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Countering Containment: Chronoscopy and Resistance in an Era of Externalisation

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ABSTRACT

This epilogue offers a blunt response to diverse explorations of varied forms of externalised bordering modalities. It argues that when taken together, such approaches reflect a form of chronoscopic policing that uses data and narrative framing to pre-criminalise potential migrants. Collaboration among agencies, states and researchers visibilise and moralise, framing poor people's inclinations to move as misguided, dangerous betrayals of law, community, country and self. Wealthy states then use the accounts and materials they produce as foundations for externalised controls that seek to prevent future deviations through current interventions. This short piece reflects on possibilities for addressing this emergent regime in ways that can produce systemic, humane change. More specifically, it considers three potential affronts – alternative narratives and practices – on contemporary border mechanisms at work between and within states: bodily assault on borders or 'storming the gates'; 'migration as decolonisation'; and broader practical and narrative efforts to destabilise histories and territories. I propose that this latter approach – informed by notions of 'nomadic power' and decolonial imaginaries – offers the most potent opportunities for countering the moralising affect underlying the current chronoscopic project.

Visibilisation and Chronoscopy

The preceding articles extend scholarship on externalisation along geographic and institutional scales. They resonate across the decades with Agnew's (1994) call to escape the 'territorial trap' and Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) cry to eschew 'methodological nationalism'. Beyond physical space, they point to bordering practices working across multiple sociological and temporal landscapes. The authors remind readers how migration should be studied: not as an outcome to predict or manage, but to surface intersections of mobility, social reformulation and the interplay of regulation and resistance. In blurring analytical boundaries between would-be movers, migrants and those

surrounding them, they evocatively demigrantise migration studies (see Dahinden 2016) and 'migrantise' the citizenry (Anderson 2019). Throughout, the authors treat migration management as a metonym for emergent regimes of global governance that are reterritorialised, securitised, commodified, data driven, unaccountable and increasingly inhumane.

I come to this collection through my own work on initiatives shaping contemporary bordering modalities and of externalisation in its multiple iterations and forms. Much of this research considers programmes to address the root causes of migration and effectively eliminate the necessity for people to seek lives elsewhere (see Benko 2020; Heck and Habersky 2024; Landau 2019). Such efforts at 'containment development' rest on elaborate systems of knowledge and partnerships that label and discipline those who may potentially transgress existing and emergent borders without elite sanction. In so doing, they move from expanding freedom to progress as moral compliance. A form of 'chronoscopy' or 'pre-crime' policing (see Miles 2010), planners, politicians and researchers collaborate in identifying and correcting those likely to move without global sanction. The subsequent interventions extend beyond controlling movement to regulating deleterious desires. Asserting their duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves, wealthy states – the US, the European Union (EU), Australia and others – increasingly aim to save migrants from themselves (see Fassin 2011). This is the White Man's Burden for the twenty-first century.

Many externalisation initiatives frame poor people's movements as misguided, as not only dangerous, but a betrayal of family, community, country and self. In this framing, every desire to move shows immaturity, atavism, irrationality and irresponsible adventurism. Such inclinations disqualify people from welcome into global (i.e., liberal, capitalist) space-time. Instead, sedentarism and adherence to the 'western penned' (Delgado Wise 2022) global migration order offers a pathway to propriety, prosperity and the possibility of a global future. This is 'development at home' or the 'timespace trap' that Freemantle and Landau (2020) outline elsewhere. Within this schema, the denigrations so many of this issue's authors describe become pastoral and paternalistic, intended to save lives while enabling those who stay behind to realise their utmost potential. This may be through education, through economic achievement, or – as Zelenskaia (2024) describes in this issue – by regulating intimate partnerships. All this is achieved by remote control where decision makers may be unknown and unreachable or local advocates become coopted into systems of control (see Cuttitta 2022; Heck and Habersky 2024; Pallister-Wilkins 2022; Spijkerboer 2021).

Notwithstanding the fears and racism underlying this elaborate and expensive regulatory apparatus, the formulation and overarching logic informing is ostensibly humanistic: of betterment and progress. Of readying Africans, Asians and even Eastern Europeans to join the western world

as equals. This is the story that powerful states tell themselves: the moral equivalent of a Potemkin village that covers up the cruelty and discrimination of exclusion (Wilder 2015).[1] As Stoler (2016, 27) argues, such Chronoscopy is not simply about unbroken continuities or practices with past colonial or imperial projects, but 'are processes of partial reinscriptions, modified displacements, and amplified recuperations' (also Mbembe 2017; Smith 2004; Wilder 2015).

As this special issue illustrates, the EU, US, Australia and other countries work 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 improving would-be migrants and their societies (cf. Molnar 2022). Rather than resist, sending states have become complicit, exchanging their population's mobility for diplomatic kudos, cash and external credibility. These chronoscopic controls – using future deviations to justify current correctives – effectively exclude outsiders from a shared, global humanity: it pre-codes them as deviants and generates an 'other' whose very perspectives and desires can be excluded from global deliberation (cf. Pandey and Sharma 2021; Valkenburg 2022; Warin, Kowal, and Meloni 2019). The poor are pre-criminalised and contained not only for their potential to move beyond bounded space but for attempting to leap-frog into a future for which they are purportedly unprepared. Such tautological pastoral rhetorical formations allow wealthy countries to shroud their exclusive externalisations in the idiom of collective progress.

Towards Unsettling

Panoptic, bio-political ambitions may fuel the kind of multi-scalar externalisation this issue describes. In practice, externalisation is manifold, internally riven by competing interests, dissimulation and coordination challenges. As Álvarez Velasco (2024, 4) notes,

> . . . border externalisation is not a homogeneous top-down unidirectional repressive mechanism but heterogeneous and contested by migrants and local communities whose bodies-territories resist the impacts of such a geopolitical mechanism.

Working beyond domestic regulations creates unaccountable and unstable regimes such as Frontex in the Mediterranean or Australia's 'Pacific Solution' in ways that reshape borders and bordering practices (cf. Campos-Delgado and Côté-Boucher 2024; Macklin 2023; Scott FitzGerald 2020; Spijkerboer 2021). As this issue describes, acting within state jurisdiction risks normalising and consolidation. It also heightens these actions' vulnerability to 'normal' politics: to 'unsettling' them through the kinds of 'counter-conduct' Cuttitta, Novak and others describe. As observers, scholars and citizens this begs the question, 'What is to be done?': *what actions* and at

what scale are the potential sources and locations for such unsettling to produce systemic, humane change.

Answering the call to action does not demand normative or ideological coherence: a pragmatic plan of action for the new order is not a prerequisite for frustrating others' actions. As Butler (1997), 92–3) suggests, discursive resistance can emerge, 'through convergence with other discursive regimes, whereby inadvertently produced discursive complexity undermines the teleological aims of normalization'. This opens possibilities for forms of speculative utopianism rooted in a belief that visibilisation, refusal and counter narratives are potentially destabilising. While such interventions might, of course, worsen conditions, they nonetheless author and amplify alternative narratives and potentially deviant subjectivities (see Lilja 2018, 428; Foucault 1982, 785).

The remaining pages consider three potential *de facto* affronts – alternative narratives and practices – on contemporary border mechanisms working between and within states. Such approaches may be oriented to systemic change or may recalibrate order as a biproduct of other actions. The first includes a bodily assault on border. This 'storming the gates' includes mass, clandestine migration. The latter two operate in the discursive realm: 'migration as decolonisation' (Achiume 2017) and broader practical and narrative efforts to destabilise histories and territories. I propose that this latter approach – informed by Deleuze & Guattari's notion of 'nomadic power' and Césaire & Senghor's decolonial imaginary – offers potent opportunities for countering the moralising affect underlying the current chronoscopic project. This is an admittedly blunt response to the preceding articles and a global reality. Yet I proceed in the speculative spirit outlined above.

'Storming the gates', or widespread forms of clandestine migration offers individual opportunities and has evident, subversive appeal. Indeed, there are reasons to celebrate the chutzpah associated with transgressive acts of border crossing, dissimulation, self-invisibilisation, forgery and smuggling. In Scott's (1985) framing, these are 'weapons of the weak'. Similarly, Franck and Vigneswaran's (2023) applaud migrants' manipulations of systems and their allies to help elude capture, deportation and alienation. Moreover, one can hardly assault on the fences in Melilla (2022) or the caravans crossing Central America and Mexico towards the United States (Martínez 2018; Walker and Boamah 2021). These actions are often more tactical than strategic. While not manifesting alternative orders, they nonetheless surface the violence of exclusion.

Making the clandestine visible can be valuable, but it may yet prove a pyrrhic victory. Such visible resistance by the few has repeatedly instigated further exclusions for the many. Two reasons underly my scepticism. First, by visibilising miseries, illicit border crossers and their advocates are effectively doing affective border-work (see Vammen 2021): disseminating messages of

suffering and highlighting the unruly, ill-disciplined nature of people from the 'global south'. There are spaces where holistic and carefully told stories may prove transformative, but the flattened accounts of suffering and indignity may reinforce rather than relax spatio-temporal boundaries. This is the work to which many scholars-activists are dedicated and there are reasons to consider the potentially counter-productive effects of such efforts.

Second, deviance can be discursively mobilised as a threat to both receiving communities and migrants themselves (see Kotef 2015). 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 into 'systems of systems' (see Latour 2005) that must continually justify their brutality and expense to their democratically elected political paymasters. This spectre appears in the *trochas* Álvarez Velasco (2024, 1) describes in which movements end up, 'being highly productive to justify the redoubling of US border enforcement across the region and its increasingly overt meddling in security and border control matters in Ecuador'. Cuttitta (2022) similarly illustrates how civil society activities may unintentionally frustrate externalisation efforts without being active resistance while active resistance may ultimately feed certain narratives which justify externalisation. Rather than frustrating authoritarianism, the 'deviant' migrant legitimises and necessitates the kind of bordering described in this special issue: the world's poor are unready for modernity.

Where else then might we then look to unsettle? Achiume's (2017) work on 'Migration as Decolonisation' offers considerable promise. It hints that rights and resistance come through a retemporalisation of the African–European relationship, a kind of historical repair work (see Usher and Carlson 2022). Effectively, the imperial and colonial powers' wealth comes from extracting material and human resources from poorer countries so would-be migrants have rights to those resources. Rather than internalising poverty as a result of crime, corruption, conflict and a lack of civic commitment, global inequity is due to external, colonial and neo-colonial action. In Achiume's logic, surfacing historical relations and their current manifestations affords migrants ethical claims on the wealthier countries. As many of these assets are effectively immovable, it translates into a right to move. This work and similar initiatives (e.g., the American *1619 Project*) undeniably instigate narrative unsettling, expanding possibilities not only to revisit long-standing debates and beliefs, but also 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. As Usher and Carlson (2022, 2) argue, 'Historical repair work in general . . . must be grounded in a larger consideration of the power that comes with being able to define and speak for the past'.

Achiume's efforts reflect a meaningful recalibration, yet they risk reinforcing the fundamental statist logics asserting sovereign right to ration

movement. Moreover, her approach risks generating a kind of singular logic in which rights to relocate are somehow apportioned primarily according to one's relation to colonial or neo-imperial consequences (see also Wright's (2020) critique of the *1619 Project*). While Achiume's work does not preclude claims to space and opportunity on multiple grounds or registers, its strength stems from tying mobility rights with history. In this schema, people's relations to space and history may become both essentialised and exclusive (see Wilder 2015). Instead, we might wish for stories that reflect Glissant's 'diversality' or Senghor's '*metissage*' as an alternative to a Eurocentric understanding of the world that neatly divides people into Europeans and others: first worlders and those from the third (Glissant 1997; Thiam 2015). Achiume partially anticipates this more diffuse geographic imagination, but the fundamental formulation relies on an uncomfortable tension between historical contingency and universalism that demands further interrogation and elaboration.

A reconsideration of statist ontologies leads to a third approach, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as nomadism or nomadic power. Albeit characteristically imprecise, they understand resistance and recalibration broadly as overt actions, orientations, or by-products that potentially destabilise taken for granted knowledge and practice. In Maier's (2007, 72) words, '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'. This opens the door to other scholars – Césaire, Senghor and Glissant – who dared to imagine forms of mobility and territoriality that could challenge the statist legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

Predating Butler's call for radical reimagination, this group of pan-African scholars recognised the inherent socio-spatial entanglements bequested by colonialism and bolstered by global capitalism. As they argue, many of the divides informing global migration management (e.g., black/white; rich/poor; modern/backwards) are conceptually conjoined as counters (cf. Mbembe 2017). Such dyads exist only in reference to the other and need to be understood as biproducts of a perennially entangled politics. As Césaire and Senghor correctly 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 newly independent peoples into the world on unequal terms. Precisely the kind of 'partnerships' that Achiume (2017) and Emeziem (2021) rightfully describe as neo-imperial. Rather than recognising humanistic connections and claims across boundaries, independence severed these potential ethical assertions. Denying these entanglements represents a form of epistemicide where dissenting voices from the 'south' can be ignored and the claims to global mobility suppressed. Instead, relations between rich and poor could be restructured along

paternalistic lines almost entirely benefitting the wealthy and powerful. Current 'migration management' interventions help reinforce these hierarchies.

Instead of national self-determination, Cesar, Senghor, Glissant, Camus and others suggested a fundamental reorganisation of former colonies into novel transcontinental polities that would keep open a conduit through which the formerly (if not always formally) colonised could claim their fair share of and from the metropolis. Indeed, they set out to 'challenge the modern universalist paradigm and its corollary, the invention of the other, through a radical critique of the limits of the essentialist understanding of the world based on roots and rootedness enabled by the modern teleological conception of time as snapshots. Glissant, especially, rejects the politics autochthony emboldens, arguing that humans are defined less by their connection to 'home soil' than by relationship to elsewhere (see Wiedorn 2021). This engenders political ideals recognising multiple registers of belonging and temporalities. Similarly, Simone Weil contended that, 'the only hope for Europe, for colonised peoples, and for humanity' would be a 'new renaissance' based on postimperial and non-national forms whereby emancipated peoples would remain aligned with larger states. (She advocated the same solution for 'the weaker populations of Europe') (in Wilder 2015, 82).

Such calls resonate with Achiume's (2019) call to create frameworks recognising the interconstitutive history across regions and protect economic and political claims on the societies poorer countries' resources and labour helped create. Importantly, Césaire and Senghor envisaged a form of reterritorialisation that extends beyond Achiume'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 that, in Cesaire's appeal, exploded the existing national state from within (Césaire 1967, 2000). This would involve legal pluralism, disaggregated sovereignty and territorial disjuncture that would be constitutionally grounded.

A nomadic reimagination not only reterritorialises right claiming and bordering, but retemporalises the language of 'advance' and 'developing' used to legitimise global hierarchies of control (cf. Bergson 1999 [1922]). Such explicit entangling promises to reshape the territorial components and ethics comprising the west and the rest. By legitimising multiple forms of belonging and rootedness, it erodes the credibility of externalisation initiatives premised on pre-criminalising those longing to live elsewhere. By fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of state policies and the externalisation project itself, a nomadic reframing can denude individual claims to asylum or rights within the existing state system. Longer term, reterritorialising and retemporalising these projects may open yet unforeseen

opportunities for justice as it challenges the right of Europe, the United States and other colonially forged metropoles to exclude those who helped build its wealth.

A Note on Scholarly Complicity

This collection explicates the ontological, ethical and aetiological premises of containment and control and their meaning for 'progressive' scholarship and engagements. It raises uncomfortable issues over scholars' potential complicity in normalising regimes of knowledge that reinforce local and global hierarchies of race, class and citizenship. Many of the issue's authors are wary of naturalising a language of rights through states or international law when these are the actors at fault. Beyond this, they tell differentiated stories and expose spaces for negotiation and counter-hegemonic action aimed to regulate love, movement, or imagination. In exposing and exploring diverse spaces and governing modalities, the authors surface spatialised forms of resistance, unintended modification, adaptation and invite readers to imagine alternatives. Across multiple geographies, they demonstrate the value of fine-grained, spatialised inquiry. This granularity makes it possible to envision new frontiers of action. All scholars should follow Novak's call in this issue to reflect on these initiatives' creativity and productivity: not what they take away, but the politics they buttress or enable.

The special issue's political project of unsettling raises substantial issues for 'migration scholars' and migrant rights advocates (two groups with considerable overlap). These challenges will be particularly acute for those most dependent on wealthy countries' 'investments' in migration research. As many authors in this collection describe, externalisation is reterritorialising power geographies (see, for example, Novak 2022). By relying on statist or highly localised epistemologies, scholars help shroud these reconfigured regimes (cf. van Reekum and Schinkel 2017, 41). Instead, we should consider Keeling's (2019, 11) call – extending one made by Stuart Hall – for a mode of scholarly production that 'imaginatively, yet seriously, engages with disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas', 'existing paradigms and traditions of knowledge' and 'empirical and concrete work' to construct a new scholarly terrain'. To do otherwise means feeding 'the matrix', reinforcing what Deleuze (1992) might term 'societies of control'. Recognising the diversity of externalisation efforts – as Cuttitta (2024) and others do – requires opening space for multiple subversions. To avoid succour for chronoscopic externalisation, scholars should also surface and amplify forms of knowledge – aspirations, imaginations, desire – from multiple locations that are often overlooked or dismissed by researchers and policy makers (see Shakhsari 2014). Already, many churches and diasporic organisations recognise, shape and mobilise forms of

sociality that delegitimise statist border moralities (see Amelina 2022; Katsaura 2020). Scholars may not always feel comfortable with the visions they articulate, sometimes for good reason. Nonetheless, stepping beyond our engagements with state-centred discourses of rights and knowledge may too be a way for us to unsettle our own naturalised connection between place, identity, time and rights.

Note

1. The ordering of citizens and those 'not quite ready' reflects internal disciplinary strategy states use to 'obscure the effective denial of citizenship' (McNevin 2020, 545).

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