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From landscapes to lawscapes

Law, bodies and agencies of the border understood as an architectural apparatus

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Synopsis

Which is the role of Law in the production of contemporary border? Can we define Law as a non material vector or should we acknowledge its material dimension, embodied in certain architectures and agents as border show us? This paper proposes an approach to the contemporary border production logics through two case studies and two key concepts. The infamous Tarajal tragedy (Ceuta, 2014) and the riots in Aluche's CIE (Foreigner Detention Centre) during 2010. We will analyse these events through the lawscape and assemblage logics. This will unveil not only spatial production mechanisms that connect laws, bodies and agencies, but also the implicit spatial violence inherent to each production.

Key words: Lawscape, bodies, spatial violence, assemblage, border.

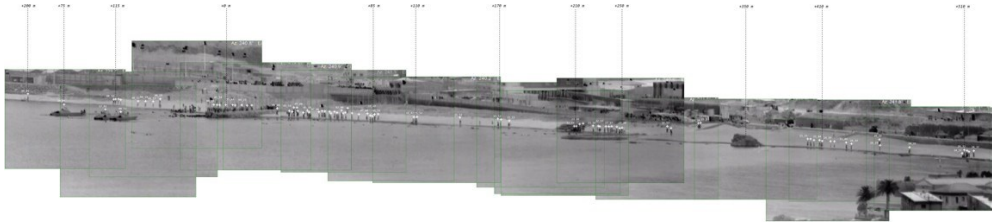


Figure 1. Analysis of Tarajal event through CCTV cameras digital reconstruction.

16th February 2014, Tarajal (Ceuta) border crossing point (Fig.1). More than a hundred of bodies cross the imaginary line that divides Spain and Morocco through its virtual extension into the water. A police deployment with more than fifty agents, CCTV cameras, shotguns, anti-riot material, gas canisters, boats and vehicles renders a new space where the geopolitical line –or its architectural representation– has lost its relevance. It has been substituted by an ephemeral spatial construction. On that display, the movement of the bodies and their actions are ultimately the ones who build the contemporary border. A border that can be deterritorialized, that is topological, dynamic and with a great response capacity.

November 2010, at the interior of Aluche's CIE -Foreign Detention Center- (Madrid). A collective body of interns starts a riot setting fire the furniture of different bedrooms, deploying white blankets on the building façade to gain media relevance. Once again, enclosure architecture has been replaced and transformed through violent actions –in a spatial sense of the term– to propose new spatialities that go beyond the physical boundary defined by the walls of the building (Fig.2).



Figure 2. Blanket disposition on Aluche CIE façade. Madrid, 2010. Source: Arainfo.

Despite the distance that separates both events, some concepts are common to them. Concepts that should be included in architectural discussion to think, not only how the contemporary border is built, but which are the roles, agencies and spatial mechanisms of architectural matter and discourses engaged in it. To do so, the comparison between both study cases will illustrate, from a concrete analysis, broader concepts present on the contemporary space production observed through the lawscape and assemblage logic.

Which is the role of the law during these events? Rather, which architectures, agents or quasi-objects are embodying the Law? First of all, we should expand Law to go beyond its normative meaning. Because, as the first event have shown us, these administrative regulations became obsolete to render new spatial constructions full of norms and codes of different nature –the police protocols, exceptional procedures, hacking tactics developed by migrants...- (Fig.3) To do so, let's include in architectural discussion a key concept developed in the legal discipline, but with deep spatial implications: the lawscape. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2014) has developed this spatial model enounced through an assemblage formed by bodies, law and space entangled in a dynamic process of affects and effects. “The law of the lawscape is state law but also the law of space that brings bodies into encounter with other bodies, which in its origin or beginning might be state law but by the time it is incorporated, its origin as state law cedes priority to the emergence of a specifically situated law. The law in the lawscape is co-determined with the space between bodies; the space that is produced and is occupied by bodies; the movement of bodies; the desire of bodies; and the withdrawal of bodies for another law.” A model that remind us the carefully tied body that Bernard Tschumi (1976) presented in one of his advertisement, followed by this statement: “Look at this way: the game of architecture is an intricate play with rules that you may break or accept”. Lawscape is precisely this active entanglement of flesh, ropes and knots that allows certain movements –or spatial practices- while impede –or punish- other ones. A “play”, in Tschumi’s words, that is mobilized by the affects and desires of the different bodies inside the assemblage.

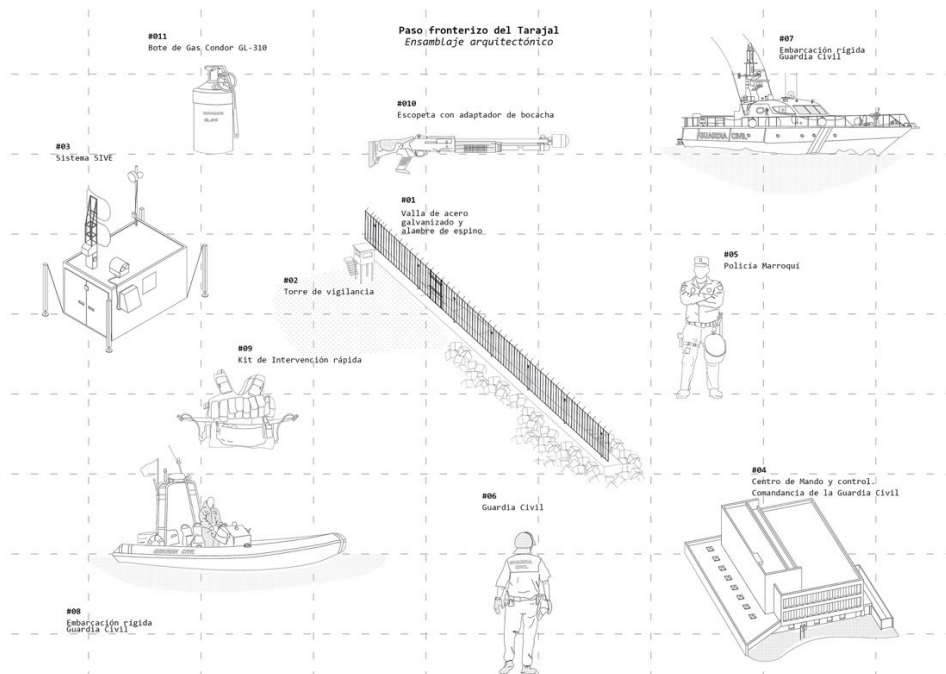


Figure 3. Tarajal assemblage diagram and its material components.

From this point of view, the previous slogan will have a greater relevance on its later Violence of Architecture essay (Tschumi, 1994) –and specifically in the update done by Léopold Lambert- where he establishes an inherently violent relation between bodies and architecture, always mediated by the deviation of the norm grade. In both events, the deviation grade is so much that the vibrant architectural matter (Bennet, 2009) and also the implied bodies will store in their material flesh the consequences of the spatial moment of rupture. A rupture where, through certain spatial and material operations –minor architectural tactics (Stoner, 2012)- will render new unexpected spatial relations from an architectural design perspective. And, to reach that point will be required to contest direct and materially with the embodied laws in different architectures.

Once that the conceptual grounds are explaining, we can approach these conflict space, these multiples assemblages deployed over the territory, to detect the common parameters in both cases that confirm this methodological scope pertinence to analyse contemporary border logics. We propose a disciplinar shift from landscape –topographical- to lawscape –topological-. Only under this new scope we will be able to contextualize its dynamic character and the relevance between apparently non-architectural agents.

The compared forensic (Weizman, 2014) analysis of both cases will operate as a mechanism to extract broader conclusions to architectural thought, through the evidence of the real performance of law entangled with space. A law that is not exterior to matter, but embodied in agents and its performance, modulating its agency. Moreover, we will be able to render the spatial violence that is inherent to any architecture, but more and more explicit when a body

contests the actual laws – consciously or not- that configure any space. Let's focus on the contemporary border understood as an architectural assemblage to unveil the logics of contemporary space production.

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Biography

Antonio Giráldez López. Architect and urban planner specialised in the field of Theory and Design. He is currently carrying out his doctoral research in the Programme of Advanced Architectural Projects of the UPM, on the topic “Border-Apparatus: spatial construction from the migrant body”. This research that has been chosen to be part of the Spanish pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2018). Since the year 2013 he is the co-creator and co-editor of Bartletooth, a publishing platform related to architectural thought in the broad sense of the word, work for which he has received awards at Arquia Próxima (2016, 2018), the FAD Awards to Thought and Critique (2017), and the Future Architecture Platform (2018).