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# The co-mingling of bordering dynamics in the San Diego–Tijuana cross-border metropolis

Lawrence A. Herzog<sup>a</sup> and Christophe Sohn<sup>b</sup> 

## ABSTRACT

The co-mingling of bordering dynamics in the San Diego–Tijuana cross-border metropolis. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. The focus of this paper is on the processes of ‘debordering’ and ‘rebordering’, and more specifically on what occurs when both forces collide and confront their contrasting goals. The hypothesis developed argues that the two bordering dynamics do not merely contest each other, they also interact and co-mingle. A tripartite analytical framework is proposed based on the functional, constructionist and symbolic dimensions of bordering dynamics. The purpose is to generate hypotheses about co-mingling of the two forces that can be tested empirically. The case of San Diego–Tijuana offers a US–Mexico cross-border metropolis as a work in progress, an urbanized region that is constantly changing and reinventing itself through the entanglement of debordering and rebordering, and, ultimately, the nesting of one category inside the other.

## KEYWORDS

debordering; rebordering; cross-border metropolis; US–Mexico border; San Diego–Tijuana

## 摘要

圣地亚哥—蒂华纳跨境都会区的边界化动态混合。 *Territory, Politics, Governance*。本文聚焦‘去边界化’和‘再边界化’的过程，特别是关于两种力量相互冲突并面临其相互抵触的目标时发生之事。本文建立的假说，主张两种边界化的动态并非仅是相互竞争，它们同时彼此互动并混合。本文根据边界化动态的功能、建构与象微面向，提出三角检验的分析架构。本文的目的在于生产能够在经验上进行验证的两种力量混合的假说。圣地亚哥—蒂华纳的案例，提供了美墨边境都会区一个进行中的工作，该区是个透过去边界化和再边界化的交缠，以及最终在一范畴中套叠另一范畴的不断改变并自我创新的城市化区域。

## 关键词

去边界化；再边界化；跨境都会区；美墨边界；圣地亚哥—蒂华纳


## RÉSUMÉ

L'imbrication des dynamiques frontalières dans la métropole transfrontalière de San Diego-Tijuana. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. La présence communication est axée sur les processus d'ouverture et de fermeture des frontières et, plus spécifiquement, sur ce qui se produit lorsque les deux forces se rencontrent et confrontent leurs objectifs contrastés. L'hypothèse développée soutient que les deux dynamiques frontalières ne se limitent pas à une contestation mutuelle : elles interagissent et s'imbriquent l'une dans l'autre. La

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proposition d'un cadre analytique tripartite fondé sur les dimensions fonctionnelles, « constructionnistes » et symboliques permet de générer des hypothèses sur l'imbrication des deux forces et de les tester empiriquement. Le cas de San Diego-Tijuana présente une métropole transfrontalière à cheval entre les Etats-Unis et le Mexique comme un projet en évolution permanente, une région urbaine constamment en train de se réinventer par le biais de l'enchevêtrement des processus d'ouverture et de fermeture de la frontière, et, au bout du compte, de l'imbrication de l'un dans l'autre.

#### MOTS CLÉS

ouverture des frontières; fermeture des frontières; métropole transfrontalière; frontière USA-Mexique; San Diego-Tijuana

#### RESUMEN

La combinación de las dinámicas fronterizas en la metrópolis transfronteriza de San Diego-Tijuana. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. El enfoque de este artículo está en los procesos de 'desfronterización' y 'reforzamiento fronterizo', y en concreto lo que ocurre cuando ambas fuerzas chocan y se enfrentan a objetivos contrastados. En la hipótesis desarrollada se argumenta que las dos dinámicas fronterizas no simplemente compiten entre ellas, sino que también interactúan y se combinan. Aquí se propone un marco analítico tripartito basado en dimensiones funcionales, contruccionistas y simbólicas de las dinámicas fronterizas. Su finalidad es generar hipótesis sobre la combinación de las dos fuerzas que se pueden comprobarse empíricamente. El caso de San Diego-Tijuana ofrece una metrópolis transfronteriza entre los Estados Unidos y México como un trabajo en progreso, una región urbanizada en continuo cambio que se reinventa mediante el entrelazamiento de desfronterización y reforzamiento fronterizo, y en última instancia, la anidación de una categoría dentro de la otra.

#### PALABRAS CLAVES

desfronterización; reforzamiento fronterizo; metrópolis transfronteriza; frontera entre Estados Unidos y México; San Diego-Tijuana

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## INTRODUCTION

Border studies have traditionally viewed state borders as physical outcomes of political and social processes (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013). At its most basic level, a political boundary was a line drawn across space that expressed a division coupled with a differentiation of political jurisdictions (states), imagined communities (nations), cultural spheres and regimes of capital accumulation. In some parts of the world, these divisions or dualities continue to accurately portray quite distinct differences – where advanced market economies bump up against emerging ones or where very different cultures collide. Yet, in a globalizing world, the role and significance of territorial borders and the dynamics of spaces surrounding them have also become far more complex.

Responding to this complexity, scholars have moved on from these traditional views of borders as fixed divisions, recognizing that, while political boundaries enclose sovereign governments, they often do not match with ethnic or cultural boundaries. Furthermore, since at least the middle of the twentieth century, economic, cultural and other forces have increasingly transcended state borders in various ways. The concept of 'cross-border metropolis' is emblematic of the changing role and effects of borders giving rise to processes of cross-border integration, whether in the form of labour markets, trade relationships, governance networks, residential mobility, hybrid cultures or more complex environments that stimulate innovation (Herzog, 1990). At the same time, the way borders are conceptualized has also undergone a dramatic shift. Beyond their role as political institutions that demarcate territorial entities, borders have been interpreted as historically contingent processes, continuously shaped by everyday social-spatial practices, representations and discourses

(Anderson, 1996; Newman & Paasi, 1998). Understanding borders in terms of social processes has led to the adoption of the concept of bordering as a ‘general context for comprehending borders as something continually “being made”’ (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013, p. 2). The impact of economic globalization on borders as well as the concomitant state-led border securitization has led border students to mobilize the twin notions of debordering and rebordering (Coleman, 2005; Stetter, 2005). Whereas the former suggests openness, exchange and hybridization, the latter underlines practices of control, protection and differentiation. The ways in which these two seemingly contradictory forces interrelate has been interpreted in different ways. For some students, the economic liberalization and border securitization/militarization are seen as complementary or paired strategies (see notably Nevins, 2010; Sparke, 2006). For others, the encounter of marked-led debordering and legal-military rebordering evokes a collision of opposing policies, the US–Mexico border being seen as a security/economy nexus of relatively incoherent policies and tactics designed from afar and without consideration for the local implications (Coleman, 2005).

In order to grasp what takes place ‘in-between’ the two processes of debordering and rebordering, we argue for a deconstruction of their binary condition and pay attention to the different and more subtle forces at work within the two categories, the ways they influence each other. In this paper, we introduce the idea of ‘co-mingling’ as a process where the forces of debordering and rebordering become interwoven in ways we argue need further explanation. Beyond mere theoretical considerations, this paper seeks to scrutinize empirically how the co-mingling is worked out practically, that is to say through which mechanisms, by whom and with what consequences for the border spaces impacted. To achieve this, we mobilize an analytical framework that distinguishes the functional, constructionist and symbolic dimensions of borders, and sheds light on the different logics at play when debordering encounters rebordering. We also acknowledge the fact that bordering dynamics are open-ended processes that are not monolithic but multiple and disaggregated along various fields of action. The use of detailed examples allows us to go further in understanding how the co-mingling actually takes place on the ground.

Specifically, we focus our analysis on the implications of the debordering/rebordering nexus for spatial planning of cross-border metropolitan regions. Cross-border metropolises are indeed the place where the impacts of the two forces are likely to be the most significant (Herzog & Sohn, 2014). On the one hand, the emergence of cross-border metropolises as dynamic places of demographic and economic growth as well as socio-cultural encounters is directly linked to the opening of borders and the effects induced by economic integration and globalization (Herzog, 1990; Sohn, 2014). On the other, national security rebordering trends are targeting these transnational urban spaces crisscrossed by cross-border mobilities of capital, people, goods and practices. Border securitization and the implementation of strict control and filtering measures is thus directly threatening the very existence of cross-border metropolises and their postborder condition (Dear, 2000; Dear & Leclerc, 2003).

Given its emblematic status as cross-border metropolis and the significance of bordering dynamics that have occurred along the US–Mexico border during the last two decades, the case of San Diego–Tijuana constitutes a logical focal point for this paper. A consensus among scholars of US–Mexico transfrontier cities has been the existence of growing interdependence and overlap due to urban growth, trade, cross-border flows of people and goods, and the subsequent greater connectivity of economy, ecosystems and culture (Cota, 2017; Hernandez & Campos-Delgado, 2015; Martinez, 2006; Romero, 2008). The combination of urbanization, assembly plant industrialization, booming trade and the flow of capital towards the border in the post-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) era have been acknowledged as factors contributing to the growth in population, and private and public sector investment in the US–Mexican borderlands (Anderson & Gerber, 2008). Cross-border integration dynamic also reflects historic linkages and common cultural connections (Nevins, 2010). Dear (2013) argues for a conceptual view of cross-border regions as part of a larger ‘Third Nation’ or in-between space that transcends the

geo-political boundary, and has led to the formation of a separate cross-border regional identity. This, according to Dear, connects people, practice and territory in new ways, that have been cemented by the greater depth of transfrontier crossings, trade, culture and ecosystem linkages. The notion of an emerging territorial identity has been skillfully explored for the case of border visual arts – in the fields of film, art and photography (Iglesias, 2008). There have also been research efforts to recast Mexican border cities as emerging centres of innovation, rather than places of illegality and vice (Montemozolo, Peralta, & Yezpez, 2006). Equally, important scientific research in the post-NAFTA era has focused on cross-border studies of border ecosystems and future sustainability (Herzog, 2000; Lee & Ganster, 2012). Our study of the debordering/rebordering nexus in San Diego–Tijuana follows on from these works which have highlighted the complexity of the cross-border integration process in its various dimensions (economic, spatial, social and cultural) and temporalities. It notably shows how debordering initiatives tend to re-emerge after the September 9/11, 2001 security-led rebordering and the fencing of the border and how the interaction and co-mingling of the two forces shape the trajectory of the cross-border metropolis.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The first section discusses the concept of bordering and its related terms. It underlines the need to grasp what takes place in-between the two opposing forces and introduces an analytical framework that conceives three main patterns of interaction. The second section presents the case study investigated and highlights its de- and rebordering trajectories through an inventory of key initiatives over the last 15 years. In the third section, significant examples of bordering co-mingling are presented in three different policy arenas: transportation planning, environmental protection and downtown redevelopment. These three cases illustrate, using real-world examples, different outcomes at play when debordering and rebordering dynamics intermingle. The last section offers some final reflections.

## UNPACKING THE NOTIONS OF BORDERING, DEBORDERING AND REBORDERING

The notion of bordering and its related terms of debordering and rebordering are closely associated with the renaissance of border studies during the last two decades and the shift from studying borders as pattern to their understanding as process (for an overview, see notably Newman, 2006). Yet, despite their obvious lexical proximity, these terms have emerged in the context of different approaches and discourses on borders. A brief reminder of their origin and evolution will allow us to position our analysis in this ongoing debate and highlight its contribution.

The twin terms of debordering and rebordering have both emerged as attempts to conceptualize the impact of globalization on borders. But this has occurred separately and within the framework of opposing discourses. Debordering has initially been part of the ‘open borders’ discourse. To the best of our knowledge, Albert and Brock (1996) appear to be the first scholars to use this notion in their analysis of the changing relationship between territory and state and its impact on international relations. In their view, debordering processes ‘are understood as an increasing permeability of borders together with a decreasing ability of states to counter this trend by attempts to shut themselves off’ (Albert & Brock, 1996, p. 70). It is interesting to note that, although the authors mention the presence of countervailing trends, they do not use the notion of rebordering, but call them ‘demarcation’. For its part, rebordering appeared within the context of the post 9/11 ‘border securitization’ discourse. The term was notably popularized by the work of Andreas and Biersteker (2003) on the enhancement of border securitization in North America and signals the hardening of borders through their fortification and the reinforcement of controls over flows and mobility.

The origin of the notion of ‘bordering’ is different, insofar as it is part of the constructivist turn that has transformed approaches in human geography relating to borders. For Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002, p. 126), bordering is understood as ‘a social practice of spatial

differentiation'. The term bordering does not imply a specific trend (towards opening or closure) but refers to all the practices (from everyday life to high geopolitics and geoeconomics) that relate to the continuous making and remaking of borders. 'B/ordering' as van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer have put it is, in fact, intrinsically ambivalent (i.e. the Janus-faced character of borders) and therefore encompasses 'complex and varied patterns of both implicit and explicit bordering and ordering practices' (Van Houtum, Kramsch, & Zierhofer, 2005, p. 2).

If, initially, the two aforementioned terminologies have pointed to clearly differentiated perspectives, debordering/rebordering focusing on 'formal' (e.g. state) processes and bordering focussing more on 'informal' (e.g. social) processes of border-making, their trajectories have since intersected. More precisely, the twin notions of debordering and rebordering have been mobilized within critical approaches to borders seeking to challenge dichotomous understandings (such as formal vs. informal border-making, open vs. closed borders) and to go beyond state-centrist perspectives on borders (Rumford, 2006). Thereby, the significance of the two notions has widened. On the one hand side, debordering highlights the opening of a border, the disabling of controls or the blurring of the differences between social and spatial entities and the mental categories associated to them. On the other, rebordering signifies the controlling of movements and flows and the construction of categories and distinctions that structure social and spatial divisions. As such, rebordering is not only about the hardening of existing borders, but also concerns new borders and bordering practices. Yet, in order to grasp how debordering and rebordering actually interact, we need to further explore their process-driven and multifaceted character.

As bordering dynamics are formed via historically contingent social and political processes, they are open-ended and in a constant state of being transformed (Newman & Paasi, 1998). The two dynamics do not 'just happen'. Rather, they are created by the contingent actions of a great variety of actors operating at different scales and in various domains as aforementioned. In the meantime, bordering dynamics have structuring effects on space and society that can prove long lasting. They are therefore recursive processes that shape socio-spatial systems as much as they are impacted in return. This suggests that debordering and rebordering are not part of a zero-sum game; one does not simply negate the other. When debordering occurs after a phase of rebordering (or vice versa), this does not result in a return to the initial situation (i.e. the conditions that prevailed before the rebordering phase). When one dynamic is mobilized, the other one remains as a potential powerful force, inherently present, and often having a critical impact. The reasons for this time dependence of bordering dynamics can be traced to the persistent character of beliefs, perceptions or narratives deeply rooted in border differentiations and categories, as well as the path dependency of public policies and everyday practices. Of course, there are times when the relationship between the two forces clearly favours one at the expense of the other (e.g. post 9/11 rebordering). But even in these rather extreme circumstances, one bordering dynamic cannot be deployed without contestation and resistance driven by the opposite dynamic and its enduring effects on the material role and symbolic significance of the border.

The changing spatiality of politics has, for its part, brought to the fore the increasingly differentiated character of contemporary borders (Rumford, 2006). Far from being singular and unitary, state borders are multiple; the same applies for bordering dynamics that are not 'monolithic' but disaggregated along various fields of action. Parker and Adler-Nissen (2012) have conceptualized this layered complexity of state bordering practices by distinguishing different 'planes of inscription' (e.g. economic interactions, linguistic practices, state securitization). When debordering or rebordering occur, they do not affect all the planes (or fields), but specific ones only. Indeed, some actors, and in particular the states, might seek to 'aggregate' different planes along one boundary. There was a time when states succeeded in this activity quite well. Nowadays their margins of manoeuvre have tightened and such multi-level interventions have often proven limited. The different fields where debordering and rebordering operate are theoretically distinct

(e.g., geoeconomics and geopolitics). However, they are not independent one from each other and many interactions are likely to occur.

Thus, instead of conceiving the two forces as opposed (or coupled), we believe debordering and rebordering are intimately entangled in a manner that remains contextually contingent. While bordering dynamics often seem to be in a fundamental state of conflict, they also co-exist and mutate; it is as if there was an intimate tension between the two. In order to investigate what is happening when both bordering forces encounter and confront their different priorities and interpretations, we elaborate a tripartite analytical framework inspired by Ferrer-Gallardo (2008) and based on the functional, constructionist and symbolic dimensions of borders and bordering processes. These are analytical distinctions that help to both structure the discussion and generate hypotheses that will be investigated further in the case study analysis that follows. In practice, of course, the three dimensions are often interrelated in complex ways.

The first dimension is *functional* and relates to the role of borders as regulators of flows (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008). Whereas rebordering speaks to the control of movements and flows (defining and enforcing who can pass and who cannot), debordering is characterized by the removal of border impediments allowing for free and open crossings and interactions. The intersection of economic liberalization and transnational mobilities where territorial borders are easily transcended by flows and networks with the security imperatives of the states requires that borders be understood beyond the logic of open vs. closed (Rumford, 2006). In the context of the US–Mexico border, the encounter between the two forces embraces the border as a ‘security/economy nexus’ (Coleman, 2005; Sparke, 2006). Indeed, border securitization is no longer performed at the borderline only, but has diffused inwards and outwards (Coleman, 2007; Rumford, 2006). Border crossing points remain nevertheless strategic sites where the two forces that operate on different planes actually collide in their primary interest (i.e. stopping some flows and mobilities whereas allowing others to pass), making their discursive framing and material reconfiguration particularly interesting to study.

The second dimension is *constructionist* and points to the meaning-making capacity of borders in terms of shaping socio-cultural categories and territorial entities. In this perspective where borders are conceived of as socio-cultural constructions, debordering embodies mixing and hybridization dynamics while rebordering is essentially about polarizing and differentiating (Heyman, 2012). When debordering occurs, the logics of mixing and hybridization are likely to affect the border categories and their territorial or functional boundaries will become blurred; the definition and legitimacy of what is ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ or ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested, resulting in in-between categories, ‘third spaces’ or ‘trans-territoriality’ and signalling new trade-offs between inclusion and exclusion, identity and otherness. In cases where a rebordering phase follows a debordering phase, it is very often the reaffirmation of ‘traditional’ binary categories and their realignment with the (state) territorial border that is at stake. To the extent that these categories are social constructions, a return to the pre-opening state of the border will, of course, be contested. Ultimately, the interaction between the processes of debordering and rebordering will result in power struggles between different legitimacies relating to border categorizations and their delineation in space and across societies. Greater or lesser shifts and disjunctions between the different planes involved are thus expected.

The third dimension is *symbolic* and refers to the role of borders as instruments of national and post-national identity formation. Beyond identities, borders also allow for the staging of a political project and its identification with a common ground (O’Dowd, 2002; Raffestin, 1986). On the one hand, rebordering is part of a strategy of affirmation of a political or territorial legitimacy. In this view, the border symbolizes the territorial container model (Taylor, 1994). On the other, debordering allows the border to become an object of recognition at the cross-border scale and may help identify and brand the cross-border region as a meaningful socio-spatial unit at the international scale (Hospers, 2006). Given the irreconcilable nature of these symbolic

interpretations, the encounter between the two bordering trends (or their interaction if they are operating in different fields) is likely to induce a recoding of the border (i.e. a re-interpretation of its symbolic significance) by the impacted stakeholders and communities and the invention of new socio-spatial identities.

In any case, the encounter between debordering and rebordering dynamics leads to complex processes, that are both multifarious and contextually driven. Depending on the type of actors involved, their strategies and resources, but also more broadly the balance of power between the two forces, different outcomes and trajectories are possible. Thus, empirical case studies become critical tools for examining notions of co-mingling in different border regions of the world.

## DEBORDERING AND REBORDERING IN THE SAN DIEGO–TIJUANA CROSS-BORDER METROPOLIS

The San Diego–Tijuana cross-border metropolitan region has a population of approximately 4.9 million.<sup>1</sup> This makes it the third largest conurbation on the west coast of North America, and the largest cross-border urban agglomeration in the western hemisphere. This region is sometimes thought of as a ‘transfrontier metropolis’, a condition where two urban settlements on either side of an international border share ecological resources, markets, industrial development, culture, trade, and common living and working spaces, such that they behave, in a sense, like a single functional metropolitan region, albeit, with different cultural origins and socio-economic levels (Herzog, 1990).

Combining the three Mexican municipalities’ total land area of about 1,700 square miles, with San Diego county’s 4,500 square miles, the sprawling region covers about 6,200 square miles. The different land areas in each city can be traced to the socio-cultural, historical and institutional contrasts in the way in which cities grow and change in Mexico and the US San Diego is a classic, late twentieth-century sunbelt metropolis whose expansion was fuelled by light manufacturing, construction, real estate, education, technology and other service economies. Its sprawling morphology was facilitated by a dispersed freeway system built to spread both jobs and residents across a low density, horizontal metropolitan pattern. Tijuana’s growth, on the other hand, was largely fuelled by its ties to California’s economy, mainly in the tourism, trade and assembly plant sectors, and in-migration from other regions of Mexico. The city’s built-up area is less spread out, partly due to the constraints of its physical setting (mountains, canyons usurp flat land for construction), and the cultural–historical traditions of living at higher densities and closer to the existing downtown core.

This is an economically vibrant international zone that produces a combined annual GDP of around \$140 billion with the principal economic sectors being manufacturing, biotech, tourism, services and defence (military). The anchor of the cross-border regional economy here is the assembly of industrial goods, as well as tourism and retail trade. Over 40 million people (10 million as pedestrians, the rest in vehicles) cross the border each year, and more than two million trucks carry goods back and forth. An estimated 50,000 Mexicans commute to work in the San Diego region on a daily or weekly basis. They are able to cross at one of three Ports of Entry (POEs) connecting the two cities.<sup>2</sup>

The main flows between San Diego and Tijuana are people and goods. Workers, shoppers, tourists, family members and school children travel north, while the movement south consists mainly of tourists, families, businesspersons and shoppers. The transborder shipment of goods is mostly tied to the assembly plant industry, with raw materials flowing south into the *maquilas* (assembly plants), and finished products flowing north. These goods travel mostly by truck in the San Diego–Tijuana region (CALTRANS, 2004; Herzog, 2009). The movement of people and goods is not uniform, either in terms of north-south flows, time of day or seasons. The greatest congestion occurs at the two primary crossings (Tijuana–San Ysidro and Mesa de Otay–Otay



Mesa), and usually is much larger flowing south to north (e.g. entering the USA), especially at peak hours (early morning commute, early evening commute), and on weekends in the afternoons and evenings. Truck congestion occurs mainly at the truck crossing facilities on both sides of the Mesa de Otay–Otay Mesa crossing. Truck traffic tends to build later in the work week, and also is linked to the institutions and agencies that are part of the administrative process – customs brokers, banks and *maquila* offices within the assembly plant, cross-border flows of inputs and outputs (SourcePoint, 2004).

Drug smuggling is also part of the cross-border economy, but due to its illegal nature, it is generally thought of in a separate category – the cross-border informal economy. It is difficult to estimate the size of cross-border flows of illegal drugs and payments. One study estimated that in 2007, one hundred billion dollars worth of cocaine and marijuana crossed into the United States (mainly across the Mexican border, but also by sea), of which, only \$1.6 billion was intercepted by drug enforcement authorities (Bagley, 2011).

The challenges for cross-border planning are greater here both because of the sheer size of the region (nearly 5 million population), and the sharp contrasts, from north to south, in economy, lifestyle and standards of living. While perhaps 25 or more percent of city dwellers in the Ensenada–Tijuana corridor live in conditions of substandard housing and insufficient services, nearly three quarters of southern California's residents, by contrast, live in relatively luxurious suburban dwellings, while all residents enjoy neighbourhood amenities such as schools, street lighting and paved roads, something not all Mexican border dwellers can count on.

Prior to 1960, cross-border integration between San Diego and Tijuana was limited by the fact that both cities were smaller in size (San Diego's metropolitan area was around one half million in 1950, while Tijuana's population was under one hundred thousand), and had not yet developed sophisticated economies aimed at international markets. San Diego, before 1960, was mainly a naval town, and port. It did not expand its tourism sector until after 1960. Tijuana, equally, was principally a gateway for migrants heading north. It experienced some growth after being discovered as a tourism destination in the 1920s and 1930s, but would not become a global tourism destination until the 1970s and 1980s (Piñera, 1985).

As early as the 1960s, the city of San Diego recognized that its future would need to be cast with an eye towards its southern neighbour; a 'Border Area Plan' was commissioned in 1965, the first attempt to rethink the growth of San Diego's south bay area and its links with Mexico (City of San Diego, 1965). That plan forecast San Ysidro as the anchor of the south bay/Mexico connection for the region. In 1973, the City of San Diego commissioned two city planning specialists to carry out a major design and planning study of the future of the region (Lynch & Appleyard, 1974). The resulting landmark report urged the city to rethink its planning strategies, placing greater emphasis on land use, environmental and design approaches that embraced the cross-border connections.

In the late 1970s, construction began on a 60 million dollar light rail connection between downtown San Diego and the Mexican border. One important rationale for building the 'border trolley' was the growing interdependence between the two border cities (MTDB, 1977). By the early and mid-1980s, the idea of transfrontier cooperation and binational planning began to emerge at local conferences, government meetings, public forums and in the print media (Herzog, 1986). Both the City of San Diego and County of San Diego created special offices to address border issues – the Binational Planning office in the city; the Department of Transborder Affairs in the county.

The problems of the border environment began to seriously confront regional planners, most notably those in the realm of border sewage spills, flooding and air pollution (see Herzog, 1990, pp. 189–246). Environmental issues in the San Diego–Tijuana border region have often transcended negotiation between the municipal governments, leading towards state, regional and national institutional actors. For example, water management is handled by the International

Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), which was created by a bilateral treaty, and continues to operate via either treaties or international memoranda of understanding. Meanwhile, water management and air pollution policy are both mediated by state and regional agencies, including the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) (USA) and the Secretary for Urban Development and Ecology (SIDUE) and Secretary for Environmental Protection (Mexico).

The early 1990s brought the passage of NAFTA, which for San Diego–Tijuana simply reinforced the recognition that economic integration would underscore the region's future. During this period, it became obvious that upgraded transport infrastructure was needed to strengthen the regional economy, including a third border crossing facility, a redesigned Port of Entry at San Ysidro, a binational mass transit connection between downtown San Diego and downtown Tijuana, cross-border highway linkages, regional port improvements in San Diego and Ensenada (Tijuana's service port some 70 miles to the south), rail linkage connections from the urban hinterland to both ports and a binational airport that would serve the transborder region (Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce & San Diego Dialogue, 1993).

11 September 2001 dramatically changed the bordering dynamics of the San Diego–Tijuana border zone. It imposed a nearly decade-long moratorium on cross-border economic growth and the infrastructure of integration. These were replaced by the gradual evolution of a 'wall' of heightened security, which wedged itself between California and Mexico. The formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a cabinet-level agency, consolidating the efforts of immigration, customs, border inspection, transportation security, the border patrol and maritime security, marked a watershed moment in 2001–2002. As drastic as it could be, this security-driven rebordering is part of a larger historical process characterized by a gradual increase of US government attention to sovereignty and boundary enforcement for most of the twentieth century (Nevens, 2010). Border policing was expanded, after the Second World War, to include more serious immigration policies, culminating with administration of President Ronald Reagan's Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986, which laid out the most comprehensive immigration control system to date. In the 1990s, anti-immigration groups and citizens began calling for more fences; the US government responded by creating new regional border control mechanisms, including Operation Hold the Line (El Paso, Texas) and Operation Gatekeeper (San Diego, California). Over the next two decades, some seven hundred miles of new fencing would be constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers, as well as more immigration detention centres and high-technology surveillance systems to further guard the boundary (Dear, 2013).

The sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2008 in the USA and the subsequent global recession further eroded the cross-border economy of San Diego–Tijuana. Both slowed the region's recovery from the security-driven post-2001 period. On top of this, the subsequent problem of drug smuggling and cartel violence in Tijuana also diminished the cross-border economy, by driving investors and consumers away. It took nearly half a decade for the region to begin to recover, but by 2011–2012, the optimism of the 1990s was starting to return. The global assembly sector continued to thrive in Tijuana, while new investors began returning to the region. Tourism started to expand, and young entrepreneurs were considering how to grow the border economy in innovative ways.

The San Diego–Tijuana border zone has often been pulled between the two extremes of debordering (cross-boundary interaction and flows) and rebordering (closing off the border for reasons of security). Tables 1 and 2 highlight some of the key examples of debordering and rebordering activities in the San Diego–Tijuana region, from 2001 to 2015. On the one hand (Table 1), there are important local and regional government agencies that intervene in favour of cross-border cooperation and economic development – these include the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, The Cali–Baja Binational Mega-region, the Tijuana Economic Development Council, the City and County of San Diego, the municipality of Tijuana, the SANDAG, the Metropolitan Transit System (San Diego) and the California Department of

**Table 1.** List of activities and projects linked to the debordering dynamic in San Diego–Tijuana (2001–2015).

Activity/project	Year	Stakeholder(s)	Category/type
Creation of Cali–Baja Binational Mega-region	2008– present	San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, Imperial Valley EDC, Tijuana EDC, Economic Promotion Commissions of Ensenada, Mexicali and Tecate	Economic development/trade
Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay Strategic Plan	2007	SANDAG	Economic development/trade
Survey and Analysis of Trade Goods on Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay	2003	SANDAG, CALTRANS	Economic development/trade
Bottleneck Study (traffic congestion at border)	2004	CALTRANS, SANDAG	Economic development/trade
Economic Impact of Wait Times study	2004	CALTRANS, SANDAG	Economic development/trade
California–Baja California Master Plan completed	2008	US–Mexico JWC, CALTRANS	Economic development/trade
Regional planning			
Opening of the El Chaparral Border Crossing at Tijuana/San Ysidro	2012	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT), Mexico	POE/transport
Measuring Cross-Border Travel times at Otay Mesa crossing. Final Report	2010	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), US Department of Transportation	Economic development/trade
Planning for third border crossing at Otay Mesa East	2008– present	SANDAG, Smart Border Coalition, County of San Diego	Economic development/trade
San Diego–Tijuana Cross-border Terminal/parking project, planning and construction	2008– 2015	Smart Border Coalition	Economic development/trade
Revitalization plan for downtown Tijuana	2008– 2015	Urban Land Institute, <i>Fideicomiso</i> for Tijuana Downtown, Municipality of Tijuana, Artists groups	Downtown redevelopment
Air quality monitoring of truck pollution, Memorandum of agreement with Mexico	2015– present	California Air Pollution Board	Environmental planning
‘Living with Water’ analysis of Tijuana River Valley, 5 Year Action Plan	2014	Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team	Environmental planning

(Continued)

**Table 1.** Continued.

Activity/project	Year	Stakeholder(s)	Category/type
Goat Canyon Sediment Basin Management Plan	2010	State of California Parks Department	Environmental planning
South Bay Wastewater Treatment, Secondary Facility completed	2011	IBWC, CalEPA), Southwest Quality Control Board	Environmental planning
Tijuana River Watershed Project	2001–present	CalEPA, SANDAG	Environmental planning
Opening of Binational Affairs Office in Tijuana	2013	City of San Diego, Office of the Mayor	Cross-border planning; economic development

Transportation (CALTRANS), among others. What is clear from Table 1 is that the issues that galvanize debordering are often those that involve building and maintaining the infrastructure/environments that house the cross-border economy: border crossings, roads, traffic studies or the larger strategic plans (Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay), revitalization plans (Tijuana) or environmental programmes (air quality, wastewater treatment, watershed, etc.) that define the region.

On the other (Table 2), a set of Federal agencies engage in border monitoring and aforementioned homeland security management. These include the General Services Administration (Port of Entry physical plant), Department of Homeland Security (including former US Customs, Immigration), Drug Enforcement Administration (Department of Justice), Department of Transportation and the Department of Commerce. The critical rebordering themes for San Diego–Tijuana, in the period of 2001–2015 (Table 2) have been consistent: enhancing the border fence, promoting security, curtailing drug smuggling, addressing violence and crime along the border.

At times, it appears as if these two sets of stakeholders and their objectives (cross-border cooperation vs. homeland security) operated in completely detached universes. Yet, as we explore below, this is no longer the case.

## THE CO-MINGLING OF DEBORDERING AND REBORDERING FORCES: THREE CASE STUDIES

As argued earlier in the paper, it is no longer entirely accurate to speak of these categories of debordering and rebordering as separate from each other. As the San Diego–Tijuana region grapples with its identity, there are several excellent examples during the period 2001–2015 that are illustrative of the ways in which debordering and rebordering have become intertwined, each having an influence on the other, leading to a border society where these seemingly disparate forces actually co-exist. What follow below are examples of the three cases and patterns of co-mingling derived from theoretical reflections. Considering these patterns using qualitative empirical data allows us to test the validity of the hypotheses derived from border theory and consider the practical implications for the development and planning of the cross-border metropolis.

### Accommodating border security and transit: the example of San Diego–Tijuana transportation infrastructure planning

In the years following September 9/11, 2001, the San Diego–Tijuana region began to experience profound delays and breakdown of what we might term its cross-border trade/exchange

**Table 2.** List of activities and projects linked to the rebordering dynamic in San Diego–Tijuana (2001–2015).

Activity/project	Year	Stakeholder	Category/type
Real ID Act. Waive restrictions on construction along international border	2005	US Congress	Border fence/wall,
Secure Fence Act: Build 700 miles of fence/vehicle barriers, lighting along US–Mexican border	2006	US Congress	Border fence/wall
Report on US–Mexico Border Security	2011	General Accounting Office	Border security
San Diego County Regional Human Trafficking Advisory Council formed	2013	County of San Diego	Border human trafficking/security
US firearms smuggled into Mexico	2006–2011	Mexican border cities Mexican federal government US border cities	Border violence
Allocation of Federal budget for US border patrol increased	2001–2009	US Department of Homeland Security US Congress Office of the President	Border security
Merida Initiative signed into law, \$1.6 billion from US allocated to Mexican military for use in combatting drug cartels, smuggling, stop flow of guns	2008	US Congress Mexican congress Office of the US President Office of the Mexican President US Customs, Border Patrol Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Mexican military	Combat drug traffic across US–Mexican border, combat organized crime in Mexico
Crime in Tijuana peaks to its highest levels	2005–2008	US State Department report, LA Times	Border Crime
US Government issues a travel warning for border areas	2005–2008	US Department of State	Border crime/Organized crime in Mexico
Studies show that US increase in border surveillance causing expansion and sophistication among Mexican drug cartels along border	2013	Testimonies, US Senate Department of Homeland Security	Border security/surveillance

infrastructure – freeways, connector roads and the port of entry facilities. As these delays piled up, local and regional government agencies realized there were severe consequences for a cross-border economy that had been yielding up to \$60 billion per year in trade and economic exchange.

For more than a decade, governments have responded with a series of formal studies and new projects aimed at fixing the growing problem of inadequate transfrontier infrastructure (roads, bridges, rail lines, port of entry buildings). This portfolio of plans and projects (see Table 1), among other things, makes it clear that, in the new millennium, planning agencies engaged in debordering acts (cross-border transit) must now become better informed with homeland security policy (rebordering), since it has become a part of cross-border planning and policy. As one study from that period stated:

Steady growth in global and regional economic integration squeezes ever more people and goods through border infrastructure that was sized for a much smaller and radically less security-conscious economy. (HDR-HLB Decision Economic Inc., 2006, p. vi)

In the first few years after 9/11, concern with the condition of roads and POEs between San Diego and Tijuana grew. Indeed, during the 1990s, the size and scale of the cross-border economy had mushroomed, following the signing of NAFTA in 1992–1993. Investment in the region boomed in the 1990s, while cross-border trade steadily climbed. Numerous policy documents from the period were optimistic that the infrastructure for the movement of trucks and people would continue to expand in line with the growing cross-border economy (Herzog, 2009). However, the 9/11 events and the subsequent formation of the DHS slowed down funding and actual construction of cross-border transport infrastructure; projects identified in plans for financing construction were backlogged, and many never built. This was primarily due to the shift in priorities towards building border fences, detention facilities, drone surveillance systems and the like, at the expense of transport projects, such as highways, bridges and rail transit near the border (SourcePoint, 2004). Meanwhile, in the mid-2000s the State of California was experiencing early signals of a budget crisis, which would further interrupt the completion of border infrastructure projects. The impact on the debordering/rebordering dynamics was mixed. On the one hand, border fences and greater security would seem to translate into more ‘rebordering’ by creating, at least the image of more physical barriers (whether these actually slow down undocumented migration is another question); on the other hand, the lack of either new roads, or wider highways meant more traffic congestion, which made it harder to screen incoming flows of vehicles.

After a few years, some cross-border infrastructure studies and projects that were temporarily delayed by the 9/11 events finally began to move forward (see Table 1). One of the first, in 2003, was the long-awaited *Survey and Analysis of Trade Goods* by CALTRANS and SANDAG (SAIC, 2003). It was the first study of its kind that used a cross-section of on-site interviews and other survey approaches to systematically understand the problem of commercial delays in the movement of goods across the California–Mexican border. Among other things, it analysed cross-border shipping patterns by the key private sector stakeholders in binational commerce: maquiladoras (assembly and manufacturer), customs brokers, non-agricultural shippers (definitive importers), agricultural shippers (produce importers/exporters) and transportation companies. Its goal was to find a basis for improvements either in border transportation infrastructure or federal inspection procedures. The study made it clear that, although transport infrastructure needed to be understood, so too did the role of Federal inspection agencies, including those concerned with security. This was established early in the report when it stated:

Since the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, the country’s ports of entry have come under increasing scrutiny as to their ability to protect the nation from the illegal entry of people and contraband, particularly those posing terrorist threats. These new circumstances have made the traditional act of balancing trade

flow with adequate inspection even more challenging.

(SAIC, 2003, p. iii)

The above quote is significant, since it marks a moment in time when the two critical transit planning agencies – CALTRANS and SANDAG – increased US government attention to sovereignty and boundary enforcement (Nevins, 2010), finally acknowledged the overlap of national security phenomena with their mission. In a sense, this points to the fact that transit planning agencies along international borders were now being called upon to expand their scope of analysis to global issues like security, since, as this study pointed out, many sectors like customs and drug enforcement were increasingly woven into the transit congestion problem.

Out of the seven major recommendations that grew out of this report, six directly included security concerns: performance monitoring, increase dedicated inspection lanes, add customs and border protection (CBP) staff at the POE, create longer and more flexible hours, binational coordination at Customs/inspection facilities, and the overall cost of delays. This demonstrates the degree to which the two bordering dynamics in fact, nest one inside the other. More precisely, in this case it is rebordering (security) that has penetrated the cross-border transportation planning and policy process. The only recommendation not directly tied to rebordering was improving road infrastructure, which was needed due to the high volume of trucks and vehicles carrying more and more goods across the border. The other recommendations fully embraced the idea that improving the cross-border flows required better management of the inspection and filtering facilities, which are all engaged in some form of rebordering – and which now have greater responsibility in more exhaustive monitoring of border crossings for national security purposes. To mitigate these greater demands, a series of changes were identified, as mentioned, from performance monitoring (that would lead to identifying problems and fixing them) to increasing dedicated lanes for filtering types of crossers, increasing monitoring staff, operating more hours and coordinating the process with Mexico. Even then, all of this implies some level of delay and thus greater costs to shippers, customs brokers and trucking companies.

A year later, in 2004, two similar studies emerged with parallel themes. They included (Table 1) the *Economic Impact of Wait Times at the San Diego–Baja California Border* (HDR-HLB Decision Economic Inc., 2006) and the *Bottleneck Study* (CALTRANS, 2004). The latter, the Bottleneck Study was a traffic engineering and scientific attempt to analyse ways to relieve congestion at the border. It used a ‘systems capacity’ approach to disaggregate ‘congestion’ into three categories: infrastructure, traffic jurisdiction and national enforcement. It claimed early on that, while it did not include security in its analytical purview, it recognized its importance:

As previously acknowledged by the Joint Working Committee (JWC), bottlenecks can also be due to National Enforcement Laws (NEL) enforced at the international ports of entry.

(CALTRANS, 2004, p. xi)

Here we see that a transport agency can no longer merely using engineering techniques to address transit planning. Clearly, when its analysis employs only engineering-type data (traffic counts, observation of road infrastructure details), its findings are limited by the fact that its main subject of analysis is trucks flowing through roads that are delayed when vehicles cross into CBP (security) zones, on both sides of the border. Once again, the categories of debordering and rebordering end up becoming co-mingled, even when there is no intention to do so. What began as contrasting fields have increasingly merged. This co-mingling represents a source of ongoing debate and struggle for policy makers in these different public policy realms.

By 2007 and 2008, the next phase of transportation infrastructure construction and improvement took place – the drafting of strategic plans and master plans to officially guide government agencies in the actual building or remodelling of POEs and transport facilities supporting those

POEs. The Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan (Table 1) was published in 2007. Although it is very much a planning document, throughout the plan references are made to stakeholders from the security areas of government – the US Department of State, the Customs and Border Patrol, etc. Also, the plan claims that its stakeholders are organized through what is called the Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM). The BLM was set up by the USA Department of State, which asserts that the BLM was created to:

[...] provide a valuable forum for local administrative and law enforcement officials on both sides of the border to use to improve border liaison and cooperation. The BLM was developed in response to a growing need for institutionalized border cooperation. It includes U.S. and Mexican Consuls, civic leaders, inspection agency representatives and law enforcement contacts who meet to share information and discuss problems.

(US Department of State, 2015)

Thus, even a planning document like the Otay Mesa–Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Plan is inherently tied to a stakeholder process originally set up to promote dialogue over security issues.

In 2008, the *California–Baja California Master Plan* (see Table 1) was drafted, the first of its kind for any adjacent US and Mexican states along the border (SANDAG, 2008). The purpose of the plan was to coordinate a cooperative approach to the development and planning of all the major POEs along the California–Baja California border. It seeks to permanently institutionalize the planning process, identifying all the stakeholders at different scales of government, the issues, and a way to allow those groups to work together to plan for growth of the major POEs and their surrounding functional zones that connect the economies and people of Baja California and California. While this document does not have an explicitly ‘security’-driven theme, it does recognize the importance of having the urban/regional planning process integrated to the highest levels of government on both sides of the border. The document explains its purpose as:

The California–Baja California Border Master Plan process is a new tool that can be used to help prioritize infrastructure projects and enhance coordination of planning and implementation of POE and transportation projects in both the United States and Mexico. A comprehensive approach helps agencies in both California and Baja California complete needed projects to efficiently facilitate international trade and improve the quality of life for residents in the border region.

(SANDAG, 2008, pp. ES–15)

Many of the listed stakeholders in this document are Federal agencies on both sides of the border associated with security.

Ultimately, this example shows how the clash of opposing bordering dynamics related to the functional role of borders as both barriers and interfaces has resulted in compromises that take the form of differentiated filtering practices and selective permeability. More specifically, the analysis of different planning approaches for the San Diego–Tijuana border crossing infrastructure shows how it has evolved since 2001; we now observe the nesting of security-driven concerns within transit and transportation infrastructure planning operations, thus illustrating the increasingly tighter connection between the two fields.

### Struggling over shifting boundaries: the border fence in the Tijuana river estuary

Shortly after 9/11, in 2002, the US federal government created the DHS. Just a few years later, the US Congress passed the Real ID Act (see Table 2), on 11 May 2005 (U.S. Congress, 2005). This was accompanied by a companion law called the Secure Fence Act, passed in 2006 (Table 2). The main focus of this legislation was on citizen identification, visa limits for temporary workers and asylum regulations, but it also addressed construction of physical barriers along international



boundaries. The Act gave DHS authority over local planning agencies to build security infrastructure deemed necessary to protect the international boundary line, whether or not that apparatus might have a clear negative impact on local ecosystems, transportation projects or the larger sub-regional economy.

Specifically, the 2005 bill included language that the Secretary of Homeland Security shall have 'the authority to waive, and shall waive, all laws' that he 'determines necessary to ensure expeditious construction of the barriers and roads' along the international borders of the USA (as cited in Mumme, 2006). This rather draconian provision trumped all federal, state, tribal and municipal law, literally exempting DHS from either the environmental impact statement process or any other public disclosure required by the National Environmental Policy Act, even in the planning process. It, in effect, nullified the normal constitutional 'police powers' that municipal governments have over their land use plans. The Real ID Act was opposed by many environmental advocacy groups. In 2007, the Sierra Club and Defender of Wildlife filed a complaint with the US District Court, challenging the 2005 law. The challenge was rejected in late 2007, but remains an issue along the frontier.

Since 2005, this provision has paved the way for the construction of almost 700 miles of new barriers, roads and fences along the US–Mexico boundary. Its impact in southern San Diego was quite dramatic from an environmental and quality of life point of view. The 2005 Act called for a new fence to be built across nearly four miles of border between the San Ysidro port of entry and the Pacific Ocean. This fence would run parallel to an existing Seabee landing mat fence that had been constructed in the 1990s. However, the new high-tech version of the fence would be built in a nearly perfect straight line cutting through five canyons west of Interstate 5 and just south of Dairy Mart road. To construct the fence, CBP would contract with the US Army Corps of Engineers to level the mesa tops above the canyons, including the notorious 'Smuggler's Gulch,' and use the debris as fill to level the base for the two tiers of fencing and road that would run down the middle. The objective was to construct barriers that prevented physical crossing, while also preserving a clear field of vision for border patrol agents and allowing ready access in the event anyone did pass the southern-most barriers. The fencing extends a short distance beyond the high tide line into the ocean.

Both the process of construction and the physical fence itself, according to environmental experts, have major ramifications. The 3.5 mile fence extension cuts along the south side of highly pristine ecological zones, including the Tijuana Estuary National Wildlife Refuge, the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, Border Field State Park and the San Diego County Regional Park. Even in the midst of an urbanizing region of over five million inhabitants, this zone has remained a somewhat insulated ecological refuge. The public preserves and parks are the result of more than half a century of local effort to set aside public domain and preserve one of the last undeveloped coastal wetlands remaining in Southern California. Local environmentalists raised public investment funds to acquire and preserve this public endowment with all its fauna and flora (Michel, 2005). Over 370 avian species utilize this wetland on a seasonal or permanent basis, as well as various species of animals and fish (TRNERRS, 2005). The estuary counts several threatened and endangered species among its permanent residents. Such efforts have been internationally recognized. In fact, the United Nations designated the estuary as a wetland of international importance in 2005 (Michel, 2005). Environmentalists believe construction alone has caused tons of sediment and debris to flow into the wetland, altering patterns of habitat and reproduction for resident wildlife. In 2009, the Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission called the project a 'wall of shame' (Reese, 2009). Destruction of the mesa tops would eliminate or drastically reduce several unique species of plants. The fence threatened the last known patch of maritime succulent scrub in California. Even after construction finished, roads passing near the estuarine reserve create traffic that churns up clouds of dust, adding to the air pollution and particulate problem at the border.

This case clearly illustrates a moment when debordering (recognition of the cross-border environment as a policy issue) collided with the rebordering efforts of politicians pushing to allow the DHS powers to build barriers with virtually no environmental oversight. Thus, what was disturbing in the Tijuana estuary case was that proponents of border fencing were unwilling and disinterested in exploring other alternatives to border security and their rebordering strategy, even when it was inextricably linked to the sensitive waterland ecology of the western Tijuana river estuary. Observers further claim that, at the time in 2005–2006, there was virtually no consideration of more environmentally friendly alternatives. Indeed, no serious environmental engineering impact study was done prior to constructing the new high-tech fence through the estuary. DHS–CBP failed to provide detailed assessments of policy alternatives, even in terms of alleged migration effects. Alternative proposals presented by local groups were rebuffed by CBP (Mumme, 2006). So, it seems that the security-led rebordering approach has, in fact, imposed its view at the expense of environmental concerns. Despite this authoritarian fencing of the boundary line by US Federal authorities, the two fields (i.e. national security and environmental protection) are still not fully aligned as border policy. This is why the transborder dimension of environmental planning continues to be considered by many local and regional actors as a legitimate policy category of action.

### Inventing a new spatial identity: the example of downtown Tijuana revitalization

Tijuana, from its inception, was a city whose economy was built around tourist services oriented towards California. Many of the city's historic landmarks – the tower of the Hotel Agua Caliente, the racetrack, bullring and curio-shop lined Revolution Avenue – are testimony to its iconic 'border town' economy, created in the early decades of the twentieth century (Piñera, 1985). By the late twentieth century, new global economic forces (free trade, assembly plant manufacturing) led Mexican officials to begin to question what scholars considered Tijuana's urban reality that increasingly represents urban fantasy (Arreola & Curtis, 1993). Downtown Tijuana, in particular, had been the main locale for the booming tourism infrastructure – restaurants, nightclubs, curio shops, street vendors, even a Jai Alai palace. The carnival-like atmosphere, over time, turned Tijuana's downtown into a Mexican theme park-like place. Some ten million Americans visit Baja California each year, many passing through Tijuana; they spend close to one billion dollars annually (Herzog, 2009).

One of the immediate impacts of 9/11 was the steady decline of downtown Tijuana as an international tourism zone. From a space that earned tens of millions of dollars annually for the border economy, downtown Tijuana, within a year or two following the September 9/11 terrorism attacks, faded practically into a ghost town. Tourists disappeared from the streets of Revolution Avenue. The curio shops, restaurants and other 'gringo'-oriented stores were abandoned. Many were forced to shut down. This was both a response to the crisis of 9/11, and to the subsequent delays in crossing the border (Herzog, 2009; IMPLAN, 2014).

The decade of the 2000s continued to bring bad news for businesses in downtown Tijuana, and for the tourism economy in general. By the mid-2000s, infighting among drug smuggling 'cartels' spilled over into border cities like Tijuana. It was not uncommon to hear about shootings or kidnappings in public places, sometimes involving innocent bystanders. This literally drove the last US customers away from Tijuana, and sealed the fate of the downtown international tourism scene. By 2007–2008, the sub-prime mortgage crisis and recession in the USA further deflated the cross-border economy, and was grim news for businesses in Tijuana's central business district.

Meanwhile, as US federal agencies responded to the narcotics smuggling and border violence situation, some scholars have shown that crackdowns on Mexican cartels actually made the border more unsecured. As US rebordering forces (from drug enforcement, customs and border patrol to gun control) began to police the boundary, and monitor cross-border drug trafficking, this had the unexpected side-effect of fragmenting the cartel leadership. The resulting uncertainty placed drug

smuggling operations into greater competition with each other, which forced them to become more sophisticated, but also often more pro-active in protecting their territories. This led to greater cartel-on-cartel violence, kidnappings, homicides and insecurity, which sometimes played out on the streets including along the Tijuana/Baja California border (Shirk, 2011). The resulting publicity in international media further diminished the flow of US tourists and consumers to Tijuana. Obviously, Tijuana was not the only Mexican border city where cartel violence occurred; similar or greater levels of violence have been reported in Ciudad Juarez, along the Texas–Mexican border, as well as in other cities.

Downtown Tijuana had long suffered from neglect and decay, as well as overcrowding. The exodus of businesses after 9/11 was just another reminder that the city needed to change its approach to redevelopment. A grass-roots movement to alter downtown began around 2008. Local entrepreneurs, artists and business people began thinking about redevelopment in a globally innovative way, that is, by turning Tijuana into a twenty-first-century centre of innovation in art, design, crafts, small-scale businesses and regional cuisine. They saw this as a way of moving beyond the outdated image of Tijuana as a place of crime, violence, chaos, or even as a symbol of crass commercialism, a sort of Disneyland for US consumers. The simultaneous juxtaposition of debordering and rebordering, in this case, is altering the place-making strategies of young Mexican residents and entrepreneurs, as they seek new ways of thinking about their homeland and city, and in responding to the global conditions of drug smuggling, violence and changing US perceptions of Mexico.

In fact, place-making offers a critical tool for understanding the degree to which the future of downtown Tijuana is a dialectic between debordering and rebordering (Herzog, 2016). In Tijuana's centre, the two concepts are simultaneously intertwined, yet in contention. For example, it is ironic yet meaningful that Tijuana's reputation as an edgy border town has also been the reason it continues to attract visitors and interest from the global media, creative artists or film-makers. Once an early twentieth-century passageway for smuggling, a century later, it became a stage for narco-trafficking and a period of violence that drove tourists away. Yet, that very thing that drove people away also remains part of Tijuana iconic cultural image, an image that will not fade away so quickly, even as the city begins to reinvent itself (Herzog, 2006). The reason this image will not fade away is that Americans, like most global consumers today, crave the fantasy narrative of exotic places like Las Vegas, or Hollywood. This is part of what scholars term the post-modern cultural landscape (Dear, 2000), and it is an aesthetic that continues to attract consumers across the planet, as evidenced by spending in shopping malls, theme parks and other artificial consumer spaces.

In effect, as Tijuana contemplates a new approach to redeveloping its downtown, part of the success of that project will revolve around how Tijuana's identity is negotiated, and whether it can become a place that people want to live in and do business in. The Tijuana metropolitan region is projected to grow from 1.8 million in 2015 to 2.7 million in 2025 (ULI, 2014). Its income is predicted to increase by 79% during that period; it will need some 300,000 new housing units to accommodate its larger population. One of the tenets of the redevelopment of downtown Tijuana will be shifting the construction of housing away from sprawling suburbs that many residents have abandoned (Herzog, 2015), towards the downtown core, where experts are calling for the building of some 10,000 housing units over the next decade, adding about 30,000 new residents to downtown (IMPLAN, 2014).

However, the ability of downtown Tijuana to become a vibrant business and residential zone will, as mentioned, be mediated by how it negotiates the debordering/rebordering dynamic. Tijuana will need to reassure outsiders that it is, once again, a safe place. Once that is achieved, once the rebordering paradigm of security is relaxed, Tijuana can begin to allow its revival to be built around making the neighbourhood an attractive place for Mexicans to live and work. This process started around 2008–2010, when young entrepreneurs and artists began opening

small galleries and shops in the abandoned spaces along Revolution Avenue, and in the two nearby sunken *pasajes*. It seems clear that artists, designers and others want to take back what was once an 'other directed place' (Jackson, 1970) for US tourists and make it a place for Mexican residents. They want to build an economy tied to art, design, regional cuisine, craft breweries, and boutique stores selling locally produced clothing or other folk products. Border artists want to open galleries here, while business interests imagine a lucrative market for offices. There are numerous historically attractive buildings, especially the old Jai Alai building, old cantinas, dance halls, movie theatres and stores that could be refurbished to create a sense of place and local identity, and attract the 'creative class' back into the centre. This would mirror a similar process that has occurred in the USA, where knowledge workers, scientists, technology entrepreneurs and artists have become part of a demographic and economic transformation of urban centres (Florida, 2002).

Investors, local entrepreneurs and others have already begun to discover the possibilities of reinventing Tijuana's downtown. Since 2010, an impressive number of new development projects, mostly small-scale, have sprung up around the centre. These include new schools, cultural centres, restaurants, micro-breweries, wine bars, high-tech offices, co-working spaces, rental housing projects, and the already mentioned renovation of the sunken *pasajes* (markets) (Dibble, 2016; Valadolid, 2016). There is talk of building a bus rapid transit line connecting downtown to the border, and other parts of Tijuana, as well as larger mixed-use, high-rise development projects in and around downtown.

As this shift in urban development unfolds, it signals a condition that is neither full-blown debordering (since the success of the new downtown is now tied to local, Mexican use rather than foreign consumers), nor a robust rebordering, since any actions that point to border policing will still bring instability to downtown Tijuana, which sits only a few hundred paces from the international boundary. In fact, the hardening of border controls and the construction of a triple fence has pushed the Mexican border city to reconsider its relation to the border and to invent its own territorial identity. This ongoing process has, so far, taken the direction of creating a sense of place that is more centred on what the city is, or wants to become, for itself, instead of continuing to focus on its proximity to San Diego and its cross-border interdependence. Yet, Tijuana's recent, locally based movement to rebuild its downtown in its own interests is very much a sign of yet another iteration of a border entity working through the debordering/rebordering dialectic. Downtown Tijuana's future is inextricably linked to a fragile balancing act where debordering and rebordering remain passively co-mingled, but where neither disrupts the transformation of the original historic border downtown. This could usher in a new and quite different era, since the history of this border has been one of chaos, uncertainty and constant change. It is possible that border citizens may yet find ways to calmly co-mingle the forces of debordering and rebordering.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have explored the ways trade-oriented debordering and security-led rebordering are simultaneously embedded in policy-making within the San Diego–Tijuana cross-border metropolis. We have arrived at a moment in history when globalizing border regions have become places where intense cross-border economic activities and flows exist alongside hardened militarized border policing practices. Most studies dealing with these seemingly contradictory forces of debordering and rebordering have focused on statecraft and the emergence of new border regimes where geoeconomic and geo-political discourses are either coupled or dissonant. For their part, critical perspectives have theorized and contested the conditions that give rise to new bordering practices and categories. Our analysis is different, in the sense that it is pragmatic and aimed at deriving knowledge from practices of border-making occurring within a specific place considered as particularly illustrative. In so doing, we have adopted a 'bordering perspective', considering

borders as social constructions and looking at how policy-making arenas increasingly express these social constructions through a globalizing political process where debordering and rebordering become entangled.

As a first step, we have inventoried and described the different planning initiatives and decision-making processes that have occurred over the last 15 years and that have contributed to either foster or accommodate cross-border interaction and flows or enhance the fortification and the security at the border between San Diego and Tijuana. In a second step, we have shown how these different initiatives are actually not separated but intertwined and mutually influence each other. To best grasp the interaction between the two forces of debordering and rebordering, we have adopted a tripartite analytical framework based on the functional, constructionist and symbolic dimensions of borders. The concrete modalities of these entangled and apparently contradictory forces vary from one domain to another, depending on the balance of power between the interests involved and the aspects of the border considered.

Our analysis thus sought to address a gap we identified in cross-border research. For studies of dynamic transnational regions like the US–Mexico border zone, what was left unclear by scholars was understanding how the two sides (Mexico, USA) would negotiate the growing interdependent economic and cultural relationship, partner to build post-NAFTA border infrastructure and address emerging environmental challenges in the context of the politics of globalization and the changing role of the international border. We have argued in this paper that these negotiations of policy in a globalizing world can only be understood by rethinking what we term ‘bordering’ behaviours. Further, what has been largely missing in the scholarly literature is the kind of fine-grained, micro-level, empirically based approach to cross-border metropolitan areas, combined with theoretical reflections, as reported in this article.

We view bordering as a permanent fixture in borderland regions like San Diego–Tijuana. Bordering we have argued, is not an ‘either/or’ binary condition. Neither is it a condition where decision-making oscillates between political and policy environments that favour either extreme of debordering or rebordering. Rather, our research convinces us that bordering is an inherently co-mingled process, whereby institutional, economic and socio-cultural behaviours simultaneously embrace both elements of rebordering and debordering.

We have argued here that bordering, in its essence, is best understood by observing how governments and power structures end up co-mingling the extremes of rebordering and debordering behaviours. On the one hand, national governments have traditionally sought to protect their sovereign borders. For example, in times of crisis, elected officials reassert ‘border protection’ (rebordering) as the solution to problems ranging from terrorism and crime to immigration and job loss. At the same time, the realities of globalization necessitate that state actors acknowledge the increasing role of transnational markets, trade, global manufacturing, international communication and global labour flows.

Our research uncovered examples of the ways co-mingling, in fact, came to define the politics of border policy, and how governmental structures are set up to address it. Indeed, we found that our bordering approach helps explain shifting political power dynamics along the US–Mexico border, and especially for the San Diego–Tijuana cases we explored. For example, in our case studies, we demonstrated that although institutions were created quickly in a period of debordering following the signing of NAFTA in 1993, these did not occur in a vacuum. Less than a decade into the cross-border optimism of the post-NAFTA signing period, the 9/11 terrorism attack in the USA led a Republican president (George W. Bush) to impose an intense rebordering platform in US–Mexico foreign policy.

In the first case study of border security and transit planning near POEs along the border, we found that during the decade of the 2000s, and beyond, public sector transport infrastructure planning on the USA side of the border – for highways, bridges or port of entry buildings – became infused with new policy concerns related to security (providing more surveillance, more customs

personnel, and special lanes for security checks, especially for trucks). Infrastructure planning along borders became so much more complicated that the USA and Mexico agreed, for the first time, to craft a US–Mexico Border Master Plan, which presumably would help integrate infrastructure planning with security concerns. Thus, from a functional perspective, this example points to practices of filtering and selective permeability as a means to cope with the border as a security/economy nexus. The confrontation between antagonistic interests results in compromises (finding the point of equilibrium between the security imperatives and economic interests) and the common integration of their management within the border regime (the two aspects are handled together).

In the second case study (border fence in the Tijuana River Estuary), we found that by imposing a Federal ‘homeland security’ policy approach upon a border zone that encompasses a highly fragile and protected ecological preservation area (the Tijuana River watershed), environmental protections were loosened and endangered habitat and valuable bodies of water were severely threatened. From a constructionist point of view, this example illustrates the changing character of border-related categories and divisions. It notably sheds light on the struggles that accompany the imposition of a security-led rebordering along the physical line vis-à-vis conceptions that value the cross-border environment and therefore transgress and shift the inherited border categories and divisions.

In the third case study, the revitalization of downtown Tijuana shows how the US-led rebordering has dramatically changed the symbolic image of the border (from a resource to an obstacle). This has resulted in attempts to reposition the Mexican border city’s image, moving away from a crass leisure and commercial centre for US visitors to a dynamic and more independent Mexican border city. This example also uncovered a grass-roots campaign in Tijuana that is encouraging Mexican border residents to break their dependence on the USA, in this case by crafting local economic development approaches that are less dependent on the USA. This organic response to a new wave of US national protectionism is a powerful new moment in the global bordering project. One could argue that Tijuana’s locally grown economic independence could end up having negative repercussions for California businesses that previously depended on Mexican consumers or suppliers. The border remains an ever-changing political space. This reminder is especially sobering in the post-election ambience of US president Trump in early 2017, which featured an early wave of nationalist, anti-Mexican sentiments coming out of the White House.

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## NOTES

1. This assumes the region is defined by including the county of San Diego combined with the municipalities of Tijuana, Rosarito Beach and Tecate.
2. The Otay Mesa East port of entry is expected to be ready in 2021.

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