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Spatialization Processes in the Americas: Configurations and Narratives

Now, these parts of the earth have been more extensively explored and a fourth part has been discovered by Amerigo Vespucci (as will be set forth in what follows). Inasmuch as both Europe and Asia received their names from women, I see no reason why anyone should justly object to calling this part Amerige, i.e., the land of Amerigo, or America, after Amerigo, its discoverer, a man of great ability. (Waldseemüller 70)

At the beginning of the 16th century, the cosmographer Martin Waldseemüller and his colleague Matthias Ringmann both worked on their *Cosmographiae Introductio*. While they had never been to America, they had read extensively on the “discovery” of the New World, including Vespucci’s *Mundus Novus*, which was a bestseller at that time. By 1503, Vespucci had published a description of his voyage of 1501, and by 1529, it had already been distributed in 60 editions and translated into almost every European language (Hirsch 540). Based on Vespucci’s and other travel reports, Waldseemüller created his popular world map where for the first time in history the newly discovered territories were called America. By putting “America on a map” (Schwartz; see Dickson for a critical reflection), Waldseemüller invented America and gave the New World its name. America’s ‘newness’ was as much a European invention, of course, as the idea that it was ‘discovered’ (O’Gorman). The discourse of its discovery and newness nevertheless became one of the key foundational narratives of the Americas. As Gregory Rabasa has pointed out, the term ‘New World’ marked not only an imaginary geographic space but also “the constitution of the modern conception of the world that results from the exploration of the globe,” that is the exploration of new fields of inquiry (Rabasa 3).

However, from the very beginning, the Americas were contested. The first reason for this was that the name that Waldseemüller put on the map never gained consensus. In Spain, for example, the name ‘America’ was refused until the 18th century (Randles 53). Instead, the terms *Indias Occidentales* or simply *Nueva España* enjoyed much more popularity. The map makes another point

clear. The naming and framing of the Americas was inevitably disconnected from the practices and experiences of the people living in or colonizing this part of the world. The name 'America' initially appeared on a map that Waldseemüller produced in Freiburg. It was not the invention of Vespucci or Columbus, and the reason why 'America' soon after *Cosmographiae Introductio* enjoyed such popularity, did not necessarily relate to the discovery itself.

A second cause why the Americas were contested was that this new land did not fit into the traditional European reasoning of Christianity. Medieval maps (so-called T-O maps or Beatus maps), such as the famous map published in the 7th century by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae* that showed the apostolic dissemination of the Faith, depicted Jerusalem at the center of a circle, surrounded by three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa. When Europe found itself confronted with the Americas, the question arose if all this land was part of the same *oikoumene*, if each part of this world was really part of the same world (and under the same God). Eventually, this question was resolved by the concept of *terra continens* and each part of the world progressively became accepted as a "continent" (Randles 53–54). The invention of America—forged in the process of European colonial history—implied the appropriation and integration of the continent into the Euro-Christian imaginary (Mignolo, *The Idea* 2–3).

Third, the discovery of the Americas led to a revolutionary shift in cartography (Padrón, *The Spacious*). Increasingly, the necessities of political and economic relationships with the New World challenged traditional mapmakers to adjust their products to the needs of sailors and captains. Paradoxically, however, Spain was the empire in which maps spread very late most notably in contrast to France and especially in contrast to England (Padrón, "Mapping" 55). As an effect of this cartographic revolution, an abstract and homogenous geometric space was born. This contributed to Newton's path-breaking idea of absolute space, which "in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable" (Newton 46). As such "formal and quantitative, it erases distinctions," acknowledged Henri Lefebvre powerfully in his critique of the production of space (Lefebvre 49). At the same time, this emerging cartographic abstract space mirrored new power ambitions of the forming European empires: it created the idea that space was something "over which systematic dominance was possible, and provided a powerful framework for political expansion and control" (Woodward 87). Indeed, the main interest of Europe in the New World was economic in nature. Between 1500 and 1650, Europe imported at least 180 tons of gold and 17,000 tons of silver, which in the last quarter of the 16th century constituted up to 85 % of the world's silver production (Blaut 189).

America had a vital impact in Europe, at least for balancing the traditional trade deficits with Asia.

Taking these issues together, the Americas were not only born as a linguistic and cartographic term or semiotic creation, but they were the effect of a dialectic between the practice and the knowledge construction of the colonized, the colonizers, and the imaginaries of European intellectuals. What America and the Americas actually are and for what they were taken are the products of both the social practices in as well as beyond the Americas and of the epistemological assumptions, foundational mythmaking, and narrations on and about the continent and the regions, countries, and people on it. However, this was an essentially unequal process. Colonization, (de)territorialization, destruction, and enculturation, as Padrón rightly affirms, “all of these things probably look the same to the colonized other, regardless of whether or not the colonizer has learned to think about space” (Padrón, “Mapping” 55). The formation of the discourse on the Americas reflects the power structures and geopolitics of knowledge from the perspective of coloniality (Mignolo, *The Idea* xi). It excludes the histories, experiences, and narratives of Indians and African slaves. As Mignolo observes, “After all, the Americas exist today only as a consequence of European colonial expansion and the narrative of that expansion from the European perspective, the perspective of modernity” (*The Idea* xi).

What are the Americas then? Whose Americas are we speaking of? Where do the Americas begin and where do they end? How were they constructed by different actors, and what were the priorities and objectives of these different constructions as continent, region, or nation? Which competing and conflicting narratives of spatialization can we observe in the past, which dynamics of exclusion and inclusion are reflected in these narratives, and how do contemporary discourses about the Americas as a construction relate to earlier narratives? These questions can be discussed on various levels, depending on our focus: do we look at the Americas as a particular, homogeneous entity or do we raise further theoretical issues? Such issues would be: how do we define space? How much homogeneity is needed to speak about one particular space (e.g. the Americas) in contrast to other spaces (e.g. Europe or Asia, but likewise Anglophone and Latin America)? How can we investigate this space and what are the appropriate methods? In turn, do we thus construct this supposedly homogenous space through our own focus and through the questions we ask at the beginning of each research? Finally, does the often-proposed way out of this dilemma, namely to look at anti-spaces, heterotopias, the monstrous other, at borders and frontiers, really resolve this problem of supposed homogeneity? What do we gain by looking at the fissures and dividing lines that fracture this

homogeneity, at the margins and peripheries and interstitial spaces? This volume of essays addresses some of these questions. It has emerged from a workshop that was convened as part of the Collaborative Research Center “Spatialization Processes under the Global Condition” at the University of Leipzig in April 2017. The workshop was designed as a discussion on spatialization processes but also as an invitation to rethink different disciplinary traditions.

Area Studies and the Americas

The different questions and trajectories of talking, thinking, and theorizing about the Americas do not only reflect ontological differences inherent in the particular space “Americas” but mirror at the same time long-standing disciplinary divides. We took these divides as a starting point and invited scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds to Leipzig to further reflect on and discuss processes of spatialization in the Americas. The empirical background of American studies was traditionally the United States and Canada while Latin America formed a distinct research community, namely Latin American studies. Area studies are confronted with the same question that we post in this book: When is an area an area? What makes the Americas one, two, or numerous different areas? Who defines areas, and what guides such definitions?

Area studies in general and Latin American studies in particular are themselves confronted with a lack of certainty about their adequate research object, be it area in general, the Americas, or North/Latin America in particular. Moreover, area studies have undergone an ontological shift during the last decades. Originally, the motivation of area studies was to gain knowledge of certain areas in the world in an attempt to safeguard European colonial and later US-American national and neo-imperial interests in a global confrontation with communism, and eventually to forward the goals of ‘modernization and development’ as proposed by the Ethnogeographic Commission (Rowe, “Areas” 16). From the perspective of area studies, the United States was not considered an ‘area’ in the sense other areas such as East Asia, the Middle East or Latin America were, rather it was regarded, along with Canada, as ‘an extension of European Civilization’ (Rowe, “Areas” 14), following the assumption that knowledge production happened in the centers about those areas under study and their populations that were not seen as part of these centers.

While traditional social science disciplines have remained rather focused on the West, thereby constructing North America as well as Europe as homogenous spaces defined by democracy and market economy and as a normative to the direction in which the “rest” of the world should develop, they left area studies to

research 'the other' part of the Americas. Consequently, social sciences integrated area studies based on the debates on development and development theory of the 1970s and 1980s (Schäbler 27). By the end of the Cold War, however, development theory lost serious ground. It was accused of rather blurring disciplinary terms and concepts. On the one hand, the distinction between "developed" and "underdeveloped" areas proved to remain rather unclear (Nuscheler). On the other hand, leading authors refused the unifying concept of the "Third World" and therefore the common research object of the entire sub-discipline. Already back in 1985, Boeckh denied the general explanatory force of dependency approaches, which aimed to explain the phenomena of underdevelopment and dependency in the Third World (Boeckh). His main argument against general theories of development exposed the Third World as much too heterogeneous to fit into a single category. Eventually, with Menzel's call to abandon the category of the Third World the ontological shift was achieved: 'the' Third World as a homogeneous space as well as a particular area would not exist and/or never existed (Menzel). Moreover and as an implication, the existence of particular but homogenous areas, which are to be investigated by development research and which share certain ontological similarities, is more than ever contested.

In American studies, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, the assumptions of US exceptionalism came under critical scrutiny from within the discipline. The belief in the uniqueness of the United States on the continent, the claim of its superiority to and independence of other countries in the Americas, and the conviction of the absence of imperialism in American history were questioned, starting with the interventions of feminist and ethnic minority scholars who pointed out that large groups of American society as well as its social and ethnic diversity remained invisible and unstudied in the field. Decisive impulses for a methodological revision of the study of the United States came from the 'New Americanists' who investigated the imperial history of the United States and showed that from its early beginnings, like other colonialist nations, the United States were shaped by imperialism (Kaplan and Pease). They emphasized that the consideration of local conditions should be contextualized in a larger understanding of the United States in global comparative contexts. The New Americanists strove for an internationalization of the field, opening up the frame of perception and interpretation for existing but obscured connections, such as Southern California's relation to Asia and Mexico, the Southeast's relation to the 'Black Atlantic,' and Miami's relations with Cuba, Haiti, and Latin America (Rowe, "Post-Nationalism" 30), as well as for an awareness that America is, as Brian T. Edwards and Dilip P. Gaonkar put it, a "node in the global circuit" (Edwards and Gaonkar 26).

Latin American studies in contrast to American studies has always pointed to US imperialist tendencies. This critique of American exceptionalism increased with the rise of dependency theory, the Cuban Revolution, and with the shift in US foreign policy towards reintegrating Latin America into the US-dominated hemisphere with the Alliance for Progress in 1961. Thus, reflecting the dependent development, Latin American studies grew by focusing on the peculiarity of Latin America as a distinct region apart from dominating US America. Moreover, area studies experienced an epistemological shift. Initiated by Said's critique of Orientalism (Said) and the rise of post-colonial (Bhabha, Spivak) and Latin American subaltern studies (Quijano, Dussel), area studies began to focus on the theoretical as well as practical construction of categories such as the 'Third World' or Latin America.

Many of these studies pointed out that these supposedly homogenous spaces do not exist on their own but rather reflect global Western thought and its implicit claim on global domination. The investigation of the history of colonialism and globalization (e.g. Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, Atlantic history, diaspora studies, and the study of transnational migrant communities) revealed the assumption of ontological spatial homogeneity to be a Eurocentric fiction. Likewise, scholars such as Joseph Roach ("Circum-Atlantic performance"), Walter D. Mignolo ("Border Gnosis" [Mignolo, *Local* 13]), Gloria Anzaldúa ("Borderlands"), Aníbal Quijano ("coloniality of power"), and others started to rewrite the history of inter-American cultural contacts, employing paradigms that link the Americas in a framework transcending the concepts of "First" and "Third World" and highlighting the power asymmetries characterizing the relations between the different parts of the Americas. In this light, areas are by no means natural phenomena but portray the cartographic fragmentation by Eurocentric requirements, just as Waldseemüller actually did in his *Cosmographiae Introductio*. Concepts such as unitary nations, societies, or states would not allow for describing particular processes of social change outside Europe and North America.

Finally, these issues culminate in a disputable methodological claim. Following these argumentative lines, areas are either too heterogeneous and similarities between different areas are superficial, or they are themselves the product of discourses and legacies of Western colonialism. Hence, traditional comparative approaches do not make sense. The preferred methodological access to areas and to the Americas as a particular area consequently shifted towards the ideographic reconstruction of single cases and thick descriptions of particular events (Gibson-Graham). In contrast to traditional comparative perspectives, the reciprocal interactions and interferences, transfers, and cultural appropriations enjoy primary attention (Burke; Werner and Zimmermann; Espagne). The field

of inter-American studies has focused on the study of previously unexplored aspects of the relatedness of the various parts of the Americas, examining the ways in which the different regions have throughout their history been economically, politically, and culturally entangled with each other, be it through the slave trade, be it through the United States' nineteenth-century expansionist ventures in the Caribbean and Central America or its more recent military involvement in various Latin American countries. With this methodological claim, however, an entire epistemological position shifted in favor of post-positivist thinking, and in some regard, abandoned the strict (and perhaps too strict) methodological rigor.

Against this background, the volume combines three different perspectives on space and processes of spatialization in the Americas. A first group of authors reflects on the process of how spaces are produced and how they become visible in the first place. A second group of authors then addresses configurations of space in order to understand how, why, and where spaces are shaped, designed, and which form they take. Finally, a third group of authors discusses the transgression of space(s). These three layers of spatializations will be briefly discussed.

Producing Space: The Americas between Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

In Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiae Introductio* the common criterion welding the Americas together was the name of its alleged developer, Amerigo Vespucci, and the simple fact that Waldseemüller perhaps thought that Vespucci discovered a single land mass. Today, this argument is hard to defend. What do Panama, Newfoundland, and Tierra del Fuego have in common? What defines the spatial core of the Americas? Does this space depend on historical (e.g. different colonial powers), economic (e.g. core vs. periphery), geostrategic (e.g. US-American backyard or Latin American autonomy), or religious (e.g. Catholicism vs. Protestantism) factors?

What do economics, politics, culture, languages, literatures, philosophy, religion, and histories tell us about the significance, the depth, and the duration of these spatializations in the Americas as well as about their frontiers and borders? How much similarity of all these different parts should be given or assumed to think of one singular space? How much difference and heterogeneity is still allowed to think of a singular space? How deep are divisions leading to the perception of diverging or even separated spaces?

The Americas are usually perceived as two subcontinents: North America and Latin America. However, this distinction is based on different typologies: while North America is defined geographically, it is the cultural heritage,

and particularly the languages, that define Latin America. Both the geographical and the cultural perspective on their own do only partially solve the question what the Americas are: North America does not only contain the United States and Canada, but Mexico. Furthermore, Quebec is not part of the Anglophone North. This same problem arises looking at Latin America. Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic are usually treated as part of Latin America with some reason, but at the same time, geographically, these islands are part of the Caribbean. The distinction between North America and South America, again, ignores the Central American isthmus. Panama and Belize are both deviations of this geographical and culturalist distinction. The Spanish initially colonized Belize. However, the British fought Spain in the Caribbean and integrated today's Belize as British Honduras into their empire.

Taking ancient civilizations as a starting point, the picture becomes even more blurred. In this perspective, the southern parts of Mexico as well as the north of Colombia and Venezuela would be a part of Central America. Ironically, parts of North America as well as of South America then would be located in Central America. Moreover, even South America with its seemingly clear continental borders is far from being homogenous. It includes at least two linguistic, historical, and cultural life-worlds: Brazil as a former Portuguese colony as well as Hispanic Latin America with its Spanish colonial roots (on the history of these disputes, see e.g. Bernecker). Thus, the geographical perspective almost automatically links up with a historic-cultural perspective. More precisely: the question what the Americas "are" does not on its own produce an adequate response.

Scholars have employed the term 'the Western hemisphere' as a frame for comparative critical practice, literary analysis, literary history, and cultural studies related to the Americas. Eugene Bolton's much debated article "The Epic of Greater America" (1933), which was first delivered as a presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1932, summoned historians to think hemispherically; his address investigated the interrelated histories of the Americas, from Canada to Tierra del Fuego, and observed parallel processes occurring throughout the Americas, from colonization to the wars of independence and nation-building. An essay collection edited by Lewis Hanke asked in 1964 *Do the Americas Have a Common History?*; another collection by Gustavo Pérez Firmat's inquired *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (1990). Much of the current transnational and hemispheric work in American Studies takes up such research, but at the same time questions certain assumptions of national belonging that inform and influence earlier 'hemispheric' scholarship.

Again, trying to answer the question what connects the Americas much depends on the viewpoint. While the development of the Americas began as

a cause of disagreement of European great powers, the revolutionary cycle of the long 18th century with the Glorious Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, the French Revolution, the independence of the United States, and finally the independence of Latin America challenged European supremacy. For Latin America, the United States replaced Spain and its Holy Alliance as a dominant force on the continent. The Monroe doctrine quickly resulted in new dependencies as the United States declared Latin America their “backyard.” The United States, in contrast, developed into a global superpower, even if it denied being an empire. US imperialism, although widely discussed in Latin American Studies and social sciences, and particularly in political science, remained a blind spot in American Studies until quite recently (Kaplan and Pease). And while in Latin America poverty, marginality, and underdevelopment remained almost entirely untouched over the last 200 years (Pérez Caldentey and Vernengo), the United States as well as Canada are today among the richest societies in the world.

Peter Birle discusses these questions in the light of regional cooperation in Latin America. He shows that regionalization oscillates between political fragmentation and the emerging forms of political integration or between the objective to produce homogeneity and the permanent threat of fragmentation. Covering the *longue durée* of regionalization, Birle argues that a forming regional space in Latin America closely relates not only to the politics of sovereignty, but necessarily includes the developing strategies prevailing in and throughout the region. Gesa Mackenthun, in her contribution, points out that the Americas have been heterogeneous as a contact zone of many cultures ever since the time before European colonial powers arrived. Exploring “rimlands” in the US Pacific Northwest as multiply inscribed places, she discusses the narrativization of cultural and geological memories in connection with current court cases related to conflicts between indigenous and industrial interests about oil and gas extraction in Cascadia. Her essay that integrates paintings by indigenous artists poses the question “whose land” we are actually talking about. This is the starting point of Steffen Wöll’s chapter. He argues that the work of Jack London can be read as a differentiated reflection and sometimes even as a counterpoint to the racist hierarchies that often dominate the discourse on space and spatialization during much of the nineteenth in Northern US America. He explores psycho-spatial place-making dynamics in London’s texts in the context of US imperial politics of white supremacy, showing that imagined spaces all too often resist being fixed as either heterogeneous or homogenous. Finally, Thomas Plötze, drawing on the idea of specific local and time-dependent contexts, argues that the political and geographic space that is today called Central America is by no means a typical or even natural region. Regional spatial homogeneity is the outcome of a historical

struggle over the proper perception of and the appropriate answer to external political threats. Plötze, thus, shows that external threats lead to political changes within the region—just as the sociology of conflict predicts—which finally result in the construction of a unified internal identity in which regional politics are encouraged and pursued.

Configuring Space: Borders, Frontiers, and the Dialectics of Inclusion and Exclusion

Taken together, 39 borders comprising 52,752 kilometers divide the Americas into different political territories (Bernecker 29). Many of these borders, however, historically divided sparsely or even unpopulated hinterland and remained rather irrelevant in political terms (Sandner). The Americas are the only place in the world where “a land border joins a developing Third World nation with a post-industrial First World country” (Herzog 4). Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa has famously described this border that includes some of the most densely populated border zones worldwide as a “1,950 mile-long open wound [...] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 2–3). On a conceptual level, border and territory form a pair of twins that for a long time have been linked to statehood (Giddens; for an overview, see Sack; Anderson). Only recently, the emphasis shifted from borders to boundaries and opened new space for discussion as borders mainly emphasize the dividing and separating function. Boundaries, in contrast, “constitute lines of separation or contact. This may occur in real or virtual space, horizontally between territories, or vertically between groups and/or individuals. The point of contact or separation usually creates an ‘us’ and an ‘Other’ identity, and this takes place at a variety of sociospatial scales” (Newman and Paasi 191). However, states are not the only group of actors imposing borders and boundaries. Overcoming methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller; Chernilo), scholars in critical geopolitics assert that “borders can be created, shifted, and deconstructed by a range of actors” (Rumford 164). At the same time, not only the border’s function of divide, conquer, and control, but the process of borderwork itself comes to the fore.

From the very beginning, the discussion on borders in the Americas highlighted the changing nature of borders. Frederic Jackson Turner not only introduced his widely discussed concept of the frontier (Turner), but at the same time related it to the creation of American values such as democracy and

individualism. Alistair Hennessy transferred Turner's ideas to Latin America (Hennessy). In contrast to Turner, who imagined his moving frontier as a linear process, Hennessy, however, was much more aware of the social interactions and overlapping that constitute the frontier. Indirectly, Hennessy anticipated a shift from defining spaces by looking at their centers towards looking at the peripheries and rimlands in order to draw conclusions for the center.

While this shift initially still reproduced the Weberian center—periphery models of statehood—even though the emphasis turned away from the center towards the “margins of the state” (Das and Poole), it finally provoked a highly productive discussion on hybrid “third spaces” (Bhabha). In the field of American studies, beginning in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, Mexican American critics and theorists interrogated the Turnerian narrative of the frontier as a central spatial framework and its link to the concept of democracy. They retold the expansionist movement into southwestern territories as a story of subjugation (e.g. Acuña), emphasizing that the concept of the frontier along with its narrative of civilization's movement from the eastern rim of the continent to its allegedly vacant western peripheries obscured the histories and cultures of the people in these peripheries. These critical voices were joined by those of historians such as Patricia Limerick and Annette Kolodny, who pointed out the limitations of the frontier myth and argued for a revised conception of the frontier as a “meeting ground” (Limerick 269), a space of “ongoing first encounters” (Kolodny 13) or a “contact zone” (Pratt 1992).

The 1980s witnessed a more general shift of critical attention from the spatial ‘center’ to the ‘peripheries,’ privileging border zones such as the US-Mexican border (Saldívar, *Dialectics* and *Border Matters*, Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*). These spatial concepts emphasized the politics of location of peripheral spaces as sites of cultural production and of multiply rooted identities in concepts such as “frontera imaginary” (Saldívar, *Border* 12), “Queer Aztlán” (Moraga 147 ff), and “nepantla state” (Anzaldúa, “Border” 108; Mora). Walter D. Mignolo has introduced the notions of “border thinking” (Mignolo, *Local* 38) and “border gnosis” (13) to describe ways of thinking that move between different epistemologies and that acknowledge the multiple loci of enunciation from which knowledge is produced, thus deconstructing binaristic ways of thinking and logocentric and ethnocentric global hierarchies of knowledge production. These concepts and approaches offer critical interventions into traditional narratives of “American” national identity and culture and interrogate the exceptionalist notions of the role of the United States on the continent. New attention has also been paid to spatialization processes in regions that had been neglected in the study of nation-states—the Caribbean rimlands or the Trans-Pacific—and that highlight

America's links with other parts of the world, but that have also crucially contributed to "respatializing" the United States along a west-east or a south-north axis.

The borderlands are today recognized as "a place of incommensurable contradictions" and as an "interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybrid subject" (Gupta and Ferguson 18). Borders in this regard are increasingly recognized as "sites of intensive marginality and creativity" (Woodward and Jones III 246). Nevertheless, acknowledging the productive character of borders and the hybrid identities that these borders give rise to does not necessarily eliminate the focus on power and control. Power still is an asymmetrical relationship, and even though creativity confronts authority, as Foucault insisted, it does not circumvent one of the central functions of borders: inclusion/exclusion.

Josef Raab in his essay describes the US-American/Mexican border as an essentially conflicted space of its own. Pointing to the fact that the border has always been a political construct and thus a contested space depending on the view of involved actors, he investigates the border as a turbulent and intercultural space. His essay identifies various approaches to this space as contestation, hybridization, and criminalization, each of which is driven by different agendas. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez likewise focuses in her chapter on a similar border region. She argues that in the light of expansionist US policies and slavery, Florida was often imagined as a zone of contact with the Caribbean yet at the same time as a perilous space. Her essay describes Florida as a hemispheric region that is characterized by its tropicality, a marker that works to distance the peninsula from the nation yet at the same time makes it desirable for incorporation. Looking at the 'other,' but within the nation, shifts the focus in Megan Maruschke's chapter from the rimlands to processes of border-making and thereof emerging spaces of slavery within the US-American nation. She argues that bordering can be understood not only as an incentive to construct state sovereignty, but must be interpreted as a tool of state actors in constructing territorial political entities in order to institutionalize and exercise political power. Finally, Antje Dietze relates this idea of border-making to transnational theatrical economic relations between Canada and the United States. She argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, Canada increasingly contested the US-American dominance of cultural production. She shows that on the one hand, economic space evolves because cultural entrepreneurs monopolize their business, but at the same time—as business theory predicts—begin to control territories. These territories, however, develop apart from national borders and thus need to be understood as transnational networks beyond national control.

Transgressing Space: Globalization, Mobility, and Bordercrossings

The question when, where, and under which conditions transnational spatialization processes involve the crossing or creating of borders is particularly relevant in the Americas. For instance, migration and financial flows but likewise Skype and Facebook connect particular places in the Americas. Transnational value and care chains affect both Latin as well as North America. However, do present processes of globalization weld together these different parts of the Americas or do they rather create divisions, for example between highly industrialized and less-developed countries? How should these emerging transnational spaces be defined: geo-strategically, culturally, historically, philosophically, geographically, politically, or as a combination of these and other approaches? Finally, which configurations emerge from such definitions? How do free trade zones, migrations, networks of drug trade, and violence and new currency flows such as remittances impact on turning national borders into new frontiers? What is the relationship between imagined border-crossings and existing or newly drawn borders and the discourses and life-worlds produced by them?

Transnational mobility and border-crossings do not necessarily abolish borders. Globalization literature has tended to envision the irrelevance of borders and highlighted the transnational as a potential alternative to national spatial configurations, producing images of a world that is “flat,” that is a level playing field, as Thomas Friedman has suggested (Friedman, *The World Is Flat*). The early 2000s produced visions of a “Century of the Americas” where the significance of borders is shrinking,¹ and border artists such as Guillermo Gómez-Peña provocatively declared the entire continent a post-national border zone (*The New World Border*). However, current processes more than ever suggest that border-crossing goes hand in hand with encapsulations and sealing. Exclusionary immigration restrictions, the criminalization of undocumented immigrants, the plans for a border wall at the US-Mexican border—all issued by the Trump administration—are just a few recent examples. Politics is, perhaps more than ever, engaged in controlling and even stopping migration, and internal borders, gated communities, and “cities of walls” (Caldeira) are on the rise. De-bordering and transnationalism in this regard permanently produce

1 For example, in a widely read *Time Magazine* issue, the thesis was proposed that in view of massive migration, free trade, and multiple economic and cultural connections between the United States and Mexico, the “American Century” could soon be replaced by a “Century of the Americas” (Gibbs). See also Fauriol and Weintraub.

and reproduce (re)-bordering and re-nationalization. De-territorialization and re-territorialization complement each other (Brenner).

Hannes Warnecke-Berger takes up these ideas and shows in the case of Salvadoran migration to the United States and remittances flowing back to El Salvador that political and economic efforts to transnationalize often go hand in hand with processes of (re-)nationalization. Elaborating on the concept of rent and spaces of rent, he shows that transnational economic spaces are the product of moral economies in which both migrants and their home families develop strong forms of agency. The outcome, however, is by no means a flat and deliberative third space. In contrast, Warnecke-Berger shows that these transnational spaces are fueled by emotional stress, struggle over prestige, and the permanent threat of falling back into poverty.

Finally, transnational agency is the pivotal focus of Sebastian Huhn and Christoph Rass. While they initially focus on the de-bordering and de-territorializing factors of refugee flows after World War II, they continue to argue that refugees and migrants not only challenge given forms of political territoriality, but often develop yet undiscovered forms of agency. Migrants and refugees, even if they are forced to migrate, are thus transnational actors in shaping both politics and territoriality in their spaces of arrival and in the spaces where they previously lived.

What are the Americas? We began this introduction with Waldseemüller's map, the first visualization and imagination of America in world history. The map gave a name to an immense land mass and to millions of people living on this land. Although this is an important process that must be acknowledged, we need to keep in mind that Waldseemüller never saw America, he "only" put the name on the map. As this example makes clear, the imagination and the naming of space is often disconnected from the very experience of living in the respective space—both empirically and in analytical terms. What is at stake is agency, but at the same time, as some of the contributors in this book have pointed out, it is a question of who is allowed to speak, to define, and to map space.

Even though the spatial turn started as one of the cultural turns in the social sciences and humanities (Bachmann-Medick), the ontological quality of "space" still remains unclear (Werlen 369). Although the spatial turn has opened the view on the variegated, formerly often undiscovered or even neglected forms of agency in the process of space-making, it has rarely accounted for the success of all these different processes of space-making, and it almost never compares these different efforts. While theories of agency that have been privileged by the spatial turn have foregrounded the diversity of actors engaged in space-making, these theories hardly ever address the question if those who voice their ideas

about space are being heard and to whom actors tend to listen. This question is deeply related to acknowledging processes of power and the asymmetric nature of space-making, as well as the often coercive practices of delineating and protecting the space in which somebody lives. These power dynamics are, however, highly relevant in space-making processes in the Americas, as the chapters in this volume on the 'dark sides' of space-making, such as domination, violence, and slavery, point out.

A final issue in researching space then concerns methodology. For a long time, scholars tried to uncover the "essence" of spaces, and authors tended to look at space from its very center. In physics, this perspective is closely linked to the work of Newton, and in the social sciences to Max Weber. It was at this center, it was argued, that the nature of a space, its form or its essence, was revealed. As for the Americas, this theoretical perspective results in questions such as "What do the different parts of the Americas have in common?" or in our initial question, "What are the Americas?"

In recent times, attention has shifted from the centers to the margins in an attempt to revise essentialist perspectives on regions, nations, and cultures. This focus on the peripheries, borders, frontiers, and rimlands has uncovered not only the many connections, mobilities, and relationships between the different spaces of the Americas, but also the multiple processes of exclusion that have accompanied attempts to define coherent collective national identities.

This approach makes an important intervention into essentialist approaches. It argues that spatial construction never happens in a vacuum but always depends on difference. This difference becomes most evident on borders and boundaries, where the lines of inclusion and exclusion are drawn. The shift of attention from centers to peripheries also accentuated the epistemological productivity of borders and boundaries as spaces where the cultural norms of the center and ontological statements on the essence of space are questioned. However, this perspective still rests on the center-periphery dualism of Newton and Weber, merely focusing on the other side and to a certain extent reproducing ontological assumptions on space.

Finally, a third methodological perspective looks at the transgression of borders between different spaces. In theory, this perspective is closely related with the work of George Bataille (see for an overview, e.g. Hetzel and Wiechens). The Bataillan perspective entertains some doubts both about the essentialist and about the anti-essentialist perspective. Taking the concept of transgression as a starting point, Bataille argues that both perspectives rather complement each other. This suggests that the focus of research should not be the investigation of the essence of space or the lack of this essence but rather the exploration of the shifting borders

and the interdependencies between spaces of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the dynamics of when, where, and why essence emerges or breaks down. This can be read both as an epistemological appeal not to fix the researcher's perspective in the first place and as an ontological appeal to not only look at the constructions of space but at the same time to rethink the forming role of space for human interaction and imagining. It remains clear that each methodological perspective has its own strengths and flaws. But rather than deciding for one or the other approach, it appears to be more productive to think about how to combine them. In this sense, this collection of essays does not only address the Americas. The volume that brings together social scientists, historians, cultural studies, and American studies scholars to discuss processes of spatialization in the Americas also hopes to broaden the view on the different perspectives on this topic.

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