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

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the processes of debordering and rebordering and more specifically on what is happening when both forces encounter and confront their different interests. The hypothesis developed is that the two bordering dynamics are not only contesting each other, they also interact and co-mingle. An analytical framework based on the functional, structural and symbolic dimensions of borders is developed in order to generate hypotheses about how the co-mingling of the two forces takes place specifically on the ground. The case of San Diego-Tijuana demonstrates that the cross-border metropolis in the making is constantly changing and reinventing itself through the encounter of debordering and rebordering and the nesting of one category inside the other.

Keywords

Debordering, rebordering, cross-border metropolis, San-Diego, Tijuana

Introduction

Theories of border zones traditionally viewed the border in a binary fashion, in which the physical line had the effect of imposing duality, polarization and separation. At its most basic level, a political boundary was a line drawn across space that caused a division on either side – of political jurisdiction (nation-state), two cultures, two economic levels of well-being. In some parts of the world, these divisions or dualities, continue to accurately portray quite distinct differences – where wealthier nations bump up against less wealthy ones or where very different cultures collide. Yet, in a globalizing world, the space around boundaries has also become far more complex.

Responding to this complexity, scholars have moved on from these traditional views of borders/binaries, recognizing that, while borders enclose sovereign governments, since at least the middle of the twentieth century, economic, cultural and other forces transcend national boundaries. The concept of ‘cross-border metropolis’ is emblematic of the changing nature and effects of borders giving rise to processes of cross-border integration, whether in the form of labor markets, trade relationships, residential mobility, tourism flows, cultural exchanges or more complex environments that stimulate innovation (Herzog, 1990). Beyond their role as political institutions that demarcate territorial entities, borders as socio-cultural practices and discourses have an inherently fluid and ambivalent character (Paasi, 1998). While fluctuating between closed or open conditions, borders may simultaneously appear as an obstacle or a protection, a threat or a resource (Herzog and Sohn, 2014). Appearing more dynamic and multifarious, borders have been interpreted not as a line that merely separates two nations and needs to be defended, but as a setting for increasingly complex processes of bordering (Newman, 2006; Van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002). Understanding borders in terms of social processes has led to a consideration of two contrasting dynamics: debordering and rebordering. Whereas the former suggests openness, exchange and hybridization, the later underlines practices of control, protection and differentiation. In such a bipolar understanding of bordering dynamics, one process is conceived as opposing the other (see notably Coleman, 2005; Stetter, 2005). Although the two bordering dynamics are contesting each other, they also interact.

In order to grasp what takes place ‘in-between’ the two extremes of bordering and debordering, we need to deconstruct their binary condition and pay attention to the different and more subtle forces at work within the debordering and rebordering categories, the ways they impact each other, and the outcomes in terms of change and invention. In doing so, this paper aims at scrutinizing the impacts of these dynamics on the ground. More 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. 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 policing are thus directly threatening the very existence of cross-border metropolises. Given its emblematic

status as cross-border metropolis and the significance of bordering dynamics that have occurred along the U.S.-Mexico border during the last two decades, the case of San Diego-Tijuana constitutes our focal point in this paper. The example of San Diego-Tijuana shows notably how debordering initiatives tend to re-emerge after the 9/11 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 need to go beyond a dichotomous understanding of bordering dynamics and introduces an analytical framework that conceives three main patterns of interaction. The second section presents the case study investigated and highlights its bordering trajectories. In the third section, significant examples of bordering co-mingling are presented. The last section offers some final reflections.

Unpacking the notions of rebordering and debordering

As analytical categories aimed at grasping the ambivalent and processual dimension inherent to borders, debordering and rebordering are often presented as separate processes marked by a fundamental state of conflict. Whereas the former 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, the later signifies, on the contrary, the controlling of movements and flows and the construction of categories and distinctions that structure social and spatial divisions. While useful for structuring the discussion, such binary thinking does not capture the full complexity of the processes at work. As bordering dynamics are formed via social and historical processes, they are open-ended and in a constant state of being transformed. This suggests that debordering and rebordering are not part of a zero-sum game; one does not simply negate the other. So, when rebordering occurs after a phase of debordering (or vice-versa), it is not simply a return to the state of 'origin'. Of course, there are times when the relationship between the two forces clearly favors 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. Instead, we believe debordering and rebordering are intimately linked. When one dynamic is mobilized, the other one remains as a potential powerful force, inherently present, and often having a critical impact. Thus, while bordering dynamics often seem to be in a fundamental state of conflict, they also interact and influence each other. It is as if there was an organic tension between the two.

In order to investigate what is happening when both bordering forces encounter and confront their different interests and understandings, we elaborate an analytical framework based on three approaches or dimensions that refer to different meanings attached to borders and bordering processes. These are analytical distinctions that help to both structure the discussion and generate hypotheses that will be tested 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 classic vision of borders as dividing lines that are more or less open or closed. Whereas (re)bordering 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 crossings and interactions. Within this functional register, borders are usually conceived of as either barriers or interfaces (Ratti, 1993). But in a network vision of society where territorial borders are easily transcended by flows and mobilities, borders need to be understood beyond the logic of open vs. closed (Rumford, 2006). In the context of the U.S.-Mexico border, the encounter of the two forces expresses the border as a ‘security/economy nexus’ (Coleman, 2005). One way to deal with such a Gordian knot would be through differentiated filtering practices as a compromise between the imperatives of separation and control and those of contact and mobility.

The second dimension is *structural* and relates to the structuring capacity of borders in terms of shaping social categories and territorial entities. In this perspective where borders are conceived of as socio-cultural constructions, rebordering is essentially about polarizing and differentiating while debordering embodies mixing and hybridization dynamics. In cases where a rebordering phase follows a debordering phase, it is very often the reaffirmation of binary categories structured by the border (such as us vs. them, here vs. there) that is at stake. That said, to the extent that these categories are open-ended social constructions, the criteria used to define and legitimate the border-related divisions are not given nor fixed and a return to the pre-opening state of the border is unlikely. Indeed, following the opening of borders, the logics of hybridization and mixing are likely to affect these categories and their boundaries will become blurred; the definition and legitimacy of ‘us’ and ‘them’ or ‘here’ and ‘there’ will be contested, ultimately resulting in a new trade-off between inclusion and exclusion. What is then at stake through the interaction between the processes of rebordering and debordering takes the form of a shift of the social and/or spatial boundaries instituted by and reflective of the border.

The third dimension is *symbolic* and points to the fact that borders allow for the staging of an intention and identity and its identification with a common ground (Raffestin, 1986; O’Dowd, 2002). In this perspective, borders are conceived of as systems of meaning that are expressed in and through space. 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 (Hosper, 2006; Sohn, 2014). Given that there is a close relationship between the symbolic meaning of the border and the identity of the spaces that are associated to it and the irreconcilable nature of these symbolizations, the encounter between the two bordering trends is likely to induce a clash resulting in the invention of a new territorial and spatial identity.

Table 1 – Debordering-rebordering interaction: an exploratory framework

Dimensions	Border conceptions	Expected outcomes
Functional	Political institution (territorial line)	Filtering
Structural	Social construction	Shifting social/spatial categories
Symbolic	Symbol (systems of meaning)	Invention of new spatial identity

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.¹ 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. 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. This is an economically vibrant international zone that produces a combined annual GDP of around \$140 billion with the principle economic sectors being manufacturing, bio-tech, tourism, services, and defense (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 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.²

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 quality of life. While perhaps twenty five 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 neighborhood amenities such as schools, street lighting and paved roads, something not all Mexican border dwellers can count on.

As early as the 1960's, the city of San Diego recognized that its future would need to be cast with an eye toward its southern neighbor; 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 and Appleyard, 1973). 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. By the late 1970's, construction began on a sixty 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-1980's, the idea of transfrontier cooperation and bi-national 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). The early 1990's brought the passage of the

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 in the final stages of completion.

North American Free Trade Agreement (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 bi-national 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 bi-national airport that would serve the transborder region (Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce and San Diego Dialogue, 1993).

September 11, 2001 changed the 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.

The sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2008 in the U.S. 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 1990's 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.

This zone has often been pulled between the two extremes of debordering (cross-boundary integration), and rebordering (closing off the border for reasons of security). Tables A1 and A2 (see appendices) highlight some of the key examples of debordering and rebordering activities in the San Diego-Tijuana region, from 2001-2015. On the one hand (Table A1), there are important local and regional government agencies that intervene in favor of cross-border cooperation and economic development – these include the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, The Cali-Baja Megaregion, the Tijuana Economic Development Council, the City and County of San Diego, the municipality of Tijuana, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the Metropolitan Transit System (San Diego), and the California Department of Transportation, among others. On the other (Table A2), 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), DHS (Customs, Immigration), Drug Enforcement Administration (Department of Justice), Department of Transportation, and the Department of Commerce. At times, it appears as if these two sets of stakeholders (cross-border cooperation vs. homeland security) operated in completely detached universes. Yet, as we explore below, this is no longer the case.

Examples of co-mingling between rebordering and debordering forces

As argued earlier in the paper, it is no longer entirely accurate to speak of these categories of rebordering and debordering 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 rebordering and debordering have become intertwined, each having an influence on the other, leading to a border society where these seemingly disparate forces actually co-exist. What follows below are examples of the three cases and patterns of co-mingling derived from theoretical reflections. Considering these patterns in contextuality is meant to empirically 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 9/11, the San Diego-Tijuana region began to experience profound delays and breakdown of what we might term its cross-border trade/exchange 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 this growing problem. This portfolio of plans and projects, 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).

In the first few years after 9/11, concern with the condition of roads and POEs between Tijuana and San Diego grew. Indeed, during the 1990’s, the size and scale of the cross-border economy had mushroomed, following the signing of NAFTA in 1992-93. Investment in the region boomed in the 1990’s, 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 event and the subsequent formation of the DHS obviously slowed down funding and actual construction of cross-border transport infrastructure; projects identified in plans for financing construction were backlogged, and many never built. Meanwhile, the State of California was experiencing early signals of a budget crisis, which would further interrupt the completion of border infrastructure projects.

After a few years, some cross-border infrastructure studies and projects that were temporarily

delayed by the 9/11 event finally began to move forward. 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 analyzed cross-border shipping patterns by the key private sector stakeholders in bi-national commerce: maquiladoras (assembly only); maquiladoras (manufacturers); 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).

Of the seven major recommendations that grew out of this report, fully six out of seven demonstrate the degree to which the two bordering dynamics – debordering and rebordering – in fact, nest one inside the other; in this case it is rebordering (security) that has now nested within the cross-border transportation planning and policy process. The seven recommendations included six that directly included security concerns: performance monitoring, increase dedicated inspection lanes, add customs and border protection staff at the POE, create longer and more flexible hours, bi-national coordination at Customs/inspection facilities, and the overall cost of delays. 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 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 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 analyze ways to relieve congestion at the border. It claimed early on that it did not include security in its purview, but 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).

In fact, while its analysis sticks to engineering- type data (traffic counts, observation of road infrastructure details), its findings are filtered by the fact that all of its analyses involve trucks flowing through roads that are delayed once vehicles cross into Customs and Border Protection 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.

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 remodeling of POEs and transport facilities supporting those POEs. The Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Bi-national Corridor Strategic Plan 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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.” (U.S. 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* was drafted, the first of its kind for any adjacent U.S. 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.

Struggling over shifting boundaries: The border fence in the Tijuana River Estuary

Shortly after 9/11, in 2002, the U.S. federal government created the DHS. Just a few years later, the U.S. Congress passed the Real ID Act (U.S. Congress, 2005). One of its critical dimensions was to give 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 United States (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.

Since 2005, this provision has paved the way for the construction of almost 700 miles of new barriers, roads, and fences along the U.S.-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 1990’s. 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, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) would contract with the U.S. 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. These 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) nested within 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 2005-06, there was virtually no consideration of environmentally more 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).

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

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 millions of dollars annually for the border economy, downtown Tijuana, within a year or two following the September 11 terrorism event, 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.

The decade of the 2000's continued to bring bad news for businesses in downtown Tijuana, and for the tourism economy in general. By the mid-2000's, 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 U.S. customers away from Tijuana, and sealed the fate of the downtown international tourism scene. By 2007-08, the sub-prime mortgage crisis and recession in the U.S. further deflated the cross-border economy, and was grim news for businesses in Tijuana's central business district.

Meanwhile, as U.S. 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 unstable. As U.S. 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 U.S. tourists and consumers to Tijuana.

Downtown Tijuana has 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 a definitive downtown redevelopment plan. Such a plan began to be seriously promoted around 2008. Local entrepreneurs, artists and business people began thinking about redevelopment in a globally innovative way, that is, by turning Tijuana into a 21st century center of innovation in art, design, crafts 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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. In Tijuana's center, 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 won't fade away so quickly, even as the city begins to reinvent itself (Herzog, 2006).

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), toward 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.

However, the ability of downtown Tijuana to become a vibrant business and residential zone will, as mentioned, be mediated by how it negotiates the rebordering/debordering dynamic. During the period of 2001-2011, the city staggered from the effects of 9/11, subsequent drug cartel in-fighting and violence that often spilled into public places. Downtown Tijuana became known, during that era, as a place where narco-traffickers and cartel gang members would hang out in cantinas and nightclubs. This caused Mexican, as well as foreign visitors to stay away. So, 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 neighborhood 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 U.S. 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 theaters and stores that could be refurbished to create a sense of place and local identity, and attract the “creative class” back into the center. Were this to occur, it would signal a condition that would not necessarily be either full-blown debordering (since the success of the new downtown would be tied to local, Mexican use rather than foreign consumers), nor a robust rebordering, since any actions that highlight border policing would bring instability to downtown Tijuana, which sits only a few hundred paces from the international boundary. Therefore, 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 would usher in a very new era, since the history of this border has been one of chaos, uncertainty, and constant change. However, it’s possible that border citizens may yet find ways to calmly co-mingle the forces of rebordering and debordering.

Conclusions

The categories of rebordering/debordering capture the two most important dynamics that explain the twenty first century reality of international border regions. These dynamic conditions are fully present at all times, and they represent the duality we spoke of earlier in

this paper. However, as we have demonstrated empirically, careful study of the emblematic case of San Diego-Tijuana clearly demonstrates that the cross-border metropolis in the making is constantly changing and reinventing itself in a form that suggests a pattern of oscillation between moments of debordering, followed by periods of intense rebordering. Indeed, an even closer analysis hints at the fact that, that beyond oscillation, these categories are never fully separate from one and the other. Rather, there is a ‘co-mingling’ of categories, in which, one dynamic frequently nests inside the other, that is to say, even when there is evidence of an intense moment or phase of rebordering, there are components of cross-border integration embedded within that rebordering dynamic. And equally, projects and periods when border interests seek to promote cross-border integration (debordering), there are also elements of national sovereignty, concerns with security, or other forms of rebordering that come to play and nest inside of what would seemingly appear to be a strong moment of debordering.

The deconstruction of bordering dynamics according to three key border dimensions has provided insights as to how the co-mingling of the two forces takes place specifically on the ground. From a functional perspective, the example of the ways POEs are planned in the San Diego-Tijuana binational region points to practices of filtering and selective permeability as a means to cope with the border as a security/economy nexus. This is however not the only outcome of the tension between a national security rebordering and an economic integration debordering. From a structural point of view, the example of the building of the border fence in the Tijuana river estuary 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. Finally, the co-mingling of debordering and rebordering dynamics also resonates with the symbolic meanings attached to borders. In this perspective, the example of downtown Tijuana revitalization shows how the U.S.-led rebordering has dramatically changed the symbolic image of the border (from a resource to an obstacle) and therefore the ways Tijuana identifies itself. This has resulted in attempts to reposition the Mexican border city in relation to its urban identity, moving away from a crass leisure and commercial center for U.S. visitors to a dynamic Mexican border city.

In conclusion, we believe that as border scholars and policy-makers better understand the process of co-mingling of debordering/rebordering, it will lead to better articulated policy as well as place-making, since part of the nature of border regions lies in the tension between the two forces, debordering and rebordering. The resolution of those conflicts/tensions is, in the end, part of what makes border zones unique as places, but also what will help frame policy discussions for future governance. If those tensions are left unresolved, or ignored, the border will continue to frustrate both its citizens and those involved in cross-border governance.

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Appendix

Table A1 – Debordering (2001-2015). San Diego-Tijuana

ACTIVITY/PROJECT	YEAR	STAKEHOLDER(S)	CATEGORY/TYPE
Creation of Cali-Baja Mega-region	2008-present	San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation	Economic development/trade
Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Strategic Plan	2007	San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)	“
Survey and Analysis of Trade Goods on Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay	2003	SANDAG California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS)	“
Bottleneck Study (traffic congestion at border)	2004	CALTRANS SANDAG	“
Economic Impact of Wait Times study	2004	CALTRANS SANDAG	“
California-Baja California Master Plan completed	2008	U.S.-Mexico Joint Working Committee (JWC) CALTRANS	“ Regional planning
Opening of the El Chaparral Border Crossing at Tijuana/San Ysidro	2012	Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transporte (SCT), Mex.	Ports of Entry (POE)/transport
Measuring Cross-Border Travel times at Otay Mesa crossing. Final Report	2010	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation	“
Planning for third border crossing at Otay Mesa East	2008-present	SANDAG Smart Border Coalition County of San Diego	“
San Diego-Tijuana Cross-border Terminal/parking project, planning and construction	2008-2015	Smart Border Coalition	“
Revitalization plan for downtown Tijuana	2008-2015	Urban Land Institute (ULI) <i>Fideicomiso</i> for Tijuana Downtown Municipality of Tijuana	Downtown Redevelopment

		Artists groups	
Air quality monitoring of truck pollution, Memorandum of agreement with Mexico	2015-present	California Air Pollution Board (CARB)	Environmental planning
“Living with Water” analysis of Tijuana River Valley, 5 Year Action Plan	2014	Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team	“
Goat Canyon Sediment Basin Management Plan	2010	State of California Parks Department	“
South Bay Wastewater Treatment, Secondary Facility completed	2011	International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), Environmental Protection Agency, State of Calif. (CEPA); Southwest Quality Control Board	“
Tijuana River Watershed Project	2001-present	CEPA SANDAG	“
Opening of Bi-national Affairs Office in Tijuana	2013	City of San Diego, Office of the Mayor	Cross-border planning; economic development

Table A2 – Rebordering (2001-2015). San Diego-Tijuana

ACTIVITY/PROJECT	YEAR	STAKEHOLDER	CATEGORY/TYPE
Secure Fence Act: build 700 miles of fence/vehicle barriers, lighting along U.S.-Mexican border	2006	U.S. Congress	Border fence/wall
General Accounting Office, Report on U.S.-Mexico Border Security	2011	GAO	Border security
San Diego County Regional Human Trafficking Advisory Council formed	2013	County of San Diego	Border human trafficking/security
U.S. firearms smuggled into Mexico	2006-2011	Mexican border cities Mexican federal government U.S. border cities	Border violence
Allocation of Federal budget for U.S. border patrol increased	2001-2009	U.S. Department of Homeland Security U.S. Congress Office of the President	Border security

Merida Initiative signed into law, \$1.6 billion from U.S. allocated to Mexican military for use in combatting drug cartels, smuggling, stop flow of guns	2008	U.S. Congress Mexican congress Offices of the President, U.S. and Mexico U.S. Customs, Border Patrol, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Mexican military	Combat drug traffic across U.S.-Mexican border, combat organized crime in Mexico
Crime in Tijuana peaks to its highest levels	2005-2008	U.S. State Department report, LA Times	Border Crime
U.S. Govt issues a travel warning for border areas	2005-2008	U.S. Department of State	Border crime/ Organized crime in Mexico
Studies show that U.S. increase in border surveillance causing expansion and sophistication among Mexican drug cartels along border	2013	Testimonies, U.S. Senate Department of Homeland Security	Border security/surveillance

