Borders, Migrants, and Writing

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We tend to think of migrants as moving between states and borders as fortifications of states. I would like to prove the reverse: that migrants produce and reproduce the state in the first place. I think we have got this story backward, and I think a very different politics would arise by getting this the right way round. I would like to try and rethink political philosophy starting from the figure of the migrant.

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Introduction

Today there are more than 1 billion regional and international migrants, and the number continues to rise: within 40 years, it might double due to climate change. While many migrants might not cross a regional or international border, people change residences and jobs more often, while commuting longer and farther to work. This increase in human mobility and expulsion affects us all. It should be recognized as a defining feature of our epoch: the 21st century will be the century of the migrant.

In order to manage and control this mobility, the world is becoming ever more bordered. In just the past 20 years, but particularly since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the US, and more recently the war in Syria, hundreds of new borders have emerged around the world: miles of new razor-wire fences and concrete security walls, numerous offshore detention centers, biometric passport databases, and security checkpoints in schools, airports and along various roadways across the world. All attest to the present preoccupation with controlling social motion through borders.

This preoccupation, however, also runs through the history of Western civilization. I have built an entire research program around the study of these

processes and patterns of motion as they emerge and mix through history. I call it the “philosophy of movement.” In my work, I have found that a few common patterns of motion tend to circulate across the arts, sciences, ontology, and politics. In this paper I focus on a brief summary of my findings in the realm of politics and the key figure of the migrant. I call this study of the patterns of human social movement, “kinopolitics.” I use the prefix, “kino-,” in this paper and elsewhere to designate the primacy of motion even in processes typically not interpreted as being about movement. More specifically, my aim here is to show how some patterns of human mobility, or “kinetics,” expand by expelling and accumulating the movements of other bodies, broadly called “migrants.”

My historical thesis is that the expansion of Western civilization required, and continues to require, the continual expulsion of migrant populations. This process includes the territorial techniques of dispossessing people from their land through miles of new fencing (invented during the Neolithic period); political techniques of stripping people of their right to free movement and inclusion with new walls to keep out foreigners (invented during the Ancient period and put to use in Egypt, Greece and Rome); juridical techniques of criminalization and cellular confinement (invented during the European Middle Ages); and economic techniques of unemployment and expropriation surveyed by a continuous series of checkpoints (an innovation of the Modern era). The return and mixture of all these historical techniques, thought to have been excised by modern liberalism, now define a growing portion of everyday social life.

This is the century of the migrant because the return of these historical methods now makes it clear for the first time that the migrant has always been a constitutive social figure. In other words, migrants are not marginal or exceptional figures, as they have so often been treated, but rather the essential lever by which all hitherto existing societies have sustained and expanded their social form. Territorial societies, states, juridical systems and economies all required the social expulsion of migrants in order expand. The recent explosion in mobility demands that we rethink political history from the perspective of the migrant.

Take an example from ancient history: the barbarian (the second major historical name of the migrant, after the nomad). In the ancient West, the dominant social form of the political state would not have been possible without the mass expulsion, or political dispossession, of a large body of barbarian slaves kidnapped from the mountains of the Middle East and Mediterranean and used as workers, soldiers and servants so that a growing ruling class could live in luxury – surrounded by city walls. The romanticized classical worlds of Greece and Rome were built and sustained by migrant slaves, by 'barbarians', whom Aristotle defined by their fundamental mobility and their natural inability for political action, speech, and organization.[1]

Some of the same techniques – and their justifications – of ancient political expulsion are still in effect today. Migrants in the US and Europe, both documented and undocumented, sustain whole sectors of economic and social life that would collapse without them. At the same time, these migrants remain largely depoliticized compared with the citizens their labor sustains, often because of their partial or non-status. Just as Greeks and Romans were capable of incredible military, political and cultural expansion only on the condition of the political expulsion of cheap or free migrant labor, so it is with Europeans and Americans today.

If this connection seems outlandish, then consider how migrants are described in recent media. The rhetorical connection is as explicit as the architectural one of building giant border walls. In the US, people such as Samuel Huntington and Patrick Buchanan have worried about a 'Mexican immigrant invasion' of 'American civilisation'. In the UK, The Guardian published an editorial on Europe's crisis that ended by describing refugees as the 'fearful dispossessed' who are 'rattling Europe's gates' – a direct historical reference to the barbarian invasion of Rome. In France, Marine Le Pen said at a rally in 2015 that 'this migratory influx will be like the barbarian invasion of the fourth century, and the consequences will be the same'. Even the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, has described the recent refugees with the same 'dangerous waters' and military metaphors used by Romans to depoliticize barbarians: refugees are a

'great tide' that has 'flooded into Europe' producing 'chaos' that needs to be 'stemmed and managed'. 'We are slowly becoming witnesses to the birth of a new form of political pressure,' Tusk claims, 'and some even call it a kind of a new hybrid war, in which migratory waves have become a tool, a weapon against neighbors.'

This rhetorical inscription of immigrants as dangerous criminals continues more recently. Anti-immigrant media representations and rhetoric have proliferated—often with the effect of treating migrants as criminals before any crime has been committed. In particular, the spread of images and rhetoric of the migrant caravan as a military 'invasion' of the United states has had disastrous consequences. President Trump called the caravan an 'invasion' and 'an assault on our country'; the Associated Press called it an 'army of migrants' and tweeted about 'a ragtag army of the poor'; and Robert Bowen murdered 11 people in a Synagogue because a Jewish refugee group supported caravan refugees. Trump even told the border patrol to shoot migrants if they throw rocks. This aesthetic criminalization of migrants and the rise of cyber-racism helped mobilize anti-immigrant militia groups and popular support against refugees. Now refugees are being deported from the US and detained in cages in Mexico *as if* they were criminals. The explicit media framing of migrants as a violent, criminal, military invasion is a an old historical tactic with a huge popular resurgence in the US and Europe.

Written commentary about migration is not a neutral. It can contribute to social "criminalization" with real effects for migrants. This exposes the real material and historical political act of writing that often hides beneath the language of the freedom of speech—as if speech were not an act with real consequences in the world. We should think about borders not just as dividing lines between countries but as cultural and aesthetic structures that also have effects on legal policy, law enforcement, electoral politics, and thus the lives and deaths of migrants. This is why we need to actively refuse the cultural and aesthetic criminalization of migrants and develop a new political aesthetics of the migrant.

This will be the century of the migrant not just because of the sheer magnitude of the phenomenon, but because the asymmetry between citizens and migrants has finally reached its historical breaking point. The prospects for any structural improvements in this situation are hard to imagine, but alternatives are not without historical precedent. Before any specific solutions can be considered, the first step toward any change must be to open up the political decision-making process to everyone affected by the proposed changes, regardless of status.

What is a Migrant?

The migrant is often defined as the one who moves from country A to country B—from one fixed social point to another. The fixity of the social points is presupposed as primary, and the migrant is the one who temporarily or permanently lacks this fixity or social membership. This definition has political consequences. In the spatio-temporal definition, movement is presupposed as the line AB, but since this line can be infinitely divided into units of immobile space-time, movement is ultimately unrepresented in the system: the migrant is the political figure who is unrepresented but still exists socially as unrepresented in the system.

The points are assumed to be primary but in fact the points are made by motion, just like states are made and reproduced by migrants. Migration and migrant writing is the unwritten movement that makes writing possible. Just as the movement of the hand, arm, and body remain unseen and unrecorded in the act of graphic inscription, so the movement of human migration is rendered invisible and un-represented. Migrant literature does not just take place in between fixed points of legible literatures and inscriptions (government, literary, historical, etc). Migration is the material historical condition of movement that is immanent to all social inscription. Migration is the immanent act or performance of writing itself—the deeply interior exterior of all writing.

Migrant literature is thus at the very limit of the literary and cultural arts because so much of it is not written down. But this is not an absence. Rather migrant bodies, labor, and culture are the constitutive conditions that reproduce the social order frequently so that others may write. The Western and colonial

literary canon is written on the backs of migrants (slaves, displaced indigenous peoples, and the colonized). The challenge to a literary migrancy is two-fold: first, starting again our understanding of writing and inscription as a constitutive, performative, and material act that makes possible writing itself; second, to transform our definition of writing to include its oral and performative other inside it. Orality and writing both have a common migrant, performative, and kinographic core. Instead of an opposition between the archive and the repertoire we can look to the material, historical, and kinetic performance of the archival process itself as the material condition for the division as such.

Migrant kinography is thus at the heart of the division between orality and literacy as such. It is their real material condition.

The Figure

A figure is not a fixed identity or specific person but a mobile social position. One becomes a figure when one occupies this position. One may occupy this position to different degrees, at different times, and in different circumstances. But there is nothing essential about a person that makes the person this figure. The figure of the migrant, for example, is like a social persona that bears many masks (the nomad, barbarian, etc.) depending on the relative social conditions of expulsion.

The figure is not a static outline but a *Konturieren*—a kinetic process of turning, outlining, or delimitation. It is the moving that draws the line continually anew like an iteration slightly different each time: singular, kinetic, and yet patterned.

In this sense, the figure of the migrant is broader than specific groups of migrants defined by crossing national borders. But it is also more regional and historical than a general ontology of migrant subjectivity. A figure is not an unchanging essence lying beyond the concrete, but neither is it merely a specific individual or a group of individuals. A figure is a social vector or tendency. Insofar as specific individuals take up a trajectory, they are figured by it. But it is also possible for individuals to leave this vector and take up a different social position, since it does not define their essence. In other words, the figure of the migrant has

a “vague essence” in the etymological sense of the word: a vagabond or migratory essence that lies between the ideal and the empirical.

For example, in geometry, a circle is an exact ideal essence. This is in contrast to inexact empirical objects that are round (such as bowls, planets, or balls). However, figuration is like “roundness”: it is more than an empirical object but less than an ideal exact essence. Roundness can refer equally to bowls and to ideal circles: both are round. Thus, as a figure, the migrant refers both to empirical migrants in the world and a more abstract social relation. It is irreducible to either.

In this sense, migration refers both to the millions of actual migrants identified by the United Nations and to the sense in which many more people than these are also migrants to some degree and in some circumstances. As a social position or figure, the migrant is a subjective formation that anyone may become. No one’s movement is guaranteed to be safe from some degree of social expulsion. In a political sense, the theory of the migrant, viewed from the primacy of movement, may even present a more inclusive model of international relations than citizenship currently does. The migrant not only is empirical but also prefigures a new model of political membership and subjectivity still in its early stages. Thus, there are empirical migrants, but their meaning and potential extend beyond their empirical features under the current conditions of social expulsion. What would it mean to rethink political theory based on the figure of the migrant rather than on citizenship? This is the challenge of political theory today.

Two Theses on Migration and Borders

In this paper I would like to put forward two interrelated theses at the core of *The Figure of the Migrant* and *Theory of the Border*. The first is that borders and migrants are socially constitutive. That is, they are not simply passive effects produced by top down structures of power. This is a historical and a conceptual point. Before there were states there were migrants and various processes of bordering that produced the state in the first place. Only once the state or other social formations are established can they then reproduce the borders and expel

a portion of the population as migrants. Social borders are therefore the material and kinetic conditions required for the reproduction and expansion of society itself. In this sense, borders and migrants precede and exceed the state. Without them there is no territory, no nation, or state. The cost, however, of continuously maintaining and even expanding social borders is precisely the expulsion of a migrant surplus. Migrants, for example, reside within states, provide them with constitutive social labor, and yet suffer numerous marginalizations along territorial, political, juridical, and economic borders. Migrants are made to perform and reproduce the very social formations that make possible the citizen, and their own exclusions. The citizen then tries to hide its colonial past by declaring itself its own origin and foundation of law.

The second thesis is that migrant positions are today being rapidly multiplied, in part, because so are borders. The more kinds of borders there are the more kinds of migrants there are—and vice versa. The two must be thought together as part of the same social regimes of mobility. The more ways social mobility is sliced up the more dimensions or aspects of migration there will be in a social body. As such, a migrant is not an essence or type of being, but rather a positionality. A migrant is a mobile intersection between various synchronous and competing borders that vary historically and geographically. The migrant is not just someone who crosses an international border, but someone who is continuously located at a position of intersection between multiple border regimes (territorial, political, legal, and economic).

These are the two theses. This paper is divided into two parts—each defending one of these theses and offering what I think is a novel movement-oriented or “kinopolitical” definition of borders and migrants.

First Thesis: Migrants are socially constitutive.

This is the case, in short, because societies are themselves defined by a continual movement of circulation, expansion, and expulsion that relies on the mobility of

borders and migrants to accommodate its social expansion and contraction.

The migrant is the political figure who is socially expelled or dispossessed as a consequence of social circulation or is systematically marginalized because of their mobility.

If we are going to take the figure of the migrant seriously as a constitutive, and not derivative, figure of Western politics, we have to change the starting point of political theory. Instead of starting with a set of preexisting citizens, we should begin with the flows of migrants and the ways they have circulated or sedimented into citizens and states in the first place—as well as emphasizing how migrants have constituted a counter-power and alternative to state structures.

This requires first of all that we take seriously the constitutive role played by migrants before the 19th century, and give up the liberal fetish of the nation-state. In this way we will be able to see how the nation-state itself was not the origin but the product of migration and bordering techniques that existed long before the nation-state came on the scene.

Second of all, and based on this, we need to rethink the idea of political inclusion as a process of circulation, not just as formal legal, economic, or other kinds of status. In other words, instead of a formal concept of inclusion/exclusion or insiders/outsiders we need a material one of circulation/recirculation in which inclusion is defined by livable patterns of social mobility in which everyone affected has a say in the structures of mobility that affect them.

One way to think about this "kinopolitical" thesis and the constitutive role played by migrants is as a radicalization of Karl Marx's theory of primitive accumulation.

Primitive Accumulation

Marx develops this concept from a passage in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*: "The accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labour."[2] In other words, before humans can be divided into owners and workers, there must have already been an accumulation such that those in power could enforce the division in the first place. The superior peoples of history naturally accumulate power and stock and then wield it to perpetuate the

subordination of their inferiors. For Smith, this process is simply a natural phenomenon: powerful people always already have accumulated stock, as if from nowhere.

For Marx, however, this quotation is perfectly emblematic of the historical obfuscation of political economists regarding the violence and expulsion required for those in power to maintain and expand their stock. Instead of acknowledging this violence, political economy mythologizes and naturalizes it just like the citizen-centric nation state does politically. For Marx the concept of primitive accumulation has a material history. It is the precapitalist condition for capitalist production. In particular, Marx identifies this process with the expulsion of peasants and indigenous peoples from their land through enclosure, colonialism, and anti-vagabond laws in sixteenth-century England. Marx's thesis is that the condition of the social expansion of capitalism is the prior expulsion of people from their land and from their legal status under customary law. Without the expulsion of these people, there is no expansion of private property and thus no capitalism.

While some scholars argue that primitive accumulation was merely a single historical event in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, others argue that it plays a recurring logical function within capitalism itself: in order to expand, capitalism today still relies on non-capitalist methods of social expulsion and violence.[3]

My idea of expansion by expulsion broadens the idea of primitive accumulation in two ways. First, the process of dispossessing people of their social status (expulsion) in order to further develop or advance a given form of social motion (expansion) is not at all unique to the capitalist regime of social motion. We see the same social process in early human societies whose progressive cultivation of land and animals (territorial expansion) with the material technology of fencing also expelled (territorial dispossession) a part of the human population. This includes hunter-gatherers whose territory was transformed into agricultural land, as well as surplus agriculturalists for whom there was no more arable land left to cultivate at a certain point. Thus social expulsion is the condition of social expansion in two ways: it is an internal condition that allows for the removal of part of the population when certain internal limits have been reached (carrying capacity

of a given territory, for example) and it is an external condition that allows for the removal of part of the population outside these limits when the territory is able to expand outward into the lands of other groups (hunter gatherers). In this case territorial expansion was only possible on the condition that part of the population was expelled in the form of migratory nomads, forced into the surrounding mountains and deserts.

We later see the same logic in the ancient world whose dominant political form, the state, would not have been possible without the material technology of the border wall that both fended off as enemies and held captive as slaves a large body of barbarians (through political dispossession) from the mountains of the Middle East and Mediterranean. The social conditions for the expansion of a growing political order, including warfare, colonialism, and massive public works, were precisely the expulsion of a population of barbarians who had to be walled out and walled in by political power. This technique occurs again and again throughout history, as I have tried to show in my work.[4]

The second difference between previous theories of primitive accumulation and the more expansive one offered here is that this process of prior expulsion or social deprivation noted by Marx is not only territorial or juridical, and its expansion is not only economic. Expulsion does not simply mean forcing people off their land, although in many cases it may include this. It also means depriving people of their political rights by walling off the city, criminalizing types of persons by the cellular techniques of enclosure and incarceration, or restricting their access to work by identification and checkpoint techniques.

Expulsion is the degree to which a political subject is deprived or dispossessed of a certain status in the social order. Accordingly, societies also expand their power in several major ways: through territorial accumulation, political power, juridical order, and economic profit. What is similar between the theory of primitive accumulation and the kinetic theory of expansion by expulsion is that most major expansions of social kinetic power also require a prior or primitive violence of kinetic social expulsion. The border is the material technology and social regime that directly enacts this expulsion. The concept of primitive

accumulation is merely one historical instance of a more general kinopolitical logic at work in the emergence and reproduction of previous societies.

In short, the material kinetic conditions for the expansion of societies requires the use of borders (fences, walls, cells, checkpoints) to produce a system of marginalized territorial, political, legal, and economic migrants that can be more easily recirculated elsewhere as needed. Just as the vagabond migrant is dispossessed by enclosures and transformed into the economic proletariat, so each dominant social system has its own structure of expansion by expulsion and marginalization as well.

Expansion by Expulsion

Expulsion is therefore a social movement that drives out and entails a deprivation of social status.[5] Social expulsion is not simply the deprivation of territorial status (i.e., removal from the land), it includes three other major types of social deprivation: political, juridical, and economic. This is not a spatial or temporal concept but a fundamentally kinetic concept insofar as we understand movement extensively *and* intensively, that is quantitatively and qualitatively. Social expulsion is the qualitative transformation of deprivation in status, resulting in or as a result of extensive movement in space-time.

The social expulsion of migrants, for example, is not always free or forced. In certain cases, some migrants may decide to move, but they are not free to determine the social or qualitative conditions of their movement or the degree to which they may be expelled from certain social orders. Therefore even in this case expulsion is still a driving out insofar as its conditions are not freely or individually chosen but socially instituted and compelled. Expulsion is a fundamentally social and collective process because it is the loss of a socially determined status, even if only temporarily and to a small degree.[6]

Expansion, on the other hand, is the process of opening up that allows something to pass through. This opening up also entails a simultaneous extension or spreading out. Expansion is thus an enlargement or extension through a selective opening. Like the process of social expulsion, the process of social

expansion is not strictly territorial or primarily spatial; it is also an intensive or qualitative growth in territorial, political, juridical, and economic kinopower. It is both an intensive and extensive increase in the conjunction of new social flows and a broadening of social circulation. Colonialism is a good example of an expansion which is clearly territorial as well as political, juridical, and economic.

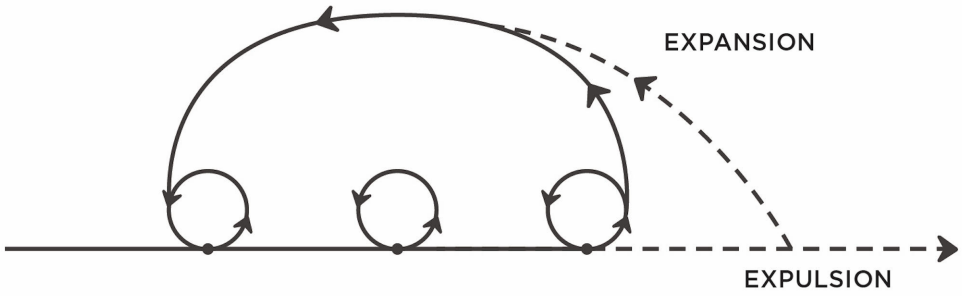
Kinopower is thus defined by a constitutive circulation, but this circulation functions according to a dual logic. At one end, social circulation is a motion that drives flows outside its circulatory system: expulsion. This is accomplished by redirecting and driving out certain flows through exile, slavery, criminalization, or unemployment. At the other end of circulation there is an opening out and passing in of newly conjoined flows through a growth of territorial, political, juridical, and economic power. Expansion by expulsion is the social logic by which some members of society are dispossessed of their status as migrants so that social power can be expanded elsewhere. Power is not only a question of repression; it is a question of mobilization.

This is the sense in which borders and migrants play a constitutive role in social reproduction and expansion. They are not simply repressed or blocked but recirculated under other conditions. For example, Mexican and Chinese migrants were not simply or merely excluded in 19th America, they were actively brought to the US, circulated across the country to work on the railways, and then juridically expelled when it was completed.

Today migrants are being used as a supplementary source of reproductive labor. One of the features that defines the uniquely neoliberal form of social reproduction is the degree to which capitalism has relied directly on economically liberal trade policies and politically liberal international governments in order to redistribute record breaking numbers of surplus migrant reproductive labor into Western countries. Global migration is therefore not the side-effect of neoliberal globalization, it is the main effect. Neoliberalism should thus be understood as a migration regime for expanding Western power through the expulsion and accumulation of migrant reproductive labor.

Figure 3.5

EXPANSION BY EXPULSION



For circulation to open up to more flows and become more powerful than it was, it has historically relied on the disjunction or expulsion of migrant flows. In other words, the expansion of power has historically relied on a socially constitutive migrant population.

Second Thesis: The multiplication of migrant positions today is directly related to the multiplication of borders.

I would like to argue here two correctives to two common ideas about how borders work: 1) Borders are static 2) Borders keep people out or let people in. My theses are the opposite: 1) Borders are in motion, 2) Their main function is not to stop movement but to circulate it. I think these have major implications for re-theorizing borders.

The Border is in Motion

The first way in which borders affect migrant positionality is through motion. It is precisely the mobility of borders themselves that continuously modulates and multiplies the positionality of the migrant.

This is at first glance a highly counter-intuitive thesis. What I am saying is that the problem is not so much that the border is too fixed and impassible, *but precisely the opposite*! It's because the border is so malleable and fluctuating—continuously moving between the two sides it separates—that it ends up changing the topology of the two sides and thus the figures defined by them. Borders are not static. They are always made and remade according to a host of shifting variables. In this sense, the border should not be analyzed according to motion simply because people and objects *move across it*, or because it is "permeable." The border is not simply a static membrane or space through which flows of people move. In contrast to the vast literature on the movement of people and things across borders, there is unfortunately relatively little analysis of the motion of the border itself. Even many so-called theorists of flows, fluidity, and mobility continue to describe the border in primarily extensive and spatial terms: as "borderscapes . . . shaped by global flows of people,"[7] or as "the material form of support for flows,"[8] whose mobility or fluidity is purely "metaphorical."[9]

The movement of the border is not a metaphor; the border is literally and actually in motion in several ways.[10] First, the border moves itself. This is especially apparent in the case of geomorphology: the movement of rivers, the shifting sands and tides along coastlines, and so on. The border also moves itself in not so obvious ways, such as the constant state of erosion, decay, and decomposition to which every physical object on earth is subject. This includes the crumbling of mortar that holds walls together, rains and floods that rot wooden fences, fires that burn down buildings and towers, rust that eats holes through fences and gates, erosion that removes dirt from underneath a building, and so on. Every physical border is subject to the movement of constant self-decomposition, which has consequences for migrants who, for example, use these weak spots for crossing. Or authorities may leave these spots weak in order to force migrants into fatal situations like the Devil's Highway.

Second, the border is also moved by others. This is especially apparent in the case of territorial conflicts in which two or more social parties negotiate or struggle over land divisions; political and military conflicts over control of people,

land, and resources; juridical partitions of legal domains or police municipalities; and economic reforms that directly change trade barriers, tariffs, labor restrictions, and production zones. Borders with large zonelike areas may persist as sites of continual negotiation and movement, like the settlements on the West Bank. The status of the migrant as enemy combatant, settler, fluctuate alongside the fluctuations of the border.

But the border is also moved in not so obvious ways, like the continual process of management required to maintain the border. Without regular intervention and reproduction (or even legal or economic deployments), borders decay, are forgotten, taken over by others, weakened, and so on. Borders are neither static nor given, but kinetically and materially reproduced. As Nick Vaughan-Williams writes, “None of these borders is in any sense given but (re)produced through modes of affirmation and contestation and is, above all, lived. In other words borders are not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives.”[11] However this same fact also makes possible the arbitrary use of police power, the profiling of migrants, mirco-economies of bribery, and so on. Even in US sanctuary cities anyone can still report suspected migrants to federal immigration enforcement. Anyone can enforce a border, even migrants themselves.

The common mental image many people have of borders as static walls is neither conceptually nor practically accurate. If anything, borders are more like motors or bifurcation points. Just like any other motor, border technologies must be maintained, reproduced, refueled, defended, started up, paid for, repaired, and so on. Even ethnic, religious, or national borders have their technologies: the control over who is allowed in what café, in what church, in what school, and so forth. Furthermore, this is not a new phenomenon that applies only or largely to contemporary life;[12] borders have always been mobile and multiple. Management in some form or another has always been part of their existence.

Therefore the distinction between natural and artificial borders posed by early border theorists[13] cannot be maintained. This is the case not because

borders today are radically different than they used to be, but because throughout history "natural" borders as borders were always delimited, disputed, and maintained by "artificial" human societies. A river only functions as a border if there is some social impact of it being such (i.e., a tax, a bridge, a socially disputed or accepted division). Additionally, so-called artificial borders always function by cutting or dividing some "natural" flow of the earth or people (who are themselves "natural" beings). A dramatic example of this is the US government's attempt to change the naturally "insecure" topology of the border outside San Diego by moving two million cubic yards of earth (enough dirt to fill the Empire State Building) from a nearby mountain top, only to have it erode within months destroying the new roads and the whole ecology.

Just as these borders move and shift, so do the migrant positions they mark out. For example, as the Russian military expands its borders over night, one may go to sleep in Georgia and wake up an arrested migrant in Russia. Or one may go to sleep on a flight from Europe to the US and wake up as a suspected terrorist upon arrival under one of Trump's travel bans.

The Border is a Process of Circulation

The second way in which borders affect migrant positionality is by circulation. Borders, like migrants, are not well understood only in terms of inclusion and exclusion, but rather by *circulation*. In part this follows from the mobility of the border. Since the border is always in between and in motion, it is a continually changing process. Borders are never done "including," someone or something. This is the case not only because empirically borders are at the outskirts of society *and* within it and regularly change their selection process of inclusion, as we said before, but also because exclusion is not synonymous with stasis. The exclusion is always mobilized or circulated.

In practice, borders, both internal and external, have never succeeded in keeping everyone in or out. Given the constant failure of borders in this regard, the binary and abstract categories of inclusion and exclusion have almost no explanatory power. The failure of borders to fully include or exclude is not just the

contemporary waning sovereignty of postnational states;[14] borders have always leaked. The so-called greatest examples of historical wall power–Hadrian's Wall and the Great Wall of China–were not meant to keep people out absolutely. Rather, their most successful and intended function was the social circulation of labor and taxes.[15] This continues today with the U.S.-Mexico border wall.[16] The success rate of illegally crossing is around 90%, according to several studies. Most of the traffic across the border is related to economic regulation. Thus one of the main effects of borders is not keeping out but circulating bodies in a particular pattern: by criminalizing them, killing them, extracting a tax from them, and so on.

But border circulation is not just the ongoing process of dividing; its technologies of division also have a direct effect on what is divided. What is divided must be recirculated, defended, maintained, and even expanded, but at the same time what is divided must also be expelled and pushed away. Division is not simple blockage—it is a redirection. What is circulated does not stop after the division—it comes back again and again. Thus "it is the process of bordering," as David Newman writes, "rather than the border line per se, that has universal significance in the ordering of society."[17] The border is the social technique of reproducing the limit points after which that which returns may return again and under certain conditions (worker, criminal, commuter, etc).

The border does not logically "decide," as Agamben says. Rather, it practically redistributes. Undocumented migrants, for example, are, for the most part, not blocked out but rather redistributed as functionally "criminalized" persons into underground economies. Or an economic surplus is extracted from their incarcerated bodies as they pass through the private detention industrial complex. They are released just on the other side so they may go through the process again, creating a whole regime of social circulation.

However, since the border is not a logical, binary, or sovereign cut, its processes often break down, function partially, multiply, or relocate the division altogether. Instead of dividing into two according to the static logic of sovereign binarism, the border bifurcates by circulation and multiplication. The border adds to the first bifurcation another one, and another, and so on, moving further along.

Instead of "the sovereign who decides on the exception," as Carl Schmitt writes,[18] we should say instead that it is "the border that circulates the division."

(Re)moving Borders

The contribution of this paper is, I hope, both analytic and diagnostic. First I hope that I have been able to sketch convincingly a few of the kinetic features of borders and their relation to migration that might be the beginning of an analytical framework that takes more seriously the material and kinetic aspects of social division. I think movement and mobility are important dimensions of migration and my hope is that by including a kinetic dimension to our descriptions of borders and migration new and more robust maps can be drawn up of their conditions. Although this paper has been largely theoretical and most of its examples are of migration, I think such a framework is analytically useful more broadly than I have been able to argue here.

Second, I hope that I have argued convincingly albeit not exhaustively that social borders and migrants play a constitutive social role in the material reproduction and expansion of societies. If this is right, one sensible consequence might be to make our treatment of migrants more commensurate with their social importance by removing the host of borders and social expulsions that currently define them. This requires, I think, a diagnostic effort to see where, when, and how certain borders might be removed, redistributed, or recirculated.

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[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, book I, chap. 6, 1255a, 25. See also Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 52-54 for a discussion of Aristotle's theory of the barbarian.

[2] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776; repr.; Lawrence: Digireads.com Publishing, 2009), book II, introduction, 162.

[3] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004); Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,

2014); Saskia Sassen, “A Savage Sorting of Winners and Losers: Contemporary Versions of Primitive Accumulation,” *Globalizations* 7, no. 1–2 (2010): 23–50; Fredy Perlman, *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1985); Massimo De Angelis, “Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital ‘Enclosures,’” *The Commoner* 2, no. 1 (2001): 1-22. https://thecommoner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Marx-and-primitive-accumulation-deAngelis.pdf.

[4] See Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2015) and Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[5] Saskia Sassen offers a similar definition of expulsion: “people, enterprises, and places expelled from the core social and economic orders of our time.” *Expulsions,* 1.

[6] There are even “quite a few things the tourist could complain about.” Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 98.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996), 376.

[9] For examples of the metaphorical usage of concepts of mobility and fluidity see: John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2: “to deploy 'fluidity' as the leading metaphor for the present stage of the modern era.” Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 2.

[10] By saying the border is not a metaphor I mean that the mobility of the border is not “like” something else that actually moves—implying that the border has no actual movement, but only a metaphorical, ideal, or representational one. This does not mean that there is no such thing as metaphor—only that linguistic metaphor presupposes matter that moves. This is directly attested to in the original Greek meaning of the word metaphor as “transport.” Metaphor is a kinetic process by which the features of one material thing are literally or affectively transported to another. The danger is that the original kinetic definition has been lost in favor of an idealist and representational model that simply compares essences by analogy. If a soldier is the human brick stacked into the military wall, it is not because the solider is like a brick or the brick is like the solider, but that both actually move according to the same border regime. They share the same affective capacity without being modeled on one another. For more on this idea of affect vs. metaphor see Deleuze and Guattari, “Becoming Intense, Becoming Animal,” in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Furthermore, if the soldier is not only matter in motion but also a figure imbued with social meaning as a civic figure, a hero, a righteous warrior, a manly protector, this is the case because both the motion and the ideal “meanings” of the figure are part of the same co-consitituive regime of motion. Matter and meaning are not modeled on one another or reducible to one another, but enter into the same specific historical regimes of motion that regulate and circulate their shared trajectories. In this sense kinopolitics is a rejection of both materialist and idealist forms of explanitory reductionism.

[11] Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1.

[12] Borders have always been mobile. Their management has always been crucial. This is not a new phenomenon—as some have argued. “If the major focus of past research into borders was concerned with the way in which they were demarcated and delimited, it is the management of the border regime which is of greater importance today.” David Newman, “On Borders and Power: a Theoretical Framework,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no. 1 (2003): 16. See also: Corey Johnson, Reece Jones, Anssi Paasi, Louise Amoore, Alison Mountz, Mark Salter, and Chris Rumford, “Interventions on Rethinking ‘the Border’ in Border Studies," *Political Geograph,* 30, no. 2 (2011): 61-69.

[13] For a summary of historical positions affirming a difference between natural and artificial borders see Victor Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 51. See also: Jacques Ancel, *Les Frontières, Étude De Géographie Politique,* Recueil des cours, 1936, I. v.55, [203]-[297] port, 51. “frontiére naturelle”

[14] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

[15] The border “wall” will be further developed in Chapter 3.

[16] This argument is fully defended in Part III.

[17] Newman, “On Borders and Power,” 15.

[18] See: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

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