



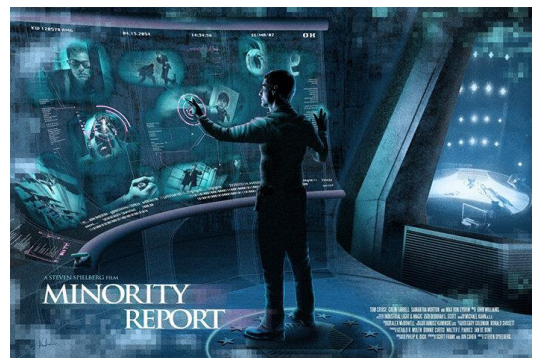
Temporal bordering and its undoing: Chronoscopy & resistance in an era of externalisation¹

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Think piece for Constructing Borders Workshop
Columbia World Projects and the Centre for History and Economics
University of Cambridge, 23 July 2022

Introduction: Visibilisation and chronoscopy

This paper considers the significance and potential counter-movements to of a set of interlocking EU initiatives and framings shaping contemporary bordering modalities. The first is ‘containment development’: a ‘Marshall plan’ like programme for Africa to address the root causes of migration and effectively eliminate the necessity for Africans to seek lives elsewhere. The second is a range of coercive mechanisms—founded on elaborated systems of knowledge and partnerships—that discipline those who transgress borders without what is effectively European sanction. The third echoes dystopian science fiction by exercising a form of ‘chronoscopy’ or ‘pre-crime’ policing (see Miles 2010): identifying and correcting those likely to move before they do so. The overall European project is progressive. It is not framed as an effort to punish or push out, but as one dedicated to protection and perfection. As we argue elsewhere (see Freemantle and Landau 2020), within this schema, publicising the denigrations of detention and border death become pastoral and paternalistic, intended to save lives while enabling Africans to realise their utmost potential.



¹ This short paper stems from a book project extending the analysis presented in I. Freemantle and L.B. Landau. 2022. ‘Migration and the African Timespace Trap: More Europe for the World, Less World for Europe,’ *Geopolitics*, 27:3, 791-810 and L.B. Landau, 2019. ‘A Chronotope of Containment Development: Europe’s Migrant Crisis and Africa’s Reterritorialization,’ *Antipode* 51(1): 169-186.

The EU's externalisation logic is founded on framing Africans' mobility projects as 'misguided': as a betrayal of family, community, country and self. At its core, the very desire to move shows an immaturity or forms of atavism and adventurism that disqualify Africans from entry into global



(read European) space-time. Employing temporal forms of socio-spatial bordering, the EU dangles a global and mobile future to Africans willing to mould themselves into externally defined parameters of moral respectability. Adherence to immigration regulations authored and often imposed by Europe, together with a demonstrated commitment to family, community, country and law are entry tickets to a global future. But meeting these legal and moral standards effectively means building a sedentary life dedicated to 'development at home'. Even a desire to move – let alone a manifested migration project likely to involve smugglers and other irregularities – evidences moral fallibility. To correct these faults, the EU works with public and private allies across sectors and continents to collect data, speculate on future movements, and pre-empt migration as means of empowering and perfecting Africans (cf.

Molnar 2022). Doing so effectively excludes Africans from a shared, global humanity while discursively shielding Europe's liberal commitments to universal human progress.

Centuries of colonial entanglement modified and reinscribed through the logics of 'containment development' (Landau 2019) have created an unusual, if not entirely unprecedented socio-political configuration: an intercontinental pastoral project pre-criminalising Africans through mechanisms both overt and diffuse. Decision makers are often unknown and unreachable to many of their intended 'beneficiaries'. As Rose and Miller (1992) observe,

political power is exercised today through a profusion of shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct. Power is not so much a matter of imposing constraints upon citizens as of 'making up' citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom.

In this case, it means constructing a criminalised citizenry fully beyond their own states' material and temporal borders.

Towards unsettling

This leads to this paper's primary tangle, the perennial question of 'What is to be done?' Or, more 'scientifically,' *what actions* and at *what scale* are the potential sources and locations for systemic change. The current system is elaborate and interlocked, but by no means consolidated or without internal tensions and external pressures. Its dynamism, adaptivity, and expansiveness suggest panoptic ambitions, but also generate internal rifts, conflicts, and coordination

challenges. As the European Union's *Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa* (EUTF) gives way to less 'exceptional' forms of intervention (cf. Spijkerboer 2021), recalibrations will occur in ways that further reshaping borders and bordering practices. This may lead to consolidation and stabilisation. It is also likely to open opportunities to 'unsettle' the bordering frameworks currently planned or enacted. Given these socio-spatial control foundations in temporal exclusion and knowledge mobilisation, there is a particular role here for those involved in scholarship and dissemination. Without overestimating our importance as academics or activists, this paper concludes by considering the unintended potential for individual and collective complicity.

In the remaining pages, we consider three potential *de facto* affronts on contemporary border mechanisms and their potential implications. These may be designed to generate systemic change although such change may also be a bi-product of them. The first is practical, almost material strategies: 'storming the gates' or mass, clandestine migration. The latter two operate in a discursive realm: 'migration as decolonisation' (cf. Achiume 2017) and a broader practical and narrative efforts to destabilise histories and territories.



Migrants climb over Melilla border fence | Photo: Picture-alliance/AP Photo/S.Palacios

We ultimately argue that this latter framing – informed by Delueze & Guattari's notion of 'nomadic power' and Césaire & Senghor's utopian decolonial imaginary – offers the greatest potential to address the moralising affect underlying the current chronoscopic project. The arguments below are made crudely and in aggregative terms. We hope our speculations will be read as such: as a means of collectively thinking through implications and potential options. Largely missing from our current discussion are actions by African states themselves including overt resistance, subterfuge, and dissimulation by states like Mali, Niger, and Morocco which manipulate and potentially destabilise the system at multiple scales (cf. Kutz and Wolff 2022).

'Storming the gates', or widespread forms of clandestine migration, clearly offer opportunities for individuals to gain advantage for themselves or families. Yet, when viewed systematically – at least in the short term – individual actions may be pyrrhic victories. One must ask if the visible resistance of the few instigate further exclusions for the many? There are undeniable temptations to celebrate the courage and chutzpah associated with the transgressive acts of border crossing, dissimulation, self-invisibilisation, forgery and smuggling (and the smuggling industry). These are easily framed as 'weapons of the weak' – activities equivalent with the 'foot-dragging, evasion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage' that Scott (1985) valorises in his work on the Southeast Asian peasantry. This resonates with Franck and Vigneswaran's 2021 work applauding migrants' manipulations of systems and their allies to help elude capture,

deportation, and alienation. Or Franck's (2022) solo work on the unsettling power of humour. To be sure, micro-level or social resistance in its various guises appears as powerful and subversive. One can hardly ignore the assault on the fences in Melilla or the caravans crossing Central America and Mexico towards the United States and their potential power in attracting attention whether celebratory or condemnatory. These may not manifest an alternative, utopian order, but they nonetheless present possibilities. These are tactical and reactive rather than strategic acts, they may nonetheless offer the power to transform.

Yet there are reasons for scepticism regarding the power of sub-alterns, migrant, and would be nomads. Some of these echo more general critiques of 'sub-altern' activism and tactical action. These are apposite, but our specific concerns are twofold. First, in explicitly drawing attention to miseries of border crossing, clandestine migration, and social marginalisation, campaigns for exploited and marginalised specific migrants are effectively doing affective border-work (cf. Vammen 2021): they disseminate messages of suffering and highlight the unruly, ill-disciplined nature of people from the 'global south'.² Second, such publicity points to Kotef's (2015) analysis of Palestinians who breach Israel's elaborate security barriers: a potentially cruder, less pastoral apparatus, but nonetheless one closely connected to a language of cultural protection supported by an elaborate network of 'kinetic' interventions, surveillance mechanisms and subterfuges. In her account, the Israeli government instrumentalises every elusion as justification for further interventions. Whether Palestinians transgressing the wall or Africans floating the Mediterranean, their presence reflects not only a threat to their intended destinations, but to migrants themselves. With direct parallels to the language of European policy makers and policy makers, Kotef outlines how every intentional or unwitting attempt to move becomes proof of the criminal, subversive nature of those authorities seek to contain. Over time, the utility of the transgressive figure becomes evident to authorities and built in to a system of systems that must continually justify its brutality and expense to their democratically elected political paymasters. Rather than frustrating authoritarianism, the 'deviant' migrant legitimises and necessitates it.

If it is not alone – or at all – that the actions of migrants will recalibrate current practice, perhaps action and resistance may take place at other scales and through rhetoric rather than action. Given the language of security and protection surrounding migration debates, one might expect to see this to provide the tabula for debate. This can not be based on facts alone, as the

² Take, for example, this recent text from a law suit filed against Frontex, the EU's border agency: 'A. Hamoudi, one of the Applicants, is a Syrian asylum seeker. On 28 April 2020, together with 21 other asylum seekers, Hamoudi made landfall on the island of Samos, Greece. Later that day they were rounded up, abducted, detained, forcibly transferred to a life raft without any means of propulsion, and towed into the middle of the Mycale Strait by the Hellenic Coastguard ('HCG'), where they were 'pushed back' for hours by the HCG and pulled back by the tide, before they were abandoned and eventually recovered by the Turkish Coastguard ('TCG') in Turkish Territorial Waters ('TTW'). During the pushback operation directed against Mr. Hamoudi on 28–29 April 2020, a Frontex Surveillance Aircraft ('FSA') overflew the scene twice.' (from <https://media.euobserver.com/3274d87803a737f6730c3429750a22eb.pdf> accessed 19 June 2022).

chronoscopic initiative is already founded on 'alternative truths' algorithmic generated to support the political project. Instead they come from targeting the territorial and temporal foundation legitimising the project. Achiume's (2017) work on 'Migration as Decolonisation' points us in this direction. Although remarkably statist in its orientation – it accepts the nation state as the fundamental unit of political and legal analysis and rights claiming – it hints that resistance will come through a retemporalisation of the African-European relationship. In her case, through denying the historical erasure embedded in contemporary language of 'equal partners'. This language dominates official European narratives of the two continents' relationship and suggests – sometimes remarkably explicitly – that current inequities in opportunity and human development, stem largely from the misdeeds of African countries: crime, corruption, conflict, and the lack of civic commitment. (It is precisely these challenges pastoral development partnerships ostensibly seek to address). What it elides is Europe's historical and contemporary role in shaping and perpetuating these imbalances across a wide range of political and economic interventions, including its 'management' of African migration.

In Achiume's logic, surfacing historical relations and their current manifestations affords migrants (and indeed all Africans) an ethical claim on European wealth and opportunity. As many of these assets are effectively immovable, it translates into a right to European space. In our understanding, this is how she understands migration as decolonisation. This kind of historical unsettling proven effective in the USA with the *1619 Project* which persuasively reinserts stories of slavery and African exploitation into America's founding myths (Serwer 2019). Even if yet to yield substantive transformation in racial inequities, it has instigated narrative unsettling which expands possibilities not only to revisit long-standing debates and beliefs, but the socio-political institutional configurations based on them.

Given the role of socio-temporal exclusion in the 'time space trap', this kind of historical excavation is a start. It reflects a meaningful recalibration, but reinforces the fundamental logics underlying states' sovereign right to ration immigration. In this regard, change is more likely if it manifests what Deleuze and Guattari somewhat abstractly (and characteristically imprecisely) refer to as nomadism or nomadic power. This, they argue, offers 'a site of resistance against the state.' In Maier's (2007: 72) summary:

the authors are well aware that the local offers no easy refuge from repressive politics. The totalitarian or fascist state power they fear usually manages to pre-empt the local. The meaningful contrast is between the ordering or linear qualities of the centre and the multiple, rhizomic possibilities of the decentred borderland . . . Nomadic as a quality connotes not just wandering, but any challenge to the order of state and discipline; it offers a perpetual challenge to the institutions and ideas that claim hegemony.

In this regard, we draw inspiration from Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire and others like Léopold Senghor, the first president of independent Senegal (1960-1980). They recognised that colonialism had enmeshed the Africa and Europe in ways that could and should not be

crudely severed. Contrary and to the dismay of many prominent African thinkers and leaders, they argued against making former French colonies independent nation-states. Instead, they suggested a fundamental reorganisation of former colonies and France into a novel transcontinental polity that would keep open a conduit through which Africans could claim their fair share of and from the metropolis. As Césaire and Senghor correctly feared and foresaw, decolonisation via nominal national independence alone enabled former colonisers to shut down this conduit, resulting in a form of pseudo-liberation that continued to incorporate Africans into the world on unequal terms. The kind of 'partnerships' that we see today. For France, decolonisation via African national independence (rather than departmentalisation within a novel type of federation) meant *partir pour mieux rester*- leaving so as to stay better.

Césaire and Senghor resonate with Achime's call to create 'a legal and political framework that would recognize the history of interdependence between metropolitan and overseas peoples and protect the latter's economic and political claims on a metropolitan society their resources and labour had helped to create'. Importantly, Césaire and Senghor envisaged a form of reterritorialization that extends beyond Achime's statist orientation. For them, it was not enough that the former colonies become 'fully integrated within the existing national state' but instead they offered a more unsettling imaginary, 'a type of integration that would reconstitute France itself, by quietly *exploding the existing national state from within*.' (emphasis added) This would involve legal pluralism, disaggregated sovereignty, and territorial disjuncture would be constitutionally grounded.

In this way, their project extended beyond Achime's argument that migrants (and other Africans) have claims *within* Europe and European nation-states, but rather insists on a more fundamental unsettling. Such an approach accepts not only reterritorializes right claiming and bordering, but retemporalises. This explicit entangling promises to reshape the territorial components and ethics comprising Europe and Africa: 'to remake the world.' This is not the kind of deterritorialization described by Appadurai (1990) or subsequent theorists of globalisation (e.g., Bauman) in which people's relationship to space is undone, but rather one in which the space itself is territorially and temporally recalibrated.

The ill-defined utopianism of the early decolonial theorist was largely undone by cold-war and neo-imperial political logics. Over time, elements of their vision may also be less appealing. Nonetheless, the possibility of a decolonial, anti-chronoscopic unsettling remains. It may be abetted by conscious processes of retelling: revisiting history in ways that remind European audiences of their historical bequests and contemporary privilege fed by neo-imperial partnerships. They may also emerge in less conscious and directed manners through the emergence of transtemporal and translocal migrant networks. Already diasporas and other patterns of socio-material constellations created archipelagic futures which, while vulnerable,

reflect a form of agential if non-directed territorial rescaling.³ Perhaps foremost among these are the multiple branches of transnational pentacostalism and Islam visible across Africa and its diaspora. Within many strains of religion practice are affective constructions that more broadly deligitimise state law and spatiotemporal boundaries, asking members to imagine their lives in ways that may rub uncomfortably against state-authored temporalities and bordering processes (see Katz 2022; Ademolu 2021; Kankonde 2018; Levitt 2007).

The kind of temporal and spatial transformation and ‘re-telling’ outlined above could help shape an approach that is discursive but necessarily extended. In the short term, by seeking to fundamentally challenge the legitimacy not just of state policies, but the European state and its project itself, it can work against individual claims to asylum or rights within the existing state system. However, in the long term reterritorialising and temporalising the European project may open yet unforeseen opportunities for justice as it challenges the right of Europe – and other colonially forged metropolises – to exclude those who helped build its wealth.

On scholarly complicity

The challenge of unsettling raises substantial issues for ‘migration scholars’. By accepting the basic framing of states’ rights, sovereignty, and a focus on more equitable partnerships among states, we reinforce the fundamental outlines of state power. Similarly, categorising data in the language of nation states makes harder the process of more radical spatiotemporal realignment. For the most part, scholars remain committed to expanding population data collection, and presenting analyses of movements that:

can be aggregated into migratory patterns and regularities that make instantaneous, homogenous, and systemic what is a sequence of disparate observations... The crucial operation here is to quantify border crossings and make them objects of calculation (van Reekum, and Schinkel. 2017: 41).

As Malkki (1995) noted years ago in critiquing the then emerging field of ‘refugee studies,’ even progressive, critical scholars tend to reinforce ‘the national order of things.’ The Global Compact’s imperative to collect ever more data⁴ – for science and policy – means more data is being generated than ever. Whatever our intentions, these data serve a purpose (cf. Foucault 2009). At a global, official level, almost all of the world’s migration data is sorted by nationality and disaggregated by state authored legal categories. This intrinsically reinforces a nation-state ontology while visibilising those who cross its political boundaries. The language of scientific discipline masks the chronotopic biases they contain: the spatial and temporal moralities they naturalise. Given the rapid expansion of European migration research across Africa and elsewhere

³ The idea of archipelagic futures recognises that lives are built across a constellation of connection, yet discrete space-time islands connected geographic sites through imagination, material exchange, aspiration, and moral economies. See Landau 2018.

⁴ In the compact, the first priority for achieving ‘safe, orderly and regular migration,’ is to ‘Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence -based policies.’

in the 'global south', there are acute dangers that a novel corpus of 'southern' literature will inadvertently reinforce and naturalise boundaries, categories, and migrant moralities.

There are also reasons for scholars and activists to consider their role in affective border work furthering the spatiotemporal imaginations underlying EU, US, and Australian policy. Many of the images of refugees and migrants we present feed into this knowledge economy – the pure victim who needs saving or the heroic migrant eager to diminish Europe's demographic deficit. If our analysis is sound, these feed the beast by continuing to speak of migrants as people out of place and states as legitimate in controlling movement. Stories of suffering similarly publicise the dangers of unauthorised, unwelcome moves. Moreover, as they highlight moral shortcomings in Europe's migration management, such perspectives do little to fundamentally challenge Europe's right to grant Africans permission to move out of compassion or calculation. Without a conscious effort to respatialise and retemporalise migration scholarship, publicising deaths at seas or sexual abuse at the hands of smugglers, protesting unlawful detention, the abhorrent bi-products of racially inscribed borders or the 'border industrial complex', enmeshes scholars in webs of complicit as our work is instrumentalised.

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