do not want to shy away from the questions that stem from the current ethnographic turn in IR (Vrasti, 2008). I have attempted to tackle them at different levels. First, I engage with how IR disciplinary mechanisms are constitutive of the important restrictions and normative choices that make the everyday lives of border dwellers increasingly unbearable and highly inhospitable. Second, I try to engage with the conversations that took place during the course of my visits in no other term than that of narratives. As such, I hope the reader will be aware that these lines that follow are my

⁹ There are important contributions that have critically reconfigured ethnography as a methodological strategy of research, especially in the after ‘Writing Culture’ interventions. See Clifford & Marcus (1986), Behar (1996) and Clifford (2002). For a recent intervention on the role of ethnography in IR, see Beier (2004) and Vrasti (2008). See also Smith (1999) for a critical reflection of the linkage between colonial mentalities and research methodology.

way of conceiving of such stories and the possibilities and dangers that lie within them. Unavoidably, I have, in different ways, incurred in the risks and problems of appropriation and ascription that are inherent in ethnographical approaches. I do not believe that there is any way out of this conundrum and that the alternative, of choosing to do nothing or to remain silent, can be even more deleterious for these groups¹⁰, as I hope will become clear in the following pages. The politics of writing is in that sense also a practice of border politics, because the normative choices made affect which stories are privileged and the standpoints from which they are told. My choices therefore are also discriminatory in their own ways, for instance, by focusing on mobile groups narratives rather than on the potential responses that stem from them from 'official' sites. Third, there is always the inevitable question of representation and the immanent fact that my partners in conversation also have their own agendas and political interests. As there is no innocent knowledge, there is no innocent political subjectivity. To engage in these conversations from a vantage point that takes seriously the claim that these partners are political subjects is to also consider the inevitable fact that they too engage in normative choices, which are neither neutral nor naïve. Therefore, the research choices made here are also political choices. In conclusion, I hope to have contributed to an 'ethnography that takes IR's own theories, histories and actors as its main objects of research' and that opens 'up the sovereign foundation of the discipline to cross-cultural or culture-to-culture engagements' (Vrasti 2008, p.300). And I hope to have done that from a perspective that

¹⁰ I am indebted to Marshall Beier for pressing me on the relationship between my research and ethnography. These considerations stem from our dialogue on this topic.

is usually disregarded, as either irrelevant or inconsequential, to the international politics of human mobility, namely that of mobile groups themselves.

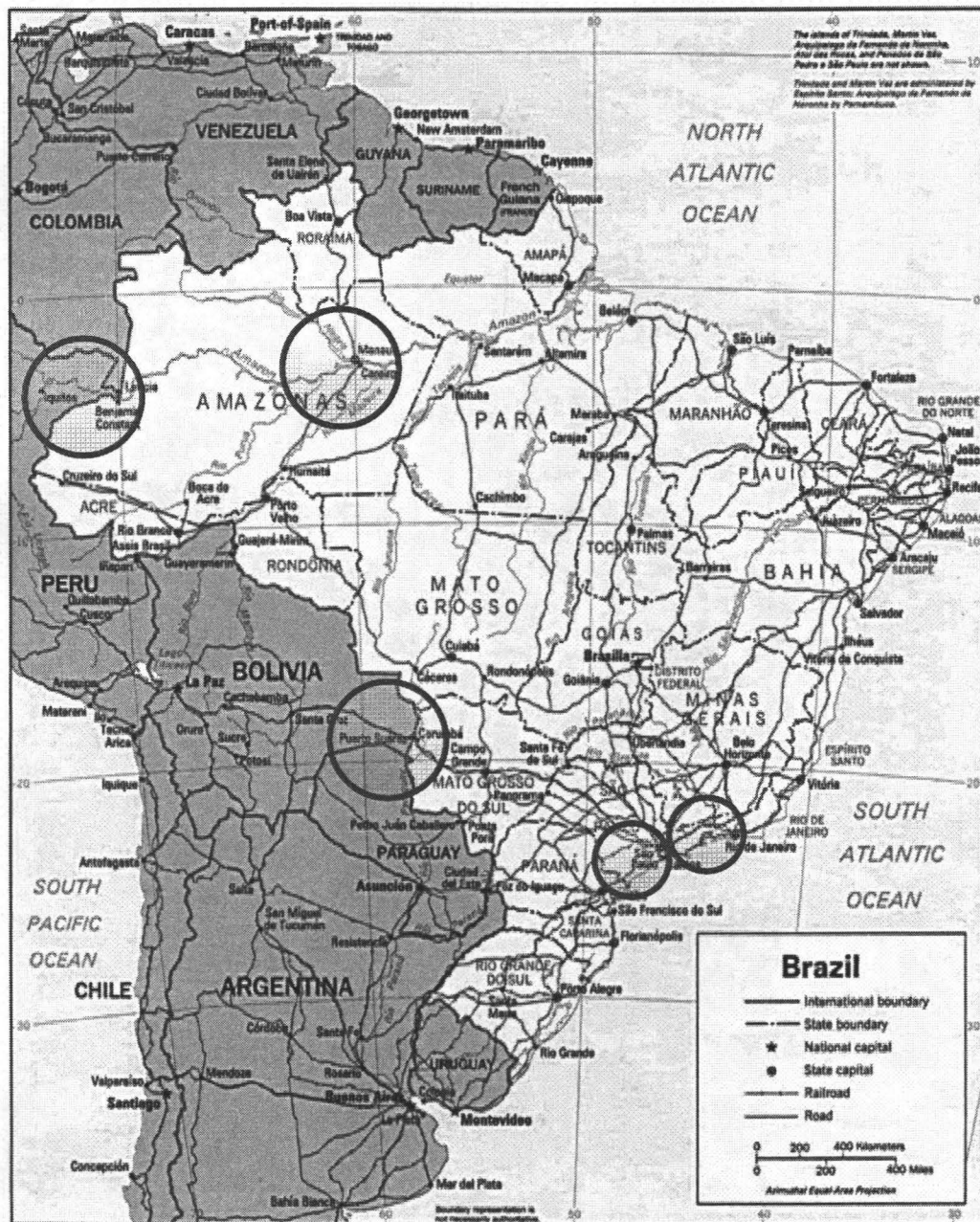


Figure 1

Map of South America, Brazil and Border Areas: circles indicate location of visits

Source: <http://www.deltatranslator.com/brazil-map.jpg>

Structure of the dissertation

In this dissertation, I attempt to show that border politics is about the negotiation over the terms and modes of presence of the ‘inter’ of the international. I argue that in order to understand these processes we need to elucidate how the global politics of mobility is played out (or translated) in border crossroads and from a range of social groups that encompass not only the Nation-State, but also a myriad of actors that, despite having little or no say in the international framework of human mobility, perform bordering practices that are central to the enactment of difference as a primary trait of inclusion/exclusion from the political. These processes of political differentiation are reinforced but also contested by mobile groups, especially in relation to discourses that try to equate human mobility as a choice between freedom and protection. In important respects, their intervention attempts to problematize the dichotomous portrayal of freedom or protection as two irreconcilable dimensions of life in displacement, thus evincing the possibility that the ‘inter’ of the international can actually become a site of living, rather than a rite of passage.

I also argue that by incorporating the narratives of diverse social actors at these border crossroads we might come closer to displacing the politics of human mobility from one premised on a conventional reading of the international, as a strategy of separation and modulation and management of difference, towards a global politics of (dis)connections, in which mobile groups can become active participants in the framing of their lives’ possibilities. At a minimum, mobile groups interventions question the normalization of modes of being (and becoming) asserted in border encounters, modes

that have routinely ostracized them as legitimate and authorized participants in the debates over, for example, immigration and integration policies. The moving-away from the international is always embedded in tenuous and ambiguous exchanges about what constitutes mobility, how movement is to be interpreted, stimulated or prevented, where and when it can take place and under what conditions. Nevertheless, a global discourse on displacement, concerned with the bringing up of more inclusive policies and an equitable distribution of access to rights, both in terms of legal status and substance, depends on taking seriously the narratives that arise from mobile groups struggles. As such, I hope this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of what is at stake in dealing with the border encounter from a political perspective and how different narratives on life in displacement can, in fact, indicate different paths of action and research.

Therefore, each chapter can be read in terms of a dialogue with these multiple narratives. In Chapter One, I dialogue with the sovereign language of the international regulation of human mobility, namely in relation to international treaties and documents. I argue, first, that the regulation and administration of human mobility and displacement is articulated in terms of what I call the international discourse on mobility, specifically exemplified in the language of international law instruments. The way in which such discourse manages issues of human mobility is a direct response to two sets of paradoxes that lie at the heart of the 'international'. First, it stems from the tension between the national and the international; and second, from the relevance attributed to sovereignty and citizenship as the normative ideals of political belonging and order within IR. I also argue that these paradoxes are presumably resolved through the establishment

of *difference* between varied types and experiences of displacement. I then move on to analyze how these topologies of otherness are connected to a particular framing of the ‘inter’ of the international. As such, this chapter is a discussion about the disciplinary boundaries of IR and how they inform the construction and maintenance of borders in relation to experiences of human mobility.

In Chapter Two, I analyze how the ‘inter’ becomes constituted in global/local crossroads through an examination of practices of zoning. I argue that zones are one of the ways in which sovereignty rearticulates itself in the encounter with life in displacement and I dwell with the openings and dangers involved in the micro-practices of the regulation of mobility for transborder dwellers. I convey the idea that zoning practices allow for an understanding of sovereignty performances as primarily enabled by ambiguous appropriations of the border. These appropriations involve an understanding of the border as both an inclusive, hospitable site, and also as an enduring mechanism of discriminations. These discriminations are affected and often staged by an assemblage of social actors, and consequently a network of varying social interests, that respond to important inequalities and perceptions of what constitutes ‘otherness’. I resort to the particular case of Bolivian migrants both in the borderlands and in urban border areas to illustrate how the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion characteristic of bordering practices are affected and resisted in their daily lives. Theoretically, this chapter aims at establishing a dialogue with the literature on border studies and on forms of flexible sovereignty and how they might help understand specific dynamics of political and social marginality especially in the context of peripheral countries. More than that, they allow

for an understanding of how asymmetries in the Global South are central to the everyday dynamics of human mobility and to the enduring difficulties displaced groups face in these contexts.

Chapter Three continues with an exploration of border zones, but with a focus on how displaced communities interfere in the political narrative of border encounters. I resort to the idea of border languages, interpreted in terms of the circulation of rumours, in order to unveil counter-narratives and perceptions of borders and their impact on the daily lives of mobile groups. I focus on the rumours shared by African refugees in a shanty-town in Rio de Janeiro and on the interpretation of a moment of ‘crisis’ in the Tri-Border area between Brazil, Colombia and Peru. This focus permits me to articulate how a different border politics might emerge that takes into consideration the racial, ethnic, economic, social and political dimensions that shape the spatial and temporal location of displaced life. Rumours allows us to see the actualization of time and social/cultural linkages through a rescuing of memory that repoliticizes the boundaries conventionally established about what constitutes community and belonging. Rumours also permit us to understand alternative responses to situations that suddenly and abruptly interrupt traditional performances of the border.

Chapter Four deals with the connections between borders and claims to solidarity. I discuss three narratives on borders of solidarity, following the Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action on Refugee Protection signed by Latin American countries in November 2004. I argue that perceptions of the role of borders, as both bridges and barriers, and as spaces of life, vary according to how each group appropriates and interferes in the

political dialogue. Some focus on the management of mobility; others on the improvement of life conditions for marginal groups; still others try to interrupt the political processes that make such marginalization possible in the first place. I propose three varying understandings of solidarity that speak to each of these perspectives: managerial, communitarian and autonomous solidarity. Thus, I aim at contributing to a more critical analysis of what borders of solidarity might actually promote and how they can have an impact on the daily lives of those who inhabit such sites.

In the concluding chapter, I provide a summary of the main contributions of the research, highlighting the points of (dis)connection between the multiple experiences of life in displacement described and the constitution of border politics. I focus on the connection between borders as sites of hospitality and how a particular reading of the international (as governmentality of difference) constructs the granting of ‘protection’ as a gift. I introduce the concept of gift-giving and gratitude in the conclusion in order to unveil some of its consequences to the politics of protection regarding mobile subjects. I revisit the case of resettled refugees in Brazil – briefly mentioned in chapter three - to derive some conclusions about how the logic of gratitude has its roots in the international discourse of mobility and is consequential to many of the problems highlighted in the everyday encounters of displaced groups in the contexts analyzed. I revisit some of the theoretical claims presented and how they can indicate further paths of investigation and dialogue within the academic community and, perhaps more importantly, between the different actors involved in the performance of human mobility in the Brazilian context.

In sum, the dissertation explores different groups, border zones and experiences of life in displacement in order to articulate the relationship between border politics and a reconceptualization of the international. It draws on the moments of encounter experienced in the course of my visits as exemplary statements about how the 'inter' comes into being through border crossings and border lives. Border politics from the standpoint of border dwellers is, in a sense, a process of identity construction, always embedded in both ideational and material basis, 'that waits for the day that is no longer necessary' (Johnson and Michaelson, 1997, p.20). As the chapters that follow demonstrate, when that day will in fact arrive depends on the view point we assume when gazing at the border.

Chapter 1

Topologies of otherness: the mobility regime and the international management of displacement

In what has now become a classical text in refugee studies, Aguayo, Zolberg & Suhrke (1989) state that there is great uncertainty and confusion in relation to the nomenclature of human mobility. This confusion, they argue, stems from a rather loose portrayal of the experience of international mobility under the rubric of ‘refugees’ and ‘migrants’ in public discourse, and a rather precise, and increasingly restrictive, definition of these terms in International Law. There is an apparent divorce between these two performances of naming – the one stemming from the international mobility regime¹¹ and the other arising from particular and more localized experiences of displacement. This divorce is, I argue (along with many other authors such as Huysmans 2002; Soguk 1999; Nyers 2006; Albert et al. 2000), a result of the increasing tension between the complexity of migration experiences in contemporary politics and a pervasive reliance on a particular conceptualization of the ‘international’, premised on state sovereignty as its normative and regulative ideal.

¹¹ I use the term regime throughout the dissertation when referring to the set of norms and standards devised for the management and regulation of human mobility, usually established in juridical instruments and their interpretation by sovereign authorities. I use the term regime and discourse quite interchangeably, in order to convey the idea that these norms are always embedded in the mechanisms and processes of their interpretation and implementation.

The junction between the construction of displacement and the international is responsible for, in important respects, the increasing inability of the mobility regime to account for the interstitial complexity involved in the experience of displacement. The proliferation of usages in public discourses of terms referring to experiences of mobility tends to attach characteristics to displaced groups that are not prescribed in international regulations. It is common to read and listen, for example, to references to economic vs. political refugees, environmental refugees, exiles, development migrants, development refugees and so on. Even though it is important to consider these enunciations and the material conditions underlying the choices of these terms, in this chapter, I refer to a general discourse on mobility in relation to its 'international' component. In particular, I focus on the discourse stemming from the conventionally acknowledged voices of sovereign authority: States and International Organizations. In this sense, it is more appropriate for the purposes of this specific chapter to speak of an 'international mobility discourse'.¹²

The tension between the recognition of *in-between* forms of subjectivity formation and the attempt to name and place an ordering upon experiences of displacement has generated huge anxieties among policy makers, international and government officials. More importantly, such anxieties arise among assistance workers from a variety of

¹² Nevertheless, part of the argument of the dissertation is precisely to highlight how this international discourse acquires its global purchase (and is both contested and reproduced) in the narratives of displaced groups and civil society organizations, in relation to the prescriptions and definitions provided by international law and its directives. One might read it then as a movement from the international towards the global, passing through a reproblematicization of the 'inter'.

organizations and migrants and refugees themselves. Therefore, while the language of ‘crisis’, ‘emergency’, ‘problem’, has often been leveled at refugees and migrants in an effort to cast them as a so-called ‘existential threat’ to the nation-state (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1998), the terminology also is revealing of the deep seated anxiety that exists over how these political subjectivities are disruptive of modern political imaginaries more generally.

When referring to the mobility regime, I am particularly concerned with the set of norms and practices that articulate the construction of difference from the ‘international’ standpoint. These sets of norms and practices attempt to control and define what the legitimate modes of otherness are; they create specifically defined expectations about how the performance of difference must be enacted, for example, in the border encounter. As will become clearer in the following chapters, the agents behind such practices, of controlling and promoting the human mobility regime, encompass not only state and international organizations’ officials, but a myriad of actors both at the regional, local and transnational levels (including, for example, municipal authorities, transnational networks of migrant labour, assistance associations, neighborhood communities, migrants’, IDPs and refugees’ organizations, etc.). The mobility regime¹³ functions, therefore, as a governmentality structure. The aim of this regime is to discipline and guarantee an ordering of ‘life on the move’ that enables a clear demarcation of inside/outside, with the result delineating the ‘inter’ as a transitory and temporary passage between the national

¹³ For a historical analysis of the constitution of the international mobility regime, see my references suggested on page 39. For an analysis of the linkage between globalization and the mobility regime, see Shamir (2005). For a general portrayal of the global mobility and visa regime, see Salter (2004; 2006).

and the international. It is the specific regulation and management of the 'inter' condition that distinguishes the mobility regime as a central disciplinary mechanism in the workings of international politics. Additionally, I argue that the mobility regime is an important piece in the overall structure of the international as governmentality. In a recent article, Neumann and Sending (2006) suggest the need for a shift 'from understanding the international as a rationalized concept to understanding it as a discursive one'. In this shift, they argue, it is possible to see how the international operates as a form of governmentality through its mechanisms and strategies of regimentation and control of populations. They go on to state that:

There exists a dense network of liberal norms that shapes the identities and behavioral patterns of states. It may be seen as a global system of indirect forms of power that operates to guide, shape and foster specific types of not only states, but also other polities, as well as individuals. It sets up standards of behavior for individuals and models of institutions to be implemented and followed by all good members of the international community (Neumann & Sending 2006, p.699).

The mobility regime provides one example of a 'global system of indirect forms of power' that operates precisely by articulating, controlling and managing the construction of difference. Foucault defines governmentality as an 'ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its targets, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatus of security as its essential technical instrument' (2007, p.108). Governmentality refers then to a group of practices that articulate and structure relations of power, that is premised on a network of actors and actions which conform a mode of 'political technology' (Bigo 2002). These

actions, for example, are reflected in the ways in which citizenship, as the appropriate model of subjectivity in the modern state system, can be interpreted as one of the mechanisms of the management of populations (Hindess 2002). I argue that the management of otherness (be it defined in terms such as refugees, irregular crossers, migrants or internally displaced peoples) provides us with the reverse (yet co-constitutive) side of the management of international populations. Moreover, the governmentality of otherness is itself essential to the reproduction of a particular conceptualization of the international, one that is clearly exemplified in mainstream International Relations (IR) Theory.

The first part of this chapter shows how the portrayal of the international in mainstream IR theory provides the basis for this particular ensemble that constitutes the governmentality of difference. In the following section I discuss some of the major assumptions about what the international is and their consequences to the regulation of mobility. In the second section, I articulate how the tension between the national and the international is evinced in the international discourse of mobility through an analysis of three categories of significant others, namely refugees, migrant workers and internally displaced groups. This analysis leads me to the second argument of this chapter which refers to how the international¹⁴ as governmentality establishes *difference* between

¹⁴ Salter (2006), for example, speaks about an international biopolitical order as an essential trait in the construction of mobile populations and individuals. He refers to a 'political technology of the international self' that is produced and enacted in the border encounter. When referring to the international, as a noun, I do not attempt to erase agency or the role of social actors (border patrol, state agents, international officials, mobile groups and so on), but rather to call attention to the underlying structure of this system of political technology as a framework through which such agency takes place. In the other

various types and experiences of displacement and how this difference is subsequently modulated and systematized. This systematization operates through a compartmentalization of life that forges a hierarchy of bodies according to degrees of necessity and a particular conceptualization of vulnerability attached to the affective/emotional components of distance/proximity from the realms of fear (notably associated with the international domain) and progress (associated with the national sphere). It is based on a linear conception of space that divorces the national from the international through territorial borders and that also equates the national with the nation-state. It also portrays movement as 'unidirectional from countries of origin to countries of asylum' (Scatellaris 2007, p.46) in the case of refugees, or as a pendulum between defined edges represented by the country of origin and the country of residence/work, in the case of migrants. Moreover, the international discourse of mobility is premised on a linear conception of time in which border crossings are represented as transitory passages in the otherwise long-run towards the assumed normalcy of the sovereign order and of 'modern' subjects. The governmentality of difference conveyed in this international regime of power establishes important asymmetries between experiences of mobility, therefore constituting what I have defined as topologies of otherness. These topologies yield specific hierarchies in terms of access to rights, freedoms and services for those who embody them. Most importantly, they define the conditions under which mobile individuals and groups 'are made subjects' (Fontana and Bertani 2003, p.284).

chapters, I elucidate how these varying actors participate in the micropolitics of the border and how their actions are somewhat embedded in the normative structure of the international self.

Consequently, the mobility regime can be perceived as one of the mediums through which a particular definition of the international is performed and, therefore, assumes a central role in the enactment of the international as a strategy of ‘governmentality of difference’. I conclude by analyzing how this specific conceptualization of the international conveyed in mainstream IR works to produce these topologies of otherness through a modulation of difference between varied mobile groups, specifically in relation to refugees, migrants and IDPs.

The inter, the national and the international in the regulation of mobility

Within IR Theory, Realism presents the most enduring attempt to construct a theory of ‘international’ politics. It posits that what is distinctive about the international realm is the fact that it is composed by specific unities, namely states, interacting in a decentralized order, namely anarchy. Morgenthau, for instance, assumes that international politics is ‘governed by laws that have their roots in human nature’ (1967, p.4). Since human beings are taken to be selfish and states are presented as aggregates of human beings, for Morgenthau and other realists, it logically follows that states are egoistic actors whose interests are defined in terms of power. International politics is thus not only different from domestic politics, where solidarity and community are feasible due to the presence of a central government with the legitimate monopoly over the use of violence, but also politics itself is separated from other realms of social life. Ethics in international relations is restricted to a form of prudence, where states’ main goal is to seek their own survival for the sake of their own citizens. It is this anarchical nature, presumed to be

conflictive and resembling a Hobbesian ‘state of nature’, that makes the interactions at the international level so distinctive and relevant. International Relations deal precisely with the issue of ‘survival’, with what realists consider to be the primary issue on the agenda: ‘security’. International politics deals necessarily with that which is ‘exceptional’, with war and peace, violence and order. When Martin Wight notoriously stated the impossibility of a progressive form of theorizing in IR, he was precisely referring to the impossibility of thinking about ‘progress’ when the nature of interstate relations is so exceptional.¹⁵

Political theory and Law are maps of experience or systems of action within the realm of normal relationships and calculable results. They are the theory of good life. International theory is the theory of survival. What for political theory is the extreme case (as revolution or civil war) is for international theory the regular case (Wight 1966, p.33).

Even those who qualify the ‘self-help’ reading of anarchy, as is the case of Hedley Bull (1977), do not escape the importance of the state and the dichotomy between the domestic and the international as central distinctive elements of IR. The ‘anarchical society’, despite being marked by the presence of common rules and values that give to the international a sense of ‘community’, is nevertheless concerned primarily with order and the stability of the system. States share interests and participate together in certain institutions, but the most important ones are precisely those of the realist image of the international: war, diplomacy, balance of power and, not the least, the great powers (1977, p.4). This is also an important aspect of the nature of the ‘international’ in IR: it is

¹⁵ A similar claim is made by Walker (2006) when he states that the international, the imperial and the exceptional have always been intertwined in the conceptualization of politics (or the lack of politics) in IR Theory.

not only about states, taken as spatial containers of societies, or as is often referred to as ‘billiard balls’, but mostly about some particular states. Certain states matter more than others and thus IR Theory should be concerned primarily with the international structure and those actors that are most relevant to it. The conservative vein of the realist portrayal of the international shows that, in fact, progress is not part of the nature of interstate relations and change is to be prevented for it is necessarily violent.

Neoliberal institutionalists (Hasenclever et al. 1997) attempted to criticize realists on the basis that interstate relations can be cooperative and tend to include in their analysis non-state agents as important variables of the international realm. As states become more interdependent and regimes arise, understood as sets of norms and rules ‘around which actors’ expectations converge’ (Hasenclever et al. 1997, p.9), they become able to coordinate behavior and the ‘international’ turns into a site of ‘bargaining, coalition and compromise’ (Waeber 1996, p.153). However, theirs is still an image that prioritizes the state as the main point of analysis, for institutions and other types of agency are relegated to the condition of ‘intervening variables’ that affect behavior, for example, by reducing uncertainty or monitoring compliance to norms. The realist response to the ‘transnational’ debate was that it could only be analyzed within the framework of the international, of interstate relations. The discussion became one about whether states were weakened by economic processes and the rise of transnational processes *versus* a reading of economic interests and behavior defined according to power and national interests (Keohane, Krasner & Katzenstein 1997). In this sense, the inclusion of globalization and transnational processes never actually questioned the nature of the

‘international’ as mainly ordered around the principle of state sovereignty. Nor did they challenge the view of the state as an homogeneous, rational actor (even if some interdependence theorists did include an analysis of states’ subunits and bureaucracies). Let us take O’Brien’s (2005, p.173) distinction between the three spheres of social activity, that of the interstate sphere dominated by states, the transnational sphere by transnational corporations and the global civil society by civic associations. In this formulation, it could be said that the ‘neo-neo’ approach in IR places these levels according to a clear hierarchy, where the transnational and the global are dependent and subordinated to the ‘international’. As Inayatullah and Blaney remark,

This demarcation and policing of the boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of political community defines the problem of difference principally as *between and among states*; difference is marked and contained as *international* difference. This construction of difference allows us to claim to ‘solve’ the problem by negotiating a *modus vivendi* among political communities. However the problem of difference remains pervasive. The bounded political community constructs (and is constructed by) the other. Beyond its boundaries, the other lurks as perpetual threat in the form of other states, antagonistic groups, imported goods and alien ideas. The other also appears as difference within, vitiating the presumed, but rarely, if ever, achieved ‘sameness’. The other within the boundaries of political community is ‘managed’ by some combination of hierarchy, eradication, assimilation or expulsion, and tolerance. The external other is left to suffer or prosper according to its own means (though its poverty or prosperity might be experienced as a threat); it is interdicted at border crossings, balanced and deterred; it is defeated militarily and colonized if need be (2004, p.7).

A similar criticism is leveled by Muppidi (2004), arguing that IR theory discourses are parochial and ill suited to ‘read knowledge on the global’. He criticizes the rationalist approach that reduces the global to ‘networks of interdependence’ where globalization is not only deprived of social meaning and historical content, but also

promoted as both a 'liberalism of fear' and a 'liberalism of progress' (Muppidi 2004, p.5). For globalization to work, within the framework of the 'international', institutions need to be effective in controlling violence and maintaining order (a traditional claim of realist analysis). A good life in the 'international realm' must be promoted through the implementation of good governance and democratization both inside (expansion of Western models of statecraft) and outside (within international institutions). This portrayal of the 'global' projects a national and western based idea of the 'international' upon different forms of imagining social identities in world politics. In this sense, one could claim that the discourse of IR theory is itself marked by a 'colonial globality' since it silences different understandings of 'politics' through a portrayal of the 'international' self that reflects the basic interests of great power politics. Debates within the discipline become marked by these processes of silencing. Theories and alternative modes of understanding are marginalized, based on prior delimitations of the ontology and epistemology of the 'international' by mainstream theories. In important respects, the question of what constitutes the 'international' is a central one for it defines what 'common sense' in the discipline is, what can be studied and how it should be studied. This is no small question, for as Smith shows, nothing is more political than defining what constitutes the common sense: 'defining common sense is therefore the ultimate act of political power' (1996, p.38).

One can look at the discourse on human mobility as one of the mediums through which such understandings of the international are constructed, empowered and reproduced. It allows for a 'realignment of authority relations that permits a movement

from anarchy to governance' (Innayatullah & Blaney 2004, p.119). What is pressing about the human mobility phenomenon is precisely the fact that it challenges this strict separation by hyphenating and redefining its two constitutive elements, the 'inter' and the 'national'. To inhabit the 'inter' is to assume the nature of a transversal existence,¹⁶ that escapes, without leaving, the assurances of a territorial cartography. After all, as Escobar (1998) aptly remarked, we all sit in places. No life can be made meaningful without some sense of spatiality. Nevertheless, a space of places,¹⁷ from the standpoint of human mobility, does not necessarily entail the fixity of immanence/permanence devised in conventional approaches in International Relations (IR). What mobile peoples represent is

¹⁶ Soguk and Whitehall argue that transversal spaces make possible 'the movements of those who, in migrations, fragment the sovereign territory of the territorial imperative, rendering it into a resource of transgressions. In the transversality of space, frontiers are turned into crossings, and rivers into bridges. Border fences become an ensemble of interstices through which bodies and ideas pass' (1999, p.685). Transversality opens up the possibility of exploring mobility and identities outside of the traditional cartographies of the modern nation-state and of the international, by placing an emphasis on the lived experiences of migrants and mobile subjects as both central and prior to the conventional delimitations of international politics. I explore some of these transversal claims in the following chapters, through an exploration of narratives that connect displacement and border politics.

¹⁷ Manuel Castells defines the space of places as 'the historically rooted spatial organization of our common experience' (1996, p.378). His central argument is that the space of places is being increasingly superseded by a space of flows, in which managerial elites are becoming integrated through network circuits that circumvent ideas of territorial and time contiguity. The space of flows allows a particular group of subjects to be 'globally connected and locally disconnected, physically and socially' (1996, p.404). Certainly, in Castell's analysis, the space of flows is inhabited by privileged agents that do not encompass the mobile subjects I am mostly concerned here. The network society is thus highly exclusionary and, for the purposes of my own argument, does not necessarily undermine the conventional understanding of the international, but rather recasts it by creating alternative mechanisms of control and management of excluded groups, among which are migrants and refugees. I think this reading is consistent with Castell's observations of the impact of urban restructuring of cities and of the 'ghetto-ization' of communities as parcel to processes of space-time changes within the network society.

the paradoxical condition of becoming subjects in a domain that does not authorize political agency in contexts of transversality. The conventional political subject is immersed within the triad of state-citizenship-territory and so can never remain in the 'inter'. The 'inter' has to be, always, a rite of passage, a temporary, transient moment in the otherwise long run towards the 'national' (one's own or another's). The possibility of taking the border as not a line, a point, or a marker, as a zone of transition between 'intras', but as the locus of life itself is incongruent with the space and subjects of the modern political imagination.

Problematizing the 'national' means to create an ambiguous relation with criteria of political subjectivity as well. The traditional subject, namely the citizen, has to be adjectified according to his/her affiliation to a particular community. We are never just citizens; we are always citizens of some 'imagined community', to borrow Anderson's (1991) celebrated insight. Mobile groups with some exceptions like indigenous peoples,¹⁸ very rarely disconnect themselves from attachments to the national. Migration can and has been also a source of intensification and recrudescence of nationalist attachments. The encounter with difference involves, as Todorov (1984) remarks, a double movement: of recognition of the 'other' and a response of the 'self'.¹⁹ This response might take the form of a heightened sense of political belonging to a community that is spatially

¹⁸ I would like to thank Will Coleman for pointing out the specific character of the relationship between indigenous groups and issues of nationality (a consequence of advanced colonialism).

¹⁹ This response in Todorov's account of the colonial (mis)encounter is two-fold: a projection of the self unto the other, as part of the recognition that the other is already within, and a distancing of self-other that either annihilates the other - by erasing difference - or puts s/he in an inferior hierarchical position (subordination).

disconnected, as some diasporic groups exemplify.²⁰ One can become more of a citizen outside than its compatriots inside. The opposite might also hold true: a sense of denial of origins and the assimilation to difference, implying an erasure of the previous spatial-temporal self. More often than not, the relationship between mobility and the national involves a complex intertwining of such reactions, an ambiguous feeling of belonging that crisscrosses the drive towards being, that is inherent in citizenship as a disciplinary mechanism, and becoming, that is parcel to the encounter with difference. In that sense, mobile subjects also refer and relate to particular conceptions of citizenship, but usually within a myriad of options that are neither exclusive, nor necessarily inclusive.

From the perspective of mobile subjects, what are the consequences of problematizing the 'inter' of International Relations? Michael Dillon, in an illuminating essay on the topic, argues that:

Neither a co-national nor another national, the refugee [and we could add here other groups of mobile subjects] is, instead distinguished precisely

²⁰ Take, for example, the cultural neighborhoods of diasporic communities in large metropolises around the world. The little nations that proliferate in the space of the city attempt to recreate the original experience of being at what is now an outside national ambiance. Of course, this is not to say that there are no adaptations, reappropriations and reinterpretations of traditions and cultural expressions in these sites. On the contrary, renowned scholars have shown how hybrid forms emerge in the zones of contact and how complex forms of attachment emerge in the experiences of encounter with difference (Bhabha, 1996). Nevertheless, these attempts at reinventing a 'territorially discontinued' national community also highlight the force of attachment to the national and to ideas of citizenship, even in contexts in which it was precisely the violence engendered in the constitution of the 'national' which fostered the habitation of the 'inter'. I am thinking here particularly of African refugees in urban areas in Brazil and their reluctance to dispense with nationality as the fundamental marker of their being. I do not intend to place a judgment of value on whether these are right or wrong choices, but rather pinpoint the power of the modern sovereignty resolution to the problem of the political even in its absence.

because he/she is located in the strange territory of estrangement that is located between the two; (...) Neither in nor out – while nonetheless actually bearing the name of some previous identification and existing in a carefully defined nowhere within the boundaries of some other nation or state, so clearly also undeniably present – s/he brings the very ‘inter’ of international relations to the foreground in a disturbing and unusual way, insisting that it become the concentrated focus of attention it deserves to be (1999, p.101).

Rather than simply starting a dialogue with a discipline that claims to resolve the ‘inter’national question, I take the construction, or in other terms, the performance of the ‘inter’ as an issue of translation. The ‘inter’national is a site of a disparate and unequal conversation between different languages and understandings of the experience of in-betweenness that characterize mobility, or more precisely, displaced life. To translate involves an attempt to make sense of these ‘territories of estrangement’, through tactics and strategies that appropriate and resist, promulgate and effect, implement and contest the meanings attached to and done by words. Translation happens in the connection between words and life, in the efforts of unveiling how acts of naming are not only matters of definition and theoretical debate, but also ones that have profound consequences on the ongoing struggles of displaced communities ‘neither in nor out’. This process can also be described in terms of the relationship between universals and particulars. Anna Tsing (2005) provides the concept of global connections to articulate the multidirectional exchange of universal ideas and their actualization in particular, concrete lived spaces. Rather than treating these two dimensions as poles in a hierarchical and vertical manner, Tsing proposes that ‘global connections give *grip* to universal aspirations. As soon as we let go of the universal as a self-fulfilling abstract truth, we

must become embroiled in specific situations. And thus it is necessary to begin again, and again, in the middle of things' (2005, pp.1-2).

From the standpoint of IR, the 'inter' represents the site of this permanent beginning where the 'inter'national meets the 'inter' body, lived through in the ordinary daily experiences of displaced groups again and again. Is it possible to think about global connections in relation to an international discourse on mobility? Is there such a thing as an international discourse on mobility? I argue such discourse is not only present and forceful, but also immanent - that it is used as an almost totalizing framework over questions of human mobility, from a varied group of interlocutors, including those who are subjected to such labeling. Any reference to experiences of displacement hinge on the meanings attached to words by states and international organizations. Definitions over what it means to inhabit the 'inter' have been premised on assumptions about their universality. To be a 'refugee' or an 'economic migrant' is supposed to depend on following the trails given by the road maps of universal concepts, defined in accordance to and as a means of sustaining a sovereignty based 'international order', that should not be taken as neither natural, nor inescapable. Almost all domestic legislation on immigration and refugees refers, in some way or another, to the definitions, practices, policies and criteria established through the international mobility discourse. Once incorporated into these contextual realities, these strategies of regulation and management of human mobility allow for the discrimination between others that threaten and unbalance the supposed tidiness of a non-hyphenated international.

In order to ‘let go’ of the universal, as Tsing insinuates, we have to, first, come to terms with what it attempts to do and with what it refers to. I will not dwell here with a discussion of the process of coming-into-being of global mobility discourses. There is a vast literature dealing with the historical and political underpinnings of the emergence and consolidation of the international migratory and refugee regime (Marrus, 2002; Soguk, 1999; Karatani, 2005). I am mostly concerned with the political processes through which these discourses are reproduced, affected and contested, in the overlappings and transitions of power relations, and in the ontological associations between these processes and the construction of the ‘inter’national. The latter concern is the object of the following sections. I attempt to retrace some of the features associated with the rather precise definitions of mobility experiences stemming from International Law and how categories, or topologies, of otherness relate to each other. I then articulate the traits of the global discourse to a specific performance of the international, in relation to the inscription of ‘constitutive others’ within its normative framework and in relation to the authorization of voice within the domain of this particular ‘international’ regime.

The political economy (or the economy of power) of ‘inter’national bodies

Zygmunt Bauman argues that ‘mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor; the stuff of which new, increasingly world-wide, social, political, economic and cultural hierarchies are daily built and rebuilt’ (1998, p.9). It is almost a cliché in contemporary scholarship to recognize that globalization has allowed for less restricted mobility of capital, goods and information, while (most) people remain

contained and controlled within the territorial markers of the state panopticon. What is interesting about Bauman's intervention is his recognition that the mobility of peoples within a globalized world is itself highly unequal; an increasingly powerful global hierarchy defines mobility today. He goes on to distinguish between those who have been freed of their spatial and temporal attachments, gaining the opportunity to accrue the benefits and fulfill the liberal promise of globalized capitalism and consumerism, as tourists, and those who have been made to choose or chose to move 'because they find the world within their reach unbearingly *inhospitable*' (1998, p.93), as vagabonds. The vagabonds are those who have very little or no degree of freedom to move or to choose 'where to be'. Their modes of travel are also radically different, for they have to work in the interstitial sites of regulation, and usually against it.

As Mark Salter shows, the global mobility regime is structured around a set of mechanisms that regulate and define how and where one can travel. They work as roads, which enable while constraining the direction and flow of movement, and also as gates, which authorize the discrimination and actualization of the hierarchy of mobility upon which it is predicated. This regime is organized around two main functions for Salter. Documentation provides a mechanism of control by 'providing a way to connect a body to a legal subject', in the form of visas, identity cards, passports (2004, p.178). Boundary functions work to patrol and determine which legal subjectivities are allowed entry and which are not. The border is the locus of the surveillance regime that, for Salter, operates as a permanent state of exception. The border is above and, at the same time, outside of the 'national' juridical order, for an individual 'can claim no rights but is still subject to

the law' (2006, p.171). In the border check, the individual partially loses control over his/her subjectivity as it has to be recognized, authorized and legitimized by the border agent, usually through a subjective analysis of an individual's confession over his/her reasons for being 'there', at the edge of the 'inter'. It is only a partial loss, even though no less significant, for there is always the 'dangerous' and liminal possibility of breaking down the system, of fooling the aesthetics of representation that is imbued in the confessional politics of the border encounter. Whereas documentation and border policing have been structured to minimize this possibility, no control can be absolute. It is in the interstices of these partialities that the repoliticization of the permanent state of exception takes place. Individuals make use of categories that were not initially devised to be ascribed to them and retake, even if only temporarily and precariously, the grips over their mobile existence. The navigation over these forms of life is exemplified, for instance, when individuals resort to asylum procedures to attain temporary legal status in the receiving country, given the absence of other alternatives. Or, when they use tourist visas to enter, yet overstay their permits. This last case resonates with Bauman's assertion that the vagabond is the alter ego of the tourist; s/he aims at experiencing, at some point, the tourist life. Tourist and vagabonds alike are both consumers, but Bauman argues that the latter are flawed consumers for they 'cannot afford the kinds of choices in which consumers are expected to excel' (1998, p.96). In that sense, vagabonds are always flawed tourists as well, that which is the same but not quite, to paraphrase Bhabha's (1994) discussion on mimicry. To view vagabonds as flawed tourists²¹ implies then the

²¹ Soguk illustrates this point in his description of the story of a Kurdish migrant

recognition that their relationship, rather than being of simple contradiction, involves a dynamics of alterity in which one does not exist without the other.

I want to move one step further in these theorizations, by concentrating on the differences and hierarchies between ‘vagabonds’, between those who are more likely to remain in the permanent state of exception of the mobility regime and of border control. The global mobility regime articulates not only the mechanisms of surveillance and policing, but also stratifies between different topologies of otherness. The sovereign ‘exceptional’ decision of who is allowed to participate, even if only temporarily, in the political community, is outside of the juridical order. However, it is also inside it at the moment in which the sovereign defines what the body of the ‘inter’ is in the border encounter. And, again, what the border encounter involves is a translation process of a moment and a presence - the moment of the encounter between the ‘inter’ body and the international structure of mobility management- that might and usually entails a presumed recognition of absence (of documents, of reasons, of ‘truths’) that is made in accordance to the particular forms of life attached to varied discriminations between degrees of mobility.

in Europe, worth quoting in length: ‘around his neck, he supported a gold necklace of the map of Kurdistan. He was from Elbistan in southeastern Turkey. He came to England illegally. Back in Turkey, he obtained a fake identity by bribing a ‘muhtar’ (a neighbor or village head), and traveled on a fake passport to Croatia. From Croatia he crossed into Slovenia, and was ultimately taken to Italy by a speedboat across the Adriatic Sea. He recounted with excitement his experiences on the boat, In Slovenia, they walked into a resort and spent a few hours relaxing and eating. He stated with a visible excitement: *Kacaktik tatil yaptik (We were illegal, but we had a vacation)*’ (2008, p.185).

In this study, three categories of vagabonds will be the focus of analysis: refugees, migrants²² and internally displaced peoples (IDPs). These three categories occupy interrelated, yet disparate, places in the global mobility narrative. These places also attempt to be precisely mapped according to a particular positioning of these bodies in the international cartography. Some are more regulated than others. The International Law on Refugee Protection is the most widely developed, and accepted, of the three. It is implemented, coordinated, managed and developed principally by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Created in 1951, and replacing previous institutions such as the International Organization for Refugees, UNHCR had a limited mandate to provide legal protection and assistance to refugees displaced in Europe, notably due to the human catastrophe that succeeded the Second World War. The Convention and the institution responsible for it were then a product of a particular context (Europe and the Cold War) and a particular set of priorities (persons of European nationality and refugees displaced by violence, both in the context of war and of the subsequent violence that divided the West and the East). As I illustrate below, it was also a reflection of a particular mindset, that of Western liberal individualism, with its emphasis on political and civil liberties, and of the rise of universal humanism within the United Nations system, with its primary concern over the construction of humanity and of

²² I use the term migrants to refer to those who live outside of their country of origin with a 'tenuous' legal status. They might include undocumented migrants or those under temporary visa requirements (overstay permits, limited working contracts). I use the term immigrant to those who live outside their country of origin with a greater degree of legal assurance (permanent residents, for example). The discrepancies in the treatment afforded to these two categories of migratory experiences will be made evident in the forthcoming analysis.

a ‘family of nations’ premised on the universal figure of the ‘human being’. A definition that was devised for a particular historical moment outlived itself, as the ‘problem of the refugee’ took new directions and new inflections. UNHCR is now one of the most active and recognized agencies within the UN system and has expanded its scope and strategies, despite being created for a limited mandate of three years.

Unlike the well-developed refugee regime, international legislation on migrants is comparatively diffuse, and it stems from a multiplicity of organizations such as the International Labor Organization, the International Organization for Migration and other UN bodies and consultative agencies (such as the Global Commission on International Migration), to name just a few. The category of ‘migrant’ is the one that is most difficult to grasp. Ultimately, it has the potential to encompass everything and nothing at the same time, if defined solely in terms of living outside one’s country of origin for a determined period of time. As I explain below, the global discourse on mobility has attached a certain set of requisites that circumscribe and orient the dynamics and the mechanisms of regulation of migrants’ groups and individuals. The migration regime has also been observed and sanctioned by fewer states²³ and thus remains particularly circumscribed to

²³ The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 45/158 of 1990, has been ratified by 37 States, mostly sending countries. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, on the other hand, has been ratified by 144 States (as of November 2007). The Guiding principles are recommendations and have yet to be transformed into a binding international instrument. Nevertheless, they have been widely approved and suggested in many UN resolutions, and are thus referred as the main instrument, in conjunction with general human rights and humanitarian law, in what regards internal displacement.

the discretionary acts of sovereign states, usually attached to ideas over ‘national interest’ and ‘public order’.

IDPs are the least regulated and, in important respects, at least from the vantage point of the international, the most problematic of the three, for reasons I state subsequently. I focus here on the definitions stemming from three of the most widely regarded international documents governing the mobility and the rights of the three abovementioned categories. They are the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees (UNCR) and its 1967 Additional Protocol, the International Covenant on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their families (ICRMW) and the United Nations Guiding Principles (GP) on the Protection of Internally Displaced Peoples. Though in no way exhaustive, nor containing the entirety of the prescriptions pertaining to these mobile groups, they nevertheless present the underlying and foundational criteria especially in what regards the basic definitions and tenets of these categories. In that sense, they provide a starting point for unveiling the main prerogatives and assumptions of what these definitions of vagabonds entail and how they (un)relate to each other. They also show how the divide between migrants, refugees and IDPs (and among different types of migrants and refugees) sits in the uncomfortable, and politically problematic, space of compartmentalizing life according to their affective purchase: economy/politics, hope/fear, choice/necessity, legality/illegality, inside/outside.

Refugees

The 1951 UN Convention on Refugees states that a refugee is:

Any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Article 1(A)2, 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

This definition encompasses a series of features so that an individual can be ‘recognized’ as a refugee. First and foremost, s/he has to have **crossed an international boundary**. To be recognized as a refugee requires, on the one hand, an unwillingness to remain in one’s country, a qualified refusal of the ‘national’²⁴, and, on the other, the territorially based search for protection in an-other country. The movement across borders, and the interim moment of waiting for status recognition, is precisely the condition that makes the refugee the paramount inhabitant of the ‘inter’. The habitation of the ‘inter’ tends to perpetuate itself despite one’s being authorized to be a refugee. Even

²⁴ I use the term ‘qualified’ refusal here because refugees and asylum seekers usually retain important connections with their nationality. For the purposes of the international mobility regime, though, this relationship is importantly severed, notably in what refers to the country of origin. Refugees and asylum seekers, for example, should not resort to their former national authorities for protection and even for access to certain documents. In the Brazilian case, for instance, refugees are supposed to require a travel permit from local authorities and, should it be granted, they are entitled to a Brazilian passport (temporary and conditioned to the travel itinerary authorized). The idea I want to convey is that refugees are expected to disconnect themselves, even if partially, from their national state authorities. The granting of refugee status is, therefore, a form of recognizing the inability of the country of origin to provide for individuals’ protection. As such, the granting of asylum is always embedded in processes of identity construction, which involve not only the individuals who claim it, but also Nation-States.

in the most liberal national legislations, the treatment afforded to refugees is similar to that of citizens only with regards to the most basic of rights, such as access to education, health, and some selective personal liberties (notably freedom of religion and of expression). In many cases, however, constraints are imposed in terms of political participation (foreclosure of membership to political groups, the right to vote, and the right to run for political office) and the treatment, for the most part, granted to refugees by receiving states should be similar to 'that accorded to aliens in general' (1951 UN Convention, article 7). This situation means that a condition of 'inter' expands itself beyond the conventional international 'protective' space, for the territorial inscription of the refugee body into a non-native 'national' space keeps unresolved the issue of their political subjectivity. Refugees become the 'inter' between the citizen and the alien, being neither one of them yet no longer situated in their original territorial space. For this reason, the figure of the refugee represents a moving *aporia* to the international and to the paradigm of state sovereignty as the locus of security and the 'good life'. Refugees are a challenge to the international, in part, because they disrupt the precise linear connection between the 'inter' and the 'national' that is necessary for the consistency of the political resolution of sovereignty. At the same time, however, the attempt to reinscribe the figure of the refugee into the logics of state territoriality and political belonging, as conveyed in the 1951 Convention, through an ad hoc qualification that attaches a spatial location and a temporal existence to them, proves the power of the sovereign resolution that makes the refugee possible in the first place. The spatial location is made clear, for example, in the three traditional solutions put forward by the global discourse, notably by UNHCR, in

what regards refugees. These solutions are all, in one way or another, a reinscription of the refugee figure back into the sovereign logics of political belonging.

The preferred solution to the phenomenon of the refugee is voluntary repatriation. It is based on a return, which is in principle consented to by refugees, to their country of origin once the conditions that led to their flight have ceased or have been reduced to a level considered 'safe'. Repatriation resumes a condition of normalcy by putting an end to refugeeeness: they are no longer refugees, but, once again, a citizens of their 'home' state. Many authors have highlighted the difficulties attached to repatriation after the end of the Cold War²⁵. The nature of conflicts has changed and both governments and non-state belligerents are sources of violations that cause the flight of refugees. It is increasingly difficult to assess what is considered to be a 'safe' return, especially when faced with the constraints of choosing between the insecure life in a refugee camp and the shattered national landscapes of war-torn countries. Increasing restrictions in mobility (as fewer countries are willing to accept refugees) and funding for refugee assistance have made it harder to cross borders and have imposed an even more selective approach to refugee status determination.

Resettlement, the second durable solution promoted by UNHCR, also faces similar constraints. It encompasses the acceptance of already recognized refugees to third countries where they would be safer and in better conditions for either integrating locally or repatriating sooner, should conditions allow. Resettlement has become increasingly

²⁵ See, for example, Loescher (1993), UNHCR (2006), especially Chapter 6, and Haddad (2008).

difficult due to restrictions for refugee entrance and growing requirements to prove why the first country of refuge has not been able to provide a 'safe' hosting environment. Usually, UNHCR Member States (and very few of them) establish resettlement annual quotas and can, and regularly do, use the prerogatives of placing restrictions regarding countries of origin, nationality, gender and age. Resettlement programs, sponsored by UNHCR, are normally devised for targeted and particularly vulnerable refugee groups; for example, those who have been living in refugee camps or in 'unsafe' border areas.

The third durable solution considered by UNHCR is local integration. This strategy is based on policies that attempt to ease the process of assimilation to new societies by refugees and that might, ultimately, lead to a change of legal status. Once refugees are integrated into the new society (for example, by embracing the new language, finding employment, and becoming culturally and economically self-sufficient) the expectation is that they should be able to become more than temporary residents of their hosting community. To integrate is, in important respects, to let go of the 'strangeness' aspect that is implicit in the idea of 'refugeeness'. It is to move one step closer to the social, cultural and economic framework that constitutes the 'national' domain; and thus to move one step away from the 'inter'national realm. In recent years, UNHCR, for example, has been redirecting its policy of local integration among urban refugees from one of reliance to a sort of individual 'entrepreneurship' approach. Increasingly, urban refugees are expected to count less on monthly stipends granted by the agency and its implementing partners and become self-sufficient, independent, truly 'liberal' individuals through labor replacement or self-sustained economic projects. The

paradoxes stemming from this change are highlighted by Grabska (2006) and can be conveyed in the following terms:

UNHCR has increasingly moved away from a care and maintenance model, based on assistance provisions to the refugee population, to a self-reliance model, where refugees are expected to become self-sufficient in their host societies. As a result of this policy shift, refugees are faced with growing pressures to disconnect themselves from the refugee agency for their livelihood, a move that is quite at odds with how the UNHCR portrays refugee's identities as dependent upon the agency's recognition and care (Moulin & Nyers, 2007, p.363).

The issue of authorization (who authorizes one to be a 'refugee') is relevant here, for although every person has the right to claim asylum, no state has the duty to concede it. As such, the determination of refugee status is a declaratory act, in the sense of simply recognizing a subjective condition that existed prior to the administrative request, asylum seekers have very little or no control over the process that defines their status. It is a prerogative of state authorities, and UNHCR in certain cases, to evaluate asylum claims and determine whether or not an asylum seeker will be recognized as a 'refugee'. The authorization process is then reflected in the two constitutive elements of the refugee status determination procedure. The so-called 'subjective' element attempts to evaluate the asylum seekers' narrative according to a particular level of credibility. As stated by a UNHCR's *Note on the Burden of Proof for Asylum Claimants*, 'the adjudicator should take into account such factors as the reasonableness of the facts alleged, the overall consistency and coherence of the applicant's story, corroborative evidence adduced by the applicant in support of his/her statements, consistency with common knowledge or generally known facts, and the known situation in the country of origin' (UNHCR, 1998, p.2). The subjective element relates then to the presumed veracity of the story and

justification provided by the asylum claimant. It is up to the sovereign adjudicator to assess the extent to which the representation played out by the applicant, namely the subjective element of its plea, is mirrored through the conventional refugee definition. ‘Credibility is established where the applicant has presented a claim which is coherent and plausible, not contradicting generally known facts, and therefore is, on balance, capable of being believed’ (UNHCR, 1998, p.3). It is a twofold subjective element, and a highly unequal one given the power asymmetries established between the asylum seeker and the sovereign representative. It rests on the capacity of claimants to (re)present their narrative and on the capacity of the adjudicator to acquiesce by it.

The ‘objective’ element of the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure relates to the data and knowledge regarding the situation that led to the applicant’s flight. This might refer to, although not exclusively, the objective conditions of the country of origin, the information available on routes and exit strategies of peoples in similar situations, human rights violations statistics and reports, reports by international organizations and NGOs on refugees and displaced peoples according to certain areas. ‘The applicant’s statements cannot be considered in the abstract, and must be viewed in the context of the relevant background situation’ (UNHCR, 1979, p.9, para.42). The objective elements amount to create a different form of representation, that of the reality from which claimants argue to be coming from and upon which their narrative is supposed to fit in.

The subjective/objective components of the RSD process have a direct connection with the second most important feature of the conventional definition of the refugee that

demands he/she has to prove a **well-founded fear of persecution**. Peter Nyers (2006, p.45) has convincingly shown how the conventional definition splits the refugee in two: ‘the human capacity to reason (well-founded) is held in tension with the emotion (“fear”) that motivates an individual’s flight’. As such, refugees are supposed to rationally present their story, devised in terms of credibility, while at the same time, having to perform, and constantly assert, an instinctive emotional component that ultimately justifies his/her reason to become a refugee. The ways in which fear paradoxically affects the ability of the claimant to fulfill the expectation of rationality are important in terms of granting power to the sovereign authority at the moment of a RSD decision. For example, as a result of the UNHCR Global Consultations meeting on Asylum Processes (2001), a directive was issued regarding ‘undocumented and uncooperative asylum-seekers’. In it, the experts assert that it may be the case that ‘an initial lack of cooperation results from communication difficulties, disorientation, distress, exhaustion, and/or fear. A refusal to provide details of the route taken to flee also undermines credibility, although this could also be because the asylum seeker fears *refoulement*, because s/he does not wish to endanger the lives of others, or because the route taken by smugglers is not known’ (UNHCR, 2001, p.8). Even though fear is constitutive of the refugee definition, and thus essential for its performance, there is a strong tendency to assess such fears in terms of ‘dangerous’ behavior. Fearful subjects are usually associated with acts of fraud, illegal maneuvers, abusive claims and a more reluctant stance towards the expected narratives and aesthetics of the refugee figure. It is expected that, encountering once again the territory of sovereignty, its law, institutions and spaces of assumed ‘refugee’ protection,

asylum seekers are able to feel safe once again, no longer in transit, and therefore capable to fulfill their obligation of becoming a rational subject and giving 'a full and truthful presentation of his case and to cooperate with the authorities' (UNHCR 2001, p.9). As Nyers highlights:

The etymologies suggest that fear moves, but this movement is structured by the political space-time of sovereignty: fear is at once spatially outside and temporally before the political. Fear is something that becomes present only in the absence of laws and political institutions. The practices of sovereignty are designed to keep danger - and hence, fear - at bay (2006, p.53).

The encounter with the refugee determination process is designed to, first, assess the degree to which fear, as a subjective element, has led the asylum seeker to present its claim, and secondly, to 'keep that fear at bay' in the moment in which the political decision of granting refugee status or not is to take place. The tension between fear and rationality resonates with the unresolved *problematique* of the incomplete passage of the refugee figure from the 'inter' to the national. In most realist accounts of international politics, the international is marked by the possibility of violence and war. Kenneth Waltz, for example, states that 'because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so [...] among states, the state of nature is a state of war' (1979, p.102). He goes on to say that 'the difference between national and international politics lies not in the use of force but in the different modes of organization for doing something about it. An effective government has a monopoly on the *legitimate* use of force, and legitimate here means that public agents are organized to prevent and to counter the private use of force. Citizens need not prepare to defend themselves. A national system is not one of self-help. The international is' (1979, p.104). For Waltz, it is not the possibility

of violence that characterizes the international per se, but the **fear** that derives from this possibility and from the fact that states can only count with themselves for their survival in the system. I resort to Waltz here, despite the by now extensive and convincing criticisms of his theory, because it exemplifies the performance of the ‘international’ structure that is at the core of the refugee regime (illustrated in the previous section). Refugees, entangled in their well-founded fear, are a product of an international realm that originates, reacts and reproduces itself in relation to this basic response to fear of an imminent and potentially deadly attack. The refugee becomes then a symptom, or perhaps a mimetic figure, of a system pathologically structured around the fear of potential death. In other words, the fear imbued in the refugee representation ‘is, therefore, much more than a subjective response to danger. It is symptomatic of the condition of being outside the zone of safety, external to the bordered, territorial community that provides the individual with protection’ (Nyers, 2006, p.52). One could read the refugee ‘rite of passage’ as a movement along a continuum between the ‘inter’, and its drive to fear and fearful subjectivities, the dangerous realm of the international, and the national, with its emphasis on security, stability and individual rationality.

The issue, though, is that the refugee oscillates between the edges, never totally here, nor there. The refugee experience does not navigate well into the linear progression upon which the inter/national disjuncture is premised. The refugee predicament can be more appropriately understood in terms of a trap between two worlds, conventionally constructed in incommensurable terms, placed in opposite extremes and, most probably than not, impossible to reconcile. A similar argument is advanced by Douzinas and

Warrington (1995) in relation to the impossibility of translating into words the fear and pain embedded in the refugee experience within the decisionist idiom of the conventional definition. They stress the unfeasibility of the representations that are expected from the refugee; an impracticality that stems from the logics of fear/truth and sameness/difference that characterize the mainstream inter/national divide.

The claim that fear and pain can be rationalized through the shared understanding of their cause puts the victim in a double bind. Either he is in fear or he is not. If he is, he should be able to give facts and reasons for it which, as they belong to the genre of truth, should match up to the assessment of the judge [the authority that decides on the status]. If they do not, the refugee is lying. If on the other hand, he cannot give 'objective' justifications for his fear the refugee again is lying. Similarly, when the refugee is inarticulate and cannot explain the 'objective basis' of his fear, he is not in fear [...] But this translation of fear into knowledge and of the style into reasons and causes assumes that the judge [the sovereign adjudicator] can occupy the place of the refugee and share his pain. Fear, pain and death, however, are radically singular; they resist and at the limit destroy language and its ability to construct shared worlds (1995, p.208).

The production of the 'inter' and the national is also parcel to the emergence of different forms of communication and of making sense of the world. Outside the national landscape, and shattered by the violence of trauma and fear, the refugee is muted to another's ears, in particular to that of the sovereign adjudicator. In the 'inter', political voice experiences a void. Outside the attached normalcy granted to the national subject, the citizen, words are not spoken, but mumbled. An assertive speech, or one that conveys an 'objective justification', cannot belong to a refugee and, therefore, the grammar of truth and rational logic demands the conclusion that the claimant is either lying (and therefore is not credible) or is not in fear. What the logic of the conventional grammar attests to is an assumed impossibility of translation, as the sovereign decision is premised

on a hierarchical standing that already places the applicant's narrative in a subordinate relation to its own account.

Refugees signify an emptiness, an incompleteness vis-à-vis the meaningful positive presence of political subjectivity that state citizenship provides. Without citizenship, refugees are denied not only political rights but also something more fundamental- the **capacity to speak politically and the expectation that they will be heard** (Nyers 2006, p.17).

The third and final element of the refugee definition that is relevant to this analysis, encompasses the idea of **persecution**. The 1951 Convention establishes that persecution, or reasonable fear of potential persecution, is justified for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Though the term persecution is amongst the most controversial and unresolved concepts within the global discourse on refugees, UNHCR traditionally associates it with threats to individual life and freedom and/or any serious human rights violations which attest to the failure of the country of origin to provide protection (UNHCR, 1979, p.10, para.51). Although the justified reasons stated in the 1951 Convention did not mean, at the time of its writing, to be exhaustive, they have, nonetheless, and in the majority of cases, provided the limits for refugee status decisions. Omission, as Chimni conveys, 'gave states a large measure of discretion' (2000, p.4) and also more leverage for restrictive interpretations of the Covenant's intentions. The 'legitimate' basis for persecution, following the overall structure of the protective international regime, reflects a strong commitment to liberal values and to civil and political freedoms. Traditional readings of the emergence of the refugee regime relate this preponderance of civil and political rights as a reflection of the victory of Western ideas in the preparatory debates (Hathaway,

1991). The paradigm privileged a particular Eurocentric conception of politics, notably aimed at favoring the protection of democratically conscious individuals. This conception, as is the case with liberalism, promoted, firstly, the association of the political with the public realm and relegated the space of individual autonomy to that of the private sphere. As such, legitimate forms of persecution, as enunciated in the Convention, echo traits that connect the individual to its more politically active attachments (membership to social groups, political opinion, religion) or that are fundamental to define its notion of self in regards to its significant others (and are, therefore, dependent on inherently intersubjective relations, like race and nationality). This has meant the overall exclusion of gender based persecution, as many female asylum seekers resort to protection due to violations that happen in the privacy of their home, in the midst of their family relations, and thus, for the conventional structure, outside of the political realm. But it is not only the public/private divide that places important gender considerations and criticisms, for persecution might affect women in non-domestic environments. The issue is not contingent upon the element of persecution, but embedded in the overall architecture of the conventional definition that tends to pay very little attention to the cultural and socioeconomic aspects that are fundamental in defining the social roles of women in particular contexts. In fact, the regime is premised on granting clear privileges for political reasons (at the expense of granting a political *status*) vis-à-vis economic motivations. The politics/economy break operates as a mirror for the refugee's own other: the migrant.

Migrants

According to article two of the 1990 International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families (UNRMW), the term migrant refers to “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national”. It is possible to define three fundamental elements of the international discourse on migrants. First, to talk about a migrant is to talk about **labor** migration, about the political economy of bodies that feeds into the global and regional production circuits. Abdelmalek Sayad (1998) defines the figure of the migrant as precisely that of ‘essentially a labor force, and a provisional, temporary, in transit labor force’. He goes on to state that:

In virtue of this principle, an immigrant worker (being immigrant and worker, in this case, almost a pleonasm), even if born into life (and into immigration) in immigration, even if called upon work (as an immigrant) for all his life in a country, even if destined to die (in immigration) as an immigrant, still remains a worker defined and treated as provisional, i.e., as revocable at any moment [...] It was ‘labor’ that gave birth to the immigrant (Sayad 1998, p.55) [Author’s translation].

The 1990 Convention enumerates different types of migrants primarily regarding their relationship with labor: itinerant workers, seafarer workers, project-tied worker, specified-employment workers, self-employed workers. The migrant can have then different contractual relations and different degrees of attachment to the countries of residence and nationality. But migrants are never stripped of their ‘worker’ quality. This is why Sayad (2004), for example, in his sociological studies with Algerian ‘migrant workers’ in France, identifies an inherent tension in the relationship between migrants and social services, particularly medical institutions. When migrants fall ill or suffer an

accident, they are stripped of that which constitutes their value to others (and, in important respects, to themselves since all relationships are intersubjective in nature): their ability to work. As such, they tend 'to expect the medical institution and the cure they bring about to almost magically restore both his identity as an immigrant and an equilibrium that has vanished and is impossible to recover' (2004, p.180). The value of migrants, and their identity as such, are synonymous with the integrity of their body, read, used and mastered as an instrument of labor. Their working quality, being thus so primordial, circumscribes the experience of migration as primarily economic. One of the consequences of these attachments is to depoliticize the nature of international migration and to delimit the scope of questions regarding it. Migration becomes a technical issue and one demarcated by rational calculations of costs and benefits, entry quotas and remittances. Whereas refugees are defined primarily in relation to the political 'event' of their well-founded fear of persecution, and, consequently, placed within the alleged 'non-political' discourse of humanitarian protection, migrants' experiences are delimited in accordance to their search for economic survival, usually translated in terms of an escape, not from persecution, but from poverty and immiseration. The fear of the refugee is converted, in the figure of the migrant, into a dual logic of despair and hope in which 'these people are seen as entering global migration networks inspired by the hope for a better, more economically successful life' (Nyers 2006, p.50).

Zohlberg, Suhrke & Aguayo (1989), for example, speak of the refugee as a composite of three categories: the refugee as an activist, as a target and as a victim. In the first two cases, the element of courage is presented as the core trait that justifies the

persecution, for the refugee engages in a 'politically significant activity that the state seeks to extinguish' or belongs to a group perceived and treated as a threat that 'has been singled out for the abuse of state power' (1989, p.30). The refugee is constructed, in these cases, as a survivor, but a politically qualified one. It is resistance to illiberal politics that makes tantamount the need for protection and for humanitarian welcoming. In the last case, the refugee comes as the result of a structural context of violence 'that is not directed at them as individuals but makes life in their own country impossible'. In either case, as Nyers highlights, 'refugees are courageous citizens who, because of their words, actions, or thoughts, are forced out of their political identities (citizens) and communities (state). The refugee fear is thus a product of a prior bravery or courage' (2006, p.50).

In contrast, if refugee status is to be considered a gift given to those who resisted political oppression, the migrant is nothing more than a contractual party (in case of those with status) in labor relations. Because of that, the only protection to which they are entitled is the one that derives from this basic employment relationship and that might, in some cases, extend to the members of their family. Contrary to refugees, migrants have not, according to this discourse, severed their ties with their original national realm to the same extent. Their mobility is perceived as a choice, as voluntary, and thus they remain within the reach of their own 'national' spheres of protection. For example, UNHCR states that '['economic' and other migrants] should not be confused, as they sometimes are, with bona fide refugees who are fleeing life-threatening persecution and not merely economic hardship. [...] An economic migrant normally leaves a country voluntarily to seek a better life. Should he or she elect to return home, they would continue to receive

the protection of their government. Refugees flee because of the threat of persecution and cannot return safely to their homes in the circumstances then prevailing' (UNHCR 2006).

This leads us to the second trait found in conventional definitions of the migrant, regarding the role of **necessity of mobility**. The archetypical migrant's movement is due to a certain sense of 'needs', usually translated in terms of material survival. Even in most critical migration studies - i.e., those that question the voluntary/involuntary dynamics that divorce refugees and migrants - the distinction is always premised on the extent to which one needs to move. It is in that sense that the mobile subject is regularly put in the place of making a rational calculation of the costs and benefits of flight. 'The more immediate and intense the life-threatening violence is, the more clearly a person is a refugee than a migrant' (Zolberg, Surhke & Aguayo 1989, p.31). Whereas refugees need to flee for the maintenance of their life, understood as their physical integrity, migrants leave for the improvement of their condition, read along a continuum between escaping misery and accumulating wealth. The necessity of mobility in the case of migrants is tamed by the opportunity of return to the original 'national' protective sphere that is, a priori, temporarily foreclosed to the refugee. Migrants' movement is a result of choices taken in relation to opportunities presented by socio-economic structures. Refugees' movement is portrayed as an 'unintended' consequence of an international system founded upon sovereign violence. The need for migration stems not only in relation to the volition of migrants themselves, but is also predicated on the demands of international and domestic economic structures.

Being a worker, the migrant is subordinated to a logic of state reasoning about the international political economy that is, primarily, informed by liberalism. Ruggie (1982) evinces the argument that the post-Second World War global economy was organized through the compromise of 'embedded liberalism'. The idea of a market-oriented international economy is consequently coupled with an evaluation of its social consequences, allowing then a combination of economic freedom outside and interventionism inside, in order to reduce the 'domestic' social costs of multilateral trade and commerce particularly in wealthier countries. The regulation and the international discourse on migrants internationally reflect the prevalence of 'embedded liberalism' as a normative ideal. On one hand, international migration remains, for the most part, a prerogative of the 'national', of domestic politics. Migrant workers thus provide one of the important spaces upon which the assessment of social costs of global economic liberalization is played out. Usually, it is also portrayed as in itself a negative effect of these same processes. For example, narratives of criminalization and danger regularly associate the migrant worker with the collapse of social protection networks and public services. More than that, the migrant acts as a scapegoat for the policy failures and inherent paradoxes of embedded liberalism. At the same time, however, international migration serves an important function for the global political economy. International migrants provide a useful pool of labour, both skilled and unskilled, which different economies can draw upon. Aihwa Ong (2006) has convincingly demonstrated how a (neo)liberal logic is recasting the connections between migration, citizenship and sovereignty. Increasingly, states and transnational corporations appropriate migrant labor

and regiment it according to specific space-time demands. Neoliberalism favors an entrepreneurial conception of the individual that feeds into and responds to global circuits of market exchange. As such, states, Ong argues, have used zoning technologies that allow them to ‘flexibilize’ traditional notions of citizenship, and thus attachments to territories and political communities, in order to increase participation in the global economy dynamics. Moreover, these ‘exceptional zones’ of production and circulation, intensive in migrant labor, are increasingly controlled and commanded by transnational corporations, not states.²⁶

Neoliberalism recasts the ‘embedded liberalism’ paradigm in important respects by rendering more flexible the national/international divide upon which it is premised. It prioritizes in even more drastic terms the calculative choices upon which decisions on migrant labor are made. ‘Neoliberalism as exception is introduced in sites of transformation where market driven calculations are being introduced in the management of populations and the administration of special places’ (Ong, 2006, p.3). Neoliberalism, as a technology of governing, not only strengthens the conventional economic definition of migrants, or in other terms, normalizes it in both the receiving and sending territories, but also transforms and disciplines the mechanisms, spaces and temporalities the migrant labor force is supposed to inhabit. In the receiving country, migrants are converted into another production factor necessary for competitiveness in global markets. States and

²⁶ I will return to a more detailed discussion of zoning practices in Chapter 2. At this point, for the purposes of the argument, Ong’s contribution is important to stress the rearticulations of sovereign power to novel mechanisms of appropriation and flexible inclusion of migrants, notably of migrant workers, within the structures of global capitalism.

multilateral agencies accommodate the demands of global capital by rendering the rules of residency and belonging more flexible, and even by tolerating certain networks of illegal labor exploitation. This is a particularly salient trait of domestic workers' networks. Ong, for example, analyzes the gendered dynamics of domestic migrant workers in Malaysia and Singapore, and argues that they amount to a form of 'neoslavery' in which employers have almost absolute control over the life and mobility of their employees. In many cases, she notes, states and societies at large passively tolerate the maintenance of these exploitative regimes through a racial profiling of domestic workers. 'There is a synergy between a racial/dirty personal profiling and a racial/spatial profiling, a sense of contaminating present of the transient but yet present foreign female labor force' that legitimizes and normalizes such practices (Ong 2007, p.203). It is important to point that this sort of racial profiling and xenophobic feelings are part and parcel to xenophilic attitudes regarding migrant labor. This is a consequence, as Bonnie Honig has argued, of the fact that migrant labor is constructed and perceived in relation to notions of 'foreignness' that sees them as either tolerated or as an enabling figure of a political economy structured around a 'performative paradox' that situates the migrant within a continuum between the citizen and the alien (Bosniak 1998).

It is not at all clear that the state does not consent to the presence on its territory of large numbers of illegal immigrants. Illegal immigration is not only combated by the state, it is also simultaneously enabled, covertly courted, often managed and certainly tolerated by it. Established citizens profit from the subsidies that cheap migrant labor provides to their childcare costs and food prices (Honig 1998, p.15).

In sending countries, those for which migrants are emigrants, the cost of the loss of its national workers is usually weighed in relation to the remittances they send back

home. As Solimano highlights, in the Latin American case, for example, ‘the quantitative impact of remittances is high: the 2002 total is put at US\$32 billion. To put this number in perspective, foreign direct investment in Latin America was about US\$39 billion that year [...] The macroeconomic and developmental impact of remittances is favorable, as they supplement domestic saving. Furthermore, the recipients are usually low-income families in the migrants’ countries of origin’ (2003, pp.60-61). Sending countries are increasingly adjusting their mechanisms to retain more symbolic attachments to the national, and sometimes to reframe it, in the case of its mobile and itinerant population. Strategies of ‘hyphenated identity’ construction (Hansen 2005) and the cultural usage of expatriate ‘nationalism’ are examples of how the inter/national disjuncture is being restructured in order to separate, control and appropriate mobile subjects while at the same time preserving and reproducing a sovereignty-based approach to the international. As such, both ‘nationals’ (that of the hosting and sending countries) work to reinforce an understanding of political belonging still centered on citizenship as its normative ideal, even in situations of discontinuity in temporality and territoriality.

The third central feature of the international discourse on migrants relates to the notion of **time**. The definition set forth in the International Convention on the Rights of Migrants Workers and their Families systematically defines migrant workers in terms of their temporary employment. Labor contracts are usually regarded as having a restricted and delimited duration period or migrants have only a temporary relationship with the national sphere in which they work. This is the case of itinerant workers, for example, ‘who, having his or her habitual residence in one State, has to travel to another State or

States for short periods, owing to the nature of his or her occupation' (UNRMW, article 2, e). This is an important trait of the discourse on migrants because it makes a clear distinction between labor migration and settlement migration, certainly privileging the first. The migrant is, in this respect, expected to be a transient mobile being, a provisional inhabitant of the inter, a short-lived disturbance of the international/national order. The interim concept of migration has profound effects in the politics of global movement. In Castles (2000) summary of states' strategies of migration management, it is possible to evince how the temporal limits imposed on the international construction of migrants experiences actually informs the national responses given. He identifies three main strategies, namely assimilation, differential exclusion and multiculturalism.

Assimilation means encouraging immigrants to learn the national language and to take on the social and cultural practices of the receiving community. The underlying belief is that the immigrants' descendants will be indistinguishable from the rest of the population. *Differential exclusion* means accepting immigrants only within strict functional and temporal limits: they are welcome as workers, but not as settlers; as individuals, but not as families or communities; as temporary sojourners, but not as long-term residents. In this model, immigrants are integrated (temporarily) into certain societal sub-systems such as the labor market and some aspects of the welfare system, but excluded from others such as political participation. *Multiculturalism* means abandoning the myth of homogenous and monocultural nation-states. Yet it can still be seen as a way of controlling difference within the nation-state framework, because it does not question the territorial principle. It essentially assumes that migration will lead to permanent settlement, and to the birth of second and subsequent generations who are both citizens and nationals. Thus multiculturalism maintains the idea of a primary belonging to one society and a loyalty to just one nation-state (Castles 2000).

In all of these strategies, the migrant experience is supposed to be short-lived. Even in the multicultural perspective, it is expected that migrants will, in time, become increasingly intertwined with the national aspects of the zones they live and work in. If

migrants become settlers, it can only be through the granting of citizenship attributes and thus through a growing proximity with the 'national'. The temporal aspect has also important effects on the construction of 'irregular' or 'undocumented' migration. 'Irregular' migration is usually connected to individuals overstaying their visas or engaging in unauthorized work. It also involves family members of migrant workers, 'prevented from entering legally by restrictions on family reunion' (Castles & Miller 2003, p.283). Usually, the illegal component attached to migration reflects a denial of one or more of the universal attributes that make the migrant body and existence recognizable and somewhat legitimate. The prevalence of the economic/working relationship, for instance, within the international discourse on migration explains why the figure of the 'undocumented' migrant worker is, on one hand, sidelined in the discussions and converted into a source of unlawful behavior (and criminalized), and, on the other, incorporated into the framework of human rights in general. The undocumented migrant worker is that which should not exist, and to whom only the most basic traits of 'humanity' warrant recognition and protection. Informal contractual relations, the ones prevailing in the universe of international migration, are not recognized as legitimate sources of justification for inhabiting the zones of 'inter'national contact. Undocumented migration is then a 'trespassing' activity, tolerated in some circumstances but constantly controlled, disciplined and punished by the mobility regime, both nationally and internationally.

The final report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), launched in 2003 by the United Nations Secretary-General and published in 2005,

provides an interesting example of how the politics of legality/illegality and the divide between mobile subjects is played out in the international discourse. The GCIM's goal was to devise "a coherent, comprehensive and global response to the issue of international migration". The process involved nineteen experts and a series of consultative meetings and hearings, attempting to include governmental, international and civil society views on questions pertaining to the limitations and potentialities of the current framework for international migration worldwide. On one hand, the GCIM is clear about its subject of interest, even though not providing a 'formal definition': migrants understood as those living outside their country of origin for more than one year (GCIM 2005, p.viii). It mentions but is not primarily concerned with refugees or asylum seekers, nor with internally displaced peoples, despite constant remarks about how the 'issue of human mobility cannot be dealt with in isolation' (ibid. p.9). As a recent commentator notes, in the absence of a critical tone, 'the report re-echoed the thin divide between refugees and labor migration. The pertinent distinction, however, remains that while the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution has universal application, states' policy for orderly migration regimes must not be prejudiced' (Adepoju 2006, p.6). The Report is also sensitive to the complexity of human mobility phenomena. It recognizes how classifications and definitions, though precise in juridical terms, are often misleading of the interweaving of lives they attempt to represent and circumscribe.

International migrants constitute a very diverse group of people. As the numbers of migrants has increased, so too has the number of legal and administrative categories into which they are placed [...] People who move across international borders are variously described as having regular or irregular status and as being skilled or unskilled workers, permanent settlers or temporary migrants, not to mention additional categories such as

student migrant, family reunion migrant, transit migrant, asylum seeker, refugee. In principle, a coherent and comprehensive migration policy should address the particular circumstances of each of these groups. In reality, however, an individual migrant may belong to one or more of these categories at the same time. She or he may move successively from one category to another in the course of a migratory movement, or may seek to be reclassified from one category to another (GCIM 2005, p.7)

The Report openly criticizes the criminalization of migration conveyed in ideas of irregularity and illegality, and opts for a different nomenclature that, nevertheless, keeps the clear shadow of irregularity as a marker of difference. In the words of the Report,

The term ‘irregular migration’ is commonly used to describe a variety of different phenomena involving people who enter or remain in a country of which they are not a citizen in breach of national laws. These include migrants who enter or remain in a country without authorization, those who are smuggled or trafficked across an international border, unsuccessful asylum seekers who fail to observe a deportation order and people who circumvent immigration controls through the arrangement of bogus marriages. These different forms of irregular migration are often clustered together under the alternative headings of unauthorized, undocumented or illegal migration. The Commission is aware of the controversy surrounding the adequacy of these concepts, and concurs with the assertion that an individual person cannot be ‘irregular’ or ‘illegal’. This chapter therefore refers to the people concerned as ‘migrants with irregular status (GCIM 2005, p.32).

State sovereignty makes its appearance in the principle guides in relation to the ‘challenge of irregular migration’. Despite its initial concern with ideas of illegality, ‘regular’ migration is usually associated throughout the report with the positive impact of migrant labor to national and international development and to building a world of cultural diversity, and thus should be protected and promoted. ‘Irregular migration’, in contrast, should be resolved ‘by means of return or regularization’ (GCIM 2005, p.80). Sovereigns have the right to control who can enter or not, but should do so in a way that upholds human rights standards and the right of refugees to seek asylum. Once the

irregular component of migration is resolved, it is possible once again to return to an optimistic lens, a lens that is, again and again, molded by the dictum of citizenship and territoriality as necessary for political order.

Recent incidents involving violence committed by immigrants and members of minority groups have led to a perception that there is a close connection between international migration and international terrorism. International migration is regarded by politicians and the public alike as a threat to sovereignty and security of the state [...] However, the linkage between migration and security should also be viewed in more positive ways. In many parts of the world, labor migration has contributed towards security and political stability by reducing poverty levels, curbing unemployment and expanding the experiences and opportunities available to the population. Migration can be an empowering experience that enables people to enjoy greater degree human security. Returning migrants and exiles have assumed important leadership roles in many nascent democracies that are emerging from years of authoritarian rule (GCIM 2005, p.9).

In this brief passage, the relationship between ‘migrants with irregular status’ and insecurity is resolved by the contribution made possible when migration becomes incorporated into the ‘regular’ workforce (and thus reassumes its labor content) or when, having returned to the citizen-state-territory landscape of countries of origin and then no longer migrants, these individuals can again regain their political status in ‘leadership roles’. Rather than questioning the ontological link between security and migration, and its consequential derivation on the legality/illegality mechanisms of regulation, the GCIM reorients the evaluation criteria from one of a negative impact towards ‘more positive ways’. It is in this vein that migration becomes then associated with development. In this respect, the report reinforces the economic drive underneath the rational calculations of migrants, transposing the reflections of despair and escape from poverty to how they might positively affect both sending and hosting communities. The migration experience

is therefore always read and interpreted in relation to a topology of otherness that places the migrant between ‘nationals’, that pulls and pushes his existence towards one and the other in an effort to regain control over the spatio-temporal framework of the ‘inter’national as always an unstable and temporary domain.

Internally Displaced Persons

The Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Peoples (GP) were the result of an initiative started in 1992 under the auspices of the UN Commission of Human Rights that aimed at understanding the causes and consequences of internal displacement and their relation with international law (Deng, 1998). Though a non-binding document, the GP, published in 1998, has provided the general framework under which UN agencies, and particularly UNHCR, define, manage and provide assistance to internally displaced peoples (IDPs). The GP defines IDPs as:

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Introduction, point 2, Guiding Principles).

It is important to highlight that the emergence of IDPs within the international discourse on human mobility is, in itself, part of the increasing inability of the conventional distinction between migrants and refugees to account for and provide the necessary mechanisms for protection and governance of multiple and varied experiences of dis-‘place’-ment. It is part of a process of scope enlargement that took place in the

1990s²⁷, in which UNHCR began to encompass in its mandate a growing number of people that, though not ‘properly’ refugees, were in ‘refugee-like’ situations. In this respect, the proliferation of categories under the rubric of ‘people of concern’ constitutes a refractive representation of mobility, always in relation to and in accordance with the traditional locus of ‘inter’national bodies. Scatellaris (2007) has aptly remarked how the concept of ‘forced migration’, one that encompasses refugees, IDPs and other displaced of concern, is in itself a response to the decrease in the number of refugees in the past years and a strategy of UNHCR to assure its institutional survival under changing circumstances. ‘UNHCR overall strategy is to reconfigure itself into the leading agency for forced displacement as a whole, thereby broadening its mandate to include IDPs and other categories of forced migrants. In such a context, maintaining a sharp distinction between forced and non-forced migrants becomes crucial in order to define UNHCR’s domain of action and in the end justify its own existence’ (2007, p.46).

The definition of IDPs involves two main features, both of which resonate with the core features of the conventional mobility regime we have discussed thus far. The first one is the forced and involuntary nature of the movement that produces the displaced. It mimics the refugee representation, in opposition to the migrant, as mobility is presented

²⁷ Currently, UNHCR faces important constraints in terms of implementing a wider mandate, mostly due to restrictions in funding and the reluctance of States to accept and host spontaneous and resettled refugees. These limitations have justified in important respects a change in policies from a protective to a preventive framework of action, in which the main goal of ‘humanitarian’ operations is to alleviate the suffering of human plight in the countries of origin. As such, UNHCR’s operations have become increasingly concentrated in the developing world from where the majority of refugee-like situations tend to arise. One of the main discursive changes in recent years has been to call attention to the need to tackle the ‘causes’ that lead to the search for refuge, rather than solely focusing on the protection of those who request asylum..

as necessity. The second trait contraposes the displaced and the refugee, for while the latter is the conventional representative of the 'inter', the displaced remains circumscribed into the national. The main feature of distinction is that displaced peoples are 'internal', they have not 'crossed an internationally recognized state border' and thus are precisely located within the domain of the sovereign authority. But their displacement is also a result of the fracture of the sovereignty principle, for it derives from the lack of effective legal protection granted and attributed to citizens. The IDP is a refugee-like but also a citizen-like figure. It is the inferiority under which it is placed, in relation to these two categories, that defines its existence. S/he has not 'moved enough' away from national to be a refugee; but s/he has also not 'moved enough' towards the inter to no longer be considered a citizen.

The lack of appropriate international regulation, and the consequent declaratory nature of the GP, reflects the assumption of the 'international' under which the mobility regime and discourse is premised. To assume an effective protective umbrella for IDPs is to collapse the national/international distinction and to allow for 'fear' and 'anarchy' inside. The collapse of territorial authority, from which internal displacement derives, has been understood as a major blow to the traditional accounts of sovereignty. Some have articulated the decline of certain nation-states with ideas of quasi-sovereignty or failed states (Jackson, 1990), conditions in which it would be reasonable and legitimate to expect the interference of the international into the national. This interference allows for a temporary suspension of the inter/national disjuncture and is deemed necessary to recreate the conditions under which the system operates. Therefore, the experience of

internal displacement, while representative of the failures of the trinity of territory-sovereignty-citizenship, is also retaken through a frail, yet much persistent, governmentality structure that aims at regaining the ‘national order of things’ (Malkki, 1999) and connecting it to the overall institutional scaffold of the international mobility discourse.

The reasons related to internal displacement are similar to the ones that are assumed to cause the refugee plight: violation of human rights and situations of generalized violence. IDPs may also move as a result of human-induced or natural disasters, and, in this case, they incorporate the ‘national’ counterpart of those who have been recently called as ‘environmental’ refugees. However, as we have already seen, the refugee status is not granted for environmentally related reasons, even though increasing numbers of ‘people of concern’ have been displaced due to natural events and development-induced landscape transformations. IDPs are in important respects a representation of what Walker (2006) has called the ‘double outside’ of the ‘international’. Their existence is derivative of a double exclusion from the national and the international that depends, firstly, on assuming the taken-for-granted dichotomy of citizenship-alien, and, secondly, on considering that outside of this dichotomy one can only find a permanent state of exception (Agamben, 2004). IDPs are thus defined as a constant state of lack, of emptied citizenship and of not being ‘alien’ enough. From the standpoint of the nation-state and the national community, IDPs are perceived as both pollution and disruption. They remind the sovereign state, and its surrogates (e.g. UNHCR), of the frailty of their authority. They remind the national community of the

failures of citizenship as a source of security. From the standpoint of the international, IDPs represent a threat to the governmentality structures of mobility as assistance and management usually involve a difficult negotiation and reconstruction of the border between inside/outside and a reframing of who is authorized to protect *de jure* citizens. They also represent an opportunity to safeguard and rescue the disjuncture by allowing for the reinforcement of sovereignty prerogatives in its absence. By regimentalizing and controlling IDPs, it is possible to temporarily regain a sense of order and security upon which the national imaginary depends. IDPs are, in conclusion, perceived and represented as an ‘unrecognizable other’, as an in-between form of displacement that is tensioned by the figures of governed mobile subjects, namely the immigrant and the refugee.

The international as governmentality of difference and topologies of otherness

Inayatullah and Blaney (2004) define the international as an strategy of difference deferral, one in which the problem of difference is always resolved by the subsumption of universal within the particular, of conversion of otherness into sameness represented by the political resolution of citizenship. I would further argue that difference is not so much deferred, but mostly modulated (Adey 2008), rearranged and normalized within the scaffold of the international. The international mobility discourse effects precisely a conversion of mobile subjects into this field of intervention; it converts their bodies, existence, and life experiences into compartments or spheres of behavior and affection whose regulation makes ‘possible, guaranteeing and ensuring circulations’ (2008, p.30).

The liberalism of fear, at the core of (neo)realist analysis, is primarily reflected in the overall distinction established between citizens, refugees (asylum seekers, recognized refugees and resettled refugees) and internally displaced persons. The ways in which these categories of populations are defined and managed demonstrate the tactics and strategies of governing the international as an attempt to reduce the levels of (in)security that stem from the violent nature of international politics. We can read the challenge of disciplining the different ways in which fear produces mobile subjects, within the linear disjuncture between national and ‘inter’national, as an exemplary form of how to build effective responses and institutions that minimize the undesirable effects of displacement within a privileged international order. The political event that gives ‘birth’ to displacement justifies their inclusion within a disciplinary system that perceives mobility as disruption, always in relation to how far or close these mobile objects are from the inter and the national. The liberalism of fear is the other face of protective/humanitarian narratives that embrace refugees and IDPs within ideas of vulnerability and victimage. The liberalism of progress, in contrast, is particularly reflected on discourses on migration, usually attaching the presence/absence of migrants to an economic rationality connected to development, governance and networks of interdependence. In this vein, migrants are incorporated within an international market-division of labour and are normalized as such. It should not surprise us then that the framework used by the Global Commission on International Migration focuses on the ‘three Ds’, namely demography, development and democracy. These are the primary axes upon which the (im)migrant population is perceived and constructed as a field of international intervention. Ceyhan

and Tsoukala, for example, analyze the current trend on the securitization of migration precisely by showing how the demographic imbalance represented by (im)migrants presence is directly translated into a threat to the socio-economic system in the form of unemployment and rise of informal economy. The demographic unbalance is also seen as an identitarian threat to the 'host societies' national identity' (2002, p.24).

The construction of 'inter'national bodies works then as a milieu or medium through which the international is performed. More than that, this idea allows us to see how certain attributes 'work to *make* these differences by sorting passengers [in our case, peoples] into different modalities' (Adey 2008, p.146).²⁸ These attributes, within the overall framework of the international discourse on mobility relate to: 1) relationship with territorial borders (inside/outside, national/international) and degrees of vulnerability associated with distance/proximity in both time and space to the 'protective' domain of the nation-state under the legal umbrella of citizenship, 2) fear/hope/despair (affective purchase of displacement), 3) need of mobility (voluntary/involuntary), 4) the nature of the event (political, economic, natural and so on), 5) juridical status (irregular/regular, documented/undocumented), among others. Each of these attributes is combined in order to constitute the 'normal' mobile subject. Modulation takes place in the moments in which these attributes are put in a particular order in the representations and performances

²⁸ Adey basis his analysis on the politics of the airport and how border controls, that take place in these venues, operated through the establishment of difference, modulations, reconstructions and a particular political economy of circulation. In a sense, the airport is perhaps the iconic representation of how the international discourse of mobility is put into effect and thus, one could argue, that the politics at the airport is exemplary of the microphysics of power imbued in the overall scaffolding of the international.

involved in the border encounter, in what I termed as the translation processes. This affects practices in which ‘mobilities are changed, separated, and modulated into controllable forms’ (p.156).

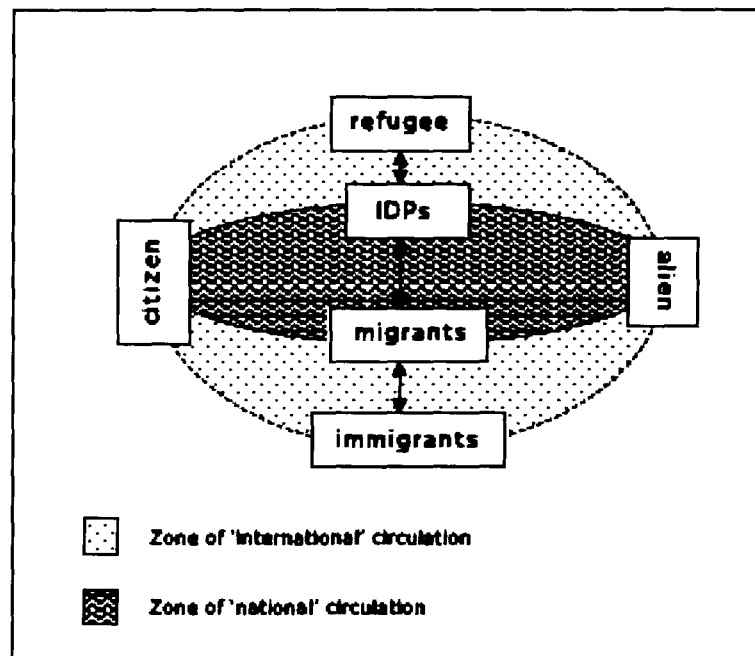


Figure 2 – Topologies of Otherness

We might then understand how this modulation produces a particular form of governmentality of difference in terms of indirect forms of power and standards of behavior/representation that allows for mobility, while at the same time constructing this ‘circulation’ as a sphere of intervention, subordination and hierarchy. This modulation proceeds as a form of ‘normalization’, that, in Foucault’s terms, refers to practices that relate performances and experiences to a conventional, prior ‘norm’. This norm is conventionally read in terms of legitimacy, legality and credibility. A normal, controllable

‘other’ is always recast in relation to how the attributes of the mobility discourse fit into a legitimate claim for refugee status, a legal request for work and residency, a credible narrative of fear and escape. In that sense, the normalized other is also the privileged other in the international discourse. In the same way in which citizenship is coveted and desired as a zone of normalcy and protection, being an immigrant or refugee, despite their transitory and frail basis, becomes a status that most others long for. It is important to highlight that I am not here stating that being an immigrant or a refugee is a desirable condition. Contrarily, displaced life experiences tend to be accompanied by enduring struggles for recognition, acceptance, access and survival in multiple and usually interrelated levels (Chapters 2 and 3 exemplify this point). But, in the exceptional conditions upon which otherness is placed and mobility is structured, and in relation to those who have been *made* to incorporate and perform such conditions, the ideals of refugeeness and immigrant status turn out to be hierarchically superior.²⁹

The myth of difference upon which these varied experiences of mobility are configured also creates its own double movement: first, it establishes a distancing between self-other, reflected in the opposition between citizen-alien, and secondly, a distancing between different types of others that are then subsumed into a hierarchical order of restricted access to material, political and socioeconomic resources. In figure 1,

²⁹ These topologies seem to be corroborated, for example, in Doty’s recent claim that the ‘illegal immigrant elicits significantly less empathy or sympathy than the refugees whose tragedy is generally recognized, even if actions to ameliorate their plight are woefully insufficient’ (2006, p.18). Even though the reality of migrants and refugees is somewhat similar – and thus ‘we should not make too much of the distinction between these categories’ (p.18)-, I have argued that, from the standpoint of the international, these distinctions are crucial and their enforcement is perceived as vital to ensuring international order and stability.

we see how both the refugee and the immigrant representations are placed in opposite ends of the 'inter'national spectrum, always in relation to citizens and aliens as markers of identity, either an absolute sameness or an absolute otherness. IDPs and migrants are placed in between such categories: mobility among different statuses is made through circulation either through the international or between national/international. Though not static, there is a clear subordination of such circulations that tend to privilege the poles in terms of a strict binary opposition. One effect produced by this hierarchical topology of otherness is that it creates a culture of competition among displaced peoples with varied status. It becomes a matter of how to assert differences in order to move further in the social ladder that is attached to distinct experiences of mobility. This competition also tends to produce conflict among displaced groups that, given the scarcity of resources and recognition, start to fundamentally resort to these differences and hierarchies as a strategy of survival. This impinges on the capacity of such groups to mobilize across diverse ethnic, national and status related categories. In important respects, the international discourse becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, one in which the displaced groups play an important part. This is not to say that in their appropriations of these categories and in the translations that take place in such transversal encounters, other imaginaries are not made possible. They are and they have been put forward by a kaleidoscope of mobilizations and political initiatives that attempt at criticizing, circumventing and responding to the marginalization such labeling promotes. Nevertheless, it is important to specify how powerful the 'inter'national construct is and how deep its grammar goes.

Therefore, though sympathetic to the argument that the divorce between policy and analytic labels presents a desirable separation (Scalettaris, 2007), one must be attentive to the ways in which it is impossible to divorce the theoretical approach from the praxis imbued in the realization and actualization of labels. It is only when we unveil the mechanisms through which policy oriented labels, like refugees, IDPs, migrants, are performed and contested that we are able to understand change and engage in an ethical compromise with respect to the difference. It should not surprise us that mobile groups attempt to recast their identities in relation to these topologies of otherness in order to resist the governmentality of difference of the international. That non-status and non-recognized Sudanese asylum seekers presented themselves as refugees in their sit-in in Cairo in 2005, that Hispanic undocumented migrants protested as immigrants and potential citizens in the United States in 2006, that ‘irregular’ Latin American migrants in Brazil signed a petition in 2007 as ‘citizens’ for an-other integration, that Bolivians have been recently denied the possibility of refugee status in Brazil after the recent violent incidents in border areas; all these examples show us that these categories, the mechanisms through which one is ‘recognized’ and authorized to speak as either a citizen, a refugee, a migrant or an immigrant, have profound and fundamental impacts on the everyday lives of mobile groups. These are not just labels, attributes established in formal documents, but should be read as inscriptions and markers over life (and the body) itself.

A proper understanding of the translation processes of the international discourse on the ordinary lives of mobile subjects requires a rethinking of our vocabulary. Firstly, we need to move beyond the spatial categories marked by the inside/outside distinction

and reproduced in the myth of difference between mobilities that is at the core of the international economy of power. In that sense, we need to think about practices of zoning and borders as sites of engagement. Secondly, the language through which mobile politics is played out is not necessarily attached to the traditional sites of citizenship prerogatives and voice. The international is premised on the authorization of a legitimate discourse marked by the search for truth, for origins and for an audible, autonomous, identifiable and controllable subject. In order to rethink the intersection of language and politics, we need to look for alternative grammars; grammars that allow us to see how these discriminations are played out and also contested. It is in this sense that we also need to analyze practices of resistance, to analyze how the inabilities of the conventional discourse have demanded a response from international actors, domestic constituencies and mobile subjects themselves. Not all these responses provide a break with the international assumptions of the mobility regime, but they point out to the recasting of notions of authority, legitimacy and political belonging in a time where circulation has become paramount. In the next two chapters, I argue that border zones and a theory of rumours might provide us with important entry points to understanding mobility circulations and translations.

Chapter 2

Borders, practices of zoning and the regulation of human mobility

The fact that borders are vacillating is a matter of experience: first and foremost, they are no longer at the border, an institutional site that can be materialized on the ground and inscribed on the map, where one sovereignty ends and another begins.

Etienne Balibar

The quote from Balibar (2002, p.89) highlights three central ideas for any conceptualization of borders. First, borders seem to be no longer *at the border*. This means that borders should not be primarily conceived as simply a material and spatial location, a territorial line dividing life and defining authority. Borders have become omnipresent, or in Balibar's words, borders start to multiply and turn themselves into '*inner borders (...) or invisible borders, situated everywhere and nowhere*' (2002, p.78). Secondly, borders are *vacillating* and a *matter of experience*. In that sense, we have witnessed the (dis/re)location of borders and their divisions, but also their constant reframing in new sites, and under new conditions, always dependent on who and how one perceives and encounters it. After all, borders are not felt in or lived through the same way by everyone. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the major functions of borders: to enable mechanisms of discrimination or, as Adey (2008) puts it, to operate as a 'difference machine'. Thirdly, borders are essential to performances of sovereignty. Consequently, the multiple reconfigurations of sovereignty as an organizational principle for political life, as well as the condition of possibility for 'international' politics, have led to a concomitant transformation of the nature, the time and the spaces under which borders operate and through which its discriminations are affected.

Given these dynamics, the current proliferation of border studies that attempt to make sense of the complexity of border practices and their impact on different forms of life experiences should not surprise us. A large array of terms has been developed in order to theorize about border encounters and to account for their multiple consequences in the everyday life of border dwellers and also on the reconfigurations of politics itself. Being central to the performance of the international, borders are perhaps a privileged site for exploring its inherent tensions and potential openings. In the previous chapter, I described how the international has profound impacts on the framing, and regimentalization, of mobile life – and how the governmentality of mobility is itself constitutive of the international. Borders are central to the discourse on human mobility: first, because it is in the border encounter that its definitions and disciplinary mechanisms are put in practice; and second, because in these encounters power is both enacted and resisted. As such, borders provide a fundamental facet for any conceptualization of the international and also a privileged site for unveiling the rearticulations of sovereign power and the creative strategies of diverse actors to respond to its processes of inclusion and exclusion.

In this chapter, I advance an articulation between border and practices of zoning in relation to mobile groups. I argue that the construction of zones involves a complex negotiation between different actors in terms of how, where and when migrant groups can claim the ‘right to have rights’ (Arendt 1948, 2004). In fact, zoning practices allow for an understanding of sovereignty performances as primarily enabled by ambiguous appropriations of the border, as both an inclusive, hospitable site, and as an enduring mechanism of discriminations, most often staged by an assemblage of social interests that

respond to important inequalities and perceptions of what constitutes ‘otherness’. Moreover, one can understand these zoning performances as one of the ways in which the international discourse on mobility is enacted. We see how topologies of otherness are translated into the everyday lives of those who have their existence modeled, labelled and controlled according to their proximities and distances from notions of citizenship and alienage.

I begin with a more theoretical discussion about what it means to think about ‘borders’ based on recent scholarly interventions on the transforming effects of zoning on the performances of sovereignty. I engage this discussion with an analysis of the current dilemmas faced by Bolivian migrants in Brazil, in particular in the border zone of Corumbá and Puerto Suarez, twin cities on the fringes of the Bolivian-Brazilian frontier. I trace some aspects of the capillarity of bordering practices in relation to this particular community within the overall context of growing economic integration and resilient cultural and identitarian cleavages between Brazilians and Bolivians and also among Bolivian migrants themselves. Scholars have pointed to a central role of states in developing zoning strategies (Molloy 2002, Hozic 2002, Seri 2004) as primarily flexible mechanisms of adaptation to both global violence and global circuits of production. In contrast, I attempt to show how, even when states do engage in more positive articulations of zones, as is the case of the regulation of transborder dwellers presented here, other repertoires of authority can in fact impinge on the ability of borders to become *de facto* zones of hospitality. Moreover, it indicates how transnational agreements are

doomed to fail unless they take seriously the historical, social, cultural and political landscape upon which its resolutions are supposed to be translated.

This is in part due to the fact that border zones have themselves become mobile. Far from being mere legal arrangements, juridical constructs or *conceived sites*, border zones are the result of a complicated network of diffuse social relationships. This border mobility, evinced by practices of zoning, is exemplified in the current debates on the treatment granted to Bolivian migrants in other areas of Brazil. I illustrate this point through a discussion of the situation of Bolivians in São Paulo, mainly focusing on the final report of the Provincial Legislative Assembly (Commission of Parliamentary Inquiry) which investigated the situation of widespread human rights abuses against these groups. In this latter case, we see how zones and camps can conflate in the border encounter and how such bordering practices allow us to see the ‘foreigner’ as necessarily an undecidable figure (Honig 2001).

Border performances through practices of zoning

Balibar (2002) calls our attention to the polysemic nature of borders. Borders are experienced in multiple dimensions and have different meanings for those who cross, live or invigilate them. Borders are thus ‘concrete’ realities, but also, and necessarily, symbolic experiences. ‘Nothing is less like a material thing than a border, even though it is officially the same whichever way you cross it’ (Balibar 2002, p.81). For Balibar, three main aspects characterize borders. First, borders are over determined. They represent more than a mere line between nation-states; they are reproduced, contested, reinforced or

'performed' in various ways depending on the perspective of those who experience the border. Borders are historical and contextual, situated in space and time, but increasingly 'no longer situated at the borders at all' (2002, p.84). Borders are also an exercise in separation, in drawing difference or establishing the traits that divorce 'us' from 'them', the citizen and the foreigner. Border politics is notably a politics of 'otherness', one intrinsically connected to the framing of distinctions and to the disciplinary efforts of managing experiences of mobility or of transversality. Borders distinguish between different types of 'others', entitled to different levels of access to rights and to forms of belonging (or becoming). In that sense, perspectivism is intrinsic to any border experience. The border might engender 'a surplus of rights', in the case of those who have access to the facilities enabled by the easiness of border crossings, or constitute itself into a 'zone of exceptionality' and thus of exclusions, where rights are suspended (Balibar 2002, p.79). Borders might even become a 'place where one resides' – a place here meaning not just a territorial site but a condition of living *as* a border, no matter where or when one stands (Balibar 2002, p.83).

The second aspect refers to the heterogeneity and ubiquity of borders: the 'tendency of borders, political, cultural, and socioeconomic to *coincide* (...) the result of this [being] that *some borders are no longer situated at the borders at all*' (2002, p.84). This aspect has to do with the proliferation of bordering practices beyond the traditional time-space zones of cartographic demarcations and the fact that sovereignty, and its accompanying borders, are thus becoming ever more present in the everyday life of people, especially of those for whom the border represents a permanent and fundamental

condition of *being*. This is the sense conveyed in the idea of *living as a border*, for the border ceases to be exterior, extraneous to the body and to the life it involves and becomes a process ‘of *negotiation* [through which individuals or collectivities have to engage in order to assert] their presence and their mode[s] of presence’ (Balibar 2002, p.90).

The third aspect relates to the fact that borders are as much material as they are ideational. Borders are fundamental in devising the mechanisms through which people interpret and act on the world and on those around them. By establishing differences, borders also enable similarities and allow for the recognition of identities. ‘[National borders] would not be capable of being ‘internal borders’ (internalized borders, borders for interiority) were they not idealized. And they would not be idealized, conceived of as the support of the universal, if they were not imagined as the point at which ‘world-views’, and thus also views of man [sic], were at stake: the point at which one must choose, and choose *oneself*’ (Balibar 2002, p.94). Borders always imply the making of choices on the part of those who encounter them.

I argue that theorizing borders as zones makes it possible for an analysis of border operations beyond their conceptualization as either barriers or bridges or as simple territorial markers. Border zones help us understand some of the complexities to which Balibar’s definition points. In fact, historically, borders were always associated with the territorial limits of a community, a place where one sovereignty ends and another begins, or, more often than not, where sovereign power finds its enemies and encounter its ultimate line of defense. This is the story told to us by mainstream IR, since the

international depends precisely on knowing where the border stands. The border represents the site where the potentiality of conflict is always imminent. The border represents the space of 'potential dissidence' (Machado 2000). The border is a dangerous place (Haddad 2007). In addition, the border has also been portrayed as a contact zone, where difference is overcome, resisted and endured through symbolic, economic, social and political interchanges. The border opens up the possibility of communication and interaction; it can bridge what territorial sovereignty has divided (even if partially). Border zones are therefore contact zones, 'in which rival normative ideas, knowledges, power forms, symbolic universes and agencies meet in unequal conditions and resist, reject, assimilate, imitate, subvert each other, giving rise to hybrid legal and political constellations in which the inequality of exchanges are traceable' (Santos 2002, p.472).

This inherent tension in border representations has had profound effects on the ways one thinks about, interacts with and lives through the border. Bordering practices are marked by these perspectives in profound ways, through sorting out desirable versus dangerous peoples and things, through the mixing of cultures and social practices, through the erection of posts, fences, walls but also of roads, bridges and railways, through diplomatic negotiations and commercial exchanges, through invasions and military presence, through the questioning of notions of legality (in everyday smuggling practices for instance), through tourism and migration, through flight but also through life. Borders can be rites of passage but they are, more often than not, living zones where the national and territorially defined limits of community are at once reinforced and contested. Some borders are intensely invigilated; others are so interdependent that it is

hard to tell they even exist apart from sporadic signs and markers. Some borders multiply and refuse to remain attached to territory; they move along and with the bodies that transverse them. In order to read the border, its politics and rhythms, innovative scholarship has started to present us with new concepts, new frameworks and new perspectives on the unfolding complexities of border practices and border lives.

Bhabha, for instance, uses the idea of a ‘Third Space’ to circumvent the binary oppositions upon which the encounter with difference has been traditionally cast. This third space represents for him ‘the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*, the space of *entre* that Derrida has opened up in writing itself – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture’ (1993, p.131). The third space is a site where identities are reframed or repositioned in relation to the ‘other’ that presents itself, for example, in the border encounter. When faced with the need to dialogue, the political subject has to negotiate the meanings of his/her existence in order to be made meaningful to that which is different. The subject has to negotiate, to use its multiple and sometimes contradictory identities, in order to translate his/her experience to the Other, or even to adapt and become somehow ‘like’ the other in this process. The third space is thus the site for the enactment of hybridity, understood as the system of reference in which fluid and ambivalent relationships with traits of identity construction allow for the recognition of otherness as both similar and different. For example, we might consider what sorts of conciliations are made necessary for example to a Bolivian Indigenous Migrant. In the encounter with border authorities, it might be the case that his/her Bolivian quality will be prioritized in order to allow for passage; in his/her diasporic community, s/he might

emphasize his/her migrant identity in order to press for access to work and to mechanisms of social and economic survival. Or, individuals might underline connections to an indigenous background as a source of strength and of granting meaning to life in displacement. As such, identities are mobile and fluid and are enacted and conveyed in different and multiple ways depending on the sense of experience and on the symbolic appropriations that groups/individuals choose to make.

At the same time, however, the idea of a Third Space seems to hinder some aspects of the politics of difference encounter, especially in relation to bordering practices. It conceals the power structures that at once restrict and allow for resistance in terms of subjectivity construction. It places emphasis on the cultural aspects of representation while ignoring the enormous apparatus of power that is currently in place to discipline and police how these identities can ‘officially’ be appropriated. The cultural aspects of representation are always crisscrossed by deeply racial, economic, social and political inequalities and the struggle over them is what constitutes the core of bordering and debordering practices. As such, and contrary to what Bhabha’s reading might suggest, any possibility of a Third Space is inherently plagued by friction and, as a consequence, by violence and resistance.

Martinez, in a somewhat different vein, criticizes the portrayal of borderlands as a possible representation of a Third Space. For Martinez, such a reading ignores ‘the dissimilarities in institutional (both public and private) settings as well as physical appearances of the worlds border dwellers have to deal with [...] Although there is some bumping or hybridization, they nevertheless remain attached to the landscape and values

of their national attachments' (1994, p.304). Border dwellers are for him a sort of 'mixers', individuals who have to navigate and find mechanisms of survival between different worlds on a daily basis and, as a result, see their lives 'changed significantly' (1994, p.253).

Martinez's own conceptualization of borderlands, though, is also fraught with problems. First, his depiction of what constitutes a borderland seems to ignore the territorial discontinuities enabled by (de)bordering practices. 'The essential functions of a border are to keep people in their own space and to prevent, control, or regulate interactions among them. A borderland is a region that lies adjacent to a border. The territorial limit of a borderland depends on the geographic reach of the interaction with the *other side*' (1994, p.5). He seems to ignore the fact that increasingly borderlands have themselves become mobile and that a strict separation between borderlands and hinterlands seems not only difficult, but also highly simplistic. Consequentially, what constitutes the 'other side' is open to contestation, adjustment and, more often than not, geographical disconnections. Secondly, his portrayal of the politics of borderlands is still plagued by traditional binary oppositions that place the options for border dwellers as an either/or choice. As such, he states, 'the border is predictable and unpredictable; it divides and unifies; it repels and attracts; it obstructs and facilitates. In a bipolar environment, it is not surprising that border society manifests such contrary tendencies as conflict and accommodation, poverty and wealth, social rigidity and fluidity, racial animosity and tolerance, and cultural separation and fusion' (1994, p.305). Martinez's criticisms of Bhabha seem, at this point, to bring us back to a certain binarism that would make it

easier to analyze border lives. Still, such a binary would foreclose the complex nature of negotiations that take place between border dwellers, national and international authorities and other actors that are embedded in the performance of borders and in the operations of bordering practices.

The most innovative and interesting contribution to the study of borders is presented, I argue, by the idea of 'borderescapes'. Advanced in an edited volume by Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007), the concept involves three major notions. The first one has to do with acknowledging the contestability of the meaning of the border. This idea resonates well with Balibar's view of the perspectivism of the border. Different actors from different standpoints enact multiple and sometimes conflictive border experiences. Contestability thus leads to changing and mobile representations and performances of borders, both in space and time. The second trait relates precisely to the moving territoriality of borders as 'borders [...] expand and contract in relation to external and internal pressures; the border is seen here as episodic, changing its features and meanings in response to different sorts of encounter over time' (2007, p.xxxii). The mobility of borders has to do with their increasing ubiquity, with the fact that the delimitation of political subjectivity is no longer merely defined by a territorially circumscribed notion of citizenship. As the editors highlight, the border represents the zone where such 'territorial resolutions of being and the laws that prop them up collapse' (2007, p.x). The border enacts the possibility for the terms of inclusion/exclusion to be contested on the basis not of juridical belonging, but on the multiple mechanisms of recognition based on social performance or on 'acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2002). Some individuals and groups are

excluded from the juridical and territorial mechanisms of belonging, defined in terms of ‘national citizenship’ which the border is supposed to protect. Nevertheless, these same individuals can and often do *act as if* they were citizens, either by asserting their voice in contexts of political abjection, or by questioning the effects and processes of bordering that define their status within their communities. Such a reading is conveyed, for example, in recent calls for ‘flexible citizenship’ (Ong 1999), ‘noncitizen citizenship’ (Bosniak 2006), or for a ‘post-citizenship’ society (Peled 2007).

On the other hand, it is possible to say that for most of the world, even territorially bounded citizens do not have access to the assumed prerogatives and rights supposedly enabled by formal citizenship. In this sense ‘the concept of *citizenship* [...] is often graduated and is to be distinguished in terms of the limits of its use and in terms of the rights it confers’ (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007, p.xiv). From the perspective of borderscapes, one might speak then about forms of political subjectivity as processes of ‘graduated otherness’ or about topologies of otherness as conveyed in the previous chapter. The third aspect refers to the fact that borders and the practices and performances that accompany it should always be read as *political*. Borders are as much about the enactment of power as they are about mechanisms of empowerment. Therefore, the realization of borders usually involves strategies of discipline, control and management of difference, but they also present themselves as privileged zones for resistance. If the border contracts and expands, it is due to processes of social ordering (border controls, enactment of immigration laws, regimentalization of mobility and the exercise of sovereignty prerogatives) and to the refusal of certain groups to acknowledge and

circumscribe their lives to a simplistic disciplinary reading of borders' operations. 'Social interactions are not contained entirely within a physical space outlined by the political border, but incorporate and speak to temporalities, solidarities, and cosmopolitanisms that refuse the categorizations of inside/outside generated by the border' (p.xxiv). The major contribution of this line of analysis is to show us that any discussion on borders is necessarily a discussion about *border politics*.

Following these three aspects of border politics, namely its contestability, its landscapes of power and its own mobility, I argue that besides the idea of *borderscapes*, whose focus is on identitarian struggles and controlling strategies, zones might provide us with another conceptual tool to make sense of the complexity of borders. The idea of border zones is advanced here as an attempt to contribute to such scholarship. It highlights two main features. The first one emphasizes the mobility of borders, or how there is an intrinsic connection between practices of zoning and mobility (both in its disciplinary and transgressive aspects). I am not referring here necessarily to a connection between discontinuous border territories, but to a much larger landscape of processes of inclusion/exclusion that makes the presence of the border more about social performance than about territorial or temporal delimitations. Zoning practices allow for both localization and deterritorialization. They can create sites of containment while enabling mechanisms of interaction; they can allow for almost permanent displacement, independent of how far or close one is to the territorial border, and also engender creative structures of participation and social interaction. Borders reflect a politics of friction (Tsing 2005), that is at once conflictive and constructive.

References to border zones have become increasingly common in the literature on borders. Nevertheless, the logic of zones portrayed in these approaches tends to privilege a reading of zones as strategies of localization and containment. Zones are thus primarily about exclusionary and discriminatory practices, as the following two passages illustrate.

Zoning, the distinction between spaces of safety and spaces of lawlessness and exception, has been the primary activity of sovereign power since its origins. By defining and locating all kinds of contrasts, sovereign power frames and stabilizes its dominion. Whereas the pre-eminence of the rule of law characterizes “normal” spaces, zones of exception are instead areas in which the juridical order has been suspended [...] The process of zoning turns any narrative able to reinforce a process of othering into a tool of sovereign exclusion (Seri 2004, pp.79-81).

Zoning – this forceful localization of this aberration that has become the norm – has indeed become the way in which (cultural) violence is governed and contained; the practice that obfuscates the increasing frequency with which sovereign power encounters –and obliterates– bare life with impunity. Construction of boundaries between zones of safety and zones of violence is, therefore, more than performances of security – it is the way to affirm global order in the face of its absence (Hozic 2002, pp.185).

Both authors portray zoning mechanisms as a reflection of a ‘camp mentality’ or as spaces of exceptionality, where the juridical order is suspended in order to secure rights (Agamben 2005) This seems to be the idea conveyed for example in discussions about the construction of safe/dangerous zones. Hozic, for example, argues that zoning strategies are part of a contemporary paradox: as mobility increases and fluidity and transversality become the norm, so does the production of ‘so many graphically localized and bounded zones’ (2002, p.184). Zones are instrumentally established to separate events and political practices that are fundamentally connected to the maintenance of a global (violent) order. Zones are read therefore as disciplinary strategies that aim at

responding to important disarticulations produced by the increasing fluidity and transversality of human experiences. When connected to borders, these strategies are usually prompted by narratives of fear and security, that display the border as a site of illegality and deviance and thus as central to the reenactment of sovereignty.

Aihwa Ong's discussion displays zoning strategies as a mechanism of adaptation by sovereign power – as a response to profound changes in the global structures of capitalist accumulation and circulation – in which states adapt to the new demands of global capital. Consequentially, sovereign authorities devise zones as sites where the regulations, rights, restrictions, administrative processes and services are designed to secure development, prosperity and freedom for those outside of it. Special economic zones tend to tolerate modes of existence, and forms of mobility, that are not otherwise present in the traditional territories of the nation-state. The border in these cases bends to 'flexible notions of citizenship', neither resident, neither migrant, neither citizen, neither alien. It also bends to flexible or graduated notions of sovereignty by allowing governance structures to incorporate the interests and de facto power of important players in the global capitalist order.

Zoning technologies encode alternative territorialities for experiments in economic freedom and entrepreneurial activity. The logic of the exception fragments human territoriality in the interests of forging specific, variable and contingent connections to global circuits. The resulting pattern of graduated or variegated sovereignty ensures that the state can both face global challenges and secure order and growth. It is also crucial to note that these strategies produced through the logic of the exception are free of the 'enlightenment' package of free-market ideology, modern political liberalism and participatory citizen-subjects. While the state retains formal sovereignty, corporations and multilateral agencies frequently exert de facto control over the conditions of living, laboring and migration of populations in special zones (Ong 2006, p.19).

Ong provides, I believe, a more nuanced approach to how sovereign power rearticulates itself in the face of globalization processes. In her analysis, flexible or graduated notions of citizenship and sovereignty are conveyed in an attempt to trace these transformations and to illustrate alternative mechanisms of responding to a world increasingly marked by fluidity and transversal connections. Nevertheless, in either case, zoning technologies carry with them a highly negative connotation. They are embedded in new structures of discrimination and new forms of exploitation, especially from the standpoint of displaced groups. For migrants, special zones present themselves as a permanent impossibility of access to equality and justice, as flexible mechanisms of inclusion place them into a transient zone where they are neither ‘proper’ migrants, ‘potential’ citizens or otherwise. These groups and individuals are somewhat tangentially incorporated into a logic of being that never fully realizes itself and that is constantly subjected to the volatile interests of multiple sovereign authorities. Moreover, zoning practices entail highly selective mechanisms of partial inclusion, opened to a group of marginal, yet privileged, few who have the abilities and ‘desired’ identities sought by those who control the exercise of graduated sovereignty. Practices of zoning as such, both in the cases analyzed by Ong, Hozic and Seri, do not alter the dynamics of exclusion inherent in border encounters. What they entail is a flexibility of notions of membership, attached to particular interests (either in security or in economic prosperity), and a delimitation of the potentialities of danger and safety within contexts in which such distinctions have become increasingly difficult to make.

Isin and Rygiel (2006) analyze strategies of zoning through the lenses of abjection. For them, the proliferation of zones, as well as frontiers, is based on narratives of protection that intend to contain people in order to guarantee their safety, ‘keeping them simultaneously “away” from danger *and* from state territories’ (p.184). Frontiers are ‘those spaces where the mobility of people is regulated and national and international laws temporarily suspended through the creation of buffer zones through which people can be processed [...] various subjects are not only stripped of their citizenship rights (of their origins), but also given ostensibly differentiated citizenship rights (in their destinations). The logic behind such spaces is to prevent the abject from exercising social, political and economic rights, recognizing that the ability to do so is a first step in becoming political and claiming legal citizenship status’ (p. 191). Zones, in contrast, are ‘spaces where abjects live under suspended rules of freedom as spaces of inexistence [...] These are zones of inexistence insofar as abjects who inhabit them are constituted as in-existent subjects in a state of transient permanence’ (p.193). A similar logic connects frontiers and zones to the extent that both operate to prevent or restrict access to rights and to a political status in which individuals are able to claim rights. In both cases, its residents see their political condition reduced by sovereign acts that prevent them from engaging in and becoming part of the daily life of these spaces.³⁰ These acts may involve

³⁰ Will Coleman has indicated that one of the problems in this approach is to assume that where mobile individuals come from provides them with a better political condition than where they are now. For authors like Ong and Bauman, this assumption would not necessarily hold, since many migrants enjoy a better access to social, cultural and economic opportunities in these zones. However, I would argue that Isin and Rygiel’s central goal is to show how sovereign power still impinges on the live possibilities of these groups, even in contexts in which sovereignty has been stripped off its exclusive

a sovereign decision on rights' exclusion (for example through regulations on access to health care or education), or ordinary responses by local communities that might foreclose in even more profound ways the attainment of rights. What differentiate these two logics, for the authors, are its processes of spatialization. Whereas zones tend to operate within states and cities, frontiers are an expression of the extra-territorialization of bordering practices. Frontiers show the territorial expansion of sovereign exceptionality (through extraterritorial processing of asylum claims, detention of foreigners on excised territories); zones reflect the contraction of bordering practices within the territorial limits of sovereignty jurisdiction. Frontiers and zones are two faces of the same coin; namely both involve the creation of abject spaces by sovereign power in order to contain and discipline the potential 'polluting' presence of 'dangerous others'. Frontiers and zones operate by constraining political status for those who encounter them. Camps, in contrast, operate through 'revoking status, that is, by transforming the status of those caught from subjects to abjects' (Isin & Rygiel 2006, p.198).

These three logics of abjection³¹ - frontiers, zones and camps - follow an 'internment' mentality, aiming at reducing or stripping away the potential for accessing

status. Even in cases where migrants and refugees are able to enjoy fuller rights, it is possible to see how new modes and forms of exploitation and practices of abjection still operate to circumscribe and restrict the life opportunities for these groups. In that sense, one could argue, following Bauman, that some individuals, in spite of their international mobility, still remain vagabonds, but under new circumstances. My purpose in this chapter is precisely to examine some of these circumstances and their coming-into being in the context of border zones.

³¹ Again, even though Isin and Rygiel seem to generalize the status of these logics of abjection, it is questionable whether this is the case for all mobile groups living in zones, camps or frontiers. This analysis always depends on how these logics are contextualized in the living experiences of border dwellers. In the case discussed in this

rights and services and by rejecting, even if temporally, the possibility of citizenship *performances*. But as the authors carefully highlight, these same process of spatial and temporal abjection are accompanied by acts of transgression and of reframing the limits of political community, by questioning the terms of membership. Abject groups, even though constrained within zones, frontiers or camps, find ways of reclaiming their political existence, their ‘right to have rights’ (Arendt 1948, Rancière 2004). This reclaiming evinces an attempt to critically politicize zoning practices as governing strategies that attempt to ‘prevent individuals from exercising political subjectivity by holding them in spaces of existential, social, political and legal limbo’ (p. 189). Therefore, the authors conclude that abject spaces are not necessarily spaces of abjection, for they can be resisted and subverted as sites for different logics, conveyed for example, in claims to hospitality and sanctuary.

I want to navigate through these important scholarly contributions by an exploration of the restrictive and also positive effects zoning practices might have, a reading enabled by the repoliticization of zones, particularly of border zones. After all, border zones are a site of social struggles between a varied range of actors. Border zones change precisely because of the political, social and economic landscapes that result from these struggles. In this and the following chapter, I attempt to trace how the proliferation

chapter, there are elements that present the border zone as a more hospitable site than the one individuals left behind (access to public services, informal jobs, better chances of social mobility and so on). But there are also elements that compose a more precarious condition of living, such as submission to degrading work standards, discrimination on the part of the hosting community, restrictions on mobility rights, difficulties in language and integration etc. Therefore, the balance between abjection and protection is always dependent on the evaluation of these circumstances on the part of mobile groups (and on the responses they provide to the problems they face in these new environment).

of border zones has been accompanied by the multiplication of mechanisms of political abjection and social exclusion. But, even under such conditions, it is still possible to find potential questionings and alternatives to a reading of life as necessarily 'bare life' (a point I believe is clearly expressed in Isin and Rygiel's critique of Agamben). The exceptionality of border zones does not make them less prone to contestation. This is precisely what is important about zones of exception (and practices that attempt to implement it): that the exception is perhaps the most fundamental moment of political engagement and of political creativity. In the next section, I discuss the construction of border zones between Brazil and Bolivia, notably in the region of Corumbá and Puerto Suarez, in light of the impact of international and diplomatic accords and in relation to how this sovereign performance of the border responds to local problems and difficulties. I attempt to articulate how the logics of zoning can actually create mechanisms of inclusion that allow for mobile groups to circumvent some of the restrictions imposed by prioritizing a national, territorially exclusive notion of community membership. Nevertheless, they also entail a proliferation of practices that make it harder for conceived and lived perceptions of 'otherness' to converge. I therefore attempt to illustrate the difficulties and possibilities enacted by a reframing of border zones as 'inter' spaces that might unveil potential, frail and sometimes ambivalent translations of the regulation of mobility in the daily realities of migrant communities.

(In) hospitable border zones

Brazil has borders with ten countries along an area that encompasses 27% of the national territory in eleven provinces. The almost sixteen thousand kilometers (out of which three thousand are with Bolivia) encompass 588 municipalities and are inhabited by more than ten million people. Brazilian legislation establishes a border strip, or *faixa de fronteira*, that envelops 150 kilometers alongside the territorial line. Corumbá, in the Province of Mato Grosso do Sul, occupies 200 kilometers of the border. Alongside the Paraguay River, the city is connected by land to the Bolivian villages of Arroyo Concepcion, Puerto Quijarro and Puerto Suarez. Corumbá is known as the capital of Pantanal, the entry point to a vast tourist region recognized by its biodiversity and unique natural landscapes. During the dry season, the wetlands become a haven for fishermen and tourists, who come to experience the biodiversity of one of the world's largest freshwater wetland systems. But Corumbá is also an important entry point for other mobile groups. The railway and road connections to Bolivia make it one of the routes for entering Brazilian territory for Bolivians and also other Andean communities. The bi-oceanic corridor that crosses the region from Santa Cruz to Corumbá 'articulates the Brazilian South-East to the Peruvian and Chilean harbors in the Pacific' (Souchaud and Baeninger 2007). It has been praised as an important stepping stone in the process of South American integration.

The Bolivian presence in Corumbá has its historical roots in the first efforts of integration, reflected in the construction of the railroads connecting the two territories. Many Bolivian descendents residing in Corumbá were born out of this immigration

process. Corumbá can be seen as a hub in a network of overlapping policies and infrastructure projects which have shaped the relationship of the two countries and the patterns of migratory flows. The economic inequalities between the two countries have impacted the socioeconomic dynamics of mobility in the region, with Bolivians crossing the border to work in Corumbá, notably in informal trade and domestic work, and to have access to public services not available to them in their hometowns. For many years, the only way of having access to Brazilian public services was by entering the territory and applying for migratory status as either permanent residents or citizens; both procedures were difficult and costly procedures for many of the impoverished families who arrived at the border. Many of these restrictions stem from a strictly economic and geopolitical emphasis on the diplomatic relationships of the two countries, largely ignoring the human dimension of these processes in the social landscape of the border zone. From the first treaties on the demarcation of the border in the mid-1800s to the 1955 Robore Accords, the emphasis was mainly given to negotiations on transport infrastructure and supply of energy resources.

Corumbá is located in the border with *Departamento de Santa Cruz*.³² One of the richest provinces in the country, Santa Cruz holds the bulk of energy resources and has a productive and highly concentrated agribusiness sector. Mining companies, usually supported by foreign corporations, many of them Brazilian, are also an important source of income and jobs in the region. In the past decades, the lowlands of Bolivia have started

³² While I was conducting research in the region, in November 2007, Santa Cruz was one of the four provinces which opposed the central government of Evo Morales. In fact, the oppositionist movement in Santa Cruz had a central national role, especially due to economic and social predominance of the Province in the Bolivian landscape.

to receive increasing numbers of indigenous *campesinos* from the Andean region in search of employment and better living conditions. The growing ethnic tensions between the *Qullas* (or *Collas* in the Hispanic appropriation of the term), peoples of indigenous origin from the Bolivian plateaus, and the *cambas*, the Spanish descendent groups from the lowlands (*mestizos*), have started to mark the everyday life of the region. This is in part due to the growing migration of *Qullas* to Santa Cruz, notably alongside the railway and the infrastructure projects built there which have attracted workers. These tensions have also sparked conflict over the terms of land occupation and appropriation. Small and subsistence farmers are faced with growing pressure from large commercial farmers to leave their properties, as price speculation escalated and the terms of land ownership became increasingly contested. Changes in the Central Government's policies, notably in an effort to assure more rights to indigenous groups, have led to violent clashes in Santa Cruz. During my stay in the region (November 2007), the border between Brazil and Bolivia was closed for three days by oppositionist protesters, some of whom were defending the total autonomy of the Santa Cruz, and even an eventual separation, from the rest of the country.



Picture 1

View of Corumbá and Pantanal with the railroad on the bottom corner.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

This border area has recently been the focus of major media coverage and intense debate in both countries. In Bolivia, this is the result of the aforementioned position of Santa Cruz, as both an economic center and an oppositionist enclave to Evo Morales' government. In Brazil, these clashes have shaken regional diplomatic relations, as the economic interests of major Brazilian corporations, like Petrobras and Vale do Rio Doce, are put in jeopardy and as agreements between governments become less stable. Throughout Corumbá's central avenue, everyone sees the signs of one of the most important, and therefore contentious, projects involving the two countries: the gas pipeline Brazil-Bolivia (GASBOL). Financed in large part by Petrobras, the pipeline is responsible for providing energy to important industrial and residential sectors in other parts of Brazil. Recent efforts on the part of the Bolivian Government to nationalize the

refineries and the economic exploitation of natural resources have raised doubts about the future of this almost US\$2 billion project (including construction investment in both the Brazilian and Bolivian sides). As of May 2008, the Bolivian Government had increased taxation of foreign companies exploiting energy in the country from 18% to 82% (in taxes and royalties). Petrobras and its subsidiaries, installed in 1995 in Bolivia, are responsible for almost 20% of Bolivia's gross national product and for 25% of the country's tax revenues. As Brazilian corporations start to amplify their regional presence, they also start to reinforce the image of Brazil not only as a hegemonic regional power, but also as the new face of predatory multinational corporations (Domingues 2008). Recent interventions have, for example, revived a narrative of Brazilian 'imperialism' in the region or have stated, in the words of Rubens Ricupero (2007), former UNCTAD head, that for many of Brazil's neighbours, the 'yankees are us'. Especially from the 1980s onwards, Bolivian history has been marked by clashes between social movements and multinational corporations, perceived as predatory exploiters of Bolivian national resources and sponsors of neoliberal projects. In great part, Morales' election is the result of a discourse that equates the retaking of state control over natural resources, particularly in the mining and energy sectors, with more inclusive policies towards indigenous groups, expropriated and impoverished after decades of cultural, social and economic marginalization.



Picture 2
Border Brazil-Bolivia on the Bolivian side.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

This brief digression attempts to illustrate the convoluted context in which the treatment given to human mobility, particularly in relation to Bolivians in Brazil, is taking place. As foreign policy clashes start to invade the daily lives of people, they also help to structure perceptions or even accentuate mistrust and suspicions about migrant communities (and within them). In the imaginaries of the border, the perception of Brazilian corporate interests with multinational strategies of exploitation is very salient. During fieldwork, it was common to hear Bolivian migrants stating that Brazilian mining companies were 'invading' Bolivian territory to exploit resources that were later on brought and sold in Brazil without any sort of control or compensation. The crisis over

gas and mining practices feeds the perceptions of the Bolivian community in Corumbá that Brazil's interests are not only rapacious, but also highly unjust.

Despite the growing tensions between the two countries, in 2004 Brazilian and Bolivian authorities signed an Agreement on Transborder Movement. Following the zoning delimitations established in the early 1980s, the Agreement established a new status for transborder dwellers. Transborder dwellers or *fronteiricos*, those residing in the 150 kilometer perimeter along the borderline, would be allowed free movement and rights of residence. *Fronteiricos* would also be allowed to work on both sides and would acquire all the rights associated with it, like pension funds' entitlements and workers' rights. Transborder residents and their children would also be entitled to attend public and private educational institutions. The agreement has, in a sense, recognized the right to participate in the everyday life of the city for its residents, regardless of whether they are of Brazilian or Bolivian origin. The condition of *fronteirico* depends on the issuance of a special document by either the Brazilian Federal Police or the Bolivian National Migration Service. Applicants must submit a valid identity card, along with proof of residence in one of the municipalities. The transborder status is granted for five years, and can be renewed for an equal period. After the renewal, the condition can be granted for an indeterminate period of time. Some limits nevertheless apply. Applicants must not have a criminal record and the transborder status can be cancelled in case of a criminal conviction or the loss of Bolivian or Brazilian citizenship. The status is only valid within the spatially delimited border zone (the 150 kilometer strip) and for those residing in specific towns, namely in the municipalities of Brasileia-Cobija, Caceres-San Matias,

Guajaramirim-Guayeramirim and Corumbá –Puerto Suarez. It excludes then some rural areas outside of the municipal limits of these cities, as well as other less populated regions.

The agreement attempts to regularize the intermittent flow of transborder mobility, where residents of Arroyo Concepcion, Puerto Quijarro and Puerto Suarez daily commute to the Brazilian side to sell goods or work, mostly without any access to legal rights, in Corumbá. Given the absence of control on transborder movement (except for those who from Corumbá take the highway to Campo Grande, the Provincial Capital), commuters have always been a constant feature of the social and economic landscape of the region. Most of these families faced significant constraints because their access to rights had to be done on the basis of territorial, national attachments. However, their lives were characterized by complicated negotiations between multiple and transient levels of engagement with where they work, where they resided, where they studied, where their children were born and so on. These multiple attachments were then not easily met by the legal procedures in effect. As such, acquiring the status of *fronteiriço* would help ensure and regularize a condition of *being* characterized by ongoing mobility and a relational and instrumental usage of public and private services offered in the border zone. As one of the migrants in Corumbá stated, the transborder status represents an initial step, ‘it is the start for later requiring permanent residency. It is usually given to those who live in the region and work as vendors in the produce fairs [...] it is a means to make them feel safer in their jobs. But they have to pay and present a whole list of documents. Only then, they are free to work.’ (Interview 2007).

It is interesting to read the transborder agreement from the perspective of zoning practices as both a response to the mobilities engendered by translocal connections but also as a mechanism of enabling flexibility in contexts of growing economic linkages and disruptions. The *fronteiriço* emerges as the paramount mobile subject in the ordering produced by zoning strategies. Despite the necessity of citizenship attachments, *fronteiriços* are no longer fully constrained by the triad citizen-nation-territory as the sole conveyor for rights entitlements. They are no longer just citizens, neither migrants, nor ‘undocumented’, ‘irregular’ crossers. They are the subject of this newly founded territory that constitutes the border zone as a site where multiple and overlapping mechanisms of governance are put in place. They are subject and subjected to constraining spatialities, as their movement is restricted to the limits of the border zone demarcation. This demarcation is also restricted to the particular spaces of selected cities and thus involves the implementation of these rights on the part of local structures of authority, like the municipalities, administrators of educational institutions and local employers. They are also subjected to new modes of temporalities, since the *fronteiriço* status is given based on some temporal connections to the border zone (as such they must prove previous residential attachments to the cities) and is granted also on a temporal basis (five years, initially). In a sense, the zoning strategy conveyed in the agreement recognizes a mode of existence that is somehow located in the past; it does not create or produce the transborder movement but rather recognizes its previous presence and engender new openings for border crossers in these contexts. This is one example of the regimentation of mobile life in transnational settings, through the creation of zones that evinces

possibilities for inclusion, for access to equal opportunities and rights even if the documentation and requisites imposed for the recognition of *fronteiriços* might prove burdensome for many. It is interesting then to note that in this particular case, the result of international negotiations that produce this ‘trans’national zone of the *fronteiriço* gives rise to, at once, a logic of enclosure but also of insertion into a framework of rights once reserved to those with exclusive citizenship status. The states that enact the border zone, present themselves as actors working for the inclusion of the demands of transborder dwellers.

This is obviously not a simply altruistic act. After all, the condition of *fronteiriço* would permit companies, many of them Brazilian corporations who depend on low skilled workers, to circulate within these spaces of capitalist expropriation without the constraints of national legislation and restrictions over mobility between their territories. But, first, it is important to note that border control within the region has always been precarious to say the least. The Federal Police (PF) office, responsible for border control on the Brazilian side, had a hand-full of employees to patrol 200 kilometres. As stated in an interview with one of the PF’s agents, their focus was not the border, but the bus station and the highway that connects Corumbá to inner urban centers. Every bus that leaves Corumbá is thoroughly searched for drugs and undocumented passengers. The journey that usually takes 5 to 6 hours extends itself to 9-10 hours due to the several patrols set along the way (Interview 2007). The situation might change in the near future as construction work is underway at the border post and a new building will host both the PF agents and the Brazilian Revenue Agency. Second, the job market is extremely

restricted for locals, Brazilian or Bolivians. Except for the low skilled jobs, the majority of the workers come from other Provinces of Brazil, notably from the South-East region in Brazil, thus feeding the service sector of the city, as hotels are constantly full even in the low season for tourism. Thirdly, this zoning strategy also aims to prevent transborder dwellers from entering further inside Brazilian territory, especially in the case of Bolivians, as their movement is always regarded as a unidirectional one towards São Paulo (I will return to the case of Bolivians in the metropolis in the next section).

Additionally, it is important to read how the logic of migration control is put in practice within the context of the everyday life of *fronteiriços*. In the same way in which the agreement attempts to incorporate the transborder dweller into the framework of citizenship entitlements within a transnational zone, it fails to tackle the ‘informal’ mechanisms of exclusion that are pervasive for *fronteiriços*. Therefore, it is possible to identify important gaps between the conceived *fronteiriços* as transborder citizens and the perceived and lived *fronteiriços*. This difference is developed by Dean (2007), borrowing the insight from Lefebvre, in the context of border encounters and in relation to the representation of space. I draw on this distinction here to demonstrate these three moments of encounter, not just in terms of processes of spatialization, or of zoning, but also in relation to how these discrepant representations of *fronteiriços* are intertwined in the processes of inclusion/exclusion to which they are subjected.

The conceived representation is formally articulated in the agreement through the construction of a *de jure* figure named *fronteiriço* with a set of rights and duties, regarded in relation to the spaces they inhabit and to the temporalities of their relationships to

residence and mobility. This conceived *fronteiriço* enables in its turn a particular reading of the space of the city, in this case of transborder settings, as a site of hospitality, openness and inclusion for those who dwell in it. It recognizes in a sense a mode of ‘dwelling-in-motion’ (Urry, 2008) that has long been an important trait in the landscape of the border. The perceived representation of the *fronteiriços* is reflected in the ways in which local communities, authorities, national officials dispatched to the area, and migrant communities themselves interpret the signs and modes of presence of transborder dwellers. As will become clear in the following paragraphs, constructed and perceived representations have not only symbolic, but highly material impacts on the lived moments of *fronteiriços* and as such help us unveil how diverse zoning, and consequently, (de)bordering practices proliferate and make more complex the ambivalent, complicated and tenuous mode of being of transborder dwellers. It is to these perceived and lived representations of the Bolivian *fronteiriço* community in Corumbá that I turn my attention now.

In interviews with local merchants and those working with Bolivian migrants in this border zone, it seemed clear that the majority of those with *fronteiriço* status were residents of the villages of Arroyo Concepcion and Puerto Quijarro (poor, rural communities within the control of the Municipality of Puerto Suarez), notably *campesinos* who farmed small tracts of land for subsistence and for local trade. Most of them worked in the itinerant fairs, or *feirinhas*, where local residents come to buy local produce and small, ordinary products. The *feirinhas* are mobile themselves and each day of the week they take place in a different neighbourhood, both on the Bolivian and

Brazilian sides. In my visits to the itinerant fair, I could notice that the majority of the street vendors were women, many of them with typical Bolivian clothes indicating their indigenous background. Under the scorching heat, these women told me their routine. They would wake up at four in the morning and get the products ready to transport. They usually walked to the border line and from there took the bus to Corumbá. The fairs operate from early morning to mid-afternoon. Around 4 pm, they would start the journey back to their homes and get ready for working the land and taking care of the house and their family members. Many of them worked seven days a week in the fairs, but in recent months Corumbá's Municipal authorities have forbidden the *feirinhas* to open on Sundays. This decision reflects the growing pressure of local businesses to restrict what they perceived as an unfair competition. According to labour legislation, contractors are obliged to grant one day off per week to their employees or pay extra hours, a cost many local business owners are unwilling to absorb.

Most of the Bolivians working at the itinerant fairs have the transborder document. Apart from that, all vendors have to be registered in Corumbá's City Hall. The authorization to participate in the fair also involves paying a small fee that is collected daily by a municipal employee. The fee during my visit was one real (approximately fifty cents USD) per day. For many of the *fronteiricos* these fees can amount to 10% of their total monthly income. Another place where Bolivian migrants, *fronteiricos*, permanent residents and some undocumented persons congregate is the *Feira Brasil-Bolivia*, known by the locals as *BrasBol*. Contrary to the other fairs, this one is permanent and trades in a more diversified set of products, from clothes to kitchen supplies. Many of the products

are bought at the *Zona Franca*, a commercial center with duty free exemptions on imported goods in Puerto Aguirre. M., the president of *BrasBol*, told me that initially the fair occupied an abandoned terrain close to downtown. Bolivians and Brazilians had their tents and local population was used to buying their products, usually cheaper and aiming at low income customers. But some store owners started to complain about the fair and accused the vendors from disturbing local commerce and from occupying a space without any sort of regularization. The Municipal authorities then negotiated with members of *BrasBol*. M. described with great anxiety those days as the future of their livelihood was in jeopardy, given threats to shut down the fair and to prevent them from selling their merchandise. An agreement was reached in which the Municipality granted a site for them where they could operate, even though the new location, M. said, was not as ‘good for business’ as the previous one (Personal Notes, 2007).



Picture 3

Itinerant fair in Corumbá/MS: one of the zones inhabited by fronteiriços.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)



Picture 4

BrasBol Fair, View from one of the corridors.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

Even though the transborder agreement was supposed to open up the possibilities for access to work and services for *fronteiricos*, we see how other repertoires of authority impact the mobility and inclusion of migrant communities at the local level. The border zone is marked by a highly unequal set of relationships and realities. Anyone can easily notice the disparity in socioeconomic levels among the villages.

I go the border in the afternoon. The difference in the price of fuel reaches almost one real per liter, and many Brazilians come to the Bolivian side to fill up their tanks. The road, on the Brazilian side, is paved and in good conditions, though there are some retention points due to the construction of the new border patrol building. You just have to cross this tiny bridge to arrive in Bolivia, the little village of Arroyo Concepcion. The difference in the landscape is latent: the muddy road, caused by the recent rains, the street vendors along the small hill top that leads to the central street. My guide tells me that ‘in globalized times, it is unimaginable that a simple territorial line can bring with it such a profound social and economic disparity; disgrace, or better said, the deepening of it is caused by the fortune (or infortune) of being born a few meters away’. In the train station at Arroyo, several people wait for the train that will take them to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, also known as the “train of death”. There are several military officers standing by, invigilating. My guide quickly noticed and commented that many people say that this military presence has been sponsored and supported by the Venezuelan Government. I see Bolivian women walking by, their children at hand, breaking through the mud: one of them lost her sandals in the mud and is fighting to keep on her way. The chaos and lively atmosphere of that hill top is contrasted by the landscape of the *Zona Franca* – the duty free area, just a couple meters away. There, the roads are paved, everything is clean, and everyone kept under surveillance by private guards: the shopping oasis for tourists who visit Pantanal, where they can buy in dollars and without paying any taxes. The name of one of the stores is highly suggestive: Shopping China (Personal Notes 2007)

In a sense, the enactment of the border zone, as conveyed in the international agreements between the two countries, is accompanied by micro-practices of zoning within the larger context of the twin-cities. First, the border is further differentiated into sites devoted to privileged ‘outsiders’ with hotels and shopping areas notably designed for

them. For example, the exchange rate in *real* and *pesos* at the Duty Free is almost 20% higher than the current market rates, showing a clear privilege of dollars as the primary currency of these zones of tourism. Most of the shops sell fishing equipment, thus focusing on the central tourist interest in the region. The privatization of tourist zones also shows a particular strategy of associating these spaces with notions of safety, in opposition to the confusing, impoverished reality of the rest of the transborder area. These areas are kept under surveillance by private security guards whose aim is to guarantee the peace of mind for the shopper.



Picture 5

Entrance to Shopping China, Zona Franca – Puerto Aguirre, Bolivia.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

Second, *fronteiriços*, despite the guarantees provided to them through diplomatic accords, face important restrictions to their mobility and to the daily exercise of their

rights. Through local policies of containment and control, they end up being forced to occupy the working spaces of informality in reserved sites, allocated to them by municipal authorities. This explains the ‘pasteurized’ image of Corumbá in relation to the Bolivian presence, since it is very difficult to notice the Bolivian community that resides and works in town except for these localized concentrated regions distributed in the landscape of the city. The Municipal Policy of control and containment is evidenced in the regulation of the fairs and in the establishment of rules and restrictions about how migrants, both residents, *fronteiricos* and ‘undocumented’, can inhabit the border zone.

This micro-politics of exclusion has deep consequences for the ways in which migrant communities relate to and perform their own identities. One of these consequences is a certain refusal to show or portray a Bolivian identity and a strong drive towards the assimilation of language and cultural traits of Brazilian life. As D., a Bolivian descendent residing in Corumbá stated, ‘the majority of the population here in Corumbá descends from Bolivians. You go to the stores and ask whether they are Bolivian and they promptly reply: “no, of course not...I am just a Bolivian grandson”. The grandson is filled with despite towards the Bolivian identity, he is angry, but this is also because he sees that his ancestors and other descendents have rejected their origins’ (Interview 2007). This refusal is also a response to, or the development of a survival strategy within a context of widespread suspicion against Bolivians. Many refer to this sense of discrimination in their ordinary life activities. Some have stated that Bolivians are perceived as ‘criminals’ and ‘drug dealers’, as having ‘illegal’ money and so the local

economy treats them in a different way. One of the participants gave a clear example of how this practice takes place:

Bolivians are very suspicious, because of the drug trafficking. They are afraid of police officers, of having connections or of possibly creating problems. Look, for example, let's talk about our experience: if we, my husband and I, go here downtown to buy a fridge. There is a Brazilian who comes and asks the price and the salesman says 1200. If we come and ask for the same product he will look at us, and say 2500. It has happened. And this is because there is a stereotype of Bolivians, they assume we are all involved in the drug dealing and so we have money to spend. They think we are all loaded with dollars (Interview 2007).

Bolivian migrants also explain this feeling and perception of inferiority as an induced process prompted by Brazil's hegemonic presence. This presence is deepened by the recent crises in the relationship between the two countries and by how locals interpret these events. For Brazilians, at the border, the new changes in Bolivia's Federal policies show the unreliable nature of Bolivian culture and thus, in order for them to be included in the community, it is expected that they will somehow choose to not indicate their 'foreignness'. Bolivians feel a huge anxiety about these identity representations. It is hard for them to navigate a transborder condition of living. Reflecting on these ambivalences, C., a Bolivian migrant residing in Corumbá since 1986, stated that:

Corumbá is a pasteurized border, one can't feel the other here, the language and the currency...our currency was never accepted here. On the other side, they take everything. I think Brazil is a hegemonic country, including in education. In Bolivia, we studied the histories of our neighbors and we were asked about them with equal expectations. Here, we only study Brazilian geography, Brazilian history, Brazilian this and that...people don't know anything about others.³³ This is a more closed country

³³ The reading of Brazilian education provided here might not be accurate, since border areas do have bilingual schools and since most of the curriculum is established through federal policies. But, nevertheless, her statement reflects how perceptions on

culturally speaking. It is a very hospitable country but it also demands that you absorb its culture. Brazilians are proud of their culture, they never renegade it. When we arrived they told us, you can't speak Spanish or they will arrest you. But if you do not speak your maternal language, you lose your identity; it creates a rancor, a rage, many people feel ashamed for speaking *castellano*. In a sense, I feel that patriotism enforces itself in the uprooting, *what we are, is what we brought from there* (Interview 2007).

Another participant highlighted the disparity between identity performances on both sides of the border, narrating on an ordinary encounter he had with a Brazilian waiter on the Bolivian side:

I went to a bar in Bolivia and the waiter said "*Bom dia*" [Good Morning in Portuguese]. I replied "*Buenos dias*" [in Spanish]. And asked him: why didn't you speak in *castellano*? He replied he was Brazilian and then I said I had to speak Portuguese when I am on the Brazilian side and so you should also try to speak *castellano* here. And I continued - So which beers do you have? I have Paceña (Bolivian brand), Brahma, Skol...In Bolivia I'll have Paceña, how much for it? He replied in a very low tone of voice: three...I asked three pesos or reales? Reales, he said. Oh, boy, you've got to give me the price in Bolivianos...and he did not say anything. Here you go to the fair and ask: how much for this *pantalon* [pair of pants]? 15 reais (he spoke with a strong Spanish accent). [laughter] And so you see the idiosyncrasy (Interview 2007).

J., Brazilian, currently the head for the Pastoral, whose work is mainly devoted to helping and assisting Bolivian migrants in Corumbá, defined the situation as a reflection of the lack of job opportunities. He also pointed out that, despite the transborder agreement, Brazilian legislation still posed many restrictions on bilingualism and on the use of foreign currency in national territory. Also, the competitive perception by local salesmen of the unfair trade promoted by Bolivians in town was responsible for some of the problems faced by the Bolivian community. He saw the current municipal policies as

issues of identity impact on the general 'world view' of transborder dwellers in relation to their hosting community and to their own origins.

a response to this local pressure, one with important reflexes on the lives of the transborder community. Much of the work of the Pastoral is conducted in the fairs, focusing on promoting religious meetings on Sundays, helping with documentation and regularization and also with improving the quality of life and family cohesion. The social workers interviewed pointed out that the closure of the fairs on Sundays had deleterious effects for their work and within the community. Without the possibility of work, many migrants started drinking and alcoholism and domestic violence cases have increased. Also, it has become more difficult to have access to the community as these were usually the days allotted for the visits and for dialogue between the Pastoral and the Bolivian migrants³⁴. With rampant discrimination on the part of the local community to hire Bolivian *fronteiricos*, many of them resort to ‘illegal’ activities and use their ability to easily cross the border to enter with drugs. C., also a member of the pastoral, works with migrant women detained in Corumbá’s penitentiary. She describes in some detail the realities and difficulties faced by migrant detainees in Corumbá.

One third of the prisoners are foreigners and they all spoke Spanish. The social worker invited me to work with this group. Some of them knew me from before, because I was a high school teacher in Quijarro. The first day they were 50 to 60. They said they were alone, they had no family, they felt left out. The only solution for them is to be sent back. The work we did was of a confessional nature, we created a space for conversation and we also made contact with their families. Mostly, they complained about discrimination inside the prison system, they were used for the worst sort of jobs – cleaning toilets and so on. We talked to the managers and explained to them about the prisoners’ rights, we also met with the judge who was very sensitive to the issue and he supported our work and helped implementing changes in the system. They couldn’t find work and working is very important because it reduces the amount of time they are supposed

³⁴ Most of Pastoral workers are volunteers. As such, they usually have regular jobs and have to find time within their own busy schedules to community activities.

to stay incarcerated. We also tried to change the regime [it is possible to request a progression, in which detainees can combine time inside and outside the detention centers] so that they could work outside and sleep in. But we couldn't make it because no one would want to take the responsibility for them [detainees in a progression regime should have a person responsible for them, a type of tutelage]. One thing we did manage to get was to guarantee that prisoners were sent here to be closer to their families [those in other cities of the province]. All of the prisoners were there for drug trafficking. Very few, in earlier times, were arrested for false documents and for being undocumented. Most of them were caught in the bus, the line that connects the border with São Paulo. [This bus is known for being systematically checked by the police: no one passes unnoticed; there are anonymous calls telling them that some are carrying drugs. C. says that they were checked in their last trip for an hour and a half. But C.'s husband also tells me that most of these calls are just about the 'small fish' - to divert police attention from the large shipments that are sent to the Brazilian territory through the roads]. The jail comports 120 women but now holds 250 people. They are all crowded. Last year we had 12 children born in the jail and eight were Bolivians. Based on their children, we managed, with the partnership of the local judge, to expedite their expulsion to Bolivia. What happens is that they are sent back to the other side of the border, handed back with their documents to the Bolivian authorities and they are prohibited from entering Brazil for 5 years. But some do come back before that (Interview 2007).

After these convictions, legislation prevents individuals from applying for *fronteiriço* status. These zoning practices then create a vicious circle, since the logics of containment and the more 'informal' restrictions presented by local authorities and by the overall discrimination against them ends up reducing the choices for some (that then resort to illegal activities and who are later caught and end up being formally prevented from having access to the rights to which they were initially entitled). This situation feeds into the perceived portrayal of *fronteiricos*, and Bolivian migrants in general, as carriers of drugs and therefore as dangerous trespassers. The perceived representation of Bolivian *fronteiricos* becomes, in a sense, a self-fulfilling prophecy as it imposes important restrictions in the lived spaces of these communities.

To complicate matters even further, the increasing arrival at the border of indigenous Bolivian groups, in what was otherwise a mainly *Cruceña* community, has prompted the overall ethnic tensions present in the Bolivian context to also affect the relationship between Bolivian migrants in Corumbá. The experiences of violence and radicalism, which have led to growing social divisions and political instability in Bolivia, start to be replicated in the microcosms of the *fronteiriço* community. Therefore, it is possible to witness divisions and tensions which have dislodged any idea of a homogeneous and unified Bolivian community in the city. C., the member of Pastoral, and a descendent of Cruceños herself, talks about her perceptions of the impasses and difficulties in the relationship between Collas and Cambas in the transborder context. She recalls in our interview a moment in which these ethnic cleavages abruptly interfered in the lived reality of migrants. In a sense, she speaks about these events from the standpoint of her own *fronteiriço* condition:

I've traveled a lot with the Pastoral. And I see, for example, the indigenous losing their quechua, their maternal language. This is what our president is trying to change, 200 years of submission. Earlier, you would never hear a word in quechua or aymara. I always thought that if you lost your original language, you lose yourself, you lose everything. When they come here, they are adamant about speaking Portuguese. I find this process of acquiring a new nationality, with the implication of forgetting one's origin, very problematic. The consequences are sad. In my last visit to São Paulo, I was amazed. The way he speaks [Evo Morales] is very nice, because he is giving value to the indigenous that have been always submissive. But we're talking about 500 years, and so they come with everything, in anger, resentful. Instead of looking for those who placed them at those conditions in the first place. I recall being in the bus where there were 10 indigenous families, of Collas, and they only spoke aymara and quechua. Even though I am Bolivian I could not understand a word. The police officer came and abruptly, almost violently said: look, they are all feeling good and upfront; all snobbish because nobody can understand them, speak properly or I'll take you! (Interview 2007).

It is interesting to note how the empowered recovery of indigenous language and culture is perceived as both necessary, as an exercise of remembering one's origins, and as deleterious, because it is associated with a vengeful attitude in relation to colonial impositions and social/cultural marginality. The ambivalent position stated by C. exemplifies the difficult negotiations between Cambas and Collas in the search to maintain one's identity, of becoming oneself again, while, at the same time, facing important constraints from the hosting community. This is in part due to the impossibility of reconciling this becoming, this identity transformation, with a condition of *being* always read in terms of 'appropriate' behaviour. This impossibility involves the inability to retain a certain dialogue capacity with other groups for whom being indigenous is associated with a rebellious, unlawful, improper attitude. This impossibility of translation, their inability to read and accept indigenous identities in terms other than the ones established through a colonial mentality, is then transposed into a threat to 'Cambas' social and economic position. The ascendance of indigenous groups is perceived as a menace to Bolivia's own development project, since the rise of Collas means, as of necessity, a decline of Santa Cruz as the epicentre of the country's economy. Another interviewee stressed this sense of threat in relation to *Cruceños*' position in the national projects:

Evo Morales said that they [the indigenous] are the land owners... They are snobbish now. We, white like this, do not have rights to anything anymore. This is a mechanism of deterring development; they want us to fight amongst each other. This resentment now is turning against the region that is the richest, which is Santa Cruz. He says that *Cruceños* are an oligarchy, and he is somewhat right but these are the groups that produce something (Interview 2007).

The point here is not to discuss the longstanding grievances and problems between ethnic groups in Bolivia that resulted from years of colonial impositions on indigenous peoples and a highly unequal developmental strategy, influenced by oligarchic interests and neoliberal frameworks. Rather, I want only to point out how these perceptions and tensions are inserted in the context of transborder relations and how they impact on the strategies of inclusion and mobilization, making it difficult to speak about Bolivian migration as a unidirectional and cohesive whole. These tensions help unveil some aspects of the dynamics of Bolivian migrant groups that are reflected, for example, in the lack of dialogue between *Collas* and *Cambas* in the fair zones, the separations and difficulties of assistant workers to engage in dialogue and foster community organization and participation. Moreover, we see how these important divisions and inequalities within Bolivian society allow for transnational modes of exploitation in which Bolivian migrants themselves are the primary agents responsible for the construction of zones of intolerance within the larger framework of bordering practices. In the following section, I illustrate this trend through an analysis of the Bolivian presence in São Paulo and the neo-slavery conditions to which they are subjected in the megalopolis.

Between the *Eldorado* and the Camp: Bolivians in São Paulo's border zones

Bolivians constitute the largest group of migrants in São Paulo, a city with an estimated population of 18 million people. Pastoral do Migrante in São Paulo estimates that 200 thousand Bolivians live undocumented in the city only. As Souchaud and Baeninger remark, 'even if these numbers are overestimated, this means that the number

of undocumented Bolivians would be 7 to 10 times larger than the total number of Bolivians accounted for in the 2000 census; this number represents 22% to 29% of the total of foreigners residing in Brazil and 1.81% to 2.42% of the total population of Bolivia in 2001' (2007, p.5). São Paulo's Province is responsible alone for 33% of the Brazilian GNP and attracts workers from other provinces and also immigrants who see the metropolis as a promise land for attaining a better life. 'If for many Brazilians, Brazil is no longer the land of opportunities, for Bolivians it still is. This is the reason why thousands of them leave the country annually, to escape poverty and a subsistence economy and, consequentially, to catch a glimpse of any possibility of social mobility' (Silva 2006, p.158).

The imaginary of Brazil as an *Eldorado* of economic opportunities (Silva 2006), common to the fantasies of many immigrants who arrive in the country, is abruptly disrupted by the proliferation of bordering practices that, at once, make it extremely difficult for them to regularize their permanence in these new territories of estrangement and that reproduce zones of confinement and of social/cultural abjection. This is the situation of many Bolivians working in sweatshops in São Paulo, some of them run and owned by Bolivian migrants themselves. The pervasive exploitative conditions to which these migrants have been submitted in the sewing shops have been described as a form of neo-slavery and servitude. Accusations of labour exploitation and human rights violations against Bolivian migrants in the sweatshops have led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI) with the mandate to investigate and punish such practices in the city. The final report of the CPI describes how the Eldorado fantasy

transforms itself into a nightmare for Bolivians, whose journey usually starts in Santa Cruz de La Sierra, where they are recruited and transported by *aliciadores*, with promises that are never fulfilled. The recruiting process is the initial step for imposing slave-like labour conditions on migrants, as they are forced to work to pay their initial debts.

The recruitment of Bolivians through radio and newspapers hides a trap that is the starting point for slave-like labour conditions in São Paulo. Many of the Bolivians who reply to the job offers do not have enough resources to pay for the journey to Brazil; they receive a cash advance to be paid through their work once they arrive in the sweatshops. As the costs of the trip are overcharged and the payment they receive is insignificant, many Bolivians end up working for months without receiving payment so that they can liquidate their initial debts. The specific case of Bolivians has an additional difficulty. Throughout the years, some migrants manage to flourish in their businesses and are able to open their own sewing factories, where they start to hire the next generation of Bolivians. A vicious circle is installed: the employers reproduce with the new-comers the same conditions to which they were subjected when they first arrived. Because of family ties or even because of their compatriot situation, the new-comers feel uneasy to protest against their employers. Moreover, they feel grateful for those who offered them jobs and housing and believe that they own them, not only money but also fidelity. (CPI 2006, p.24; Author's translation).

The working conditions become even more restraining for Bolivians, who once incorporated into the labour circuit of the sweatshops, find themselves subjected to degrading and inhumane treatment. These restrictions range from retention of documents and threats based on their lack of 'proper' documentation to unhealthy housing and food, inability to relate to the Brazilian community and a series of restrictions to regularization, as rights of residence and work are circumscribed to those who have children born in national territory or who have married a Brazilian spouse. Lack of information is also paramount as many Bolivian migrants register their children; even the ones born in Brazil, under the name of relatives who are documented in the country, for fear that they

will be deported if they resort to local authorities (Silva 2006, p.162). This situation is amply described in the CPI report:

Once employed, there are numerous ways of restricting their liberty. In many cases, their documents are retained by their employers, supposedly for security reasons. Because they find themselves in situations of irregularity, with an inadequate visa (tourist), expired or even without any visa, Bolivians are afraid to go to the streets and get arrested – a risk that is stressed and exaggerated by the employers, who sometimes threaten to hand them over to the police in case the migrants leave their jobs. All in all, as they do not learn how to speak Portuguese and do not have time or opportunity to leave their working place, many are afraid of getting lost in the city and prefer not to take the risk. The housing offered to the seamstresses is the factory floor; after working the whole day they place their mattresses underneath the sewing machines, where sometimes children are left asleep the whole day. They also have their meals there. The buildings are precarious, with inadequate electric connections, combustible material near the wires and the constant danger of accidents – without mentioning the fact that they are all exhausted after long working hours [...] Since many of the sweatshops work without authorization or have several irregularities, they keep the windows closed – sometimes even walled with woods or bricks. This heightens the feelings of discomfort and, without proper ventilation, the possibility of diseases being transmitted, like tuberculosis which has a high incidence among Bolivians, increases. [...] To disguise the noise of the machinery, some employers turn on loud Bolivian music, which also fulfills another purpose: to prevent seamstresses to talk with one another (fearing that communication might lead to organization and to some sort of rebellion or uprising) and to create a forced atmosphere of ‘familiarity; by transposing an element of their native culture to this new address. For all these reasons, the neighbours of the sweatshops where Bolivians live and work say that they resemble *refugees*; they quickly enter their homes, they keep doors and windows shut and they do not talk to Brazilians (CPI 2006, p.25-26; Author’s translation)

The sewing shops operate as ‘informal’ labour camps, as ‘reservation zones where the rights of subjects can be suspended as a first step in stripping away their status as political subjects in order to render them as objects’ (Isin & Rygiel 2006, p.197). They spatially confine Bolivian migrants and deprive them not only from having rights, but

also from the ability to claim any rights. Several mechanisms are put in place to ensure that migrant workers will follow the logics of these labour camps, mechanisms that resemble Foucault's *panopticon*. The *panopticon* is a structure of power that operates through discipline. In the case of the sweatshops, discipline comes with the imposition of long working hours and pressure to produce as many pieces as possible since wages vary accordingly. It also involves restrictions on mobility and liberties, through the retention of documents, the confinement of their lives to their working space, the inability to communicate with the outside world and with each other. These disciplinary mechanisms prolong themselves in time since indebtedness and lack of documents perpetuate a condition of absolute dependency for migrant workers. But disciplinary mechanisms are only effective, as Foucault (2007, p.66) aptly remarks, because they are internalized and interpreted as being a necessary and forceful part of the lives of those subjected to the *panopticon* structure. In these 'informal' labour camps, internalization of disciplinary mechanisms takes place, for example, through the construction of fear (when employers exaggerate the penalties to which workers might be subjected because of their undocumented condition and the likelihood of a potential deportation), the production of hope (that one day they might become the employers and thus move up on the social ladder), the creation of a 'familiar atmosphere' (where workers might feel closer to a reality they already know), the enactment of bondages (of fidelity and gratitude towards those who have 'hosted' them), and the implementation of an environment in which such restrictions are normalized and considered to be ordinary in the daily routine of most Bolivians in the city.

It is precisely through this combination of disciplinary and normalizing mechanisms, of containment and abjection, that the sweatshops can be compared to the camp. The perception of neighbours, described in the report, that Bolivians working in the sweatshops *resemble refugees* reflects the process of political abjection and social ostracism to which they are subjected. Moreover, it reflects a conflation of the normalized image of the migrant as a worker and that of the speechless, victimized refugee. The immigrant is converted into this moving 'inexistence', whose presence is confined to closed buildings where their body is appropriated as a piece in a long chain of production that involves not only the sewing shop' owners but also large retail shops. In fact, the Commission found out that most of the clothes produced in the sweatshops were sold to large retail corporations, including multinational stores like the Dutch C&A.

The camp mentality, associated with the working situation of many Bolivians, is also accompanied by other mechanisms of containment and practices of zoning. The delimitation of spaces within the urban landscape where the Bolivian presence is tolerated responds to the difficult negotiations between the lived and perceived dimensions of migrants' modes of existence. One example is given by the establishment of Kantuta Square, currently the meeting point of Bolivians in the city. As Silva describes,

The growing presence of young migrants, most of them undocumented, has generated an increase in the offer of entertainment sites for Bolivians in the neighbourhood of Pari. The problem acquired new dimensions due to increasing violence, resulting from excessive consumption of alcohol, leading the locals to organize a petition to obstruct the use of the neighbourhood central square by the migrants. According to an old resident, the square was known as 'square of the roses', and had suddenly been transformed by the migrants into a place of disorder, drug dealing, and immorality (Silva 2003, p.231-232; Author's translation).

The solution to the impasse was provided by São Paulo's City Hall, which granted Bolivians a different venue for their Sunday gathering in Canindé, a place known as Kantuta Square. It is important to note that, even within the constraints provided by an almost forceful reterritorialization of their presence in the megalopolis, these border zones also provide for an opportunity to contest the traditional portrayal of Bolivians as either exploited migrant workers or as unlawful, disturbing individuals. The dynamics of the Sunday meetings at Kantuta give the migrant community an opportunity to articulate and organize their presence. Bolivians count with several cultural associations and important festivities, which range from sport tournaments to religious celebrations. In Kantuta, they have managed to construct a space of tolerance, of sharing and exchange. They have also managed to articulate a forum for Bolivian migrants to get to know each other, interact with other groups and even with Brazilians, who are now starting to discover Kantuta. Therefore, one possible mechanism found by the Bolivian migrant community to respond to the proliferation of border zones and spaces of abjection in the urban landscape was precisely to reinforce and promote their cultural presence, to try to bridge regional and ethnic divisions among the group and attempt to change the perceived image of Bolivians in the city.

There is growing consensus among Bolivian Associations in the city [...] that it is time for the group to surpass regionalisms and differences of a social, cultural, and ethnic order, in search of a possible integration. An example of this trend is the proposal to create FURBRA [Central Federation of Bolivian Residents in Brazil]. Another concern is with changing the generalized negative image that the large majority of Brazilians have about Bolivia and Bolivians [...] The Bolivian Consulate took some steps, like relocating their headquarters from downtown to an upscale neighbourhood (Jardins), airing tourism campaigns of Bolivia in a

local TV channel and hosting an adjunct Consul to deal with the problems of disfavoured compatriots (Silva 2003, pp.30-31; Author's translation).



Picture 6
Bolivian women looking through pictures of cultural and religious events
in search of acquaintances – Kantuta Square
(Author's Personal Archive, October 2007)

The CPI has also proposed some changes in order to tackle the issue of slave-like labour conditions, particularly in relation to the Bolivian community. Among the several proposals are the establishment of specific public policies towards migrants, notably focusing on health assistance, access to education for migrant's children and changes in federal and municipal legislation to guarantee work rights even for those with an irregular

status in the country. The CPI has also attempted to increase the control over sweatshops and suggested the creation of a reception center that could host workers dislodged by these operations. The results of these policies are, at most, scarce. There is evidence that the sweatshops are now relocating to the interior, therefore outside of the jurisdiction of the Municipality of São Paulo, and it is still too soon to tell whether the legislative changes will be approved and how they will impact on the ability of the Bolivian community to find more hospitable conditions.

In 2005, the Brazilian and Bolivian Government signed an agreement granting ‘amnesty’ to Bolivians residing in Brazil who had arrived in national territory prior to its entry into force. These general regularization campaigns have had mixed results. Though many are able to provide the required documentation, the large majority of Bolivians find it extremely difficult to pay for the high fees imposed. In order to benefit from the agreement, migrants who have overstayed their visas have to pay a ‘penalty fee’ that can cost up to 850 reais (two times the average monthly wage of a worker employed in the formal economy). For those working in the sweatshops, this is a huge obstacle to any possibility of regularization. These penalties are established in the national law for foreigners established in the early 80s, which has been amply criticized for its economic and securitized treatment of immigration. But a new Law proposed by the Ministry of Justice has met important criticisms from large sectors of society, notably for maintaining, among other things, important restrictions on political participation and capacity of mobilization for migrants; privileging skilled workers and imposing more obstacles for an eventual naturalization of foreigners residing in the country than the

current legislation (Silva 2006, p.263). In this context, it is then hard to predict whether any significant changes in the conceived representations of immigration in Brazil will take place in the coming years, despite increasing pressure from civil society movements, migrants associations and also from national and international sectors. Nevertheless, the battle over the border, as the Bolivian case illustrates, depends not only on transforming the juridical framework on migration, but mostly on changing the *perceived* and *lived* modes of existence of migrants, informed, first, by the fact that borders are concomitantly idealized and internalized and, second, by the ‘tendency of borders, political, cultural, and socioeconomic to coincide’ (Balibar 2002, p.84).

Zones, Camps and the Border as a site of (in) hospitality

I have attempted to show how zoning and bordering practices come hand in hand in terms of defining the spatial and temporal locations of mobile subjects. Zoning practices, whether those which create new territories of inclusion, as is the case of *fronteiriços*, or those which, in more subtle but no less powerful ways, work to contain and confine the ‘others’ presence in the landscape of the city, the border strip, the working space, grant flexibility to borders’ strategies and are thus central to defining what is involved in the making of *borderscapes*. Borders are therefore composed of a myriad of representations, of moments of presence and also of inexistence, formed through a complex combination of legal, material, cultural, social and economic frameworks that stem from states, international and transnational agreements, local arrangements, municipal policies and also from public assumptions and migrants’ responses.

The situation of Bolivians in Brazil attests to the fact that any transversal experience is accompanied by transitions between different modes of existence. There are moments in which their migrant worker status prevails, moments of being like a refugee, moments of abjection and moments of transnational citizenship performances. The movement of Bolivians across these multiple, and more often than not divergent, sites of inclusion/exclusion show how border zones can, at once, be territories of hospitality, but also abruptly convert themselves into internment camps. The gap between the Eldorado and such spaces of abjection, symbolically so distant, is strikingly reduced in the terrain of the square, the fair, and the duty free with dire material consequences for migrant groups. An analysis of practices of zoning allows for an incorporation of these 'informal', capillary structures of power as central features to understanding how this moving 'inter' condition is enacted through the border encounter. And these encounters, especially in the context of periphery countries, happen routinely no longer at the border.

The logic of hope and fear, so central to the global discourse on mobility, one that defines in important respects the distinction between a refugee and a migrant, is significantly disrupted in the lived moments of Bolivians in Brazil. For them, these two feelings are always already there, inextricably connected to each other: the fear of deportation, of entering, of getting arrested, of exploitation, of visibility, of poverty and death and the hope of social mobility, of access to rights, of choosing oneself. As Bonnie Honig (2001, p.54) aptly highlights, the foreigner is always this 'undecidable' figure, this polysemic subject, both friend and enemy, both refugee and migrant, both citizen and alien and sometimes none of the above, just an abject, an inexistence. These moments of

presence depend on how one conceives, perceives and lives through these border zones. And the struggles over these moments, the fact that sometimes they diverge or converge, that they tend to be diachronic rather than synchronic are what constitutes border politics. The battle over the border, and thus over how difference is constructed and dealt with, takes place sometimes at the territorial line, but more often than not in the bus, in the fair, in the working space, in the public square. And these sites have conventionally been disregarded by International Relations as not having any significant relevance to its 'analytical economy'. As Cynthia Enloe puts it, 'there is a serious flaw in this analytical economy [...] it presumes that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent, and far from power that exactly how they are *kept* there could not possibly be of any interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer' (2004, p.23).

The amount and variety of power required to keep Bolivians in these material and symbolic zones tends to be underestimated. In a sense, and following Rosello's analysis of the enactment of forms of postcolonial hospitality, these zones become a 'place of forgiveness and of punishment at the same time. Or, put another way, a form of forgiveness that implies exile is what constitutes punishment' (2001, p.156). In the case of Bolivians in border zones, both as *fronteirços* and as urban dwellers, their forgiveness (enacted in a conceived hospitality through international juridical agreements and regularization campaigns) is also combined with a forgetting, on the part of their hosts, of the important economic interests and of the impact of Brazil's hegemonic regional presence in modeling the flow of migration but also in condemning them to a similar marginal social position, simply replicating even in more constraining ways a reality that

led to their plight in the first place. It is this combination of forgiveness and forgetfulness that places Bolivians in a double bind, in which they are forced to choose between freedom (of mobility, of work, of identity performance) or protection (of rights to residence, to education, to health assistance, to participate in the community) (Rosello 2001, p.164).

These modes of marginal hospitality are also disrupted when, for example, migrants organize themselves, when they perform their cultural and religious festivities, and when they organize their working space and negotiate their presence in the fairs. It is also disrupted when States, usually deemed as the source of general inhospitality, decide to implement and work together with these groups to prevent exploitation and to incorporate their demands. But these strategies of interruption often involve a different conceptualization of politics; one that has to displace the locus of 'legitimate voice' and that has to contest the sites of participation and the terms of community membership. In the following chapter, I move towards an analysis of these forms of political interruption that crop up in border zones. I trace how mobile groups respond to and articulate their own understandings of this general 'crisis' of hospitality in the context of spaces of abjection and of border encounters.

Chapter 3

Border Languages: rumours and the ‘inter’national politics of displacement

In a 1988 essay, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak posed the question, which has now become even more pressing, of whether the subaltern can speak (Spivak 1988). Her negative answer stems from a criticism of forms of representation and of how the colonial legacy, and more precisely, of how the western subject has molded the ways in which one speaks of and for those considered being in the margins. Her criticism is well founded and points to important deficiencies in conventional scholarship on marginalized and oppressed groups. However, her answer seems to silence and foreclose other possibilities for reconsidering the political status of subalternity. Clearly, we must deal with the ethical dimensions of representation and with the inherent violences associated with it. Does it necessarily follow, however, that any attempt of interpreting narratives that arise from subaltern experiences is deemed to be vicious or to reproduce the same inequalities that allow for processes of subalterization in the first place? Her warning is supposed to keep the researcher in check in terms of constantly being attentive to the possibilities of infusing subaltern discourses with meanings and searches for origins and authenticity that might counteract its intent. As she highlights, ‘the substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the “concrete” subject that, in fact, compound the appeal’ (Spivak 1988, p.292).

I argue that two moves are necessary for any investigation to avoid the pitfalls presented in Spivak's argument. The first has to do with a redefinition of politics and specifically of 'inter'national politics – the questions of who, where and how one can speak and intervene in the political dialogue. The second implies a change of grammar and of the locus of voice. What happens when an audible political subject loses its face, its grip over who is speaking? What happens to politics when such voices cannot be traced back to a particular point in time and space and when they speak to the violences and memories experienced by particular groups? What remain of traditional participation mechanisms when anyone and no one take part in the unfolding interpretations of politically significant events?

In this chapter, I analyze some of these questions through an exploration of stories that systematically came up during interviews and during the time I lived in border zones in South America. I retell these stories as if setting the scene for an exploration of the political consequences of speaking from the context of displacement. In particular, I look at these scenes and their interpretation of (not-so-ordinary) events with the goal of understanding how certain communities deal with their mobile experiences, with the ongoing marginalization of diverse forms of alienage, and with how they perform specific perceptions of what subalternity means and its relationship with notions of displacement, refugeeness, mobility, race, fear and international protection. My aim is also to show how a sociological approach to shared understandings of social events, propagated in terms of rumours, might get us closer to a positive answer to Spivak's question. I propose the idea of *border languages* as a metaphor for fostering this sort of theoretical engagement. This

metaphor permits me first, to question the traditional time-space zone within which political subjectivity is supposed to inhabit. Second, it opens the door to critically refuting a linear connection with the territorial imaginary of the nation-state by rethinking the locus and features of political voice in the context of life in displacement. I argue that rumours provide us with an important exemplar of a discursive imaginary that at once interrupts and reconfigures politics from a subaltern perspective. Through rumours, groups perform dis-identifications and re-identifications outside of the scope of authenticity and rationality under which territorial, state-based identities are traditionally cast. Rumours are, in this way, produced by ‘linguistic acts that are at the same time rational arguments and ‘poetic’ metaphors’ (Rancière 1999, pp.56-57). Rumours involve a process that requires ‘first freeing up the norms of representation, and second, constituting a kind of community of sense experience that works on the world of assumption, of the *as if* that includes those who are not included by revealing a mode of existence of sense experience that has eluded the allocation of parties and lots’ (Rancière 1999, p58). Rumours do not just reveal; they perform things (Austin 1962). ‘The deployment of rumours is the perlocutionary force of words, their capacity to do something by saying something, through which words come to be transformed from being a medium of communication to becoming bearers of force’ (Das 2007, p.119).

The chapter presents therefore an exploration of border zones, but with a focus on how displaced communities interfere in the political narrative of border encounters. I resort to the idea of border languages, interpreted in terms of the circulation of rumours, in order to unveil counter-narratives and perceptions of borders and their impact on the

daily lives of mobile groups. Therefore, the analysis conveyed here tries to contribute to an understanding of how political subjectivity can arise in contexts of transversality through an exploration of stories and narratives produced by displaced groups. The first two sections discuss some of the theoretical implications of a redefinition of politics and of the locus of voice through an exploration of a politics of disagreement and of rumours. The third and fourth sections explore these ideas through a reading of narratives in two border zones in Brazil, focusing mainly on refugees and displaced groups. I focus on the rumours shared by African refugees in a shanty-town in Rio de Janeiro and on the interpretation of a moment of 'crisis' in the Tri-Border area between Brazil, Colombia and Peru in order to articulate how a different border politics might emerge that takes into consideration the racial, ethnic, economic, social and political dimensions that shape the spatial and temporal location of displaced life. Rumours allow us to see the actualization of time and social/cultural linkages through a rescuing of memory that repoliticizes the boundaries conventionally established about what constitutes community and belonging. Rumours also permit us to understand alternative responses to situations that suddenly and abruptly interrupt traditional performances of the border. I conclude with some reflections on how this type of approach might contribute to a different form of scholarship and ethical engagement with difference.

Politics as disagreement

Our traditional democratic wisdom tends to associate politics with a search for consensus between equal speaking beings. Contemporary democratic theory has been

enormously influenced by the Habermasian search for an ideal type of speech situation in which interlocutors are supposed to speak through a similar grammar that would then foster the possibility of resolving conflict (Habermas 1984). In simplified terms, according to this reading, politics is about the negotiation of conflict and the establishment of participatory mechanisms for resolving disputes. The greatest challenge of democratic practice is then to reduce the gap and inequality between speaking subjects in order to allow the inclusion of those excluded from political processes.

In the context of border zones, and of border dwellers that reside there, this definition of politics is inadequate and perhaps even inappropriate. Its first problem stems from the silenced question of who is allowed to be a speaking subject. This issue has been conventionally resolved through the establishment of a dichotomous and hierarchical relationship between citizens and aliens based on a statist resolution to the problem of the political. The second problem stems from its individualist basis or from a particular set of characteristics that are deemed necessary for a collectivity to speak as a political subject. These forms of political subjectification are premised on processes of legitimization that grant a special status for those who operate within the framework of legality and regularity defined from the standpoint of sovereign structures of authority and authorization.

Border dwellers can only precariously and uncomfortably negotiate these predetermined positions. Outside of the legal, and increasingly questionable, spheres of justice (Walzer 1983) created by citizenship, and inside the humanitarian and managerial discourses of otherness (Hyndman 2000), their political status tends to be perceived, at

most, as an accidental condition. As we saw in the previous chapter, for those living in the margins of the 'inter'national, as is the case of displaced groups, the border ceases to be just a simple territorial marker and begins to be an inscription on their bodies, a moving entity that follows their existence and trails. In this context, one might conclude that perhaps Spivak's analysis is accurate. The subaltern cannot speak about the 'good life'; they are condemned to possess only a depoliticized 'bare life' (Agamben 1998). Rancière, for example, highlights the barriers to political subjectivity when he states that:

the advocates of progress as well as those of law and order have decided to accept as legitimate only those claims made by real groups that take the floor in person and themselves state their own identity. No one has the right to call themselves a prole, a black, a Jew, or a woman if they do not possess native entitlement and the social experience. "Humanity" is, of course, the exception to this rule of authenticity; humanity's authenticity is to be speechless, its rights are back in the hands of the international community police. (1999, p.127)

Border dwellers are a representation of a fundamental 'inter'national contradiction. They are both the accident of the international, the collateral effect of sovereign regimes that have created strategies of managing mobilities – Balibar (2002) speaks of this management in terms of a response to a structural condition of violence -, and also the realization that the accident is always and already there. Nyers (2006) notes that the accident is usually perceived as an unintentional, unexpected and exceptional occurrence, as a problem and an indeterminacy to be avoided. He goes on to unmask the processes in which sovereign acts have excluded normalized citizens based on claims to the accident further exposing the fallacy of attaching senses of security to notions of belonging. In a way the accidental citizen 'suggests that the traditional dichotomy of citizen/non-citizen has to be rethought to account for the exceptions rendered by acts of

sovereignty'. He concludes by asking whether 'embracing accidental citizenship would contribute to the democratization of borders' (2006, p.38).

Whereas Nyers analyzes the accident in what was supposed to be the site of normality, namely citizenship, I approach the accident from the site where it is supposed to happen (i.e. within the 'inter'national) in order to question the extent to which it can be expected, embraced and recast as a condition of existence. The border dwellers, or as Martinez (1994) states 'border people', interdict the processes of bordering practices, of construction of otherness, of discriminations between who belongs and who does not. From the standpoint of border thinking, to live as a border means that the accident ceases to be accidental and becomes the circumstance of being in the world. As a consequence, the question of democratizing borders is no longer meaningful for it is no longer a matter of access, of allowing passage and permanence, but it is 'existence reclaiming its own condition' (Nancy 2000). Of course, this argument is only plausible if we redefine the content of the political. I borrow from Jacques Rancière and Etienne Balibar two important concepts - disagreement/interruption³⁵ and the 'other scene' respectively - which will give us important insights into the possibilities for understanding the political from the perspective of border dwellers.

In *Disagreement*, Rancière argues definitions of politics based on the norm of consensus is, in actuality, far removed from politics and instead resembles a form of policing. By 'police', Rancière means 'the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and

³⁵ The idea of interruption is also conveyed in Partha Chatterjee's discussion on political society or the *politics of the governed*, though his case is centered on a national domain of Indian squatters. See Chatterjee, 2004.

consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimating that distribution' is put in place (1999, p.28). In this sense, policing aims at weighing a rational calculation and allocation of resources by setting in advance the subjectification processes and the sites from which individuals and organizations can speak and what sorts of claims and languages are deemed as legitimate. It is based on an opposition that precedes politics, for it is the hierarchical position of beings that defines *a priori* where subalternity is and from where it can be seen and interpreted. It is thus structured around an artificial form of participation and representation that excludes or that only includes to the extent to which the excluded can be counted (Rajaram 2007).

'Politics', Rancière says, 'does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around: politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effects of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist [...] Politics exist when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part. This institution is the whole of politics as a specific form of connection' (Rancière, 1999, p.11). In this sense, politics might be interpreted as the coming-into-being of subalternity; the articulation of a moment and a presence that makes the other recognizable in its own terms. Politics presumes a significant positional change that 'shifts a body from a place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as a noise' (Rancière 1999, p.30). Politics happens when the accident is no longer accidental, when those who have

been systematically excluded become not only audible, but also recognizable in their difference and through their political potential. Politics is thus not about procedures, but occurs ‘whenever contention over what speaking means constitutes the very rationality of speech situations’ (Rancière 1999, p.xi).

How does such a politics of disagreement take place? One possible answer is to look at discourses that aim at interrupting and interdicting the normal order of things. Interruption implies a subjectification that is always a ‘disidentification, a removal from the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part’ (Rancière 1999, p.36). Interruption acts precisely by redefining the terms and means through which differences between who can or cannot be counted takes place. Interruption calls into question those lines by denying them, by a disidentification, that is always accompanied by a re-identification, by a reconfiguring of identities and terms that ‘bears on the situation in which speaking parties find themselves’ (Rancière 1999, p.xi). It is a political discourse that requires the bending or stretching of rules (Chatterjee, 2004, p.66) in order to guarantee a relative autonomy from statist modes of governance and subject formation.

Politics by interruption is also a poetic move. Politics, in this sense, is as much about aesthetics and performance as it is about content and form. In *Politics and the other scene*, Balibar (2002, p.xiii) emphasizes the fact that ‘material processes are themselves (over- and under-) determined by the processes of the imaginary, which have their own very effective materiality and need to be unveiled’. A discourse of interruption and

interdiction is therefore premised in a change of imaginaries that relates, if only partially and tenuously, to what most would consider to be ‘accurate’, ‘true’ or ‘rightful’ representations of political events. In fact, a discourse of interruption calls into question the very notion of an aesthetics of authenticity, in which the validity of arguments and evaluations is put to the test through a confrontation with an assumed *a priori* materiality. It calls our attention to how these imaginaries, collectively constructed, constitute not only the ‘other scene of politics’, but also ‘the scene of the other’ (Balibar, 2002, p.xiii). Following this line of reasoning, the argument is not that collective imaginaries, some of them regarded as fantasies, are the one and only source of understanding, nor have they a simple, direct and linear connection with the political scene. Nevertheless, they have profound impacts on the sense of life experienced by these subaltern groups. These modes of communication are ‘no more an *ideological-imaginary* than an *economic-social* scene’ (Balibar 2002, p.xiv). They allow us to bring to light different understandings of a materiality that breaks with the normalized mechanisms of diffusion of information and of interpretation of such information. They show how the social performance of materiality is itself intrinsically related to the dispersal of shared collective imaginaries that feeds into, and also in important respects constitutes a particular reality (or understanding of it). Discursive imaginaries are thus determinant of the forms through which subalterns, in this case displaced groups, have spoken within the political terrain, a terrain that has traditionally and regularly excluded them. In the following section, I discuss some of the characteristics and political implications of rethinking a speaking voice within the zone of rumours.

Rumours and the aesthetics of subaltern communication

Historically, the theorization of rumours was initially associated with the war efforts and its impact on military mentality. Rumours were thus inserted into what constituted the traditional site of International Relations analysis: war and militarism. Rumours had important effects on group cohesion and confidence. Shibutani (1966), in his groundbreaking sociological study of rumours, recalls the story of military training practices during the Second World War. Usually, the training cycle encompassed 17 weeks and recruits associated longer training exercises with higher rates of survival in the battlefields. When a German advance took place, several rumours started to spread stating that infantry battalions ‘would be leaving for overseas after 10 to 15 weeks of training’. This created confusion and anxiety among the men. Shibutani recalls a conversation about a recruit who ‘apparently was starving himself in an effort to get a discharge’. One of the interlocutors says: ‘By God, I’d just as soon get my ass blowed off here [at the training camp] and get a discharge than go over there [to the battlefield]’ (Shibutani, 1966, p.13). Many of the studies conducted about war rumours associated them with inaccurate information and polluted noise. Rumours were perceived as disruptive and therefore research was conducted to explain the mechanisms through which they were created and to establish effective strategies to limit and control their spread. The negative image of rumours reflects a belief that they are a distortion, an incorrect and incomplete version of reality. But, as Kapferer notes, ‘rumours do not take off from the truth, but rather seek out truth’ (1990, p.3).

Only recently have rumours regained its theoretical terrain, notably in the field of sociology and in studies that investigate alternative modes of political expression³⁶. And so what are rumours? What are their main characteristics? Shibutani defines rumours as a 'form of communication through which men [sic] caught together in an ambiguous situation attempt to construct a meaningful interpretation of it by pooling their intellectual resources' (1966, p.17). Two central features of rumours are conveyed in this definition. First, rumours arise from ambiguous situations. They come to life as people try to understand events, facts or perceptions that are unclear, unsaid, or uncertain. Rumours arise either from ambiguity and doubt, or from the unavailability of information. Rumours seek in this way to fill in the gaps and to disclose particular understandings of events within a community. They usually speak to the perceptions a community has about events. Therefore, rumours tell more about social perception than about notions of facticity and validity. As Kapferer rightfully points out, 'once false information has penetrated into the social body, it circulates just like true information. One forgets all too easily that a piece of information's truth-value is above all a product of convention and delegation. The notions of truth and verification stem from a social consensus' (1990, p.11). Rumours escape an objective conception of truth based on a strict comparison and separation of facts and their interpretation. Rumours speak to the forms of life and

³⁶ For examples see Fine & Turner, 2001; Kapferer, 1990; Das, 2007; Sabini & Silver, 1982. In International Relations, recent interventions in this direction have attempted to reconnect research with everyday practices that highlight micro-social interactions and the impact of localized experiences in the shaping of global connections. See Hobson & Seabrooke (ed), 2007; Doty, 2007; Enloe, 2004; Schendel & Abraham, 2005. For a seminal work on the connection of everyday life and politics, see de Certeau, 1984.

collective imaginaries in which events and stories are embedded. In a traditional sense, it might be the case that rumours might engender false information, inaccurate interpretation and so on. But they also disturb these same notions, as it promotes a 'mode of laying claims over the real [that] gets its affective force from the sense of uncertainty created through political events that pry open ideas of a settled social life' (Das 2007, p.121).

Secondly, rumours involve a process of collective interpretation. Rumours are a form of *social* communication in which everyone involved takes a part in developing, reframing, reproducing or reorienting a particular understanding of a situation. It is a mechanism of collective communication in which those who have no part can take a part. The spread of rumours usually involves face-to-face encounters that take place in the realm of the everyday, for example, in the workplace, in markets, public spaces and so on. As such, rumours become an essential aspect of community life and help to open up and stretch the limits of participation for those who are involved in the shaping of these stories and in their interpretation. Rumours are set as a process of communal interpretation in which it is impossible to trace back origins or to identify a particular subject from which it firstly arouse. It is in this sense that Das argues that rumours lack signature. 'The absence of a legitimate voice from which the rumour emanates makes it more difficult to assess its "authority"' (Das 2007, p.132). Rancière speaks about modes of subjectification that produce a 'surplus subject', one that comes to life by a set of operations that has more to do with a 'capacity of enunciation' than with a particular body and presence whose voice can be appropriately located within the political scene

(Rancière 1999, 58). Das defines the mode of subjectification effected by rumours as a form of 'brokered subjectivity' that allows for the subversion of the subject as a singular presence (Das 2007, p.160). They both point to a reframing of the political subject, focusing on multiscale relationships and on a collective realization and actualization of discourse. The poetics of rumours allows for a genre of political interruption that happens 'wherever a community with the capacity to argue and to make metaphors is likely, at any time and through anyone's intervention, to crop up.' (Rancière, 1999, p.60). These types of subjectification are particularly suited for subaltern groups, for it gives them the possibility of inclusion without incarcerating their voice and intervention in the traps of forms of representation and that assures a speaking position from a zone of indeterminacy.³⁷

Rumors are mediums of politics useful to subaltern groups because they escape and contest traditional modes of governance. 'A rumour is a spontaneous vie for the right to speak, no previous invitations have been made. It attests thus to a questioning of authorities, of "who has the right to speak about what"' (Kapferer 1990, p.14). The information they convey is a compound of multiple relationships and operations that are

³⁷ Marshall Beier has aptly called my attention to how these brokered modes of subjectivity are, nevertheless, always fraught with dangers. Their lack of signature or the fact that they somehow become 'disembodied' does not mean that rumours are free from disciplinary mechanisms. In fact, it is quite possible that these indeterminate subjectivities can be violently reinscribed, reappropriated and disciplined. I am thinking here, for example, about how these rumours can impinge on the perceptions of agencies dealing with displaced communities and how they can in fact have a deleterious effect on the services and opportunities open for them, by feeding into a stereotypical perception of these groups as ungrateful troublemakers (I return to this point in the conclusion). Other forms of reinscription of these surplus subjectivities into the bodies and everyday lives of these individuals can actually involve more direct forms of violence, as evinced in the claims of refugees in Rio about police persecution and the militarization of their routines.

in constant movement and thus constantly changing. 'A rumour is a phenomenon that provokes disturbances, and though they are identified in many occasions as a source of noise, it cannot be immediately deactivated because it is a communication that worms through different paths, that penetrates, creates doubts, and as it advances, regenerates itself with new data' (Orozco 2001, p.4). Rumours break from the hierarchy of information that privileges interpretations that stem from official or 'regular' sources. They are troubling, and thus political, because they give rise to disagreement between those who have no part in conventional processes, but that nonetheless influence and collaborate on the production and circulation of rumours, and those who have access and dominance over the means of 'legitimate' political membership. Rumours blossom from assumed unofficial means: 'they are the suspicion of the occult, the silenced desire of the governed, the claiming for more complete information, the distrust of official information, that throws itself in the face of a government who is under a legitimacy crisis' (Orozco 2001, p.1). Rumours are troubling because they are somewhat outside of the circles of political communicational control. Rumours can be considered then as metaphors for collectively constructed truths that have a diachronic relationship with time. Usually, rumours reflect a particular encounter with past experiences, reinterpretations of foreseen events, speculations about future occurrences that are intermingled for the composition of the overall representation they are trying to convey. As Veena Das (2007) argues, rumours allow for an actualization of time in which past experiences are embodied into an imminent present, into a near future that disrupts the linear order of events and of experienced trauma. The trauma, or the forms of life (and

death, Das would add) in which rumours are embedded, is no longer located in a simply recognizable memory of the past, but is constantly always and already there.

In sum, rumours are a form of social communication that interrupts the conventional processes of politics by bringing to light the forms of life and sense experience of those who, having no part, make a claim to a speaking position that disowns demands for truth and authenticity. Rumours are a form of political poetics, a means of an aesthetics of expression that has a confronting relationship with authority and with the authorization of political subjectivity. The unsigned authorship of rumours attests to the reformulation of modes of subjectification that disallow claims of visibility and rationality as necessary traits for the birth of a 'legitimate' participant of the political community. Rumours are precisely a questioning of what constitutes this community; they give rise to disagreement over the limits of inclusion/exclusion that are inherent in the definition of community. Whether they resort to inaccurate information, or convey an augmented or inverted interpretation of reality, rumours make salient important aspects of shared experiences that impinge on social responses and reactions to instituted structures of power. In this sense, rather than noise, rumours should be read as political manifestos, as important sites of expression of subalternity.

I analyze two strands of rumours that took place in the course of fieldwork conducted with displaced communities of varied status in Brazil (refugees, migrants without status, permanent residents, asylum seekers, internally displaced communities,

transborder groups and naturalized foreigners).³⁸ My aim is to highlight how such rumours are, not only a reflection of the ongoing struggles of these historically marginalized groups, but also a form of resistance and of voicing their concerns against those processes that have systematically excluded them. These rumours are also exemplary of the fact that sometimes the narratives that arise from the collective imagination put in evidence aspects of social life that are constantly hidden through the ongoing normalization of exclusion and violence within these communities. As such, all these rumours are attempts of repoliticizing the border zones which displaced groups are supposed to inhabit. Rumours are therefore performances of border languages; or, put in other words, an expression of how 'the scene of the other' is revealed for the political. This is not to say that rumours will present us with an ultimate resolution for the problem of exclusion or of structural violence that seems to plague our contemporary times. To make such an assertion would be to fall into the modes of scholarship that have made it impossible for the subaltern to speak (in Spivak's terms). A note of caution is thus necessary: rumours only provide us with the means to worm through such inequalities and modalities of exclusion, to wind through the forms of discursive intervention promoted by marginalized groups. They expound a different genre of politics that, I believe, is important to present us with a better understanding of what is at stake in the

³⁸ The stories conveyed here do not aim, in any way, to be representative of a general picture of life in displacement in the zones of subalternity, particularly in Brazil. The realities they encompass are particular, local, and specific to the time-space zone such groups inhabit, to the moments, presences and absences of delimited realities. Nevertheless, they do speak to how the local is necessarily a site of 'global connections' and that appropriations eventually take place that might lead us, perhaps, to a rethinking of how universal strategies are doomed to fail for their inherently violent quality.

ongoing confusion of politics and police, a confusion that seems inherent in conditions of peripheral modernity as is the case of the following scenes. Rumours are thus tenuous, sometimes conflictive, readings of events; at other times they vanish just too quickly, as soon as the conventional order of things is resumed and the shadows of normalcy take over again. Their life expectancy is consequently and paradoxically synchronic with that of the time-space leverage marginalized groups have. In the same way as law and claims to justice are fraught with uncertainty and danger (Das 2007), so are rumours.

Scene One: Are we all refugees?

A major Brazilian evening news program was showing the arrival of resettled Palestinian refugees in São Paulo's airport. The opening line was: 'First World Brazil – country welcomes Palestinian refugees'. The almost one hundred Palestinians came from a refugee camp in Jordan and were accepted within the Brazilian Resettlement Program in 2007. The images showed the Palestinians holding their documents and expressing gratitude for their hosts. The news story also pointed to the fact that the refugees would be receiving housing, a monthly stipend for two years as well as access to public services like health, education and professional training programs. Language training would also be provided through local organizations. An interview with government and international officials highlighted the Brazilian tradition of asylum reception and the increasing importance of the country in current humanitarian policies, alongside with the peacekeeping operation in Haiti. The refugees were sent to an undisclosed location in the state of São Paulo.

The news came at a time in which I was conducting visits to several shantytowns in Rio de Janeiro in order to interview and share the living experiences of refugees and migrants' communities in the city. I was also working with the assistance team of AST³⁹, UNHCR's implementing partner in the city. Most of the migrants with different status as well as asylum seekers and refugees I visited live in Complexo do Alemão⁴⁰ (German's Complex) and its surroundings. The area comprises a group of twelve slums and poor communities in a central area of Rio de Janeiro. The name comes from the 1920s when a Polish man bought the land and due to his looks and accent, locals started to call it the German Hill. In Brazil, white men usually, though not necessarily, of foreign origin are commonly named as 'Alemão' ('German'), denoting the physical and racial attributes (tall, light hair, very white skin) of those to whom the term refers. 'Alemão', in the context of the favelas, might also mean 'enemy', usually referring to warring parties in the drug conflict that has taken over such territories. The squatter name however is at odds with the current racial profile of its inhabitants (though not necessarily with the view that 'favelados' are an enemy to public order and security). In the case of displaced groups, most of them are blacks of African origin, notably Angolans and Congolese. My visit began with what was supposed to be a brief stop at a refugee-owned hair salon in one of the slums, but ended up taking a whole day as people would come and go. Other migrants

³⁹ I refrained from using the 'real' names of institutions and have resorted to symbols in order to indicate organizations. AST refers to the organization responsible for refugee assistance in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

⁴⁰ Many African refugees and migrants also live in another slum complex: Complexo da Maré, notably in the micro-neighborhoods of Vila do Joao and Vila do Pinheiro. Maré comprises sixteen impoverished communities in the Northern part of the city and has an estimated population of 130 thousand people.

joined and the interview took the form of a large group conversation, with different interlocutors intervening at different points. In the end, the picture presented no longer belonged to a particular individual, but reflected a collective understanding of the reality and problems they faced. Our conversation began slowly and intermittently. The salon is ran by a group of people, mostly refugees and migrants who live in the area, that come and work for a couple of hours in order to help out and earn some money. Most of the clients are also migrants with different status and Afro-Brazilians. My guide was a refugee who told me most of the people there were also refugees. But soon it became clear that many were undocumented, some were denied asylum cases, others had just arrived and several were applying for a permanent resident status. Most of them though lived in a juridical limbo, waiting for a decision on their immigration cases. Others have just conformed themselves with the impossibility of achieving any juridical status whatsoever. But most of them also spoke about and as if they were all refugees, that because of sharing the same conditions they were all entitled to the prerogatives of refugeeeness. All of them shared and conveyed similar perceptions regarding the assistance they received from public authorities and from local implementing agencies.

The first widespread rumour I encountered was about racial discrimination. African refugees and asylum seekers all mentioned that 'people' say that there is one day in which blacks are not allowed inside AST, the UNHCR implementing agency. That day, some said it was Tuesday, others that it was Thursday, was reserved for the 'white' applicants. There was also a rumour about the fact that the monthly stipend and help given to the 'whites' were higher and better. That would help explain for them why other

refugees have managed to get jobs and make a better life for themselves. It also explained for them why most white refugees did not live in the squatters nor shared the same living space of African refugees. The news about the Palestinian resettlement enhanced that perception in the following days, giving content to the rumours that racial discrimination was tantamount in relation to Africans in Brazil. As one of the group participants stated: 'People say we do not want to work, but they never lived with us, never visited us, never saw our daily life. I have been receiving phone calls since yesterday from other refugees and African migrants and they want to know: 1) How many UNHCRs are there? 2) How many United Nations are there? Why is it that the Colombians, Cubans, Chileans, all those from South America can get a job and are faring better than we Africans? Everyone knows there is a special day for receiving them, a day when black Africans are not welcomed. There is one day in which Africans are not allowed at AST. I have never noticed, but now I know and I am sure of it. You watch on TV that Palestinians, Lebanese, and Iraqi refugees that just arrived will get house, help and money for two years! It is revolting, frustrating. We ask that this man who claims to be a UNHCR representative would stop speaking as our representative because we have been recognized for a long time and we never get something even remotely like the tenderness and compassion they are affording them. This has a name, it is called discrimination'.

Another participant reinforced the rumours by stating that "The 'white' refugees are given houses by AST, their monthly stipend is higher. They are treated differently even though we all have the same status. We Africans get arrested all the time: the police come and put drugs in our pockets, so they can arrest us. No one visits. There are several

Congolese in jail, for trying to leave the country. We have sometimes to resort to illegal means to get out, because the bureaucracy will not help us or give us our rights. And then some get caught. This guy was arrested and shot in jail. He has been there for four years accused of international drug trafficking. He is a refugee. Brazilians do not know what a refugee is, they associate it with banditism [the word refugee in Portuguese resembles 'fugitive'], they think we are criminals, or even worse that we are miserable, so poor, so suffered, to be pitied. We are discriminated twice: because we are black and because we are African refugees".

Ever since early 2007, military invasions in the slum complex have become routine. Some are calling Complexo do Alemão 'the Brazilian Gaza Strip', in a reference to the ongoing conflicts between drug warlords and between criminals and the police. The area is now responsible for 40% of all reported violent crimes of the city (Globo, 2007) and almost one hundred thousand people live in the area. It was already 3 PM and I was alerted to leave before 4 PM as that was the time when drug dealers and armed men would take control of the streets and of the incoming/outgoing flow of people and merchandise. Many of the refugees said that the military and the police harassed them. "Our community has become a 'police house', they do not need a reason to invade. We tolerate it once or twice, but we are reaching our breaking point. Sometimes we fiercely argue with them". It is also routine to watch on the news the stories of military intervention in the slum complexes and the violence that accompanies it. These mediatic images resonate with the daily experiences of the displaced community at the Alemão and help to reinforce and spread rumours about imprisonment, mistreatment, persecution,

and lack of protection. In the end of our conversation, one question seemed to take over the air: after all, are we all refugees? And if so, why are we treated in such a way?

The rumours among the displaced community in Rio de Janeiro speak not only to the anxieties brought by conditions of social and legal marginalization, but also to the inabilities of traditional labels and accounts of sovereignty to tackle the dynamics and restrictions over mobility for border dwellers. One of the most important issues raised by such narratives lies in the meanings attached to ideas of refugeeness. Although rumours highlight the importance of regularization and documentation, enabled by the refugee status determination process, their use of the legal label is made outside of the conventional scope associated with it. They contest both the securitization portrayed in a discourse of refugees as criminals or outlaws, a reading enabled by issues of language and translation, and the victimization that is relentlessly attached to them as the helpless *misérables* produced by conditions of structural violence. The attachment to ideas of refugeeness shows a great deal of ambiguity. On the one hand, rumours highlight the fact that to be a refugee is to submit oneself to other means of social exclusion. Refugeeness becomes a reinforcement of subalternity, one that begins with a racial component and culminates with a sense of alienage and strangeness.

This move is most clearly reflected in the recent efforts to take out the name ‘refugee’ from official documentation issued by Brazilian authorities since 2007. Ever since then, identity cards no longer carry the word ‘refugee’ in order to avoid the double exclusion referred to in the rumours. On the other hand, this denial is also accompanied by a reidentification process, by which engaging in the construction of rumours is also to

assume the position of *speaking as a* refugee. Whereas being a refugee is perceived as a social *deficiency*, it is also reconstructed as an important element of social cohesion and of a reclaiming of political participation within the framework of protection and assistance. To present and voice concerns *as a refugee* is to create an opportunity to interfere and interrupt the politics of normalization that not only defines who can claim to be a refugee, but also delimits the locus these groups are supposed to inhabit - both in relation to the zones they actually reside in and in relation to other forms of alienage. The question 'Are we all refugees?' reinforces the contradictions of the current policies of humanitarian protection that creates hierarchies between different topologies of otherness. These cleavages are reappropriated and reinterpreted in terms of other mechanisms of differentiation that relate to the memories of trauma and to ongoing struggles over recognition within the black community in Brazil. These topologies are translated, for example, around ideas of race.

Race, as Persaud (2002) remarks, is a relational and over-determined concept. Therefore, processes of racialization are eminently social and politically articulated around the intersubjective construction of identity. 'The concept of over-determination allows us to understand how a particular fragment of identity [in this case race] of an agent may be reified, objectified, isolated and then deployed as the essential property of the agent and his or her culture' (Persaud 2002, p.64). Consequently, race as a concept or category is relational, mediated, over-determined and constitutive of a particular understanding of identity. In the rumour among black African refugees, race has an ambiguous function. It enables a transnational insertion of the African refugee community

in relation to other refugees within the same environment and to other blacks of non-African origin (as is the case of the Afro-Brazilian community). African refugees perceive themselves as a subordinate category in relation to what they perceive constitutes refugees' *whiteness*, specifically encompassing groups of South American and Middle Eastern origin. In this case, they mistakenly homogenize under the strict binary of 'whiteness' other displaced groups that are themselves members of racial and indigenous minorities. This reactionary aspect reflects, in part, the importance of the racial component in the determination of African refugeehood, as many of the recognized 'refugees' have received the status based on racial persecution. Even those who were not 'legally authorized' to be refugees also associate their notions of belonging to some form of racial exclusion that is part of their personal history and memory. Hence, there is an important paradox in the ways in which these two ideas, of refugeehood and race, come together. Conventionally, and particularly from the standpoint of African asylum seekers, race performs a fundamental criterion for inclusion in the humanitarian protective umbrella. Nevertheless, while providing a solution for the initial difficulties of displacement, race transforms itself into an enduring condition that allows that displacement to be almost permanent.

Rumors also place African refugees in a subordinate position in relation to other black groups who share their living space. When asked to explain why is it that African refugees are perceived to be unable to accommodate in the Brazilian job market, the answer is always regarded in terms of how even black Brazilians cannot get a 'proper' job, i.e., a formal job. The conjunction of alienage and blackness results in an even more

restricted access to socioeconomic opportunities. The association of race and discrimination permits a double movement. First, it permits an approximation with the cause of the Afro-Brazilian community by contesting the myth of ‘racial democracy’ and of the ‘beautiful interbreeding’ that is conveyed in much of the public discourse over Brazilian national identity. As such, African refugees position themselves within the debate over the slavery-colonial legacy of a national project that has deferred the resolution of the connection between race and politics. There is no doubt, from data presented both by the Brazilian Government and from international agencies and civil society movements⁴¹, that there is a direct and significant connection between race and social inequality and that blacks suffer the brunt of conditions of economic and social marginalization in Brazil. African refugees are well aware of that, as they live through those conditions on a daily basis.

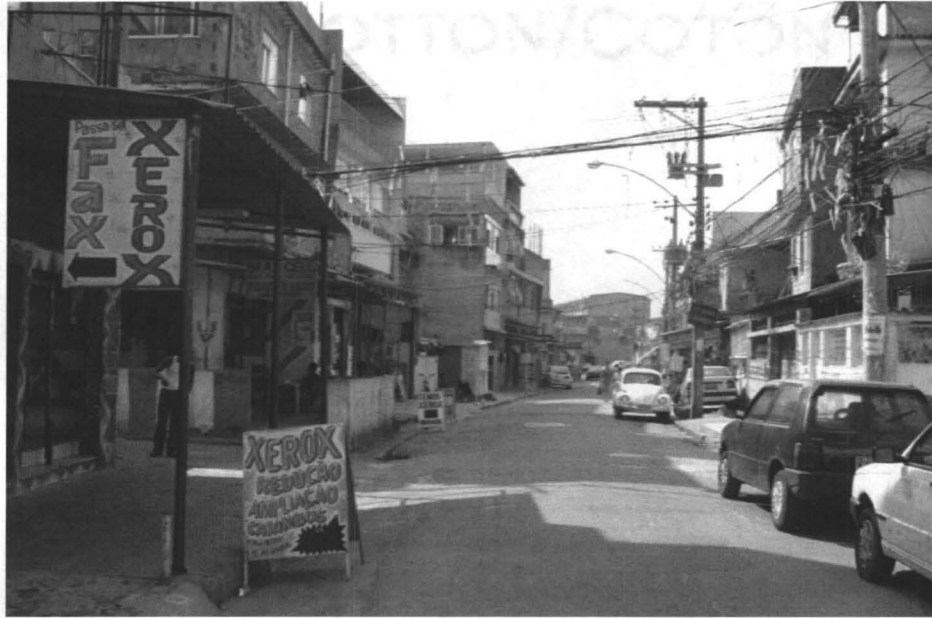
Yet, being a ‘black’ refugee allows for a distancing from the Afro-Brazilian community as well, since they see their ‘blackness’ as more problematic, and therefore even more alien to that particular context, because it is associated with a refugee identity whose primary source is race itself. Conversely, rumors enable a more positive source of identification. African refugees use the legal label as a means to promote and privilege a certain attachment to the ‘international’ discourse of mobility. This attachment permits African refugees to be interlocutors in a local politics increasingly affected by global decisions. It is identity in race and origin, despite the long standing differences between

⁴¹ For the most comprehensive database on racial issues in Brazil, see *Atlas Racial Brasileiro* [Brazilian Racial Atlas], 2005, published by the United Nations Development Programme. Available at: http://www.pnud.org.br/publicacoes/atlas_racial/index.php.

groups of African non-status migrants and refugees, that allows them to speak as a community and to participate and to recognize as their own the ideas and claims conveyed through these rumors. *It is this unique conjunction of exclusion based on alienage and racialization that permits the black African community to assert their subalternity and to speak as such.* Refugeeeness provides de-identifications, through a subordination to different topologies of subalternity, but also re-identifications, through the sharing of similar living conditions and through the enactment of modes of communication, of border languages, within a context in which facile attachments to citizenship are largely discredited. This is particularly relevant in the context of the *favela*, as a zone at the edge of the state and under multiple, overlapping and, more usually than not, conflictive sovereignties. Race and an ‘inter’national status are thus coupled in the ongoing dynamics of the ‘favela’ as a ‘collective identity machine’ (Wacquant, 2004). Rumors allow for community building while also working to ambivalently question and reinforce perceptions about the authority mechanisms which police and discipline refugees’ modes of existence.

These perceptions have had important effects in the still incipient initiatives of self-organization within the group. The setting of an association is crippled by the lack of resources and the difficulty of managing differences and even the (il)legalities involved in any form of mobilization. The issue is particularly salient for the migrants as Brazilian legislation prohibits foreigners from ‘exercising political activities and getting involved in Brazilian public affairs’ (art.106, Law 6815/1980). Though it would be unusual for such regulation to be enforced, it nevertheless presents enormous difficulties in terms of the

registration of associations, especially those composed mainly by foreigners, and of the development of its activities within the community.



Picture 7
Slum entrance, Rio de Janeiro.
(Author's Personal archive, 2007)

The issue of race and foreignness in relation to law enforcement provides a good example of how refugee communities ambiguously question the normalization of violence characteristic of life in displacement and in the shanty towns. The rumors present the African community in the *favelas* as particularly targeted and mistreated. The fact that squats such as *Complexo do Alemão* have become militarized zones is reinforced by the ongoing confrontations between refugees and police and of the war-like daily routine of those living in these zones of urban exclusion. As Haesbaert (2006) aptly remarks, squatters have become zones of exclusion and also of reclusion, since mobility

becomes restricted by the condition of economic destitution and structural violence that plagues such sites. Rumours therefore spread and are reinforced by representations portrayed in the media about the situation of refugees, the living conditions of the *favelas*, the distancing between the displaced and the institutions that are supposed to dialogue and represent them. Though being a common trait of the everyday of *favelados*, restrictions on liberties and rights seem to be even more salient for the African refugee community. As one of the participants highlighted ‘we, refugees, have been kidnapped here in Brazil’. Issues regarding mobility are prominent for refugees, since they need an authorization from the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) to leave, even if temporarily. In order to get the authorization and a temporary Brazilian passport (usually valid just for the duration of the trip that is being authorized and then retained by the Federal Police in the port of entry), refugees must prove that they have enough funds, indicate where they will be staying, for how long and for what purposes. They usually have to submit documentation attesting to such claims in order to get the authorization. For many of them, these requisites are difficult to fulfill and the issue becomes one more in a long list of grievances with governmental and international authorities.

The relationship between African refugees and the assistance network, represented by both civil society organizations, UNHCR and CONARE is also fraught with uncertainties. Due to the lack of contact between UNHCR and Government personnel with the refugees, much of the work, as well as the blame, ends up in the hands of AST. AST is a partner of UNHCR in the integration and determination phases and despite participating at the meetings of CONARE, the agency has very little leverage in terms of

adjusting or changing the policies regarding refugees. The lack of dialogue between different institutions and the refugee community leaves AST as the only 'identifiable' source for both the solution and the problems lived by the displaced community. This has created an atmosphere of distrust and a sense of rebellion that is then translated in terms of the metaphorical refusal of receiving 'black' refugees on particular days of the week. AST opens its doors every afternoon for any refugee that comes to it. They do not provide services on Wednesdays because this is the day where they do administrative and internal work⁴².

But, as rumours go, it matters little whether it is true or not that 'black' refugees will not be received: rumours create their own consensually based notion of 'truth'. Rumours escape authenticity and validity. One might also see this particular interpretation of the relationship between the refugee community and the assistance institutions as a metaphor for the 'forms of life' refugees usually encounter in the urban space, forms that exclude and that speak to a memory of ostracism and violence always read in relation to race. This sense of ostracism is additionally reproduced in the rumours about imprisonment and ill treatment in which the black refugee community conveys the idea that 'no one knows' or 'no one visits us' and, therefore, no one really understands what it means and feels to be a 'black refugee'. This impossibility of translating the forms of life

⁴² It might be the case that African refugees associated the closure of the office on a particular day with a refusal of service that was later interpreted as a 'racial' issue. I have worked at the AST project from early 2004 to September 2005 and have stayed there also in September 2007. In neither of those periods, there was any evidence that such refusal of service was taking place, except in the overall day in which no refugee was allowed for 'internal affairs'.

(and death) associated with their identity thus reinforces the difficulties of communication with both governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Nonetheless, refugees also resort to these same institutions for help and support, for applying to economic projects, for receiving medication, for issuing documents, and for food. Even those who speak *as if* they were refugees, but cannot officially access these institutions because they are not ‘recognized’ refugees, somehow share the access to their services. Many of the African migrants (of different status) share their houses, food and utilities. In one of the houses I visited, twelve people shared a three-bedroom apartment. The food was given monthly by AST to two of the house members, who were asylum seekers – the others had different or no migratory status- and it had to serve them all. There is a clash between the individually based mechanism of refugee determination and protection and the fact that much of refugee/displaced life is set on a collective basis, especially in what regards the African refugee community in the squatters in Rio de Janeiro. Rumors help reinforce community ties in such circumstances, making it possible for the ‘recognized’ to share with those officially ‘unrecognized’ and, at times, makes this distinction not only questionable, but useless in some aspects of their daily lives.

This tension in the relationship between ‘refugee officials’ and the African refugee community in Rio is representative of the argument that subaltern groups through rumours usually demonstrate a perception of the state as what Das describes as

a form of regulation that oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being. As a rational entity, the state is present in the structure of rules and regulations embodied in the law as well as in the institutions for its implementation. The law is a sign of a distant but overwhelming power that is brought into the framework of everyday life by the representation

and performance of its rules in modes of rumour, gossip, mockery and mimetic representation. [But they] also looked to the law as a resource for seeking justice, although they knew that its use is fraught with uncertainty and danger (Das 2007, p.162).

This paradox of the state and, in the case of refugees, of international actors such as UNHCR, as both the solution and the cause of refugees' problems reflects the inherent ambiguity with which the community relates to the legal label. It is considered to be important and thus necessary for those who wish to stay, but at the same time it forecloses as many opportunities as it opens. For example, the relationship between the African refugee community and UNHCR seems to foster a particular understanding of the degree to which subalternity is constitutive of their displaced experience. In a way, the fact that rumours portray a contradictory and unequal policy regarding 'spontaneous' refugees and resettled refugees places the issue of time and space under a different light. On one hand, it allows for a questioning of the dual policy on the basis of a long-term relationship with displacement. Because many African refugees are considered to be in 'protracted situations' and thus living in marginalized conditions for over 10 years, they feel that they are entitled to more 'rights' of access to the 'first world initiatives' as portrayed in TV than the resettled Palestinian refugees. The fact that the resettlement program has been conducted outside the jurisdiction of the refugee assistance program (and through a different group of organizations) increases the suspicion among the refugee community about the degree of trust they can put in the state and in international actors as the original sites for claiming their demands. In that sense, rumours attempt to reclaim a certain privileged position for long-term refugees within the traditional structures of refugee protection, one that is translated in terms of a questioning of the current degree of

‘authority’ held by UNHCR to speak on behalf of the refugee community. One might say that African refugees, through rumors, attempt to displace (inter)national politics, by first casting doubt on the decision-making processes about who gets what from whom and, second, by trying to reposition themselves into the hierarchies of the local and global discourse on refugee assistance.

The questions as to whether ‘they are all refugees’ and to ‘how many United Nations are there’ demonstrate that the African refugee community inhabits what Santos (2004) calls ‘transnational third worlds’. Especially in the context of South-South displacement, it seems that there is very little change in terms of the ongoing dynamics of social exclusion for those living on the margins of the global economy. The transnationalization of mobility between zones of exclusion, contrary to what the refugee mobility regime would presume, does not necessarily lead to notions of security and stability in the daily lives of those it affects. Displaced groups, especially those living in such marginal zones, are then faced with other ‘repertoires of authority’ (Hansen 2005, p.36) that usually include informal sovereign powers (e.g. drug dealers and militias) that control and provide the framework of morality and order within the community. But this does not preclude them from articulating different understandings and from questioning the current structures of authority and authorization that attempt to discipline their lives. The refugee community has to negotiate the rational and magical modes of being of sovereign authorities (Das 2007) that are, more often than not, in direct conflict. Their livelihood and survival within the space of the slum depends on these political negotiations, sometimes in ways that place them within the framework of ‘official’

criminality, but that also allows the creation of different mechanisms of participation and communication. For many, this is a trait that is part and parcel of the political dynamics of life as a ‘favelado’ (a slum dweller).

In that sense, the reality and politics of refugees in this context is very similar to the ongoing struggles of the overall community. But it is felt in a heightened sense because *they are or present themselves as refugees, as both slum and border dwellers*. It used to be common to hear, for example, in the local media, that African refugees were training the militias and drug gangs in *guerrilla* tactics (Istoé, 2003). This is because, within the collective imaginary, African refugees were escaping situations of armed conflict that they were themselves a part of. Even though this was not the case for most of the Africans living in Rio, it nevertheless perpetuated a mentality in which the ‘recruitment’ of these groups was perceived by local drug lords as interesting to their strategies and, consequently, by the police (who is also feared in these contexts as much as criminals are). One of the interviewees noted that he had been recently offered four hundred reais (around two hundred dollars) by drug dealers to help ‘patrol’ drug distribution in his street for a week. He refused the offer, even though he was unemployed and had four children to support (Interview, September 2007). This is an example of the daily negotiations that African refugees have to face. The militarization of the shantytowns points to the fact that, rather than conveying a simplistic assumption that these zones are increasingly ‘outside’ of the control of the state, they actually portray a reframing of the state function in which it is reduced ‘ad absurdum to its penal apparatus’ and to its disciplinary governmentality (Wacquant 2008a). This shows that the refugee

community is aware of the mechanisms through which the internalization of border zones operates. They are particularly attentive to the fact that, increasingly, all those who dwell in the shantytowns are themselves becoming refugees of an urban reality that systematically excludes and secludes them. This urban reality also places them as subjects of modes of sovereign violence – as is the case of police, drug dealers and militias - that work outside the law in order to enforce it.

What the African refugee community attests is to the persistency of such insecurities in transnational modes. They replicate conditions of socioeconomic marginality and bring to the fore the crisis of citizenship as the sole *voie* for access to social and political rights. From the standpoint of border dwellers, one might speak of such transnational third worlds as the transnationalization of the ‘camp’ architecture for the management of populations as an ongoing practice of control and disciplining urban outcasts (Wacquant 2008b). If Brazilian citizens cannot have access to their rights, how can refugees expect to integrate according to the standards set by governmental and international institutions? More than that, if these institutions treat different refugee groups unequally, how can refugees allow them to speak on their behalf and to decide on what justice should mean for their community? These issues expose the difficult compromises these individuals have to make between the drive towards being a refugee and escaping a socioeconomic condition that comes along with it. In a sense, they elucidate how conditions of expulsion and trauma are, in important respects, replicated in the hosting community. Rumours speak to life in transnational third worlds where choices between refugeeness and economic survival are contradictory. Rumours help subaltern

groups understand and articulate these contradictions. Rumours are then mechanisms not only of fostering – or more appropriately of *creating* - a different *refugee politics*, but also of searching for refuge from refugeeness, or for rethinking what it means to live as a refugee especially in the context of the *favelas*.

Scene Two: Barbarian Invasions

The cities of Tabatinga (Brazil), Leticia (Colombia) and Santa Rosa (Peru) are one of the nine-triborder areas of Brazil. The Amazonas River, called Solimões on the Brazilian side, connects them. Located in the western portion of the rain forest, Tabatinga and Leticia are about one thousand and six hundred kilometers away from the Provincial Capital of Amazonas, Manaus – a journey that can take up to five days by boat. About one hundred thousand people live in the area. Leticia alone has seen a four fold increase in its population in the past ten years – from ten to forty thousand people-, some argue, due to the Colombian 'War on Drugs' and the displacement of its nationals to rural areas caused by guerrilla and paramilitary action.

The borderline that separates Brazil from Colombia, and that constitutes the main avenue of both Tabatinga and Leticia, is called Friendship Avenue. The Avenue provides a façade of civilization; it is one of the few streets with asphalt, even though it is poorly maintained. It has a long central line with gardens and trees and an intense traffic of motorcycles, the main means of transportation in the region. The cities are well known for the number of motorcycles, locals tell they have won a world record for the longest

consecutive line of motorcycles that took over 20 kilometers from Tabatinga to Leticia's airports. Apart from that, what one sees are open sewages, the red dust that comes from the roads due to the lack of rain in the past few days, mostly poor houses made of unfinished bricks or wood, and children playing on the streets. The indigenous component of the population is at odds with the social division of labour of the towns. The Tikunas, the largest urban indigenous group there, live in a specific neighborhood, the 'Umariachu'. Impoverished groups live in disputed borderlands and are now facing eviction threats and resettlement projects from both municipalities. Despite the vastness and exuberance of the region, land is a scarce and expensive resource in this part of the world. Most of the unoccupied space is now protected under national conservation laws. The population growth and lack of socio-economic opportunities has been forcing many to resort to irregular settlements and provisional housing. Unemployment and informal economic activities are a common trait in local stories. Public buildings and services, whose officials are usually southern foreigners, especially in the case of federal institutions, occupy the downtown area. Many displaced families used to live alongside the only road that connected Leticia to its surroundings. Now many have had to leave or have once again been forced out of their precarious tents, with muddy floors and no running water. Living in the city can be extremely expensive for these groups. Just to rent one bedroom can cost around 300 thousand pesos (approximately US\$150).

The border outpost exerts more of a symbolic function than anything else. The two flags and a marker indicate the geodesic line that divides the countries. Six cones placed on the streets force the drivers and cyclists to reduce their speed. On the Colombian side,

two military recruits are seated under a white tent in plastic chairs, supposedly to patrol the circulation of people and goods. On the Brazilian side a military police officer seats besides a street vendor that rents motorcycle helmets for those crossing. Since Tabatinga does not have a local transit authority office, there is very little control over drivers. Leticia, though, being the provincial capital has a more strict surveillance. And so if drivers have to go to the Colombian side they can rent the helmets from this 40-something man for 50 cents of real for an hour (around US\$0.25). There are no gas stations in Tabatinga and gas is sold in plastic Coke bottles alongside the main avenue. Gas, food and even Brazilian products are cheaper on the Colombian side. Borders, it seems, are well known in South America for fostering commercial tourism. Most of the inhabitants of Tabatinga buy their things in Colombia and so some local traders see the border as a problem – others see it as an opportunity.

Every year the three municipalities commemorate the “Festival de la Confraternidad”, a cultural event to celebrate the diversity of the region and the sisterhood that is supposed to orient the lives of these communities. Dancing, food, musical presentations and political discussions, alongside with a beauty pageant contest, take over the towns for three consecutive nights. The Festival was scheduled to begin that Sunday evening, which was coincidentally a day for another important event on the Brazilian side: the final match of the America’s Cup between Brazil and Argentina. The match began at 4 p.m. and soon the Brazilian team scored a goal. An abrupt noise could be heard, many assumed it was a rejoicing for the unexpected victory over the Argentineans. As soon as the match ended, three nil to Brazil, many people decided to

celebrate outside, on the bars, on the streets. I was walking towards the borderline after the game, and upon arriving at the Friendship Avenue that Sunday, a chaotic scene abruptly took everyone. People running from Leticia towards the Brazilian side, some with their bare feet over the hot asphalt, carrying their children in their homely Sunday clothes. Their faces were of desperation and incomprehension. Brazilians, still under the impact of the recent victory, looked at the startling scene without fully apprehending its meaning. Some invited acquainted Colombians to share a beer and join in the celebration. Others were just too busy to even bother. Rumours soon start to spread. The most common and shared rumour explained the disquieting events as an imminent takeover of the region by Colombian guerrilla forces. The noise that had been earlier heard was of an explosion. They had occupied military headquarters and would soon assume control over the town. The information was further reinforced by people from Santa Rosa who claimed they could see the huge 'mushroom cloud' from the explosion on the other side of the river. Others who were on the riverbanks mentioned they could see the debris of the explosion now incrustated in the muddy terrain of the shores. Still, many testified seeing and hearing the Colombian soldiers, who regularly stay in the border post, yelling and asking for the peasants to find 'refuge' on the Brazilian side.

Not too long after, news started to circulate that the Festival would be cancelled. It was impossible to hold the celebration when the town of Leticia had suddenly been taken over by the noise of sirens and an atmosphere of fear and apprehension. It was also recurrent to hear about the casualties of the invasion: some spoke of hundreds of deaths caused by the attacks. No one knew what could happen from there. Later on at night,

information started to circulate from official sources that the explosion happened in the military weaponry facility. The causes of the fire and subsequent explosion were unconfirmed, but preliminary investigations pointed to a short circuit that could have ignited it. It happened in a location close to the city's airport some three miles away from downtown. People were advised to return to their homes. No one had died, only a couple soldiers had had minor injuries. The Festival would resume on Monday. And so the artificial peacefulness of a region consumed by drug gangs, poverty, lack of infrastructure, isolation and a multiethnic composition, would triumph over once again.

The rumours in Leticia and Tabatinga, the twin cities in the heart of the Amazon forest, show how ambiguity and anxiety, brought up by events that one cannot fully comprehend, but that can certainly be *remembered*, might bring to the surface the social and political mores of towns marked by violence, trauma and 'distant proximities' (Ortiz, 2004). Rumors make the basis of community less opaque, especially in contexts of heightened uncertainty and anxiety. The sudden explosion made visible the invisible, made heard what was once simple noise and nuisance: the fact that these communities are embedded in the context of civil war and also on a major crossroads of routes of international drug trafficking. More than that, they highlighted the extent to which violent displacement is a deep-seated, though barely spoken, trait of such communities. Many families have felt and lived through the effects of violent displacement; others have shared the dislocating impacts of such experiences on their neighborhoods, friends and relatives; others have followed the prolonged coverage of years of social and political unrest caused by the forceful expulsion of millions of mostly rural communities in the

context of a failed national project whose ‘potential resides precisely in its impossible unity as a symbolic force’ (Bhabha 1990 quoted by Uribe 2004, p.79).

The memory and ongoing actualization of time, produced by the imminent threat of invasion and loss of control over one’s life and death’ possibilities, marks the politics of such communities. They represent a form of normalization of a *necropolitics*, i.e., ‘the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations’ (Mbembe 2003, p.14). It is this particular memory of *necropolitics* that allows for the explosion to be interpreted in terms of a reenactment of the expected, yet silent: violence will happen again, or in Veena Das’ words, ‘violence becomes so embedded into the fabric of the social that it becomes indistinguishable from the social’ (2007, p.219). Leticia is usually portrayed as being quite isolated from the context of generalized violence that characterizes certain regions of Colombia, especially because to get to the town one needs to cross several rivers, walk through treacherous paths or pay for a flight from the national capital (a cost most displaced families, who have lost their land and possessions, cannot afford). This spatial distancing undermines the proximity of such events to the social fabric of these communities, either due to the presence of a large number of displaced families or due to the growing presence of indigenous minorities that have been systematically targeted both by paramilitaries and guerrillas.

The spatial distancing also hides the increasing interpenetration of political violence with illicit practices of drug and human trafficking that pervade the border’s everyday life. It is common knowledge that Tabatinga and Leticia have now been taken

over as the battleground for the control of trafficking routes and that targeted individuals have been violently murdered on a daily basis in both towns⁴³. This trend is compounded by the massive presence of ‘mulas’ (mules) in the penitentiaries of both Leticia and Tabatinga. During my visits, it was clear that the majority of the inmates had some relation with these illicit practices, either as *transporters* instrumentally used by the criminal networks to cross the border with their merchandise, as *supporters* in such activities, as consumers or as simple bystanders. One of my acquaintances in Tabatinga was straightforward in stating that ‘almost every family here has had some contact with drug warlords offering money or posing threats’ (Personal Notes 2007). The increasing financial reliance of warring parties on drug money, and the by now suspected relationship between government officials and non-state militias, makes the violence even more salient in the everyday realities of such communities. It creates a double distrust in which both state and non-state ‘authorities’, these competing forms of sovereignties that articulate the *necropolitics* of internal displacement, are treated as unreliable and illegible to the population, especially those who have been displaced themselves. In the rumour, people note that the military was actually advising border dwellers to cross to the Brazilian side and to search for ‘refuge’ there. The frailty of the power apparatus of state

⁴³ In the day following my arrival, a man was found hanging in a tree on the street I was living. According to the neighbors, the man was killed because of a debt with local drug dealers. I lived in a neighborhood called Santa Rosa, alongside the borderline, an area whose population is in its majority of Colombians. In the following week, the son of a local businessman was also targeted and killed. Locals were invited, through a loud speaker set in a car crossing the streets of the town, to participate in the funeral. Again, rumours spread that the son was involved with drug trafficking networks and that the murder was a consequence of disputes between him and the drug warlords (Personal Notes 2007).

structures combined with the illegibility of criminal activities and widespread impunity tends to place the population in a permanent state of apprehension. Therefore, they have to negotiate with these multiple forms of authority, but without the assurance that they can count on either of them for protection and security, or even, for survival.

In a sense, the rumours portray the collapse of two interrelated discourses of protection. Firstly, the discourse of citizenship as a site for the realization of justice within the 'national' sphere is doubly undermined: by the initial displacement and by the increasing difficulties of displaced families to be included in the social programs⁴⁴ and adapt to the sites of socioeconomic marginality in this new environment. Secondly, the protective 'refugee/humanitarian' international discourse, in which the displaced are supposed to find sanctuary in the neighboring town, is disrupted by the illegibility of this trauma to the Brazilian population, and by the fact that, for many, refuge is but a secondary and distant option. In the last couple years, UNHCR and International Organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration, have increased their presence in the area. UNHCR has established a partnership with local organizations for the reception of refugees who arrive in the border as well as provided training and assistance to both social workers and governmental officials. UNHCR estimated, in a

⁴⁴ Colombia has a national legislation that allows for protection of displaced families through their Social Action Agency. Nevertheless, individuals have to enroll in the program and be 'recognized' as displaced. Many have faced difficulties in such recognition as is the case of one the families I interviewed for whom it took six years to get a 'legal' displaced status. Corruption and fear of persecution are also among the reasons stated by interviewees for not enrolling in the official programs. These problems have strained the already fragile relationship between governmental agencies and displaced families associations, in ways that resonate with the ongoing struggles over recognition between UNHCR and governmental officials and refugee communities as portrayed in Rio de Janeiro.

recent investigation conducted in the Amazon region, that around twenty thousand Colombians are living in the area, displaced by the violence, but only very few of them have applied for refugee status (UNHCR 2007)⁴⁵.

In many of the conversations, two major justifications were provided for this lack of search for ‘international’ protection. The first one was the dismissal of refugeeness as a solution. Many did not see a direct relationship between attaining refugee status in Brazil and acquiring a better sense of security, both in terms of physical integrity and of material survival. In a sense, to become a refugee was to reinforce the displaced nature of their everyday experience, a trait that should be minimized not enhanced. The restrictions over mobility that come along with the refugee status (for example, the prohibition of returning to Colombian territory) are also a barrier for those who still keep a close and daily connection with their communities of origin and residence. It was also pointed that the distance and cost of transportation were a limitation for dislocating towards the country. Some also mentioned they were afraid of encountering persecuting agents in the areas other Colombians live in Brazil. One of the interviewees, for example, stated that she knew of a case where a Colombian displaced person moved to Manaus (the capital of the Province of Amazonas, in Brazil) and was killed by drug dealers supposedly of Colombian origin who were also living in the same neighborhood⁴⁶. Secondly, some

⁴⁵ Data obtained through the Social Pastoral in Tabatinga shows that until 2007 less than 80 Colombians from different Provinces had ‘officially’ applied for refugee status through their office. This data seems to resonate with information obtained in the interview with Brazilian Federal Police officials in Tabatinga, which stated that they received only six cases in the first six months of 2007.

⁴⁶ The distant ‘presence’ of transnational networks of criminality, connected directly with the violence that leads to internal displacement in Colombia, is also fostered

interviewees highlighted the fact that, despite the economic inequality between the two countries and thus the incentive to search for jobs and a more stable life within urban areas in Brazil, there was an important gap between the two realities. These aspects could make it harder for Colombians to adapt to the Brazilian environment. Language and cultural differences, the disparity between the rural life they are used to and the chaotic portrayal of Brazilian urban cities, as well as the fear of the 'unknown', were pointed out as aspects that hindered a straightforward attachment with the search for 'inter'national modes of protection. In that sense, living in and as a border was considered to be a better strategy for an eventual return, to the properties, cities and villages the displaced were forced to leave behind. Or, should violence once take over, they could dislocate themselves again towards new territories of estrangement, both legally and geographically. Therefore, the border was not perceived as a crossing or checking point, but as a zone where life should be resumed.

through mediatic exposures of the entrenchment of Colombian cartels into Brazilian territory. The most recent case is that of Colombian cartel chief Juan Carlos Abadía, whose cinematographic arrest and later extradition to the US, took place in São Paulo and was widely and systematically broadcasted in both countries in 2008 (Folha de São Paulo 2008).



Picture 8
Waiting for potable water in Leticia.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

The rumours also attest to a contradiction between ideas of friendship and the distancing between two interrelated yet different realities. There is a paradoxical disconnection between the cultural portrayal of a supposed harmonious life between the towns in different countries, expressed by ideas of ‘friendship’ and ‘confraternity’, and the relative divide that forecloses the possibility of refuge and solidarity between such sites, especially in the interpretations and articulations of displaced families’ views. This paradox is conveyed in Ortiz’ idea of ‘distance proximities’ as the rumours, and the events that followed it, show a ‘disruption of the functional and geographical immediacy of two cities’ (2004, p.xxv). The proximity reflected in the festival and the ethnic composition of towns is suddenly disrupted by the influx of an indecipherable ‘mass of people’, fleeing from fear and from events they can only but try to explain. The Friendship Avenue becomes the landscape for the display of such distances, showing that

‘borders not only join what is different but also divide what is similar’ (Schendel 2005, p.44).

In the same way in which such distant proximities engender de-identifications, and thus separations between border realities and performances, they also create moments for re-identifications, or for what Schendel calls the re-enactment of ‘scales almost lost’. These are ‘pre-border webs of relations that have weakened under the onslaught of state formation but have not quite vanished’ (Schendel 2005, p.57). These scales are evident in the re-identification made possible by displacement between indigenous groups within the local space of the border. Most of the Colombians, and also Peruvians, who decide to reside in the Brazilian side do so in the indigenous neighborhood of Umariáçu⁴⁷. Umariáçu counts with bilingual indigenous schools that have a higher rate of foreign children enrolled, mostly with indigenous background, than any other public school in Tabatinga (UNHCR 2007). The linkage between the Tikunas, the largest indigenous group of the High Solimões area, articulates communities in the three countries of the border and mobility, being central to the indigenous livelihood, is now also hampered by governmental regulations and the ongoing urbanization of the villages. Some indigenous families relocate to Brazil in order to have access to public services, like health and education, and, in the case of the indigenous displaced, to regain a sense of community and safety. Displacement is then an opportunity to strengthen communitarian ties that have been systematically severed after years of colonial imposition – since the early

⁴⁷ Other important neighborhoods for Colombians in Tabatinga are Santa Rosa and Union, both located along the borderline.

Catholic missionaries and colonizers who sailed through the Amazonas⁴⁸ – and economic disruption, brought about by intense changes in the exploitation of natural resources and land occupation.



Picture 9

The Amazonas River (know as Rio Negro at that juncture), Manaus (AM), Brazil. The '*recreios*' are the boats that transport passengers through the Amazon region, including the border area in Tabatinga. (Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

⁴⁸ Francisco de Orellana is considered to be the first Spanish conqueror to descend the Amazonas River in the late XV century. He participated in the Peruvian conquest and a Dominican friar, Gaspar de Carbajal, chronicles his journey. It is worth quoting at length the relationship between this expedition and the legend of the Amazonas, as portrayed by Carbajal and reported by Goes Filho (2001): 'Orellana separated himself from the troops [...] He had two boats, both with fifty-seven people. Throughout the journey, there was constant fighting with the many riparian tribes, which indicates that the Amazon valley was densely populated at the time and that the indigenous groups were war-like [...] As for the Amazonas, the friar claims to have seen them fighting in front of the indigenous troops, as if they were their captains. They were women, very white and tall, with long hair [...] they rode naked, arrow and arch at hand, making as much war as ten Indians' (Goes Filho 2001, p.138-139). The river was later named Amazonas, in reference to the indigenous women warriors, a fact that, as Goes Filho remarks, seems to be a recurrent trait of such naming encounters: 'If "Indians" remained for the natives of a land that were not the Indies, "America" for a continent that Amerigo Vespuccio did not discover, why not "Amazonas" for the longest river of a new world that had no resemblance with Ancient Greece?' (2001, p.139) [Author's translation].

The language of rumours reflects also a particular trait connected to the nature of the Colombian conflict. Many of the cases of both community and individual persecution are done on the basis of personal denunciation through the figure of the 'informant'. As Uribe (2004) aptly remarks, this method of persecution has accompanied the Colombian conflict ever since the 1950s, during the time of 'La Violencia'. Nowadays, she notes, 'rural inhabitants are murdered because they are perceived as direct or indirect support for the opposition [in this case, either guerrilla or paramilitary units]. To do business with, chat with, show hospitality to, or sell any goods or services to the other group is reason enough to be considered an enemy collaborator (*auxiliador*). In some cases, paramilitary and military intelligence agents seek to convert, by force if necessary, local peasants into a pointer (a traitor to one's own group) or a collaborator (an ally of the opposition) – contradictory roles known by the same term *sapo*' (Uribe 2004, p.91).

The 'sapo' is both an insider, a member of the community, and an outsider, one that can always disrupt the supposed sense of cohesion of the community. Being this ambivalent figure, the informant can be everyone and no one, which creates a sense of overall suspicion and distrust. Therefore, even though everyone has had some connection with the violence, or has been directly affected by it, no one openly speaks about it for fear that their voice can be identified and brutally silenced. Rumours become then one of the few mechanisms of communication for displaced communities, one of the means through which they can rescue their memories, share interpretations of events, or elucidate how their fear is socially constructed. As Veena Das argues, in such stances:

My fear of the other is transformed into the notion that the other is fearsome [...] It is not only the past then that may have an indeterminate character – the present too may suddenly become the site in which elements of the past that were rejected, in the sense that they were not integrated into a stable understanding of the past, can suddenly press upon the world with the same insistence and obstinacy with which the real creates holes in the symbolic. It is in this manner that rumour's adequacy to a reality that has become suddenly unrecognizable makes it the privileged mode of communication and constructs panic as its corresponding affect in this altered world (Das 2007, p.134).



Picture 10
Barrio Union, on the borderline between Brazil and Colombia
 [cone indicates the geodesic division]
 (Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

Rumours are a medium of communication, but also a performance of moments of *crisis*. They are ambivalent in their sudden rise. They disrupt while connecting; they allow for associations with old and new kinships while reproducing and merging 'past and present' insecurities. In the same way in which the border is produced as bridge and

barrier, rumours present us with a heterogeneous picture that contextualizes the experience of displacement as ‘life in movement’, as a ‘dynamic yet persistent configuration of identities and positions’ (Ortiz-Gonzalez 2004). Rumours attest to the fact that such borders are not just lines of passage, or cultural regions, or zones of abnormality and accident, but are always and constantly instrumentally and poetically appropriated as permanent intervals of life itself.

Border languages, border zones and ‘inter’national bodies

International Relations scholars have started to pay increasing attention to borderlands and to the politics of ‘inter’national bodies. Concerns with how issues of security, and securitization, make their incursion in the daily lives of border dwellers, as well as attempts to repoliticize the border as a zone of resistance and alternative imaginaries of solidarity and compassionate action, have pointed to new directions in research (Doty 2006 and 2008; Bigo 2002, 2007). In the same vein, recent contributions have emphasized the connections and (dis)articulations between international and ‘subaltern’ politics and how they might open up other possibilities for answering the pressing issues of global structures of social, cultural and economic marginalization in contemporary times (Soguk 2008, Dean 2007, Tangseefa 2007). All these attempts show the need for rethinking the meanings and consequences of the ‘international’, its location, its timelines, its subjects (and objects). My own attempt at conveying the idea of border languages, through an exploration of rumours as a modality of subaltern communication, hopes to contribute to such scholarship.

When I first met with a military commander in an informal gathering at the border between Brazil and Colombia, he asked me whether ‘it could possibly be true that twenty thousand refugee-like Colombians were living in the Brazilian Amazon region’. For him, the data seemed not only outrageous, but also invalid. It was perceived as a move by international institutions to increase their participation in the management of these regions and to ‘fabricate’ a problem that did not, *in reality*, exist. I could not answer that question, not from the same standpoint from which it was posed: that for numbers to be valid they need to be proven, that facts have to be confronted with a supposedly *prior and objective* reality and that information has to be controlled and diffused from appropriate sites of authority. More than that, it seemed to distance these numbers from the everyday realities of violence, trauma and displacement that constitute life in and as a border. This was no easy question for it requires a rethinking of what constitutes knowledge and what constitutes politics and a legitimate voice. Who can count how many refugees are there? Who can speak from or for these border zones? I have argued that rumours might give us some glimpses of such alternative understandings of community and politics. By denying the rationalization and individuation of political practice, they show how the international is itself performed, enacted, contested and, why not, reproduced in ‘a myriad of small and not so small ways, ‘on the ground’, in everyday local practices that are seemingly far removed from “international politics”’ (Doty 2006, p.73). Through rumours, those who cannot be counted participate in the social construction of reality, outside the conventional realms of democratic politics, presenting their own understandings (and grievances) about conditions of marginality and subalternity, and how they relate to

contexts of political violence and sovereign power. These are always tenuous, and often ambivalent performances of social practices. They do not aim at providing a definitive resolution for the problems displaced groups face in contexts of peripheral modernity. But they do point, I believe, to different mechanisms of making sense of life, affected simultaneously by local, transnational and international processes, and of responding to the (dis)articulations produced by these same processes.

The scenes of the other presented in the two strands of rumours reflect how such understandings might disrupt the traditional sites in which politics is supposed to happen and how a condition of ‘inter’ might engender different conceptions of subjectivity. The two border zones analyzed have enormously different layouts but share a striking resemblance. On one hand, they highlight the proliferation of border practices outside the traditional territorial imaginary of the Nation-State. They demonstrate how such practices are increasingly taking place within states and societies. If the border was supposed to clearly delimit inside/outside, as mainstream IR tells us, it seems we no longer can define where such lines are supposed to be. These bordering practices are the result of global processes, of the ‘transnationalization of third worlds’, of an exceptionalist mentality, and of the inability of states, notably of developing states, to effectively reproduce a traditional conception of sovereignty, one that divorces citizens and aliens in a dichotomous way. But they are also the result of the inabilities and unfulfilled promises of protective international discourses, such as those related to internally displaced and refugee communities. Rather than solutions, these conditions are appropriated as both mechanisms of re-identification and of contestation, of distancing and proximity with

other communities that share the forms of life and death that accompany those who inhabit abject sites. The rumours allow for a re-conceptualization of attachments to race, ethnicity, nationalist rhetoric, subalternity and ideas of otherness that disrupt and interrupt the aesthetics of politics as policing that seem to prevail in these sites. For reasons that should be evident by now, these re-conceptualizations are always partial, uncertain, conflictive and, more often than not, short-lived. But this should not diminish the important role they play in reconfiguring the politics of and for these communities and how they necessarily relate and influence governmental and international politics to that extent. After all, traditional authority structures have to constantly and increasingly negotiate with these groups and through mechanisms that attempt to make sense of these different and diachronic forms of social communication.

Whether the subaltern can speak depends also on the ability of others to listen and to recognize, in their difference, the potential for a legitimate and fruitful dialogue. Giving credence to rumours as an important conveyor of political ideas is, perhaps, an incipient and initial step towards a refusal of the 'accident' as an abnormal and pathological occurrence. 'My terror that whether our words can go on meaning what they do depends upon whether people find it worthwhile to continue to understand me, or that finding a better bargain elsewhere, they might decide that they are not of our world' (Das 2007, p.203-204). The attempt at hearing border languages is, perhaps, an initial strategy, one that hopes that current disciplinary structures will strike a different bargain.

Chapter 4

Borders of Solidarity: life in displacement in the Amazon Tri-Border region

*There is a lot of pain and misunderstanding;
the border remains an infected wound.
Perhaps the utopian spirit of the
border project lies in its impossibility.*
Guillermo Gomez-Pena, 'Warrior from Gringostoika'

In 2004, the representatives of Latin American countries gathered in Mexico City to devise a Multilateral Plan of Action in order to foster an improvement on refugee protection mechanisms in the region. Among its many proposals, the Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action (MPA) advanced the idea of 'borders of solidarity'. Though not conveying the idea of an 'open borders' project, the proposal nonetheless calls attention to new forms of thinking about border zones and border lives and how different actors might dialogue to improve the reception, assistance and protection of displaced groups in a region marked by deep social inequalities and political violence. This chapter is an attempt to make sense of these allegedly new means of governing borders, and attempts to elucidate multiple perspectives and mechanisms of dealing with life in displacement in border contexts.

I follow the narratives stemming from national and international officials, NGO and assistance workers, and displaced families' associations in this particular context in order to unveil how each discourse deals with the (dis)connections between borders, displacement and protection. I argue that perceptions of the role of borders, as both bridges and barriers, and as spaces of life, vary according to how each group appropriates

and interferes in the political dialogue. Some focus on the management of mobility; others on the improvement of life conditions for marginal groups; still others try to interrupt the political processes that make such marginalization possible in the first place. I propose three varying understandings of solidarity that speak to each of these perspectives: managerial, communitarian and autonomous solidarity. Thus, I aim at contributing to a more critical analysis of what borders of solidarity might actually promote and how they can impact on the daily lives of those who inhabit such sites.

The chapter is organized in five sections. The first section provides a brief description of the Tri-Border area, highlighting the paradoxes of distance and proximity as well as the overall political context in which groups' narratives emerge. The second section discusses the overall policies presented in the MPA and analyses some of the consequences involved in it. The third section discusses the views of assistance workers, in particular, those associated with the Catholic missionaries in the region. The fourth examines the narratives stemming from displaced groups' associations, focusing on the difficulties and strategies of intervention devised by them to advance their claims in a context of social and political abjection. The fifth and concluding section advances a classification of solidarity approaches in relation to borders, stressing the problems and also the positive aspects that might be learned from each set of discourses.

Representing the border landscape

The previous chapter already described, in general terms, the landscape of Tri-Border area between Peru, Brazil and Colombia. In this chapter, I will focus on the

mechanisms put in place to control movement in this particular borderscape and on the relevance of this region to the connection between displacement, border zones and practices of solidarity. The first thing to note is that transit and movement are free between the cities, as there is no border controlling post along the Avenue that connects them. Control of goods and people takes place only on the Brazilian side, some 50 km down the Amazon River, in what is called 'Base Anzol' (Hook's Base). The Hook serves as a customs, security and immigration processing checkpoint. There, a handful of Federal Police agents are responsible for checking the documents and cargo of all the incoming/outgoing boats sailing in Brazilian territory. Their main goal is to check passports and to look for drugs. In my conversations with local populations, many expressed a great deal of fear in relation to that checkpoint. They are often requested to open everything and many told me about cases of racial profiling, abuse and discrimination among travelers especially those of Colombian origin. As the Head of the Brazilian Federal Police in town told me, there is very little that passes unnoticed at the 'Hook'.

Secondly, the massive Amazon River crisscrossing the exuberant landscape and the supposedly free movement of peoples and merchandise along the avenues, streets and fluvial routes are at odds with the violence (at least one violent death per day is registered in town), poverty, lack of public services and a not-so-subtle military/police enforcement presence along its edges. In total, more than one hundred thousand people live in the region. They rely on the informal economy, exchanges of goods, and the few public service positions available in town (both at the local government and the military) to

survive. The idyllic landscape provides a postcard background for a politically convoluted context, marked by a precarious political economy, with no industry or reasonable public investment, lack of basic infrastructure and increasing pressure from guerrilla and paramilitary groups reliant on a transnational network of drug trafficking and on multiple forms of exploitation of social vulnerabilities. The Tri-Border area is an important hub in the international routes of drug trafficking schemes.



Picture 11
Border marker between Leticia and Tabatinga
along Avenida da Amizade (Friendship Avenue)
(Author's Personal archive, 2007)

The border has a dual impact on the city. It alters the cultural and social landscape; the city operates in bilingual mode and all three currencies (real, pesos and

soles) are accepted in most stores. The ‘cabloco’ face, a mixture of white and indigenous peoples, marks the typical image of its inhabitants. At the same time, federal and provincial authorities consider the region as a strategic crossroads for sovereign presence and control over human mobility.

This region, as well as that of Tabatinga, is important for learning about borders of solidarity for two main reasons. First, in the past years the Amazon border corridor has caught the attention of international organizations and state authorities in relation not only to the illegal activities that have taken place there⁴⁹, but also because of the influx of migrants to Brazil. The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) and the UNHCR, as stated in the previous chapter, estimate that around 20,000 Colombians are now residing in the Amazon region. Most of them are considered to be “of concern” for they have been displaced by the Colombian conflict. This number is five times the total number of refugees who have been recognized nationwide by Brazil so far (UNHCR 2007). Because of the difficult access and supposedly absence of state/guerrilla

⁴⁹ The Colombian government has put in place a program, sponsored and funded by the United States Government, to fight the guerrilla and paramilitaries and also to prevent growth and distribution of drugs in its countryside. The control over coca plantations has impacted some rural communities and augmented the violent displacement effect of the war, as reports show the products used have damaged the soil and water supplies. Also, toughening controls have expelled many of the coca planters to neighboring countries and some isolated incidents show the use of foreign territory in Brazil and Peru as transporting sites for the transnational scheme of drug distribution regionally and internationally. I heard from several different participants the claim that many of the violent deaths occurring in the Tri-Border area were a result of the fight over the controlling of drug distribution routes in the region. In that case, the assumption that the war has not yet reached the border collapses into a picture where the region has become of vital interest for financing the drug scheme that supports the conflict with arms and money. As a consequence, it also becomes a strategic standpoint in states’ policies to repress drug and arm trafficking schemes. For an analysis of the connection of the current Colombian ‘war on drugs’ and the ‘war on terrorism’, see Suarez 2008.

interaction, Tabatinga presents itself as one of the main entry corridors, given the relative intensity of traffic along its fluvial lines. Second, there are significant development inequalities between the countries and the image of Brazil as a land of opportunity and security for poor rural and indigenous peoples in the Peruvian and Colombian side. As one assistance worker stated,

The education system in Brazil is more welcoming and better structured than in Colombia. Schools are better in Tabatinga especially for the children. So there are issues in Brazilian development and social investment that attract the poor in Leticia. And there are also things in Leticia that attract the Brazilian in these borders. But certainly, there is an inequality in the flow of people; it is thicker in the Brazilian direction, of course because Brazil is more developed (Interview 2007).

Moreover, for those fleeing the generalized conditions of human rights violations in Colombia, Brazil presents a distant but real opportunity for escaping and for claiming asylum (an opportunity that presents its dangers and ambivalences as the rumours previously analyzed attest to). The current estimates are that Colombia now hosts more than three million internally displaced peoples, though the data presented by UNHCR and the Catholic Solidarity Network has been contested by government officials. Not surprisingly, the issue of human mobility has become a priority topic within regional diplomatic negotiations. The Coordinator of the Social Pastoral in Tabatinga, Father Gonzalo, recognizes that Tabatinga and Leticia, despite their calm atmosphere, are a time-bomb waiting to explode: 'by the time violence reaches Leticia, they will all enter Brazil and request asylum' (BBC 2008).

Sovereign appropriations of the border zone: The Mexico Declaration and the MPA

The main focus of the MPA is certainly the Colombian conflict, the largest humanitarian crisis in the subcontinent, and its impact on neighboring countries - Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela - especially in border zones. Mainly sponsored by Brazilian diplomats and UNHCR representatives, the final document was consensually signed and included active participation from civil society organizations. The process that led to the MPA involved three sub-regional meetings articulating state authorities, international organizations and also transnational and local networks, usually conducted by civil society types of arrangements. Whereas in all sub-regions the meetings involved a direct dialogue between these three groups, the meeting of the sub-group of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama and Peru had to be separated. Governments and non-governmental organizations met separately in part due to the Colombian Government's denial of many of the claims presented by civil society representatives. It was the only document which highlighted the need to balance the state-based concern over security, involving 'terrorism, organized crime, drug and arms trafficking and other types of transnational delinquency', with the humanitarian claims of protection for those in conditions of vulnerability (UNHCR 2004, paragraph 3).

The MPA's main conceptual innovation was to articulate the international protection of refugees in border areas with the principle of solidarity⁵⁰. The notion of 'borders of solidarity' advanced in that document is an attempt to coordinate institutional

⁵⁰ This is an unprecedented articulation considering the overall securitized, or alternatively economicist, approach granted to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in most multilateral agreements.

efforts of improving the humanitarian character of borders and procedures and of sharing the ‘burden’ of the refugee ‘problem’ in the continent. Initially, this new regional approach seems to convey the idea that there is a growing convergence among multiple discourses, notably from a varied range of actors, on the notion of solidarity. Accordingly, what is meant by “solidarity” and how it is ‘engaged’ in the context of borders is crucial.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, solidarity refers to “the fact or quality, on the part of communities, etc., of being perfectly united or at one in some respect, esp. in interests, sympathies, or aspirations”. In its origins, solidarity refers to being part of a whole. In this respect, solidarity has always been caught between the drive towards a particularistic definition of community, usually attached to the nation (the solid, territorially circumscribed space of the whole usually defined as a ‘we, the citizenry’), and the universalistic aspiration of attachments to ideas of humanity. This latter notion, as such, has not been a common feature of state-based discourses internationally, especially when it comes to the treatment of others. One can only be in solidarity with fellow citizens; solidarity can only take place inside.

The policies devised in the MPA involved, for example, the ‘support to implement a program with the objective of determining in a reliable manner the magnitude and the characteristics of the *refugee problem*, with a view to identifying protection and assistance needs as well as to propose the most appropriate durable solutions’, the ‘reinforcement of institutional mechanisms for protection and refugee status determination; the formulation of a Regional Strategic Plan to address the protection,

basic assistance and integration needs of all of the populations in need, using a *territorial and differentiated* approach' (UNHCR, MPA, ch.3, sc.2). This approach would involve fostering the social and economic development of border zones, particularly those isolated and impoverished, benefiting both refugees and local communities and taking into special consideration the situation of rural population, women, children and the elderly.

These 'solidarity' policies are based on two main objectives. The first is to account for those who need protection. This strategy measures and establishes a population of concern for whom needs would be assessed (develop means of calculating how many people in refugee-like situations would require protection and of strengthening the refugee status determination in member countries) and solutions would be promoted. Second, there is a presumed need to reterritorialize mobile subjects and to intervene in the lived 'spaces' of the border (integration and connection between uprooted and hosting communities) in order to articulate the relationships between local, national and international levels. For integration to succeed, the MPA argues that public policies of humanitarian protection should come alongside with strategies of development promotion. Effective inclusion depends on transforming the figure of the displaced into a component of local progress. It thus combines an effort at legal protection, in the form of granting and opening up access to the refugee determination process for those considered to be entitled to it, and social intervention.

When analyzing the strategies of South East Asian states in a global political economy, Aihwa Ong introduces to the concept of 'graduated sovereignty':

Graduated Sovereignty refers to the effects of a flexible management of sovereignty, as governments adjust political space to the dictates of global capital [...] Graduated sovereignty is an effect of states moving from being administrators of a watertight national entity to regulators of diverse spaces and populations that link global markets (2006, p.78).

The MPA entails, I argue, a form of graduated sovereignty in terms of the management of mobility that is enabled precisely by a framing of the displaced as a population and developmental problem. Once we know how many ‘potential’ refugees and irregular migrants are out there, once we can count the uncountable (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007), we will be able to devise the appropriate disciplinary mechanisms to resolve the problem. Institutions can be empowered for protecting, integrating only those who are entitled to be parts of the whole, and separating them from those who are not. In addition, the MPA devises a transnational system of governance (involving states and international organizations) over mobility, an area that has been remarkably protected from external interference and democratic control (Walters, 2004). Rendering the mechanisms of governmentality more flexible is deemed necessary to respond to the emergence of social groups that potentially disrupt claims to authority and territorial/national unity required for the exercise of solidarity.

We must not assume here that the state, and its sovereign prerogatives, constitutes a homogeneous actor. Flexibility in the management of populations provided by the construction of ‘borders of solidarity’ requires the articulation of multiple levels of governance. Federal, provincial and local authorities are all called upon, within their respective jurisdictions, to implement and foster policies that permit the measurement of the magnitude of the ‘displacement’ problem and at the same time allow for the inclusion

and reception of those recognized as such. Federal Governments have the prerogative of status determination and local/provincial sectors are activated during the integration phase of the process. One of the subliminal problems with this approach is, first, that it fails to recognize the border as a living space and, second, that it hides the contradictory nature of refugee legislations in most Latin American countries. Once recognized as a refugee, individuals are faced with important restrictions over their mobility, one of which is the requirement of not returning to their countries of origin (and thus preventing in important respects the current situation of many who live in border areas and those who have transnational ties) and the prohibition of engaging in any political activity. It leaves unanswered the question as to what should be done with those who are deemed ‘worthy’ of solidarity but that nevertheless inhabit spaces where such solidarity can only partially be uphold.

In the concluding note on borders of solidarity, the MPA document states ‘**solidarity** can only be sustained through **active cooperation** between the **State, civil society and UNHCR**, with the financial contribution of the international community, within the framework of responsibility-sharing’ (UNCHR, MPA 2004, ch.3, sc.2; emphasis added). The claim of sharing the ‘burden’ of mobile populations is a common one in forced migration discussions. The goal seems to be to activate a network of action that would permit several actors to share the costs and responsibilities associated with the management of vulnerable populations in their cultural, social and economic demands. This network involves multiple levels of state-based governance and also civil society organizations. Many scholars have highlighted the ways in which civil society does not

account for the multiplicity of political subjectivities in contemporary times nor represent the most legitimate voice in terms of the concerns and demands of those in conditions of social marginality (Doty 2006, Soguk 2008). One might argue that the distinction between state and civil society, and moreover the emphasis on “civil” forms of social organization, has foreshadowed other forms of struggle that happen in the interstitial spaces and by groups that do not necessarily fit into the categories of traditional citizenship (Moulin & Nyers, 2007). Santos aptly points to the fact that in most of the world, and notoriously in the developing world, state and civil society have been intertwined as mechanisms of social regulation, and thus have not accounted for much of the politics and struggles of social groups.

If in some core countries it could be reasonably argued that civil society had created its state, in the periphery and even in the semi-periphery, the opposite had actually occurred. In the latter case civil society was thus an even more artificial entity than the state itself. The multiple social processes that were left out of civil society, so narrowly defined were the gauge of the weaknesses of the peripheral and semi-peripheral states (Santos 2002, p.69).

The same point is advanced by Chatterjee (2004) when he identifies a split between an elite organized domain, that of state and civil society, and an unorganized subaltern domain, which he calls political society. ‘Civil society restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens represents the high ground of modernity’ (p.41). As he points out, political society and subaltern communities negotiate within the high domains of state law and bureaucracy. They also move beyond it by asserting their own conflict resolution mechanisms, by providing alternative regulations of social life and

membership and very often by reacting and refusing to subsume themselves to the categories and interpretations of normality and legality given in a top-down perspective⁵¹.

Taking these considerations on the relationship between civil society and state in account, it is not surprising to see the overlapping concerns between these two actors in the final accords of Mexico. It is important to emphasize that this is not a criticism of the intentions or the hard work done by groups and persons who have devoted their lives to helping others. The argument here is one focusing on the underlying conditions of possibility of such resolutions in relation to the treatment of difference that lies at the heart of border experiences. They are, henceforth, a criticism of the systemic conditions that make dis-‘place’-ment (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007) possible in the first place and the consequences of engaging with multiple practices of solidarity from the perspective of abject populations (Nyers 2003). As such, despite recognizing the originality and creative effort underneath these initiatives, we have also to question the

⁵¹ Chatterjee and Santos mainly refer to relations within states. As such, one might argue that perhaps the concept of global civil society is more appropriate for it allows the incorporation of actors who work on a transnational and international basis, as is the case of UNHCR and the Solidarity Network (the Catholic organizations on the South-American Continent – their relationship extends to several NGOs and civil society types of organizations in countries that both send/receive asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs). Nevertheless, it is possible to question whether the idea of a ‘global civil’ society can in fact tackle the political participation of groups who only tenuously and ambiguously relate in any meaningful way to the concept of citizenship. Therefore, for many displaced communities, the ‘civil’ component of these types of arrangements, whether global or local, is highly constraining and, to a certain point, exclusionary. An example is provided precisely by the MPA, since states and transnational civil society actors participated in the framing of the agreement but not a single refugee, asylum seeker or IDP was present in the Mexico meeting. This point was brought to the attention of participants by a Mexican-based NGO. Peter Nyers and I have advanced some criticisms of the idea of global civil society and proposed the idea of a ‘global political society’ as a possible contribution to incorporate the political participation of these groups within the framework of transnational relations. For a more detailed discussion, see Moulin & Nyers 2007.

assumptions and mechanisms that are put in motion and the consequences, and costs, of improving the living conditions of displaced groups. We need to do so not only from the standpoint of sovereign actors but also from the perspective of those who live in these circumstances.

Humanism at the border: a social assistance approach

The relationship between Catholic missionaries and the Amazon border region dates back to the earlier colonial period. The religious component and the presence of the Catholic Church are important aspects of the social fabric in the border. Given the relative inadequacy of public services and difficulties involved in accessing social assistance, the Church has provided a fundamental network of support for those living in conditions of poverty and destitution.

The historical work of faith conversion has been supplanted by a ‘moral rescuing’ approach, aimed at fostering strategies of local organization and activism. A Tri-Border team of missionaries, church followers and social workers was instituted⁵² and assists those involved in loosely defined experiences of human mobility. The work consists in providing orientation for those who have migrated to the region, in terms of, for example, assisting them to present claims to state authorities at different levels. It serves as an assistance centre to which they can resort in cases of need or emergency, and enabling

⁵² Though missionary work in the region dates back to colonial times (XVIII century), the assistance specific to displaced groups only increased in the last ten years. Since 2006, UNHCR and IOM have also provided some form of funding for their work and have also sponsored studies on the situation of displacement in the region. See the 2007 IOM’s publication on Human Trafficking in the Tri-Border area.

programs of professional training and self-sufficiency in conditions of displacement, such as establishing collaborative projects with educational institutions and governmental agencies. The members of the migration ‘arm’ of the Human Mobility Team (HMT) are very few and most of them are not from the region. Despite providing institutional assistance, the affiliation to the place is always transitory, except in very rare cases. Members of the HMT tend to stay in the region for a couple years and then are sent by their respective dioceses to other missions. The more permanent members of the HMT are therefore mainly composed of migrants themselves.

The missionaries live under very poor and strenuous circumstances. Their motto of ‘living for and with the poor’ translates into a reality in which they are housed in one of the most vulnerable communities, the Union Neighborhood, and funding is restricted to basic food and housing provisions. Given these restrictions, the help provided for those deemed to be in ‘need’ is mostly of an advisory nature. The situation has changed slightly with respect to those requesting asylum in Brazil. UNHCR has now established a partnership with the HMT for the reception and assistance of asylum seekers in the region. UNHCR also pays for the expensive transportation fares of asylum seekers and refugees should they be willing to move inside Brazilian territory and after their application has been filed. Up to mid-2007, only 82 people have requested asylum in Tabatinga and have received the ‘refugee’ based assistance of the Social Pastoral. The majority of the work is then conducted with border dwellers and the displaced families who have not resorted or intend to resort to refugee status’ claims. The situation in Leticia is even worse for there is no funding available except for the ones provided by the

programs put in place by state authorities to help those who can be classified under The Displaced Persons Act. As one of the assistance workers stated:

Refuge is not an alternative to all of the displaced, except in the cases of those who have not adapted to living conditions here or whose life is really in danger. To leave, once again, can be even more traumatic, and honestly we have advised them about that. Very few displaced who come here know about the option of asylum, and even if they based on an illusory evaluation of Brazil, thinking that it is a more developed knew I am not sure they would opt for it: their decision to claim asylum would be country, with more opportunities. Life in Brazil is hard even for Brazilians, the language is a barrier and rural, poor peasants will suffer the most (Interview Notes, 2007).

In that sense, the approach adopted by the HMT is a more sensitive one because it recognizes the heterogeneity of displacement and mobility experiences in the everyday lives of those they assist. They also have a clear understanding of the limitations of the governmentality structure in terms of bringing to light and resolving the multiplicity of demands and sometimes incongruent and incoherent requests made by these groups. They see the constraints on both sides of the equation: as states and international organizations try to regiment and to compartmentalize mobility experiences in terms of clear-cut categorizations and as displaced peoples, refugees, and other marginalized groups make claims to inclusion and help without necessarily taking the actions (or being willing to take the actions) needed to promote change in their lives. One of the missionaries vented his frustrations with the slow pace of people and change, stating that ‘one needs a lot of spirituality to work here as the sense of adventure vanishes off too quickly’. The sense of time is very different in the Amazon and despite the desperate condition of many of the displaced, they are still very much resilient to change (especially because they associate change with trauma). Similarly, the social/spiritual workers feel discontent and frustrated

with their moral and emotional attachment and the absence of short and mid-term results or significant impact in the life conditions on the border. One of them told me this is the fate of their 'moral and humanitarian task', a mixed feeling of responsibility towards destitute others and of disappointment with the limited practical results achieved. The frustration comes, for example, as a consequence of the incapacity of untying the knots of structural social inequalities pervasive in the border and in the lives of border dwellers. Many of them choose invisibility and being undocumented as a strategy of survival and the state infrastructure only reiterates the fears and suspicions of these groups.

Nevertheless, the philosophy of the HMT work is one centered on ideas of vulnerability related to displacement experiences. They aim to provide a moral and religious oriented program, with no discrimination based on faith practices, which would help individuals and families to overcome the traumas and violence that have led them to become border dwellers. They seek to speak for the displaced/migrant communities concerns with local authorities and other interlocutors, while at the same time attempting to elucidate and bring to light their realities and demands. The idea of solidarity has always been an intrinsic part of the Catholic network of social assistance; it has always informed the strategies of intervention between assistants and assisted in the context of human mobility as portrayed by these organizations. Claims to solidarity are also an intrinsic part of Catholic social theory, traced back to an original brotherhood conception under which we are all God's children. More than that, it is a solidarity approach based on a particular conception that, on the one hand, recognizes the distinctions and differences in the ways dis-'place'-ment is experienced, and, on the other, assumes that these same

experiences are lived by abject, marginal, vulnerable and victimized subjects. We are all the same under God's eyes, but that equality cannot be fully realized in the here and now. All we can try to do is to alleviate and be responsible for the other, especially for those others who are in need. In important respects, this humanist approach to borders assumes a hierarchical standing not of individuality, but of suffering and agency. Because of their trauma and condition of invisibility, the displaced should be endowed with the means for making legitimate claims in relation to their community and also to official authorities. Even if their displacement and mobility experiences are different and heterogeneous, their suffering and vulnerability is the same; they are victims of a system that excludes and the space of exclusion they inhabit is a delimited and socially definable one. From that particular position, the goal of humanitarian work is to make the displaced realize, through a mediated form of subjectivity (Rajaram 2002), that they have rights. In important respects, the HMT presents a contextualized approach to solidarity on border zones, that takes the lived experiences of mobile subjects as its starting point, but that also subsumes them under the rubric of victimization.

Contesting borders: displaced groups' interventions

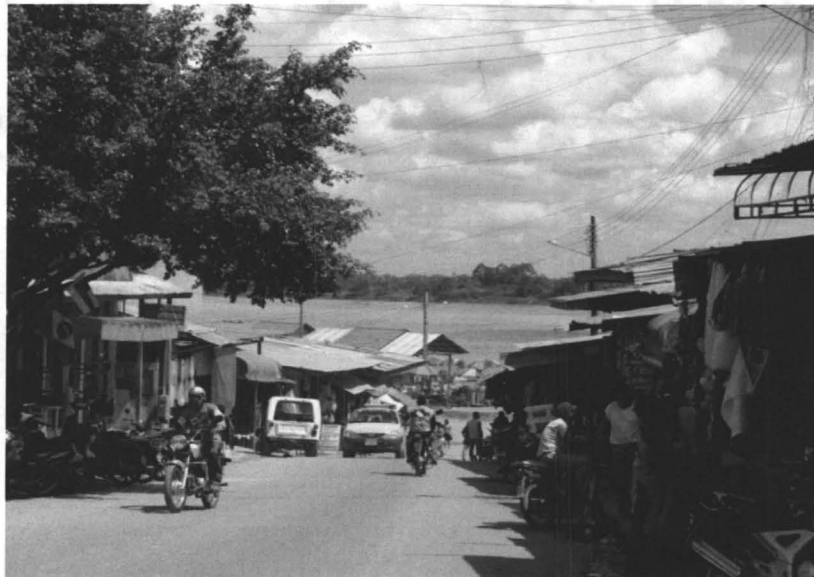
The focus of state based organizations is in the ordering of the displacement 'problem'. They aim at compartmentalizing experiences of mobility under defined rubrics, as refugees, asylum seekers, irregular migrants, temporary workers or permanent residents. These labels allow for public policies to be devised and for 'durable solutions' to be implemented in terms of integration, resettlement or expulsion. Catholic assistance

networks, in contrast, portray mobility experiences as contextualized and distinctive experiences. They emphasize the position of vulnerability and the need for a charitable, humanist approach to difference whose common denominator places them all equally under the rubric of ‘the poor’ and needy. Despite their important, sensitive and vocational efforts, the results have so far been limited and the challenges faced keep mounting. Frustration and concerns over the sustainability of their strategies are amongst the many issues raised by those who devoted their lives to helping others. Both strategies resort to claims that the border should be seen as a zone for exercising and performing acts of solidarity towards those considered to be different. But what sorts of self-organized foundations have been put in place by the displaced groups in order to overcome their problems and survive in conditions of political marginality?



Picture 12
Street Vendors in the harbor area – Leticia
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

Displaced groups know very well the double nature of their condition of social marginalization. On the one hand, it derives from the poverty and destitution associated with uprooting processes, where they have lost their businesses, property, means of livelihood and where the cohesion of families is disrupted. These are the consequences of expulsion. On the other hand, it derives from their exclusion from both the national and the international realm, their being left in a permanent state of in-betweenness, as non-citizens and as non-foreigners. The international framework, even the one devised by the Mexico Declaration, does not create mechanisms to deal with internally displaced peoples, unless they become a recognizable 'other' (as a refugee or asylum claimant, for example). Hence, their negatively defined existence, in relation to conventional forms of belonging, becomes more acute because they also inhabit a liminal time-space zone, that of the border.



Picture 13

Street Vendors in the harbor area – Tabatinga.
Many of the migrants and displaced make their living on these sites.
(Author's Personal Archive, 2007)

In this context, and mostly in response to their own liminality, displaced families have tried to put forth associations that would be able to speak for them and to press official authorities. In Leticia, two associations are now fully run by displaced peoples. Association 1 (A1)⁵³ has been in place since 2004. Forty-five families are actively participating in it, and the appointed directors say their main goal is to search for resources, especially in the areas of education, health and housing. They meet regularly and the convocations are usually on a mouth-to-mouth basis or through the local radio station. Every member contributes with two thousand pesos (around three US dollars) whenever they can. One of the members stated how much had changed in terms of the discrimination and xenophobia faced by the displaced in the border zone:

When I arrived here, discrimination was really bad; it was unusual; now things are a little better. People think we are all displaced and that all the displaced live from government money, but this is not true. If we do not work, we do not eat (Interview 2007).

A case worth mentioning is that of C. Despite living in the border for almost seven years, she entered the association a few months before my arrival in the border. One of the reasons was that it took years for Colombian authorities to include her and her family in the protection network. She remained displaced in the border for six years without ever being recognized as such. Her husband was recognized but once she decided not to live with him, the government did not extend the protection to her and her children. For the past couple years, she says, they have received help, but very little. 'I came to Leticia because my family was here, they supported me. I defend myself washing clothes, I am

⁵³ All names of people and institutions have been changed or omitted to preserve anonymity.

an ‘independent saleswoman’ - I sell clothes, cosmetics, and so on. But it is not enough, I have small but recurring debts. Debt is a problem for all the displaced, life is very expensive here, we stay here just because it is very peaceful here. That’s the reason I remain here’ (Interview 2007).

The displaced people that arrive at the border are supposedly informed of the presence of displaced peoples’ associations through Social Action - a governmental agency with a mandate to care and manage the displaced families. They promote meetings and workshops. But they have also undermined the associations’ work by choosing non-affiliated displaced families to speak for the displaced community and this has disrupted grassroots attempts of creating an ‘interrupting’ voice in the political debate in the area.

Here in the association we have people capable of speaking for and understanding the problems of the displaced community, but the Directors of Social Action have nominated outsiders that have nothing to do with the elected leaders of the association to speak on our behalf. We have sent communiqués to other entities denouncing this behavior and we will soon make this known to the central government. We have also scheduled a meeting to gather all the movement leaders to debate this situation. We want her replacement, **by someone who can work in accordance with the displaced** (Interview 2007; my emphasis).

In her statement, C. makes two important claims. The first one states the ability and capacity of the self-organized associations to speak on behalf of themselves. She refuses the mediated subjectivity that has been pervasive in border engagements. She responds to the disrupting policies of governmental authorities that aim at destabilizing their initiatives by disturbing their leadership role. Secondly, she reverses the traditional assertion that places them as the ones who should be *in accordance* with governmentality

strategies and victimization approaches. It is the official authorities that should work in accordance with the displaced; the displaced are *entitled* to demand from the appropriate agencies access to benefits and it is their *duty* to dialogue with them. The form of solidarity enabled by the experience of self-organization among the displaced enables an empowering position that reverses the systemic logic usually attached to the governing of mobility. It does so in very conflictive, rudimentary, and incoherent ways.

The Associations face many constraints and problems, precisely because they have to work through their differences without erasing them, if they want to respond to the structural challenges presented by their condition (and especially in relation to the increasing pressure of multilevel governance and networked action that has made its incursions in the region). One of these problems is exemplified by the breakdown of the Association into two groups. One remained the Association 1 (A1) and a new association was formed (A2). J., the Director of A2, explains the conflict in the following terms:

We were faced with many inconveniences. Inside the board, we witnessed many irregularities and we wanted things to be made in a different way. As a leader one must always be with the group. Because of these clashes, I decided to quit the Association and others did the same. So we were a numerous group and we decided to create a new Association within a strategy of more transparency and consistency. Right now, there is a lot of collaboration between the two associations, especially with the changes in direction that took place. The concerns of the displaced are the same, mainly related to economic concerns over survival and the discrimination we face here. Many said that the displaced should be taken away from here. They even requested the Army Captain to arrange a flight to take us all out. So we scheduled a meeting and we showed the locals that we are also Colombia, that we could have moved anywhere but **we chose to be here** because we do not belong to this war, we are not the protagonists of the conflict, we are neither Left nor Right (Interview 2007; my emphasis).

P., the Treasurer of A2, also highlights the conflictive context that led to the separation, recognizing that many of the problems regarding the construction of a solidarity group remain:

The dismantling in two associations was caused by conflict. There was a disclosure of certain negotiations that were taking place on the leadership's back. Those against these negotiations decided to establish another organization. But now we have new leaders and things have changed, but still the problem remains, of those taking advantage of these processes and ignoring both displaced associations (Interview 2007).

When looking at the narratives of mobile groups, one can see the emergence of alternative forms of solidarity that seem to contest the particular/universal divide pervasive in civil society arrangements and state-based discourses. It is an approach that fosters a sense of empathy of interests while retaining a central role for agency and, thus for conflict, precisely because they experience and relate to similar contexts in different ways. But that does not necessarily mean that because of that they forfeit their right to present claims, not as citizens, not as refugees, not as foreigners, but as displaced. As Juan stated, 'we are also Colombia', we are here, we have been there and we intend to stay. This is not to say that their efforts of solidarity organization are not presented with dangerous choices. At many times, they resort to the same language and discourses that have created the conditions of possibility for their existence. They use a rights based discourse, even if disconnected from the traditional sites of citizenship; they fall back on appeals to a nation, to sovereignty prerogatives and to international organizations in an effort to translate their experiences to those who have never experienced or faced the disruptions of forced displacement. But, at the same time, they emphasize that, despite not choosing to be displaced, they chose where to go for reasons related to the lack of

imminent conflict, proximity with neighboring countries, family and ethnic ties and so on. They chose to remain displaced, to not ask for asylum and thus to permanently yet precariously live as a border.

Varying Solidarity Approaches to Borders

In important respects, to rethink the border as a zone of solidarity requires a questioning and reframing of how to deal with difference and mobility. In this concluding section, I argue for the need to clarify the potential meanings of solidarity in order to avoid the reproduction of exclusionary discourses. What I have tried to show is that solidarity has, as of necessity, to be differentiated. Contrary to what many presume, solidarity does not necessarily lead to political ideals of emancipation and the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, nor does it necessarily question the dichotomy between inside/outside as spaces of order/chaos. I propose three different types of solidarity with very different impacts over what it means to rethink borders in their relation to claims over mobility. The first one, *managerial solidarity*, is expressed precisely by the MPA attempts of improving refugee protection in the continent. It is a meaning connected to strategies of control and discipline, that can improve the living conditions of refugees and locals who live in refugee-like situations, but on the terms that they be defined as ‘refugees’ and therefore in opposition to the ‘citizen’. The first action proposed by the MPA is to ‘carry out an assessment of the number of persons who could benefit from this Plan of Action’ and ‘present a study on the impact of the presence of asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons in need of international protection in the geographical areas

covered by the program'. This is not to say that the MPA does not incorporate other groups who might be affected by the 'refugee situation'. On the contrary, for example, in what regards public policies towards border areas there was a specific concern with making sure local populations would also be incorporated in the programs and would benefit from them, 'since these populations are bearing the brunt of solidarity, despite being populations as needy and poor as the refugees themselves' (UNHCR, MPA, 2004, ch.3, section 2). What is interesting to note is how the managerial discourse equates solidarity with strategies of development and with the obliteration of the demands of these groups, even while recognizing the collapse of both the mechanisms of international protection (which the Plan proposes to resolve) and of 'citizenship' as the conveyor of rights and access to justice and equality.

The second one is what I call *communitarian solidarity* and is framed around ideas of unity or the need that for individuals to be in solidarity with one another 'they need to develop a sense of self and become a community of fate' (Brown 2001, p.120). This sense of belonging can either have a localized or a more universalistic basis, either referring to small groups who share a particular identity or social position or referring to broader social contexts such as those based on claims over humanity. I argue that the perceptions presented by Catholic NGOs and some local level organizations tend to rely on such definitions. They use a common origin, a claim to that which makes us the same and that ultimately justifies an erasure of alterity. In this way, and even though there is a legitimate concern with the well-being of the other, there is necessarily the creating of an 'other' that is in the process victimized, impoverished, turned into an object of charity

and in need of moral and social rescuing.

Finally, a third possible meaning is what I frame as *autonomous*⁵⁴ *solidarity* in which individuals and groups are able to share and advocate for common goals without having to resort to a common denominator beyond difference. Their solidarity and coming together are rooted in the multiple ways in which differences are played out and performed in the global/local realities they live in but without the need for a complete convergence of ideals and identities. It is a coming together that recognizes friction (Tsing 2005) as a productive moment and as a source of change and opening of possibilities. It is a form of resistance that sees in that which separates us, the accident, the outside, the unexpected, the potential for reacting to necessary hierarchies and exclusions. Nevertheless, these are also incomplete and uncertain experiences of solidarity that have faced important practical limits in their conceptualization and implementation. One of them, as previously highlighted, is the drive towards unity based not on claims to the ‘inter’ as in-between (as a cosmopolitan solidarity would entail) but on the national (even when the national is no longer there as is the case of displaced and refugees).

In a way, all forms of solidarity present their openings and dangers. Even the ones who tend to respect, tolerate and embrace a togetherness-in-difference, as the experience

⁵⁴ The term ‘autonomous’ refers to the ability of certain groups to work together on a common issue while retaining the right to differ or to disagree. It has been used in research on migration in recent years to highlight how migrants can decenter ‘the state as the regulator of human movements across international boundaries’ (Rodriguez 1996, p.3) and can establish their own mechanisms of self-organization based on collective priorities. I would like to thank William Coleman for introducing me to the concept. See, Rodriguez 1996.

of the Displaced Associations in the Tri-border zone exemplifies, are filled with uncertainties, mixed results, conflict, frustrations and sometimes reproduction of the constitutive elements that allowed for their displacement, such as those entwined in claims to nationhood and to citizenship-related rights. To live in-between, to live as a border presents enormous challenges. There have been attempts to circumscribe and to some extent re-inscribe these lives in the 'normal' ordering of things. Even though well intentioned, as I do believe is the case of both governmental and civil society initiatives, one should be clear about the assumptions and meanings involved in their claims. I have attempted to bring to light what is involved in the representations of border zones and of conceptualizing borders as sites of solidarity from these two particular and privileged speaking positions. I have also attempted to contribute to a discussion of the narratives that have usually been disregarded, namely of those who live outside, or better said in-between, the national and the international, the citizen and the foreigner. The experiences of mobility and political organization of the displaced communities at the Tri-Border attest to the possibilities, and limitations, of alternative conceptualizations of political subjectivity and of perhaps less homogenizing strategies of building solidarity approximations. They are certainly embryonic, inceptive collaborations, but they speak, I believe, in important respects, to the anxieties ushered by the failing design of citizenship (Weber, 2008), notably in the context of a developing world where the thrust of citizenship was never complete in the first place.

Conclusion

The Gift of Protection and the Dilemmas of living *as a border*: some concluding remarks on border politics from below

This dissertation focused on the (dis)connections between the performance of border politics and the constitution of the ‘inter’ of international encounters. One of my central goals was precisely to question the natural, taken-for-granted approach, prevailing in mainstream accounts of IR, about what and how this ‘inter’ condition is constructed within contexts of bordering practices. I considered the narratives of mobile groups and the actors who play a central part in the unfolding of border politics in order to unveil different narratives about what the border entails within the Brazilian context and within the realities of South-South migration. Most of these narratives stress the fact that, for one, borders have become ubiquitous and mobile themselves (Balibar 2002). Therefore, borders have become increasingly connected to the bodies and modes of presence of those individuals and groups who are subjected to the mechanisms of international mobility management. Second, borders are, more than ever, an important site of social struggles and consequently of politics. Contrary to the international mobility discourse portrayal of the ‘inter’ as a rite of passage from fear to protection, from hope to happiness, from alienage to citizenship, mobile groups articulate such conditions of living *as a border* as a permanent battle for recognition and rights. In important respects, to politicize the border encounter is to take seriously the claim of mobile groups that their fight for both freedom and protection should not be considered within the framework of an either/or choice, but as two inextricably related aspects of the construction of the

‘inter’ as a site of living. These claims have been leveled within local, national, international and transnational spheres, engaging a multiplicity of actors and also dimensions of experience (material and ideological). These claims also unsettle the conventional expectations of what it means to be an inhabitant of the ‘inter’ (a refugee, an undocumented migrant, an IDP, an asylum seeker, among other possible terms) and the relationships that stem from such labeling in relation to the negotiations with overlapping, and sometimes conflictive, sources of sovereign authority.

Unveiling what border politics from below might engender requires a certain amount of creativity and certainly a bending of rules about what have traditionally been considered as legitimate forms of representation and participation. Border politics from below is necessarily about the reframing of political voice and criteria of membership to community. Community should be defined not only in terms of nationally delimited forms of identity, but also in terms of multiple spheres of life. These might involve the slum, the neighbourhood, the local square, the city market, the border zone and so on and forms of collective memory (usually related to experiences of trauma, ostracism, and also of hope that someday these individuals will regain a certain amount of control over their lives). Border politics requires a questioning of the limits between legalities and illegalities. These groups have to negotiate their presence with multiple forms of authority and have, more often than not, to resort to ‘illegitimate’ means in order to cope with the illegibility of both state and non-statist forms of power. Border politics is therefore about the coming-into-being of ‘global political society’, or put in other terms, about the processes of subject formation that enact border dwellers as *political* actors. Peter Nyers

and I (2007) have suggested, drawing inspiration from Partha Chatterjee's discussion on the politics of the governed (2004), the need for reclaiming the political in discussions about forms of resistance and protest on the part of mobile subjects. The concept of global political society was proposed as a way of incorporating the demands and claims of subaltern groups, especially in terms of how they reframe their modes of presence within international politics. As such, the key point of global political society was to move away from a portrayal that treats them as a population (a group of individuals to be counted, managed and controlled) to one through which their existence acquires 'the moral attributes of a community' (Chatterjee 2004, p.57; Moulin and Nyers 2007, p.362).

One of the central contributions of global political society, and of border politics, is to question the normative content – and the choices that stem from it - that are routinely denied or erased in discussions about the treatment granted to border dwellers. More than that, these normative choices result usually in the obliteration of the political from analysis on borders and on those who are subjected to the border encounter in their everyday lives. This is one of the important contributions derived from the analysis presented in this dissertation. Engaging with the narratives of mobile groups and the logics of border encounters should necessarily be premised on the assumption that theirs is always a political stance or a process of reclaiming a say in political negotiations. In this conclusion, I emphasize the connections between these normative choices, which result from the varying discourses about the status of the 'inter', and claims of gratitude and reciprocity. One of the consequences of the international discourse on mobility is to present the granting of protection as a 'gift'. The sovereign authorities (and accordingly

hosting communities, international officials, municipal authorities and so on) expect that the recognition of mobile forms of presence, usually attached to the concession of a ‘legal’ and authorized permanence status, is in its essence a benevolent, gratuitous action. This recognition is an act of inclusion, even if tenuously, within the community and of minimizing, even if partially, the needs and suffering of not-so-distant and usually innocent others. The expected response on the part of those affected by these benevolent actions is that they should be grateful and that they should somehow reciprocate the gift. But what is missing in these discussions on protection and gratitude, in the normalization of the governmentality of difference embedded in these acts of benevolent inclusion, is the fact that ‘all forms of reciprocity in political life share one key feature: they deny, in effect, that a relation of power exists’ (Van Wees 1998, p.47). By problematizing the logic of generosity imbued in discourses of protection and regularization, and also in attempts at solidarity claims, I underline the fact that any behavioural expectation depends on contextualizing and unveiling the political dynamics and the situated perspective of what the encounter with the border entails.

If, from an IR perspective, the moral exchange of border politics should lead to some form of reciprocity and gratitude, these forms of ‘generosity’ are always embedded in mechanisms of exploitation and abjection from the standpoint of border subjects. Therefore, they demand on their part the enactment of forms of resistance. Border subjects also attempt to distance themselves from discourses that portray them as either victims or criminals, and therefore deny that theirs is an innocent form of participation or a romanticized image of suffering. In the following pages, I revisit the case of resettled

refugees in Brazil – briefly mentioned in Chapter Three - to derive some conclusions about how the logic of gratitude has its roots in the international discourse of mobility. In this respect, it is consequential to many of the problems highlighted in the everyday encounters of displaced groups in the contexts analyzed. I revisit some of the theoretical claims presented and how they can indicate further paths of investigation and dialogue within the academic community and, perhaps more importantly, between the different actors involved in the performance of human mobility in the Brazilian context. As such, I conclude with a discussion on the normative underpinnings of the ways in which IR deals with the ‘inter’ condition. Additionally, I consider how an emphasis on border politics from below might problematize the nexus between the international and the political and the nexus between freedom and protection, two themes that are central to IR both as a discipline and as a way of making sense of the world.

Border lives, resistance and the gift of protection

*Criminals! No one will tell me what I have or not to do. I know what I want and I am incisive. If they do not like what I say in the open, or whether they do not like to see that I do not bend over them, it is because you are playing with my life and with the life of my friends. It is because for you humanitarian work is another perverse war game. If as a refugee I have rights, tell me what they are. If I don't have any, also tell me. Be sincere at least once and tell me whether you are responsible or not for my situation as a refugee. If not, I can keep going my own way by myself, searching for another country that will host me, since I cannot return to my free Palestine.*⁵⁵

⁵⁵ All quotes have been translated by the author from the original in Portuguese from the blog of Refugees for Dignity (www.acampadosnoacnur.blogspot.com) and the Independent Front for the Autonomy of Refugees

These are the words of protest of Hamdam Mahmoud Abu-Sitta, a 65 year-old, Palestinian refugee, resettled in Brazil in September 2007. Hamdam and other Palestinian refugees began their protest outside the UNCHR/Brazil office in Brasília in May 2008. The protest started with a group of nine Palestinian refugees and increased to almost twenty, including families, elders and children. Living in mattresses with blankets over their heads, the refugees camped in front of a big house that now holds the UNHCR Brazilian office, with a swimming pool and barbecue area, in one of the most expensive neighbourhoods of Brazil's Federal Capital.⁵⁶ UNHCR moved its office in 2006 to the house. Its previous headquarters were in a building which hosts most UN offices. I remember when I went there in 2004, a few months after UNHCR resumed its work directly in Brazil. It is a tall, fancy mirrored building, with high-end security gadgets. 'Documents, please', the guard requested. I gave him my identification, my picture was taken for the record, my signature recorded in a notebook. I remember thinking how on earth any of the asylum claimants I knew would be able to cross that border, that security line that separated them from their 'protector', except under some sort of invitation. Looking back, I came to believe it would be easier to cross the border in Corumbá or Tabatinga.

A group of resettled refugees, invited to come to Brazil by UNHCR and the Brazilian Government under the Solidarity Resettlement Program, camped in front of the new UNHCR headquarters, day and night, protesting and demanding to know what has

(www.autonomiadosrefugiados.blogspot.com). Dates are referenced according to the blog entry from which quotes were taken.

⁵⁶ At the time of writing in March 2009, the protest was ongoing.

happened and what to do next. More than simply staging a sit-in, the refugees set up an internet blog, documenting their own perceptions of the situation, their demands, the impasse in the negotiations, the lack of dialogue, the revolt, the living conditions, the help they get, the abuse they suffer, and so on. It is there for everyone to see and experience: videos, pictures, testimonies, documents, newspaper articles. The blog entries are signed as ‘Refugees for Dignity’ (RD). The collective describe themselves as

refugees from various wars. We were hosted by Brazil. So love and respect its people and its government. However, the United Nations are not giving us the proper care. We have special needs and immediate being neglected [sic] (RD, entry posted in 2008).⁵⁷

While RD are clear on how they view themselves as a group, it is unclear how UNCHR or civil society organizations view the protestors as they have largely chosen to ignore them. Hamdam suspects that the refugee protestors are viewed as ‘criminals’ and himself as a crazy, old, troublesome man. As a Palestinian, he sees himself as belonging to a group of ‘unwanted people’, and Brazil, according to the National Refugee Board (CONARE) spokesperson, was ‘the only country willing to host the Palestinian Refugees that were living at Ruweished [...] and the government is still committed to grant them juridical protection’ (D’Andrade, 2009).

Ever since the beginning of the sit-in, the protesting refugees claimed that their subsidies were cancelled and that not only UNHCR officials refused to speak to them, but also called in the police on several occasions or prevented their case to be shown on televised interviews. One of the videos on the blog showed an interview conducted with an activist and one of the protestors. In the middle of the piece, a police car appears.

⁵⁷ This quote was in English in the original.

Viewers are told that UNHCR personnel were unavailable to comment. In another video posted, the UNHCR representative alleged that several offers had been made, including medical assistance in Brasília and relocation to alternative cities within Brazil, all proposals being systematically rejected by the protestors. In their requests, the resettled refugees demanded, among other things, better financial assistance for their daily needs, immediate medical assistance especially for elders and money to buy medication, dental assistance and money for transportation (Refugees for Dignity blog, entry posted September 23, 2008).

These refugees are the same ones portrayed in the rumours among African refugees in Rio de Janeiro (Chapter Three); the same ones who in September 2007 sparked enormous doubts and anxieties in other groups of refugees under dire living conditions. They are same ones who, as I write, are getting closer to the end of their two-year program which granted them housing, monthly subsidies and language classes. They are creeping closer to the end of the 'First World Brazil' promise, a promise they felt was never fulfilled despite how often it was spoken on TV news programs. This is the same promise that encouraged many of the Bolivian migrants in Corumbá and São Paulo. But somehow, after 14 months of being in Brazil and another five years in refugee camps, they share a striking resemblance with the mobile groups discussed in the previous pages, not only in their 'legal' status, but also in their claims for rights, recognition, and dignity.

Despite being in cities as diverse as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Mogi das Cruzes, Santa Maria, Brasília, Campo Grande, Manaus, and Corumbá, these individuals face common challenges in their struggle between freedom and protection. Freedom and

protection: the two irreconcilable *gifts* from which mobile subjects have to choose. And, as with any gift, they are expected to pay back somehow at some time to their givers, no matter what their choice is. In its reply to the complaints and claims made by the protesting refugees, CONARE stated that this was a demonstration of ‘ingratitude’ in the face of hospitality (D’Andrade, 2009). If the refugees choose protection, it is expected that they will be grateful for it. If they choose freedom, it is expected that they will no longer be refugees. After all, freedom makes for hope, and hope does not belong to the refugee as we are told by the international discourse of mobility. By choosing freedom, the Palestinian refugee demonstrators are walking the dangerously thin line that might lead them to the loss of the refugee-gift. This line has been walked before, and those who have crossed it can no longer claim anything towards CONARE and UNHCR for they are no longer refugees; their status has been withdrawn.

This expectation of gratitude towards the gift of protection granted by the sovereign authority, a protection reduced to the granting of a certain legal status, reflects a logic of moral exchange that has always been an integral part of mechanisms of social interaction. Aristotle, for instance, ‘thought of the grateful attitude as demeaning: It puts its subject in glad acceptance of the debtor position - not a position noble natures gladly accept’ (Roberts 2004,p.58). Gratitude for Aristotle was not a virtue, nor something to be sought by those who endeavour to acquire a good life. This understanding, as Roberts aptly remarks, seems at odds with our modern intuition regarding gratitude as something that is intrinsically connected to happiness and well-being. Gratitude, in modern western philosophy, is usually regarded as a positive feeling connected to the need to create trust

and solidarity among community members. However, the logic of gratitude also depends on important power relations and social hierarchies. Thomas Hobbes, for example, declared gratitude to be a law of nature, part of a set of qualities and human dispositions acquired through reason and necessary for human beings to survive in the state of nature. For Hobbes, gratitude is necessary for achieving justice and derives from it. The fourth law of nature thus states that ‘a man which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, Endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will’ (Hobbes 1651, 2004, p.105). But Hobbes also remarked that, even though human beings give out of a voluntary act, the one who gives seeks his own good and shall it be ‘frustrated, there will be no beginning of benevolence, or trust; nor consequently of mutual help; nor of reconciliation of one man to another; and therefore they are to remain still in a condition of war’ (ibid., p.105). Gratitude is needed, for Hobbes, for the purpose of justice, but more than that, for the purpose of social order in the absence of the sovereign. These natural laws are necessary, nevertheless, even under the sovereign authority, because they reflect ‘the qualities that dispose men to peace, and to obedience’ (ibid., p.185). Gratitude reflects social hierarchies and places the one who receives into a subordinate position, from which they are expected to obey the rules, natural or civil, as a form of reciprocity. Therefore, gratitude is necessary for asserting that individuals will follow the norms, fulfill their duties, and as such ‘gratitude joins force with the sentiment of rectitude’ (Gouldner 1960, p.176 quoted by Van Wees 1998, p.17). It is right and righteous to feel grateful for what one receives as a benefit from others.

Marcel Mauss, in his *Essay on the Gift*, also highlights the inequalities intrinsic to the gift-exchange logic and defines it as ‘prestations’⁵⁸ which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested. The form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest’ (Mauss 1967, p.1). Such definitions that focus on the self-interested nature of gift-giving, might not necessarily hold true for day-to-day experiences of exchange among certain groups.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, they demonstrate the normative structure of the moral altercation that is fostered through a reading of the granting of refugee protection as a gift by the Nation-State and the consequent expectations of gratitude and reciprocity on the part of those who are subjected to it. First, the granting of the refugee-gift reproduces a system of hierarchies in which refugees are placed in a condition of subordination and dependency. As Van Wees states, the ‘one who benefits from another’s generosity in

⁵⁸ The translator of Mauss’ *Essai sur le don* to English, Ian Cunnison, chose to maintain the word ‘prestation’ from the French because, according to him, ‘there is no convenient English word to translate the French *prestation* so this word itself is used to mean anything or series of things given freely or obligatory as a gift or in exchange; and includes services, entertainments, etc., as well as material things’ (Mauss 1967, p.xi; Translator’s Note).

⁵⁹ There is an important critique of classic gift-giving approaches, especially leveled at the priority granted to exchange in their analysis. Some scholars have tried to reorient the analysis by focusing on the politics of care and on community bonds enabled by a non-individualistic understanding of the social role of gifts. Kuokkanen (2007), for example, demonstrates how indigenous peoples relationship with the gift is itself premised on notions of autonomy and of coexistence. The central problem with the gift-giving logic prevailing in the politics of protection and integration of mobile subjects relates also to the exchange assumption and to the consequential expectation of particular modes of reciprocity and gratitude. Therefore, the challenge remains in terms of moving away from a patriarchal and paternalist framework of exchange towards the conversion of the practice of giving into one of ‘sharing’ and of ‘strategic partnerships’ (Kuokkanen 2007, p.22). I would like to thank Will Coleman for alerting me to this point.

reciprocal exchange is placed under an obligation until he repays, and this may entail a degree of actual subservience to the generous giver. Often, generosity is not meant to be repaid in kind at all, but to be reciprocated with long-term subordination to the benefactor' (1998, p.41). Second, gift-giving depends on forms of identity construction that are, in the case of political life, not only unidirectional – from the giver to the receiver – but also involve the delimitation of clear sets of expected behaviour on the part of the receiver. For example, they will accept and receive the gift unconditionally, they will submit themselves to the imposed interests of the giver, and they will be grateful for it and eventually will reciprocate such benevolent action. 'It is clear that the presentation of a gift is an imposition of identity [...] (Schwartz 1967, p.1-2). Insofar as one's position in society depends on how one presents oneself and how one is treated by others, the nature of gifts offered and received affects one's social status. Up to a point, you are what you give and what you get' (Van Wees 1998, p.30).

Once these two requisites, of submission and identity imposition, are upset, the logical conclusion that follows is that we are witnessing ingratitude. This seems to be the case of the protesting refugees, for they have disturbed the logic of the gift, by conditioning its receipt on the acceptance of their terms. The international discourse of mobility, as stated in chapter one, constructs hierarchies between categories of others and places the refugee, the 'authorized' migrant in a privilege position, precisely because they are, after all, allowed in and allowed to stay. They are granted juridical protection, they are the legitimate, if still tenuous, dwellers of the 'inter'. This 'advantageous' condition, assumed through the authorization granted by sovereign authorities and

enabled/reproduced through the framing of the international as governmentality of difference, is nevertheless routinely questioned by those subjected to it. In their interventions and interruptions, these individuals and groups subvert the international framework and contest these topologies by questioning the place of authority and by reclaiming their speaking position through demands and through a retelling of their living conditions under their own terms (and their own language modes).

Among a set of questions posed by visitors to the RD blog, one was precisely about why they did not accept what they have been offered so far. This kind of question strikes the same gratitude chord that is expected from refugees towards their hosts. When answering this question, the RD replied:

We accept everything that is offered to us from the heart. If they offer us something out of interest that is not voluntary generosity, we refuse everything. If they offer us something because they want to shut us up, we yell. If they offer us something for us to be forgotten and abandoned silently, we shall move the world. Let justice be done: we respect those who respect us, help those who help us, our love and consideration are for those who give us love and heart. There are no differences. We are not victims, wretched, nor do we expect scraps. We have dignity. They can take our money, our clothes, our houses, our right to travel, they can even take our medical treatment. But they will never take our dignity from us (posted October 18, 2008).

In important respects, the position of the protesting refugees (as well as the stance presented by African refugees in Rio de Janeiro and displaced groups in the Amazon) attempts to precisely question the hierarchies and the moral subordination effected in the logic of protection as gift-exchange. More than that, they refuse the scaffold of gratitude as the expected reciprocal attitude and identity imposed on them. They do so, first, by

conditioning the acceptance of protection, by requiring a condition of equality that is denied in the logic of gift-giving. They subvert the structure of international protection, by disturbing the conventional identities attached to them and reproduced in the logics of gift-exchange and gratitude: neither victims, nor beggars. Second, they pose the dilemma of living as a border, and the consequences that stem from it, as one that involves duties and rights. This justifies, for example, their call for dialogue and for clear rules of procedure; for knowing what is theirs by right and what is not so that they can establish their courses of action and regain a certain amount of control over the course of their lives.

The logic of gratitude is, in important respects, an intrinsic part of the international discourse on human mobility, and of the international as governmentality of difference in general. For, if it is premised on the establishment of topologies of otherness, it is also principally concerned with defining the terms upon which such differences are modulated and *authorized*. I have tried to show how border politics is precisely about the delimitation of such authorization processes, of establishing the terms of who, where, when and how mobile groups and individuals can become inhabitants of the 'inter'. Even though much of these prerogatives remain centered around the state, and its governmental officials, other actors and social ensembles also participate rather actively in assuring that these limits are kept and that mobile subjectivities are tamed within the contours of daily interactions and everyday life. International organizations, civil society associations, the Church, neighbours, consumers, tourists, corporations, local business owners: they all perform their own parts in this long, unfolding play of border

politics. Some of them work through the management of such mobile subjectivities by fostering more inclusive approaches and policies, as evidenced in claims of solidarity, in the enactment of border zones and the emergence of the *fronteiriço*, and in the pursuit of changes in public policies and legislation. But even in such cases we have witnessed a persistent ambiguity that attempts to include either through some form of exclusion or through reclusion (Haesbaert, 2006). This results partially from the consideration that legal protection, a hospitable environment, the promotion of solidarity or the charitable nature of solidarity should evince some form of gratitude. Gratitude translated both in terms of the establishment of social hierarchies between givers and receivers and in the expectation of reciprocity. As one blogger on the RD website described the situation:

If we have a situation of almost four thousand refugees in Brazil, we know that the majority of them is forsaken. They do not show themselves, they are subjected to a degrading *condition of dependence*. Even though we might have cases of success in life for some refugees, this is the condition that is demanded. *Nothing can be more exalted than an act of charity* (Independent Front for the Autonomy of Refugees, entry posted November 22, 2008; emphasis added).

These expectations are not, however, a unique prerogative of refugees. After all, interstate relations, especially in what pertains to issues of mobility and border control, have routinely been premised on the principle of reciprocity. The treatment granted to foreign nationals by one country should be reciprocated by others in relation to its own nationals.

This is the logic implied, for example, in justifications provided by the Brazilian Government regarding the current proposals for a general amnesty to non-status migrants in the country. As of February 2009, the House of Representatives approved a piece of

legislation that would grant a general amnesty to all migrants that have entered the country before February 1, 2009. According to President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, the state ‘can grant the right to people remain in Brazil. This country here has a *lesson to give* the world about the treatment of migrants’ (quoted by Folha 30/01/ 2009; emphasis added). More than that, the executive-secretary of the Ministry of Justice, and President of CONARE, Luiz Paulo Barreto, stated that the objective of the new amnesty was to ‘legalize the situation of these people and *obtain in return the same reaction from countries that host Brazilian migrants*’ (Giraldi 11/11/2008; emphasis added). By regularizing the situation of non-status migrants in the country, the sovereign authority expects that reciprocity will be affected in relation to its own mobile nationals. Gratitude in this case is not so much leveled at the migrant community itself, but to the political institutions, the sovereign authorities upon which their subjectivity and modes of political existence are dependent upon.

Mauss (1967), when analyzing the logic of gift exchange among the Maoris, highlighted the belief in the *hau*, a form of spiritual essence that belongs simultaneously to the things that are exchanged and to the individuals who exchanged them. As such, the obligation of exchange and of returning the gift has to do with the fact that the *hau* granted in the gift has to somehow return to the original giver, because for the Maoris, ‘to give something is to give a part of oneself [...] one gives away what is in reality a part of one’s nature and substance’ (Mauss 1967, p.10). Looking at the granting of protection, either through the concession of refugee status or through the regularization of permanence, one can see how sovereign prerogatives actually enact a logic of exchange in

similar terms – i.e. as giving part of oneself. In a sense, this logic acknowledges that sovereignty moves along with the bodies of its citizens. To concede some form of juridical recognition, even if partially, to aliens is in itself an act of inclusion, of ascribing to that which is foreign some qualities that belong to the sovereign body, the polity. Therefore, the regulation of human mobility is perhaps the most salient example of sovereignty as biopolitics, as control over life and over the bodies of those who incorporate the *hau* of sovereignty's essence, namely of forms of belonging usually ascribed in terms of citizenship. Therefore, the state gives and expects in return that other sovereigns will recognize this benevolent action and reciprocate in relation to its own 'sovereign' parts. In this way, the life of sovereignty accompanies the life of those, who no longer being territorially inscribed, live as a border and thus in their daily encounters put to the test the hold sovereign authorities have in term of fulfilling these expectations of reciprocity. International Relations, while premised on the principle of sovereignty, and especially in what regards the management and regulation of border lives, evinces modes of moral exchange that are in important respects similar to those involved in the configurations of gift-exchange, particularly oriented by ideas of gratitude and reciprocity.

Concluding remarks

One of the consequences of the logic of gratitude, along with the fostering of subordination and hierarchical standings, is that it simplifies *ad absurdum* the dilemmas and difficulties faced by these groups in their daily lives, by implying a reading of their

narratives as either one of victimage (and therefore of ingratitude) or one of criminality (and therefore of police and law enforcement). This simplification works to restrain the ability of these groups to portray their own understandings and narratives over the problems they face, and also to hide the contextual aspects that are central for explaining how and why they came to be in such liminal conditions. These aspects involve, for example, the historical conditions that led to migration and to submission to forms of exploitation, the imbalances in the relationship between countries and societies of origin and reception, the reproduction of social, racial and cultural cleavages in the hosting community, sometimes even within refugee/migrant groups.

In all the cases analyzed throughout this dissertation, it is possible to see how these aspects are central to delimiting the modes of existence, as well as the responses, of mobile subjects living in border contexts. In the case of Bolivians, important ethnic divisions, a history of regional inequalities and economic marginality, the encounter with forms of hegemonic identity construction, an overall atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust and the lack of interchange within the context of the city in their everyday encounters are all factors that help to compose a better understanding of the complexities involved in bordering practices regarding the Bolivian community – a community itself fragmented as a result of some of these same factors. In the case of African refugees in Rio de Janeiro, race, social marginality and exclusion from the urban space of the city (through a territorial containment in the zone of the slum) are combined in their own narratives to explain the feelings of ostracism and rebellion produced by a life of trauma, violence and lack of possibilities, that refuses to change in a context of granted

‘international’ protection. In the case of IDPs in the Amazon, colonialism, the unfulfilled promises of citizenship and the difficulties of negotiating ambivalent modes of presence with ‘fellow’ nationals and ‘neighbouring’ strangers within the distant proximities of the border zone help unveil how the *necropolitics* of displacement is always part of their collective memory. This memory informs the mechanisms through which they make sense of their ongoing struggles and their strategies of intervention in what has become a site of increasing global connections.

I argued that all of these narratives have something to teach us in relation to the questioning of the terms of the governmentality of difference evinced in the international discourse of mobility. For one, each of these narratives, in their own specific way, attempts to reposition mobile groups within the scaffold of protection. They do so by contesting the priority granted to the ‘authorized’ voices of the state and international organizations as the sole institutions responsible for the course of their lives. They do so by reclaiming ‘the right to have rights’ (Arendt, 1948), but also by retaking the right to voice their own understanding of their living conditions. In a sense, what these narratives show is that there can be no protection without freedom, and that the granting of citizenship or the regularization of juridical status is not enough to guarantee an effective implementation of these ideals. To politicize the border is to take seriously these modes of existence that become lost when the discussion of human mobility is solely defined in terms of policies, legislations and juridical constructs. To politicize the border is to take seriously the demands of mobile groups to regain a control over their lives. These demands range from the retaking of an active stance in defining the terms of their own

international mobility to the questioning of the prerogatives of governmental and international organizations' officials as their 'legitimate' representatives. They might also involve more subtle, but no less significant, mechanisms of ascertaining their presence in bordering contexts, as evinced in attempts to mark a cultural presence in the space of the city, of organizing and fighting for better working conditions, of negotiating with local authorities and neighbours their strategies of survival.

But these are always ambiguous political performances. In our constructing of these groups and in our naming them as subaltern and marginalized, it should not lead us to a romanticized version of their political subjectivity (or of their fight for it). The undecidability of the foreigner (Honig, 2001) is inextricably related to the undecidability of citizenship as a marker for the ability to claim access to rights and social resources, especially in the context of South-South displacement. This has to do with the context in which such claims are made, one in which the translations of citizenship as status to citizenship as substance are, to say the least, an impossibility for a great part of the hosting community. As such the socio-economic marginality of mobile groups is not exclusive to them. One of the consequences of such contextual realities is to disturb the conventional narrative that the granting of juridical status is the central solution to the problems faced by these groups. In fact, the demand to receive a 'preferential' treatment attests to the recognition of the peculiar situation of these groups, but also to the latent inability of their supposed 'protectors' to transform such protection into a sustainable condition of living. In this case, a systematic refusal of citizenship should be seen as a contextual response in which alienage is used and exploited as a political tool that enables

mobile groups to press for their demands not only within the local context, but also within the larger framework of international and transnational relations. Caught in between the drive towards citizenship as a suitable discourse for equating freedom and protection and the protective humanitarian one, these groups attest to the demise of both narratives as effective solutions to their demands.

More than that, the collapse of freedom *from* fear as a prerogative for the resolution of insecurities (later on equated with the granting of protection) leaves unanswered the extent to which positive freedoms (freedoms *to*) are also inevitably a part of border dwellers' claim to inclusion. The dichotomous relationship between freedom and protection is disrupted when the interpretation of freedom is problematized beyond the more conventional discourse of a trade-off between forms of protection (evinced in claims of humanitarianism, solidarity and citizenship) and of liberties (of choice, of participation, of membership, of movement)⁶⁰. An IR (and sovereign-based) conventional reading would suggest that, in order to inhabit the 'inter', one has to choose between these two forms of being: either to be protected from the insecurities and violences of the international or to be free to live, in the terms of the protesting refugees, with dignity. Unpacking the resolution to this dilemma, mobile groups show that these two competing demands, of freedom and protection, are always inextricably related. There is no freedom without some form of protection. And protection should not be interpreted as another technology of government, as another mechanism of tutelage. In other words, there is nothing natural or obvious in the traditional claims that in order to feel safer one has to be

⁶⁰ See Huysmans (2006) for a discussion on the linkage between liberty and security within the framework of the securitization of migration.

less free or vice-versa. In fact, some authors would claim that the liberal project of liberty (embedded in humanitarian and human rights claims towards the international) is in itself also a project of security (Neocleous 2008). If this is so, we should not be surprised by border dwellers' claims that freedom and protection are two sides of the same coin and fear and hope are hence contemporaneous emotions for most mobile groups.

In the compelling statement of Hamdam, protection is about responsibility and, more often than not, about accountability. This can only happen as a result of the repoliticization of their living conditions and of leaving behind the romantic veil of innocence so embedded in discussions on those who live in the bottoms of international circulations. Mobile subjects *qua* political subjects have therefore their own agendas and interests, some of which are in strong disagreement with the perceptions of their own significant others (and even within their own groups). And assuming a political stance of responsibility over the course of their lives should also be premised on the fact that they too are responsible, even if partially, for their current situation. Therefore being political has nothing to do with judgements of value, with whether theirs is a more benevolent, progressive or inclusive agenda. It has to do with the recognition that their demands and mechanisms of participation, despite necessary and relevant, are also embedded in their own forms of discriminations and violences. Let us remember, for example, the negative and antagonistic portrayal of racial clashes within the African refugee community in Rio, the exploitative stance of Bolivian migrants amongst themselves, and the important divisions in the attempts of mobilization among Colombian IDPs. To expect anything less

would be to follow into the modes of representation and participation which have been at the root of their problems.

In this dissertation, I have shown that border politics is about the negotiation over the terms and modes of presence of the ‘inter’ of the international, represented here by the experiences of displacement of refugees, migrants and IDPs in South America. I have argued that in order to understand these processes we need to elucidate how the global politics of mobility is played out (or translated) in border crossroads and from a range of social groups that encompass not only the Nation-State. They include a myriad of actors that, despite having little or no say in the international framework of human mobility, perform bordering practices that are central to the enactment of difference as a primary trait of inclusion/exclusion from the political. These processes of political differentiation are reinforced but also contested by mobile groups, especially in relation to discourses that try to equate human mobility as a choice between freedom and protection. In important respects, their intervention attempts to problematize the dichotomous portrayal of freedom or protection as two irreconcilable dimensions of life in displacement, thus evincing the possibility that the ‘inter’ of the international can actually become a site of living, rather than a rite of passage.

I have also argued that by incorporating the narratives of diverse social actors at these border crossroads we might come closer to displacing the politics of human mobility from one premised on a conventional reading of the international, as a strategy of separation and modulation and management of difference, towards a global politics of (dis)connections, in which mobile groups can become active participants in the framing

of their lives possibilities. At a minimum, the interventions of mobile groups question the normalization of modes of being (and becoming) asserted in border encounters, modes that have routinely ostracized them as legitimate and authorized participants in the debates over, for example, immigration and integration policies. This moving-away from the international is always embedded in tenuous and ambiguous exchanges about what constitutes mobility; how movement is to be interpreted, stimulated or prevented; where and when it can take place and under what conditions. Nevertheless, a global discourse on displacement, concerned with the bringing up of more inclusive policies and an equitable distribution of access to rights, both in terms of legal status and substance, depends on taking seriously the narratives that arise from mobile groups struggles. As such, I hope this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of what is at stake in dealing with the border encounter from a political perspective and how different narratives on life in displacement can, in fact, indicate different paths of action and research.

Some of these paths involve the urgent need for improving dialogue and participation of mobile groups in the institutional framework that defines and circumscribes their modes of existence. A direct participation of displaced communities in the devising and implementation of policies depends also on fostering mechanisms of social organization and mobilization among these groups. These steps depend, on one hand, on removing the fear, on the part of governmental and international institutions, over what might happen once these groups *become* political. More than that, this fear is a result of the unintended consequences of an antagonistic position in relation to displaced groups, as if the rendering of more flexible mechanisms of negotiation would necessarily

lead to a loss of control and a reduction of the ascribed institutional power these institutions hold in terms of the management of mobility. This idea is represented in one of the demands of the protesting refugees: that UNHCR, its implementing agencies, and CONARE 'shall stop treating the matter as something that threatens their self-image'. The protesting refugees see this refusal to acknowledge their claims as a fight for institutional self-preservation and, I believe, they are on the mark in their analysis. But this is not just a contextual, situated reality. In fact, as I have tried to demonstrate, this is a consequence of the larger scaffold of the international discourse on mobility and of the difficulties and violences that are enacted once this discourse is translated to the everyday dynamics of border encounters.

But some of these problems also stem from displaced communities themselves and from their inability and difficulties in overcoming differences between migrant and refugee groups and in organizing their demands. It has also to do with the difficulty of translating their situation to the overall community and understanding the extent to which their own social marginality is shared and lived through by other displaced and non-displaced groups alike. In a sense, the problem stems from the inability of some migrants and refugees to understand that some of their demands are not feasible within the context of a developing country. As such, for a potentially fruitful dialogue to flourish, these groups will also have to concede in their expectations and understand the limitations that conditions of underdevelopment place not only on governmental institutions but on the hosting society as well.

I do not intend to prescribe solutions as a concluding note to this research. In part, I believe that these solutions can only come from those groups who, living as a border, have a better understanding of what is at stake in the governmentality of difference evinced by the international mobility regime. My own research has attempted to bring to light some of their claims and strategies of intervention in the debate over – and the coming-into-being of -- border politics. I, therefore, could not find a better way of concluding than that stated in the words of the protesting refugees, precisely because they question, among other things, the hierarchies established in the mobility regime, the lack of control and the abjection to which they are submitted by local and international structures of power, and the need for finally recognizing that they too have a say and an opinion about their own lives and about what should be done. These too have been the central claims presented in the preceding pages.

There isn't any advantage in being a refugee:

It is extremely humiliating to be considered an 'effect of war' and to need everything;

It is extremely humiliating to be helped and have people demand a reward for such beautiful humanitarian act all the time (beauty found exactly when political issues are supplanted by humanitarian aspects);

It is extremely humiliating not to be able to self-determination because we are seen throughout the world from the vantage point of systemic discriminatory policies

It is extremely humiliating not to be able to care for our families because they have been decimated or spread throughout the planet;

It is extremely humiliating not to be able to be what we wanted to be or even to expect that one day that might occur;

It is even less advantageous to be a Palestinian refugee. We do not even have the possibility to have the right to return to our land. When we came to Brazil, we did not come for tourism, we did not even come to take the house, health services or work from the Brazilian people. We came because UNHCR in Jordan fed our hopes: we watched a movie that told us that we would have here housing, work, health, that we would not suffer any persecution, as any other Brazilian. These hopes were not so that we could live with luxuries, nor to have any privileges. We do not dream to live in palaces in Europe, nor enjoy the “American way of life”, even less to make the Brazilian people our enemy, a people that has hosted us so well. We dream of a better life. If it is to misery that they want to condemn us once again, we do not accept. We do not admit being treated like rogues on the verge of death. [...] To place us as the problem is to divert the focus of attention away from the truly responsible. We like the Brazilian people and government; our problem is with the fact that we have been mistreated by some who should have dealt with us with more respect, that should have not treated us like pitied poor always thrown from one side to the other.

Why is it that always and only when some people in high official positions say something, it is considered to be true? Why don't they ask us directly? If anybody doesn't know what we want, it is simple: come to us and ask. Throughout these four months we have been in Brasília, anyone knows where to find us (RD, posted August 28, 2008).

Appendix I – List of Interviews (Recorded – Audio or Notes)

Interviewee	Records	Date	Site
F. (Displaced), 51 years-old, female, married with 6 children	Audio	11/07/2007	Leticia, Colombia
A.S (Displaced), 29 years-old, female, single mother with 3 children	Audio	11/07/2007	Leticia, Colombia
J.L.and wife (Displaced), 29 years-old with 5 children	Audio	10/07/2007	Leticia, Colombia
B. (Displaced), female, single mother with 5 children	Audio	12/07/07	Leticia, Colombia
Father Gonzalo, priest, Human Mobility Team	Notes	July 2007	Tabatinga, Brazil
Social Assistant, Human Mobility Team	Notes	July 2007	Tabatinga, Brazil Leticia, Colombia
Federal Police Officer	Audio	July 2007	Tabatinga, Brazil
L. (Peruvian migrant), male	Notes	June 2007	Manaus, Brazil
J. (Refugee), Colombian, male, late 20s.	Audio	June 2007	Manaus, Brazil
Assistant workers, women	Audio	June 2007	Manaus, Brazil
D. (refugee), DR Congo	Audio	17/09/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
P.R. (refugee), Angola, male	Audio	20/09/2007	Duque de Caxias, RJ
Group of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (Angola and Congo), both women and men of varying ages	Audio and Notes	20/09/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
G.H. (asylum seeker), Iraqi, male, early 50s	Audio	18/09/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
M.T (refugee), Georgia, woman	Audio	18/09/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
P.S. (refugee, now permanent resident), Poland, late 70s	Audio	27/09/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Director, AST, Refugee	Audio	02/10/2007	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Assistance Center			
Assistant Workers and Director – Migrant Center	Audio and notes	25/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
Father Mario, Priest, Pastoral do Migrant	Audio	26/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
Father Ubaldo, Caritas - Director	Audio	30/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
Assistant Worker, Refugee Center	Audio	30/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
Lawyer, Refugee Center	Audio	30/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
P. (Asylum Seeker), Peruvian, male, early 20s	Note	23/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
F. (Refugee), Colombian, female, single, late 30s	Note	24/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
J.Q. (refugee), DR Congo, female, late 20s, single mother with 2 children	Note	23/10/2007	São Paulo, Brazil
Federal Police, Maritime and Immigration Control	Note	31/10/2007	Santos, Brazil
UNHCR Officer	Note	08/11/2007	Brasilia, Brazil
CONARE	Audio	07/11/2007	Brasilia, Brazil
Pastoral do Migrant, Priests	Notes	20/11/2007	Corumbá, Brazil
C. (migrant), Bolivian, female, now permanent resident	Audio	n.d.	Corumbá, Brazil
M. (migrant), Bolivian, female	Notes	n.d.	Corumbá, Brazil
H.. (migrant), Bolivian, male, late 50s	Audio		Corumbá, Brazil
A.C., Federal Police Agent, Immigration Sector	Audio	20/11/2007	Corumbá, Brazil
M., migrant, Bolivian	Notes	24/11/2007	Corumbá, Brazil

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