In recent years borders have become an important concern not only of research but also of political and artistic practice. Contrary to the vision of a borderless world that shaped debates on globalization in the 1990s, there is today a pronounced awareness of the increasing presence of borders. This article presents excerpts from a forthcoming book titled *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* that charts this proliferation of borders, investigating its implications for migratory movements, capitalist transformations, and political life. The book probes the atmospheric violence that surrounds borderlands and border struggles across different geographical scales. It takes distance from the exclusive focus on exclusion and the fixation on the image of the wall that animates many studies of borders and migration.

We approach the border not just as a research object but also as an epistemic framework through which to examine the paradox that boundaries between inclusion and exclusion seem to be breaking down at the same time as points of differentiation and control are multiplying. This allows us to provide new perspectives on the crisis and transformations of the nation-state as well as reassessments of political concepts such as citizenship and sovereignty. Along with the analysis of geopolitical borders, the book examines more elusive lines of demarcation, ranging from linguistic and urban borders to the boundaries circumscribing special economic zones. It also analyzes current capitalist transitions and transformations of labour to test some of the most
cherished notions and theoretical paradigms produced by political economy and the social sciences—from the international division of labour to the topography of centre and periphery. Border as Method shows how the proliferation of borders is deeply implicated in the operation of old and new devices of dispossession and exploitation. It also provides impetus for border struggles, contributing to the debates on political subjectivity surrounding the emergence of a new politics of the common.

**THE PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF MODERN CARTOGRAPHY**

A sense of cartographic anxiety permeates the contemporary discussion on borders. To be sure, it is a pronounced feature of work that investigates what Étienne Balibar describes as the “vacillating” quality of borders—their tendency to be “multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function,” to be “thinned out and doubled,” to form “zones, regions, or countries.” The perception that the border is “no longer at the border, an institutional site that can be materialized on the ground and inscribed on the map” has significant consequences for theories and practices of mapping. Even in work that retains a strong sense of borders as territorial edges between sovereign states, the question of the reliability and influence of cartographic representation has become unavoidable.

It is not enough to imagine a border politics that remains caught in the regression between epistemology and boundary drawing. Also crucial is the ontological sense in which borders are involved in making or creating worlds—their role in the scene of fabri
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ca mundi, to pick up an expression circulating among Renaissance philosophers such as Pico della Mirandola and Giordano Bruno. The concept of fabri
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ca mundi resonates with the celebrated image of the homo faber fortune
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saev (“man as master and creator of his own destiny”), employed by these thinkers to designate the liberation of “man” from the subjugation to natural and transcendent forces. It is salutary to keep in mind that Gerardus Mercator, the first “scientific” cartographer, also mobilized this concept in the title of his Atlas sive cosmogra
ic
phae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figurae (1595). Only by heeding the world-making capacity of borders is it possible to discern their role in the processes of accumulation and exploitation that arose with mapping the modern world.

The emergence of the cartographic gaze has been investigated from a wide variety of angles. Less explored are the implications of the use of the expression fabri
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ca mundi in the title of Mercator’s Atlas, as well as in the works of other early modern geographers. Twenty years before Mercator, Giovanni Lorenzo d’ Ancona, a Calabrian scholar who specialized in geography and demonology, called his geographical treatise L’universale fabri
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ca del Mondo overo cosmografia (1573). Geographia naturalis, sive, fabrica
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ca mundi sublunaris ab artifice et artihore satura inventa et elaborata (1703) was the title of a work by Heinrich Scherer. In these works, particularly in Merca
tor’s Atlas, the term fabri
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ca mundi comes to denote the “proportion,” the “order,” or “texture” of the world the map is supposed to represent. Early modern cartographers participate in a process of abstracting the meanings of the word fabri
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ca that can be traced in medicine, astronomy, and architecture between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this period, fabri
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ca comes to describe the fabricated work itself, rather than the process of its fabrication. The original theological meaning of fabri
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ca mundi (as present, for instance, in the work of the early Christian writer Victor
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inus of Pettau) is thus transposed into the image of the perfection of the object under investigation (from Vesal
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ius’s human body to Palladio’s buildings to Mercator’s world). What is lost in this transposition is precisely the act or the process of creation, which was at the core of the reinvention of materialism in the humanist thought of the Rena
sance. The use of the expression fabri
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ca mundi signals, in the form of a slippage, the cartographer’s awareness of the fact that representing the world on a map also means producing it. But such aware
ess assumes the form of a disavowal, because the abstraction of the word fabri
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ca—its transposition to denote the produced work, its perfection, propor
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ion, and inner order—obscures the very process of production.

While modern cartography was em
erging in Europe, new lines were being traced, on both European land (in the forms of the enclosures of the commons that marked what Karl Marx called the so-called primitive accumulation of capital) and on the new maps of the Americas, to legally organize the colonial conquest and expansion of European powers. Trac
ing these lines anticipated and made possible the establishment of linear borders among European nation-states in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia. Once we consider this entanglement of lines, another meaning of the word fabri
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ca comes to the fore. In his Totius Latinitatis Lexicon (1772), eighteenth
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...Producing the World...
Arnoldo di Arnoldi’s world map printed in 1600 in Siena, based on a map by Dutch cartographer Petrus Plancius in 1592. The relation between the birth of modern cartography and primitive accumulation is explicitly at stake in this work. Artaker uses rubbings from a historical silver coin minted in Potosí at the end of the sixteenth century to superimpose on her copy of the original map “the sea routes on which the silver traveled eastward [toward Europe] and westward [through Manila toward China] from Potosí around the world.” The global channels of the new trade and monetary circuits of capital are thus inscribed on the map, and so is the materiality underlying the emergence of the first global currency, made possible by the extraction of silver from the mines of the Cerro Rico (the “Rich Mountain”) of Potosí. Artaker’s map sheds light on the logistics underlying the abstract power of money (the channels of silver circulation, the galleons carrying it, and the new global geography opened up in the Pacific by the Spanish conquest of Manila in 1571). At the same time, its location in the exhibition unearths the “secret” of its production: the “tens of thousands of Indios working in forced labour under deadly conditions.”

This global scene of the primitive accumulation of capital provides another point of view on the birth of modern cartography. The connection between map making and modern colonialism has been often noted and critically investigated, stressing, for instance, the role played by atlases in illustrating collections of travel reports between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Frank Lestringant writes, the “open form” of the space resulting from the combination of maps, tales, and juridical documents in these collections, its “theoretically unlimited growth,” served to “prepare colonial expansion.” What has been less noted is that the space of modern cartography was definitely “open.” But to open up this space (to open it up at the same time to the primitive accumulation of capital and to colonial expansion), tracing boundary lines of the enclosures famously analyzed by Marx in the final chapter of Capital, volume 1, as well as of the “global lines” of the jus publicum Europaeum reconstructed by Schmitt in The Nomos of the Earth played an absolutely crucial role.

Marx was well aware of the global geography of so-called primitive accumulation. “The discovery of gold and silver in America,” he famously writes, “the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signaled the rosy dawn of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.” Here Marx registers the simultaneous emergence (and structural intertwining) of geographic and cognitive borders in the scene of primitive accumulation.

Cartographic proportion reshapes the world according to its measure and thus inscribes this structural intertwining in the very “metageography” underlying modern maps. It is precisely at this metageographical level that borders begin to crisscross the cartographic imagination from early modernity, collapsing geographical and “civilizational” divides. As Jerry Brotton shows in Trading Territories, the orientation underlying Mercator’s projection was “arguably more complex than simply instating the centrality of Europe.” His world map established “a distinction between a geopolitical East and West which reflected their growing polarization in line with the territorial and commercial interests of the sixteenth-century imperial powers.” It
also contributed to the creation of the epistemic conditions “for the discursive deployment of the idea of the ‘Orient’ within European travel accounts and geographical discourse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which implicitly framed descriptions of an exotic, indolent and mysterious ‘East’ in relation to a dynamic and enlightened ‘West’.”

This is consistent with Walter Mignolo’s investigation of the role of cartography in the colonization of the Americas, which stresses that the process of putting this part of the world on the map from the European perspective in the sixteenth century was a decisive step toward the birth of “Occidentalism.”

Long before the nationalization of territory and state that determined the generalization of the linear border within European space, early modern maps had already anticipated the connection between boundary lines, the territorialization of identity, and even civilizational thought. They established a cognitive border that anticipated later divides between the “West and the Rest.” The operation of this border (as well as of borders in general) cannot be simply described in terms of exclusion. To be produced as the Rest (and to be constructed and excluded as its other), the non-Western world already had to be included in the West itself, in the hyperbolic moment in which both the West and the Rest (as well as the world itself) are produced. This hyperbolic moment—the ontological moment of the production of the world—is what we must read off modern maps.

The appropriation of space that lies at the core of modern mapping replicates the appropriation of the commons that establishes private property as well as the colonial conquest with its global geography of genocide and extraction. In all these gestures of spatial appropriation, tracing boundary lines played a crucial role: no private property without enclosure, one could say with Marx or for that matter with Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “the first man, who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say this is mine, and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.”

No colonial conquest without the global lines that legally construct non-European spaces as open to conquest, one could say with Schmitt. No modern map, we can now add, without the geographical and cognitive borders that articulate the cartographic production, the fabrication of the world. What we want to stress is precisely this ontological moment of production connected with tracing borders. Just as classical political economy removed from the historical horizon of capitalism the “original sin” and violence of primitive accumulation, naturalizing the “laws” of capitalist accumulation, so modern cartography congealed the ontological moment of the fabrication of the world, constructing its epistemology on the idea of a natural proportion and measure of the world, an abstracted fabrica mundi to be projected onto maps. The naturalization of geographical and cognitive borders was the necessary outcome of this epistemological move. At stake in border as method is an attempt to rescue this ontological moment congealed in modern mapping, to open up a space in which a different understanding of the production of the world becomes possible.

Franco Farinelli notes the elective affinity between cartographic symbols and money in capitalist societies. Where, as the first work on the map and the second works in the market, they both perform the role of “general equivalents,” making space and commodities commensurable. This means that the logic of exchange value permeates modern cartographic reasoning from the time of its emergence in the same way it constitutes the conceptual skeleton of the “phantom-like objectivity” of the world made by commodity fetishism. As Société Réaliste, a Paris-based cooperative created by artists Ferenc Gróf and Jean-Baptiste Naudy, writes in the introduction to the catalog of an exhibition in which cartography features prominently among the topics of artistic intervention, “Gerardus Mercator may be the Latin translation of the Flemish name Gerhard de Kremer, but the fact remains that mercator means ‘the merchant’.”

We know that Mercator was a good merchant. We are well informed about his “ability to combine geographical skill with an astute management of the commercial and political implications of his work,” converting his products, at the dawn of “print-capitalism,” into “some of the most sought after in sixteenth-century Europe.” But the very space produced by the modern cartographic gaze is what transposed onto maps the sovereignty of the commodity form.

Many authors have investigated the development of the link between modern geography, maps, and commodity fetishism, following, for instance, the analysis of the economy of display and mass consumption in urban life provided by Walter Benjamin in The Arcades Project. Our intention has been to work from within the conceptual and material space established by this link, bringing to light the ontological moment that produces it and illuminating the function of the intertwined action of cognitive and geographical borders in what we call the primitive accumulation of modern cartography.

The world market and the international division of labour

We have emphasized the production of global space as a densely heterogeneous field in which borders and differences are always made rather than given. This implied an emphasis on fabrica mundi that showed how ontological questions of world-making are neither prior nor anterior to social, political, and economic processes of spatial transformation, but, indeed, historically and temporally coeval with them. Now, we switch our attention to the global constitution of economic space, keeping in view the ontological complexities we previously explored and their implications for the production of subjectivity. In particular, we hold up to critical interrogation one of the most cherished notions of classical political economy, which has influenced not only debates about the globalization of economic space but also discussions of labour history, labour politics, and labour processes: the concept of the international division of labour.

Capitalist production processes are organized in hybrid and flexible networks that extend across increasingly abstracted global terrains. From this point of view, arguments about the international division of labour must focus not only on differentials of class and wealth but also on the borders established by differences of gender and race. Border as method seeks to critically discern these modes of differentiation and assess their relevance for border struggles and the various forms of political subjectivity to which they give rise. This involves an investigation of the intertwining of the economic space of capitalism with political and legal spaces, which are no longer fully conjoined in the territorial form of the state. It also requires a reconsideration of the kinds of global mobility that are typically under-
If one looks at the history of economic thought from the early modern age, it is easy to trace a genealogy of the concept of “foreign” and “international” trade, starting with bullionist and mercantilist theories of the balance of trade in the seventeenth century and culminating in the theory of comparative advantages elaborated by David Ricardo in chapter 7 (“On Foreign Trade”) of his seminal work *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817).21

Far more interesting for us here, is to emphasize the conceptual rupture that was produced within this genealogy by the critique of political economy articulated by Marx. A crucial aspect of border as method is the analysis of the articulation and disarticulation of heterogeneous borders and boundaries: first the tense balance and dramatic unbalance between political borders and what we call the *frontiers of capital*, traced not only by capital’s expansionist drive but also by its need to organize space according to multiple hierarchical criteria.

In the famous pages of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Friedrich Engels insisted on the “cosmopolitan character” given to “production and consumption in every country” by the bourgeoisie “through its exploitation of the world market.”22 This emphasis on the *world market*, which is something different from “foreign” or “international” trade, matters to us. In one of the several plans Marx made for his critique of political economy, he explicitly distinguishes the world market from the “international relation,” stressing that the former “forms the presupposition of the whole as well as its substratum.”23 Though the international relation is predicated on the previous moment distinguished in Marx’s plan (the concentration of production in the state), the world market refers to a spatiality of capital that structurally exceeds the topographical space of the state and its related system of international relations. From this point of view, the tension (as well as the necessary articulation) between the frontiers of capital and political borders emerges.

There are at least three aspects of Marx’s concern with the world market that need to be highlighted. First, and this explains our use of the phrase “frontiers of capital,” Marx’s concern with the world market is crucial to forging an analytical framework for the critique of the capitalist mode of production. This critique is entirely built on capital’s structural need to continuously expand itself. Marx writes in the *Grundrisse*: “The tendency to create the world market is directly given in the concept of capital itself. Every limit (Grenze) appears as a barrier to be overcome.”24 It is interesting to note that the German word *Grenze* used by Marx is the same one usually employed to denote a political border. The passage of the *Grundrisse* from which we take this quote is also important from the point of view of the parallel (and once again the articulation) between the analysis of capital’s creation of “absolute surplus value” and “production of relative value”—that is, the “production
scapegoat of surplus value based on the increase and development of the productive forces.\textsuperscript{25} Although the first requires an extensive growth of the spaces subjugated by capital, the second requires an intensive reshaping of the whole social life submitted to the imperative of capital’s accumulation. “The production of new consumption” (which also means the “production of new needs and discovery and creation of new use values”) is crucial in this respect. What is needed, Marx writes, is “that the surplus labour gained does not remain a merely quantitative surplus, but rather constantly increases the circle of qualitative differences within labour (hence of surplus labour), makes it more diverse, more internally differentiated.”\textsuperscript{26}

Although the constitution of the world market is directly posited as the tendency corresponding to the first “extensive” axis of capital’s expansion, it also sets the rule for the second one, which we call “intensive” expansion. Capital’s production of space is characterized from the beginning by the intertwining of these two axes, which leads to the second aspect of Marx’s analysis of the world market that we would like to stress. In a way that is entirely consistent with his method and philosophical approach, the most abstract level of analysis (the world market itself) has direct consequences for the determination of the most concrete aspects of the everyday life of any individual who has entered the realm of capital. The intricate relationship between “home and the world” is already apparent from an economic viewpoint, especially with respect to the “money market.” The world market “is not only the internal market in relation to all foreign markets existing outside it, but at the same time the internal market of all foreign markets as, in turn, components of the home market.”\textsuperscript{27} The reference to money (famously analyzed in the Grundrisse as a “social relation”) is crucial. In fact, he considers the world market as the highest level of representation (and as the last practical guarantee) of both “the connection of the individual with all” and the “independence of this connection from the individual”—that is, according to Marx, of the very material conditions for the possibility of individuals in their modern capitalist shape.\textsuperscript{28} In the middle of the nineteenth century, the world market and the frontiers of capital came to play a crucial role, according to Marx’s analysis, in producing the “spatial coordinates” of the everyday experience of individuals, this in a time during which these same individuals were quite far from having completed their transformation into citizens determined by the linear borders of the modern state.

Once the absolutely concrete nature of the world market has been emphasized, its abstract character also needs to be briefly highlighted. This is the third analytical element we want to pick up from Marx. The world market is not just the scale on which each “industrial capitalist” is compelled to operate, comparing as we read in Capital, volume 3, “his own prices not only with domestic market prices, but with those of the whole world.”\textsuperscript{29} It also becomes more and more—with the progressive “socialization” of capital and its reproduction “on an expanded scale”—the scene of the “turnover” of capital and the “automatization of value as a mere abstraction,” which is to be considered as “abstraction in action.” We are confronted here, as Marx emphasizes in Capital, volume 2, with a movement that is initiated by individual capitalists but always tends to revolve against them, especially in times of crisis: “The more acute and frequent these revolutions in value become, the more the movement of the independent value, acting with the force of an elemental natural process, prevails over the foresight and calculation of the individual capitalist, the more the course of normal production is subject to abnormal speculation, and the greater becomes the danger to the existence of the individual capitalist.”\textsuperscript{30} “The ‘automatization of value’ that takes place within this space nowadays tends to impose its law against ‘individual capitals’ as well as whole ‘nations’ and ‘peoples,’ enormously complicating the relations between the frontiers of capital and political, legal, and cultural borders and boundaries.

It is again in the writings of Karl Marx that we find one of the earliest uses of the phrase “international division of labour,” in close connection with his analysis of the world market. “Before the invention of machinery,” Marx writes in The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), “the industry of a country was exercised principally on the raw material which was the product of its soil.” But “thanks to the machine the spinner can live in England while the weaver dwells in India. Industry becomes detached from the national soil and ‘depends only on the markets of the world, on international exchanges, and on an international division of labour.’”\textsuperscript{31}

Already before the revolutions of 1848, Marx conceived of an international division of labour in relation to a world market and a global scope of proletarian struggles. Although the world was still becoming “international,” the concept...
of international division of labour provided him a theoretical lens for understanding the world scale of capitalist production as well as a material basis for politically anticipating its disruption through the theory and practice of proletarian internationalism. Though this extraordinary political invention was bound to prompt an ambivalent history, made of struggles that changed the shape (and boundaries) of the world as well of catastrophic backlashes of “national interests” (in 1914 no less than in the age of Stalin), the theory of competitive advantages went through a series of complex refinements that laid the foundations for describing the division of the world into discrete labour markets delineated on one hand by the borders of nation-states and on the other by the separation between core and periphery.

In 1937, Jacob Viner summed up the development of such debates when he wrote: “in the analysis of gain from trade, attention was definitely centered upon particular boundaries, enclosing areas of community of interest, and these areas were also generally countries or nations.” The deepening of the meaning of the core-periphery divide for the international division of labour was left in the following decades to (mainstream international division of labour was left...)

**THE MULTIPLICATION OF LABOUR**

Space and territory continue to play a significant role in the composition (as well as the division) of labour. Processes of intensification, diversification, and heterogenization are reshaping labouring lives and conditions across the diverse spaces and scales of capital’s global operations, but they produce very different concrete assemblages of employment and unemployment, misery, subsistence and exploitation, flight, refusal, and struggles. It is certainly still possible to speak of a global division of labour connecting (as well as dividing) workers employed within specific productive cycles and commodity chains. But the concept of an international division of labour is becoming less relevant due to processes of heterogenization that single out regions more than nations as significant economic units. This means that too insistent an emphasis on the element of division can easily obscure the _multiplication of labour_, as well as the subjective tensions, movements, and struggles that crisscross it.

While the expanding frontiers of capital have pushed the world market onto the new dimension of global financial circuits. The arrangements of microcredit are one means by which the entire life of these masses is coded as human capital that should not be wasted (although it is often wasted) but compelled to generate value according to the logic of abstract labour. The generalization of abstraction labour does not delete the gap that separates it from living labour. On one hand, this gap widens in the actual processes and form of labour; in this sense, its multiplication plays the role of divide and rule. On the other hand, living labour has still the chance to refuse to subordinate itself to the norm of abstract labour—or at least to negotiate its subordination. From this point of view, multiplication can become an incalculable element in the relations between capital and labour, giving rise to unforeseeable tensions, movements, and struggles.