

CHAPTER 6

Becomings: Placemaking in Inbetweenness

In this chapter, I examine the enduring presence of colonial legacy in today's border regimes through a postcolonial lens. The Dzjanggal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales embody their inbetweenness, navigating colonial, racialized, and migratory dynamics that shape their unique placemaking. I look closely at their migratory "becomings" and how these have shaped the creation of their social places.

6.1 From Temporary Status to Colonial Resonance

During my fieldwork in Italy in 2021, while participating in an exchange program at the postcolonial and gender center of L'Orientale University of Naples, I encountered the anthropologist Ian Chambers, who offered a different perspective for looking at the Dzjanggal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales—the case studies of this book. Chambers understood my initial motivation for employing the term “liminality,” recognizing its significance not only in terms of ritualistic transformation as highlighted by the ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep ([1961] 2019), but also through its temporal, sensorial, affective, and spatial dimensions within border zones, both geographical and affective (see Chapter 5). Through a postcolonial lens, Chambers suggested initially viewing these places as “Elsewhere,” acknowledging them as having “other” knowledge and practices beyond Western ideals. Subsequently, we explored together the potential of adopting a decolonial lens, specifically through the “Borderland/Frontera” framework proposed by the scholar of Chicana feminism and queer theory, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), which encompasses the multifaceted states of inbetweenness—geographical, affective, and existential—of communities living on the border (I will unfold this trend in the last section of this chapter).

Drawing from his extensive work on “Mediterranean crossings” (see Chambers, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2019, 2020), Chambers looked at the layers of colonial legacies within the communities of the Dzjanggal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, particularly concerning the African diaspora traversing the Mediterranean Sea—a phenomenon that makes Italy a natural bridge between North Africa and Southern Europe. In

looking at the narratives of the people in these places, as analyzed in the second section of this chapter, we were able to identify relationships to the colonial past among the inhabitants, where there is not only the history shaped by colonialism in Africa and Central-South Asia, but also a connection with the transatlantic trade in enslaved people, the Haitian Revolution, and its legacy in the Caribbean, which are essential traces in current migration in Chile.

In *The Post-Colonial Question* ([1994] 2002), together with the postcolonial feminist anthropologist Lidia Curti, Chambers explored the implications of inhabiting margins or existing beyond established borders, framing it as an experience originating from “Elsewhere,” amplifying the diverse voices of communities emerging from alternative perspectives, offering critiques and resistance to the prevailing Europeanist “center.” Chambers and Curti argue that postcolonialism seeks to recognize diverse points of view and to be mindful of the enduring scars of colonial legacies. However, “under common skies and before divided horizons” (Chambers and Curti, 2002: xii), they identify potential for uncovering new insights and shared responsibilities that amplify the perspectives of those marginalized from the colonial grid (Chambers and Curti, [1994] 2002). In this sense, viewed through the lens of “Elsewhere,” the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales communities highlight ongoing resistance and struggles against the border regime. This is especially so in the alternative knowledge production emerging from these places, which are saturated with migratory narratives embedded in the dehumanization and violence perpetrated by border regimes. The critical stance of postcolonial theory toward the impact of colonialism and its contemporary repercussions on migration underscores the limitations of the concept of liminality within the context of migration struggles against today’s border regime. Although I have attempted to politicize liminality by shifting from subjectivation to spatiality and locating the states of inbetween of the liminal in the context of border regime struggles, as analyzed in chapter 5, it remains a concept that does not fully capture the various layers of the colonial past that these communities continue to struggle with in the present.

I interpret Chambers’ concept of “Elsewhere” as encompassing marginalized histories stemming from colonial times. Chambers diverges from the notion of these histories being viewed as “mere remote elsewhere,” as measured from a colonial standpoint, recognizing that within this “other knowledge” a compulsion to confront a “worldly response, a historical response-ability” (Said, 1977; also cited in Chambers and Curti, 2002: 51). By acknowledging the existence of an “alternate world” distinct from the familiar one, Chambers and Curti introduced in the 1990s a fresh perspective through a postcolonial reading, offering insights into approaching the understanding of “Elsewhere” as an alternative avenue for grappling with and taking accountability for the colonial past. This approach seeks out the alternative narratives that are often intertwined in today’s cities, questioning the assumed ideas of the “center” as “home” and the “elsewhere” as a “distant place”

lacking belonging. Even so, acknowledging these other realities and perspectives does not automatically lead to resolution, solace, or healing of colonial legacies. However, there is the potential to seek answers and define future responsibilities, fostering a collective aspiration to understand and address the enduring wounds of colonialism (Chambers and Curti, [1994] 2002).

To expand on this, I turn to the decolonial sociologist Catherine Walsh's reflections on "other thought," which open a decolonial way of confronting the colonial legacy. In her work *"Other" Knowledges*, *"Other" Critiques* (2012), Walsh examines these alternative "other" spaces, encompassing divergent philosophies and knowledge that challenge not only the definitions and boundaries of Western philosophy and knowledge production but also its geopolitical dominance. Walsh, from a decolonial perspective, places the production of knowledge within a modern and colonial historical context, framing the struggle against it within the context of the "other America." This "other America," as Walsh defines it, encompasses not just the geographical "South" but also epistemological "souths" within the North, including the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and particularly Andean America. Walsh's arguments about "other knowledges" primarily stem from the viewpoints of Andean indigenous and Afro-descendant scholars and activists, who view epistemic production as a crucial aspect of their decolonial political projects in confronting colonialism. These projects aim not only to challenge colonial structures but also to transform and reconstruct concepts of societal perceptions and power dynamics within coloniality (Mignolo, 2012; Walsh, 2012). In this regard, the ongoing process of decoloniality (see Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) seeks to unveil what has been silenced, made invisible, and marginalized. This process of transformation and reconstruction, rooted in colonial subjectivities, histories, and memories, involves the production of these "other" knowledges with alternative philosophies and ways of relating to the world, which have historically been disregarded and denied. This "other" critical thought does not claim to represent a singular and uniform perspective but, as Walsh stresses through the work of Abdelkebir Khatibi (see Khatibi, 2019), it embodies collective thought emerging from difference and marginalization (Walsh, 2012).

Building upon this argument, looking at the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales as "Elsewhere" implies recognizing that in these "other places"—"Elsewhere"—different ways of thinking and community-building are being nurtured. As I have noted throughout this book, these communities counter the categorization of "non-places" and "places of exception" by creating alternative placemaking practices within Western urbanism (see Chapter 5). Their unique conceptions of time and space, reflected in their placemaking practices, must be comprehended on their own terms, distinct from Western frameworks. This perspective reinforces the notion of "Elsewhere" as a counternarrative to enduring colonial structures in

contemporary border regimes, aligning with postcolonial and decolonial discourses that address coloniality more broadly.

Thanks to looking through this “Elsewhere” lens, I have opened a window to examine the colonial past and its current repercussions, as I will elaborate in subsequent paragraphs. However, in the third section of this chapter, I reconsider examining these places from this position by applying Anzaldúa’s (1987) hybrid lens of *Borderland/Frontera*. I have come to understand that places like the Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales serve as arenas where dichotomies between the “West” and the “South” are not as clear as they seem. The Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales represent places where the dichotomous borders and the distinct boundaries between colonial legacy and strategies of decolonial resistance pose a complex challenge. In contrast to the distinctions of “other” knowledge production originating from outside Western societies, the Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales embody a more nuanced reality. These places illustrate the possibility of experiencing, comprehending, and engaging in contemporary Western urban life while envisioning alternative urban forms inside them, thus challenging the conceptual confines of Western ideals. They embody a dynamic interaction within the urban fabric, emphasizing the potential for coexistence and mutual influence between diverse cultural and social spheres. The concept of *Borderland/Frontera* underscores the understanding of the intermediate state of these communities, whose existential, migratory and territorial inbetweenness extends into contemporary reality and the interrogation of the “West–South” dichotomy.

6.2 Present Advocacy with Colonial Traces

By exploring the (hi)stories of the Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, I found it crucial to delve into the migratory routes of its inhabitants, which brought to light layers intertwined with imperial, colonial, and racist structures present in today’s border regimes. It revealed their relationship to the violent tactics of control and identification with a focus on technologies such as digital fingerprints and databases which play central roles in today’s border surveillance. In this section, I look at traces of colonial legacy present in the narratives of people-in-transit. The journeys of the African diaspora across the Mediterranean Sea, acting as a bridge between Africa and Europe, unveil echoes of maritime colonial trade routes. Zooming out, these connections extend across the Atlantic Ocean, encompassing colonial maritime routes between Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Understanding these historical connections is essential in grasping present-day migration trends in Chile, particularly in the case of Los Arenales, where Afro-Caribbean residents endure severe racial violence. These acts of violence, carried out by many Chilean communities, underline “migrants” as an inferior classification, bringing to the

forefront an unnamed racism that violates these communities in Chilean territory. These acts of violence are deeply entangled in centuries of colonialism in America and the suppressed history of African communities during the Spanish and Portuguese colonial era. Exploring the colonial past within these violent actions, as well as pointing out the surveillance tactics of European border regimes, brings to the forefront the colonial patterns present in these urban spaces. Yet it is also possible for diverse strategies to be employed by people-in-transit to challenge the border regime's tactics and structural racism.

Echoes of Empire

Text fragments from the book chapter: "The Jungle of Calais: A Place of Resistance and Monumentality" (Garland, 2021a)

At the crossroads of France and the United Kingdom, where Calais—and with it the Dzjangan settlement—once was located, a critical lens opens onto the border regimes shaping the European Union and the Schengen Area. The following text fragments engage with the Dzjangan by situating it beyond the category of a "refugee camp," reading it instead as a historically layered borderland shaped by colonial legacies, geopolitical asymmetries, and long-term displacement.

The Dzjangan is not only a new urban form of cosmopolitization as analyzed by the anthropologist Michel Agier in his ethnography *The Jungle: Calais's Camps and Migrants* (2018), due to its conviviality between different nationalities, cultures, religions, economic status (the socioeconomic past of each inhabitant), and inter-social positions (refugees/migrants/volunteers). It is possible to go further, understanding the Dzjangan and its environment as a cosmopolitical border settlement, by its geographical category of being located on the border between the continent (Europe) and the island (the UK). The Dzjangan not only represents a cultural biopolitics and mobility, it also embraces the politics of geography and nature, with its archeological borderline of being on the edge of geographical, natural, political, economic, cultural forms of contrast, among others (Hicks and Mallet, 2019). By considering the Dzjangan only as a "refugee camp," seeing it from a defined type of "informal" settlement, risks losing the perspective of long-term juxtaposition between the several human experiences of displacement between the UK's border and the European continent. By defining the Dzjangan as a "specific" form, it will not be possible to make the spatial parallels that this fringe embraces in the "totality" of the present and past. Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet write: "These juxtapositions proliferate: between colonial pasts and the (post)colonial present, between shelter and dispossession, between the Global North and the Global South, and even between Old and New Worlds" (Hicks and Mallet, 2019, p. 26). (Garland, 2021a: 125–126)

When I first entered the Dzjanganal and observed its precarious and dehumanizing conditions, I was extremely shocked to experience this reality within a European country like France. With my experiences inside shantytowns, “Tomas,” and “Favelas”¹ in South America, I already had a bit more understanding of the material reality of the inhabitants in these fragile environments. Observing this similar and even more complex context² in a European city inside the economic and political powers of the EU and the Schengen area, it struck me how environmentally hostile what I was seeing was. The contrasts and parallels of contemporary realities between Europe and “the otherness” triggered me to consider how “Western ‘civilisation’ grew in two directions at once, enacting the idea of progress in tandem with its reverse—creating present pasts that justified its own degenerate savagery beyond the bounds of Europe” (Hicks and Mallet, 2019: 51). It is here that the reality of the Dzjanganal (inside and out) embodies the ongoing problematic of colonialist legacies in contemporary Europe. The (post)colonial images and actions of resistance of the surviving bodies of the camp consistently point out the colonialist and imperial legacy of Western civilization. In the Dzjanganal, it is possible to witness firsthand how these ongoing (post)colonial survivors are experienced vividly by displaced people through the strange epoch into which they are forced: “a technological Mesolithic, where, apart from the smartphone, there is no modern technology of shelter, of transport, of lighting, heating, or community based on sedentism” (Hicks and Mallet, 2019, p. 63). (Garland, 2021a: 126)

When looking at the historical legacy as analyzed by Hicks and Mallet, which points out the radical vision of Lucy Mayblin (2017), most of the asylum seekers in Great Britain come from regions that used to be part of the British Empire. More specifically, in Calais these former regions overwhelmingly comprise only four states: Afghanistan, Sudan, Southern Sudan, and Eritrea (with some smaller but significant numbers of Somalis). (Hicks and Mallet, 2019, p. 68). Refugee Rights Europe reports that in the 2015–2016 census of the Dzjanganal population, between two-thirds and four-fifths of the total population comes mainly from five countries: Afghanistan, Sudan, Southern Sudan, Eritrea, and, to a lesser extent, Somalia. A significant number of Syrian and Iraqi communities began to arrive in 2015–2016 and Iranians began to arrive in late 2017.³ Four of the five main countries that have been represented by nationals in Calais were former Protectorates or protected states of the British Empire: Afghanistan (Emirate of Afghanistan, 1879–1919), Sudan and Southern Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian, Sudan 1899–1956), and Somalia (British Somaliland, 1884–1960). And in the case of Eritrea, after half a century of Italian rule there was a significant period of British military rule (Hicks and Mallet, 2019, p. 69). (Garland, 2021a: 127)

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- 1 Refers to the same concept as shantytown, used mainly in South America. For example: Toma in the case of Chile and Favela in Brazil.
 - 2 Its cosmopolitan quality, its location on a territorial fringe, and the daily violence between authorities.
 - 3 Due to the introduction of visa-free travel for Iranians to Serbia.

From this standpoint, people-in-transit crossing the English Channel and navigating the borders of the European Union and Schengen Area grapple not only with the historical legacies of colonialism in their countries of origin but also endure the harsh techniques employed by the present-day European border regime, which are deeply rooted in colonial practices of surveillance, control, and identification. In her book *Postcolonial Surveillance: Europe's Border Technologies between Colony and Crisis* (2022), the feminist scholar Anouk Madörin delves into the history of the European border regime and its ties to colonial predecessors of current border technological artifacts. Madörin explores how Europe's colonial past continues to influence contemporary high-tech politics and has shaped EU border migration policies, border security, and surveillance mechanisms. She sheds light on pivotal moments where the past and present intersect and clash, including “panoptic surveillance, biopolitical registries, biometric classification, and deterrent media infrastructure” (Madörin, 2022: xv).

The reform of the Dublin III regulation in 2013 marked a pivotal point in the technological sophistication of European border regimes. With the European Commission's approval, the first EU member state in which fingerprints are stored or an asylum application is lodged becomes responsible for the asylum application of the individual seeking refuge. In this sense, EU legislation takes control of the database to collect fingerprints of people-in-transit and carefully monitors in which country they must apply for asylum. Once individuals are in the EU database, they are compelled to return to the first European country where they were identified upon entry. This procedure deprives individuals of the opportunity to choose the country in which they wish to seek asylum. The Dublin Regulation stipulates that people-in-transit can and should be deported to the country where their fingerprints were first taken, halting their continued border crossings.

With the Dublin reform update, the implementation of biometric devices in the EU database became a strategic measure to expedite and enhance the identification of individuals crossing borders. Today, these biometric technologies have become the standard for immigration control worldwide. They have transcended their original purpose and have been integrated into various facets of society, not only for controlling migratory flows but also for everyday use in urban settings. For instance, fingerprints, once solely utilized for border-control databases, civil and electoral services, are now employed in schools, universities, pharmacies, supermarkets, and other contexts to identify individuals in a “fast, effective and clean” manner. In this sense, biometric practices are seen as “neutral and clean” methods for classifying a person's identity. Their character of using statistics to calculate biological and physiological data provides this supposed neutrality when it comes to identity categorization (Madörin, 2022). However, as argued by Madörin, these practices of data collection and identification have deeper historical colonial origins than the neutral advancements in EU border regimes suggest.

Biometric technologies emerged during the era of European imperialism, intertwined with colonial strategies of suppression and scientific racism. Biometric technology traces its origins back to the pseudo-disciplines of anthropometry, phrenology, and craniology in the 19th century. These practices were once extensively utilized in anthropology but are now widely discredited for their basis in scientific racism (Madörin, 2022). Madörin identifies fundamental aspects in the history of biometrics: from its origins in the colonial era, its utilization in 19th-century criminology and police work, to the contemporary biometric database of the European border regime. Throughout its history, key elements have revolved around “physical violence, identification, and evidence” (Madörin, 2022: 58).

The current border regime demonstrates an unprecedented level of sophistication, extending beyond physical, technological, and digital means of border control to include the biology of the human body. This sophistication is exemplified by the use of carbon dioxide to detect human presence (via palpitations) within transportation vehicles (such as cars and trucks) crossing borders, tested often at the English Channel Tunnel on the France/UK border. These advancements have refined the state’s mapping of bodies, resulting in a significantly more detailed database for migratory identification. The sophisticated data collection techniques are based on colonial tactics from early biometric projects. Madörin identifies three direct links between modern biometric data collection and colonial biometric initiatives. Firstly, physical violence: each biometric data collection involves violence against the human body, bringing the past of colonial terror into the present. Secondly, the use of biometrics for subject identification: biometrics are frequently used not just for identifying individual bodies but also for categorizing them into specific groups or classes, influenced by racialized structures masked by seemingly impartial statistics, biological calculations, and physiological data. Lastly, the prioritization of machinery and technological precision over individuals’ narratives and life stories. Here, the “facts” collected by biometric data will influence later decisions, erasing the personal experiences suffered by these bodies at the border. Through these observations, Madörin (2022) highlights the deeply entrenched colonial remnants within contemporary biometric practices and stresses the significance of critically examining the ethical ramifications of such technologies.

In this context, despite biometrics being wielded in service of state violence, people-in-transit have devised strategies to counter them, aiming to remain clandestine while crossing borders. These tactics have reached levels of sophistication in the struggle against border regimes, with some resorting to extreme measures such as body mutilation to resist the “obligation to be seen and identified” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007). These efforts challenge the EU database and oppose the Dublin Regulations, which impose authoritarian rules forcing people-in-transit to undergo asylum processes in the first country where they were biometrically identified and entered into the EU database. These ongoing struggles against border regimes rep-

resent efforts to combat the persistent vestiges of colonial structures characterized by racism, authoritarianism, and hierarchy toward “migrant bodies.” The strategies employed by people-in-transit serve as acts of reidentification, reclaiming agency over their bodies colonized by the contemporary border regime. The notion of the right to disappear, manifested through practices of mutilation to dissociate oneself from the database, underscores the importance of reflecting on the migration struggle and prioritizing mobility over border control (Garland, 2021a).

Strategies such as document burning, fingerprint erasure, and the use of border-crossing tactics, as described by scholars Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos (2007), are efforts to erase the connection between the human body and its identity, thus challenging the fundamental notion of human rights. The erasure and mutilation of fingerprints underscores debates about disappearance and the right to disappear. Philosopher Roberto Esposito’s concept of the “immune dispositif” argues how contemporary biometric identification policies present a tangible and symbolic challenge to modern life. This dispositif serves as the central axis, both real and symbolic, of contemporary existence (Esposito, 2011; Sanyal, 2017; Garland, 2021a). The integration of digital and technological elements into the human body through fingerprint identification personifies an official biopolitics of inscription. The mutilation and near-amputation of physical and digital identities emerge as products of violence, state control, and the lingering structures of colonial traces within the present border regime (Sanyal, 2017; Garland, 2021a). By embracing innovative resistance tactics, people-in-transit confront the contemporary manifestations of colonial patterns embedded within security and surveillance within the border regimes. The entanglement between visibility and invisibility in autonomous migration tactics revealed the sophistication of these resistance efforts, echoing colonial terror akin to that described by Madörin above. However, this progressive sophistication of migration strategies and border regimes has led to tragic events that violate all human rights. The many deaths that the Mediterranean Sea and the English Channel contain, and also the Atacama Desert in South America, remind us of the consequences of these struggles, both to prevent mobility and to preserve its right.

These strategies against border regimes have also led to the erasure of individual identity within these same communities, as seen in the case of the Dzjangan community. The high level of community and collective organization within the Dzjangan had fostered a strong sense of unity. However, it had also resulted in the loss of personal identity. The community transformed from being perceived simply as “migrants” wandering the streets of Calais to being recognized as “The Dzjangan”—a resilient, organized community actively resisting the policies of the French and British governments. The community’s appropriation of the Calais area had engendered decolonial attitudes, yet simultaneously led to the suppression of individual identity as a means of defense against the border laws of the European Union.

During my first visit to the Dzjanganl in July 2016, I encountered these mobility strategies. At the time, I was deeply immersed in the complex and dynamic environment of the Dzjanganl, and I couldn't fully comprehend what I was witnessing. During a meeting with Syrian community leaders, I noticed that almost all of them had their fingertips wrapped in medical bandages. While at first it seemed like a minor incident, I now realize their attempt to erase their own fingerprints, preparing to cross the Channel through the tunnel that same night. During the conversation, they told me that the initial plan was to jump from the road that runs through Calais and leads to the tunnel, with one of its entrances located directly above the area occupied by the Dzjanganl. The way they described it revealed a strategically collective organization, with each person having a role in how they would jump onto the moving trucks. I could sense their individual identities fading away—without fingerprints or identification documents—as they merged into a collective strategic body. Choosing to synchronize their movements and jump onto the trucks simultaneously was a deliberate tactic to challenge individualization and leverage the collective act of jumping together. In this sense, the elimination of fingerprints serves not only as a form of resistance against the state and its policies of control but also as a process of disappearance that fosters a collective mindset, provoking a powerful resistance to the search for safer haven outside the confines of official European “refugee” camps. The act of self-eradicating fingerprints is a means to achieve “free” mobility and the ability to choose the destination of their journey. By mutilating their fingerprints, communities-in-transit can assert their autonomy and determine their own path. This collective decision illustrates that by “disappearing” as individuals, they can strengthen their group identity, uniting as “one” and forging a new communal identity. The example of the Dzjanganl serves as tangible and dramatic proof of this art of resistance against border regimes and the still present colonial patterns within it (Garland, 2021a).

Afterlives of Colonialism

From a South American perspective, particularly looking at the reality of contemporary migration in Chile, these colonial traces take on a different form, often more subtle and challenging to discern. As South Americans, we are familiar with a particular colonial legacy deeply rooted in our history—a history scarred by the extermination, violence, and exploitation of countless indigenous communities across the continent. The Spanish and Portuguese colonial imprint is evident in our “official languages,” traditional dances, attire, and iconic national cuisines, embodying a blend of European and indigenous cultures in a contemporary “creole” and “mestizo” society shaped by a turbulent past and the forced coexistence of Europeans and indigenous peoples. Yet, the afterlives of colonialism in Chile are not limited to indigenous histories alone. Unlike in some parts of Peru and predominantly in

Brazil and the Caribbean countries, there is not much historical documentation of the African diaspora as inhabitants of the country in Chile's collective consciousness. However, this omission leaves untold and marginalized stories that resurface today with the influx of Caribbean communities, many of them of African descent, particularly from Colombia, Venezuela, and Haiti.

This unraveling of colonial patterns in Chilean territory invites us to take a closer look at this sociocultural phenomenon, which leads us to possible connections between racism, colonial legacy, and migration, reflected especially in the northern region of Chile, where the Los Arenales settlement is located. The arrival of Caribbean communities in Chile in recent decades has had sociopolitical and cultural implications, imbued with a negative sentiment toward their presence, bringing to the surface deep wounds and hatreds stemming from historical conflicts and colonial narratives, which throughout Chilean history have not been criticized when discussing Chilean national identity. This forgetting and erasure of the past has shaped the present experiences of these communities in Chilean society (Tijoux, 2016).

During my fieldwork in Los Arenales at the end of 2021, I participated in a seminar at the Sociology Department of the University of Chile, taught by sociologist and activist Professor María Emilia Tijoux. The seminar, titled "Racism and Contemporary Migrations," focused on the everyday racism that "migrant" communities are experiencing in Chile, especially communities of African descent. Tijoux and other academics structured the seminar around the effect of forgotten colonial legacies on the socioeconomic and political dynamics of contemporary migration in Chile, highlighting that the intersection of migration and racism has become almost indistinguishable, particularly within the Chilean context. This offered a new lens through which to look at the narratives of "migrant" communities like Los Arenales, echoing similar struggles experienced by inhabitants of the Dzjanganl and Tiburtina in Europe.

[I]mmigration is constructed as an idea, and in the way some people use it, it ceases to express its broader definition and becomes a stigma that labels citizens of specific countries,⁴ placing them in geographical, spatial, and symbolic borders that rob them of their social being and question the law and their human rights ... "[I]mmigration" as a concept, then, becomes a "problem" that ends up sheltering racism. (Tijoux, 2016: 15, my English translation)

In recent years, academic debate surrounding contemporary migration in Chile has been coping with the transformation of migration into a concept extending beyond mere global human mobility. This shift has accentuated the distinction between the

4 In the Chilean context: Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, and Venezuela.

“foreigner” and the “migrant,” effectively linking migration with racism. In Chile, the stigmatization of Caribbean communities, particularly those of African descent, has given rise to stereotypes and daily instances of racist behavior—many of which would be publicly condemned or deemed morally unacceptable in today’s European contexts.

The Chilean historian Celia Cussen, in her article “Race and Quality of Life in the Kingdom of Chile: Colonial Background of Discrimination” (2016), analyzes the history of African people who were enslaved in Chile. She argues that when studying the second contemporary diaspora of African descendants in Chile, it is pertinent to review the history of the first African diaspora, which is poorly known but essential to understand the racist actions of Chilean society toward today’s “migrant” community. Cussen argues that from the beginning of the arrival of the African diaspora in Chile, there was no such evident naming or stigmatization on the condition of “race” or skin color. Instead, the European colonies in the South American territory referred to this diaspora mainly geographically as “Congo,” “Mandinga,” “Angolo,” and “Carabali”; there were also other names such as “Mulato” and “Zambo.” Still, the idea of “race”, as Cussen argues, was not present in the first centuries of the enslavement of African people in America. Rather, the concept of “race” will later be a strong factor in the independent republics of the Chilean “criollos.” The African diaspora in Chile dates back to the 16th century when the indigenous population was dying from disease, extermination, and violence by Europeans, requiring the “replacement” of labor for mining and mechanical work in the city (Cussen, 2016). The “replacement” from the 16th century concerning the African diaspora in Chilean territory, resurfaces today in the labor integration of “migrants” in Chile. In their work “Immigrants, the ‘New Barbarians’ in the Biopolitical Grammar of Contemporary States” (2014), Tijoux and sociologist Gonzalo Díaz analyze the dominant narratives of the Chilean nation throughout its colonial past and neoliberal present, and how they resonate with “new migrants” when they enter the Chilean labor market. They introduce the term “new barbarians” to characterize the role that Afro-Caribbean communities play in this market.

According to Tijoux and Díaz, the “new barbarians,” impoverished and of darker complexion, are depicted as the contemporary “other,” perpetuating longstanding colonial dichotomies and reinforcing Chilean society’s self-image of a white, European, and Greco-Christian civilization (Tijoux and Díaz, 2014). Tijoux argues that the self-image of Chilean society is based on the colonial founding and the establishment of the Chilean nation-state. This creates a potent national image that justifies dominance and supremacy, leading to the integration of racist arguments along with classist discourses into the national fabric (Tijoux and Córdova, 2015: 8). In her work “The Other ‘Black’ Immigrant and the Chilean ‘Us,’” Tijoux (2014) connects colonial historical narratives of a Chilean past with its patterns of racism with the current experiences of communities of African descent when entering the labor mar-

ket. These communities often participate in “precarious employment characterized by flexible schedules, lack of contracts, and extended workdays” (Tijoux, 2014: 12).

There is also the perpetuation of stereotypes associated with “racialized sexualization” (Aguirre, 2018), which have historically contributed to racist behaviors against Afro-Caribbean communities, especially female Afro-Caribbean “migrants,” in South America. These women are frequently exoticized and racialized within and beyond their workplaces. Historical studies and colonial theory reveal a pattern of sexualization and exoticization of female “migrants” of color, stemming from processes of colonization, Eurocentrism, and racial categorization. Many Afro-Caribbean female “migrants” are unfairly stereotyped as excessively sexual, resulting in the reinforcement of such stereotypes in both workplace environments and broader Chilean society (see Barton, 2017). The exploitation of labor and racialized sexualization experienced by “migrant” communities today are crucial aspects to consider when looking at colonial traces in Chilean territory.

Much has been said in Chile about the marked disconnection between Chileans and their African roots. As Cussen speculates, it could be the reason for the early “mestisaje” and also “blanqueamiento”⁵ between European, indigenous, and African communities in colonial times. Since the 19th century it has also been an important factor that has erased and silenced traces of African heritage in the famous liberal discourse of the construction of the Chilean nation-state, the blood union of “the Chilean race.” Early racist Chilean historians, such as Diego Barros Arana (1884), affirm that African people who were enslaved did not play an important role in the economic and cultural development of the Chilean nation. Barros Arana argues that most emigrated to Argentina, Peru, and Brazil because many could not acclimatize to the non-tropical Chilean weather. Another well-known racist Chilean historian, Francisco Encina (1912), says we have been “fortunate” not to have African descent. In his words: “The elimination of the n**** was a great good for the Chilean race. The intellectual and moral manifestations of its mestizos were not encouraging” (cited in Cussen, 2016: 31, my English translation).

These historical racist writings displaced and silenced African traces in our Chilean national imaginary, although scientific studies corroborate that the DNA of

5 *Blanqueamiento* is the Spanish translation of “whitening,” which refers to a societal, political, and economic strategy observed in numerous postcolonial nations throughout the Americas and Oceania, aimed at “enhancing the race” toward an idealized notion of whiteness (Rahier, 1999). The term “blancamiento,” originating in Latin America, is often associated with the concept of racial whitening. However, whitening encompasses both symbolic and biological aspects. Symbolically, it embodies an ideology stemming from the legacies of European colonialism, as outlined in Anibal Quijano’s theory of the coloniality of power, which promotes white dominance within social hierarchies (Montalvo and Codina, 2001). Biologically, *blanqueamiento* involves the process of achieving whiteness by marrying individuals with lighter skin tones to produce offspring with similarly lighter complexions.

thousands of Chileans from different social strata have a percentage of African heritage—2.7% of the total population (Berrios, 2016). However, it is a low percentage compared to our indigenous and European traces. Historically, Chilean society has forgotten, silenced, and denied this past, which flourishes again with the current migration in the country and is becoming “a problem” that somehow is resurfacing issues of “race” and everyday racism (Correa Telléz, 2016).

In her paper, “Immigration as a ‘Problem’ or the Resurgence of Race. General Racism, Everyday Racism and Its Role in the Confrontation of the Nation” (2016), the Chilean sociologist Josefina Correa Telléz argues that in the mainstream Chilean narrative, when the marginalization of the “migrants” are discussed, it is framed as a “problem of discrimination or xenophobia,” while sometimes when the notion of racism is used it is presented as a synonym of xenophobia. Somehow, “racism” loses its connotation and becomes equivalent to the “fear of the other,” also reflected in classism. I remember a conversation with some of my Chilean communities, referring to the various discriminatory and violent actions of Chilean groups against the Venezuelan community. One of the examples we discussed was the event that occurred in January 2022: A group of Chilean citizens from Iquique (northern Chile) burned tents, personal belongings, passports, and important documents belonging to Venezuelan families who were sleeping outside the Venezuelan consulate, waiting for bureaucratic answers. In our discussion, the argument was that these violent acts were more of a “classist” response on the part of this Chilean community and not a “racist” act. “The Chilean is not racist but classist,” one of them told me. The “classist” perception this person was referring to was: “these families come from very poor places in Venezuela. They already had their way of living and relating to public spaces, marked by a lack of education, cleanliness, chaos and noise.”

What this person meant by saying that “the Chilean is classist but not racist,” referred to the xenophobic acts of the Chilean group toward the Venezuelan, Colombian, and Haitian communities. By not problematizing the category of racism to understand discriminatory phenomena and marginalization of people-in-transit, there is a tendency to ignore the historical, political, and economic process that today places migration as a “problem” for Chilean society (Correa Telléz, 2016). Instead, violent acts are individualized only as “racist subjects”; they are not framed as structural and therefore embedded in the colonial legacy of our Chilean history. Another example of this can be found in the 1990s in Chile. According to Correa Telléz, there was a large Argentinian and Peruvian migration to Chile, but only Peruvian migration was perceived as a “threat” to Chilean society as, in the racist imaginary, Peru was seen as having a higher percentage of indigenous population and also because of the shared history with the Pacific War, making the Peruvian people “the natural enemy of Chile.” In contrast, the Argentine people were perceived as being of largely European descent. The Peruvian “migrant” thus became the “illegal,” the

“delinquent,” “the poorly paid worker,” “the nanny,” “the underdeveloped,” and “the unemployed” (Correa Telléz, 2016: 39–40).

Another example I was confronted with was from a neighbor of Antofagasta talking about the Los Arenales settlement and other self-built settlements in the city, where almost 80% of the inhabitants are people from Caribbean countries:

You know what the new name of our city Antofagasta is? It is now called Antofalombia⁶ since we have already had an “invasion” since 2015 of Colombians looking for the Chilean dream.⁷ They are poor in their country and believe they will become rich in Chile. Now we even have sicarios and many daily deaths in our city. Colombians and now Venezuelans have brought crime and danger to the streets. I can no longer go for a walk with my husband, as we find n**** always in the streets.

The neighbor’s comment and the comments above from some of my Chilean community are an accurate summary of the commentary in extreme right-wing Chilean newspapers on the various violent events that have spread in the north of the country, saturated with xenophobia about delinquency, sexualization, and exoticism toward the “migrant” community. “This image of ‘them’ versus ‘us,’ that assumes the existence of ‘superior and inferior’ beings, is achieved in a way that brings back the old question of ‘inferior races’ that shaped colonial representations” (Tijoux, 2016: 18). It may be that our historical ignorance, specifically with regard to the African diaspora and the historical desire for a “Chilean white nationhood,” reveals how class, ethnicity, “race,” nation, and gender are markers that highlight the outbreaks of violence and stigma toward the “migrant” (Tijoux, 2016). “The race,” so questioned and debated, reappears with today’s Afro-Caribbean diaspora in Chile, mainly when government policy seeks to “protect” the nation and to “integrate” the “migrant” into

6 Antofalombia: Antofa: diminutive of Antofagasta, falom: diminutive of “falopa” popular term to refer to the drug cocaine and lombia: diminutive of Colombia.

7 In 2015, Chile stood out as the most “developed” nation in Latin America. The significant surge in migration mirrors Chile’s economic upswing and its democratic consolidation following the end of the Pinochet dictatorship. While the United States remains the main destination for most Latin American communities, and Canada the second, the challenges associated with pursuing the “American Dream” are prompting a growing number of Latin Americans to consider the increasingly appealing “Chilean Dream.” The ripple effects across the region should not be underestimated: as people from other Latin American countries choose Chile as their new home, the country’s market-oriented economic strategies and commitment to strengthening democratic institutions are closely watched in other regional capitals. In contrast to the “American Dream,” often perceived as culturally distant or disconnected from Latin American realities, the expanding influence of a “Chilean Dream” has led many in neighboring countries to believe that if Chile can achieve the status of an industrialized nation, so can their own countries (Navia, 2015).

society. The reemergence of the concept of “race” that we see in Europe, Latin America, and many other parts of the world is seen in the various strategies of border regimes, government policies, and the everyday dynamics of the city, which highlight this harmful discrimination reflected in the dehumanization of the “migrant body” by the host society.

The historical prejudice entrenched in Chilean society remains pertinent today, chiefly due to its direct impact on the prevailing institutional behaviors and attitudes toward newly arrived Afro-Caribbean communities. According to Tijoux and Díaz, the history of enslaved people in colonial Chile, coupled with the nationalist rhetoric of the “republic of Chile” project, forms the foundation of our contemporary racism.

[H]istorically, two primary sources have shaped our identity as a collective “us” in Chile: the colonial legacy embedded in our culture (colonial imagination: civilization); the formation of the Chilean nation-state (national state imagination: racial identity). These origins delineate two interconnected dimensions of the issue: the ideological construction of discourses surrounding “civilization” and the nation-state, and the tangible exercise of power, manifested through institutional violence (via public policies, actions, or omissions) and everyday instances of violence (through gaze, language, and treatment). (Tijoux and Díaz, 2014: 7; my English translation)

In the argumentation of Tijoux and Díaz, the basic social convictions in Chile are reflected in the political constitution of the state of the respective historical time. In it, a notion of Chilean identity is drawn that is permeated with a homogeneity derived from the supposedly unique notion “between Europeans and Araucanians” (Aravena and Alt, 2012, cited in Aguirre, 2018: 11). Consequently, the Chilean social and constitutional imaginary, stemming from the colonial past, has traversed the stages of independence to the present, underpinning nation-state ventures that, according to Tijoux and Díaz, threaten xenophobic, racist, and violent tendencies. This violence, they argue, is exercised and legitimized against the “other,” who does not fit into Chilean society, such as today’s “migrants,” especially the diaspora of African descent, who are marginalized as “the other,” perpetuating colonial dichotomies between “us” and “them” (Aguirre, 2018).

All of that being said, I do not want to claim that “Chilean society is inherently racist,” as has been emphasized by many due to the widespread violence against “migrant” communities in recent years. Rather, with these reflections, I want to emphasize the complexity of the colonial legacy that is deeply embedded in our collective consciousness as “Chilean” and requires a process of deep deconstruction that goes back to the founding of the Chilean nation-state. After the social outbreak in Chile in 2019, layers of colonial traces from even before the time of Augusto Pinochet’s

dictatorship came to light and revealed how our constitution is still characterized by racism, xenophobia, and violence. The ongoing process of reformulating the constitution is a crucial step in breaking down our homogenous perception of Chilean identity. The great efforts to remind us that Chile does not have a homogenous identity, much less the idea of a “white Chile” with only European ancestors, that have been undertaken by indigenous communities, together with the strategies of communities-in-transit in the Chilean territory to seek belonging, have brought South America’s colonial past back to the forefront. In particular, people-in-transit living in Chile have opened up new perspectives on South America’s colonial traces and shed light on the extent to which “being a migrant” in Chile is synonymous with the experience of racist acts. This perspective goes beyond Latin America and highlights the realities of racism, xenophobia, and violence that the “migrant” is confronted with on a daily basis as they move through border regimes and their technological apparatuses for monitoring and controlling mobility.

In a conversation with Tijoux during one of her lectures, I shared my apprehensions about the potentially stigmatizing and racist implications of labeling people as “migrants,” within the Chilean context and beyond (see Prologue). Tijoux shared with us that some communities-in-transit, despite their “migrant” status, are deliberately choosing to identify themselves and their Chilean community as “neighbors,” as I would perceive later in my encounters with Los Arenales community (see Prologue and Epilogue). By using this term, they highlight their shared identity with Chileans and reject discriminatory labels based on their geographic origin. This linguistic shift from “migrants” to “neighbors” could represent not only a resistance to the racist label experienced by the word “migrant,” but also invites empathy, compassion, and care for their Chilean neighbors.

Therefore, this strategy not only serves as a form of resistance against prevailing social norms but also offers an alternative way of imagining a collective future. Beyond making visible the violations of human rights and the right to the city—by bringing to the surface the still-present colonial and racial structures of border regimes—these communities propose alternative urban knowledge strategies. Their aspirations go beyond mere assimilation into Chilean territory and instead extend toward inclusion on their own terms. In this sense, by redefining themselves as “neighbors,” these communities foster mutual understanding and cooperation in the places where they live. This linguistic redefinition is one of many strategies employed by communities-in-transit to challenge current border regimes, providing an aspirational foundation for a postmigrant society characterized by conviviality, solidarity, and a profound respect for all people sharing the same urban space. Through their particular migratory practices, they seek ways of repairing

and “healing wounds from epistemic, racial, slow, and colonial violence inscribed in cities” (Ortiz and Villamizar Duarte, 2024).⁸

6.3 Becoming a Social Place

Returning to my opening reflections in this chapter, in which I examine the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales through a postcolonial lens of “Elsewhere,” I engage with the colonial past and its ongoing impact on the narratives of people-in-transit. The colonial traces embedded in migratory experiences, as well as in contemporary border regimes, confer upon these places an “other” temporality—one far removed from Western ideals of fast-paced urban life. Their distinctive conceptions of time and space, as expressed through their placemaking practices, must therefore be understood on their own terms. Through these urban practices, so-called non-places gradually transform into social places—an argument that lies at the core of this book. In the following and final section of this chapter, I look more closely at how these places *become* social places, and how inbetweenness, understood as a processual state, plays a key role in this transformation.

Places as a Process

Inspired by the critical geographer Donna Massey’s term “Sense of Place” (1995), I ponder the relationship between time and space in these places, initially perceiving it as “out of time” due to liminality. The intertwined relationship between their temporal and spatial dimension plays a crucial role in understanding the inbetweenness of their social and relational processes. However, the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, with their states of inbetweenness, temporal uncertainties, and constant violence within the border regimes, as well as their resistances and social and solidarity processes, offer a sense of place extending beyond the “Elsewhere” postcolonial lens. These places serve as arenas where the distinctions between the “West” and the “South” are blurred, challenging clear demarcations in today’s cities. In contrast to disrupting colonial patterns, as perceived by the “Elsewhere,” these places underscore a more nuanced and processual reality. They demonstrate the feasibility of engaging with Western cities while envisioning alternative ways of living and knowing.

8 The urban planners Catalina Ortiz and Natalia Villamizar Duarte (2024) argue that it is essential in times of civilizational crisis to facilitate North–South dialogues to learn from alternative urban practices for a process of healing and reparation of the colonial legacy, by recognizing territory as a living entity that can reimagine the notion of the city and its relationship within the land (Escobar, 2019).

In her book *For Space*, Massey (2005) analyzes how places have more than a single historical identity and cannot be considered static. She argues, somewhat conceptually, that places are social spaces with interactions. These interactions are also in motion on their own. They are not “frozen in time,” and Massey considers them to be processual interactions in constant flux, “places as a process.” By affirming that a place does not have a single and unique “identity,” Massey refers to the temporality and historical events within which it is framed—the internal conflicts produced between past, present, and future. She gives the example of London’s docklands and the conflict between heritage and development (Massey et al., 1991). I linked this conflictual aspect to the reality of settlements such as the Dzjanganal, a place distinctly shaped by conflict—through colonial patterns embedded in technological border regimes, the ongoing presence of colonial histories from its residents’ places of origin, and repeated experiences of eviction and border violence. This tension extends into the future as well, reflected in the current framing of the area as one of “heritage and natural conservation”—a narrative used by Calais city council to justify the final eviction in 2016 (see Chapter 1). These diverse temporal and spatial layers render places like the Dzjanganal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales inherently processual, constantly shaped by entitlement of past legacies, present circumstances, and future ambitions.

The specificity of place is continually reproduced, but it is not a specificity that results from some long, internalized history. There are a number of sources of this specificity—the uniqueness of place. There is the fact that the wider social relations in which places are set themselves are geographically differentiated. (Massey et al., 1991: 7)

A further observation Massey makes is to consider places without borders in terms of separation from inside and outside, arguing that places are not closed entities. Although geographical studies and territorial boundaries are essential in defining a place, they cannot be considered conceptually in the definition of a place per se. Here Massey’s concept of a “Global Sense of Place” (2014) resonates with the reality of these settlements and their local/global interaction. Regarding the specificity of the Dzjanganal, and its unique location on the maritime border between France and England, I would contend that constant migratory flows, the extreme controversies of the French–English police forces, and the sophistication of strategies in the border regime have produced a degree of the local/global relationship that Massey refers to. Although they are particularities of what is happening on this frontier, they resonate internationally in discussions on European border regimes, colonial legacy, and racism toward the “migrant body.”

Following Massey’s line, places are not necessarily rooted in the local, communal, and territorial but go beyond these classical parameters. The Dzjanganal,

Tiburtina, and Los Arenales are clear examples of “processual places.” Through the physical design and construction of what was initially understood as a “space of flows” (a space of transit and passage), a “space of places” (a space with history, memory, and identity) can begin to emerge (Castells, 2020) as inhabitants engage with their new environment and negotiate new social and political identities. The local/global interrelationship produces this multiplicity of identities (Massey et al., 1991), which no longer represent a single culture, but the diversity of many people and histories that allows for the creation of its own internal order and dynamics, which in turn is reflected in connectivity, international networking, and, in some cases, a merging with the city. These diverse parameters, such as the colonial legacy, the common background of forced migration, resistance, and aspirations, progressively produce the essence of the place, hence its sociability.

Borderlands and Inbetweenness

Yet, even as communities such as Dzingal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales strive to redefine and reimagine urban life through alternative placemaking, the inbetweenness stemming from their migratory narratives imbues a distinct quality to our understanding of what constitutes a processual place in today’s cities. The concept of “borderland,” articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), amplifies my comprehension of the state of inbetweenness. The existential, migratory, and territorial inbetween embodied in the idea of borderland extends into contemporary reality, challenging the “West–South” dichotomy. The depth of spatiality, sensoriality, and personal experience inherent in the concept provides a great framework to understand placemaking in these communities. It also clarifies why liminality is not a concept that can grasp the spatiotemporal inbetweenness of these places. In liminality, time narrates transformative processes rather than looking spatially and historically at the intertwining of migratory stories, their transformative processes and territorial context.

In her work *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa draws upon her personal biography living at the Texas–Mexico border, where she encountered cultural marginalization. Her theories interweave issues of social marginalization with concepts such as hybridity, inbetweenness, and multiracial identity (Keating, 2006). Anzaldúa introduces the notion of “border thinking,” which decolonial scholars such as Walter D. Mignolo later expand upon, emphasizing its emergence from inhabiting the inbetween space of the border. For Mignolo, Anzaldúa’s concept of borderland prompted a realization of residing within the border without conscious awareness. According to Mignolo, borderland embodies “border thinking in action; Anzaldúa doesn’t merely study borderlands but inhabits them” (Mignolo and E-International Relations, 2017). Mignolo and other decolonial thinkers such as Madina Tlostanova further delve into the idea of “border thinking,” emphasizing its theoret-

ical and epistemic dimensions, which must also encompass lived experience (Garland, 2024a).

Border thinking doesn't emerge independently of modernity but rather in response to it, as part of real-life struggles against the oppressive apparatus of the colonial power matrix. Border thinking is the epistemology of exteriority; that is, it emerges from the exterior created from within. (Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006: 206)

In this context, Mignolo and Tlostanova argue that the border is defined by epistemic difference and geographic distance, thus representing a perspective from the outside that utilizes alternative knowledge, traditions and modes of expression (Global Social Theory⁹). Anzaldúa instead perceives the border as an inbetween space that fosters new possibilities for understanding. She argues that individuals, shaped by their respective cultures, perceive reality through diverse lenses. Those straddling multiple cultures encounter conflicting messages, resulting in what she terms a “cultural collision.” However, this collision can be transformative and productive, sparking fresh ways of perceiving and comprehending the world.

Mignolo's perspective, articulated in his work *Local Histories/Global Design* (2012), reflects on border thinking, emphasizing the need to “inhabit” the border rather than simply cross it. In other words, border thinking is not merely an abstract concept, but a conceptualization rooted in the lived experience of those who exist within it, inspired by Anzaldúa's notion of “the new mestiza consciousness” (Mignolo and E-International Relations, 2017). Mignolo also draws on the reflections of the psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon, particularly in his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where Fanon explores the experience of living in the inbetween as an Afro-Caribbean person in a French colony. Fanon introduces the concept of “socio-genesis,” elucidating its role in shaping one's consciousness of being perceived as black. He delineates the boundary between his self-awareness and the moment of realization that, although he was aware of the color of his skin, he had not truly comprehended its implications until he was seen as black (Mignolo and E-International Relations, 2017: 2). Similarly, the historian and philosopher W. E. B. Du Bois reflects on the notion of inhabiting the frontier through his concept of “double consciousness.” Du Bois examines his own experience of embodying his social identity between being African American and American. His own double consciousness of seeing himself through the eyes of a dominant white society and, at the same time, his own idea of identity and culture (Du Bois, 1903).

Building upon these conceptual frameworks, Mignolo theorizes about border thinking, drawing from his own experiences of border dwelling and the diverse

9 See more in <https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/border-thinking/>

identities he embodies depending on his geographical location: as a son of Italian immigrants in Argentina, as a “métèque” (Latino, gypsy, foreigner) in France and later as a Hispanic/Latino in the United States (Mignolo and E-International Relations, 2017). Mignolo’s autobiographical reflections on living at the border have sparked considerable debate within the South American decolonial academic community, particularly among decolonial feminist Indigenous scholars who challenge his perspective as a white male thinker. Although this discussion lies beyond the scope of my argument in this chapter, I want to note that Mignolo’s and other decolonial thinkers (mostly white male latinos) have been widely critiqued across Spanish-speaking Latin America, yet these debates have received little attention in English-speaking academia due to the lack of translation. Some critics embrace the “intellectual fashion” of decolonial thinking that some intellectuals have spread outside Latin America, which reproduces power dynamics similar to those it seeks to denounce. One of the most influential books in this denunciation is *Piel blanca, máscaras negras: crítica de la razón decolonial*, edited by the decolonial scholars Gaya Makaran and Pierre Gaussens (2020).

Returning to the idea of the borderland, this concept presents a novel outlook on border dynamics, surpassing binary conceptions to embrace a space—the borderland—characterized by its distinct temporality and spatiality. This space serves as an arena for collective negotiation and interaction among marginalized identities, enabling the articulation of hybridity as both a political and intellectual stance (Anzaldúa, 1987). Borderland deals with issues of belonging and marginalized identities, exploring culture as well as identity construction. Anzaldúa reimagines and constructs a place that doesn’t physically exist but carries a history, emotions, and associated identities—an intermediary state (Pulido, 2016). She describes Borderland as: “A border zone is a vague, indeterminate place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural border. It is in a constant state of transition” (Anzaldúa, 1987: 3).

Anzaldúa describes borderland as a nebulous and indefinite zone, a realm shaped by the emotional residue of an imposed border, constantly evolving and in flux. In this inbetween space various identities interplay and are influenced by the perpetual state of inbetweenness. She particularly associates this dynamic with “mestizo/a and Chicano/a” identities, delving into what she terms “the new mestiza consciousness,” characterized by an embrace of duality, ambiguity, and contradiction. This consciousness embodies a hybrid identity, drawing from diverse facets of one’s identity. Borderland thus emerges as a container for shaping these “new consciousnesses” that navigate a world characterized by hybridity, fluidity, and continual change. By conceptualizing “the new mestiza consciousness” within the context of the borderland, she highlights the colonial legacy inherent in the “mestizo/a” identity (see the idea of a “Latinoamerica city” in Epilogue).

It’s crucial to recognize that the concept of borderland emerged from a sense of tension, stemming from feelings of not belonging and the need to establish a sense

of belonging. These intersections of identity signify an intertwining of cultural and personal identity, shedding light on the multitude of identities that individuals possess, as well as the tangible and intangible “borders” inherent within these identities (Pulido, 2016). This duality is not only present in the identity of the individual living in the territorial borderland but is also reflected in contemporary cities—not only in border cities but in cities where colonial legacies, postcolonial realities, and cultural hybridizations merge into the fast-paced, connected urban fabric. Borderland represents both the reclamation of these border spaces and an identitarian reinvention, serving as a platform for people to recognize their inbetweenness and identity. In this sense, in the “new mestiza consciousness,” Anzaldúa offers a perspective on how contemporary society can engage with the enduring colonial imprints embedded in multiple layers of individuals and their urban identity. This reimagining has the potential to deconstruct the violence inherent in colonial *mestizaje*, seeking more nuanced paths of engagement with contemporary identity and its history.

Building on this, the concept of hybridity, which strongly resonates with the complex race-mixing of *mestizaje* on the American continent, is one of the broad terms employed and disputed in postcolonial theory. It commonly refers to the emergence of new transcultural forms in a zone that had contact with colonization, forming a “third space,” which is the hybrid of two or more cultures. The work of the postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha is one of the most prominent in conceptualizing the term, whereby he argues that all cultural statements and structures are based and articulated in a space that he calls a “third space of enunciation” (Bhabha, [1994] 2012: 37; also Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013). For Bhabha, the recognition of this contradictory “third” space of cultural identity can contribute to transcending the exoticism of “multiculturalism”, which is so criticized in postcolonial discourse for neglecting the degree of colonial power and legacy that a “multicultural” society represents. Instead, the “inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (Bhabha, [1994] 2012; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013) can open a way of conceptualizing an international culture that is not based on the exoticism of other cultures (Mambrol, 2016; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013; Garland, 2024a: 29). By this, Bhabha suggests looking at hybridity as an inbetween space through which cultural meaning is produced.

Robert Young ([1995] 2005) is one of the postcolonial theorists who criticizes the term “hybridity” because it has been an essential term in the imperial and colonial discourse on negative descriptions and definitions of race mixtures. Young argues that hybridity is a critical concept, particularly because it is often used to describe a simple cross-cultural “exchange.” Such a use can be problematic, as it obscures the imbalance and inequality of power relations that structure this supposed exchange. In doing so, it reflects the asymmetrical power between colonizer and colonized, while veiling the “whitewashing” of cultural differences (Mambrol, 2016). This idea of hybridization somehow flourishes in its “primitive origin,” being part of the

colonialist discourse of racism. Young highlights the complexity of using this terminology as, although initially coming from biology, it is rooted in previous racist premises where creolization or hybridization is framed in the cataloging of colonial race structures. Young highlights how the use of hybridization in the representation of mixed-race cultures unconsciously repeats processes of racialization, as this term clearly had a racial meaning in the past. Although the intention of hybridization is, as Young ([1995] 2005: 27) argues, “deconstructing such essentialist notions of race today we may rather be repeating the [fixation on race in the] past than distancing ourselves from it or providing a critique of it” (also see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2013).

In this context, Anzaldúa provides another perspective to this critique of hybridity, through her conceptualization of borderland, which recalls the notion of border thinking, the being between two realities, which can also produce spaces of possibility for new understandings. The degree of territorial spatiality and personal experience that borderland entails rethinks the notion of hybridity as a political and intellectual position—a place of collective negotiation and encounter with marginal subjectivities. The concepts of hybridity and borderland as put forward by Bhabha and Anzaldúa play an important role in understanding the states of inbetweenness of the inhabitants of the Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales. Looking at the narratives of these places allows me to grasp their migratory inbetweenness as much more complex than a simple location “in between” two sides, challenging me to look beyond the initial notions of “liminal places” and later “Elsewhere” from a postcolonial lens. Being between cultures, territories, and identities opens the potential for an alternative interpretation of the dominant dichotomies delivered since the colonial past. Placing the migratory narratives of the inbetweenness of these places as a central aspect in the construction of borderland represents a way to better understand how these spaces transform and change into social places.

Toward a Transient Permanency of Becoming

In light of the discussion above, I return to one of the main questions guiding this book—how so-called non-places transform into social places. In closing this chapter, I look at the process of transformation through the inbetweenness lens experienced by people-in-transit inhabiting and resisting border regimes. Living in the borderlands, as articulated by Anzaldúa, leads people to greater awareness of their inbetweenness undergoing nuanced and constant transformations influenced by border regimes, ultimately culminating in what can be described as a “transient permanency.” Within this fluid state, the perception of temporality and spatiality deviates from the conventional frameworks prevalent in Western societies. The notion of “transient permanency” (see Diken, 2004; Martin, 2015) implies a paradoxical juxtaposition of impermanence and continuity. The fragility of change is present

at every stage, yet at the same time there is a degree of continuity. This notion may reflect the experiences that people-in-transit navigate as they traverse cultural, social, political, and geographical landscapes, constantly negotiating their sense of belonging and identity, embodying their existence within a unique temporality.

Therefore, in places like the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, identity and urban boundaries blur, creating hybrid, interconnected landscapes—dynamic zones of interaction and exchange (Bhabha, [1994] 2012). The quality of transit and transition in these places, not only spatially but also in the identities of the people living there, challenges the dichotomies inherent in Western spatialities—inside/outside, periphery/center, foreigner/native. Living on the border, as Anzaldúa highlights, entails a profound reconfiguration of consciousness, as people grapple with the complexities of inbetween states. Despite being viewed externally as detached from conventional notions of time (as framed by liminality), the everyday experiences of those in transit embody a sense of permanence. The ongoing transformations and becomings, of people-in-transit emerge as a catalyst for resistance against border regimes, revealing their placemaking and belonging in the place they have taken as home.

A similar understanding of transformation is explored by the scholars Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos through the notion of “Becoming.” In their work *The Autonomy of Migration: The Animals of Undocumented Mobility* (2007), they describe becoming as a political practice in migratory contexts. Here, “migrant” actors transcend societal norms to reconstruct themselves in their environment. Becoming, beyond being a mere oppositional force against existing structures (as observed in the struggle against border regimes), also serves as a driving force toward future aspirations. “Every becoming is a transformation of multiplicity to another, write Deleuze and Guattari; every becoming radicalizes desire and creates new individuations and new affections. Becoming is a drift” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007: 1).

In my initial reflections, I argued for using liminality and its state of transformation as a motor process of inbetweenness that the people-in-transit experience at the moment of migration. Here the analogy of becoming transforms the perception of inbetweenness. It is no longer just being “inbetween” that produces a transformation. Still, a state of becoming directs the driving force of migration, making it resilient, autonomous, and aspirational. Papadopoulos and Tsianos highlight Philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari’s universal political project of indiscernible, impersonal, imperceptible becoming, which is becoming “everybody and everything,” by eliminating the use of names and the identity of oneself. Papadopoulos and Tsianos use “dis-identification” (Muñoz, 1999): the act of rejecting a personal identity, as the strategy of becoming “more than one.” “Migrant’s material becomings do not end in a new state of being, rather they constitute being as the point of departure on which new becomings can emerge” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007: 3). Their analogy suggests that “being” is like the transitory

spaces where people-in-transit collectively shelter when they are on the road. These places are a refuge in which to rest, reconnect with their communities who are also on the road, call their family and friends, earn a little money to pay the smugglers, and recharge to continue their journey (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007).

Papadopoulos and Tsianos draw on the life story of Sir Alfred Mehran¹⁰ to analyze migratory becoming, understood not only through movement but also through the appropriation and placemaking of space. Mehran exemplifies this process of becoming while living between borders, often described as being “stuck” in one place. In his case, he was “stuck” in the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport for more than 18 years.

“Sir Alfred Mehran’s biography seems to be emblematic of the figure of the nomad. His desire was to come to Britain on a refugee passport with his original name Mehran Karimi Nasser. In 1988 he flew from Brussels via Paris to London. In London he was refused entry into the country and sent back to Paris. But France also denied him entry and Brussels did not accept him back ... when he finally got a UNHCR passport and was able to travel again and to leave the transit space, he declined to acknowledge and to sign these documents arguing that the person Mehran Karimi Nasser does not exist any more. This person existed in 1988, today he is Sir Alfred Mehran” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007: 2).

His life story represents many other “migrant” narratives of individuals who become contemporary nomads. The crossing of borders, obstacles, and corridors becomes the embodiment of the desire to join the two points in between. Papadopoulos and Tsianos claim that “the nomad does not have a target, does not pass through a territory, leaves nothing behind, goes nowhere” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007: 1), but rather occupies the space between departure and arrival. In Mehran’s case, Terminal 1 of Charles de Gaulle Airport was the physical place of his inbetweenness and becoming.

In this sense, Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007) argue that even “migrants” must face waiting and may never reach their final destination, but this does not prevent them from becoming. Even when seemingly trapped between borders, people continue to travel, evolving and shaping their identities by re-defying spatial limitations. The strength to keep moving forward becomes a strategy for staying in motion: the body and mind continue traveling even if they are not physically moving.

10 “Mehran Karimi Nasser (1945–12 November 2022), also known as Sir Alfred Mehran, was an Iranian refugee who lived in the departure lounge of Terminal 1 in Charles de Gaulle Airport from 26 August 1988 until July 2006, when he was hospitalized. He returned to living at the airport in September 2022, and died there of a heart attack in November 2022” (Wikipedia, 2022).

Since migration is not an individual process but a collective one, as described by Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2007), it provides the force for this movement; the collective comes into play and becomes a form of connection. The interpersonal relationships that occur are not formed through communication, translation, or the representation of “what was” and “what is now,” but rather through the collective process of becoming “what will be” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007). Becoming is the meeting point where migration is empowered, creating, in many cases, social places imbued with belonging, solidarity, and a sense of home.

By looking at the Dzjantal, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales through their becomings, it is possible to discern the transformation of these places toward sociability. Their distinct perceptions of time and space, as manifested in their placemaking practices, offer a vision of alternative urban configurations through resistance and conviviality, thus challenging Western paradigms rooted in colonial legacy. These places embody a dynamic interaction within the urban landscape, highlighting the social capacity between diverse cultural and hybrid spheres. The ongoing becomings of their inhabitants imprint transient statuses with a sense of enduring permanence, as they forge places of sociability and belonging as one of several counternarratives to today’s border regimes.