

The WRITINGS on the wall

An analysis of identity construction
in relation to the rise of walls
in border zones.



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Introduction

It is commonly assumed that the borderland as space for encounters and transition is turned into a place of separation, due to the building of walls along these borders.¹ Also, the increasing amount of walls along borders has resulted in an upsurge of border art that takes the wall as central point for resistance. This research is aimed at analysing the dual function of walls: being a means for separation between the Self and a dangerous Other, as well as being a platform for countering this Self-Other distinction. The 21st century global world order, also called the Information World, is often described as a capitalist virtual world, in which transnational actors and the borderless crossing of information, capital, ideas and people are obtaining a prominent role in global politics.² Especially the fall of the Berlin Wall and the coming down of the Iron Curtain signified a new era of openness. However, as the increasing amounts of various physical borders in our world demonstrate, this growing openness of our world has changed into a strong focus on the fixed demarcation between Self and Other.³

Building walls has been a recurring phenomenon throughout the history of mankind; by 700 BC, China constructed stretches of its Great Wall. Nowadays, walls exist along the US-Mexico Border and between Israel and Palestinian territories. Furthermore, concrete walls on the Belfast Peace Line in Ireland and the Moroccan wall in the Western Sahara have been created.⁴ After the events of 9/11 and during the War on Terror that followed, the idea of the dangerous 'Other' found a tremendous rise in public as well as political debates. Especially during the years 2003-2006, border issues became a highly debated topic on multiple places in the world. The building of the West Bank Barrier which separates Israel from Palestinian territories was in progress. Concerning the US-Mexico border, a strong voice for enhanced border control found resonance in Congress. In 2006, this resulted in the 'Fence Secure Act', a bill to extend the building of a fence between the US and Mexico.⁵ So instead of openness, 'exclusion' seems to be of growing importance in the 21st century.

The following analysis contributes to the field of borderland studies by revealing the

¹ Elisabeth Vallet & Charles-Philippe David, "Introduction: The (Re)Building of the Wall in International Relations," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27(2) (2012): 112, 114-115., David Newman, "The Lines that Continue to Separate Us: Borders in our Borderless World," *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (2006): 1-19., David Newman, "On borders and power," *Journal of Borderland Studies* 18 (1) (2003): 15-20., Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, "Walls and Border Art: The Politics of Art Display." *Journal of Borderland Studies* 27 (2) (2012): 214-218.

² Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004), 141.

³ Vallet and David, "Introduction," 111-112.

⁴ Jon Henley, "Walls: an illusion of security from Berlin to the West Bank," *the Guardian*, November 19, 2013, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/19/walls-barrier-belfast-west-b-ank>

⁵ 109th United States Congress, "Secure Fence Act of 2006," *H. R. 6061*, October 2006, accessed online <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-109hr6061enr/pdf/BILLS-109hr6061enr.pdf>

dual function of walls. I argue that walls are both a tool for separation based on identity construction and a security paradigm, as well as a platform for countering the separation that is enhanced through the building of a wall. In order to analyse this contradicting feature of walls the research question is; ‘how are walls adopted and contested in the process of identity making, concerning the West Bank Barrier and the US-Mexico fence? To answer this research question a Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis is employed on news articles of CNN and Washington Times from 2003 till 2006.⁶ By using the theoretical perspectives of David Campbell on the performative practice of identity construction in relation to the ‘dangerous Other’, this analysis deconstructs the imposed power relations and frameworks on identities. Subsequently, it reveals how structures of meaning in relation to ‘danger’ and walls as security measures are created.⁷

In order to reveal the dual function of walls I use Homi Bhabha’s theory on hybrid identities to address art-projects of Guillermo Gomez Peña and Valeska Soares who take the US-Mexico border as central point for resistance. Concerning the West Bank Barrier, art projects of Banksy and Photographer JR are analysed. For this research, Bhabha’s theoretical perspectives on hybrid identities and cultural distance,⁸ are used as a critique on the idea of fixed identities of Self and Other as employed by Campbell, in order to analyse how these walls are adopted and contested in the process of identity making.

⁶ To limit the scope of the research and based on the accessible databases of news sources of the most circulated in the US, a discourse analysis is made of news sources of Washington Times (conservative) and to give it a balanced approach, news sources of CNN (perceived as more centrist) in the time period 2003-2006. See for a list of most circulated newspapers: <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/Top50/Top50-CurrentUS.htm>. Other sources from Fox News (most conservative, right wing) are used in addition to support my analysis. See for a list of most popular online news sources, CNN (23 % among individuals who get their news online) and Fox News (8 %): <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/newswar/part3/stats.html>

⁷ Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5 (2) (1999): 231.

⁸ Homi Bhabha, “How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), 216-219.

1. Walls in the 21st Century

The Fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of the Cold War and the vanishing bipolar world of East and West. It was a clear turning point in history and assumed a more open world in which functions of state borders would diminish.⁹ However, the 21st century shows a significant change in these border processes and ideas about the openness of our world. The literature on border processes mainly focus on borders and national security interests in relation to migration flows as a result of globalization.¹⁰ Especially the building of walls has found new prominence in international relations, for both democratic as well as authoritarian states, as Vallet and David claim.¹¹ The events of 9/11 made the border come back as ultimate tool of separation, consequently making the wall a prominent feature of the protection of state sovereignty.¹² Vallet and David claim that in 2010, 45 different walls were built across the world consisting of 29.000 km of concrete fences, as new kinds of strategies of separation.¹³ Amongst all these different cases of upcoming walls, the US-Mexico Border and the West Bank Wall seem to be the most controversial, due to their underlying political motivations.

There is extensive academic research on US foreign policies towards the conflict between Israel and Palestine as well as on immigration policies towards Mexico in relation to the discourse on security. Research on US-Mexico relations and migration policies mostly highlight the border as a possible doorway for organized criminal networks, illegal immigration and drugs smugglers.¹⁴ In the US there might be some 12 million illegal immigrants, with approximately 4000 illegal border crossings every day, Adamson states.¹⁵ Since these huge amounts of immigrants can challenge the notion of a clearly bounded sovereign territory and a homogenous American nation, it poses a threat to the cohesive American national identity.¹⁶ Throughout the 1990's, the US used advanced technologies to

⁹ Vallet and David, "Introduction," 111.

¹⁰ Jason Ackleson "Constructing security on the U.S. – Mexico border," *Political Geography* 24 (2005): 165-184., Fiona B. Adamson "Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security," *International Security* 31 (1) (2006): 167., David Newman "The Lines that Continue to Separate Us," 149-150., Vallet and David, "Introduction," 114,115., Lynn Stephen, "Expanding the Borderlands: Rescent Studies on the U.S.-Mexico Border," *Latin American Research Review* 44 (1) (2009): 270.

¹¹ Vallet & David, "Introduction," 111.

¹² Ibid.: 115.

¹³ Ibid.: 112-113.

¹⁴ Adamson, "Crossing Borders," 168, 178., Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Douglas S. Massey, "Borders for Whom? The Role of NAFTA in Mexico-U.S. Migration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 6 10 (2007): 111-116. Chad C. Haddal, "Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol," *Congressional Research Service*: 4-5.

¹⁵ Adamson, "Crossing Borders," 174.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 175.

secure their borders. Furthermore, they created fences and used local initiatives on the ground like the Minutemen, to put forward the image that they had carefully sealed their international borders, according to Ackleson.¹⁷

Various scholars argue that 9/11 altered the discourse on immigrants entering the US and tightened immigration policies on the US Mexico border.¹⁸ The fact that terrorists were able to enter the US raised significant questions about their border policies, since terrorists were able to enter the US directly as happened on 9/11, or could come to the US as immigrants and create terrorist networks and terrorist *sleeping cells*.¹⁹ The creation of the Department of Homeland Security as a response to 9/11 was a means of controlling the border even more tightly. This was accompanied by a rise in biometric technology to detect illegal immigrants entering the border.²⁰ Since the attacks of 9/11, national security and migration policies have become extremely interlinked to each other. Based on a clear distinction between the national American Self and the terrorist Other, it intensified the discourse on national security.²¹ Eventually in 2006, this discourse on foreign threats resulted in the 'Secure Fence Act', a bill that was passed in Congress in order to expand the building of a 700 miles fence in areas along the border which are assumed to be the most vulnerable for illegal immigrants, drug trafficking and terrorism.²²

On the other side of the globe, similar events were taking place. Since the war in 1948, Israel has aimed to create the state 'Israel' with a minimal Palestinian or Arab population in it, according to Makdisi.²³ However, Palestinians still compromise 20 percent of the population of Israel within its borders and this Palestinian presence is perceived as a threat to the creation of an exclusively Jewish national identity of Israel.²⁴ Within the 1990's the idea of a separation wall emerged in Israel's policy towards Palestine. This 'security fence' would parallel the West Bank Green Line border between Israel and Palestine territories.²⁵ Usher explains that in the following years, a 'buffer zone' consisting of fences, electronic surveillances, helicopter patrols and a permanent presence of soldiers and police was in

¹⁷ Ackleson, "Constructing security on the U.S. – Mexico border," 171.,

¹⁸ Ackleson, "Constructing security on the U.S. – Mexico border," 165-184., Adamson, "Crossing Borders," 165-199., Fernández-Kelly and Massey, "Borders for Whom?" 108., Stephen, "Expanding the Borderlands," 270.

¹⁹ Adamson, "Crossing Borders," 195.

²⁰ Ibid.: 179.

²¹ Ibid.: 180.

²² 109th United States Congress, "Secure Fence Act of 2006," *H. R. 6061*, October 2006, accessed online <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-109hr6061enr/pdf/BILLS-109hr6061enr.pdf>

²³ Saree Makdisi, "The Architecture of Erasure," *Critical Inquiry* 36 (3) (2010): 523.

²⁴ Ibid.: 526.

²⁵ Peter Lagerquist, "Fencing the last sky: excavating Palestine after Israel's "separation wall," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33 (2) (2004): 6.

progress.²⁶ After the Second Intifadah (Palestinian Uprisings) in 2000, Israel started building a wall, the ‘West Bank Barrier’, which would prevent Palestinians from entering Israeli territory and would serve as protection against Palestinian terrorists. A lot of research is related to the political implications of the West Bank Barrier as oppressive tool in order to destabilize the process of Palestinian state building. The actual construction of this wall has adopted as much Jewish settlement into the Israeli territory as possible and consequently encompasses more territory than the Green Line border originally implied.²⁷ Consequently, this has resulted in isolated Palestinian towns and villages.²⁸

The existing literature on border processes commonly state that borders and walls are unique phenomena within their own specific contexts, which hinders generalizing them.²⁹ However, the following analysis will connect the US-Mexico Border and the West Bank Wall to each other in order to understand how processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized through a common discourse on identities.

²⁶ Graham Usher, “The Wall and the dismemberment of Palestine,” *Race & Class* 47 (3) (2006): 17.

²⁷ See: Merav Amir, “On the border of indeterminacy; The separation Wall in East Jerusalem,” *Geopolitics* 16 (2011): 768-792., Lagerquist, “Fencing the last sky,” 10-17, 20-24., Makdisi, “The Architecture of Erasure,” 530-559., Usher, “The Wall and the dismemberment of Palestine,” 9-30.

²⁸ Anna Ball, “Impossible Intimacies: Towards a Visual Politics of ‘Touch’ at the Israeli-Palestinian Border,” *Journal of Cultural Research* 26 (2-3) (2012): 177.

²⁹ Newman, “On borders and power,” 13. Vallet and David, “Introduction,” 115-116., Amilhat Szary, “Walls and Border Art,” 214.

2. Walls and Power: theories and concepts

In order to analyse how walls are adopted and contested in the process of identity making, the following analysis is based on Campbell's and Bhabha's ideas on identity construction. Instead of identities as fixed things, both scholars perceive identities as fluid social constructions constituted through social interactions. However, they entail different perceptions on the distinctness of these identities. Campbell focuses on the binary distinctions that are created between a Self and Other through a focus on security and identity. Bhabha's theory on identity will be useful for this analysis, since it specifically employs the hybridization of identities.

David Campbell perceives identity making as a performative practice that is related to danger. Identity as performative practice means there are no objective identities, since they are always constructed *within* a discourse.³⁰ Campbell argues that 'Otherness' is based on difference; threats and dangers for the nation-state constitute the identity of the nation and its enemy.³¹ He further argues that 'danger results from the calculation of a threat that objectifies events, disciplines relations, and sequesters an ideal of an identity of the people said to be at risk'.³² The border defines the nation and represents the Self as being 'at risk' of terrorist infiltration. This performative feature of identity construction gives meaning to both the dangerous Other, as well as the coherence of the Self which is endangered by the Other.

Such notions of the dangerous Other have been developed throughout history. This political context of the relationships between US and Mexico and US and Israel is important for further analyzing how walls are justified through identity construction. The historical approach in the existing literature towards these relations shows that identities have been related to Orientalist depictions of the Other in mass media and popular culture.³³ For example, McAllister, Little, and Chevrette and Braverman give an historical account on how cultural differences between the US and the Arab World have been put forward in popular culture; books, photographs, Hollywood and Disney movies. Both the special relationship between the US and Israel in which they are often defined in masculine terms as 'brothers' in

³⁰ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice, Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

³¹ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 8.

³² *Ibid.*: 3.

³³ Melanie McAlister, *Epic encounters: culture, media, and US interests in the Middle East* (London: University of California Press, Ltd. 2001), Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 10-24.

order to create a 'fictive form of comradeship'³⁴, as well as the Oriental depictions of Arabs is important for understanding the triangular relation in hierarchical frameworks between the US, Israel and Palestine. Peteet and Chevrette and Braverman argue that Palestinians used to be identified as backward and exotic Arabs. Since 9/11 this framework transformed and is now mostly defined through 'evil' or 'Islamic terrorists' terminology.³⁵

These Oriental frameworks are also apparent in perceptions of Mexico and Latin America as the passive backyard of America which is translated into a hierarchical framework of civilized and barbaric nations.³⁶ Huntington argues that this Self and Other binary is constituted through the threat the 'dangerous immigrant' poses to the traditional and civilized 'Anglo American' identity.³⁷ After 9/11, the threat of terrorists coming across the Atlantic and entering through the US-Mexico border is adopted in the discourse on the 'dangerous immigrant'.³⁸ Although these security measures both against immigration coming from Mexico and Israel's 'security fence' against Palestinian threats have been a long going process, the events of 9/11 gave a new dimension to this Self and Other distinction. The 'terrorist Other' took a prominent place within these security paradigms and the wall has become a central feature in perpetuating opposite identities through exposing the danger of this 'evil Other'.

Furthermore, strong controlled borders and walls are an effective bounding tool for the coherence of the nation, the identity of the Self.³⁹ Therefore, walls do have a peculiar place in this Self-Other process. Various scholars point to the institutional features of walls which relates to identity construction and power in this hierarchical framework of Self and Other.⁴⁰ When difference is put forward by one group over the other it directly results in power relations, since the 'Other is *controlled through exclusion*', Newman argues.⁴¹ Literature on border processes represents the border as a place for contact, encounters and communication between nations. It becomes therefore a space of transition which results in a hybridization of identities due to movement and interaction between people living near the border. Walls, on

³⁴ Chevrette and Braverman, "Brothers, Fathers, Terrorists, Masculine Assemblages in Glenn Beck's Rhetoric of US-Israel Unity Post-9/11," *Feminist Formations* 25 (2) (2013): 82.

³⁵ Chevrette & Braverman "Brothers, Fathers, Terrorists," 84-87., Peteet "Words as interventions: naming in the Palestine - Israel conflict," *Third World Quarterly* 26 (1) (2005): 156-157.

³⁶ Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012), 180.

³⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy* (2004): 31-33.

³⁸ Ackleson "Constructing security on the U.S. - Mexico border," 175.

³⁹ Newman "On borders and power," 14. Adamson, "Crossing Borders," 182, 183.

⁴⁰ Vallet & David, "Introduction," 114-115, Newman "On borders and power," 14., Anthony Cooper and Chris Perkins, "Borders and Status-functions: an institutional approach to the study of Borders," *European Journal of Social Theory* 15 (1) (2011): 57-58.

⁴¹ Newman, "On borders and power," 15.

the other hand, are often imposed by one state over the other, and have opposite intentions by putting forward images and representations that focus on the Other's distinct characteristics which separates it from the Self.⁴² Walls therefore change the meaning of this place of transition into a space of separation and exclusion. The wall itself results in an enforcement of this Self-Other distinction since it is a visual translation of these threats, and makes the Other even more invisible and unrecognisable.

Although most of the literature focuses on walls as symbol of separation, the following analysis will focus on the dual function of walls. The growing number of walls across the world has, according to Amilhat-Szary, also resulted in a significant rise of border art on these walled places. 'The new tagging of borders has multiple finalities that go way beyond their primary governmental functional appearance', as Amilhat-Szary explains.⁴³ Walls also serve as a platform for counter elements, 'since the wall allows the population who had been deprived of expression to seize the word,' she explains.⁴⁴ A prominent aspect of these counter elements on walls (different art projects with their own specific purposes and intentions), is challenging this Self-Other binary. Opposed to the conviction that walls are exclusively places for separation, this analysis will contribute to the field of borderland studies, by analysing how walls can become places for transition and recognition in specific occasions, as a result of either adopting or contesting walls in the process of identity making.

Therefore, Bhabha's theory is used to further analyse how walls are adopted and contested in the process of identity making. Bhabha rejects the idea of opposite identities of Self and Other. According to him, there is a constant negotiation and remaking of these boundaries. Therefore, Bhabha speaks rather of *cultural distance* since Self and Other are not based on opposite cultural differences but on *cultural distance* through stages of recognition.⁴⁵ He asserts that stereotypes point to the differences between Self and Other, but is also a means of making this Other understandable in their own terms. The violent barbaric nature of the Other is made comprehensible through using stereotypes that are understandable for the Self. Consequently, making the Other *understandable* challenges the idea of opposite identities since the Other is made *less distinct from the Self*. 'The regulation and negotiation of these spaces that are continually, *contingently*, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of differences' means that differences

⁴² Newman, "On borders and power," 19-20, 22., Vallet and David, "Introduction," 112.

⁴³ Amilhat Szary, "Walls and Border Art," 213.

⁴⁴ Ibid.: 213.

⁴⁵ Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World," 216-219.

are 'neither One nor the Other but *something in-between*', Bhabha claims.⁴⁶ Furthermore repeatedly enhancing such *terrifying* stereotypes actually means this identity cannot be achieved but is imagined, according to Bhabha.⁴⁷ Counter elements use the physical presence of the wall in order to challenge the idea of a homogenous Self and Other. On these specific occasions, the wall is turned into a space of recognition and transitions.

⁴⁶ Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World," 219.

⁴⁷ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2010), 63-65.

3. Justifying the existence of walls

3.1. Walls: based on hierarchical frameworks

The following discourse analysis will show how both the West Bank Barrier and the US-Mexico fence are represented and related to each other in a similar discourse. It will specifically show that the justification of these walls is constituted by publicly denying their political motivations and effects, and exclusively focusing on the walls capacity as security measure. Although CNN seems to be a bit more balanced towards its approach on the West Bank Barrier, the conservative media (Washington Times and additional sources of Fox News) are more in line with Sharon's statements about the fence as ultimate and highly effective security tool against Palestinian violence and terrorist infiltrations.⁴⁸ In both these media sources, the US-Mexico fence is commonly put forward as a straight forward project without any controversy.

The controlled border seems to be of utmost importance for a nation's security as well as the nation's identity, the Self as opposed to the Other.⁴⁹ Through building a wall, a nation can literally shield itself and its identity from the outside. This bounding tool enhances the coherence of the own nation as opposed to other dangerous, untrustworthy and terrorist nations: 'a nation without protected borders is not a real country because their absence makes us nothing more than a continuation of the country next to us,' as Washington Times reporter Alan Nathan claims.⁵⁰ The analysed conservative media sources consistently argue that their government is not protecting its borders enough. Consequently, they put forward a strong focus on the danger of the immigrants, metaphorically called an 'invasion of terrorists masquerading as immigration'⁵¹, from which the nation should protect itself through a

⁴⁸ Joshua Mitnick, "Mideastsecurity barrier working," *Washington Times*, January 25, 2004, accessed June 10, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terror%20AND%20deaths%20AND%20drop%20AND%20sharply&s_dispstring=Terror%20deaths%20drop%20sharply%20AND%20date\(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2005\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2005\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terror%20AND%20deaths%20AND%20drop%20AND%20sharply&s_dispstring=Terror%20deaths%20drop%20sharply%20AND%20date(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2005)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2005)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁴⁹ Newman, "On borders and power," 14.

⁵⁰ Alan Nathan, "A wall and legalization," *Washington Times*, April 12, 2006, accessed on June 13, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=A%20AND%20wall%20AND%20legalization&s_dispstring=A%20wall%20and%20legalization%20AND%20date\(01/01/2006%20to%2001/01/2007\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2006%20to%2001/01/2007\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=A%20AND%20wall%20AND%20legalization&s_dispstring=A%20wall%20and%20legalization%20AND%20date(01/01/2006%20to%2001/01/2007)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2006%20to%2001/01/2007)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁵¹ Ronald F. Maxwell, "What Bush fails to see at the border," *Washington Times*, April 6, 2006, accessed June 6, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=What%20AND%20Bush%20AND%20fails%20AND%20to%20AND%20see%20AND%20at%20AND%20the%20AND%20border&s_dispstring=What%20Bush%20fails%20to%20see%20at%20the%20border%20AND%20date\(01/01/2006%20to%2001/](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=What%20AND%20Bush%20AND%20fails%20AND%20to%20AND%20see%20AND%20at%20AND%20the%20AND%20border&s_dispstring=What%20Bush%20fails%20to%20see%20at%20the%20border%20AND%20date(01/01/2006%20to%2001/)

physical wall, in order to ‘close the backdoor on terrorism’.⁵²

The most prominent rhetorical tool in order to interpret danger, is the difference between Good and Evil. The most common way to put forward these dangers from outside is depicting both Palestinians’ and terrorists’ identities as inherently evil, who want to destroy the American and Jewish civilization: ‘Palestinian terrorists have no qualms about killing civilians, including children, in pursuing their larger goal of the destruction of the Jewish State’.⁵³ The analysed news sources show a consistent difference in describing Israelis and Palestinians: Israeli *militants* have to fight Palestinian *terrorists*. The urgency of building a ‘security fence’ is tied to the naming of both groups: *Israeli citizens* have to be protected from *violent Palestinians*. Although CNN frequently shows its balanced approach by representing both sides as militant groups, Palestinian groups are often simultaneously addressed as terrorists, as the following statement of Dawn Pamir reveals: ‘PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) is a Palestinian *militant group* that has committed *international terrorist attacks*’.⁵⁴

Furthermore, this rhetoric is specifically aimed at criminalizing the Other. Often, immigrants coming illegally through the Mexican border are generalized as ‘armed’ gangs and terrorist threats.⁵⁵ The following quote from a debate on Fox News in 2005, about suspected terrorist activity along the US-Mexico border, reveals the use of such stereotypes. Herein, former Navy SEAL Jay T. Rockwell describes arrested illegal immigrants near the US-Mexico fence: ‘the way that they were moving with their military tactics. When they come up to us and the weapons that they had sludge over their shoulders in the backpacks, it’s just a flash back to the military training.’⁵⁶

Next to these general denominators, there is a strong focus on hierarchical frameworks of national identities in which the US and Israel are represented as more civilized in their

01/2007)&p_field_date=0=YMD_date&p_params_date=0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2006%20to%2001/01/2007)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no

⁵² “Shocking New Video of Illegal Immigrants Crossing the Border,” *Fox News*, November 14, 2005, accessed June 15, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/11/14/shocking-new-video-illegal-immigrants-crossing-border/>

⁵³ Abraham H. Foxman, “Building a fence against terror,” *Washington Times*, October 15, 2003, accessed June 14, 2006, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Building%20AND%20a%20AND%20fence%20AND%20against%20AND%20terror&s_dispstring=Building%20a%20fence%20against%20terror%20AND%20date\(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004\)&p_field_date=0=YMD_date&p_params_date=0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Building%20AND%20a%20AND%20fence%20AND%20against%20AND%20terror&s_dispstring=Building%20a%20fence%20against%20terror%20AND%20date(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004)&p_field_date=0=YMD_date&p_params_date=0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁵⁴ Dawn Pamir, “Israel to dismantle outposts, ease travel limits,” *CNN*, December 29, 2003, accessed June 11, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/12/28/mideast/index.html>

⁵⁵ “Bush: U.S. ‘A lawful society and a welcoming society,’” *CNN*, May 15, 2006, accessed June 12, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/05/15/bush.immigration.text/index.html?iref=newssearch>

⁵⁶ “Shocking New Video of Illegal Immigrants Crossing the Border,” *Fox News*, November 14, 2005, accessed June 15, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/11/14/shocking-new-video-illegal-immigrants-crossing-border/>

shared purpose of fighting against terrorism that stretches around the world. According to Campbell ‘challenges are represented as dangers located in an external and chaotic environment which threatens the security of an internal and domestic society’.⁵⁷ He further argues that a notion of who we are is related to ‘what we fear’, and what we fear is bound to moral valuations that are implicit in the representation of the Self and Other, resulting in a ‘moral space of inferior/superior’.⁵⁸ Washington Times reporters frequently argue that both the US - Mexico fence and the Israeli fence are merely *defensive reactions* to *barbaric attacks* through which Israel and the US are ‘suffering the most savage attacks on civilians in modern history’.⁵⁹ Since identities are neither primary nor stable, states are always in the mode of reproduction according to Campbell.⁶⁰ The identities of the Self and Other needs to be reproduced constantly, by addressing these endless and barbaric threats from the chaotic outside world.

This chaotic outside world is further described through notions as ‘untrustworthy, supporting terror, or incapable of peaceful cooperating’ nations, with which the US and Israel have to deal. Especially the Washington Times reporters often credit Israel for being the peacekeeper in the conflict, while Palestinian officials and citizens are represented as preferring violence over peace and lacking any willingness to cooperate. This argument is also put forward by Dennis Ross in an interview with Fox News. He argues that the identity of former Palestinian Authority leader Arafat is tied to violence: ‘for him to end the conflict is to end himself.’⁶¹ Such unwillingness to cooperate due to their terrorist identity, is also addressed by Stephen Silver of Washington Times. He claims; ‘the Oslo accords require the Palestinians to prevent terrorism and negotiate in good faith. They have done neither. Israel, by contrast, offered the Palestinians a state born in peace, encompassing virtually all of the land in dispute, asking in return only a promise of peace and an end to the conflict. The Palestinians refused; their answer was a war of terrorism targeting Israel's innocent and most vulnerable civilians’.⁶² Building a wall is therefore described as a necessary security measure

⁵⁷ Campbell, *Writing Security*, 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 73.

⁵⁹ Diana West, “Line in the sand,” *Washington Times*, February 27, 2004, accessed June 14, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Line%20AND%20in%20AND%20the%20AND%20sand&s_dispstring=Line%20in%20the%20sand%20AND%20date\(02/01/2004%20to%2003/03/2004\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=02/01/2004%20to%2003/03/2004\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Line%20AND%20in%20AND%20the%20AND%20sand&s_dispstring=Line%20in%20the%20sand%20AND%20date(02/01/2004%20to%2003/03/2004)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=02/01/2004%20to%2003/03/2004)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁶⁰ Campbell, *Writing Security*, 10.

⁶¹ “Dennis Ross on Fox News Sunday,” *Fox News*, April 21, 2002, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2002/04/21/dennis-ross-on-fox-news-sunday/>

⁶² Stephen A. Silver, “A humane solution,” *Washington Times*, July 18, 2004, accessed June 14, 2014, <http://nl.newsbank.com/nl->

and represented as a peaceful non-violent solution ‘that physically harms no one’.⁶³

CNN shows a specific attitude in its representations of the willingness to cooperate of both these nations as well. The following quote from a CNN report is typical for how this (un)willingness is put forward: ‘Palestinians must end attacks against Israel, and Israel must freeze the development of settlements and dismantle those established since March 2001’.⁶⁴ It shows how the Palestinian attitude is perceived as inherently tied to their violent identity. The Israeli attitude is, on the other hand, often represented by much more willingness to cooperate, and is praised for its compromises of giving up some of their settlements.⁶⁵

Hierarchical frameworks of ‘civilized and chaotic’ nations, are also present concerning the representation of threats coming from Mexico and Latin America. In this case there is a strong focus on the untrustworthiness of these ‘chaotic lawless’ countries with ‘freewheeling cities’ which function as areas that harbour terrorists who can ‘kill Americans and Jews’.⁶⁶ These places are represented as being easily accessible and containing a comfortable atmosphere for terrorist to operate and discuss future attacks on U.S. and Israeli targets in North and South America.⁶⁷ This is further enhanced by putting forward the idea that already existing organized crime networks can be easily used by these terrorist, who can subsequently expand their networks to infiltrate in the US.⁶⁸ Even Mexican officials are blamed for

search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=A%20AND%20humane%20AND%20solution&s_dispstring=A%20humane%20solution%20AND%20date(01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no

⁶³ Ibid.: <http://nl.newsbank.com/nl->

search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=A%20AND%20humane%20AND%20solution&s_dispstring=A%20humane%20solution%20AND%20date(01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no

⁶⁴ “Bush praises Sharon's pullout proposal,” *CNN*, April 15, 2004, accessed May 22, 2014,

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/04/14/bush.sharon/index.html>

⁶⁵ Elise Labott, “Powell: Israel too slow on outposts,” *CNN*, July 6, 2004, accessed June 25, 2014,

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/07/06/mideast/index.html>, “Sharon: Israel must make 'painful concessions”

CNN, November 27, 2003, accessed June 12, 2014,

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/11/27/mideast.sharon/index.html>

⁶⁶ Jerry Seper, “Terror cell on rise in South America,” *Washington times*, December 18, 2002, accessed June 11, 2014,

<http://nl.newsbank.com/nl->

search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terror%20AND%20cell%20AND%20on%20AND%20rise%20AND%20in%20AND%20South%20AND%20America&s_dispstring=Terror%20cell%20on%20rise%20in%20South%20America%20AND%20date(01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2003)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2003)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no

⁶⁷ Ibid.: <http://nl.newsbank.com/nl->

search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terror%20AND%20cell%20AND%20on%20AND%20rise%20AND%20in%20AND%20South%20AND%20America&s_dispstring=Terror%20cell%20on%20rise%20in%20South%20America%20AND%20date(01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2003)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2003)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no

⁶⁸ “Exclusive! Rep. John Culberson,” *Fox News*, November 21, 2005, accessed June 26, 2014,

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/11/21/exclusive-rep-john-culberson/>

cooperating with terrorist networks and for giving illegal immigrants/terrorists easy access into the US.⁶⁹

3.2. Walls: an urgent security measure.

These analysed frameworks show how walls are adopted in the process of identity making as being a tool for the coherence of the own nation, as well as being an urgent and highly effective tool against the violent identity of the Other. However, the West Bank Barrier has been a highly debated topic and is surrounded with much controversy throughout the world. During his presidency, Bush often criticized this wall for violating the 'Road Map', which was established between the US, the UN, the EU and Russia in 2003 for a peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine.⁷⁰ In 2004, the United Nations started interfering with the West Bank Barrier project and claimed Israel should dismantle the West Bank Barrier since it violates the rights of Palestinians. In the General Assembly 150 members voted for the dismantling of the West Bank Barrier, however, 6 members voted against it.⁷¹ Despite Bush's prior criticism on the West Bank Barrier, the US voted against this proposal since this UN judgment was 'not balanced to reflect the danger Israel faces against terrorist attacks by Palestinian militants', US officials claimed.⁷² This development shows the effectiveness of framing the West Bank Barrier as exclusively being an urgent security measure.

The most profound way of choosing a certain stance towards the West Bank Barrier is either using the word 'fence' or 'wall'. 'Wall' points to the political implication it has, mainly through its strong historical resonance. Critics often depict the West Bank Barrier as being an 'apartheid wall' or a new Berlin Wall, as well as being the ultimate tool of suppression that makes a viable Palestinian state impossible.⁷³ The word 'fence' is used to represent it merely as a security measure. A change in rhetoric of President Bush in 2003 illustrates this issue.

⁶⁹ Bill Gertz, "Terrorists said to seek entry to U.S. via Mexico," *Washington Times*, April 7, 2003, accessed June 11, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terrorists%20AND%20said%20AND%20to%20AND%20seek%20AND%20entry%20AND%20to%20AND%20U.S.%20AND%20via%20AND%20Mexico&s_dispstring=Terrorists%20said%20to%20seek%20entry%20to%20U.S.%20via%20Mexico%20AND%20date\(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=Terrorists%20AND%20said%20AND%20to%20AND%20seek%20AND%20entry%20AND%20to%20AND%20U.S.%20AND%20via%20AND%20Mexico&s_dispstring=Terrorists%20said%20to%20seek%20entry%20to%20U.S.%20via%20Mexico%20AND%20date(01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2003%20to%2001/01/2004)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁷⁰ United Nations, "A performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the israeli-palestinian conflict," April 30, 2003, accessed June 23, 2014, <http://www.un.org/news/dh/mideast/roadmap122002.pdf>

⁷¹ "U.N. votes 150-6 against West Bank barrier," *CNN*, July 2, 2004, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/07/20/un.barrier.resolution/index.html>

⁷² Elise Labott, "Four Palestinians killed in West Bank," *CNN*, October 22, 2003, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/10/22/mideast/index.html>

⁷³ Greg Myre, "In the Middle East, Even Words Go to War," *CNN*, August 3, 2003, accessed June 14, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/03/nyt.myre/index.html>

Although Bush criticizes the construction of this wall and the expansion of Israeli settlements into Palestinian territory, thereby making progress in the peace efforts more difficult, he quickly changed from the word ‘wall’ to ‘fence’ after a meeting with Sharon in 2003.⁷⁴ ‘It also means that the barrier now being built to protect Israelis from terrorist attacks must be a security fence rather than a political barrier,’ Bush said.⁷⁵ This points to the justification of the West Bank Barrier as being an important security tool without any political motivations.

Washington Times news sources consistently use the word ‘fence’ to describe both these separation projects. CNN reporters commonly use ‘fence’ or ‘barrier’. The US-Mexico fence is solely addressed as a fence against illegal immigration and terrorists. Although controlling the border through building a wall is a direct translation of power relations, addressing them as *security fences* justifies their existence and safeguards them from any historical political resonance the word ‘wall’ has. CNN does refer to the implication the wall has for Palestinians who have been cut off from their relatives and jobs due to these circumvented territories. This controversy is commonly summarized as following: ‘Israel says the barrier is designed to stop Palestinian terrorists from entering Israel and killing civilians. The Palestinians see it as a land grab that will divide communities and increase travel restrictions’.⁷⁶

Although the West Bank Barrier’s controversial nature is being addressed in the Washington Times news sources, very few reporters take it seriously. The political and practical implications the wall has for the isolated Palestinian territories is mostly contradicted or simply neglected. A Washington Times reporter argues: ‘this barrier would leave as much as 85 percent of the West Bank available for a Palestinian state. The fence would leave 1.9 million Palestinians - approximately 94 percent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank - east of the fence, in the area available for creation of an independent state’.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Arnaud de Borchgrave, “When a wall becomes a fence,” *Washington Times*, August 4, 2003, accessed April 10, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=When%20AND%20a%20AND%20wall%20AND%20becomes%20AND%20a%20AND%20fence&s_dispstring=When%20a%20wall%20becomes%20a%20fence%20AND%20date\(01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2005\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2005\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=When%20AND%20a%20AND%20wall%20AND%20becomes%20AND%20a%20AND%20fence&s_dispstring=When%20a%20wall%20becomes%20a%20fence%20AND%20date(01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2005)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2002%20to%2001/01/2005)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁷⁵ “Bush Praises Abbas for Peace Efforts”, *Fox News*, October 20, 2005, accessed May 20, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/10/20/bush-praises-abbas-for-peace-efforts/>

⁷⁶ Dawn Tamir, “Israel to dismantle outposts, ease travel limits,” *CNN*, December 29, 2003, accessed June 11, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/12/28/mideast/index.html>

⁷⁷ “The fence and Palestinians,” *Washington Times*, February 20, 2004, accessed May 22, 2014, [http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=The%20AND%20fence%20AND%20Palestinians&s_dispstring=The%20fence%20and%20Palestinians%20AND%20date\(02/01/2004%20to%2003/01/2004\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=02/01/2004%20to%2003/01/2004\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=The%20AND%20fence%20AND%20Palestinians&s_dispstring=The%20fence%20and%20Palestinians%20AND%20date(02/01/2004%20to%2003/01/2004)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=02/01/2004%20to%2003/01/2004)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

Although news sources are a bit more hesitant when dealing with the West Bank Barrier, the fence on the US-Mexico border is represented as a very straight forward project and urgent tool for US security, without any controversy. Since there is such a strong focus on the geographic and physical danger of the terrorist Other, the building of a physical fence is proclaimed to be the best solution as a security measure in order to prevent an *invasion* of terrorists through *smuggling pipelines* into both US and Israel.⁷⁸ Concerning the West Bank Barrier, it is frequently stated that the wall is in the best interest of Palestinians as well; ‘it will deter suicide bombings, and also prevent innocent deaths of Arabs in Israeli counterattacks,’ according to Washington Times reporter Paul Martin.⁷⁹

By using Campbell’s theory on identities as constituted through danger, a wall can be understood as an effective bounding tool and security measure. Even more, it shows how the wall adds to the continuous reproduction of the Self as opposed to the Other. The analysed news sources reveal that the West Bank Barrier is mostly justified by representing it in recognizable terms, being a fence just like the US has; a *security fence*. However, this artificial separation, a physical inscription on the ground that ought to keep danger outside, also becomes a platform for counter elements against the power relations imposed by the wall.⁸⁰ Therefore, explaining walls as exclusively being tools for separation according to Campbell’s theory is not sufficient, since these counter elements specifically address the political and practical effects the walls have, which are originally denied in the justification of these walls as protection against the ‘dangerous Others’. Although walls are commonly understood as transforming the borderland into a space of separation, the following analysis shows how artists turn the wall into a place of hybridization, encounters and transition.

⁷⁸ “Terror-Linked Migrants Channelled Into U.S.,” *Fox News*, July 3, 2005, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/07/03/terror-linked-migrants-channeled-into-us/>

⁷⁹ Paul Martin, “8 bomb victims help fuel protest at The Hague,” *Washington Times*, February 23, 2004, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://nl.newsbank.com/nl->

[search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=8%20AND%20bomb%20AND%20victims%20AND%20help%20AND%20fuel%20AND%20protest%20AND%20at%20AND%20The%20AND%20Hague&s_dispstring=8%20bomb%20victims%20help%20fuel%20protest%20at%20The%20Hague%20AND%20date\(01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005\)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005\)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_product=WT&p_theme=wt&p_action=search&p_maxdocs=200&p_text_search-0=8%20AND%20bomb%20AND%20victims%20AND%20help%20AND%20fuel%20AND%20protest%20AND%20at%20AND%20The%20AND%20Hague&s_dispstring=8%20bomb%20victims%20help%20fuel%20protest%20at%20The%20Hague%20AND%20date(01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&p_field_date-0=YMD_date&p_params_date-0=date:B,E&p_text_date-0=01/01/2004%20to%2001/01/2005)&xcal_numdocs=50&p_perpage=25&p_sort=YMD_date:D&xcal_useweights=no)

⁸⁰ Amilhat Szary “Walls and Border Art,” 222.

4. The wall as public platform

4.1. Art on walls

Border art, taking a border as central point of resistance, is something that has existed throughout history. However, the growing number of walls gives a new dimension to it; it results in physically adopting the wall into art projects. Therefore, the wall itself becomes a platform for opposing its original meaning. Amilhat-Szary argues that the ‘fixity of the line creates a fluid response’ through which art becomes a symbolic crossing of the border.⁸¹ A solid wall in order to separate people becomes a physical platform in order to address the implications of such separations; the hardship and suffering, the divided families and the unequal power relations that are imposed by the wall. Thereby, these art projects address the political context and practical implications which are often denied and neglected in the justification of building these walls.

From the 1980’s onwards, the US-Mexico border became a central theme for artists living in this region. The bi-national group *BAWTAF* (Border Arts Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo) founded in 1984 by members from both sides of the border, mostly used performances in order to deconstruct the notion of Otherness; ‘we are a multi-national conduit that serves to address the issues we are confronted with while existing in a region where two countries and cultures meet’ they state.⁸² Rather than addressing an essential otherness, they pointed at the hybrid and bi-national border-subject as a result of the encounters of various cultures living in the porous border region, according to Berelowitz.⁸³ Furthermore, the members of BAW/TAF argued that media does not reflect the ‘reality’ of the border, but instead, reproduces the border in a specific context to maintain existing power dynamics, which has become apparent in the above analysed media sources as well. The aim of the BAW/TAF performances was to subvert these power dynamics.⁸⁴

The most prominent figure of this group is Guillermo Gomez-Peña. In his work he criticizes the still existing stereotypes of Mexicans in the US and advocates the existence of a borderless world in which new transnational and hybrid transcultural citizens interact.⁸⁵ ‘Border culture is a project of ‘redefinition’ that conceives of the border not only as the limits

⁸¹ Amilhat Szary, “Walls and Border Art,” 214- 215.

⁸² “Border Art Workshop” accessed June 10, 2014 <http://www.borderartworkshop.com/BAWHistory/BAWHistory.html>

⁸³ Jo-Anna Berelowitz, “Border Art since 1965,” in *Postborder Cities: Cultural Spaces of Baja California* ed. by Michale Dear and Gustavo Leclerc (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003) 155 - 158

⁸⁴ Berelowitz, “Border Art since 1965,” 159.

⁸⁵ Berelowitz “Marcos Ramirez Erre: Border art ‘from this side’,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 21 (2) (2006): 49.

of two countries, but also as a cardinal intersection of many realities. In this sense, the border is not an abyss that will have to save us from threatening otherness, but a place where the so-called otherness yields, becomes us, and therefore comprehensible,' Gomez-Peña explains.⁸⁶ Through his performances Gomez-Peña changed the notion of the border from a geographic zone into a *mode of consciousness*, according to Berelowitz.⁸⁷ In the art performance 'The Couple in the Cage' of 1993, Gomez Peña and Coco Fusco dressed themselves as 'undiscovered Amerindians' who were locked up in a cage, in order to provoke reactions from passers-by. This art project focused on the cultural stereotyping of the Other, a heritage from colonial times which seems to be still present nowadays since passers-by were not shocked by the idea of 'primitives in a cage'.⁸⁸



Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco 'the couple in the Cage'

⁸⁶ Gomez Peña cited in Amilhat-Szary, "Walls and Border Art," 222.

⁸⁷ Berelowitz, "Marcos Ramirez Erre," 49.

⁸⁸ "Border Art Workshop" accessed June 10, 2014 <http://www.borderartworkshop.com/BAWHistory/BAWHistory.html>

Due to an increase in physical separation on borders, a rise in border art projects across the world has emerged, Amilhat-Szary asserts.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the intensifying of border politics in the 21st century gives a new dimension to border art, and consequently walls have become a prominent tool in making political action even more visible. ‘The words, colours and graffiti on its surface stress its symbolic as well as functional roles’, as Amilhat-Szary argues, it is a subversion of the violence imposed by the ruling party.⁹⁰ A rather new phenomenon along the US-Mexico border, is the bi-national art organization InSite. It has organized art fairs in this region since the 1990’s, in order to address border issues and the upcoming of the wall along this border. The purpose of these art projects is to counter balance the fixed aspects of the wall by focusing on the fluid identities that exist along these borders. Thereby it specifically focuses on the geo-politics and cultural dynamics of the San Diego-Tijuana border region.⁹¹

Concerning the West Bank Barrier, art on its physical surface raises attention to the power relations imposed through this wall as well as the practical and political implications it has for both Israeli and Palestinian people living nearby it.⁹²



Graffiti on the West Bank Barrier

⁸⁹ Amilhat Szary, “Walls and Border Art,” 219.

⁹⁰ Ibid.: 217.

⁹¹ Ibid.: 217., Jo-Anne Berelowitz, “InSITE” *Sculpture*, July 2001, accessed online <http://allanmccollum.net/amcnet3/mountsignal/berelowitz.html>

⁹² Ball, “Impossible Intimacies,” 178-180.



Graffiti on the West Bank Barrier

The wall as a canvas for political statements becomes a place to hear multiple voices and narratives, from both Palestinian and Israeli side.⁹³ For the Palestinians these surfaces can be used to address the unity of the Palestinian identity and to show the reality of oppression and feelings of imprisonment in their everyday lives.⁹⁴

For international artists it becomes a platform to call for human rights and raise awareness for the effects of such physical separations. British graffiti artist Banksy uses the wall as platform to show the suffering and oppression such walls impose. His statement that the wall ‘essentially turns Palestine into the world's largest open prison’⁹⁵, is countered in his work by creating illusionary openings in the wall. The physical surface of the wall therefore serves as a platform for showing resistance and suffering, the isolated territories, the numerous checkpoints along the road and most importantly the unequal power relations imposed through this wall.⁹⁶

⁹³ Christine Leuenberger, “The West Bank Wall as Canvas: Art and Graffiti in Palestine/Israel,” *Palestine –Israel Journal* 17 (12) (2011) <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=1350>

⁹⁴ Ball, “Impossible Intimacies,” 176.

⁹⁵ “Banksy at the West Bank Barrier,” *the Guardian*, accessed June 13, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/arts/pictures/0,8542,1543331,00.html>

⁹⁶ Leuenberger, “The West Bank Wall as Canvas,” <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=1350>



Banksy on the West Bank Barrier

4.2. Walls; an encounter between Self and Other

As the discourse analysis showed, the justification of these walls is bound in Oriental frameworks and hierarchies in order to represent the dangerous Other against which the Self has to be shielded. Following this logic, it means that these frameworks result in opposite identities of Self and Other, through which the wall is justified. However, seeing the wall merely as separation tool of a distinct Self and Other is insufficient for understanding the actual impact it has. The above artists, specifically address the power relations that are imposed by the border, as well as the existing stereotypes and the oppression and suffering due to the existence of these walls. However, resistance also takes place on a deeper level by challenging the distinctness of Self and Other through border art.

Bhabha criticizes the idea of homogenous entities of the Self and Other, and rather focuses on the *constant negotiations* of these boundaries. The following discussed art projects show this dual function of walls; separating the Self from the Other as well as opposing the separation of Self and Other. Ironically, the walls are both adopted and contested in this process, since the material presence of the wall is used to contradict the justification of the wall's existence. Due to this focus on similarities, walls are changed from spaces of

separation into fragmented spaces of recognition between people living in cities on both sides of the wall.⁹⁷

The art project of Valeska Soares, a Brazilian artist, points to the vanishing of a strict demarcation between Self and Other. For her project *Picturing Paradise* which was part of the InSite fair 2001, she installed a series of mirrors on the US-Mexico fence which created illusionary openings in the wall.



Valeska Soares, *Picturing Paradise*

Soares declares: ‘I started to think about how I could deal with this idea of the border, something that was solid but transparent. How I could deal with the illusion of entry...or of not entering. Because what you realize when you are there is that the border is psychological, the physical object of the fence itself doesn’t stop anybody. The border exists in your mind.’⁹⁸ She addresses the border as a *mode of conscious*, which can be altered through creating an illusionary opening in which the separation between one nation and the other disappears. It creates an interplay between San Diego and Tijuana and a diminishing of a distinct Self and Other living near these borders. These mirrors meant to enhance recognition by looking at the Other and seeing the Self on the mirror in the wall.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Amilhat Szary, “Walls and Border Art,” 215.

⁹⁸ Soares quoted in Vik Muniz, “Valeska Soares, Interview,” in *Bomb* 74 (2001) accessed online <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2353/valeska-soares>

⁹⁹ Amilhat Szary, “Walls and Border Art,” 222.

A similar project that appeared on the West Bank Barrier is *Face 2 Face*, made in 2007 by photographer JR. For this project, portraits of Israelis and Palestinians are pasted face to face, in monumental formats on both sides of the wall and in several Palestinian and Israeli cities.¹⁰⁰



JR *Face 2 Face*

Before this project took place, JR travelled along the wall and concluded that: ‘these people look the same; they speak almost the same language, like twin brothers raised in different families. A religious covered woman has her twin sister on the other side. A farmer, a taxi driver, a teacher, has his twin brother in front of him. And he is endlessly fighting with him.’

¹⁰¹ This project highlights the similarities between Israelis and Palestinians, the Self and Other that are separated due to this wall. It points at the hybrid identities of people living near the border. Since these photos cannot tell the differences between Israelis and Palestinians, it increases the sense of recognition between Self and Other.

All these art projects are aimed at opposing stereotypes between Self and Other and challenging the existence of the border as a *mode of consciousness*. The wall is made

¹⁰⁰ “Face 2 Face,” accessed online, June 10, 2014, <http://www.jr-art.net/projects/face-2-face>

¹⁰¹ JR quoted in “Face 2 Face,” accessed online, June 10, 2014, <http://www.jr-art.net/projects/face-2-face>

transparent by Banksy and Soares and the projects of Gomez Pena, Soares and JR challenge the stereotypes and separation between Self and Other on a deeper level in which their projects aim at closing this *cultural distance*. The homogeneous identity of the Self is being subverted and the wall as bounding tool for a nation and separating tool between Self and Other is altered by making the wall transparent and showing similarities between people living near the border. Thereby they specifically point at the constant negotiation of boundaries and fluidity of identities of Self and Other, which is employed by Bhabha.

It shows the dual function of walls in which walls do not only produce and enhance separation but also become a platform to oppose this strict separations. Through this focus on the similarities between people from both sides of the border, these projects are initially aimed at revealing the Other and make them even more understandable. Therefore these walls are their own bearers of the counter elements against the discourse on security and the violent Other coming through these walls. Rather than only being a tool for separation, this explicit focus on similarities and recognition through art, turns the wall into a place for transition as well.

Conclusion

The increasing amount of walls along borders suggest that the 21st century can be understood as an era of separation instead of the previously assumed openness after the Cold War. The wall is thereby perceived as the ultimate tool for separation in our globalized world. However, the above analysis revealed how the dual function of walls is constituted; it creates a strong separation between Self and Other and can act as platform for counter elements that oppose this strict separation and rather highlight the similarities between Self and Other. The analysed news sources of Washington Times and CNN from 2003 till 2006, show a consistent focus on the separation between Self and Other. Walls are adopted in the process of identity making through reinforcing the invisible and unrecognisable Other. These Oriental representations are represented in hierarchical frameworks, wherein nations are evaluated on scales of civilization. Through the wall's depiction of exclusively being a security measure, it is put forward as an urgent and viable solution in dealing with untrustworthy nations that will either harbour or support terrorism and for stopping the *invasion of terrorists* coming through these borders.

Although the wall is a visible manifestation of the power of one nation over the other, accompanied by the marginalization of the Other, the political motivations and effects of these wall are strongly denied and neglected in the Washington Times sources. Although the analysed media sources are more hesitant about the West Bank Barriers purpose, the US-Mexico fence is put forward as a security project without any controversies, in both the CNN and Washington Times, as well as in the additional news sources of Fox News. By calling both these walls 'security fences' with the single purpose of protecting itself from the terrorist Other, the West Bank Barrier is justified by representing it in the same notions as the US-Mexico fence.

The wall, built in order to shield the Self against the Other, is meant to enforce the coherence of the nation. Following this logic, the borderland which is usually described as a space for transition and hybrid identities, is turned into a place of separation due to walls.¹⁰² However, this analysis has shown that understanding the wall as exclusively being a tool of separation between Self and Other, is insufficient since its physical presence turns the wall into a platform for political statements and voices that are barely heard in the official rhetoric.

¹⁰² Vallet and David, "Introduction," 111-112.

Therefore, in this research, Bhabha's theory on identity construction and *cultural distance* is used as a critic on Campbell's strict opposition between the Self and Other, in order to understand the multiple functions of these walls.

By local as well as international artists like Banksy, the wall is used to highlight the political and practical effects of the wall and the suffering of people living near these physical separations. However, challenging the power relations imposed through the wall is constituted on a deeper level as well. The discussed art projects adopt and contest the wall in the process of identity making, by focusing on the heterogeneous Self and Other. The projects of Gomez Peña, Valeska Soares and photographer JR specifically focus on the similarities between the Self and Other and challenge the stereotypes that are put forward in the justification of these walls as was apparent in the media sources. Bhabha asserts that stereotypes are used to increase the gap between Self and Other. However, opposed to Campbell's theory, Bhabha claims this gap will never result in a strict opposition since using stereotypes to describe the Other actually means this identity can never be achieved. The wall itself points to this contradiction, since it can never really close the Self off from the Other. Even more, the surface of the wall is used to contradict this Self-Other binary and separation between nations, by either making the wall transparent or decreasing the *cultural difference* by addressing each other's similarities.

Still, there is an imbalance in power relations since these art projects can never make the wall disappear in its entirety. However, in specific occasions they can challenge the imposed power relation and raise questions about the wall's existence. In this process, the surface of the wall itself becomes the ultimate tool for opposing what the wall is originally meant to be, and in these fragmented occasions the wall becomes a place for transition and recognition.

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