

BORDERLAND: A LINE CONSTRUCTS THE LANDSCAPE

The US/Mexico border traverses the North American continent from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. At 1,952 miles it is the **longest border in the world** and the **most tightly controlled border of its length**. The landscape of US/Mexico borderlands is an exemplary 21st century test that reflects, represents, and reveals the conflicting demands and imperatives of the relationships between the two nations and the global economy.

There are two different regimes under which the border is marked and constructed. The eastern half of the border follows the course of the Rio Grande until the river turns north into the United States at the Juarez/El Paso metro region. This section of the border was established with the annexation of the then-independent Republic of Texas in 1845, having historically formed border of Texas or Coahuila y Tejas territory. In the case of the river, the existing landscape feature was re-spatialized as a political border. This border responded to gradual to the shifting vagaries of the landscape, and the river re-inscribed the location of the border during periods of flooding and drought. When the river meanders the southern end of New Mexico at the Juarez/El Paso metro region, the border was projected west along a straight line, established by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and marked with a series of obelisks, crossing deserts, arroyos, rivers and mountain ranges, ending at the California coast. This abstract conception of the border is indifferent to the landscape it divides. Over time, political attitudes have changed with regard to migration and trade, leading to a continuous re-writing of both conditions. In 1933, the Rio Grande Rectification Treaty was signed by Mexico and the US, and the Rio Grande was straightened and encased in an open concrete canal. The rectification of the river defined the border by preventing further shifting and evasions of the riverbed during floods. As the western portion of the border undergoes similar "hardening", the friction between the projected line and the landscape through which it passes is amplified. This case is best exemplified by the filling of Smuggler's Gulch, a canyon used by migrants and drug smugglers near Tijuana. In a massive earthmoving project completed in 2004, Smuggler's Gulch was filled with nearly two million cubic yards of fill, and then capped with a road and fence.

In the early 21st century, the large-scale capital investment by the US to increase security resulted in a third wave of reification of the border, in the form of new fences, surveillance systems, modernized ports of entry, and a tripling of the border patrol workforce. Again, the dual regimes of the border landscape—the river and the abstract line—reflect and dictate how the investment is resolved both architecturally and tactically.

The border zone has always existed as a series of exchange points between the nations. The series of paired cities that stretch along its length serve as both points of mixing and points of tension. Things and systems that historically crossed the border: capital, goods, water, workers, students, wildlife and livestock, have responded to the current border conditions by improvising new practices and strategies. From the absurd to the deadpan, to the tragic and transcendental.

While the border marks the boundary between two political systems, it cuts across a globally integrated economy. As neatly as the border separates two official languages it divides a dynamic and multi-layered culture. The semi-permeable border is a charged membrane across which diffusion takes place, and against which enormous pressures develop. This energized or pressurized area becomes a cultural zone with a specific identity, economy, landscape and culture.

CONDITIONS AT THE BORDER

1. RIVERS AND WATER

The eastern section of the border runs along the Rio Grande from Juarez/El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico. The Rio Grande Watershed provides irrigation and daily water supply for cities in the southwest and along US/Mexican border. In following the course of the river the border bisects the river's watershed causing tension over water rights, usage and pollution in a chronically dry landscape.

2. MIGRATION

Thousands of people move across the border each day. These migrations range from routine commuters from homes on one side of the border to work on the other to desperate bids to cross illegally in hopes of exchanging one life for another. In setting up conditions of disequilibrium the border creates powerful pulls on people to cross as workers, migrants or immigrants. The rate of this migration is an important index of the action of the state of the two countries it separates.

3. ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Not only is the physical infrastructure of the border cut across ecosystems, interrupting the migration of animals and the flow of water, it also sets up a differential between two regimes of land use. With growing suburbs in US side, manufacturing in Mexico and agriculture on both the border becomes a hinge point for a range of stressed ecological dynamics.

4. BORDER CONSTRAINTS

In addition to performing the practical work of controlling the movement of people and material across the border the marking, enforcing and policing of the border provides a theater in which anxieties about national security and cultural identity are played out. The making of the border becomes a task of surveying, surveilling and controlling not only people but the landscape itself.

5. BORDER PERMEABILITY

The border is not an impermeable barrier. In order to function it must be selectively porous. Whether through the planned and officially sanctioned exchanges of trade and legal migration or the subversion of smugglers, traffickers and other interlopers the border is open and constantly opening even as attempts are made to harden and close it.

US/MEXICO TERRITORY CHANGES

1840 The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed, ending the Mexican-American War. Mexico cedes 2/3 of its territory (what would be present day TX, CA, NV, UT, and parts of CO, AZ, NM, and WY).

1848 The present Juarez/El Paso is established.

1850 The Gadsden Purchase opens a southern route and terminus for US railroads through Arizona and New Mexico south of the Gila River.

1853 The present day US/Mexico border is established.

1890 Chinese labor is reduced because of the Chinese Exclusion Act leading railroad companies to search for alternative labor sources. Mexican workers are increasingly recruited.

1900 75 mounted inspectors are hired to protect the border.

1910 The Mexican Revolution begins, which solidifies the border as a place of refuge. Thousands of Mexican flee across the border for safety. More than 890,000 Mexican refugees migrate into the United States between 1910 and 1920. Military Presence at Fort Bliss increases in an effort to control the border and keep the fighting from spilling into the US.

1916 Pancho Villa defeats Columbus New Mexico during the Mexican Revolution.

1920 The 1924 Immigration Act is passed stipulating that a literacy test for immigrants is required to stay within the US. This provision is waived for Mexican immigrants alone.

1924 In response to public outcry by nativist factions against Mexican workers, the US Border Patrol is formed to stop illegal entry into the US. Initially there are only 450 officers to police the borders with both Mexico and Canada.

1924 Federal authorities working in cooperation with state and local officials undertake a series of deportation campaigns that reduce the number of the Mexican citizens living in the US by 41 percent.

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1942 US soldiers return from World War II, which lessens the demand for Mexican workers.

1964 The Bracero program ends, depriving agricultural laborers from Mexico of their legal, guest worker status. Many are deported and Migrants crossing into the border now must evade the US Border Patrol.

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1965 The Border Industrialization Program begins, the first maquiladoras are constructed along the border.

1970 The Immigration and Naturalization Service starts a public relations campaign that warns of the dangers of illegal migration.

1970 El Chemical Agreement: 600 acres along the Rio Grande in El Paso are ceded to Mexico.

1970 President Carter prescribes infrastructure at the western seven miles of the San Diego border. It includes a ten foot chain-link fence, backed with flood lights and increased helicopter patrols.

1980 The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allows undocumented workers to receive green cards. Over three million people are legalized, because workers who entered the US before 1982 receive amnesty.

1980 Mexico joins the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) works to reduce barriers to international trade and becomes a precursor to the World Trade Organization.

1990 1993 Operation Hold the Line begins.

1993 Operation Blockade El Paso, TX begins.

1994 Operation Gatekeeper (San Diego, CA) begins, and becomes one of the largest deployment of enforcement resources in US history.

1998 Operations Linebacker and Rio Grande (Brownsville, TX) begin, giving local law enforcement greater resources and an expanded roll in policing the border.

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2000 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) developed for use by the military for surveillance purposes begin to be used by border patrol personnel for monitoring the border and identifying illegal crossings.

2000 The Real ID Act passes, granting DHS the ability to wave environmental, historical, and other laws that could interfere with the building of physical borders.

2005 Mexico launches Operation Secure Mexico to control organized crime and decrease violence in communities that have housed cartel wars in Mexico.

2005 The Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act is passed, but fails due to its provision that would potentially label churches, schools, and humanitarian aid organizations as criminal.

2005 DHS begins the Secure Border Initiative with goals to reach a total of 18,000 Border Patrol Officers by 2008 and increase border control technology through the development of the SBInet virtual fence system.

2005 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is created under the Department of Homeland Security by 2008 and increase border from terrorism, human and drug smuggling, illegal migration, and agricultural pests.

2006 Operation Jump Start sends 4,000 National Guard Troops to the Border.

2006 The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act provides \$35 million for the construction of the border fence in San Diego. The DHS projects that the San Diego border fence will cost \$177 million for its 14 mile length.

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US/MEXICO TERRITORIES 1840



US/MEXICO TERRITORIES 1845



US/MEXICO TERRITORIES 1853



RIO GRANDE TRANSFORMATION (HISTORY AND IMPACT)



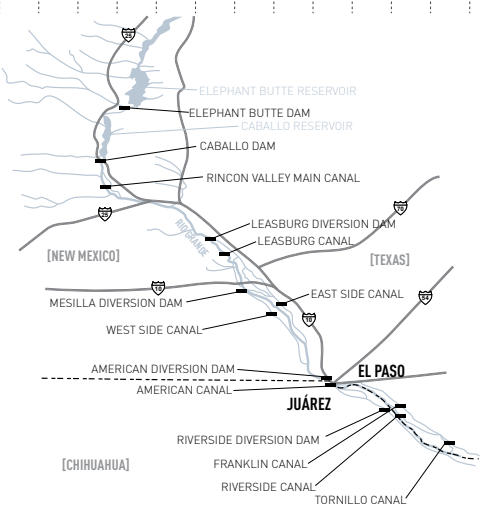
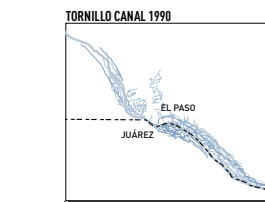
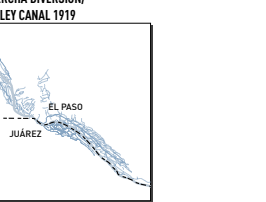
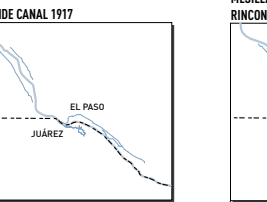
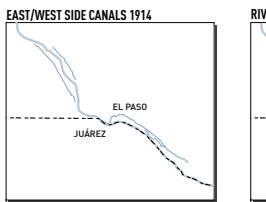
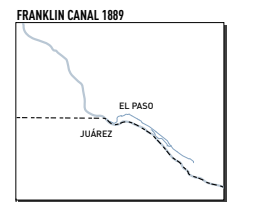
- 1951 PLATORO DAM
- 1935 EL VADO DAM
- 1963 ABIQUJU DAM
- 1975 COCHITI DAM
- 1979 GALISTEO DAM
- 1934 ISLETA DIVERSION
- 1934 SAN ARCADIA DIVERSION
- 1916 ELEPHANT BUTTE DAM
- 1930 CABALLO DAM
- 1919 LEASBURG DAM
- 1947 AMERICAN DAM

THE RIO GRANDE (DEVELOPMENT AND MANIPULATION)

The eastern part of the border between the United States and Mexico runs along the Rio Grande. At 1,885 miles long, the Rio Grande is the fourth-longest river system in the United States. In 1905 the Department of the Interior undertook the Rio Grande Project, which would eventually supply irrigation water to 178,000 acres of land and electrical power to surrounding industrial areas. Today the project consists of six diversion dams, 137 miles of canals, 454 drains, and a hydroelectric power plant.

The Rio Grande basin encompasses 234,737 miles of territory in both Mexico and the United States. As both a border and a source of water and waste management for a growing population, the physical manipulation of the Rio Grande and its watershed reflects and reveals the continuous negotiation between the nations.

The 28 mile Franklin Canal carries water at a capacity of 325 cubic feet per second. Water from the Canal carries 17,000 acres of land in the upper portion of the Valley.



1889 The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) is formed. The Commission was set up to ensure distribution of the waters from the Rio Grande and Colorado Rivers to either side of the Border. This includes the regulation and conservation of the Rivers, operation and maintenance of international storage dams and reservoirs, and monitoring water quality.

1902 Reclamation Act is signed by the US congress. The act requires that water users repay the construction costs from which they received benefits.

1906 The Leasburg diversion dam is constructed. 1908 The Elephant Butte dam and reservoir are constructed.

The 13.5 mile East Side Canal carries water at a capacity of 300 cubic feet per second, while the 2.5 mile West Side Canal carries water to the lower portion of the El Paso Valley and serves 39,000 acres of land.

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The Mesilla Diversion Reservoir diverts water into the East and West Side Canals. The Percha Diversion directs water into the Rincon Valley Canal, which carries water for irrigation to the Rincon Valley. The Canal is 28 miles long with a capacity of 280 cubic feet per second.

1925 The State of New Mexico along with the US Department of the Interior formed the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, which initiated projects to increase the efficient use of the river.

1933 The US and Mexican governments agreed to jointly construct, operate and maintain, the Rio Grande Rectification Project, which straightened, stabilized and shortened the river boundary in the Juarez/El Paso area.

1934 The Isleta and Angostura diversion dams are constructed. 1935 The San Arcadia diversion dam is constructed, and later rehabilitated in 1957.

1935 The El Vado dam and reservoir are constructed and then rehabilitated in 1954. 1938 The American Diversion Canal and American Dam are constructed.

1944 The Flood Control Act is passed. It authorizes the construction of dams and levees along US waterways by the Army Corps of Engineers.

1948 The Caballo dam and reservoir are completed.

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1951 The Platoro dam and reservoir are constructed.

1953 The Jemez Canyon dam and reservoir are constructed.

1954 The Falcon diversion dam is constructed.

1962 Construction on the San Juan Chama Trans-mountain diversion project begins. At its completion the project diverts water from the upper tributaries of the San Juan River, through the Continental Divide, and into the Rio Grande Basin primarily for use by the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

1963 The Amistad dam and reservoir are constructed.

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POPULATION TRENDS

Labor demands, and policy responses: cyclic trends intersect linear increases in population and investment in "hardening" the border.

This timeline documents changes in labor policies and contracts between the two nations. American migration policies constantly shift to adapt to fluctuating American labor demand. Post 9-11 rhetoric cites the US/Mexico border as a key gateway for terrorist infiltration of the United States, leading to an increase in Homeland Security budgets to expand the Border Patrol workforce and fund the construction of a "hardened" border. Projecting from these trends, the increasing unemployment in both nations, due to the credit market collapse of 2008, will result in surplus labor conditions in Mexico and a political and media backlash against Mexican workers in the United States.

NUMBER OF BORDER PATROL AGENTS



MAQUILADORA WORKERS



POPULATION



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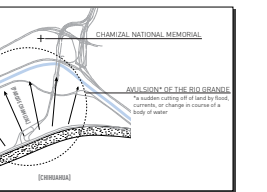
BRACERO PROGRAM

In 1942 the United States signed the Bracero Treaty which reopened a channel for the legal migration of Mexican workers into the country. Between 1942 and 1964, millions of Mexicans were allowed into the US as "Braceros" to work temporarily on contract as farmers and ranchers.

During these years, more than 4 million Mexican farm workers came to work in the United States. At the end of the Second World War, however, Mexican workers began to be let go from their jobs and were replaced with workers coming out of wartime industries and by returning servicemen. By the 1960s, the surplus of "illegal" non Bracero, agricultural workers along with the invention of the mechanical cotton harvester, made participating in the Bracero program less practical and appealing to employers. This combined with increasing public concern at humanitarian violations by Bracero employers, brought the program to an end in 1964.

PARQUE CHAMIZAL

This 800 acre parcel on which Parque Chamizal is built has been both part of Mexico and of the United States. The land was originally on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande until flooding shifted the course of the river, placing the land on the US side. Mexico filed a claim with the US in 1865 for ownership of the land. However, it wasn't until 1943 when Presidents Kennedy and Lopez agreed to split the land. The two countries made the newly acquired spaces into public parks dedicated to international peace and understanding.



DRUG TRAFFICKING (ILLEGAL TRADE ACROSS THE BORDER)

The varying economic conditions of the US/Mexico border have created a region that is a nexus of transnational trade. Hundreds of companies have made the Mexican border region home to manufacturing operations that are among the most productive in the world, many of their products are then shipped to the US. However illegal trade across the border has also increased. Trafficking and drug related violence has escalated over the past few years, as Mexico has become the primary supplier of illegal drugs for the US. Since 2007 there have been 9,903 drug related deaths in Mexico alone, more than the combined fatalities suffered in the US Iraq war. (www.latimes.com)

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1971 Nixon announces the "War on Drugs."

1973 The Drug Enforcement Agency is created.

1981 Medellín Cartel comes to power. The alliance includes the Ramos Escobar, Cartels Lehner, and Jose Gonzales Rodriguez Gacha.

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