Young People's Rights to Recreate Spaces and Reimagine Borders

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Abstract

Despite rising interest in border studies and childhood, geographies of children, childhood, and youth have always been concerned with borders. Whether the conceptual borders between adult and child or the contested terrain of borderlands between nations, territories, and institutions, the geographies of children's lives are fundamentally about the geographies of borders. These borders are not impermeable boundaries, for many are relationally produced spaces of contradiction, difference, and tension that give rise to new relations and actions, while at the same time they may violently exclude and limit others. This chapter reviews literature on children, youth, and borders, with a focus on the violence that borders impose on young people's lives. Using three examples pulled from

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each author's empirical studies, the chapter argues that a critical approach to children's rights to space can begin to account for the diversity of children's engagements with borders, which has the potential to aid in youthful reimagining of border spaces.

Keywords
Children and youth • Border violence • Chains of violence • Ecuador • Emotional experiences • Filipino education systems • Geopolitical and economic borders • Labor markets • Maturation and identity • Mobility politics • Neo-liberal context • Slovenia • Social media • Socio-spatial relations • US/Mexico border, indigenous youth • Young people's rights • Colonialism • European Union's Court of Human Rights • Feminist traditions • Gaming • Globalization • Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP)

1 Introduction

Borders provide the socio-spatial context for the lives of children and youth. Borders can be symbolic, such as racialized and gendered boundaries that construct social imaginaries. Borders can also be material realities. For instance, militarized political borders and judicial impediments can restrict children and young people's physical movement. Borders are the selectively permeable brick and mortar that generates young people's environments, whether they are homes, schools, places of labor, or the symbolic spaces marking identities and belongings. Sometimes densely networked and structured and other times ill defined and ambiguous, borders exclude young people from certain mobilities and actions while enabling others (Sibley 1995; Creswell 2010). While ubiquitous, borders are also profound sources of violence that wreak havoc on young people's lives and relations. This chapter seeks to engage specifically with the impact of border violence on children and youth by examining the ways that violence is expressed spatially, on the bodies and in the constrained mobilities and presence of young people (Moosa-Mitha 2005). In this chapter, the terms "children" and "youth" are often used interchangeably, not because we do not recognize the profound socio-spatial differences between children and youth, but to correspond with existing literature that does not make these distinctions. When possible, we differentiate the experiences of youth and children, particularly in our empirical discussion.

In what follows, existing work on the geographies of children, youth, and borders is reviewed. The concept of structural violence is then used to analyze the impacts of borders on the bodies and futures of children and young people. Structural violence is a concept coined by Norwegian politician Johan Galtung (1969) and subsequently elaborated by anthropologist Paul Farmer as a concept "intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression" (Farmer 2004a, p. 307). Farmer defines structural violence as "suffering [that] is 'structured' by historically given, (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire – whether through routine, ritual, or, as is most commonly the case, the

hard surface of life to constrain agency" (Farmer 2004b, p. 40). This chapter uses Farmer's definition of structural violence to aid in discussing the violent impacts of borders on children and young people that often manifest in the disruption of potential futures and locally worn paths to maturation. Research with erased Slovenian youth, Ecuadorian migrants, and indigenous youth on the US/Mexico border are then discussed to argue for a children's rights discourse that recognizes mobilities in the ways they account for the spatiality of youth agency and practices.

As Spyrou and Christou (2016) highlight in their chapter, *Children, Youth and Border Spaces*, children and young people's border relationships remain relatively understudied, and their voices are often obscured in existing work. The chapter argues that a rights perspective can help foster youthful reimaginings of violent border spaces and account for the relative invisibility of young people's constitutive role in border relations (Spyrou and Christou 2016). As Harvey (2008) argues, the right to space is fundamentally also a right to create and recreate one's self. Rights discourses that recognize the rights of youth to reimagine borders make strides toward recognizing the materiality of young people's belongings and agency and their right to engage with difference. To spark this discussion, the chapter begins with a story of a Slovenian youth contending with structural violence after the breakdown of Yugoslavia created geopolitical and institutional borders that exiled him from his home country. In what follows, pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of all the young people discussed here, with the exception of Sam whose experiences of borders were made public through his activism.

2 The Violence of Erasure

Born to a Muslim father and a Christian mother, Samir (Sam) Kaltak lived through boyhood and his early teens in Slovenia when it was still part of Yugoslavia. In June 1991, at 18 years of age, Sam traveled to Croatia to visit his grandparents as he had done throughout his life. But this was June 1991 and the Balkan War was just about to begin. On this occasion, Sam was unable to get to his grandparents, who lived in a Catholic area that was, by this time, surrounded by Milošević's predominantly Serbian army; so he joined the ZNG RH (the Croatian Territorial Army) and started fighting. Two years later he had switched to the Bosnian army and was fighting against some of the worst that Milošević's troops could offer; within another 2 years he was skilled at living off the land and slipping through enemy lines. At the end of the conflict, Sam was unable to return to his home in Slovenia on a permanent basis because he had no official registration papers, and he had missed the deadline to apply for Slovenian citizenship. Sam got a temporary Bosnian passport, which indicated six zeros in place of his nationality (Fig. 1). He ended up as a refugee in London, where he has since made a life for himself. Sam famously and publically stated to a Slovenian border official that "Neither you nor your government will stop me coming home as far as I'm concerned. I'll come here as I please and who are you to decide whether I come home or not?" (related in interview with Aitken, March 17, 2014 and in a Pop TV (Slovenia) documentary a week later).

Fig. 1 Sam's Bosnian passport (issued in Ljubljana, Slovenia) shows his date of birth followed by six 0s indicating no place of birth or nationality (Photo: Aitken)

Sam is part of the *Izbrisani* (Erased) who lost their legal status and rights when Slovenia gained independence in 1991. The context of other *Izbrisani* is part of the empirical discussion below, but it is raised here to underscore the resilience and energy of young people against structural violence – in Sam's case the contexts of violence and war, loss of human rights, and severe privations – that often impose themselves on young people who cannot vote but use their bodies and mobilities not only to make statements but also to transform spaces. As a young man, Sam learned how to traverse the borders between enemy lines, and when food was scarce or movement dangerous, he learned how to keep his head low and live off the land. After the war he challenged Slovenian border guards on at least one occasion and negotiated the somewhat porous border between Croatia and Slovenia to return home for a short time. With six zeros on a temporary Bosnian passport indicating no place of birth or parents, he left the country to look for work, finally ending up in London where he secured refugee status. Over a relatively short period of time, Sam became adept at resisting and pushing back against political and bureaucratic impediments to his mobility and aspirations for home. Reworking borders is perhaps the most poignant transformation of space, and many young people are at the forefront of this endeavor.

3 Children, Youth, and Borders

Geographers' interest in the material and experiential impacts that borders have on children and young people's lives arguably stems from two different but overlapping research traditions. The first is research that takes a theoretical approach to borders and that is fundamentally concerned with how childhood is socially constructed through conceptual and material borders that shape children's access and opportunities across space (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Aitken 2001). This research branches from feminist traditions exploring how social

differences, such as age, race, gender, and class, are embedded and reproduced in young people's lives and act as symbolic borders implicated in children's experiences of belonging, exclusion, and identity politics (Aitken 2001; Thomas 2011). Much of this research explores the divisions between childhood and adulthood as bordered and liminal constructs and the act of growing up as itself a type of border crossing (Jeffrey and Dyson 2010). This research has revealed the everyday and ubiquitous role of borders in youth maturation and identity and has brought attention to the ways that young people are contested battlegrounds for forces invested in shaping futures and identities (Aitken and Plows 2010).

A second research tradition looks at children and youth's experiences navigating geopolitical and economic borders. Some geographers focus on the dimensions of living in and moving through borderlands where young people negotiate conflicting forces and tensions that shape their opportunities for access and participation in profound ways (Jeffrey and Dyson 2010; Aitken et al. 2011). Significant research examines how globalization, economic restructuring, and migration are bringing youth into contact with a range of borders that are transforming the geographies of childhood in different locales (Katz 2004; Swanson 2010a; Pratt 2012). Economic restructuring has transformed localized symbolic and geopolitical borders and given rise to new ones that limit the viable economic and social futures available to youth. These borders can be conceptualized as mechanisms of structural violence imposed by state and economic policies that disinvest in social reproduction and that wreak havoc on the lives of the socially vulnerable and particularly marginalized young people. This violence is reflected in the transformation of socio-spatial patterns of childhood as youths enter labor markets at younger ages forsaking school, while global restructuring renders local knowledge and pathways of maturation increasingly insufficient (Katz 2001, 2004; Jeffrey and Dyson 2010). Some young people become stuck in an extended or perpetual childhood where the resources necessary to successfully take on the relations and capacities associated with adulthood are no longer available (Ruddick 2003; Swanson 2010a; Jeffrey and Dyson 2010; Jeffrey 2010). This recreates a context for young people, which pushes them into problematically predefined roles while foreclosing upon the mobilities needed to create and imagine different futures.

The destabilization of socio-spatial relations in certain locales that historically characterized childhood and the successful transition into adulthood also act as powerful forces that push youth to increasingly navigate precarious border spaces, where they often confront symbolic, geopolitical, and physical borders (Swanson 2010a). Pratt (2012), for example, examines how state violence perpetuated by Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), in combination with larger global economic restructuring and Filipino education systems geared to export women as nurses and caregivers, has led to problems for Filipino youth when they migrate to join their LCP mothers in Canada. Their experiences not only involve negotiating changing patterns of migration and unfamiliar urban contexts but the crossing of age-based, racialized, and gendered norms and discourses that have positioned them as out of place in Canadian society. The restructuring of economic and social borders that characterize contemporary globalization and render traditional routes

of maturation no longer tenable in many parts of the world also push children out of place. Children's right to stay put is violated as they struggle to find alternative paths of maturation in spaces that lack material resources (Aitken 2012). Despite the uncertainty, disruption, and violence that accompany children's navigation of new mobilities and border spaces, opportunities and possibilities arise to take on new roles and cross symbolic borders, impacting identity and capacity in the process.

The range of research and approaches used to examine young people's encounters with borders, whether they are geopolitical, economic, institutional, and symbolic, nonetheless share common themes. Research has emphasized that borders can be violent and act as selective and limiting forces that reduce and enable certain possibilities for children and youth (Aitken et al. 2011). Border violence is reflected in reduced mobilities that limit children and young people's agency and capacity to participate in varied relationships. Borders, however, are not structures simply imposed upon youth; rather, they are reworked and transgressed as they are experienced and navigated. Research examining young people's border encounters also emphasizes the agency and creativity of youth (Aitken et al. 2011; Cristou and Spyrous 2012). As children and youth navigate the day-to-day workings of border spaces, they also find ways to challenge and rework the constraints imposed. Young people craft alternative pathways to cross borders and access closed spaces, or find ways to creatively utilize the resources available to them to make do in borderlands. Still, many children and youth are victimized by the layers of violence that become infused in border spaces.

Research that examines children's subjective experiences moving through, transgressing, and manipulating borders has deepened understandings of young people's complex border encounters – encounters that may be concurrently violent and liberating. For example, Helleiner (2007) argues that young people crossing the US-Canada border often reproduce dominant narratives of good citizenship, nationalism, and childhood: At the same time that children's agency is revealed, it both challenges and reinforces dominant constructions. The border acts as a filter for facilitating the mobility of certain expressions of youthfulness and child agency while excluding others deemed unchildlike and threatening. Christou and Spyrous' (2012) study of Greek Cypriot children's experiences crossing a contested border with Turkish Cyprus further exemplifies the tensions and contradictions that characterize children's border encounters. Christou and Spyrous examine Greek children's emotional experiences with place as they moved through a borderland contested since Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974. Young Greek Cypriots' border perspectives were influenced by conflicting discourses on the occupation, the nature of their inter-ethnic encounters, and the ritualized and material processes involved in crossing the border (Fig. 2).

These studies illuminate the need to understand the conflicted, emotive, and creative aspects of young people's engagements with borders that are often embedded in what Pratt calls the "spaces of ordinariness" and banal moments of youth expression (Pratt 2010, p. 343). The violence that borders impose on children and youth is not simply reflected in poor health statistics, poverty, and reduced

Fig. 2 Nicosia's "Green Line" separating Greek Cyprus from the Turkish occupied north (Photo: Aitken)

opportunities for those encountering them, but also in everyday family dramas, emotions, and alienation of young people's experience. As Pratt (2012) points out, focusing too heavily on the widespread and obvious impacts of state violence may obscure the seemingly banal, microscale, and everyday politics through which young people understand, make sense of, and rework borders. Violence is not only imposed on youth through the historic disadvantages and large-scale economic decisions and rationales theorized by Farmer but often manifests itself through "chains of violence" that characterize some children's and youth's daily lives (Auyero et al. 2014, p. 2). The erasure faced by Sam Kaltak is not only a very obvious form of state perpetrated structural violence, it precipitated chains of violence that forced, for example, the humiliation of six zeros on a temporary passport, difficulty finding a job and, later, the ignominy of the UK refugee process. It is in these moments that we readily see the tensions of youthful engagements with borders that often violently push young people into navigating new roles, mobilities, and precarious contexts that may require taking on "unchildlike" behaviors while simultaneously limiting children and youth's access to resources and the spaces needed to imagine and create different futures.

The spatiality of borders is constantly reproduced, moved, and migrated at the intersection of spatial relations that constitute borders. Tensions, conflict, and contradictions are heightened in border spaces as material structures are reinforced, foreclosed upon, creatively manipulated, and transgressed. As youth navigate the power-geometries embedded in their daily lives, they often create new hybridities and modes of cultural expression. Swanson (2010b) illustrates this in her discussion of the oppressive borders intersecting with Aboriginal Canadian youth's everyday lives and their use of social media to build alternative belongings. Social media

allow expressions of positive indigenous identities and create spaces for youth to build connections and networks of belonging that bridge multiple borders.

While border engagements often manifest as productive encounters, they are also very real and must be understood as potentially violent and brutal forces acting upon youth in profoundly disruptive ways – often in ways that leave emotional and psychological scars despite youth resilience and creativity. We argue that structural violence, a relatively neglected concept in children's border scholarship, has the potential to deepen understandings of the relationship of children and youth to borders by bringing attention to the intersecting manifestations of violence implicated in children and youth's border encounters. By focusing more on the geographies of border violence, studies of young people's border encounters can uncover the myriad ways that borders disrupt mobilities and the everyday mobilities employed by youth to transgress and challenge the layers of imposed violence. Borders are fundamentally about creating material divisions, constraining certain movements deemed threatening or out of place, while ordering and enabling others (Martin 2010; Creswell 2010). The empirical examples of young people's engagements with borders discussed below emphasize that the geographies of border encounters are wrapped up within what Cresswell (2010, p. 19) calls a complex "politics of mobility." These mobility politics are reflected in young people's navigation within highly regulated border environments and the ways that youth engagement can disrupt this regulation (Helleiner 2007).

Recognizing the interplay between border violence and movement, border encounters can reveal episodes through which youth agency and political engagements become particularly transformative. For example, Bosco and his colleagues' (2011) study of Hispanic children and women migrant's involvement in a local advocacy group found that they employed a range of political strategies to propel change in their neighborhood, which transgressed categorical norms of citizenship and participation. Youth often took on unchildlike behaviors – caring for younger siblings, taking on wage labor, and serving as the cultural brokers for parents. Embedded in the spatiality of borders are spaces of uncertainty, precarity, and tension, through which creativity can arise and expressions of difference can emerge.

3.1 A Right to Space Is a Right to Reimagine Borders

The violence of borders expressed on young people's bodies, identities, and futures can be better mediated through a rights discourse that recognizes the spatiality of children and youth's engagements. Critical approaches to rights recognize the contingent nature of children's border crossings in terms of their right to stay put or move as important concepts that can recognize the work youth do in reimagining borders. In terms of the current neoliberal context, the rights of children and young people to participate freely in society and move freely between differing societies and nations are ascertainable only within specific socio-historic and geographic contexts. One of the leading feminist proponents of children's rights, Mehmoona

Moosa-Mitha (2005) focuses on two axes of recognition. Her first axis establishes the notion of the citizen as an active self, and the second defines the citizen self as a relational, dialogical self, who gains a sense of identity through relationships and dependencies with other people, places, and events. Aitken (2014) notes that geographers add a third axis to this difference-centered approach that recognizes a young person's multiple spatial relations. To the degree that Moosa-Mitha redefines children's rights relationally by examining if children are able to have a presence in the many interactions through which they participate, these relations must also recognize young people's presence through multiple spatial scales (Aitken 2014). By presence, Moosa-Mitha means the degree to which the "voice, contribution and agency of the child is acknowledged" (2005, p. 381). Not to recognize the presence of a political subject is itself a form of violence that limits young people's opportunity to be heard and is one of the primary ways that borders negatively impact children and youth's lives. Presence, as Aitken (2014) points out, acknowledges the self not only as relational and dialogical but also as spatial.

An axis of multiple spatial relations suggests that it is problematic to consider children's rights outside of issues of global consumption, production, and reproduction because, as noted by Katz (2004), in a connected world of flexible capital and instantaneous market adjustments, local places are increasingly important for understanding the contexts of children and youth's well-being. Of course, young people are not simply agents upon which the structure of capital is etched and upon whom rights are delimited as unviable. Children and youth not only pave the way for different futures through the influences of these changing objects, they also bring something of themselves into cultural life as they actively participate in the day-to-day workings of places. Establishing the spatial rights of children and youth may be about difference rather than inclusion within a bordered existence, and positioning young people as relational citizen-selves has the potential to upset seemingly clear bordered spaces. Young people's needs also vary from place to place and their needs for space vary from person to person. So, too, rights should encompass this spatial variability and personal flexibility. The important point is that young people are afforded the right to make and remake bordered spaces and themselves in an ongoing dialectical process (Aitken 2014).

4 Children's Border Encounters

What follows are discussions of young people who have been deeply impacted by borders and are examples gleaned from the disparate work of the authors. These examples are not chosen because they are illustrative, which they are, but because they are ordinary experiences for young people faced with the structural violence of border spaces. Slovenia, Ecuador, and the US/Mexico border spaces provide the geographic contexts of these young people's lives and from which emanate different layers of border violence and youthful agency.

4.1 Slovenia's Bordered and Erased Youth

The struggles of *Izbrisani* ("Erased") children and youth in Slovenia from the early 1990s to the present day suggests one of the worst human rights abuses in contemporary Europe. Local scholars and activists argue that the *Izbrisani* represents a unique case of structural violence processed through administrative bordering and presented in terms of ethnic and language discrimination and human rights violations (Zorn and Lipovec Čebron 2008; Jalušič and Dedić 2008; Kuhelj 2011). The bulk of Slovenia's erased population was ethnic minorities from Bosnia, Croatia, or Serbia, or they were Slovenian Roma. Many of the erased children were born in Slovenia, but the country's policy of granting citizenship through bloodlines (*jus sanguinis*) preempted the argument of citizenship and legal status through birth rights tied to the land (*jus soli*). A critical geographical perspective on these children's rights and (im)mobilities raises the issue of the ways people are tied to the Slovenian nation at the same time that it reinforces the notion of Slovenian space as fluid, produced, and political.

As of 2009, when the last official statistics were taken, 5,360 of the *Izbrisani* population was enumerated as under 18 years of age (Kogovšek et al. 2010, p. 133). These children and youth were made stateless in a vicious cycle where they had no rights in Slovenia and could not leave the country to collect necessary documentation from elsewhere for fear of being unable to return. Others, like Sam, were stuck outside of the country during the independence process and were barred from reentry. The spatial rights concerns here revolve around objectionable ideas of citizenship because they tie young people not only legally, but geographically, to an idea of statehood. For some, like Sam, the issue is to return to the country they consider home. For others, it is deprivation of legal rights within Slovenia's political boundaries, which serve to lock them in place. Following Pratt's (2012) ideas about fixities, mobilities, and families forced apart, concerns also revolve around the problematic emotional relations within families and communities where some members attain legal status and others are erased with an almost casual and seeming arbitrary violence. In many cases, cousins, and even siblings, were differentiated as either in the country illegitimately or legally based on the whim of an official.

The consequences for a family member losing legal status during the erasure process included not just loss of the possibility of becoming citizens but also the loss of health insurance, loss of employment, no possibility of purchasing an apartment at a noncommercial price, no possibility of schooling beyond the elementary/primary level, and no possibility of legally driving a car or getting married. Freedom of movement was curtailed by fear of deportation and daily exposure to the arbitrary conduct of police officers and bureaucrats. The consequences of erasure sometimes showed up as strictures and rebukes, as detentions and expulsions, or as denial of access to bureaucratic processes. These young people were caught up in state violence that had a systemic effect on their security, their emotional well-being, and their development (Aitken 2014, p. 149).

Fig. 3 Fužine, Ljublana (Photo: Aitken)

Igor, an erased young person (whose story is published in Kogovšek et al. (2010, pp. 79–81) and retold in Aitken (2014, pp. 149–151)) who was 11 in 1992, relates an upbringing in Fužine, a working-class neighborhood with a large proportion of immigrants to the east of Ljubljana's center, under what he felt was constant police surveillance. Even at this young age, Igor understood the need to remain invisible to the authorities. He would find ways to return to and from elementary school that avoided passing by police cars. For 10 or 11 years, Igor refused invitations to travel to the Croatian and Bosnian coast because he did not have the papers that would enable him to return to his home in Fužine. But this was more than just about going to the coast with friends. When his grandfather died, he was unable to attend the funeral in Bosnia for fear of not being allowed home to Slovenia: "We were locked in this country" (Igor, excerpted from Kogovšek et al. 2010, p. 80) (Fig. 3).

Although it was difficult for many Slovenian children to understand the specific privations that erasure entailed, most understood at some level that they were being singled out. They also understood their context as quite serious and that Slovenian independence had created incongruously hard borders against which they did not know how to push. Some found other paths that led to delinquency and criminality. When he was 11 years of age, Igor waited eagerly for the postman to bring his citizenship papers because his sister got hers automatically when her mother applied. After months he realized that they were not coming, and he started to feel shame and resentment at school and also an unease when walking home past local policemen. In seventh grade he dropped out of school, "replac[ing] the classroom with the basketball ground in front of our apartment complex" (Igor, excerpted from Kogovšek et al. 2010, p. 79).

Like many erased youth in Slovenia, Igor was resilient and found other ways to survive. Igor is now in his 30s. His story was collected as part of an ongoing

ethnographic project at the Ljubljana Peace Institute (Kogovšek et al. 2010). In Spring 2014, at a time when the European Court was compelling Slovenia to award reparations to former erased youth, Igor could not be found. The trauma of growing up with insecurity and constant fear is incomprehensible and unimaginable for most people. This is why children's rights over/through space are so important. Young people are flexible in the face of change and resilient to violence to the degree that they do not readily show or even understand the emotional scars, until later. As children, they bounce back quickly. Sam survived, but at a cost; what happened to Igor is not known.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to speak to the reasons for the Slovenian erasure or to elaborate its continuing impact on families. It is nonetheless an insidious form of structural violence with wide ranging chains that eat deeply into the hearts, minds, and bodies of erased children. Even with the weight of the European Union's Court of Human Rights (see Aitken 2015) leaning on successive Slovenian governments to effect change, and even with laws passed to give *Izbrisani* a path to citizenship, ongoing chains of violence haunt the lives of those who grew up erased. This is why we need to look critically at rights-based approaches. We must recognize that as state violence goes beyond structures, the allocation of rights must also go beyond structures to embrace difference and alterity. Rights discourses must provide a clear path not only to freedom from oppression, tyranny, patriarchy, and so forth but also freedom to live openly, protest the government, get a job, and grow in healthy ways.

4.2 Ecuadorian Young People Traveling Across Borders

Carla, an indigenous girl from the rural Ecuadorian Andes, began working on the streets of Ecuador as a beggar and gum vendor when she was 12 years old. Unable to subsist from the land alone, she and her sisters migrated to the city on weekends and during the summer months to help support their family and pay for their schooling. Eventually, Carla and her sisters began to struggle in the city, as the municipal police cracked down on street vendors in an effort to improve the urban image and attract more tourists to the city. So, at the age of 18, Carla took matters into her own hands; she decided to migrate to New York City. Following the well-worn path of many other Latin American migrants (but a very new path for her indigenous community), Carla made her way up through the Americas on trucks, boats, trains, buses, and cars, not to mention the many kilometers she trekked on foot. The reasons for her journey are deeply entrenched in centuries of structural violence, which have resulted in highly inequitable conditions for indigenous peoples in the Americas. Along with the region's highest levels of poverty, indigenous peoples typically endure lower wages, higher unemployment, lower rates of schooling, higher illiteracy rates, higher school dropout rates, lower life expectancies, higher infant mortality rates, higher levels of child malnutrition, and lower access to important services such as drinking water, sewage, and sanitation (Hall

and Patrinos 2012). It is for all of these reasons that Carla felt that she had to leave her homeland in order to seek out better opportunities.

But at the US/Mexico border, Carla was met with yet another layer of violence, this time in the form of a militarized border zone, which forced her to forge a dangerous and illegal path into the USA. Since 1994, there has been an acceleration of US border militarization. Beginning with Operation Gatekeeper, the US government has invested billions of dollars in fortifying its 3,145-km border with Mexico. The Secure Fence Act of 2006 called for double-layer fencing along 1,126-km of the border to stop both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Across the entire border, the number of border patrol agents has surged to well over 18,000. Meanwhile, popular crossing areas are monitored by radio control towers, infrared video cameras, motion sensors, and, in some regions, drones. Under the proposed comprehensive immigration bill, the number of border patrol agents would increase by 20,000, which would be enough to place an agent along every 1,000 ft of the border (Younglai 2013). This makes for a very impenetrable border for the thousands of young migrants who travel through the Americas to seek out the American Dream. In 2014 alone, the US Border Patrol apprehended and detained more than 68,000 unaccompanied migrant youth who were trying to forge better futures in the USA (USCBP 2014). In the process of crossing the US/Mexico border, these young people also cross, often through violence, multiple identity borders in their effort to reimagine different futures.

Somehow, Carla made it through this militarized zone and found her way to New York City. Yet, there she lives much like the Erased in Slovenia. With no legal status in the USA, she cannot work legally, drive legally, open a bank account, and receive financial aid or health care. She has few rights in America and must live her life underground, rendering her more vulnerable to other layers of economic and often interpersonal expressions of violence. Currently, her best option is to work under the table in a slaughterhouse in Brooklyn, earning low wages in a risky and highly undesirable workplace. But with this money, Carla is reworking borders at home. Gradually, she saves enough money to help her sisters who have stayed behind. With the money she earns, her sisters can finish school, her parents can build a better house, and Carla can forge a new future as an immigrant in America.

Mobility has long been a key survival strategy for indigenous peoples living in the Americas. Yet, with colonialism, the mobility of indigenous peoples became fixed. The nation-state fragmented ancestral territories and community ties to distant places were cut. Indigenous peoples were pushed off key lands and relegated to a patchwork of reserves and remote territories. Lines were drawn to create distinct material and metaphorical borders in indigenous peoples' lives. Given the intense levels of structural violence that have shaped indigenous peoples' lives – from colonialism to imperialism to neoliberalism – they have had to navigate colonial, legal, national, state, ethnic, racial, and cultural boundaries for a long time now. In response to this violence, mobility remains a key survival strategy in many parts of the Americas – albeit one that has more recently become transnational. Rates of indigenous transnational migration are accelerating in the region, largely due to exacerbated conditions of racialized inequality and ongoing structural violence, leading to limited opportunities for young people (Stephens 2007;

Swanson 2013; Torres and Carrasco 2008; Fink 2003). Stephen (2007) frames indigenous border crossings as "transborder" rather than "transnational" because these crossings are always more than national. Instead, they cross multiple borders, both within nations and between them.

The legacy of colonialism has further created a romanticized ideal that fixes indigenous peoples in rural spaces, thus essentializing their connection to place (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996; Orlove 1993). In doing so, indigenous people become "incarcerated" or locked-in-place, effectively erasing their historical mobility and creating challenges for their opportunities to move outside the remnants of historic territory preserved in government trust lands (Watson 2010). Indigenous youth in the Americas who move from rural to urban environments often confront racialized borders that position them as out-of-place (Peters 2011; Swanson 2010a; Forte 2002). As indigenous youth navigate territories both on and off of reserves, they carry the othering narratives of indigenous authenticity with them. These narratives, shaped by centuries of colonial encounters, have been utilized to dispossess indigenous peoples of their land and to set them apart both conceptually and geographically from the spaces of cities, civilization, and modernity (Forte 2002; Peters 2011; Johnson 2013). Inherent in these stereotypes is the idea that to be a "real Indian [is to be] racially unmixed, culturally undiluted, geographically remote, and materially impoverished" (Forte 2002, p. 1).

In the current period of globalization and intense neoliberal reforms, indigenous youth throughout the Americas are using their mobility to rework borders. For instance, among the indigenous Otavaleños of Ecuador, the remittances from transnational migration have allowed for a complete transformation of the community, and migrants have been able to invest in land, business, and infrastructure in ways that the state has not (Meisch 2002). Some have entered into national politics and have garnered powerful political voices in the nation-state. In doing so, they are transgressing borders and redefining what it means to be an indigenous person in the Americas.

As Harvey (2008) argues, the right to space is fundamentally about a right to create and recreate oneself, a process that involves engagement with multiple borders. Indigenous youth struggling to rework indigenous identities across the Americas employ mobility as a key strategy for accessing difference and imagining alternative futures. Their movement across borders is a result of violence, and children and youth endure much violence throughout their journeys. But the right to move allows them to reshape identities and (hopefully) forge better futures. Approaches that recognize the rights of children and youth to rework borders also must acknowledge the materiality of young people's agency and belongings as fundamental to young people's survival and forging of difference in borderlands.

4.3 The US/Mexico Border Passes Over and Through Indigenous Youth

If we shift to the US/Mexico border, another story of indigenous mobility and borders plays out. The Kumeyaay people have inhabited the borderland region of

Southern California and Mexico since time immemorial. Southern California is also home to very diverse indigenous communities, including the Luiseño people whose ancestral territory is located just north of the Kumeyaay, and one of the largest urban indigenous communities in the county, which brings together people with indigenous ancestry from across the Americas. While this narrative focuses on the experience of one Kumeyaay woman, the context and processes discussed here are relevant to indigenous communities throughout the Southern California region, as well as many indigenous communities living in settler contexts.

Centuries of Spanish and US colonialism have dispossessed the Kumeyaay of the vast majority of their ancestral territory and led to the loss of indigenous cultural knowledge and resources. In 1848, the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the US/Mexico border, cutting the ancestral territory of the Kumeyaay in half. Subsequently, the Kumeyaay territory was further restricted with the establishment of 5 reservations in Northern Mexico and 12 reservations in Southern California (Carrico 2008). The US/Mexico border is a violent imposition that eroded this indigenous community's ability to maintain connections to family and territory on opposite sides of the border. This has had profound impacts on indigenous youth and communities that are deemed out-of-place in the spaces that sustained them for thousands of years. As youth spend less time on the land, intergenerational relations and opportunities for the transfer of indigenous knowledge are diminished. Excluded from the spaces that historically maintained their subsistence, many Kumeyaay people have become stuck in cycles of poverty and live on isolated reserves where jobs and material resources are scarce.

The story of Debbie, a young Kumeyaay woman living on one of San Diego County's reservations, while raising her family and attending school, exemplifies some of the challenges that these borders impose. Living on one of the more isolated reservations, there are limited job opportunities available, and unlike some of the neighboring reserves, there are no profitable gaming/gambling operations. The closest grocery store is a half hour drive away, and food insecurity on her reservation is a major issue. Without a solid income or transportation, Debbie and her family have to rely on the commodity foods offered to them by the government based on their low income. In many cases tribal members with jobs do not qualify for subsidized food but remain too poor to provide enough food for their families.

Debbie is determined to get a degree in social work, but this is difficult since her reservation is also located far away from area colleges and universities, and transportation remains limited and expensive. Despite these obstacles, she has enrolled at a community college and is working toward her associate's degree. She plans to eventually transfer to a local 4-year university. Navigating school while supporting her four children is profoundly challenging. With limited family and no partner support to fall back on, she became the main provider for her children during their early youth and was forced to forego college. Debbie made many attempts to reconcile with her partner for the sake of her children and because her tribe emphasizes the value of staying married, but after struggling with domestic violence, she ended her relationship. She continues to raise her children within the isolation of her reservation. Her eldest daughter is in her teens and has had her

first child. Debbie is assisting with the baby, but her daughter and her partner were forced to drop out of high school to care for their son. They do not have a car or job and rely on Debbie for financial support. Debbie relies on subsidized transportation to attend classes and school but this service is only available during selective times and greatly limits her flexibility. Professors, often unfamiliar or unsympathetic to her unique circumstances, are less accommodating of her limited schedule.

Sometimes finishing her education seems like an impossible prospect to Debbie, and when times get particularly hard, she considers dropping out and finding whatever limited work is available to her. The end of semester can be particularly tough; as her student aid runs low, there is not enough money to support her family the way she would like. Still, Debbie remains committed to her degree, despite the borders that render her access to educational and economic opportunities difficult. A degree in social work would help Debbie work for her reservation to counsel youth who may be struggling with issues of addiction, education, and uncertain futures. She worries about the futures available to her own children growing up where drug use, depression, and poor health impact children heavily. Migrating from her reservation to one of San Diego's urban communities would make attending school easier but would also mean increased separation from her family and the tribal cultural institutions that she values. Debbie remains committed to living on the reservation, despite its isolation, as it offers her a connection to her ancestral territory, culture, and indigenous identity. She resents that success in her community often requires moving away from her reservation. She explains, "I personally don't want to leave my tribe, my home, my family, my culture just to 'make it' in society and the consensus among a lot of us is why should we have to?" (Debbie, February 2015). As Debbie's story exemplifies, acknowledging young people's right to space should not just entail a right to mobility but also a right to stay put.

Indigenous youth who do choose to move off the reservation to live, work, or attend school are sometimes seen as leaving behind their indigenous identity – an identity often characterized as immobile and rooted in ancestral territory (Forte 2002). Urban indigenous populations must negotiate othering narratives that essentialize expressions of indigeneity and conceive of their existence in urban space as inherently wrong. Likewise, indigenous youth confront borders to education, which marginalize indigenous knowledge and often frame indigenous youth as out-of-place in Western school settings (Ingen and Halas 2006). Tribes that run gaming operations may also confront what Spilde (1999) terms "Rich Indian Racism," where increasing wealth and power are seen as incompatible with authentic indigeneity. These material and symbolic borders are forces that overlap with the geopolitical border between the US and Mexico to lock Kumeyaay youth into the remote, fragmented, and economically marginal spaces of reserves, while locking them out of the urban spaces and cross-border mobilities required to maintain relations to territory and cross-border Kumeyaay communities.

While these borders impede on Kumeyaay youth's right to space, these youth do not take things passively. Kumeyaay youth find ways to challenge and transgress these borders, articulating new forms of indigeneity in the process. Kumeyaay

youth draw from a wide network of indigenous cultural, service, and rights organizations to access spaces and resources that enable them to connect and celebrate their indigenous identity whether on or off the reservation. These networks connect Kumeyaay youth to San Diego's diverse urban indigenous communities, helping to transgress territorial and identity borders. For example, the youth-driven indigenous social movement *Idle No More* has a regional chapter in San Diego that connects San Diego's indigenous youth to indigenous politics on a global scale, crossing geopolitical and symbolic borders to advocate for common issues, such as decolonization, resource protection, and self-determination.

Gaming is another phenomenon creating new opportunities and challenges for indigenous people, as it provides much needed revenue for investing in local infrastructure, education, cultural institutions, and stipends, which have transformed the power of many tribes within global economic and political systems (Contreras 2006). Within a decade, some tribes have moved out of the poverty that has trapped them for centuries, to become wealthy political and economic forces with strong political lobbies. Many of the Kumeyaay tribes with revenue from gaming now have financial resources to invest in their young people's higher education, develop health and cultural organizations that specifically target the needs of indigenous children and youth, and provide their tribal members with a range of economic opportunities. As indigenous youth access spaces and opportunities that they were formerly excluded from, they craft new modalities of indigeneity that are less rooted in specific spaces and more able to actively negotiate and assert agency in a global, mobile, and hybrid world (de la Cadena and Starn 2007; Forte 2002). Many of these young people now bring experience navigating social, political, and identity borders back to their community and are helping to find new ways to preserve traditions, protect tribal sovereignty, and support community development. Despite the increased resources and opportunities facilitated by gaming, these gains are uneven, and Kumeyaay communities in gaming and non-gaming tribes continue to contend with layered violence that is reflected in the poor health, poverty, violence, and low educational attainment that disproportionally affect their youth. Like Debbie, Kumeyaay youth are often faced with the difficult choice of staying on reservations with scarce opportunities or moving to cities where jobs and resources are more available, but where they become subject to other forms of layered violence that render their presence in the city as out of place.

These three examples of young people encountering borders on three separate continents illustrate both the layers of violence youth experience negotiating border spaces and the creativity and resilience youth employ as they struggle to find ways around and through them. The geopolitical borders separating youth from cross-border relations with families and homeland are implicated in the layers of violence that carry over into Carla's, Debbie's, Sam's, and Igor's everyday lives, exemplified in lost economic opportunities, domestic and interpersonal violence, and the psychological impacts of reduced self-esteem and uncertain belongings. This multilayered border violence is imposed through the constrained mobilities of Slovenian, Ecuadorian, and Native American youth who are excluded from spaces where

their agency could be recognized and extended. At the same time, the stories chronicled here maintain and express agency within border spaces. In some cases, these young people find ways to challenge and rework borders and access alternative spaces to build relations and identities that cross borders. In all three examples, mobility, whether that means the capacity to move or stay put in the face of tremendous pressure to move, is fundamental to youth agency and vital to their survival and success in the face of border violence.

5 Young People's Rights to Reimagine Borders

A right to space is one of the most taken-for-granted and yet least understood aspects of human rights discourses. It is also fundamental to creating opportunities for people to challenge the unequal structures and relations of power that comprise Farmer's (2004a, p. 307) "machinery of oppression." Young people are always moving in, through, and around some kind of border and through that movement become subject to layered geographies of violence. Simultaneously, they are implicated in creating potentially transformative and emancipatory spaces. Children and youth navigating border spaces employ their own mobility to carve out alternative pathways to access spaces, people, ideas, and bodies that are closed to them. But at what cost? Border violence is multilayered, interconnected, and overlapping – young people who successfully find ways in and around border spaces are open to victimization by other layers and chains of violence (e.g., increasingly militarized border patrols, vigilantes, racism, sexual violence, unfair judicial processes). The powerful example of state-imposed violence that moved a border across the Kumeyaay, erased thousands of Slovenian youth, and set many more Ecuadorian youth on the move ultimately trapped these young people in geopolitical limbo linked to a complex network of economic, institutional, and interpersonal violence to which they, at different times, fell victim or pushed through - often simultaneously.

It is not enough to assert youth agency and point to their persistence in finding ways to cross, rework, and remain resilient in the face of myriad borders. Recognizing that youth agency is inherently spatial and that youth have presence can mediate the chains of violence discussed here. As Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues, the effectiveness of children's agency is dependent on its presence or the degree to which the agency and contribution of children is acknowledged through the many relationships in which children participate. Asserting youth agency while ignoring that this agency is inherently spatial and shaped by the extent that youth participation and contributions are recognized renders young people potentially more vulnerable to border violence. When Aleksandar Todorović started his hunger strike and political protest that ended up in front of UNICEF headquarters in Ljubljana, it was primarily his representation of 5,360 erased children that got international attention. Prior to this the *Izbrisani* were hidden to the world and to each other. The hue-and-cry on behalf of these young people is that their basic rights are violated and that humanitarian breach is fundamentally spatial. This

breach stunts youth's presence by impeding the mobilities through which their relational agency is extended and heard.

When violence remains invisible, young people often remain more vulnerable. Recognition of youth presence involves attention to dynamics of violence that impose themselves on youth within a bordered landscape and the strategic mobilities youth employ to navigate them. Bringing visibility and presence to the spatiality of borders and agency may aid in mediating other forms of violence (e.g., interpersonal, cultural) permeating the geopolitical borders discussed here. Young people are always involved in reimagining the borders imposed on their everyday lives, but as Moosa-Mitha (2005) argues, youth agency is only as effective as its ability to be heard. Visibility of the border engagement of child migrants, indigenous youth, and erased Slovenian youth may help mediate other forms of violence infused in these border encounters and extend the presence of the already existing efforts of young people to rework borders as their experiences gain more acknowledgment. For Slovenian youth, visibility has helped pave the way for social mobilization that is beginning to hold the state accountable for its act of erasure. For indigenous youth, visibility of physical and symbolic border engagements can challenge the narratives of indigenous essentialism and acknowledge their efforts to foster new modalities of indigenous identity that increase their capacities to engage with multiple modernities and hybrid worlds.

This is not to say that visibility of young people's victimization by borders is always positive. In fact, in some instances visibility of border violence perpetrated against children and youth may render them more vulnerable. For example, the visibility of young migrants crossing the US/Mexico border has the potential to increase their victimization by those who fear rising numbers of immigrant alien "others" in the USA. Instead the authors argue for a categorical right, not for individual youth, but for children as a category, to have the spatiality of border encounters given visibility and presence as their collective experiences and contributions gain acknowledgment. Out of this visibility, border violence may be mediated, hopefully in ways that allow borders to be reworked and reimagined in productive and liberating ways.

6 Conclusions

This chapter reviewed, analyzed and synthesized existing literature on children, youth and borders by focusing on the violence that border encounters often impose on young people. The spatial implications of Moosa-Mitha's (2005) and Harvey's (2008) insights into rights and space particularly informed how youth agency and spatiality cannot be detached from one another when investigating how people of all ages navigate the violence of borders. Three empirical examples drawn from work with youth in Slovenia, Latin America, and along the U. S. /Mexico border informed discussions on the interconnected chains of violence characteristic of border spaces and the agency youth employed as they challenged, transgressed, and reworked the violent circumstances of different border encounters. This chapter

also demonstrated that the violence borders present to young people can be better mediated through a rights discourse that recognizes the ubiquitous spatiality of children and youth's engagements in and through any border reality. Research that makes visible the chains of violence entwined within border spaces, including how youth present successful but also at times unsuccessful challenges, in making and remaking borders is a central ethical imperative researchers on borders and children must confront if the capacities of young people to reimagine border spaces in material and difference-making ways are to be more fully explored, better understood, and actively and politically contributed to and transformed.

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