

# The Contested Cartography of "Illegal Immigration"\*

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'What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.... The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12)

## **'Breaking Point' (2004)**

On September 20, 2004, the US news weekly *Time* published a special issue. The cover story was titled 'Who left the Door Open?', and announced that the issue was to be devoted to 'the lack of national security at the United States' borders'. The general thrust of the special issue was that a mere 3 years on from the events of September 11, and despite the massive investment made in homeland security, 'sneaking into the US is scandalously easy – and on the rise'. As proof, *Time* estimated that 'the number of illegal aliens flooding into the US... will total 3 million – enough to fill 22,000 Boeing 737-7000 airliners'. Millions of 'illegal aliens' pour over the US-Mexico border each year. But this is not the only scandal reported. If once these 'illegals' could nearly all be assumed to be Mexican, 'a small but sharply growing number come from other countries, including those with large populations hostile to the US'. Elsewhere we find the somewhat rhetorical question: 'Is this the perfect cover for terrorists?' Having established the potential for danger at the border, the special issue proceeds to carry out a sort of audit of the damage and the risks associated with such a leaky border, and asks plaintively 'why does the US fail to protect itself?'

The article is full of assumptions and assertions that a critical inquiry into migration today would surely want to interrogate – not least that borders are capable of protecting

the citizens of America and governing migration. However, it is not the article but rather one particular map – one of a number of graphics accompanying the articles - that I find interesting. Entitled ‘Breaking Point’ (fig.1), it is clearly intended to convey a sense of imminent crisis. There are a number of interesting features here. Note the fact that it places the observer in terms of an imaginary and seemingly impossible viewpoint that is oblique to the landscape, as though we are in a plane approaching the US Southwest. The southwest section of the border is to the foreground while the landmass of North America rolls out towards the horizon and away to the east. The earth’s atmosphere is lightly represented in shades of blue on the horizon. It seems that illegal immigration is happening not just in relation to US territory but within a quasi-planetary space - a slippage that Hardt and Negri would surely appreciate.

But another interesting feature of the map has to do with the fact that its visual field is largely dominated by geographical and natural features, such as deserts, mountain ranges and rivers. What geographers would call ‘political’ features are only faintly there. The US/Mexico border is certainly emphasized as a somewhat jagged line, marked in red, just in case we miss the point. State lines and the occasional city are marked also. But much more prominent are the green, grey and khaki shadings which convey a sense of the physical relief of this space; the lie of the land. In some respects it resembles a political topography, or even a political geology, rather than a political geography of illegal immigration – a point I shall return to later.

There are other features that deserve to be mentioned. In boxes the graphic choreographs a set of stories, little situated dramas, perhaps intended to convey the plurality of lives, cultures and places negatively affected by this ‘problem’. Many of these are referenced and developed in the articles which make up the special issue. There is the small border town of Bisbee. Its tiny hospital ‘may’ be forced to close because of the cost of caring for illegal immigrants. There are the ranches at the border losing cattle when fences are cut [check]. There is the Tohono O’odham reservation whose facilities are overtaxed by the migrants, its (sacred?) land ‘trashed’. And to express the scandalous nature of this issue, not even the army is immune. Fort Huachuca, may be a ‘top-secret intelligence training ground’ but it is also a ‘thoroughfare for smugglers’. Americans may be divided along all sorts of racial, social, ethnic, sexual and economic lines, but it seems that at least in the case of those citizens who inhabit the borderlands, there is unity around one point: they are bound together by a common suffering at the hands of illegal immigrants.

Maps like this are increasingly a feature of press, TV and internet coverage of migration issues in general, and especially the phenomenon known as illegal immigration. They also quite frequently accompany official reports and policy documents. They contribute in minor but not insignificant ways to the wider symbolic and semantic field within which political questions of human movement are debated today. Yet such maps have been largely ignored by critical scholarship about migration. While there is now a vast literature concerning the political and social construction of immigration, this focuses largely on rhetorical devices and forms. The burgeoning literature on securitization of migration is a case in point. For all its sophistication, it is for the most part concerned

with speech and pays little attention to the visual mediation and construction of security situations (Williams 2003).

An obvious exception to this emphasis on the rhetorical and the textual, narrowly understood, is work within cultural theory, media studies and within certain artistic and performance milieu. Here, of course, there has been a sustained exploration of the visual representation of immigration.<sup>1</sup> But there is little that I know of that has attempted a systematic analysis of migration maps in their own right.<sup>2</sup>

This paper seeks to partially remedy this rather strange oversight by focusing on the cartography of illegal immigration. It argues that we should take such maps more seriously. While their published context cannot be ignored, they deserve to be analyzed as irreducible elements in their own right, and not merely pictorial decorations or illustrative features for textual practices.

There are, of course, several ways in which we might frame such an analysis. For instance, it would certainly be valid to examine migration map-making in relation to questions of the production and legitimation of sovereignty and territoriality. In a recent work exploring various imaginings of the state, Mark Neocleous takes up the theme of how the power of the state is legitimated by the idea that every state, and 'its' people, has a 'home', namely, a particular territory. He identifies several ways in which the idea of territory as home is concretely produced. One such way is the political identification of a field of outsiders, aliens, strangers and refugees.<sup>3</sup> Another is the map. Through its capacity to dominate the political imagination, this 'crucial political technology of space', Neocleous avers, is responsible for nothing less than legitimating 'the great movement of territorialization through which the whole earth has been turned into an object of state stewardship' (Neocleous 2003: 124). If Neocleous is indeed correct to insist, in the words of one geographer (Wood), on the 'power of maps', then surely migration maps deserve to be taken seriously. For the essence of these hitherto neglected inscriptions is to combine the two mechanisms of legitimation which Neocleous identifies, namely the identification of outsiders and the map, so that they reinforce one another.

But while I will certainly touch on themes of territoriality, this is not the primary line of analysis I pursue in this paper. Instead, I want to make a different reading of the phenomenon of migration mapping, one that relates quite closely to the theme of cultural political economy. This paper will argue that as a corollary to the study of the cultural constitution of the economic, it is also important to understand how cultural practices and artifacts play a significant role in limiting, containing and sometimes suppressing public and political perceptions of the economic. This is the space that I call anti-political economy.

My first major section surveys the scope and some possible meanings of anti-political economy, and how it relates to cultural political economy. I then turn to an examination of migration maps in terms of this theme. Exploring a series of examples of drawn from popular as well as official sources, I suggest that migration maps might be understood as everyday artefacts which contribute to the production of this anti-political economy. At

the same time, I argue that this is not inherent or inevitable. As my final example of practices of counter-mapping suggests, the migration map is fast becoming a medium for critical analysis as well.

### **Anti-Political Economy and Cultural Political Economy**

In their introduction to this project, Best and Paterson argue that conventional as well as critical strands of political economy have tended to overlook the role which cultural processes, practices and phenomena play in shaping economic objects. They insist that a better understanding of the cultural – a term they recognize as subject to a considerable range of interpretation – will make for a more powerful version of political economy. It will illuminate, among other things, the role which culture plays in shaping economic domains and the actors and activities which populate those domains.

This does seem a very valid and important point to make, even if it could be argued that something resembling CPE is already well underway amongst certain political and economic anthropologists.<sup>4</sup> But rather than engage directly in the question of the cultural and its shaping of political economy, I want to explore a corollary of this hypothesis. This is to consider the place of cultural practices and formations in relation to anti-political economy. The project of cultural political economy should not confine its attention to the positive ways in which practices, objects and processes come to be considered as ‘economic’, or the role of the cultural in explaining economic transformations. In addition, it needs to encompass the study of the discursive and nondiscursive practices whose effect is to manage the distribution of the economic and its separation from the non-economic. Put differently, it needs to attend to the various ways in which the economic is contained, neutralized, displaced and in some cases made invisible. Paying attention to some of the everyday ways in which migration is mediated and made visible both at public and official levels, my study of migration maps is intended to illustrate this phenomenon of anti-political economy. But before I return to the maps, it is necessary to add some theoretical content to the idea of anti-political economy.

One place to start is with James Ferguson’s political anthropology of international development policy. Focusing on Lesotho, Ferguson describes development practice in terms of an ‘anti-politics machine’. There are two aspects of this machine which he describes in terms of ‘instrument-effects’. The first is ‘the institutional effect of expanding bureaucratic state power’ (Ferguson 2006: 273). This expansion happens despite the fact that nearly all development projects are deemed by academics as ‘failures’ since they rarely meet their stated aims of alleviating poverty. The second is ‘the conceptual or ideological effect of depoliticizing both poverty and the state’ (Ferguson 2006: 273). This effect is the move which turns political issues into technical matters. Poverty, inequality, and starvation, become statistics and objectives to be mitigated. Instead of a conflict, one has administration. Foucault describes the modern prison system as a success despite the fact that it never managed to ‘solve’ the problem of crime. It is a success because in unplanned and only partially coordinated ways it has constituted a manageable and governable space of crime, populated by a discrete class of

persons, the delinquent (Foucault 1977). In much the same way, Ferguson uses the machine metaphor to theorize development as a successful failure.

Rather like Ferguson, Andrew Barry (Barry 2002) is interested in these moments of translation. But Barry discusses technicalization more specifically in relation to themes of economic and environmental governance. Barry emphasizes a particular domain of technical practices which he calls ‘metrology’. The legal requirement for cars to undergo periodic emissions test is a good example of this. The emissions test has anti-political effects. For instance, it allows political objectives, such as the promotion of better air quality, to be projected to sites beyond the state apparatus, such as the used-car lot. Particular political debates about pollution can be translated into technologically-mediated practices: has this car passed its test? Moreover, the possession of certification to this end will shape the market value of the car. In the spirit of actor-network theory, Barry shows that through testing and certification practices, a range of actors including buyers, sellers, mechanics and scientists, are enrolled in strategies of environmental governance, but through non-political mechanisms.

But Barry brings something more to the idea of anti-political economy. First, he insists that one should not denounce the anti-political in blanket terms. If disagreement is a fundamental and pervasive feature of human life, then anti-politics – understood as mechanisms to manage disagreement, and make collective life viable – are necessary. Hence it is a matter of differentiating between different *forms* of anti-politics. There are anti-political forms which respect and promote certain forms of democratic experience (e.g., rules concerning the political impartiality of the civil service), and those which do not (certain forms of violence and state censorship). Second, regimes of metrology are not as robust as certain accounts of technicalization – including, perhaps, Ferguson’s Foucauldian version) - presume. They are often fragile because they are susceptible to politicization. Metrology can become a surface of politics in its own right. For instance, making illegal immigration something statistical may contribute to a certain depoliticization since it encourages the idea that such a thing has a quasi-natural existence in the world (like annual rainfall), and that the territory is host to increasing numbers of people called illegal immigrants. Statistical practices contribute to the games of ‘making up people’ (Hacking). Yet, statistics can become a sites of politicization in its own right. Questions might be raised about their accuracy. But in addition, the field of such statistics can be extended – to count not only the ‘illegal entries’, but death at the border, the human toll exacted by particular regimes of immigration control. In these ways, the statistics of illegal immigration becomes a field of struggle.

While my understanding of anti-political economy is particularly indebted to Barry’s development of the theme, I think it is important to identify a second aspect of the field of anti-political economy. This is less about nullifying politics/disagreement within the economy (e.g., the potential for political disagreement between vendor and buyer in the used car salesroom), or purifying it from political contamination, but more about all those situations when affairs are conducted in ways which refuse, fail, neglect or consciously repress the identification of things *as* economic. I propose to call this second aspect the *non-identification* of the economic.

A classic case of such non-identification concerns household work. Feminist scholarship and activism has, of course, a long and lively history of engagement on just this matter. But Marilyn Waring's study of the UN's System of National Accounts, makes the point particularly clearly at the level of institutional and statistical practices (Waring 1988). This system, which became the template for national economic accounting practices on an international scale following WWII, served to establish official definitions of what was to count as economic activity and what would not, who was in the labour force, who was not, and so on. Hence Waring reveals an anti-political economy embedded at the level of economic theory and statistical practice itself. Equally significantly, because of the way it is embedded in official definitions, she shows how this non-identification of the economic is typically reproduced unknowingly and almost automatically every time these statistics are used.

For my purposes, there are two points that can be taken from Waring's discussion of the institutional power to define the economic, and conversely the extra-economic. The first is that the non-identification is an active process and not merely an absence of recognition. Hence, the location of the household outside the economy is mediated by the immense cultural work which renders household work as something else – for example, as 'care', that natural responsibility and competence of persons identified as mothers and wives. Second, the point is not that there is a true definition of the economic by which everything else can be measured. Rather, the identification and non-identification of the economic is always mediated by politics. If it becomes possible to identify certain patriarchal practices in terms of anti-political economy, this is because feminist political interventions have made it so, not because they are inherently anti-economic in their effects.

With these two aspects of anti-political economy in mind – the techniques which nullify and displace political disagreement in the economy, and the move which suppresses the identification of things as economic – I turn now to the case of migration cartography.

### **Migration Cartography as Anti-Political Economy**

Migration cartography is certainly not new. There is a long tradition of charting the movement and settlement of peoples which spans the disciplines of history, geography, ethnology and demographics. For instance, it was in the early 1970s that the historian Martin Gilbert authored a series of historical atlases offering geospatialized accounts of British, American, Russian and Jewish history. The fact that the latter atlas ranges from a map which charts the Exodus from Egypt into the Promised Land, to one documenting the 'Return of Jews to Zion 1948-1964', reveals that such demographic maps are capable of producing their own kinds of political effects. The fact that two events of quite different historical and factual status can be represented using identical iconography, and located through the cartographic exercise upon the same epistemological and geo-historical plane suggests at the very least that these older forms of migration cartography are certainly not politically innocent.<sup>5</sup>

But something is different and relatively new with regard to much of the migration cartography which interests me today. The social and political context in which migration maps are being produced and received seems to have changed. As the growing literature on ‘securitization’ has observed, the political framing of migration issues, including the treatment of refugees, has moved its subject matter much more closely to the realm of security policy. This move has often been traced at the level of political rhetoric: how politicians, media commentaries and policymakers frame migration as a security issue, an existential threat to the cultural integrity and political sovereignty of the nation, etc. However, the study of migration maps points to and illustrates aspects of a more prosaic process of securitization, one that occurs at the level of everyday graphics, images and inscriptions. We can speculate that these representations are rarely politically decisive or influential on a singular basis. It would be hard to point to this or that map and argue that it changed public opinion about immigration in some decisive way. Instead, whatever effect they have on public perceptions – the estimation of which is, of course, complex and beyond my scope here – we might assume to occur through processes of iteration. It is surely through their everyday presence in the margins of newspaper reports, as the background to TV news, or as a supplement to official reports that they help to produce a securitized political imagination of migration as well as the state.

### *Popular Cartographies*

Let us return for a moment to the *Time* map, ‘Breaking Point’. Michel Foucher uses the term ‘geostrategy’ to refer to ‘concrete practices in places that are analysed as theatres of operation, actual and potential. It thus considers spatial, physical and human configurations in terms of war and defence’ (Foucher 2001: 165). There are certainly powerful geostrategic and geopolitical overtones to this map. The United States is cast as a territory defined by a border, which is marked in red. The map spatializes a series of border incidents, incidents which collectively attest to the vulnerability of a system of defence. But the map also generates a sense of drama and unease in other ways. Note how it is subtended by three jagged graphs, displaying different aspects of the volume of ‘illegal bordercrossings’ over time and place. Jonathan Inda (2006) has noted how narratives about ‘illegal immigration’ almost always represent it as something ‘growing’, and frequently ‘out of control’. Things are always somehow getting worse. In the case of *Breaking Point* this impression of impending crisis is produced through the juxtaposition of the red-lined border and the upward slope of the graph.

Other maps are even more explicit in the way that locate migration processes within geopolitical space. In making this move, such maps largely suppress the economic connotations of migration. They negate the fact that much of the movement that is pejoratively designated as ‘illegal’ or ‘people smuggling’ could be considered as labour migration in a global capitalist economy (De Genova 2002). At the same time such maps foreground associations of migration with territorial invasion.

Consider this map from the BBC news website (fig. 2). Encountering its thick, arching lines of movement which traverse the political map of Europe, it is hard not to detect echoes of those classical maps of warfare in which Europe features as a ‘theatre’ of

military conflict. But if such maps can forge historical connections which evoke games of war and statecraft, they can also establish a resonance amongst more contemporary phenomena. For instance, it is not uncommon to see formally similar maps and diagrams showing the transnational flows of illicit goods, weapons and substances. Could it be that the ‘security continuum’ and the ‘transfer of illegitimacy’ – processes which Bigo identifies as profoundly structuring the political and governmental field of migration - are effected not just through the institutional and expert framing of things, but at the level of these little image-fragments.

Let us consider another map (fig. 3). This one utilizes data from the Protection Project at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins and purports to show the ‘trafficking routes’ of persons into the United States. The red points represent transit stops. The first point to make is that at the very least the map could be accused of an act of visual exaggeration. Its makers note at the bottom that to count as a route there needs to be ‘at least one documented case of trafficking of persons’. In other words, a route is not necessarily a well-worn pathway but nothing more than at least one documented case. Since the threshold for qualifying as a route is set so very low then it’s hardly surprising that the map manages to portray human trafficking as an overwhelming and dramatic phenomenon. In this case one could at least expect some differentiation in the depiction of the routes in terms of their volume.

But my bigger point is not to note how such maps could be improved. Instead, it is to observe that this map, like the BBC one, conveys the impression of western, developed countries confronted by a set of forces which penetrate their borders. Especially in the case of the trafficking map, one gets the impression of a besiegement, of territories surrounded on all sides. It is not difficult to see how the politics of rebordering, whether understood as the fortification of frontiers or the extension of controls inwards and outwards, follows almost logically from such representations.

Crucial to understanding the power of these and countless similar image-fragments, and their anti-political economy effects, is their selectivity. Nowhere in their vicinity do we see the other forces which might give them some context, whether lines of capital investment and disinvestment, flows of ideas and images, circuits of tourism and trade, or relationships of military influence. In the absence of these other connections, migration appears as an ‘autonomous’ force (Sassen 1998) emanating from ‘troubled’ parts of the world, and converging upon the wealthiest regions. In the absence of any representation of the multiple ties which interconnect rich and poor regions – for example, cultural ties associated with a history of colonialism – the wealthy regions appear as innocent bystanders, as victims of malign forces. The point is not that maps ought to be comprehensive, Mapping, like other forms of diagramming, is necessarily a selective practice. The point is to note that such selectivity is deployed strategically, in ways which resonate with public cultures of insecurity.

[Paragraph on the Arizona Daily Times map... (fig. 4). I have argued that these maps can be considered elements of anti-political economy because of the way they objectify migration as a security question, and geo-graph it as a game that plays itself out in and

through geographical space. In the maps we have looked at, the socioeconomic barely registers. This is not always the case. In the Arizona map... factory job... The metonymy of illegal economies – of movement and employment. Note also the emphatic depiction of relief in the map which recalls the *Time* map: how migration is embedded in the contours of the earth. Does this naturalize the border by associating it with physical geography. Or does it actually speak to the fact that the re-militarization of certain borders has actually compelled migration to become an affair conducting on foot across deserts and mountains, and in small boats negotiating dangerous waters. New migration which becomes an intensely embodied, physical activity, a confrontation with elemental forces. The return of natural frontiers?]

### *Official Cartographies*

In my prior discussion I suggested that there are at least two possible interpretations of anti-political economy. The first is about translating political controversies into technical objectives that might be pursued by relatively de-dramatized economic and other means. The second is the move of non-identification, wherein economic moments and identities are suppressed by other discourses and systems of meaning. The maps I have discussed thus far tend towards this second position. At this point I want to consider one map that is much closer to this first position. That is, I want to consider the case of a map that has a higher programmatic and governmental content, and a greater degree of instrumentality than the maps which typically appear in mass communication contexts.

Titled ‘African and Mediterranean Migration Routes’ (fig. 5), the map in question comes from the Vienna-based International Center for Migration Policy and Development. ICMPD has been described as a think tank and an influential consultancy centre for the EU Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs (see [http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/home\\_map1.html](http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/home_map1.html)). It serves as a secretariat for the Budapest Process, a series of conferences aimed at reinforcing the external frontiers of eastern Europe and thereby, the quasi-territory of the EU. This map appears in the first newsletter of the ICMPD-sponsored project, Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM) Dialogue. In many ways, MTM is a project of immigration policy statecraft. It is seeking to enlist North African governments (‘Arab Partner States’), and other actors geopolitically coded as ‘countries of transit’ and ‘origin’, in Europe’s ongoing campaign to police unruly migration flows; or what the EU adversarially and unfortunately calls, a ‘fight against illegal immigration’.

ICMPD’s map can be fruitfully compared with some of the other maps we have discussed thus far. It is notable in several respects. First, notice how Europe, represented as a largely undifferentiated blue mass, now recedes into the background. The focus has shifted from the space of destination, and even from the European routeways identified in the BBC map, to Africa and to the near and middle east, to spaces that are now geographed as ‘countries of origin and transit’. More and more, it seems, the routeway, and its subjective correlate, the migrant’s journey, as much as the border, becomes an object of knowledge in its own right.<sup>6</sup>

Second, and following from this, the map presents the viewer with something we might call an analytics of the route. There are now multiple kinds of line, allowing for the differentiation of media of movement (land, sea, air), and scales of movement (major, minor).

Third, where previously there were curved lines offering impressions of flows of population movement, here we are presented with something which appears more scientific and precise. The lines are mostly straight and move between geographical nodes. Movement plays itself out across a space of places. The ensemble of the routes and the nodes comprises a network. If the project of European integration has often imagined itself positively in terms of a space of networks (Barry 1996), here we find one instance where a less benign face of the network appears.

In what ways might this attempt to generate a scientific analysis of migration routes serve as an element within the technicalization of migration politics? Does this anti-political move, which displaces a whole series of possible political questions about the distribution of justice, citizenship and wealth under global conditions, go hand in hand with the attempt to co-opt the ‘Arab Partner States’ designated and colour-coded by the map, into international regimes of ‘migration management’?

It is certainly important to challenge the scientificity which is implied or claimed for maps such as this (Düvell 2006). However, to focus on the veracity of maps like the ICMPD one is to miss an important aspect of their purpose. Here a comparison with the cartography of colonialism is instructive for it speaks to the map as an ethical technology, concerned as much with establishing the right and fitness of certain authorities to govern distant peoples and places, as it is with the precise nature or geographical location of those persons and places. Mapping is, in this sense, about making ethical as well as territorial claims. Joyce has put this nicely in regard to official cartography’s aspiration to construct British India as an object of rule. It illustrates that ‘the practice and reception of instruments of governance may sometimes be of secondary importance: what seems to have mattered here... was the creation of the illusion of a rational, and therefore governable, space, that of a mapped “India”’ (Joyce 2005: 37).

In the case of ICMPD and other transnational technicians in the management of migration, it is of course not about the aspiration to conquer and control territories but something seemingly more modest: to rationalize the distribution of population with regard to territory. If it generates maps which in some respects resemble the plans of transportation systems, or the transit maps familiar to the subway rider, might this not be seen, like the case of the mapping of India, as both a bid to secure the legitimacy of this project, but also the expression of the political dream that the unruliness and ‘turbulence’ (Papastergidis) of migration really could be channeled into rational, ordered pathways.

### *Counter Mapping*

If migration mapping deserves to be taken more seriously and regarded as a significant element within contemporary politicizations and depoliticizations of migration, this is not

just because popular media utilize these maps in order to simplify the complexity of migration. Nor is it because certain experts and agencies like ICMPD and IOM tasked with the work of ‘managing’ migration have found in the map both a means to rationalize their interventions, and affirm their status *as* experts in the competitive institutional field of migration security. Migration mapping is a lively phenomenon today not just because it offers something valuable to policy officials and mainstream media. It is also because migration cartography has been fashioned as an instrument of protest, a polemical weapon, and a heterotopic medium for a range of actors outside the institutions which appear to have the greatest power in shaping debates and policies. Developing in parallel with official cartographies of migration, various tactical cartographers, self-styled hacktivists, and visual artists have improvised a practice of migration counter-mapping – what one video artist and theorist calls ‘writing counter-geography’ (Biemann 2003). If the restless desires and energies associated with capitalism are constantly provoking new spaces and experiences which defy many conventional categories, it is this challenge of making such processes representable and intelligible which this alternative cartography has taken up.

This visualistic counter-geography of migration deserves to be the subject of study in its own right. It also needs to be seen in light of a wider turn within political activism and critical thought whereby mapping has become a critical practice for a range of movements and counter-publics.<sup>7</sup> Lacking the space to even gesture towards such a project here I shall confine myself to one example. Entitled ‘borders and migration’, it is produced under the auspices of the Spain-based project called Hackitectura. It is one of many maps this project has made of the Straits of Gibraltar. The choice of this site is, of course, far from incidental. The Straits have long been considered a meeting point as much as a frontier between Europe and Africa. But like the US/Mexico border, they have more recently become a critical borderland in contemporary migration (geo)politics.

Hackitectura’s maps attempt to capture the multiple processes, regimes and agendas which co-exist, converge and combine at the Straits – questions of work, territory, citizenship, technology, frontier controls, mobility, and much else. The fact that the map positions the Straits at its very centre, and the fact that all manner of networks, flows and processes are represented as traversing this symbolic frontier between Europe and Africa, suggests that the map is not interested in reproducing the old political lines of nations and continents. Instead, it seems to be about charting the emergence of strange new territories that confound these lines. For Hackitectura, the Straits are an experimental encounter, a kind of ‘laboratory-territory of the contemporary world’.<sup>8</sup> This ambition to map discordant and heterogeneous processes and spaces, to explore their combination, immediately marks it out from official cartographies which, as we have seen, are distinguished by their particular form of partiality – a point I shall return to.

But first I want to consider this map from the point of view of representational form. Our brief and incomplete survey of popular and official migration cartography has already revealed that to be a diverse field. Like their official counterparts, these counter-geographies are also quite varied in their form. There are multiple genres. For instance some undertake a very subtle appropriation of dominant mapping styles to the point

where they are barely distinguishable from authorized cartographies. Utilizing the iconography of transport planning maps, An Architektur's diagrams of the controversial refugee centre at Sangatte, near Calais in France, is a good example of such a tactic. It is a subtle tactic of subversion.

The same cannot be said of this map. There is nothing particularly subtle about Hackitectura's map. It is not as an act of subversive mimesis that it grabs our attention. Instead, it is much closer to a parody of official migration mapping. But this is definitely a political parody – and this is the first point I want to make about the map. Consider, for instance, how the map flips cartographic convention on its head, placing North Africa 'above' and Europe 'below'. Or note the lines which designate flows of migration. Instead of the migration networks that are depicted with the appearance of technical precision in the transit map, or, in the case of the trafficking maps, the thick curves and arcs which invoke the threat of invading forces, Hackitectura opts for a jumble of little squiggly arrows, drawn in an almost childish hand. The blocks at the edge of the map – the closest that the map-makers get to providing a 'key' to their symbols – claim these squiggles represent the 'autonomy of migration'. Perhaps the point is that migration is never singular, and certainly not adequately represented by a single line. Instead, Hackitectura is interested in the multiplicity of migration. They reveal that it has at least two planes. It has a molecular face, an 'individual' level, which is expressed by the countless little lines, some forceful and confident, others weak, faltering and hesitant. (Note that some of the little lines make u-turns; not all move purposefully from A to B). Each little line could be a biography in its own right, a decision to exit or to stay: a will to determine one's own fate no matter what the obstacles. But these migrations also have a molar identity: they form a collectivity which exceeds the sum of its parts, gesturing perhaps to the potential social force which inheres in migration. What at first sight appears as parody actually embodies some rather sophisticated observations.

But there is parody in other places as well. Notice the satellites which seem to move in formation across the centre of the map, and above the geographical edge of Europe. We are all familiar with advertising and popular cultural contexts where the satellite is used to connote high technology, the instantaneity and sophistication of global communication, and perhaps the flip-side, the totalizing powers of surveillance available to (certain) political authorities. But here the satellites are arrayed more like a migrating flock of clumsy, robotic geese. The pervasive presence of surveillance is certainly front and centre in this map, no more so than with the concentric waves of energy which radiate from the epicenter marked SIVE – the acronym for Spain's External Surveillance System – and striate the interconnected space of the straits. Yet the fact that the system of satellites can be represented in this rather comical way suggests that perhaps critical thought should be careful not to exaggerate the power of technology. It should not overlook the fallibility, the necessarily imperfect character of this or any other attempt at population control. Nor should it overlook the possibility that a given technology might be appropriated and put to uses for which it was never intended.<sup>9</sup>

The second point to be made about the map is that a close inspection reveals more than one layer. Look more closely at the purple area which is the sea. Parenthetically, note

again how the decision to colour the sea purple makes fun of cartographic convention, revealing its arbitrary nature. Here the faint outlines of a nautical map are discernible – numbered contours which chart the distribution of depth, and hence the topography of the seabed, names of bays and coasts. Similarly the yellow landmass bears traces of a map showing things like a ‘planned highway’ and an ‘economic free zone’. Spanish words are written over English. Walter Benjamin described the modern city as a palimpsest: layer added upon historical layer, but with the traces of earlier times and experiences still visible to the critical eye.<sup>10</sup> Can we say that with Hackitectura we arrive at the migration map as palimpsest? For it is a map, in fact, several maps written over older maps. Rather than starting with a blank page, it recycles other maps putting them to new use. Again, this flies in the face of the usual cartographic practice. Official maps are not inscribed over old maps. On the contrary, quite often they strive to suppress the past – former placenames, borders, worlds are erased from the geo-historical record. Either that, or they are accorded the status of the monument, the place of ‘historical interest’, and thereby neutralized. This is a vital aspect of the power of mapping: the power to use space to shape our perception time. Hackitectura brings this little secret to the surface. There is no pretense of purity here, no gesture towards scientific detachment. They challenge the myth that maps are objective and apolitical renderings of a world outside, and expose the view of the map as somehow uncontaminated by previous knowledges and uses. Mapping does not take place outside historical and social processes. Mapping is a site of struggle in its own right, a struggle to dominate a space of authoritative representation. Hackitectura’s is a ‘living cartography’ which demonstrates its own provisionality.

This leads to another, and for the purposes of this paper, more important point. This concerns the map’s status as a small but not insignificant act which disrupts the anti-political economy of migration. If this map is a palimpsest, it is also quite clearly a work of bricolage. Gone is the pretense of systematicity or uniformity of style that is so essential to the official map’s authority. Instead, heterogeneous elements, jagged forms and fragments are juxtaposed. There are advertisements for products, photographs showing uniformed officials (perhaps coast guards or police), posters for political demonstrations. Other photographs document additional aspects of this border complex that are frequently missing from official cartography. A brown-skinned hand which works a sewing machine, long lines of traffic congested at a checkpoint, grainy night-time surveillance footage of border-crossers, striking workers. Vivid symbols identify special sites of interest, but these are not of a tourist nature. The Euro sign identifies strategic locales in the growing economy of the borderlands, while a mini-version of the map of the Straits – the map within the map - signifies processes of internal and external frontier-ization. The overall effect is a bit like a school project where a bunch of students are asked to make a display exploring a particular topic. Each brings a clipping from home and pastes it onto the board.

In what ways does this map challenge the anti-political economy of migration? One might answer this question by pointing to the very visible presence of economic processes and identities in the map. For instance, it depicts networks which suggest interconnections between the licit and the illicit, and the co-dependence of local, global, European and underground economies. While it displays the processes of securitization

and rebordering at work in the region, it refuses to subsume the economic within the geopolitical – the move which, as we have seen, conventional maps do make. In other words, just as Barry insists that the anti-political move to render a space of disagreement into technical, measurable, and administrable forms is itself always susceptible to politicization, often in new and unpredictable ways, then we might observe that Hackitectura politicizes the anti-political regime of migration mapping by its insistence on the economic dimension and neoliberal capitalist uses of illegal immigration.

But I think such an interpretation, while valid in many respects, still misses something crucial. The key thing here is not merely the foregrounding of economic processes. For there is nothing inherently critical or radical in pointing out that illegal immigration is underpinned by market forces. Certainly the point is sometimes made to in response to anti-immigrantist claims. For instance, demands for migrants rights and social justice often refute the popular image of the migrant as scounger by pointing to the value, the ‘invisible’ economic contribution which illegal labour makes to a country’s GDP. But just as often, the act of unauthorized migration is criticized on economic grounds - for instance, the often-heard complaint that migrants ‘steal’ jobs from ‘native’ workers, or depress the level of wages in the labour market. Economically framed discussions can cut both ways.

If Hackitectura engages in a genuinely critical act, it is not merely by mobilizing the economic and insisting this is political-economic as well as, or rather than a security issue. It is not a matter of presenting one scientific discourse as essentially more truthful than another. For that move fails to problematize the organization of knowledge itself. If it has opened up a critical space, it is in a different way: by exposing and transgressing the *purification* processes which enable discourse about illegal immigration to function. Mapping is one such purification practice. Following Latour (1993), and Barry, under modern conditions, official knowledge works by separating things: keeping them in discrete domains. It is a regime of division and distribution. Hence one can have an economic discourse about migration, and a security one.

Hackitectura seeks to represent something that finds no place in either the purified space of the geopolitical maps of trafficking, nor in economic (even certain political-economic) accounts of migration. A hodge-podge of pictures, graphics, symbols; the recycling and reuse of old maps to make something new; the juxtaposition of seemingly discordant fragments of technology, bodies, politics, machines and territory: this seems to point to an understanding of migration in terms of the assemblage – ‘an ensemble of heterogeneous elements in contingent and provisional interrelationships’ (Ong 2005: 259).

Why is this significant? What political effects does it accomplish? Think back to the BBC and Time maps. These typically represent illegal migration in terms of an interaction between passive and active entities. Western states are passive actors whose sovereign territory is violated by the intrusion of the active – the malicious external forces. The line always runs from a distant, outside place, through zones of transit, into the heart of the national territory. Under this view, and in much the same way that we have Ministries of

Defence and not Ministries of Attack, western states never *initiate*, they only *respond* to a prior ‘incursion’. Migration policy, border control – these are framed as *re*-actions to a prior transgression.

But once we can see things in terms of an assemblage, a somewhat different picture is possible. There are two things to be said in this respect. First, the starting point is not two static and objective entities – be these the states of Spain and Morocco or the regions of Europe and Africa – existing in an external relationship with one another. Hackitectura take Deleuze and Guattari at their word because their performative practice starts ‘in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*.’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25). Their map reveals some of the many ways in which Europe and Africa fold into one another (Balibar 2004), forces which move back and forth as well as orthogonally. There is no beginning or end, only the middle. For instance, take the case of border controls. These are totally invisible in many of the popular and official maps. Hence people smuggling appears in official representations only as a violent act perpetrated on victim-migrants and the states of destination (victim-states?). Yet smuggling only happens, it can only exist and thrive as an illegal form of ‘travel agency’ (Sharma), because the thickening of borders has made it one of the only ways that refugees, for instance, can exercise the internationally-sanctioned right of all human beings to seek asylum. This is why it is so important that Hackitectura’s assemblage reveals the connections between border control, migration, movement and work.

Second, by mapping from the point of view of the assemblage, Hackitectura says something important about contemporary capitalism and the character of work. Standard economic understandings of migration very much resemble the standard economic accounts of other things. There are forces of supply and demand, push and pull, incentives and disincentives. The global market as a ‘hydraulic’ system pushing and pulling its subjects around (Mezzadra 2004). But as David Harvey has recently reminded us, the textbook account of the economy is only one face of capitalist accumulation. It is the benign and ‘rational’ face. The other consists of all the ‘predatory practices’ which, far from belonging to a ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ stage of capitalism – as many Marxist accounts assumed – have a ‘continuous role’ and ‘persistence... within the long historical geography of capitalist accumulation’ (Harvey 2004: 74). These predatory practices have been integral to the vitality of capitalism. They include the forcible appropriation of common land, slavery, as well as practices whose pedigree is more recent, such as biopiracy. But while Harvey doesn’t mention it, a strong argument could be made that such a list should also include the political production of the illegal immigrant as a source of unfree and exposed labour (De Genova 2002; Moulner Boutang 1998). Locating its representation of migrant work within an assemblage comprising systems of surveillance, military and police personnel, free enterprise zones, and smuggling networks, Hackitectura unsettles the pure view of the economy, and reveals a regime of work shot through with relations of violence and force.

There is one final point to make. While an assemblage might be likened to a machine because of the interaction of its parts, and their translation of energy into certain outputs, it has none of the fixed properties which we typically associate with the more

conventional conception of machinery. Assemblages are provisional and contingent arrangements. The connections between their parts are not guaranteed. Bits are prone to flying off at unforeseeable moments and at unpredictable tangents. There is one symbol on the map that I have not yet mentioned. It seems to be a Marianne-like figure. Of course, the figure of Marianne first appeared at the time of the French Revolution as a symbol of liberty and citizenship. Yet Marianne was and remains a much contested symbol. Revolutionaries had depicted Marianne wearing a Phrygian cap, a cap that had been worn by freed slaves in Greece and Rome, but also by Mediterranean seamen and convicts in the galleys. But in many representations of Marianne, such as busts in many town halls, the cap was deemed to be too seditious and replaced with a crown or diadem. The revolutionary force of Marianne was neutralized, her image sanitized and made more compatible with less democratic forms of rule. Marianne would thus seem to be a particularly suitable image to attach to this assemblage – a sign of potential future citizenships, but also citizenships without guarantees.

### Concluding Remarks

This paper has argued that the project of developing a more culturally attuned and informed version of political economy is a timely and important one. But it has suggested that any discussion of the intersection of politics with cultural and economic phenomena should pay attention to those occasions when it is not so much the constitution of the economic which is at stake, but its suppression or displacement. The paper has suggested the notion of anti-political economy as a somewhat provisional title for investigations which examine the suppression of the economic.

The argument has been illustrated by reference to the case of migration cartography. A secondary argument of the paper is that these migration maps deserve to be an object of critical analysis in their own right, and that such analysis can enrich ongoing work on the visualization, securitization, and geopoliticization of migration. It transpires that it would be inaccurate to describe migration cartography unequivocally as a practice of anti-political economy. In many cases it is, but not always. For migration mapping is, in fact, not adequately described as a singular instrument of power or ideology but more accurately a heterogeneous field comprising multiple political agendas, representations, interests and possibilities. Indeed, so rich and insightful are certain forms of migration counter-mapping that they can serve not just as case studies for scholarly analysis in political economy or migration and security studies, but as materials for the development of better concepts.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the major exhibit staged in Frankfurt under the auspices of Projekt Migration.

<sup>2</sup> But see the video work of Ursula Biemann, especially her *Contained Mobility* (2004) for the way it examines political controversies about human movement using cartographic iconography which alludes to the geo-strategic re-coding of ports and other spaces of everyday commerce.

<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere I have suggested the name of domopolitics for the move which seeks to legitimate certain forms of migration policy in the name of the state as ‘home’ (Walters 2004). Domopolitics seems particularly useful for thinking about cases where population management is not grounded in biological terms, such as a biological conception of race, or even (national) culture, but instead through the imagery of home insurance and domestic risk management. Border control as a home alarm system or firewall (Walters 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see many of the excellent essays collected in Ong (2005).

<sup>5</sup> On the question of the historical status and political uses of the Exodus, see the extremely heated and polemical debate between Michael Walzer and Edward Said.

<sup>6</sup> A fuller discussion of this map would need to consider it in terms of a genealogy of migration governance. Such a project remains in its infancy. With certain notable exceptions (Inda 2006; Ngai 2004), the sorts of insights associated with genealogical investigation are absent from the field of migration studies. One aspect of such a genealogy would surely be an account of the contingently formed and shifting objects and territories of migration governance. If so, then projects such as ICMPD’s will perhaps appear in connection with the birth of something new – a dispositif formed around the time and space of transit.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see the superb site <http://criticalspatialpractice.blogspot.com/>

<sup>8</sup> Editorial Team, 'Technological Observatory of the Straits', Fadaiat.

<sup>9</sup> See Project Fadaiat.

<sup>10</sup> See José Muñoz Millanes, 'The City as Palimpsest',  
<http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v03/Munoz.html>