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PHOTOFORUM

Roger Eberhard. Human Territoriality

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Content

Human Territoriality

Human Territoriality is the result of a three years research by Swiss artist Roger Eberhard, during which he photographed former border sites – both recent and historical ones – around the world. His apparently perfectly serene images stand in a dialogue with texts recounting the major and minor historical episodes linked to the photographs; often tragic, sometimes innocuous, and other times surprisingly peaceful. These places reveal the incessant need for demarcation between oneself and others in successive human societies.

These boundaries have all shifted over time, in some cases only by metres, considerably in others, for a broad range of reasons. Conquests, peace treaties, but also non-hostile exchanges or even trade have constantly re-defined and redrawn the maps. Climate change as well as man-made transformations to the landscape have led to new territorial alignments. Some borders have disappeared in the wake of the collapse of powerful empires and even entire civilisations over the millennia. Roger Eberhard's corpus of some fifty photographs, supplemented by their detailed captions, thus helps us to grasp the protean puzzle of world cartography. They allow us to grasp the instability inherent to these man-made demarcations, as well as the geographical, political and symbolic importance of these territorial boundaries. Devoid of any human figure, they invite us to contemplate and reflect on the ways in which a territory can embody the partitions between us and the others.

Artist statement

"Borders are a means of separation. They create a barrier between two sides, a clear demarcation of here and there. Although built for eternity, there is no border in history that has not disappeared. There is a certain irony in the discrepancy between knowing that one's border will eventually change or even completely vanish and the large amount of pride and protectionism some individuals or entire nations demonstrate on their behalf."

Events & publication

Two talks with the artist and a speaker accompany the exhibition: one with Tobia Bezzola, art historian and director of MASILugano, and the other with Simon J. A. Mason, researcher and mediator specialising in border issues, from the Center for Security Studies (CSS) of the ETH Zurich.

Human Territoriality is also the subject of a monographic publication, published in March 2020 by Patrick Frey (hardcover, 116 pages, 51 colour plates). It includes an essay by Henk van Houtum, professor of political geography and geopolitics at Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands).

Biography

Roger Eberhard (*1984) is a Swiss artist and photographer based in Zurich. He studied at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, USA, before obtaining his master's degree at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste in Zurich. His work has been regularly exhibited internationally since 2006, mainly in the US, Europe and Switzerland, and has received extensive international media coverage (British Journal of Photography, The Guardian, CNN, The Washington Post, NZZ, Monopol, etc.). He has participated in major international photographic exhibitions, including currently Civilization: The Way We Live Now, presented in major institutions in France, Korea, Australia, China and New Zealand. His work has been the subject of numerous publications by renowned publishers, and Human Territoriality is his ninth monographic publication.

His photographic work, of great conceptual and formal rigour, attempts to document episodes telling of contemporary society, on which he takes a close and almost anthropological look. His bodies of work often focus on historical events which remain marginal or little-known but are fundamentally revealing of contemporary values and ways of life.

Furggsattel, Switzerland

Switzerland is a landlocked country surrounded by ve coun- tries: France, Italy, Austria, Liechtenstein and Germany. Its longest border is with Italy, measuring 782 km and running mostly across the Alps, ranging in altitude from 4,600 m above sea level (east of Dufourspitze) to under 200 m (Lago Maggiore), the highest and lowest points in Switzerland respectively.

Long stretches (totaling 578 km) of the border in this mountain region run along watersheds between the two countries, including 40 km across glaciers. Due to global warm- ing, the glaciers have shrunk consid- erably over the past few years, shifting those watershed boundaries. The melting of the massive Theodul Glacier below the Klein Matterhorn has displaced the corresponding watershed 150 m to the southwest, resulting in a small territorial gain for Switzerland, which was rati ed peacefully by both the Italian and Swiss governments in 2009. So the top station of the ski lift to Furggsattel Glacier, Zermatt, which used to lie in Italy, is now in Switzerland – and the Swiss operators of the ski resort don't have to pay rent to the Italians anymore.

100th Meridian, USA

The border between Mexico and the United States is 3,145 km long. With up to 350 million legal crossings a year, it is the world's most frequently crossed border. Its history has been turbulent and remains politically fraught, thanks not least to current plans to build a wall along its entire length.

Under the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, Spain ceded Florida to the US in exchange for settling territorial disputes in Texas: the US relinquished all claims to the parts of Spanish Texas west of the Sabine River and to other Spanish areas. The treaty also established a US border running through the Rocky Mountains all the way to the Paci c Coastline. Part of this border ran along the 100th meridian between the Arkansas River and Red River.

This treaty had only been in effect for 183 days when Spain recognized Mexican independence in 1821. The Adams-Onís Treaty border was subsequently reestablished by Mexico and the US in the 1828 Treaty of Limits. It remained in place until 1836, when settlers in the region declared Texas an independent republic, which was soon recognized and incorporated into the United States in 1845, triggering the Mexican-American War (1846–1848). In 1848, the present boundaries were drawn in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, making the Rio Grande the US's southern border and ceding California, roughly half of New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona, as well as parts of Wyoming and Colorado to the US.

Crimea, Russia/Ukraine

On February 27, 2014, in the aftermath of the Euromaidan protests and the 2014 Ukrainian revolution, Russian troops took over the Crimean Parliament and captured other strategic sites across the Crimean Peninsula. Within two weeks of the takeover, Russia held a controversial referendum in Crimea: the local population could vote either to join Russia or to re- store the 1992 Crimean constitution, thereby making Crimea signi cantly more autonomous from Ukraine. Preserving the Ukrainian constitutional status quo was not on the ballot. After the annexation–one of the biggest land grabs in Europe since WWII – the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution declaring the Crimea referendum invalid. Sanctions were imposed on Russia, which was suspended from the intergovernmental political forum G8 as well.

But that wasn't the rst hostile takeover of the peninsula, not even by the Russians. With its strategically important location on the Black Sea, Crimea has been fought over time and again down through history. The ancient Greeks (ruins of the Greek city Myrmekion are visible in the photograph) and Romans both incorporated Taurica, as it was then called, into their empires. Ottoman rule over the peninsula, established in the mid-1400s, was brought to an end in 1783 by Russian an- nexation under Catherine the Great.

After occupation by Nazi Germany during WWII, it be- came a Russian oblast. Then, after Stalin's death, Soviet pre- mier Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea to Ukraine in 1954. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Crimea voted for independence from Russia and to remain part of Ukraine. In 1997, Russia and Ukraine signed a Treaty on Friendship, Co- operation and Partnership, allowing Russia to keep its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol and con rming both parties' inviolable borders – a pledge the Russians obviously reneged on in February 2014.

24th Parallel South, Chile

The Boundary Treaty of 1866 established the 24th parallel south, from the Pacific coast to the Andes, as the border between Chile and Bolivia. It was agreed that the two countries would share tax revenues generated by mineral exports from all territories between the 23rd and 25th parallels. To take advantage of the growing demand for minerals extracted in the area, Bolivia then decided to increase taxes on Chilean companies – despite having agreed not to do so for 25 years. The resulting con ict erupted into the War of the Pacific from 1879–1883. Chile's victory enabled it to enlarge its territory by annexing parts of southern Peru as well as Bolivia's coastline.

90 years later, under Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (1915– 2006), the country's relations with Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru tensed up again. Pinochet feared ground invasions from across the Atacama Desert as well as from Patagonia, so he had his army bury 180,000 land mines along the Chilean border. Thousands of mines remain buried to this day and have so far injured or killed over 170 people as well as countless cat- tle and llamas. The main problem with clearing the landmines is their location in remote and high-altitude areas that are dif cult to reach. In 2001, Chile rati ed the Ottawa Treaty, agreeing to dig up and destroy all its anti-personnel mines by 2020.

Dahala Khagrabari, Bangladesh

One of the world's most fascinating cartographical oddities ceased to exist on July 31, 2015, when India and Bangladesh signed a treaty to swap border territories–more than 40 years after the rst boundary lines were drawn. The Indo-Bangladeshi border included almost 200 small enclaves in the Rangpur Division of Bangladesh and along the eastern edge of India's Cooch Behar District: 102 little bits of India surrounded by Bangladesh and 71 splinters of Bangladesh surrounded by India. Life was hard for the 50,000 people living in these landlocked archipelagoes as they were denied IDs, civil rights and legal assistance from their own country. Not only that, but the country surrounding them would not grant them access to schools, electricity or health care.

According to folklore, this geographical patchwork dates back to the early 18th century, when the Raja of Cooch Behar and the Nawab of Rangpur challenged each other to a game of either chess or cards: they used small plots of land or villages along the border between them as stakes in the fateful game. More likely, this cartographical puzzle came about in 1713 owing to vague border de nitions in a treaty between the Kingdom of Cooch Behar and the Mughal Empire. Regardless of its historical origins, the problem only became apparent after the Partition of India in 1947: someone living in an enclave would require a visa to enter the surrounding foreign country, but to obtain such a visa they had to travel to a major city in their own country, which was, of course, impossible without illegally entering the foreign country surrounding the enclave. The most extreme example of this territorial folly is Dahala Khagrabari, a 0.7-hectare piece of Indian farmland – roughly the size of a football eld. Like a Russian doll, Dahala Khagrabari was surrounded by a larger Bangladeshi patch of land called Upanchowki Bhajni, which was lodged within the Indian enclave of Balapara Khagrabari, which, in turn, was situated in Bangladesh. Which made Dahala Khagrabari the world's one and only third-order enclave.

Magersfontein, South Africa

Before the rst Europeans arrived in the area between the Orange and Vaal rivers in what is now South Africa, it was home to the semi-nomadic Bantu peoples. In the 19th century, itinerant farmers of Dutch descent, called Boers, undertook what is known as the Great Trek: heading north from the Brit- ish Cape Colony, they crossed the Orange River and settled the area. The British annexed the land between the two rivers in 1848. However, after failing to build an orderly administration and after continual skirmishes with the Basotho (a Bantu ethnic group), they eventually withdrew from the area and relinquished sovereignty. The Bloemfontein Convention of 1854 recognized the independence of the local Boer settlers and their Orange Free State.

The discovery of diamonds and gold brought new tension into the region as the Boers and the British vied for control over the very lucrative mining business. Britain's desire to incorporate the two independent Boer states Transvaal and the Orange Free State into her realm, as well as the Boers' fear of becoming a minority in their own land due to the massive in ux of British workers to the mines, eventually led to the so-called Second Boer War (1899–1902).

The Boers' initial attacks were successful and they soon besieged the mining city of Kimberley. British forces tried to relieve the siege of Kimberley on December 11, 1899, but their attempt was foiled at Magersfontein ow- ing to brilliant tactics by the Boers and bad reconnaissance by the British. The Boers, entrenched at the foot of the hills along the border between the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State, survived bombardment by the British artillery and managed to in ict heavy losses on the British army. The British were forced to fall back and wait for reinforcements. Two months later, the siege of Kimberley was lifted and, in late 1900, they invaded the two Boer republics. The Orange Free State ceased to exist after its defeat and surrender to the British Empire at the end of the Boer War in 1902.

Cajón del Maipo, Chili

The Inca first appeared in the Andean region during the 12th century. In its prime (c. 1525), the Inca Empire spanned 5,500 km from northern Ecuador to central Chile. It was the largest empire in pre-Columbian America and possibly the largest empire in the world at that time. At one point the Inca state, known as Tawantinsuyu, ruled over as many as 12 million conquered people from roughly 100 different ethnic groups. The administrative and religious center of the empire was located in Cuzco (a city in modern-day Peru) and had a popu- lation of up to 150,000. The empire expanded at a staggering rate. The Incas built a 40,000 km network of roads, without wheels or iron tools.

The Incas' reign in Chile was comparably brief, from the 1470s to the 1530s, when the Inca Empire collapsed. The main settlements of their empire in Chile lay along the Aconcagua, Mapocho and Maipo rivers. Many modern scholars believe the southern border was situated between Santiago and Cajón del Maipo, maybe even as far south as the river Maule.

The Inca Empire was formed and ruled with brutal force and the rulers were often loathed by their conquered peoples. Rebellions, especially in the northern territories, and a war of succession amongst the Incas weakened the empire in the 15th century. The Spanish conquistadores, led by Francisco Pizarro (1478–1541), took full advantage of this situation. The Spanish brought not only weapons, but also diseases such as smallpox, typhus and measles, which decimated more of the population than any armed conflicts. The Spanish conquered the last Inca stronghold, Vilcabamba, in 1572 and captured and executed their last ruler, Túpac Am-aru (1545–1572).

Events

Opening day
Free admission and drinks
Saturday 19 September 2020 from 11.00 to 16.00
Talk with Roger Eberhard at 16.00 (in German)
Talk with Rudolf Steiner at 17.00 (in German)

Talk with Roger Eberhard and Tobia Bezzola, director, MASILugano
Wednesday 21 October 2020 at 18.30 (in English)

Talk with Roger Eberhard and Simon A. J. Mason, Mediation Team Support, Center for Security Studies (CCS), ETH Zurich
Friday 23 October 2020 at 18.30 (in English)

Guided tours
FR 24 September at 18.30
DE 1 October at 18.30
DE 22 October at 18.30
DE 8 November at 16.00
FR 19 November at 18.30

Useful information

Titel	Roger Eberhard. Human Territoriality
Parallel exhibition	Rudolf Steiner. Ricochet
Dates	19.9. – 22.11.2020
Venue	Photoforum Pasquart
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