



# **Arming the Environment, and Colonizing Nature, Territory, and Mobility in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument**

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## **Abstract**

In 2009, the U.S National Park Service instituted tours accompanied by armed guards to areas of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, which abuts the U.S.-Mexico boundary in southern Arizona. These areas, like the majority of the park's lands, had been closed to the public since August 2002, following the shooting death of National Park Ranger Kris Eggle—allegedly by drug smugglers from Mexico. The re-opening reflected the U.S. Border Patrol's and National Park Service's "retaking" of parts of the park that had been "lost" to unauthorized migrants and drug traffickers. This article explicates the tours' origins, illustrating how they connect present and past in relation to the making of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument as a territory of "nature." In doing so, the article shows that the militarized tours (which ended in September 2014, with the entire park's re-opening) are the understandable extension of the park's doubly colonial logic—as imperialized/settler-colonized space and as the



embodiment of a stark division between humans and nature. Overcoming such violence and facilitating the thriving of humans and other-than-humans in the space of OPCNM requires a reworking of “nature” and territory—as well as of the associated human identities.

## Keywords

Coloniality; empire; mobility; nation; political ecology; socionature

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## Introduction

*“What we are trying to do is retake this landscape so we can all be free to be out here”* (quoted in Goodwin 2012). -- Ken Hires, park ranger, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

In early 2012, media reports revealed that the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) was conducting tours under armed escort of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (OPCNM) in southern Arizona (Goodwin, 2012; Kreutz, 2012; Slagle, 2012); the NPS began offering such tours in 2009, in an attempt to bring more visitors to previously closed sections of the park. The agency had closed more than half of it to the public soon after the shooting death of Law Enforcement Park Ranger Kris Eggle on August 9, 2002. Eggle was killed, asserts the NPS on the monument’s website, “while pursuing members of a drug cartel who fled into the United States after committing a string of murders in Mexico,” and “[w]hile protecting visitors from harm” (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

According to a journalist’s account of one of the armed tours, participants, before entering the bus, had to register at the park office, show identification, and sign a consent form relieving the NPS of responsibility for any injuries incurred during the visit. Leading and trailing the bus were two vehicles (for a total of four) “containing Park Rangers wearing full-camouflage and carrying weaponry that make them look more like G.I. Joe than Smokey the Bear.” When the bus arrived at the intended destination, the tourists had to remain onboard, the report continued, “until all of the escort vehicles empty their human cargo as the battle-ready park rangers form a protective inner and outer ring of fire. Only when the perimeter has been set up and secured are the tourists allowed off the bus” (Slagle, 2012). Another article described a tour on a different day as one “of public lands with splendid scenery . . . and lethal firepower on hand just in case.” The ranger leading the particular tour in question characterized the situation as follows: “‘It’s like going into a bad neighborhood’ where protection by escorts armed with ‘assault

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.nps.gov/orpi/learn/historyculture/kris.htm>. For a detailed account of these events see Clynes 2003, and Marizco 2004.

rifles and other weapons' is essential." The armed escorts, he explained, "'kind of lurk in the bushes' out of sight while keeping a close watch on the touring party. . . 'They try to be inconspicuous, but they're close—within earshot'" (Kreutz, 2012).



**Figure 1:** Memorial in front of the Kris Eggle Visitor Center. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, 2015. Photo by Adriana Provenzano.

The dominant explanation for the existence of the weaponized tours is often tied to Eggle's killing. It is also coupled with a larger "siege" of the nationalized space by drug smugglers and unauthorized immigrants entering from Mexican territory. Even before Eggle's death, the U.S. Park Rangers Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police had designated OPCNM (in 2001 and 2002) as one of the "Top 10 Most Dangerous Parks in America," due to "illegal" immigration, drug running, and low ranger staffing (Nielson, 2008; see also Clynes, 2003). For many U.S. officials, political figures, and media pundits (e.g. Fialka, 2003; Malkin, 2002; Tancredo and Hoekstra, 2002), Eggle's death was further evidence of the park's danger and endangerment, and highlighted the need for far-reaching changes in its policing apparatus and that of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands broadly.

What this dominant framing misses, or, better yet, ignores, are the violence-infused origins and making of the park as nationalized "nature" and territory. Organ Pipe's roots and construction have entailed determining and producing what is "natural" and what is not. It has also involved the production of particular types of human bodies and, thus, distinctions between who belongs and who does not in

the park's space. In obscuring these processes, the framing serves to "naturalize" or normalize the park and the work that it does in relation to socio-territorial boundaries associated with the U.S.-Mexico divide.

To illuminate how such distinctions came to be, and to explicate the origins of the armed tours, the article interrogates the making of OPCNM as both bounded nature and a U.S. American space. It demonstrates that the weaponized tours (which ended in September 2014, with the re-opening of the entire monument to the "authorized" public in and around which is now a markedly strengthened policing apparatus) are the extension of the park's doubly colonial logic—as imperialized/settler-colonized space and as the embodiment of a stark division between humans and nature. In this regard, the armed tours brought about in the aftermath of Kris Eggle's death were part and parcel of a larger set of political ecological and political geographical circumstances than is suggested by accounts in the mainstream media and in establishment political circles (as reflected by Democrat and Republican elected officials and national state spokespeople) in the United States.

As discussed below, the space of Organ Pipe came into being as U.S. American "nature" and space through various forms of violence, violence not visible as such within mainstream U.S. society. This lack of visibility reflects, in part, the fact that the ill-gotten territory and its population were eventually incorporated under the (U.S.) national constitutional structure and overrun by a settler population; it flows from and contributes to what Engseong Ho (2004) calls an "invisible empire." This empire-infused process helps obscure the original conquest as well as the colonial dispossession and structuring of the region (see, for example, Perea, 2003; Gordon, 1999) —and the associated injustices that persist and reproduce its incorporation—and to create a façade of legitimacy for that which maintains it. Illuminating the process requires that we refuse to understand a space such as that of Organ Pipe as "outside of, prior to, or apart from the fact of colonial experience" (Wainwright, 2006, 1034). To demonstrate this line of analysis, the article builds upon literature in environmental studies, geography, and political ecology exploring the relationship between bounded nature (in the form of state-run parks and forests) and political endeavors of various sorts, from those involving counter-insurgency (e.g. Peluso and Vandergeest, 2011) to those implicated in projects of settler colonialism (e.g. Braverman, 2009; Spence, 1996). In doing so, it employs a heterodox methodology informed by feminist geography, postcolonial theory, queer geographies, and by efforts to rethink territory and space by seeing them in processual terms.

As a case study of bounded nature, what is unique about OPCNM is its location along an international boundary. It is one across which there is a significant amount of unauthorized and illegalized movement and which divides and connects what are today, in many ways, two very disparate (socio-economically) parts of the world (particularly if one takes into consideration Central American countries). Thus, the regulation of international mobility has

been and is key to the construction and maintenance of Organ Pipe as both “nature” and national space. It manifests how the modern territorial state, along with its technologies and practices which police territory and its boundaries as well as bodies in motion, is, in many ways, a “regime of movement” (Koteff, 2015, 6). So, too, is a nationalized nature like Organ Pipe, particularly given its involvement in the U.S.-Mexico boundary policing apparatus. Thus, while there are many ways to understand how Organ Pipe became a “war zone,” and a space of armed tours, one way to do so is to see it as a contested terrain of conflicting mobilities. If mobility is socially produced movement (Cresswell, 2006)—in other words, it reflects and produces a world of ideas and social relations regarding moving bodies, who gets to move, who doesn’t, and by what means and under what conditions—it is geographically produced, too, in that (im)mobility is inherently spatialized. In the context of Organ Pipe, it is also “naturally” produced. In this regard, what mobility is like in the national monument, how it is represented and perceived, negotiated and regulated, emerges out of the dynamic interrelationship between coloniality, (national) territory, and nature.

The article first explores these matters in a mostly theoretical manner, drawing on literature in political ecology, political geography, mobility, and U.S.-Mexico border studies.<sup>2</sup> Then, in engaging primary (mainly U.S. government documents) and secondary sources—both scholarly and mainstream media—it demonstrates empirically how the ties between space, nature, coloniality, and mobility manifest themselves in Organ Pipe’s making. Thus, in the section that follows, it explains the acquisition and “cleansing” of the land that is now OPCNM. It subsequently explores the production of Organ Pipe’s “nature” and, with it, the construction of different types of walkers in the park’s space—the welcome “visitor” and the unwelcome migrant. Finally, in conclusion, the article argues for the decolonization and a “queering” of both the “nature” and territory embodied by Organ Pipe—together which involve a refusal of a simple nature-society divide as well as a recasting of space as inclusive of multiple forms of activity and difference—so as to facilitate the thriving of humans and other-than-humans in the monument’s space. This requires a broader and deeper form of security than that imagined by those who champion the type of policed “natural” space that led to the armed tours which, until recently, were a “normal” part of the Organ Pipe experience. It is a security that is neither anthropocentric, nor nation-state-centric, but one concerned with the wellbeing of all life forms, human and other-than-human.

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<sup>2</sup> The article also significantly draws upon Provenzano 2013.

## Space, Nature, Mobility, and Coloniality

To help rescue the park from those who endanger it, U.S. officials ask that visitors to Organ Pipe contact them when they witness questionable individuals or unauthorized migrants passing through the monument's space. A roadside sign in the area of the monument close to the U.S.-Mexico divide, for example, warns in capital letters that the "ROAD PARALLELS THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER" and that "ILLEGAL ACTIVITY IS COMMON"; it also asks that people "REPORT SUSPICIOUS PERSONS OR ACTIVITY TO A RANGER OR THE VISITORS CENTER" (Piekielek, 2009, 178; see also Figure 2). Meanwhile, Organ Pipe's website, manifesting what has become at best a blurry divide between law enforcement aimed at protecting a nationalized form of "nature" and the policing of the U.S.-Mexico boundary and those who cross it, instructs visitors to "Report ANY suspicious behavior to park staff or Border Patrol." The website, after noting "Visitors should be aware that drug smuggling routes pass through the park [emphasis in original]," also offers the following:

Each year hundreds of people travel north through the park entering the United States. It is possible you could encounter an individual or small group trying to walk through the park with little or no water. Please do not stop, but instead, note your location and immediately call 911 or contact a ranger as soon as possible (USNPS, undated).

While the text is followed by a sentence noting "Lack of water is a life-threatening emergency in the desert," the expression of humanitarian concern is undercut by the instructions not to stop and, by extension, not to offer aid to those in distress. At best, the underlying reason for these instructions would seem to be that the dangers the migrants allegedly pose to "visitors" (see Piekielek, 2009) outweigh the dangers the migrants face—this despite the fact that thousands of people have lost their lives since the mid-1990s while trying to traverse the southern-Arizona section of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands without authorization (see, for example, Martínez et al., 2014; NMD, 2016; Slack et al., 2016).

What is also striking about the warning are the social categories—and thus distinctions—that it deploys between different types of bodies: that of the hiker ("visitor") and that of the unauthorized migrant ("an individual or small group trying to walk through the park with little or no water"). The warning's authors seem to assume that these distinct categories are easily discernible—particularly to the "visitors" to whom the cautionary advice is directed.



**Figure 2:** Roadside sign, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, 2015. Photo by Adriana Provenzano.

The assumption raises the question as to how such a distinction came to be and was made obvious in the context of OPCNM. It speaks to how mobility itself is communicative. As Joseph Amato (2004, 4) asserts in relation to walking, it “declares who walks, how, why, in what spirit, under what conditions, and whose volition he or she walks”; walking “expresses itself with varying speed, stride, gait, and associated posture, company, dress (especially shoes but also leggings and socks), place, load, condition and occasion.” Walking, and other forms of mobility, identifies; in other words, it marks bodies.

This process of identification, however, is always contextual, not least in terms of the space(s) in which it unfolds. Real, lived space is more complex and multifaceted than binaries such as “visitor” and people who “travel north through the park,” or “nature” and non-nature, allow. Hence, the very making and maintenance of the park necessitates a conceptualizing of the space as both “emptiable” and “fillable,” an imagining of space in such a way that allows for separating things (including forms of life) from the places in which they are found and for assigning other things to those places (Sack, 1986, 34-38). In this regard, it is helpful to consider Joel Wainwright’s (2005, 1034) assertion that the seeming “objectivity of a space is a problem to be explained, and not a scale of analysis to be embraced.” Similarly, the seeming objectivity of nature (or distinctions between people on the move) is a problem to be explained, a reflection of how “modern”

environments (or socionature) are “part natural and part social, and [embody] a multiplicity of historical-geographical relations and processes” (Swyngedouw, 1999, 445) in a physical sense. It is also a reflection of the very construction of nature in terms of how “natural” landscapes are imagined (see, for example, Braun and Castree, 1998).

A primary way in which nature is imagined (at least in its dominant, Western iteration) is as distinct from society. The human-nature divide is one of the most fundamental “moves” of Euro-modernist epistemology, its achievement a form of coloniality (see Jackson, 2014). Also tightly tied to coloniality are the very making of the U.S.-Mexico divide, the concomitant socio-territorial expressions, and the accompanying forms of violence and inequality (see Acuña, 1988; Gordon, 1999; Nevins, 2011). As both nature and territory associated with the U.S-Mexico boundary and the “Americanization” of what is today the U.S. Southwest, OPCNM embodies coloniality and the associated inequities.

Given that not everyone is equally situated in a context predicated on inequality (such as that of Organ Pipe), the identity of any person found within—and how that identity relates to “difference” (e.g. race, gender, class, ability, and citizenship, among others embedded in hierarchical, power-infused webs of social relations)—informs and flows from that context. It is tightly tied to the person’s mobility, and the conditions under which she moves. A woman walking on the street, for example, is typically far more likely to experience forms of violence such as catcalling than a man, reminding the woman that her body is under threat (Stanko, 1985; Solnit, 2000) and manifesting an inequality born and productive of patriarchy. That individuals experience space and mobility unevenly speaks to Cresswell’s (2006, 2) assertion that movements of people are always “products and producers of power (and thus their attendant inequities).”

A manifestation of such inequities is embodied in the distinction between walking out of necessity and that for leisure. In the United States, for instance, the likelihood of one walking for transportation increases as one moves down hierarchies of race and class; meanwhile, the propensity to walk for leisure or exercise is inversely related to those hierarchies (see Kruger et al., 2008). It is thus not surprising that walking for leisure (by “visitors”) is the activity putatively in need of protection—due to the threat allegedly presented by, among others, those who walk out of necessity (“illegals”)—in Organ Pipe.<sup>3</sup> It is a distinction whose origins are tightly linked to the making of socio-spatial inequality and to the modern production of nature (see Amato, 2004).

Walking for leisure has long been tied to territory, the construction and reproduction of which is inextricably linked to meaning (Delaney, 2005). This was

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<sup>3</sup> For the historical-geographical production of the “illegal” immigrant or “alien,” see Nevins 2008, and 2010.

certainly the case of strolling in the English garden in the 17th and 18th centuries (see Amato, 2004; Solnit, 2000), just as it is in the context of today's heavily policed U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Andreas, 2009; Nevins, 2008, and 2010; Miller, 2014) and in a nationalized space of "nature" (Organ Pipe) in which authorities make a strong distinction between those who belong—citizens and other visitors authorized by the state—and those who don't (e.g. "illegals"). In this regard, territory involves the control of people and land as well as governance of space (see Elden, 2013). It is thus tied to power and to socio-spatial orders; territory both expresses and produces social orders and does so at multiple geographical scales, including that of the body (Delaney, 2005). This speaks to how territory is not a timeless (or space-less) universal, that it is always contextual (Elden, 2013). The same is true of walking and other forms of mobility.

Walking was integral to nation-state-building in the United States. As seen in the celebrated stories of Lewis and Clark, who in 1804 explored "by combination of boat, horse, and foot" much of what is now the continental United States, walking was one way for explorers to establish providence over what is today the U.S. West (Amato, 2004, 136-137). At the turn of the 20th century, walking clubs, which became popular during this time, built on this legacy by helping to displace Native Americans from their traditional lands through the championing of environmental protection and the production of national, bounded spaces of "nature" (Spence, 1996). Many walking clubs—the Sierra Club a prime example—were organized around particular ideas of nature. They were ones which prioritized environmental protection, but of a national(ized) sort, and were often informed by racialized and class-infused fears regarding the need to maintain purity in the face of pollution (see Kosek, 2004). Thus the development of walking in nature in the United States was also entwined with a history of settler colonialism and dispossession and "removal" of the Native population (see, for example, Spence, 1996).

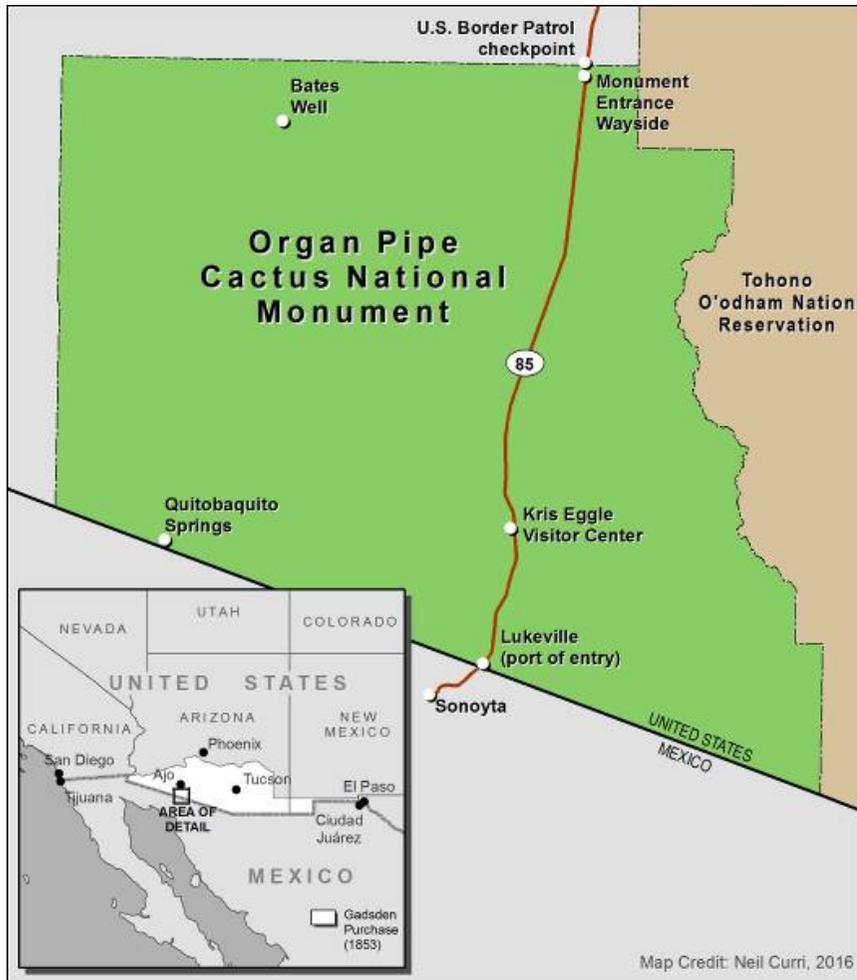
Walking—by the "wrong" type of people, in a manner deemed inappropriate, and/or in spaces from which they are excluded (see, for example, Bilefsky, 2015)—can be threatening to established power and those who uphold it. Populations that wander, that are not sedentary, are particularly worrisome to the modern territorial state. As James Scott (1998, 1) has noted, "the state has always seemed to be the enemy of 'people who move around,' to put it crudely." This is why nomadic populations, wanderers, and people who do not stay where, according to state authorities, they are supposed to (say, on "their" side of an international boundary) present a "problem" for so many states across the world and why states make great effort to stymie them (see Shamir, 1996; Shehadeh, 2008). In such situations, bodies can "become public sites of violence" (Hyndman, 2004, 318). A prime example is the contemporary policing apparatus in and around Organ Pipe and its great efforts to prevent non-(U.S.) citizens whose presence in the United States has been illegalized from entering or passing through the monument.

This outcome speaks to how the state observes and produces legible bodies as a way to craft citizens and, by extension, non-citizens. Recalling Cresswell's observation that the modern state's development is tied to its increasing efforts to delimit space and control mobility (2001), the exercise of mobility in relation to the nation-state is inextricably attached to the making of territorial boundaries and to the associated identities of citizen and alien. How the related process of "emptying" and "filling" territory unfolded in what is today OPCNM is the focus of the next section.

### **Acquiring and Cleansing the Land**

In order to secure what is today OPCNM, the United States government first had to acquire the land of which it is comprised, and then rid it of people and practices deemed as antithetical to its project of ecological conservation. In doing so, U.S. authorities imagined and constructed a nature they deemed to be pristine. The U.S. originally gained possession of the monument's land via the so-called Gadsden Purchase in 1853, several years after the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-48) through which the country acquired almost half of Mexican territory. Wanting more land to facilitate the construction of a southern transcontinental railroad linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, President Franklin Pierce sent Secretary of the Treasury James Gadsden to Mexico City. U.S. threats to seize militarily parts of northern Mexico led to Mexican authorities' giving the U.S. all that it sought, including dominion over a nearly 30,000 square mile area in what is today southern Arizona and mineral-rich southwest New Mexico (Martínez, 1995, 17-21 & 43; Griswold del Castillo, 1990, 55-61).

As took place in other lands that had been part of Mexico, a process of "Americanization" followed. This colonial, often overtly violent, project involved, among other things, the pacification and dispossession of the Mexican and Native populations in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the encouragement of in-migration by U.S. American settlers, and the drawing and strengthening of ethno-racial boundaries between Anglos (white "Americans"), Native peoples, and Mexicans (see Acuña, 1988; Benton-Cohen, 2011; Dunn, 1996; Gordon, 1999; Johnson, 2005; Meeks, 2007; and Perea, 2003). It also necessitated the nationalization of the land itself—in part by establishing and giving substance to its territorial definition via the making of the U.S.-Mexico boundary and its apparatus of exclusion (Nevins, 2010; St. John, 2012).



**Figure 3:** Map of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Elaborated by Neil Curri.

In addition, reshaping the territory along U.S. American lines also entailed protecting and preserving what were defined as “national treasures” in the form of “nature” and “wilderness.” It was out of such efforts that national parks and monuments were created. As such, the making of “nature,” nation, state, and territory dovetailed considerably (see Nash, 2001; Piekielek, 2009).

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument’s creation was justified in part by a strain of such efforts, one championed by (among others) John Muir and Aldo Leopold—major figures in U.S. wilderness conservation in the 19th and early 20th centuries—concerned with what they saw as the human propensity to destroy nature and the need to preserve the United States’ vast resources for purposes of scientific research (among others). As such, Organ Pipe’s rationale, unlike that for many national parks, was centered on ecological principles, rather than on scenic beauty. Indeed, NPS administrators recommended the preservation of the Organ Pipe cactus as an example of the Sonoran Desert’s unique flora and fauna

(Piekielek, 2009, 46-47). At the same time, some of the monument's architects emphasized the need to "control" nature in order to preserve it from various threats. As the author of one proposal for the monument wrote, "Without control, haphazard blazing of desert roads, fruitless mining ventures, wholesale removal of interesting cacti and other desert plants and unrestricted slaughter of Mountain Sheep will be the rule" (USNPS, 1935).

As the author's expression of concern suggests, many saw livelihood-related pursuits in the monument as one element in a constellation of threats. Conservation in Organ Pipe, ever since its creation by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1937, has meant protection of historic artifacts and what the National Park Service deems as nature. Not surprisingly, local residents and O'odham reservation residents would come to resent the NPS, perceiving the agency as insufficiently consultative—from the very start of the planning process to create the park—and insensitive to their concerns and needs. The Tohono O'odham in particular avoided Organ Pipe for this reason, except under the rare instances when the NPS provided them some form of support. It often hired O'odham as temporary laborers for construction and maintenance projects, particularly in the late 1950s and 1960s (Lissoway, 2004).

These projects concerned both the construction of buildings and infrastructure, as well as, within the monument's space, the production of nature. A key element of the NPS's making of Organ Pipe's socionature involved, as Gary Nabhan (2003) asserts, the gradual cultural cleansing of the landscape. Central to this "cleansing" was the curtailment and often elimination of all pre-existing activities related to livelihoods, a project that focused largely on the Tohono O'odham, a people viewed by the NPS and its staff in somewhat contradictory ways: as both a benefit and a detriment to Organ Pipe. Robert Toll, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park and the person charged in 1931 to determine which sections of Arizona desert would be worthy of monument status, is an example. While he preferred that the park be sited in its present location, Toll worried that Arizona authorities would not approve the federal government's takeover of the land. So, as a backup, he also proposed a nature preserve on the Tohono O'odham reservation (established in 1917). Toll did so under the belief that Native American presence would provide "added interest" to the monument, even though he thought that the Tohono O'odham "had lost most of the picturesqueness they may have had" due to settler presence on the land. As such, Toll hoped that the NPS might help restore their "Indianness," therefore making them an added feature of any reserve (Lissoway, 2004, 22-23).

The Tohono O'odham proved to be unsympathetic to Toll's desire to construct a national monument on their lands. Their protest, as well as the growing public embrace of a conception of nature as a place devoid of people (except those visiting it and those facilitating the visit), led Toll to drop his idea, and instead focus his efforts on building a "pristine wilderness" on the land just west of the Tohono O'odham reservation (Lissoway, 2004).

Building the park required, among other things, the discursive erasure of what was already there. *The New York Times* aided in this endeavor in its article celebrating the monument's opening. By entitling it "'Prehistoric' Land Made a Reserve," and subtitling it "Still as it was Eons Ago," the *Times* presented the monument's landscape as timeless. And by describing the 330,690-acre preserve as one comprising "a desert country so waterless and formidable that it has rarely been visited by white men," the U.S. newspaper of record suggested that Organ Pipe's relationship to "white men" is what mattered most (Author unknown, 1937). To the extent that accounts of the space did admit to human residence and livelihood-related activity in the area, they often minimized it. For example, in the 1935 proposal for the park, one explorer wrote, "without going into the records for verification, it is understood that there is only one or two settlers in the proposed area, and a few mining claims" (USNPS, 1935).

Such representations played a key role in obscuring the fact that Native people, people of Mexican descent, and Anglo citizens occupied the land of Organ Pipe Cactus a long time before 1937, pursued economic activity there, and in doing so continually reconfigured the landscape (Greene, 1977; USNPS, 1997; Lissoway, 2004). For centuries prior to Organ Pipe's establishment, for example, the Tohono O'odham came to the area annually for the harvesting of the ripe fruit of the saguaro and organ pipe cacti, which comprised a significant portion of their diet.

President Roosevelt acknowledged this activity in his proclamation establishing the monument by asserting the right of the O'odham to pick these fruits "under such regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior" (Roosevelt, 1937). Despite a general disregard for any livelihood activities in parks, the NPS would learn to spin the fruit ripening into a "natural activity." In doing so, the NPS turned the fruit-harvesting season into a tourist attraction. In one document, the Service writes, "the local Indian cultures, from the dim past to the present time, are also based upon the saguaro, and the primitive native way of life still persists little changed, with religion, customs, and well-being directly influenced by this giant cactus" (USNPS, 1965, 17). Such activities were deemed as adequately primitive, or sufficiently nature-like, to continue within monument boundaries. In addition, as fruit ripening happened once a year, the Tohono O'odham were only temporary visitors and so their movement did not endanger Organ Pipe's supposedly pristine nature.

More permanent forms of O'odham presence were far more objectionable for the agency. Thus, the NPS eventually sought to end human inhabitation of Quitobaquito Springs, located in the south of the park (see Figure 3). For some time, the NPS recognized that José Juan Orosco, the sole Hia Ced O'odham resident in the Springs, had advanced knowledge of the management and maintenance of the area's ecology. Hence, the agency allowed Orosco to live and graze his animals at the spring for 20 years after the park's creation. However, the NPS would later determine that, in order for tourists to be attracted to Organ Pipe as a "pristine desert wilderness," they would have to remove all subsistence

activities that ran counter to this ideal. As such, in 1954, the NPS decided that Quitobaquito should truly become uninhabited. After Orosco's death, the NPS bought the grazing, farming, and squatter's rights to the land in 1957 from the last O'odham resident, Jim Orosco, the son of José, for \$13,000 (Bassett, 2004).

Quitobaquito Springs was never a site of pristine wilderness. Indeed, it is a human-produced spring; however, it would become "nature" through NPS efforts. Before the NPS's contact with the land, indigenous people practiced irrigation and traditional, ecological management for millennia at Quitobaquito. Such indigenous practices did not just influence the landscape, but in many ways, Native people's agency produced and maintained cultural and biological diversity. This would all shift when the NPS took over management of the reserve (Nabhan, 2003). After the last O'odham residents left their settlement at Quitobaquito, the agency destroyed a large wetlands and constructed in its place what a monument superintendent who issued the order characterized as a "Midwestern fishing pond." It also razed a host of Tohono O'odham buildings and sites; in terms of the latter, the NPS even covered some of them with parking lots. The NPS did so in the name of ecological restoration and with the goal of making the area resemble a "bird sanctuary"—in the words of regional officials of the agency (Nabhan, 2003, 292; see also Ray, 2013, 159). While done in the name of environmental protection, the result of these undertakings was a marked decline of the area's ethnobotanic wealth and biodiversity (see Nabhan, 2003).

The NPS undertook a similar process of nature construction in order to eliminate grazing at Organ Pipe, the number one priority listed on a 1975 environmental assessment document (USNPS, 1975). Cattle ranching had a long history in the area. Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, a Jesuit priest, introduced the first cattle to the Tohono O'odham in the 18th century. Other people who traveled through the region, such as those headed towards California gold mines, also brought cattle into the area. Federal legislation in the form of the Homestead Act of 1860 and the 1877 Desert Land Act further increased ranching's popularity in the area, especially due to the monetary incentives to landowners these acts guaranteed (Greene, 1977). Mostly starting after the 1910s, Tohono O'odham and other Native people, Anglos, and people of Mexican descent alike kept cattle on what is now the national monument's land.

With Organ Pipe's creation, the National Park Service had to negotiate grazing rights with settlers and the O'odham. Though local residents had pressured the NPS into permitting limited ranching,<sup>4</sup> the agency continually fought for its removal, citing cattle grazing as one of the most ecologically devastating activities faced by Organ Pipe (Lissoway, 2004). In 1962, for example, the NPS asserted,

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<sup>4</sup> Because Organ Pipe is a national monument, restrictions on livelihood activities are relatively fluid. Many conservationists wanted to turn it into a national park, which would have required a ban on all non-recreational activities.

“elimination of grazing rights and unrestricted mining and prospecting is the key to wilderness and park preservation” (USNPS, 1962). Three years later, the agency argued, “grazing [given its deleterious impact on the area’s ecology] could defeat the purpose for which the Monument was established” (USNPS, 1965, 34).

One local family, the Grays, which had kept a ranch (called Bates Well, see Figure 3) on the lands of what became Organ Pipe since 1919 (Lissoway, 2004, 68), fought for decades to maintain grazing rights for hundreds of cattle in the monument. Given the size of the Gray herd, the family became the focus of the NPS’s efforts to eliminate ranching. As the family attorney wrote in 1954, “it appears to me that the Park Service is hell-bent, not only to run the Indian, but also the Grays out of the area” (Lissoway, 2004, 92). Despite such characterizations, it took until 1968, in a context when the importance of ecological criteria for national park management was growing within the NPS and when the damage brought about by the Gray’s ranching operation was becoming increasingly evident, for the agency to cancel the family’s grazing permit (Lissoway, 2004, 114). Still, it was not until 1976, following a long legal battle and the deaths of two senior Gray family members, that the agency removed all their cattle from the park— and two years later, the NPS would end all mining activities in the monument as well (see Lissoway, 2004).

The “cleansing” of Quitobaquito Springs and the ending of the Gray family’s ranching represent a small sample of myriad NPS endeavors to empty Organ Pipe of residents and livelihood-related activities not related to the running of the monument. They speak to the significant human effort involved in constructing a space designated as pristine desert, as one largely beyond human activity. Through the legitimization of Organ Pipe as a wilderness along the U.S.-Mexico boundary in need of protection by federal authorities, the NPS created a place that needed to be preserved for the benefit of a nationalized, U.S. American “us” and, by extension, protected from a foreign “them.” A key component of this project involved the bounding of the monument as U.S. American territory and the enactment of a host of related practices to protect the space from what were perceived as extra-territorial threats.

What constitutes the perceived threats from without and the practices aimed at repelling them have both endured in various ways and changed markedly over the many decades since the monument’s founding. Regardless of whether the threats and practices are “old” or “new,” we should see them as dynamically connecting past and present. In this regard, the past lives on in the OPCNM in the policing of its territory and the regulation of mobility within. We turn to this past in the following section.

## **Delimiting Nature and Producing Different Types of Walkers in an Occupied Land**

As demonstrated in the previous section, what Sarah Jaquette Ray (2013) calls the “ecological other”—social groupings constructed as dangerous to nature—and part of what we term “anti-nature” (the antithesis of that which is perceived as “nature” and who is deemed as belonging within) has taken many forms in Organ Pipe. In terms of the preserve’s establishment and construction over its first few decades, anti-nature was largely internal to the monument’s space and that of the United States more broadly. Yet efforts to regulate extra-national-territorial “threats” have also always been a significant component of the monument’s making—particularly over the last two decades. They have been vital to the production within the monument of the (authorized) visitor and the (unauthorized) migrant and many of their associated characteristics (such as those relating to the quality of their behavior in “nature”), as well as to the U.S-Mexico boundary’s making.

With Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument’s establishment, the Park Service decided to fence the perimeter of the park in order to “gain a measure of physical and symbolic control over the land” (Lissoway, 2004, 40). Fencing, the NPS argued, would deter hunting and woodcutting, limit grazing to certain areas, and discourage trespassing onto monument lands. Thus, in the 1940s, the NPS summoned the Civilian Conservation Corps, a key labor source for U.S. public land management agencies during the Great Depression, to build a fence. World War II, however, delayed its completion. While this effort was aimed at limiting perceived threats both “domestic” and “foreign,” an outbreak of hoof-and-mouth disease and the fear that Mexican cattle might cross the boundary and infect U.S. cattle brought to the fore perceived dangers emanating from Mexico. This epidemiological threat provided the impetus for the NPS to complete the fence along the monument’s southern boundary on December 26, 1947. The NPS regional director at the time celebrated the achievement, claiming that the new barrier would “settle once and for all the trouble of trespass on the Organ Pipe Cactus boundary” (quoted in Lissoway, 2004, 43).

That the fence did not “settle once and for all the trouble of trespass” is a manifestation of the dynamic ties of transnational mobility that have long been part of the space which is now Organ Pipe. Indeed, “[t]he area has long been crossed by migrants, traders, miners, missionaries, tourists, and travelers” (Piekielek, 2009, 41). Starting as early as 1500 BC, for instance, Hohokam people passed through the space of Organ Pipe as part of an annual salt pilgrimage, whereby they would mine and carry rock salt from the shores of the Gulf of California (in present-day Mexico) back to their homes in the Arizona desert, a quest driven by religious beliefs as well as sustenance. Similarly, the Tohono O’odham carried salt across the desert into the 20th century (Greene, 1977, 11).

Since the late 1800s, the area has served as a space of transshipment of illicit goods by smugglers—including opium in the early 1900s, weaponry (from the United States to Mexico) during the time of the Mexican Revolution, and alcohol (especially mescal and tequila) during the Prohibition era (1920-1933) (Piekielek, 2009, 63). As for unauthorized migrants, they have been crossing from Mexico through the land that is now Organ Pipe since the very establishment of the U.S.-Mexico boundary. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, many Chinese migrants arrived in Mexico and utilized the relative remoteness (in terms of the lack of urban settlement and the presence of U.S. authorities) of much of Arizona's southern boundary to circumvent the apparatus of control associated with the Chinese Exclusion Act to enter the United States (see Lee, 2003). Chinese migrants often traveled by foot over El Camino del Diablo (The Devil's Highway)—a more-than-one-thousand-year-old trail that passes through Quitobaquito Springs and that has seen many migrant deaths (see, e.g., Annerino, 1999; Urrea, 2004)—a dangerous journey that they, similar to contemporary migrants, were often ill-prepared to take (see Lee, 2003). An individual who worked as a "line rider" for the Immigration Service (a forerunner of the U.S. Border Patrol) in and around what is today the monument between 1904 and 1908 estimated that he had tracked between 300 and 500 Chinese migrants in the area (Piekielek, 2009, 63-64).

Unauthorized migration by Mexican nationals in the area did not become a "problem" for U.S. officials until much later. In the first few decades of the monument's existence, unauthorized immigration from Mexico occurred at low levels in the space of the park. While it began to increase in the mid-1960s and, again, in the 1980s, neither unauthorized immigration nor smuggling were significant concerns of NPS staff during this time. Nor were they major concerns for the U.S. Border Patrol. Indeed, until the mid-1990s, the Border Patrol station responsible for the Organ Pipe area (located in Ajo, Arizona) never had more than 20 agents on staff (Piekielek, 2009, 63-66). Still, the very fact that NPS administrators felt it sufficiently noteworthy to report in the 1940s and 1950s that unauthorized migrants were passing through the monument or that they had apprehended some and turned them over to the U.S. Border Patrol (see Piekielek, 2009) demonstrates that they were already having "success" in distinguishing between different types of walking bodies and policing those deemed not to belong.

The NPS seemed to have a strong idea by the mid-20th century about the characteristics of the appropriate walker in Organ Pipe and the benefits accruing to the nation due to the presence of this "modern visitor." According to an NPS document, this idealized visitor "will benefit from his wilderness experience; and his country will, in turn, benefit from his widened horizon" (USNPS, 1956. 2).

He [sic] comes today, largely for relaxation it is true, but he also comes for diversion, for fulfillment of subconscious desires, to satisfy his curiosity. His spirit is as that of old - adventure; a burning to view new, distant scenes. He seeks to 'discover' or to see things

‘as they were.’ In these respects our modern visitor differs little from those men of yesterday. Man's fascination with wilderness does not die (USNPS, 1956, 2).

Between 1943 and 1950, the annual number of such masculinized, wilderness-loving “modern visitors” more than tripled—from 50,842 per year to 155,875. This marked growth was perceived both positively and as a reason for concern by the NPS; as one agency document stated in 1955, “this area has a good start toward being ‘loved to death’ by well-meaning visitors” (quoted in Lissoway, 2004, 96).

This characterization of tourists as “well-meaning” manifests the “ecological legitimacy” (Pulido, 1996; see also Ray, 2013) enjoyed by the welcome visitor (presumably a U.S. citizen—at least in the vast majority of cases), just as does the unfettered mobility that she enjoys within the monument. Conversely, the unauthorized migrant, simply by virtue of her very presence in the space, is unwelcome, the antithesis of nature, and marked as ecologically illegitimate. Just as “[c]itizens, allowed to move freely, depend on the noncitizens, the aliens who are not free to move in the same way” (Cresswell, 2006, 15), those who enjoy ecological legitimacy depend on those who do not; they are co-productive.

These dynamics dovetailed with larger shifts related to the construction over time of the “illegal” as an existential threat to the United States as a nation-state and to the growing acceptance, and often embracement, of the U.S.-Mexico boundary within the national body politic as a line of socio-spatial control (Nevins, 2008, 2010). When unauthorized immigration in southern Arizona grew markedly in the mid- to late 1990s as migrants were “squeezed” out of traditional migration corridors in more urbanized areas and pushed into more arduous terrain (Andreas, 2009; Dunn, 2009; Nevins, 2008, 2010), the ideological and infrastructural tools were well in place to make distinctions between those who belonged in Organ Pipe and those who did not. As in many places in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the growth in unauthorized migration through Organ Pipe coincided with an increase in drug smuggling in the area (Piekielek, 2009, 73) and blurred the distinction between migrants and traffickers in the minds of many. This facilitated the perceived need to strengthen the policing apparatus, which saw dramatic growth: between 1994 and 2007, the number of Border Patrol agents stationed in Ajo rose from 14 to approximately 200 (Piekielek, 2009, 76).

As the number of migrants traversing Organ Pipe increased, so did the number of clandestine trails and roads inside the monument, damage to soils and vegetation, and the amount of refuse and belongings they left behind. Noted by many commentators in the media, national politicians, and monument staff (see, e.g., McGivney, 2003; OPCNM, 2011; Slagle, 2012; Tancredo, 2003a and 2003b; Vanderpool, 2002), the “trashing” of Organ Pipe by migrants only added to the impetus to strengthen the bounding and policing of the park (Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007). (Meanwhile, the considerable amounts of trash thrown along the roadways that pass through the monument by U.S. American drivers, and the high

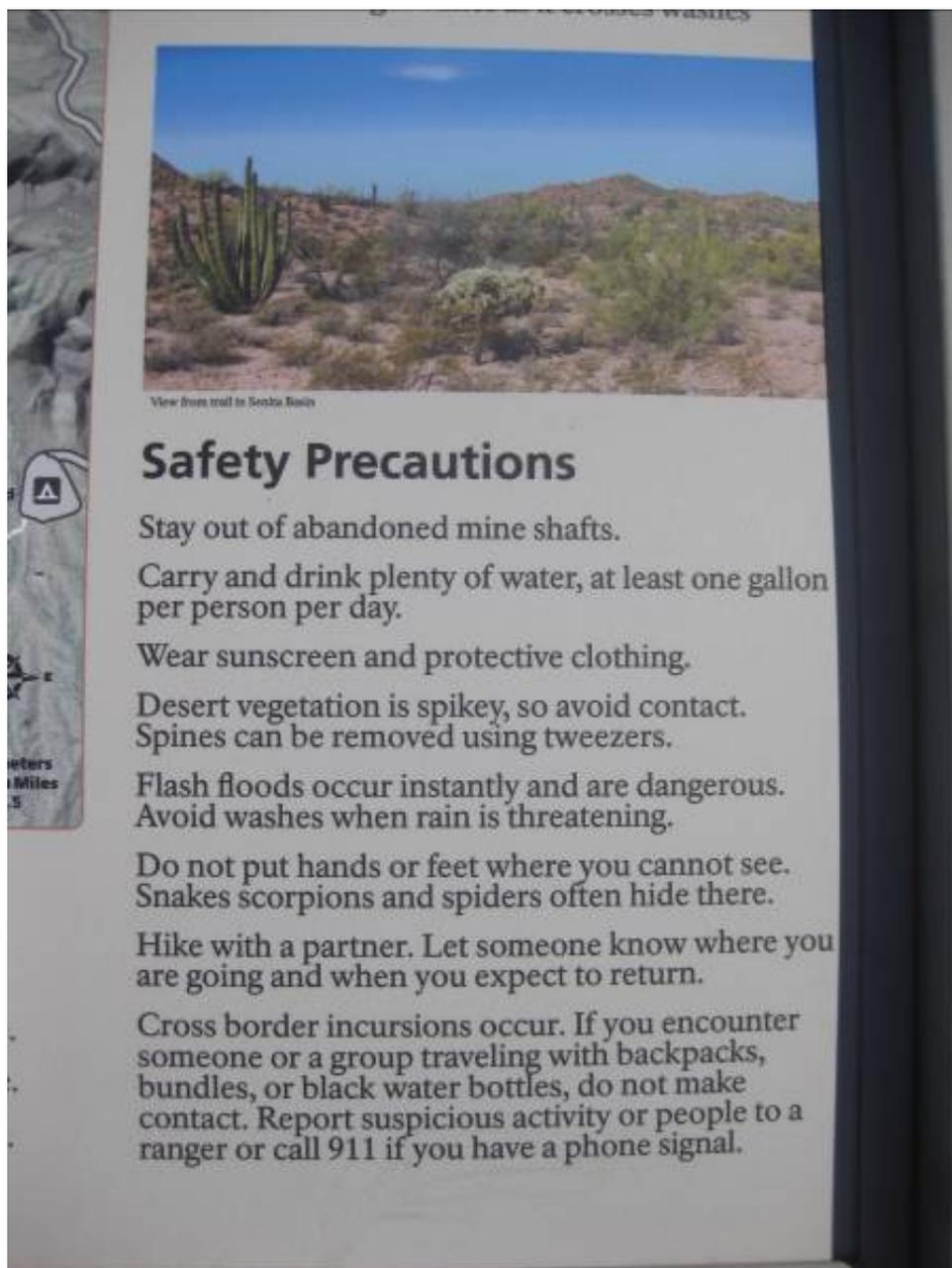
levels of damage done to the fragile landscape by the activities and infrastructure of the Department of Homeland Security, within which resides the Border Patrol, are ignored or, at best, downplayed [see Piekielek, 2009; Reznick and Durand 2017]). At the same time, the conflation of trash with migrants contributed to the construction of migrants as enemies of “nature” and of the United States more broadly (Piekielek, 2009; Ray, 2013; Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007; Sundberg, 2008).

Observers have often described the situation in Organ Pipe in war-like or life-and-death terms, thus portraying illegalized migrants as mobile threats or invaders. One hiker and writer, for example, asserted that “Nowhere is the border war more intense.” “Caught in the crossfire,” he continued, “are a fragile ecosystem, stunned park officials, thousands of desperate migrants, and a dwindling number of backpackers” (McGivney, 2003). Another article, citing the National Parks Conservation Association, reported that the “park is being trampled to death” (Author unknown, 2004), while a headline for a different article spoke of “Parks Under Siege” (Vanderpool, 2002).

Key to the work that such characterizations do is the masking of the violence that brought the land of Organ Pipe into U.S. possession in the first place and that which subsequently unfolded in the very making of the monument as nationalized nature. In this regard, if we take to heart Wainwright’s (2005, 1034) assertion that the seeming “objectivity of a space is a problem to be explained, and not a scale of analysis to be embraced,” we can flip the script from one of a park under siege to a land under occupation. For those now defined as invaders of nation and nature, they and their ancestors are the dispossessed: they lost not only land but also—for those now cut off by a boundary policing apparatus from territory to which they (and their forbearers) previously had access—all the associated rights, like the rights to move, live, relax, and work within the area (see Nevins, 2011).

Those who succeed—even temporarily—in overcoming the policing apparatus, the “walking others,” are made visible within the park’s space in a host of ways, not least through the literature and OPCNM’s website. Similarly, signs throughout warn (authorized) visitors of possible dangers in the form of “[c]ross border incursions” and invite them to participate in its policing through instructions to “not make contact” if “you encounter someone or a group traveling with backpacks, bundles, or black water bottles” and to call 911 immediately (see Figure 4). (Presumably, the suspicious person[s] looks very different from the appropriate visitors who are often likely also carrying backpacks.) Along with the presence of U.S. Border Patrol checkpoints at the entrance of, near, and inside the monument—in addition to many Border Patrol agents and vehicles within the preserve—and the larger infrastructure of exclusion (e.g. vehicle barriers, walls, fences, surveillance towers) associated with a militarized (Dunn, 1996) divide with Mexico, these “technologies” help to mark walking bodies of the “wrong” sort. They also dovetail with a larger (and historically deeper) discourse of fear relating to the U.S.-Mexico boundary and that which is beyond (see Martínez, 1995; Nevins, 2010), and the

very nature of “nature” in Organ Pipe. In doing so, they help NPS staff and the “modern visitor” to “see like a state” (Scott, 1998) as well as to act like one —the U.S. state— in relation to official practices of socio-territorial exclusion and environmental protection, and to identify those bodies who do not belong, who are enemies of the nation-state project. The armed tours are the logical extension of this project.



**Figure 4:** Portion of sign in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, 2015. Photo by Adriana Provenzano.

## Conclusion: A Conservation of Violence

On September 15, 2014, the NPS re-opened all 517 square miles of Organ Pipe—after 11 years of various levels of closure—“to hikers, birders and desert lovers,” one journalist reported (Peterson, 2014). Sue Walter, the monument’s chief of interpretation, presented the new situation as follows: “No more armed guards. . . . [The border] has surveillance towers, vehicle barriers, pedestrian fences. We’re educating visitors and they can make their own decisions about whether they feel comfortable [going into the backcountry].” Moreover, the park has 20 NPS law enforcement officers, up from five in 2003. Meanwhile, the number of U.S. Border Patrol agents in the area (operating out of the Ajo Station) has reached 500, a more than 20-fold increase from the time of Kris Eggle’s murder (Peterson, 2014; see also Gaynor, 2015; OPCNM 2014). In other words, armed guards, while no longer escorting tours, are still present in and around the monument—indeed, in far larger numbers prior to the monument’s closure—with the vast majority of them U.S. Border Patrol agents. Thus, the militarization of nature embodied by the armed tours has not ended. Indeed, it has increased, but its visibility and how it manifests itself in relation to the monument’s landscape have changed.

The policing apparatus’s amplification is consistent with the historical evolution of violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. From the time of the “founding” of the U.S. Southwest, and of Organ Pipe in particular, as U.S. territory, which entailed what various analysts (e.g. Mayer, 2002) have called a “violence of foundation,” the preponderance of violence has now shifted towards institutionalized forms embedded in a landscape and infrastructure predicated on exclusion of undesired “others.” This “violence of conservation” (see Mayer, 2002) is one whose manifestations and power in the context of Organ Pipe has grown tremendously since the early 2000s, and is indicative of the NPS quest to “retake this landscape so we can all be free to be out here,” as one ranger put it in 2012 (Goodwin, 2012).

That the “we” referred to by the ranger excludes many speaks to a “violence of conservation” distinct from the normal use of the term. It is one concerned with protecting “nature” so that the “modern visitor” can move through Organ Pipe unhindered, while trying to ensure that the wrong kind of person—the one raced, classed, and nationalized as “other” in the form of the unauthorized immigrant—cannot. Or, as *The Guardian*’s summary of one of its articles asserts, boundary policing in relation to Organ Pipe involves “two different types of visitor: one seeking recreation, the other survival” (Carroll, 2015).

By claiming space, and by engaging in associated practices of territoriality (see Sack, 1986; Delaney, 2005; Elden, 2013), OPCNM and its agents normalize the connection between nature, citizen, and nation as defined by the U.S. state (see Kosek, 2006; Sundberg and Kaserman, 2007). They also enact coloniality in that nature is imagined and produced as almost museum-like, as separate from humans (see Jackson, 2014), while space is regulated in a manner consistent with the U.S.

settler-colonial takeover of the Southwest. Thus, when illegalized “others” enter into the heavily “homeland securitized” space of Organ Pipe, they are perceived as jeopardizing both individual bodies (like that of Kris Eggle) and the national body (the United States of America) as well as the “nature” claimed in the nation-state’s name. In turn, the presence of the illegalized migrant helps to justify the militarized efforts to police the space, which furthers its nationalization (see Peluso and Vandergeest, 2011), a form of state violence made acceptable to the broad (U.S.) public by the erasure of the historical-geographical and socionatural contexts out of which it emerged (see Correia, 2008). Similarly, when institutions and individuals perceive and construct migrants as embodiments of anti-nature, they support both a violence of foundation and one of conservation, with its harmful and often deadly consequences: While no one knows precisely how many migrants have died in the monument in recent years, U.S. Border Patrol agents and humanitarian aid workers, from groups such as the Tucson, Arizona-based No More Deaths, find one set of human remains there per month on average (Carroll, 2015). According to another source (Trevizo, 2014), more than 100 sets of remains had been found in the monument between 2001 and 2014.

As this article demonstrates, there is nothing “natural” about the nature of OPCNM, nor about the deaths of illegalized people passing through its space. It could have been and could still be radically different so as to allow for the flourishing of flora and fauna, as well as for the well-being of the human beings who visit the monument, work there, pass through it, or live around it. Such a project is necessarily tied to new, expansive forms of security—a security concerned with all human beings (see Hyndman, 2004; Nguyen, 2016, 241) as well as with other-than-humans (see Sundberg, 2017)—and requires the decolonization of the monument as well as its “queering” (see Gandy, 2012). Decolonization would entail a re-imagining of Organ Pipe’s “nature” and its related forms of spatiality so that they serve to support rather than repel those who find themselves reliant on the monument for their well-being—regardless of species, and, in terms of humans, their place of birth, national citizenship, immigration status, or other forms of “difference” (e.g. class, gender, race). Queering OPCNM takes the reworking of its space even further. Moving beyond a concern with sexuality, queering would involve a re-casting of the space as inclusive, fluid, heterotopic, and radically democratic (see Gandy, 2012; Oswin, 2008)— as a space that has a mixed identity, one always in process, and not predicated on inequity (in terms of different types of body on the move) and hierarchy. This would entail embracing what Massey (2005) calls the “challenge of space,” so as to allow for diversity and flexibility both in terms of who is embraced and what types of activities are permitted within the monument, and permitting encounters based on “randomness, chance, and confrontation with difference” (Staehli and Mitchell, 2006, 978) rather than its simple rejection. In other words, to move beyond the myriad forms of violence that have shaped Organ Pipe since its inception and through its development necessitates, among other things, the construction of new socionatures. It also demands a reworking of the U.S.-Mexico boundary, the

nation-states it helps define, and the associated socio-territorial expressions (see, for example, Bryan, 2012; Wolkin and Nevins, 2018), not least those entangled with mobility.

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