



Where the Exception is No Longer Exceptional: Visualising Sovereignty, Violence and Refusal in the Spanish-Moroccan Borderscape

by Vincent Förster



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Abstract

Borderscapes are spaces of exception: They are where the state exercises sovereignty in a violent and unrestrained manner on the one side, and where citizens and non-citizens subvert the state's authority by refusing to acknowledge its existence on the other. Borders are hence socially constructed liminal spaces that extend beyond the borderline. To understand these complex bordering processes and practices, both monolithic and ideographic academic analyses are required. By visualising the borderscape we uncover the multi-faceted realities at borders, the performative acts that constitute them, why and how exceptional violence and refusal are performed and give agency to non-state actors otherwise hidden from history.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Border, Resistance, Sovereignty, Violence, Visual IR

Introduction

In the Borderlands

you are the battleground

where enemies are kin to each other;

you are at home, a stranger

the border disputes have been settled

the volley of shots have shattered the truce

you are wounded, lost in action

dead, fighting back;

[...]

To survive the Borderlands

you must live sin fronteras^[1]

be a crossroads. (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 194–195)

[1] *sin fronteras* = without borders



Figure 1. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. Ceuta from afar.

'It is January 2016. Morocco's coastline is rolling past; Spain and Europe seem only a stone's throw away. I'm on a bus to Ceuta, one of the two Spanish exclaves on North African territory. Together with Melilla, Ceuta is the only land border Europe shares with mainland Africa. Slightly smaller than London's City of Westminster, it is located at the eastern end of the Strait of Gibraltar, only 25km from continental Europe. An 8.4km long and 6m high fence topped with barbed wire surrounds the enclave, where surveillance, smuggling, irregular crossings, physical violence and deaths are regular occurrences. Yet, despite these "hard facts" Ceuta and, thus, the border are not officially recognised by Morocco. For the Moroccan state, Ceuta is territory occupied by its former coloniser, Spain, that should be returned to the righteous sovereign. For the Spanish state, however, Ceuta is in their hands since 1668 and, thus, as Spanish as anything can be. At the same time, Ceuta is one of the EU's most southern external borders. Here, European, Arab and African identities, Muslim and Christian values, Northern and Southern economic realities are constantly renegotiated, produced and reproduced, reinforced and contested. The "gate to fortress Europe" for some, the last European outpost for others, Ceuta is a textbook example of a modern border, a place of political, social and cultural meaning-making and meaning-breaking.'

The above excerpt is the scripted opening sequence after a prologue in my documentary *the wound that needs to be healed* (55', UK/Germany, 2016), a film I shot in and around the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in January 2016 and in which I explore the lived realities of sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans at and around the border. In this essay, I draw on the fieldwork I conducted there to argue that bridging politics and aesthetics is a valuable, even necessary, methodology to do justice to the multi-faceted, contradictory and complex realities of and around borders. I will use excerpts, stills and quotes from the film to support my argument throughout this paper. After discussing the shift within critical border studies away from the mere perception of borders as territorially identifiable sites towards the notion of borderscapes that encompass both the border as a space *and* bordering processes, I demonstrate that this shift requires a bridging of politics and aesthetics. By visualising the human border experience and thus focusing on emotion rather than meaning, the images become a site of knowledge production in their own right enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of what borders do and how they affect the people living within and

around them. This is followed by a case study based on my fieldwork in Ceuta in which I contend that the borderscape is an exceptional space on two accounts: on the one hand, it can be viewed in the Agambian sense of the concept, given the state's unrestrained and often violent exercise of sovereignty in attempting to secure the border, and on the other, the borderscape constitutes the state's Achilles' heel, the space where the state is most vulnerable because it is here where state agents, citizens and migrants constantly challenge and subvert state power. I close with reflections on my aesthetic approach to the borderscape and a discussion of the limitations of this particular research.

From Border to Borderscape – A Turn Towards Bridging Politics and Aesthetics



Figure 2. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'We don't know where the border is.'
<https://vimeo.com/313709072>

In the past ten to fifteen years, the debate about state boundaries has shifted from a focus on 'borders as territorial dividing lines and political institutions to borders regarded as [dynamic] socio-cultural and discursive processes and practices' and thus away 'from the concept of border to that of *bordering*' (Brambilla, 2015, pp. 14–15, emphasis added). By recognising the importance of identity, culture, language, symbols and emotions in the construction of borders, borders are problematised and opened up for critical scrutiny rather than taken for granted as the mere territorial demarcation of a political distinction between inside/outside, us/them. While by no means diminishing its territorial and real-political role, this shift calls for a thinking about the border not purely in terms of the borderline itself but beyond it, which means taking the landscape through which it runs, the borderlands that are territorially close to it and all the processes that take place around it into consideration as well. Methodologically, this requires a shift from a nomothetic to an ideographic analysis of the border, as the latter becomes partially de-territorialised, disseminated across space and, hence, more wide-ranging in its material practices of demarcation, as well as its inclusion of the actors these processes involve (Schimanski, 2015, pp. 35–36). In other words, the border is more than a fixed, primeval line on a map, which, in its materialised form of a wall or a fence, delineates sovereign state territory today. Rather, it is a dynamic space constantly re-imagined



through political, cultural and symbolic everyday performances by the sovereign authority, citizens and migrants, including their respective discourses of political geography, history, race and identity (cf. Paasi, 2005, p. 18).

Consequently, the border is conceived in a different epistemological and ontological sense as well: instead of being the focal point of territorial integrity imposed “from above”, the border becomes a liminal relational space, a ‘threshold (en)folding the margin’ in which not certainty and security, but *uncertainty* and *insecurity* are the main features (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 585). Such an actor-oriented outlook gives voice and agency to people who are otherwise merely the passive objects of sovereignty in traditionally state-centric IR discourses, if they are mentioned at all. Moreover, this combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches challenges the widespread “‘territorialist’ Western geopolitical imagination’ of borders and becomes inevitably more political by privileging the dynamic encounters and processes that produce, shape and sustain borders (ibid.). In order to describe this broadened, yet more precisely defined space in all its complexity more accurately, the term “borderscape” has been introduced to replace the “simple” notion of the border within the field of critical border studies (cf. dell’Agnese and Szary, 2015). This way of (re)thinking the border enables us to interrogate the relation between the geography of the borderlands, the state’s bordering practices and the violence that often accompanies it, as well as the modes of resistance and contestation to these very state practices by people “on the ground”.

What, then, does a turn to visualising the borderscape add to the discussion about them? In a purely academic context, there is little room for experiences and imagination. This, of course, is not to say that academics lack either or both of these. Yet, the language used is by definition (and thus by necessity) so precise and rational, and the endeavours so intellectual that it is often hard to take away any kind of sensory experience, perception or meaning from what they are describing. Politics and aesthetics are thus often seen as two diametrically opposed fields. In contemporary IR scholarship, documentary film, for example, is not only rarely used as an object of analysis, but also neglected as a means of exploring issues within IR (van Munster and Sylvest, 2015, pp. 230–231). Real life, however, is full of things we see, feel and hear, i.e. *sense*, and borders are indeed among such tangible experiences. Were it not for their very evident sensorial components, their existence would not be recognised by anyone and, therefore, become irrelevant. Indeed, one of their major markers – at least at certain geographical points – is their high level of visibility: ‘we view fences, markers, gates or contours in a landscape as what constitutes a boundary’ (Rosello and Wolfe, 2016, p. 5). Moreover, everyone will have some kind of feeling or sensation based on expectations and/or experiences when approaching a border, may it be annoyance or boredom for those who will not have problems crossing to the other side, or uncertainty and fear (to name a few) for those who will or might have problems doing so. The very point of borders is that you feel them, that you recognise their existence and that they wield a power seemingly greater than yours.

While the border is then a sensorial experience in its own right, its visualisation will always have a sensorial aspect to it in two other ways: on the one hand, visualisation is the attempt of a person to make sense of and capture their personal sensory perception of a given phenomenon, place or event. In that sense, the study of border aesthetics is ‘another way of expressing the relational dimension of socio-political interfaces and of questioning their political component’, as well as opening ‘the ground for questioning the positionality of the investigator’ (dell’Agnese and Szary, 2015, quoted in Rosello and Wolfe, 2017, p. 4). On the other hand, once this personal perception is “out there”, it demands other people’s reception of it, triggering their imagination and evoking feelings while and after they look at the images, listen to the sounds etc. The language of aesthetics, as well as the visual itself, thus engage in a highly political conversation articulating what Rancière calls ‘the distribution of the sensible’: who and what can be seen in the images, who has the ability



to see them, what can be said about them and who has the ability to speak about them. These are inherently political questions for they 'reveal who can have a share in what is common to the community' (Rancière, 2004, pp. 12–13). Whoever is excluded from these activities does not take part in the 'sharing of the perceptible', is rendered invisible and, thus, a victim of a kind of symbolic violence from above, ostracised from the political system. Therefore, visualising discourses like that of the borderscape opens up the possibility for notoriously invisible and under-represented non-state actors, i.e. the people "on the ground", to become active agents and 'borders are revealed as political, symbolic, cultural, anthropological and epistemological constructions' (Brambilla, 2012). Thus, the visualisation of the border as a method of inquiry helps us widen our understanding of what it means to experience the border in its complexity, plurality and highly personal forms. In other words, the images become a source of knowledge production in their own right that is neither linguistic nor linear, but instead focus on what certain experiences can do and how they affect us (cf. Callahan, 2015). Hence, I adopt the theoretical starting point of scholars like Elena dell'Agnesse, Johan Schimanski, Chiara Brambilla and Stephen Wolfe among others, to whose work I am especially indebted, namely that 'there is no such thing as a non-aesthetic figuration of the border' (ibid., p. 6) and that in order to make sense of borders, a bridging of politics and aesthetics is imperative.

During my time in the Ceutan borderscape, I met three young sub-Saharan migrants, T^[2], R and J, and four Moroccans, A, N, S and F, who agreed to be part of the filming process. The former three had successfully crossed the border into Ceuta and were waiting in the C.E.T.I. Centre for Temporary Residence of Immigrants (C.E.T.I. – Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes) to be transferred to mainland Spain. The Moroccans were living in the coastal town of Martil, bar one who was living and working in Ceuta. I chose to collaborate with them because they all had different experiences with the border. T, from the DRC, had been living in Morocco for several years trying and waiting to make it to Europe to support his family. R, a young woman from the Ivory Coast, tried to leave the 'misery' of Africa behind her and crossed the border by boat. J from Cameroon had climbed the fence. Among the Moroccans, A was born in Morocco but left to work in Ceuta, while S was still living on the Moroccan side but working in the cross-border trade for many years. F is a fisherman whose areas of fishing have been successively reduced, as Spain prohibited Moroccans from entering their waters. Finally, N is a young woman for whom Ceuta was a way of making a trip to Europe every now and then. The documentary is loosely divided into two parts with the first dealing with the Moroccans' point of view on the borderscape, and the second with the perspective of sub-Saharan migrants on Ceuta. Both parts are framed by Bertolt Brecht's late 1930s poem *An die Nachgeborenen*,^[3] which is divided into three paragraphs referring to present, past and future in this order, serving as prologue, interlude and epilogue to the film. In the first section, Brecht speaks about living in 'dark times' under the Nazi regime, criticising those who remain silent despite knowing about the crimes committed in front of their eyes. In the second part, he deplores the missed opportunity during the Weimar Republic to nip the rising nationalism in the bud while it was still possible. Finally, in the third segment, he directly addresses 'those born later' asking for forbearance once the time comes 'at last [in which] man is a helper to man'. The poem, thus, has a kind of alienation effect, breaking the spell of the imagery of the real and alluding to the potential of history to repeat itself unless we stand up against injustices.

I chose documentary filmmaking as my *modus operandi* for the visualisation of the border, as it can be a powerful tool to make sense of international politics, and indeed shares – depending

[2] In order to ensure the safety and anonymity of the people I interacted with and filmed, I will not disclose their real names.

[3] Brecht, B. (1979), *Poems – 1913–1956*. Edited by John Willet and Ralph Manheim. London: Eyre Methuen, pp. 318–320. The English title of the poem is 'To those born later'.



on its operational mode – theoretical considerations with IR theories like Marxism and critical theory. In the film, I try to combine explanatory arrangements with more observational ones. In the former arrangement, telling is privileged over showing in order to make analytical or interpretative arguments by connecting the reality ‘that can be glanced [at] and a deeper reality of truth that requires narrative excavation’ (van Munster and Sylvest, 2015, p. 234). In the latter arrangement, showing is privileged over telling and, accordingly, demands a more active role from the viewer to interpret what he/she sees. The latter arrangement in particular allows me to challenge established regimes of visibility and the politics of exclusion that are connected to contemporary EU and Moroccan border management policies through a ‘redistribution of the sensible’, i.e. the creation of a visual subject out of the usually invisible irregular border crosser and the everyday-crosser from Morocco (cf. Brambilla, 2012). Instead of merely being a passive object of state sovereignty at the border, sub-Saharan Africans and northern Moroccans become active actors in the bordering process. Consequently, another narrative about borderscape reality emerges, one that makes room for those voices and biographies that are mostly hidden in official state, media and academic discourses. It is exactly this pluralisation of perspectives on the borderscape that gives documentary filmmaking ‘not only critical but political, if not ethical, purchase’ (Downey, 2009, p. 125).

In the following sections, I demonstrate this argument drawing on my fieldwork in and around Ceuta and using my documentary film *the wound that needs to be healed* as a recurring point of reference.

Visualising the Spanish-Moroccan Borderscape as a Space of Sovereign Authority and Exceptional Violence

Borderscapes are spaces in which the state is exercising sovereignty, for it is the border which marks the territory of a state and serves simultaneously as the assertion for implementing internal tasks of statehood (White, 2007, p. 696). Yet, Wendt argued that sovereignty is a man-made construct, ‘an institution [which] exists only in virtue of certain intersubjective understandings and expectations; there is no sovereignty without an other’ (Wendt, 1992, p. 412). With respect to migration, borderscapes are thus the spaces in which the constructed authority of the state first meets – or rather collides with – the “other”, i.e. the migrant or the refugee.^[4] The borderscape of Ceuta is exemplary for this collision since it constitutes not only a threshold between Spain and Morocco, and thus two nation-states, but is simultaneously (b)ordering the EU, a supranational institution, and Morocco, an African nation-state, dividing the Christian and the Muslim world, the “rich Global North” and the “poor Global South”. These binaries result in specific ‘economic, ethnic, gendered, historical, and racial subjectivities’ that shape the perception and experience of the border on both sides (Leite and Mutlu, 2012, p. 38). In the Western context, the Arab or sub-Saharan migrant is often perceived as a threat to EU identity, security and wealth and when facing a threat, any ‘ethic of hospitality’ is abandoned in a space that is governed by the ‘Machiavellian virtue of security’ (Salter, 2008, pp. 371–372). Consequently, the state takes actions that make it difficult for the “other” to enter its territory, actions that take place in the borderscape and can be described as exceptional.

Using discourse analysis, Linke and Smith examine how this development is justified and reinforced. They evaluate the construction of fear through a securocratic language used in global public post-9/11 discourse, which affects and facilitates political decision-making in the contemporary Western state. They argue that the fear created through the media and political rhetoric encourages proactive

[4] For an important discussion on the politically loaded terminology used in migration research, see Gerard, 2004, pp. 6–8.

military action, legitimates war as a surgical intervention, diminishes civil society and abandons human rights. The neoliberal global order, which requires economic mobility, flexibility and de-territorialisation, collides with the state's political commitment to securitise space. In that sense, national security restructures the biosocial by an appeal to racial hierarchies and creates a 'regime of borders', 'a nation form founded on fear, in which policing, surveillance and militarism have become companions to normal life' (Linke and Smith, 2009, pp. 3–4). This discourse is not unknown to those facing the immediate consequences of it, namely those who are migrating to the North. From the perspective of a European government or indeed a European citizen, this discourse might make sense while being inside their own "bubble" because they "know" or perceive the migrant only as the "unknown" and/or the "unknowing other" – mainly due to the lack of interaction in the first place. Yet, it is in conversation with this "other" that a mirror is held up to our society and indeed ourselves, and the hypocrisy of such an idle attempt to distract from inherently internal problems by focusing on the exterior is disguised:



Figure 3. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'There are French terrorists too.'

<https://vimeo.com/313709089/833f20bba2>

The clarity of T's understanding of the situation questions common beliefs about who these people making their way to Europe *really* are. After all, is he not one of those young, less educated, low-skilled, religious African men who are not actually refugees but are, in fact, merely economic migrants searching for a better life in Europe? Does he, thus, threaten the economic and cultural integrity and indeed safety of European states (cf. for example Flood, 2017; Strauss, 2018)? Yet, having met him, having had tea with him, having spent time with and talked to him, it turned out that reality is not as clear-cut as popular opinion would like to make us believe. Certainly, what he says is nothing "new"; this is a discourse often embraced and discussed by figures on the left in the Western world too. Returning to Rancière's aforementioned 'redistribution of the sensible', however, it matters who says what to whom. Usually, in the European context, these discourses are dominated by white people talking to white people about persons of colour, but here a black voice is not only taking part in the conversation, but speaks to a white person about his experience as a person of colour. Seeing and hearing a black man who wants to come to Europe say that terrorism is not only an external problem that the EU can solve by securing its borders, is a first step towards an adjustment of power dynamics within the discourse because a usually suppressed voice is being



heard. It is a sober realisation, but it was through direct confrontation, a conversation and the simple act of listening to the ominous non-white “other” that she/he became a face with a name, a story, an opinion and, thus, a human being with agency. Surely, I do not mean to overestimate the impact of a conversation between two people for the whole world, implying that it can or will completely change the discourse. Yet, it is a start, from the bottom up. Visually recording this encounter ensures that it does not have to remain my own personal experience but that I can make it accessible and comprehensible, tangible in the broader sense, for others as well. Thus, while the impact of a reproduced image is likely to be less strong than a face-to-face meeting, it remains strong enough to constitute a crucial political intervention in the way we think about the “other” and, indeed, our own society.

Representatives of the state, however, often do not have or cannot make time for such interactions. When it comes to securing the state’s (territorial) integrity, all nuances in the discourse seem to vanish and a clear distinction between us/them, inside/outside is being made. Drawing on Carl Schmitt’s conceptualisation of sovereignty – ‘[s]overeign is he who decides on the state of exception’ with the ‘sovereign [being], at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order’ (Agamben, 1998, pp. 11, 15) – Agamben suggests that the fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is that of bare life/political existence, and exclusion/inclusion in a constant state of exception. Here, bare life is the life of *homo sacer*, who ‘may be killed and yet not sacrificed’ (ibid., p. 8). In this state of exception, the normal laws of the state remain in place and most people still have to follow them; however, the sovereign is able to use violence without consequence whenever they perceive their authority to be threatened. What takes place in the borderscape, then, is the differentiation between kinds of life that resembles the Greek distinction between *zoê* and *bios*, i.e. the simple fact of living, bare, biological life, and a political, qualified life (ibid., pp. 1–2). In other words, the state creates a legal void at the border in which it decides who is granted political rights and who – for the well-being of others – may be killed without consequence because he/she is not part of the ‘internal’, national citizenry, but part of the ‘external’ international ‘other’ (Doty, 2011, p. 605). In that sense, the concept of biopolitics with its growing inclusion of man’s natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power is what determines political decision-making and the granting of rights in contemporary Western democracies. Here, the border constitutes the materialisation of the state of exception and the creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a realm of indistinction, where exceptional violence is not only possible but also the rule (Salter, 2008, p. 365).

In Ceuta, the state of exception is realised through the extensive border installations present in and around the exclave: an 8.4km-long and 6m-high double fence topped with barbed wire, surveillance cameras and a radar system surrounds the exclave to prevent irregular entry from Moroccan soil. In order to prevent irregular entry into the exclave from the sea, the Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE) has been introduced by the Spanish Guardia Civil to monitor the Strait of Gibraltar, the entire Andalucían coast and the coasts of the Canary Islands. It consists of fixed and mobile detection devices like radars and infrared cameras that identify the small vessels migrants use to cross the sea, as well as units composed of helicopters, boats and cars that intercept the migrants once they are spotted (Carling, 2007, p. 325). Additionally, more than 300 Spanish national police officers and almost 700 Guardia Civil officers, one military command headquarter, three armed infantry battalions, an armoured regiment, an artillery regiment and other logistic military units are deployed in Ceuta (Leite and Mutlu, 2012, p. 34). Finally, and rather paradoxically given Morocco’s refusal to recognise Ceuta officially as a Spanish city, Moroccan border and police authorities increasingly cooperate with the Spanish Guardia Civil in managing the migration flow towards the Spanish/EU border by monitoring and raiding the woods around Ceuta (Espiñeira and Ferrer-Gallardo, 2015, p. 254). It, therefore, seems appropriate to speak of the Spanish-Moroccan borderscape as a highly militarised space that is without equal among the

inner-European borderscapes (cf. Vaughan-Williams, 2015). This is again not unknown to “those who jump”,^[5] who learn about the different deterrence and detection mechanisms around Ceuta through their informal networks and personal experiences when trying to cross into the exclave. As T recounts:



Figure 4. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. ‘There are radars everywhere.’
<https://vimeo.com/313709120/218dd0e1d4>

These measures of securitisation have proved to be successful in detecting migrants, although the numbers of irregular entries have remained relatively stable over the past 15 years due to changing migrant routes and sudden political events like the Arab uprising (cf. Frontex, 2015; Carling 2007, p. 336). Simultaneously, however, they also have severe consequences for the migrants who – being almost always denied the right to legal entry – have no other chance to get into Europe except by entering Ceuta in an irregular fashion. Crossing the border irregularly, however, has its price as it comes with high risks of getting injured or even dying due to the many natural obstacles as well as man-made measures taken by the states to prevent that. For example, the “structural violence” of the border controls’ (Weber, 2010, p. 41), i.e. the fence and surveillance systems, is not directly killing people, but it increases the risk of their injury and death. With the enhancement of security measures, the migrants (and certainly smugglers and traffickers as well), in turn, further elaborate their methods of escaping the reach of the state. The expansion of SIVE led migrants to take longer and, thus, more perilous routes than before, which increases the likelihood of capsizing, motor failure or getting lost at sea and dying of thirst or hypothermia (Carling, 2007, p. 327). While it is difficult to claim that these control measures are directly responsible for fatalities, the geographic location of the border provides the state with a space of moral alibi that enables politicians to deny responsibility for migrant deaths when they occur in the sea, for in these circumstances nature simply takes its course (Doty, 2011, p. 608). Moreover, through this increased usage of technologised surveillance techniques, the people trying to cross the border are dematerialised, since the border guards mainly look at them through an intermediary, namely the camera (Rosière, 2013). This

[5] The people trying to cross the fence into Ceuta or Melilla are often referred to as “les sauteurs”, those who jump, cf. *Les Sauteurs* (2016).

means that migrants are not primarily seen as “real people”, but merely as figures on a screen, which makes it easier to strip them of their humanity and, therefore, regard their potential death as the “collateral damage” of a combat against illegal migration’ (van Houtum and Pijpers, 2007, p. 299). Hence, footage captured from the Spanish Guardia Civil’s infrared CCTV cameras tells a very different story about the people trying to cross through the borderscape than the footage that I shot, for example. In the latter, the human beings behind the multitude of migrants are revealed while in the former, their number merely translates into radiating stick figures in a non-place.



Figure 5. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. CCTV.

<https://vimeo.com/313709033/896cf6a272>

Juxtaposing the security footage and my footage makes it possible to understand that making sense of the borderscape is inherently linked to the perspective from which one looks at the border; that is to say, the theoretical claim that the borderscape is multi-faceted is proven by *showing* it. Seeing the CCTV footage of the Guardia Civil, it becomes understandable how migrants can be dehumanised and mainly perceived as a threat: they are nothing more than black dots that move, in big groups or alone, towards you. Especially being in a position of defence, it is easy to have a very physical reaction to these images, for not few of them resemble the view through a hairline cross in a video game. For the Spanish state and the EU, these images suggest that their territories are being invaded by hundreds of sub-Saharan migrants unless they implement preventive measures to stop them. On the contrary, the footage that I shot indicates that these same migrants are people who are actually not so different from us and who ‘come to help Europe move forward in order to help [them] to go forward too [as they also] want [their] piece of the cake’, as J said. Rather than being passive objects of their circumstances, they are active, if sometimes only reactive subjects

in the situation they – at least from a certain point onwards – decided to face. Thus, what this audio-visual depiction of the different perspectives and their interplay does is that it complicates rather than simplifies the narratives about the borderscape and, therefore, comes closer to reality. The contradictions are apparent, as is the fact that there is no single answer or simple solution to facing Morton's fork here because both sides have valid arguments at their disposal. This is even acknowledged by R and T, although their testimony further complicates the already complex conflict situation.



Figure 6. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'You have to respond to violence with force.' <https://vimeo.com/313709156/a0cfd31f2c>

The complication I alluded to above, which I only have the space to touch upon here briefly, arises from these questions: has the physical violence started from migrants trying to get to Europe and, thus, are European state policies of securing their borders simply a reaction to an external threat? Or, is this threat merely a distorted perception of reality and the measures taken by states to secure their borders are disproportionate and, in consequence, fuelling the violence coming from migrants? Arguably, being denied any kind of possibility to migrate legally through measures of symbolic violence (not being able to obtain a visa, for example), the migrants have nothing left to resort to than their bodies to claim their rights, let alone their dignity. Thus, their bodies are used simultaneously as a weapon and a shield and become both object of and subject to physical violence from the authorities. On the flip side, the border around Ceuta was only fortified since the number of migrants trying to get into Europe started rising in the early 1990s. Regardless of the "correct" answer, however, the borderscape around Ceuta is territory in which violence regularly takes place and death is part of everyone's calculations, although the exact number of injuries and deaths occurring in the Spanish-Moroccan borderscape is almost impossible to verify, especially regarding those drowning in the sea. Thus, the figures provided by the Spanish or the Moroccan government, the media, NGOs like "United for Intercultural Action" or "Fortress Europe" and international organisations like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) vary significantly (Brian and Laczko, 2015, pp. 92–97). Nevertheless, it seems likely that thousands of African migrants have died trying to

reach Spain from Moroccan soil since the late 1980s (ibid.). What leads to these deaths is again difficult to validate given the absence of reliable data. Yet, there is cause to believe that in addition to those deaths caused by the structural violence of the borderscape discussed above, a minority of border-related deaths results directly from the 'deliberate actions or negligence of others', i.e. border guards, policemen or other officials (Weber, 2010, p. 41). Some of these actions that have resulted in fatalities around Ceuta include shootings and beatings by both Spanish and Moroccan officials during interventions on irregular border-crossings, raids of unofficial migrant camps in Ceuta's hinterlands by Moroccan forces, as well as arrests and deportations of migrants by the Moroccan police to the Algerian border or further into Morocco's South and to the borders with Mauritania and Western Sahara (cf. Salmi et al., 2014, pp. 3–4; No Borders Morocco – Blog, 2016). This is confirmed through the testimonies of R and J:



Figure 7. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'It's like in a film.'

<https://vimeo.com/314358985/18f35ebd3d>

Despite contrary assertions then, in the borderscape, humanitarianism seems to be given precedence over human rights, inadvertently finding itself complicit in human rights abuses. Rather than including the (potentially) threatened or deprived person (i.e. the migrant) into their laws and granting them rights, 'only the suffering or sick body [i.e. that of the refugee] is seen as a legitimate manifestation of a common humanity, worth of recognition in the form of rights' (Ticktin, 2009, p. 138). The institutionalisation of structural and indeed physical violence can thus be interpreted as what Arendt famously called the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 2006). Violence, "the evil", becomes normal, i.e. "banal", because it is legalised – though not justifiably legitimised – by the state. In addition to the material securitisation measurements financed and provided by the Spanish state and the EU, Spain introduced an Amendment to the Law on Public Security in 2015, which provides the legal basis for immediate pushbacks of irregular migrants at its external borders without identifying those among them who might be in need of international protection (Galán, 2015). This Amendment has been approved by the Spanish Congress even though it violates the migrants' right to asylum, the principle of non-refoulement, and other laws and rights established in treaties like the Geneva Convention or the European Convention of Human Rights, all ratified by

Spain. Paradoxically then, the exceptionality of the borderscape lies in the fact that the exceptional violence used by the state to secure its sovereignty and integrity is actually no longer exceptional, but banal. What is shunned in the international, and indeed the national, realm becomes the rule in the “zone of indistinction”, the borderscape.



Figure 8. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. ‘The border is like a wound that needs to be healed.’ <https://vimeo.com/314144106/45ee7643a0>

Visualising the Spanish-Moroccan Borderscape as a Space of Limited Sovereignty and Exceptional Refusal



Figure 9. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. ‘–Where is Ceuta? –In Africa. –So you’re African like me.’ <https://vimeo.com/314147590/879fd32c1f>



It is evident that the borderscape constitutes an exceptional space with regard to the state's use of violent measures to secure its territorial integrity. Yet, returning to Wendt's contention that sovereignty does not simply exist 'out there', the power states use only emerges out of social interactions and is itself also producing social subjectivities. Hence, it makes more sense to speak of 'power relations rather than of power per se' (Edkins, Pin-Fat and Shapiro, 2004, p. 2) being at play in the borderscape, which additionally emphasises the possibility of counter-discourses from the margins that challenge the hegemonic power rhetoric (Schimanski, 2015, p. 36). The above episode recounted by A shows that small acts of defiance enabling these counter-discourses take place on a day-to-day basis. While they do not necessarily change the status quo per se, they question Agamben's one-dimensional and monothetic conceptualisation of the state of exception, which leaves no space for modes of resistance in light of the absolute power of the sovereign. Indeed, this is an important and oft-mentioned limitation of Agamben's work (cf. for example Ziarek, 2008; Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2005; Colatrella, 2011; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). While A might have had to stop speaking Arabic in the presence of a police officer, he certainly still speaks his mother tongue with his friends away from the presence of policemen. Thus, he challenges and undermines the idea that Ceuta is 'as Spanish as anything can be', and indeed the concept of what it means to be Spanish and on what territory Spain actually is.

Yet, instead of abandoning Agamben's concept altogether, I suggest that an ideographic examination of the borderscape expands the notion of exceptionality to one that also encompasses exceptional modes of non-compliance to the state's authority performed by the inhabitants of the borderscape. In other words, the border is simultaneously a space of exceptional violence exercised by the state *and* the space where the state is most vulnerable to practices subverting its sovereignty. Not least, it now becomes apparent why the concept of the borderscape is a helpful paradigm and its visualisation is a practical method to analyse the multi-faceted borderscape realities (re)shaped and (re)imagined by different actors in the borderlands. Then, what should we call these subversive non-state practices? Speaking about modes of resistance in the borderscape is somewhat misleading, as it either suggests an ongoing revolution against the state from below or implies the romanticised idea of a political struggle of the powerless against the authorities (Jones, 2011, p. 687). Certainly, the state usually gains the upper hand. Power relations in the borderscape, however, are characterised by partiality and constant reconfiguration, notwithstanding that they are never really turned around and indeed not necessarily questioned at all, as will be discussed below. I therefore adopt Jones' terminology of 'spaces of refusal' to describe those zones in the borderscape in which people 'disregard the rules of the state' through their 'everyday actions' (ibid.). Crucially, these actions 'are not [a] politically motivated resistance to sovereignty' demanding systemic change but are undertaken to achieve immediate personal gains (ibid.). Thus, the overall power relation between state and individual remains undisputed, even though the individual might gain a short-term advantage through his/her non-compliance. In the Spanish-Moroccan borderscape in and around Ceuta, at least two distinct fields can be discerned in which acts of everyday refusal are constantly performed: irregular migration and the cross-border economy.

The most obvious form in which migrants disregard state law is their very attempt to cross the border without a visa and, if they are successful, their survival and arrival at their desired destination (cf. Doty, 2011, p. 609). Since 2000, around 23,000 migrants have crossed the Spanish-Moroccan border around Ceuta irregularly, thus successfully refusing to obey the authority of the state (Espiñeira and Ferrer-Gallardo, 2015, p. 258). By trespassing the borderline drawn by a state, they transgress the state's law that has declared them "outsiders", simultaneously subverting the state's sovereignty. The means migrants employ to do so range from subtle evasion and deception, to identity stripping and the forceful physical climbing of barriers like border fences. Importantly, these attempts to escape the reach of the state are "acts of desperation", born out of the circumstance

that they have already been rendered 'bare life', stripped of their rights, thus having nothing left to lose (Ellermann, 2010, p. 410). This is exemplified in R's disbelief over the fact that black people rarely have any chance to enter Europe other than irregularly and, as a result, validates her and T's assertion that they will find a way in, no matter what:



Figure 10. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'We will find a solution to arrive.'
<https://vimeo.com/314366651/76c435a3d2>

Paradoxically then, it is the migrants' 'extreme powerlessness' that is the source of their refusal to uphold the law and that 'presents a potential threat to the exercise of state power' (ibid.). This, in turn, is only possible because liberal states like Spain are, at least theoretically, 'forced to operate within the constraints of the international legal order – making repatriation contingent on the possession of identity documents – but [...] also constitutionally limited in [their] exercise of coercion against the individual' (ibid., p. 408). In other words, with their official devotion to human rights, liberal states' exercise of sovereign power is constrained to the extent that migrants remain powerless, but not without rights, and thus cannot be treated as standing 'outside the law' and simply killed, as Agamben argues. With respect to migration, then, the state's exercise of sovereignty is not absolute but partial, constrained by international law and the refusal of migrants to recognise the state's jurisdiction. The use of violence might even be interpreted as a sign of the state's weakness and inability to control the borderscape completely (cf. Jones, 2011, p. 689).

These considerations about the limitations of the exercise of sovereignty in the borderscape are reinforced in the cross-border economy that takes place in Ceuta. Despite the official discourse of a hermetically sealed border where only goods and people that are declared "legal" by both Spain and Morocco can cross, every day some 15,000 Moroccans are involved in what is locally known as *contrebande tolérée*, tolerated smuggling.^[6] They leave Morocco to buy commodities in Ceuta, carry them through the border and resell them on the Moroccan side. This is possible due to the exceptional circumstances of this particular borderscape. Firstly, Ceuta (as well as Melilla) is a tax-free zone under Spanish law, exempted from all custom rules and not subject to EU fisheries and trade policies (Gold, 2000, p. 151). Secondly, given that Morocco does not officially recognise the existence of Spanish territory in Ceuta, no commercial frontiers exist between the Spanish enclave and its Moroccan hinterland. Finally, a special amendment to Spain's Accession Protocol to the Schengen Agreement of 1991 allows Moroccan citizens from the provinces adjacent to Ceuta

[6] These people, mainly women, are known as *porteadores* (carriers) or "human mules".

(Tetouan) and Melilla (Nador) to enter the exclaves without a visa on the condition that they return again before midnight (Buoli, 2014, pp. 303–304). What takes place in the borderscape every day is hard to imagine unless it is seen with one's own eyes. Chaos seems to take precedence over sovereignty, or at least a version of sovereignty that is not managed by either state but by those individuals or groups of people controlling the flow of goods from Spain into Morocco and vice versa:



Figure 11. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'Theatre without a director.'
<https://vimeo.com/314448554/66771d4341>

These official prerequisites already suggest that the border around Ceuta resembles more a semi-permeable membrane than the entirely regulated double-door system that the Spanish state in particular would like outside observers to perceive. Furthermore, the Ceutans and Moroccans living in the borderscape naturally 'attempt to exploit this unique locational ambiguity by building their lives and livelihoods around particular resources which borders offer' (Donnan and Wilson, 1999, p. 87). On the Moroccan side, this is a result of the state's inability to take care of its citizens properly, as A tells me:

Would the cat leave if there's a wedding in the house? Of course not because the house is full of food. If the Moroccan government provided us with what we want, we would be just like tourists. Like German, French or Belgian tourists. We would cross just to visit since we have work in Morocco. But we do the opposite. We go to Ceuta searching for work. And all these jobs are in the black market.

Consequently, a 'subversive economy' has developed, that is, 'a highly organised system of income-generating [legal and illegal] activities that deprive the state of taxation and foreign exchange' (MacGaffey, 1988, in Donnan and Wilson, 1999, p. 88). Here, the notion of a 'space of refusal' is at play again. Although they might accept that the political division between the countries materialises through the physical border, people living in the borderscape do not necessarily think in terms of the sovereignty and territory (and, on another level, also the identity) framework the state has set (Jones, 2011, p. 696). As a result, apart from the cross-border trade, they take part in practices like

prostitution, undocumented labour migration and smuggling, which do not play by state rules. Crucially, it has to be emphasised again that these modes of refusal do not aim to overthrow the state. Certainly, these activities defraud Morocco in particular of its revenue through tax evasion, and they challenge the state's attempt to regulate all flows into and out of its territory. Yet, it is not in the interest of the cross-border merchants and their accessories to harm the state in the long run. Whether their cross-border trading practices are considered illegal or not is not important as long as they gain a personal advantage out of them. Indeed, this subversive, black-market economy even contributes to the wider economy through 'smooth[ing] the workings of the system by offering employment where otherwise there may be very little' (ibid.). This is clearly visible in the Spanish-Moroccan borderscape, where, due to lack of other opportunities, around 45,000 people live directly off the informal cross-border trade and 400,000 people are indirectly involved in it (Buoli, 2014, p. 304; figures for Ceuta and Melilla, author's note). In a way, then, the livelihood of Ceutans and Moroccans alike depends on the existence of the border, although they constantly challenge its legal validity. As A put it: 'Ceuta would be nothing without the Moroccans. Like Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries without oil. And the Moroccans would be nothing without Ceuta as well.'



Figure 12. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. 'It's as if you were entering paradise.'

<https://vimeo.com/314140076/2818155193>

A final consideration concerns the state agents who control the border. While it is the central state bureaucracy that decides on border policies, the responsibility of the practical implementation of these policies mainly rests on the shoulders of the border guards and immigration officers. These state agents are the 'petty sovereigns' of the borderscape: they manage everyday practices of border regulation and embody sovereign power on behalf of the state, for they ultimately decide who and what is allowed to cross the border and who and what is not (Leite and Mutlu, 2012, p. 37). Hence, rather than directly abiding by the sovereign power of the state, border-crossers submit to the authority of the border guards first. This, in turn, means that the border guards take on an ambiguous role at the border since the subversive cross-border traffic described above – both irregular migration and trade – would likely not be possible without their consent or feigned

ignorance. Once more, this complicity of the border guards in the illegal cross-border activities is probably not driven by their desire to overthrow the state system, but by their desire for personal gains such as bribes or other favours (Donnan and Wilson, 1999, pp. 103–104). Indeed, they need the symbolic power of the border to sustain their “additional income”. Either way, the state’s theoretically absolute sovereign power in the borderscape remains incomplete in practice, for it is both perpetuated and simultaneously undermined by its own agents.

This discussion of irregular migration, subversive economies and “border-guard regimes” has shown that the borderscape is not the exclusive playground of state authority, but the scene of continuous re-negotiations of the power relations between the rulers and the ruled, a space of sovereign exception as much as of exceptional refusal. Paradoxically though, migrants, everyday crossers and state agents attest to the significance of the border through their activities, which ‘reaffirm the very borders [...] they seek to subvert, for without borders these activities would cease to exist’ (ibid., p. 105). In the final part of this article, I reflect on the benefits and limitations of my aesthetic analysis and visual representation of the borderscape around Ceuta.

Reflections



Figure 13. Still from *the wound that needs to be healed*. ‘One thing I don’t understand.’

<https://vimeo.com/314365919/8fbadd90f0>

Spending time in the borderlands and making this film was a highly personal experience. Many times, my encounters left me unsettled and awake at night. Ironically, it was at the border that I realised that there were also “borders” between myself and the people I met – not in terms of our humanity but in terms of our rights and status. We all knew that I could leave the area at any time, while they remained in limbo and uncertainty about their future. We all knew that I could make this film in the convenient knowledge that their reality was not mine, while they never chose to live a life that needed to be captured on camera. I increasingly felt that I enjoyed membership in an exclusive club I never actively chose to enter. My membership came with my EU passport. It was a



strange realisation because I had never thought of the EU as something of which I did not want to be part. Here, however, I felt I was betraying my ideals. Suddenly, Europe became a private club, a gated community, the incarnation of a conservative neoliberal world. Ceuta was its lobby that could only be peeked into, and the border fence became the materialisation of a highly racialised, discriminatory door policy that only allowed in those people who conformed to the taste of the border guards and their bosses – European states. I did not feel guilty, yet somewhat complicit nonetheless. Most of all, I felt helpless. There was hardly anything I could do to improve either their or the general situation. In doing this film, I was afraid I would reproduce the very power relations they were criticising and that I had wished to overcome. Here I was, a white male from a middle-class family, pretentiously pointing my camera on a black African woman and allegedly illegal immigrant, who unfolded the truth about the structure my privilege is based on. In other words, my positionality as a researcher in this very particular context highly influenced the way that I was seeing and making sense of the microcosm of the Ceutan borderscape, but crucially also the way that I was being seen and made sense of within it. Consequently, this project, like any other qualitative research, is not exempt from issues surrounding the positionality and power relations of the researcher to informants and research material in general: 'a researcher's social, cultural and subject positions [...] affect the questions they ask, how they frame them; the theories they are drawn to' (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts and Whatmore, 2009, p. 556). By focusing on particular themes, characters and sceneries, something will always remain outside the frame, i.e. there is always something that cannot be seen. While that does not mean that it is irrelevant to the topic or not part of the truth, with a camera one can only capture a *part* of reality, never reality as a *whole*. A documentary therefore does not portray an objective truth, but is a reflection of the director's perception of reality. The final film, then, is a 'creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson in van Munster and Sylvest, 2015, p. 233), the result of deliberate choices, even if they were made under the aegis of practical limitations.

In my case, the time I spent in the Spanish-Moroccan borderlands was limited to two weeks, which presented difficulties in finding informants and building trust to interview *and* film them, not least given the sensitivity of the topic. Therefore, ethical considerations were of major importance given that I was filming in a highly politicised research setting. I attempted to respect and protect my informants as much as possible by not filming things, events or people when I was told not to or when I thought that it could have negative repercussions for my informants later on (Jessee, 2011, p. 288). For example, I anonymised one of the interviews by blurring my informant's face, although this certainly is not visually pleasing. It was also impossible to film and interview one or more Moroccan women working in the cross-border trade. They feared that if they were recorded and border guards were to hear what they had said, they would not be allowed to cross the border anymore, consequently losing their jobs and becoming unable to sustain their families any longer. This, in turn, is the reason for the film's gender-bias in its under-representation of women. Hence, what the people I filmed said – or dared to say – was determined by many factors, including their sentiments towards me and the potential consequences for them once the interviews were to be published. Certainly, the interviews in my film are not less valuable or true than unfilmed interviews would have been. Yet, it has to be kept in mind that the presence of a camera may influence the way people behave and present themselves, as 'what we can say is affected by what we say it with' (Freudenthal, 1988, p. 126). Thus, and not least because these interviews were not chosen from a large pool of narratives, my informants' views remain highly subjective and their testimonies may not be viewed as representative of every possible permutation. Moreover, while I conducted interviews in English, French and Arabic, my knowledge of Spanish was not sufficient to interview Spanish Ceutans. Thus, I had to focus on the border experience of Moroccans and sub-Saharan Africans only, which leaves an important aspect of the borderscape reality unexplored, namely that of the Ceutans.



Finally, and this deserves more detailed attention than I can devote here, but could perhaps form the kernel of another article, the biggest obstacle for realising a true 'redistribution of the sensible' is the fact that it was I who posed the camera on my informants, not they at themselves. This means that, rather than being active narrators in a participatory film, they were the objects of my observation. The former constellation would have had a much more empowering effect on my informants, as this would have actually meant to re-vocalise the language of border crossing and migration with which I am partly concerned (cf. Brambilla, 2012). Unfortunately, given the short amount of time I had for my fieldwork, this was not possible to achieve.

Having raised these important limitations, I want to conclude by briefly highlighting the benefits of this approach once more. Describing the phenomena taking place in the borderscape in words is effective on a cognitive level, fostering our intellectual understanding of the situation. Having tested it with audiences and indeed myself, however, the act of viewing footage collected from NGOs or CCTV cameras has a much more emotional effect on the viewer, hitting home even more. Seeing images of migrants being beaten by border guards or hearing their testimonies of how they experienced climbing the fence gives audiences and me a sense of helplessness, maybe even hidden complicity, but also stimulates a momentum of "let's do something about it". I have no illusion about how many people follow that impulse and actually do something about trying to change migration policies – including myself – but that is a separate discussion, which goes beyond the scope of this article. What I am trying to say is that as long as something happens far away from you without any tangible personal effect, it will be less interesting/concerning/stimulating than if you had some kind of relation to it, albeit only through images. Film has the power to bring those faraway places and people closer to home, create emotions and affect us as only art can do. When used appropriately, film can reveal a crucial truth that might otherwise remain hidden from sight.

Conclusion

The borderscape is the 'exemplary modern subject' (Downey, 2009, p. 109), for it is here where the contradictions of our time are most clearly revealed. In the borderscape, the state's stasis collides with dynamic processes of globalisation: state sovereignty with international law; national security with human rights; territorial integrity with economic de-territorialisation; national culture and identity with transnational migration flows. Moreover, once we leave a nation-state to enter another, a distinction is being made between us, the people, that goes beyond our shared humanity. At the border, we are categorised by the state we want to enter as citizens or non-citizens, as regular travellers, asylum-seekers or illegal migrants, as being included in or abandoned by the state's jurisdiction. Ultimately, we are rendered either political or bare life. This biopolitical performance of sovereignty and "b/ordering" practices has grave real-life implications (cf. van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer, 2005), especially for those people who are abandoned by the law (e.g. sub-Saharan "economic" migrants) or who receive extraordinary treatment (e.g. Moroccans from Tetouan). Simultaneously, it is in the borderscape where the state appears not as a monolithic entity, but as partial and conflicted, undermined by and dependent on what its agents, citizens and "the other" make of it. While far from denying the existence of spaces within the borderscape in which exceptional violence is exercised, we should be cautious about generalising claims regarding the ubiquitous existence of the Agambian 'state of exception' and the all-encompassing claim of sovereignty at borders. Instead, I suggest that the exceptionality of the borderscape lies in its multi-faceted and contradictory character: on the one hand, it 'represent[s] a legal exception to [international] norms on rights and freedoms, [however,] the exceptional practices of these border crossings are no exception to the norms of global border management' (Leite and Mutlu, 2012, p. 38). On the other hand, borderscapes are amalgamations of both difference and sameness that



rest on the legal and political differentiation between insiders/outside and inclusion/exclusion, e.g. EU/non-EU identities, while simultaneously relying on interactions with this “other” for its very constitution (cf. *ibid.*, p. 36).

Thus, the borderscape is an exceptional space in which exceptional things happen, and where exceptionality, especially if it appears to be the norm, is always in urgent need of representation (Downey, 2009, p. 110). This representation, however, must not only be an academic one. Without doubt, as this article has shown, academic conceptualisations and analyses are vital for the understanding of the borderscape’s (bio)political, economic and cultural nature. Yet, part of the novelty of the borderscape paradigm in critical border studies is its call for the bridging of political analysis and aesthetics (dell’Agnese and Szary, 2015, p. 11). Indeed, the very notion of “performance” seems to demand a visualisation of the borderscape, for this allows the immediate grasping of both de- and re-bordering processes in the making. Moreover, to show the border, to connect stories, faces and places with it, in other words, to make it a real rather than an abstract space, evokes emotions and thus fosters an understanding of the borderscape that is unique to visual and literary art forms. Following this proposition, I decided to make a documentary film about the Spanish-Moroccan borderscape around Ceuta in order to render its theoretical and conceptual analysis, as it is presented in this article, more tangible. There are crucial limitations to this approach – and to this research in particular – that need to be addressed and explored further in order to overcome or acknowledge them in more depth during the fieldwork. I believe, however, that an ideographic aesthetic and visual exploration are valuable contributions to the analysis of and debate about borderscapes in general and the Spanish-Moroccan one in particular, offering an insight into a tranche of borderscape reality that would otherwise likely remain hidden. Rather than aspiring to synthesis and totality, the documentary makes an integral contribution to the assemblage of ‘justifiable knowledge’ about a multi-faceted, exceptional space by presenting narratives that challenge conventional and hegemonic discourses (cf. Campbell, 1998, pp. 280–281).

About the author

Vincent Förster is interested in personal stories that engage and evoke public debate. Vincent is an Edinburgh-based documentary filmmaker from Berlin. He gained his first experiences in documentary filmmaking while living in Alexandria, Egypt, where he documented the societal division in post-revolutionary Egypt between winter 2011 and summer 2012. The result was the documentary “For Bread, Freedom and Social Justice” (2013). Since then, Vincent lived, studied and worked in Morocco, Sudan and Scotland. In June 2016, he graduated from the University of St Andrews with an MA (Honours) in International Relations and Arabic. In his second documentary “the wound that needs to be healed” (2016), he explores the lived realities of sub-Saharan migrants and Moroccans at and around the Spanish-Moroccan border in Ceuta. His latest short documentary “some of these days” (2018) features his grandparents and reveals the jazzy sound of Germany’s history in the 20th century. Vincent just finished his MFA in Documentary Film Directing at Edinburgh College of Art.



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