

# Review of: "Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula"

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The aim of the article "Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula" is to analyze the multiple historical, social, political, urban planning, cultural, and, of course, geographical issues involved in delimiting borders between municipios - Mexico's smallest political-administrative unit - in the case of the Cholulas, two municipalities on the eastern outskirts of Puebla, the fourth-largest metropolitan area of the country. The author studies the construction of boundaries and a border territory, as well as the relevance and discrepancy of political spatial discontinuities in relation to physical (in terms of planning), social, cultural, economic, and political discontinuities. Through a wide-ranging methodology mobilizing a lot of sources and tools, the construction of "critical polygons", first on several variables taken separately, then combined, allows to put to the test the relevance of political separations by borders, the limits of sectorizations based on these divisions, but also the territorial constructions that result from them. On the one hand, this kind of work on spatial grids feeds the thinking of the humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, it helps to diagnose problems of inequality at sub-municipal levels, in order to highlight the limits of current urban planning and development policies, and to build more effective ones in the service of an ideal of greater spatial justice in these territories.

The aim is ambitious, commendable, clearly stated, and extremely interesting. The theoretical foundation is very solid. The methodology is fascinating, as it draws on a wide range of materials and seems to involve an enormous amount of work. But perhaps paradoxically, it mobilizes too much material and too many specific analyses, each of which is perhaps not sufficiently presented in the complexity that rigorous understanding requires. We're thinking here in particular of the spatial analysis techniques used to create the polygons, then the unified critical maps, about which some geographers-readers might wonder: we might need to better understand the method to better measure the contributions and limits of the polygons finally obtained. In addition, the same question arises for the last elements used for a critical analysis of public policies and the gap between planning tools and the field: we don't know what precise sources were used (which newspapers, articles, empirical surveys, etc.) to measure the contributions and limits of the samples, the methods of sample construction, then those of textual and semantic analysis mobilized. It's a very rich subject, but perhaps tackled very (too?) quickly. In this respect, for example, the analyses of the effects of the border in the section devoted to "lack of cooperation" on page 11 don't seem to take the necessary step back between sources and « big conclusions »: simply specifying "according to the (non-exhaustive) sample of texts analyzed", and giving more details on the corpus chosen, would perhaps enable a more rigorous approach and thus be strengthened.

As for the results and the analysis itself, the article presents a very interesting piece of work, the fruit of a remarkable

effort. While the first half of the article seems very clear and convincing, and lays the geographical foundations of the subject, the second half seems perhaps a little more fragile in certain passages, starting with the analysis of public policies, which seems a real pity in view of the amount of research work that went into this article.

So, for example, this section on public policy would probably benefit from a very clear and systematic re-specification of sources and methods, to avoid a feeling of « hearsay », or even axioms sometimes: on pages 11-12-13, evidence may be lacking to make the (rapid) argumentation robust, for the moment based on very little presented material. The term "reality" also seems surprising: rather than an absolute reality, it's more a question of a confrontation with "findings / surveys / field observations" (themselves containing methodological biases, and therefore not "absolutely real"). Rather than an in-depth analysis of public policies, counter-examples or problematic examples of conflicts/contradictions/shifts are presented: better to assume them as such in the article's demonstration, rather than speak of "reality". This section probably covers too many issues: a selection of a few, better mastered and argued, would be more than enough to achieve the article's objective, and would give greater force to the argument, rather than risking drowning it in too many not necessarily well-defined themes.

With regard to the ambition to deal with the issue of spatial injustice (and therefore inequality) in order to develop strategic planning tools, it would be possible either to place it in a simple perspective, but less at the heart of the article, or, on the other hand, it would have to be worked on in its own right, in a much more complex way, perhaps returning to discussions of the fundamental concepts worked on by Rawls or David Harvey in particular, but this would probably be another article. However, there are enough elements in this one without necessarily embarking on another "big chunk" that would risk deviating from the line of the article.

The map-based approach is interesting and has the merit of giving a strong spatial dimension to the subject of borders addressed here, the space of delimitations being not just a support, but a variable in itself in the functioning of societies. Nevertheless, we could argue about the risks of a fixist vision of geography that static maps could induce - territories are of course always moving and fluid, thanks to the circulation of populations and the interplay of political stakeholders.

On the discussion at the end of the article, while the effort to make recommendations to politicians is commendable, some of the suggestions may seem derisory in relation to the issues raised by the article. For example, an infrastructure policy aimed at the development of cyclomobility, while certainly worth considering, does not meet the needs of a majority of the population who suffer above all from a lack of access to efficient, public transport. Similarly, while the prospect of citizen participation in public services is not in itself open to criticism, it nevertheless seems derisory compared with the need for investment in public services, properly financed by a better redistribution system in a highly unequal country. Admittedly, such rhetoric is no longer fashionable, but still...

On a more ad hoc, linear basis, here are a few comments to suggest minor corrections to help improve certain small things:

Page 2. Figure 1 : missing toponyms and landmarks on this map, but also on all maps. Mention of Puebla, Tlaxcala, Santa Isabel, and the Cholula pyramid would be helpful. Next, the legend is missing from the map, and the title is repeated.

Page 3. A little socio-historical detail on the construction of municipios in Mexico would be appreciated. For example, the work of C. Bataillon. : BATAILLON C. [2005]. « Découpages territoriaux en Amérique latine : autour du Mexique ».

Colloque international Frontières, territoires et pouvoirs en Amérique latine, CREDAL, juin 2005, in Robic M.-C., Tissier J.-

L., Pinchemel P. [2011]. Deux siècles de géographie française. Une anthologie. CTHS Géographie, pp. 494-499

Page 6. « Critical borders in Cholula » section. These are not so much "visits" as empirical field surveys.

Page 6. Section "the socio-spatial phenomenon". INEGI's urban facilities database also seems to have been used, in addition to the census.

Figures 2-3-4-6. Legends, scales, and toponyms cited in the text (which could be found on the maps for better orientation) are missing.

Page 7. A few small spelling mistakes.

For bibliographical references: note 3 on ejidos: also possible to refer to works of Antonio Azuela, Guillermo Olivera, Clara Salazar, between others. Note 7. Perhaps refer to Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities and borders.

In spite of these remarks and suggestions, whose sole aim is to discuss and possibly suggest improvements if the author feels it is relevant, congratulations once again on the work brought to light in this article.