Mimi Sheller

Mobility, Mediation and Territoriality on a Haitian-Dominican Border Crossing

Ente di afferenza:
 ()

Mobility, Mediation and Territoriality on a Haitian-Dominican Border Crossing

by Mimi Sheller

1. Introduction

Governance of mobility is a key feature of state-making, which produces and is produced by a dynamic relation between territory (i.e., the spatial limits of the state and the extent of its coercive power, typically marked as a line on a map) and territoriality (i.e., the cross-cutting legal jurisdictions, instruments, codes, and mediations of territory). This article considers mobility regimes at a specific border crossing between the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as a material and performative site of mobility, bordering and debordering through which territoriality is practiced, mediated, and contested. Employing both an autoethnography of the border crossing and a deeper macro-history of colonial and post-independence mobility regimes that have formed and transformed the island of Hispaniola, this article extends relational and processual approaches to mobility, bordering and territoriality. It builds on Claude Raffestin's relational concept of territoriality [Raffestin 1977; 1980; 1984; 1986] especially as interpreted via recent Anglophone socio-spatial theory [Klauser 2012], while also drawing on multi-scalar sociological approaches to territory and debordering [Sassen 2013], critical border studies [Paasi 2012; Geopolitics 2012], and mobilities research [Hannam et al. 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Adey et al. 2013].

The relation between mobility, space and power is an important theme in critical mobilities research [Sheller and Urry 2006; Jensen 2011; Baerenholdt 2013],

which has important implications when applied to contemporary Caribbean bordering processes. Recent analytical approaches to borders understand them not simply as the spatial or jurisdictional edge between two adjacent territories, but rather as "dispersed sets of power relations that are mobilized for various purposes" [Paasi 2012, 2304]. Friction, turbulence, borders and gates are all central to contemporary im/mobilities as described within mobilities research [Hannam et al. 2006; Cresswell 2010; Sheller 2010] as well as in the study of mobility and enclosure at borders within critical migration studies [Heyman and Cunningham 2004]. However, in contrast to recent work that focuses on border crossings of migrants from economically disadvantaged territories into more economically privileged territories – such as the Mexico-U.S. border [Andreas 2000] or the European Union's borders with North Africa and Eastern Europe [Mountz 2010; Jensen and Richardson 2004] – instead the concern here is with privileged travelers transiting between two states in the global south.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share a single island but also share entangled histories of state formation, colonial governance, and neocolonial intervention. From a historical perspective, the colonial Caribbean long entailed extensive global mobilities along with many kinds of immobilities, and both mobility and immobility were often coerced – through slavery, indenture, military conscription, pass-laws, debt bondage, etc. [Sheller 2003]. Today the exercise of neocolonial power also sets some people and things in motion across the Caribbean, while stopping the mobility of others, but it does so in complex and uneven ways. There is a pressing need for better understanding of how bordering occurs between these two neighboring countries, not only because of a long history of border conflicts,[1] but especially in the context of recent tensions over the stripping of citizenship from Dominicans of Haitian ancestry.[2]

Through a relational theory of territoriality and bordering this article seeks to shed new light on the ways in which the Haitian-Dominican border is produced and practiced. The following sections first introduce a relational approach to territoriality as a process of mediation at multiple scales and jurisdictions. Then a brief methodological discussion and description of the historical context of the Haitian-Dominican border sets the scene. The main empirical sections of the article turn to a "thick description" [Geertz 1973] of the physical materiality of the border today, followed by an autoethnography of a border crossing in each direction by a particular kind of

---

[1] On Haitian-Dominican relations, especially in relation to race, ethnicity and nation, see Howard [2001; 2007]; and Torres-Saillant [1998; 2010].

[2] A September 2013 ruling by a Dominican high court is alleged to have stripped citizenship rights from tens of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent and has caused a major crisis in relations between the two countries. The Dominican Constitutional Court's Ruling 0168-13 strips nationality from citizens resident in the Republic since 1929 and their descendants, an estimated 210,000 Dominican-born children, women, and men of Haitian descent.

mobile assemblage: a group of American, Haitian and German researchers traveling from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, and back again, in a truck laden with scientific equipment, funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation.[3] While such an assemblage might normally be considered to occupy a privileged position in crossing borders, instead this account examines how it gets caught up in bordering processes that hinge on competing territorialities in the midst of compromised sovereignty, extensive illegality, and the indulgence of flows of commodities and capital.

This almost trivial case of border crossing, I argue, can reveal important elements of the mediation of territoriality in weak states. Examining the ways in which friction, turbulence, borders and gates are central to contemporary mobilities, this thick description of multiple jurisdictions and social actors at this border crossing shows how "fuzzy" control of mobility ironically produce the fiction of state territory even within competing forms of territoriality.

2. Theorizing Territoriality, Mobility and Debordering

Borders are not simply edges, limits, or barriers for controlling mobility in and out of adjacent territories, nor does territory pre-exist the border, but instead the relation between the two terms can be understood as "bordering practices" [Sassen 2005; Popescu 2011]. In contrast to theories that distinguish between fixed territorial logics of state power versus the mobility of capital accumulation [Harvey 2003], relational theorists emphasize that it is through acts of bordering and debordering that a territory is at once produced, stabilized, and sometimes deterritorialized. The "state border is not simply a borderline", Sassen writes. "It is a mix of regimes with variable contents and geographic and institutional locations", including different flows of capital, information, professionals, undocumented migrants, smuggled goods, etc. [Sassen 2013, 30]. Furthermore, despite the current emphasis on state surveillance and massive powers of data collection by new border security regimes [e.g., Salter 2008], borders are contingent and sometimes even fragile territorial practices that in many ways exceed the control of a single state, overflowing its edges, tunneling

beneath its ground, and stretching beyond its institutional capacities to form state space and govern populations.

Sassen [2013, 21; 2008] theorizes territory itself as "a complex capability with embedded logics of power/empowerment and of claim-making," which "cannot be reduced to either national territory or state territory." She emphasizes two types of formations that suggest structural rearrangements of territory: first, there is the extension of non-national jurisdictions inside the state territorial jurisdiction; and second, there are new types of bordered spaces that cut across the traditional interstate borders. Examples of the first kind include the territorial jurisdictions of the World Trade Organization, the International Criminal Court, or the United Nations humanitarian system, all of which are strongly present in the Caribbean region. Examples of the second kind include what she calls "structural holes, deep inside the tissue of national territory" [Sassen 2013, 23], including informal, underground, and non-legal practices. In the Caribbean this involves an extensive hidden narcoeconomy; the "offshore" jurisdictions of banking, tax havens, special tax-free economic zones; the spaces of exception such as foreign military bases or detention camps; and coursing through it all the electronic financial transactions of global capital flows.

However, this view of territoriality can be enriched by drawing on Claude Raffestin's much earlier theorization of the relation between concrete and abstract territories. In his view "territoriality is the system of relations of a collectivity or an individual with exteriority and/or alterity by means of mediators" [Raffestin 1984, 141]. In his view territory is not about spatial formation alone, but begins from an analysis of the instruments, codes and "mediators" of semiotic space through which social actors relate to each other on different social, spatial and temporal scales [Klauser 2012; Raffestin 1977, 1980]. Space, in other words, is socially appropriated or "territorialized" as an object and outcome of social practices and knowledge (connaissances). Thus Raffestin draws our attention to sociospatial power relations that are instantiated in everyday practices, and following Michel Foucault asks us "to follow what seems trivial in order to reveal the relationships of power which are established within our society" [Raffestin 1980, 245].

In more applied terms, for example, Peter Andreas has argued that "border control efforts are not only actions" aimed at regulating the forms and paths of migrant mobility, but also constitute "gestures that communicate meaning" [Andreas 2000, x]. In examining local practices and forms of agency at international border crossings one must keep in mind both how state power is exercised and formed in relation to mobility and *vis-à-vis* "escape" from the state [Scott 2009]. The day-to-day tactics of undocumented migrants, human smugglers, and traffickers who populate border crossings also co-create territoriality not only through concrete spatial

practices but also through abstract mediations. The border crossing is a key site for struggle between state powers, transnational powers, illicit and illegal agents, and various kinds of local agents, all seeking to assert different codes, rules, rhythms and durations of competing territorialities. In the midst of all this, the border crossing is also implicated as a site of "biopolitical management" [Walters 2002] for the regulation of populations, their movement, health, and reproduction of who is and is not part of the nation.

Emergent forms of national and transnational territoriality are always in tension with efforts of local agency [Das and Poole 2004]. Moreover, non-state performances of the border may intersect with state practices of border governance to mutually constitute border regions that are outside state control, yet still implicated in reproducing state power. For example, as Galemba has argued of the Mexico-Guatemala border:

> local control is formed in constantly shifting negotiations with state agents, formal businesses, and high-profile smugglers. I argue that spaces like this border region do not necessarily constitute 'gaps' in state power but are integral to processes of evolving state formation and capital accumulation that often further marginalize border residents [Joseph and Nugent, 1994] [Galemba 2012, 826].

In a recent special issue of the journal Mobilities on mobilities and borders, Jorgen Ole Baerenholdt theorizes "governmobility" as a form of governmentality in which self-regulation of mobility becomes internalised within mobile subjects, but may also serve as a point of resistance. Thus he emphasizes that "borders must be studied along with the practices of resistance, with people's tactics and strategies in coping with, transcending, ignoring, overcoming, using and not least building borders. As such borders are made not the least by way of the various passages crossing them" [Baerenholdt 2013, 31].

Malini Sur furthermore argues that borders that are formally closed and often lethal sites of sovereign violence may at the same time entail "sovereign indulgence" of various kinds of material circulation in which commodity flows are entangled with border-crossings in complex, ambiguous, and "fuzzy" ways [Sur 2013, 70-71]. State territoriality, in other words, may depend on and even thrive on non-state mediators using their own instruments, codes and languages, even as it appears to be undermined by rival jurisdictions, structural holes and competing semiotic spaces. Thus in the production of bordering and "governmobility" at the Haitian-Dominican border we should pay attention not just to the dichotomy between mobility (as power, privilege, right, freedom) and immobility (as powerless, coerced, colonized), but also to the tactics of resistance that circumvent the border, the state strategies for indulging

certain kinds of border crossing, and the "fuzzy" bordering practices that may destabilize state territory even as they reinforce a relational territoriality that benefits some social actors.

3. Methodology

This study arose out of work on a different project, a collaboration with a team of climate scientists and hydro-engineers concerning climate change adaptation funded by the National Science Foundation under the title "*RAPID: Understanding Sudden Hydro-Climatic Changes and Exploring Sustainable Solutions in the Enriquillo Closed Water Basin (Southwest Hispaniola)*". This involved a social science component of interviews conducted with Haitians and Dominicans affected by flooding near the two lakes on each side of the border, which is reported on elsewhere [Sheller and Deleón forth.]. The methodology adopted here is first to appropriate that research trip for alternative purposes by engaging in an autoethnography of my own research group's experiences of mobility and border crossing. I employed a similar tactic of reflexive participant observation of a research context in an earlier analysis of post-earthquake Haiti [Sheller 2012]. I argue that such a purposive meta-analysis of the research "field" itself offers important dimensions for understanding the production of territoriality.

Elsewhere I have examined with Tamara Vukov how borders work as sites of political communication [Vukov and Sheller 2013] and as forms of material infrastructure and labor that "situate communication and culture within a physical, corporeal landscape" [Packer and Wiley 2012, 3]. Following Raffestin, this implies a need to focus on "mediators" within the social semiotic field of the border. Here, however, I focus on the materiality of this particular border crossing as a site of miscommunication, and of unintelligible codes. In contrast to the tightly regulated, biometric borders of high-tech surveillance and tracking so often found in the literature on mobility and borders, this analysis draws attention to other kinds of bordering practices that are equally important to the current mobility regimes of the global political economy: practices that thrive on ambiguous jurisdiction, failed communication, and the break down of social trust at the border.

Using narrative thick description [Geertz 1973] of my research-related border-crossing experiences in March 2013, I examine how the border becomes a profitable site of ambiguity in meaning and of various kinds of labor by actors who benefit from the production of "fuzzy" territoriality. The narratives zero in on specific acts of passage across this border in all of their material richness – including the mobile

material assemblage of people, vehicles, goods, money, and water, as well as the semiotic assemblage of instruments, rules and codes such as passports, visas, insurance documents, and different languages. Through an orchestration of failed communication, weak sovereignty, and mis-trust, I seek to explore how state control collapses at the border into a kind of vortex of extra-territorial processes and mediators, which nevertheless reinforce the power of territoriality.

This micro-history of two specific border crossing moments and the complex of practices and mediators by which they were constituted is embedded in the longer temporalities of the history of Haitian-Dominican relations and international interventions, and the even longer temporalities of lake formation, climate change, and hydro-geological processes. The next section describes the larger geo-political context, followed by a narrative and pictorial autoethnography of the border crossing. Vignettes and photographic representations are used to dig into the material and semiotic mediation of the border as an active process of bordering and debordering through which territoriality is produced.

4. The Geo-Political Context of the Haitian-Dominican Border

Pinched between Lake Azuei in Haiti and Lake Enriquillo in the Dominican Republic, the Haitian-Dominican border crossing near Malpasse/Jimani lies at a fraught gathering point on a single highway (see Map 1). Pinned between these two low-lying salt-water lakes whose waters can no longer be contained, and the surrounding high sierras whose runoff and rubble often tumbles down steep hillsides in flash floods, the border zone takes shape as an unpaved strip of highway clinging to the edge of the lake. Moving at a slower pace than humanity, relentlessly rising due to some unknown forces of nature, the two lakes are slowly swallowing the border. They have taken all the surrounding low-lying farmland, killed all the lakeside trees, and now the waters of Lake Azuei are literally moving over and under the border, gravitating downhill towards the lower Lake Enriquillo (Figure 1).

The surfeit of water overwhelming this deforested borderland over the last six to ten years hints at something about the instability of territory and the vastly different scales of mobility and temporality that are re-shaping state jurisdictions and debordering their imagined territoriality.

Haiti's National Highway 3 leads out of Port-au-Prince through Croix-des-Bouquets, where it escapes the choke of congested traffic and heads east into a long valley at the bottom of which sits the brackish waters of Lake Azuei. Going through the small towns of Fonds Parisien and La Source, the two-lane and, in places, unpaved

roadway (unadorned with any lanes, shoulders, or safety fences) finally turns into a temporary gravel track clinging to the edge of the lake for the last few kilometres leading up to the Dominican border. On the other side of the border, past a major Dominican military camp, the town of Jimani sits next to the more low-lying, larger, and far saltier Lake Enriquillo. Six thousand years ago these two lakes were connected by a sea passage, which crossed the entire island of Hispaniola, dividing it in two (ancient sea shells of extinct molluscs still turn up in farm fields around Jimani). Now, it seems, the divided lakes are trying to rejoin their bodies, strengthened by the unseen force of subterranean springs and the sudden flash floods of mountain runoff, ignoring and absorbing the state territory on either side.
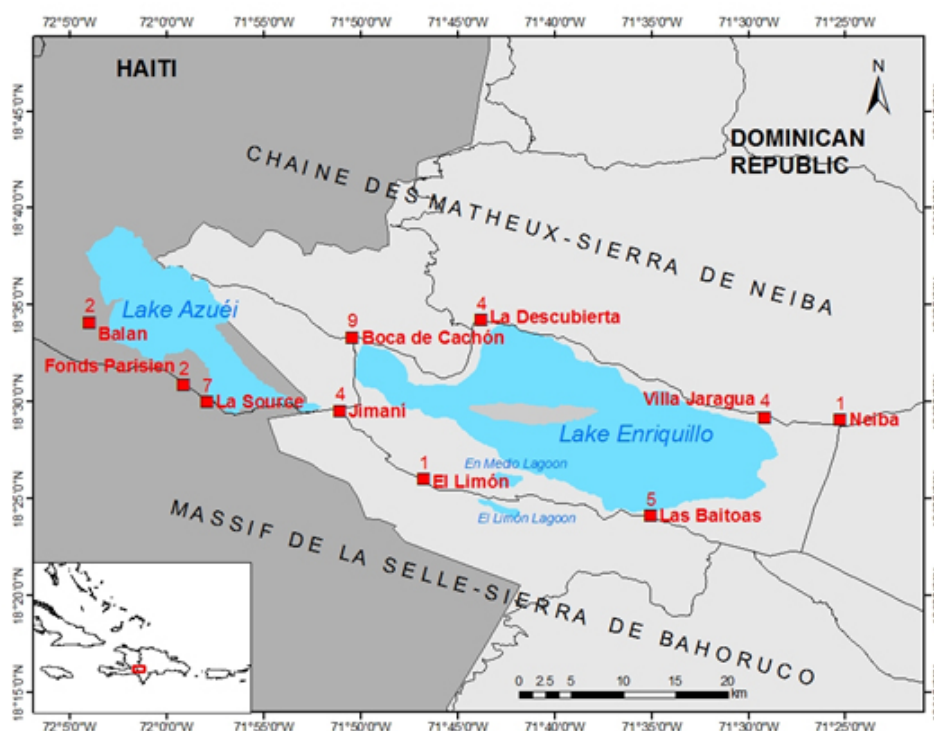
Map. 1. Location of Lake Azuei and Lake Enriquillo, showing the Haitian-Dominican border running North to South, with locations marked where the author's research team conducted interviews.

Note The border crossing lies between the Haitian town of La Source and the Dominican town of Jimani.

Source: Author's elaboration

There are further human-made, blood-drenched, histories percolating close under the surface. At one time there was no state border here. After the Republic of Haiti emerged in 1804 out of a slave uprising and revolution against French colo-

nial powers, it unified the entire island of "Ayiti" (known to Europeans as Hispaniola) during the presidency of Jean-Pierre Boyer, from 1818-1843. The Dominican Republic finally declared its own independence from Haiti in 1844, and its historians describe this period as an occupation. Both states, however, were later subject to outside occupation and control: the U.S. Marines occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, and occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924. While both countries were under US control, the American-owned sugar industry expanded by displacing Haitian peasants from their land and then importing them as low-paid laborers into the Dominican Republic to work on sugar plantations for 20-30 cents a day [Richman 2005, 53]. Between 1916 and 1925 it is thought that around 150,000 Haitians crossed the border, undocumented, in what one historian describes as "virtual osmosis" [Lundahl 1983, 119; cited in Richman 2005].

Fig. 1. Lake Azuei in Haiti overflows its shores, swallowing up trees, fresh-water springs, houses and farmland near the town of La Source.

Source: Mimi Sheller

After the US withdrawal from both countries, the Dominican government of dictator Raphael Trujillo decided to "clear" the border region of Haitians and reinstate a national border to more firmly separate the two populations. In an event known as the "Parsley Massacre" in 1937 he encouraged Dominican peasants us-

ing machetes and clubs to kill anyone who could not pronounce the Spanish word "perejil" (parsley), which was difficult for Kreyol speakers. It is thought that between 15,000 and 25,000 Haitians were killed, a trauma that still scars relations between the two countries. With up to one million undocumented Haitians living in the Dominican Republic today, where they still form the backbone of manual labor ranging from agriculture to construction, the two countries continue to struggle over issues of border control, citizenship and nationality (see notes 1 and 2).

A Haitian colleague in our research team insists that there is no such thing as Hispaniola. He says that when Haiti declared its independence in 1804, it was the entire island that was liberated and given the name Ayiti, and that Haiti never "occupied" the Dominican side of the island, but that it liberated it from Spain. Dominicans, meanwhile, insist that they liberated themselves from Haitian occupation, and they see themselves as culturally (and racially) distinct, as well as being today more economically developed. These historical points become symbolically crucial for both Haitians and Dominicans in defining their national identity. Both sides insist they are culturally different, linguistically different, racially different. Even their rice and beans are different.

Today the Haitian state asserts sovereignty over its territory, but is frequently subjected to U.S. interference ranging from support for the coups against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to the military take-over of the country's main international airport following the earthquake of January 12th, 2010. Haiti also remains under the control of the United Nations stabilization forces known as MINUSTAH, whose armored vehicles and foreign troops can be seen on the border (Figure 2). It is furthermore subjected to the powers of the UN humanitarian system, which has been operating throughout its territory since the earthquake destroyed portions of the capital city and the majority of government offices, including the National Palace. Under these multiple jurisdictions, the border zone certainly partakes of many of the features of "debordering" described by Sassen.

The border crossing lies at the edge of two states, but there is great ambiguity in its legal jurisdiction(s), including the assertions of the national immigration authorities, national customs authorities, and the National Police on both sides of the border, as well as MINUSTAH and other UN agencies. There are various kinds of self-serving state actors, diplomatic immunities of foreign powers, a vast array of "global humanitarian" operators with various degrees of power, plus the undertow of smuggling, "fiscal disobedience", human trafficking, and undocumented migration, which all challenge the territoriality of the state and its powers of regulation [Roitman 2005; Scott 2009]. Mediators are everywhere, displaying signs, badges, identity

cards, uniforms, and signs of power, but at no point is it clear where or with whom national authority rests.

Fig. 2. United Nations MINUSTAH troops parked alongside the border crossing between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as our driver addresses an unidentified Haitian national authority wearing a t-shirt.

Source: Mimi Sheller

4.1. On the Border

Subject to a number of infra-national actors, formal and informal, legitimate and illegitimate, the challenge for anyone seeking to cross the border is to determine which authorities are actually empowered to control one's progress across the border, and which are merely "vultures" operating illegally in the conditions of uncertainty produced by the territorial instability of the border. While a chain of movement involving ground transportation of goods may require inspection, certification, and customs payment at the border, capital flows move through the adjacent states unimpeded. While international passport holders such as NGO workers, humanitarians, missionaries, or academic researchers may feel entitled, as "blancs" (a word meaning both "foreigner" and "white" in Haitian Kreyol), to pass through the airport borders of the Haitian state unimpeded [Sheller 2012], they may inadvertently find them-

selves caught up in other bordering regimes at the more sticky land border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is at this point of passage that one becomes most aware of the asymmetry between territory and territoriality, as particular mobile assemblages are slowed by differing jurisdictional conditions and mediations governing territoriality.

Two days before we are to cross the border from Haiti into the Dominican Republic we set out on a kind of reconnaissance mission, to go to its edge and pick up some equipment passed to us from research-team members on the other side. We drive our powerful, white, Ford F-250 through a number of blue metal gates, past immigration control, past the Haitian national police check point, and we park it in the "no man's land," with no one stopping us or asking any questions. The road is unpaved, dusty, and hot. With Mack trucks, motorbike-taxis, tap-taps (a kind of informal collective transport in a converted pick-up truck or mini-bus), and pedestrians weaving in and out, there are no discernible lanes, no certain check points, and no informational signage except large signs saying "STOP" where no one seems to come to a stop. Small market stalls line certain portions, selling duty-free alcohol, cooked food, lottery tickets, phone minutes, odds and ends (Figure 3). Tap-taps, the highly-decorative trucks used in Haiti for collective transportation, stop near the border and drop off passengers, who then negotiate with Dominican motor-bike drivers to transport them (and their luggage, balanced on the handlebars) across the border. There is an odd syncopation between those who are hurrying through, and those who are loitering along the edges, buying, selling, or just sitting and talking.

We park by the roadside, then proceed on foot, squeezing between slowly inching trucks and overly hasty motorbikes. Our group of four approaches the last gate, the one leading into the Dominican Republic, with no one stopping us or questioning us. We do not want to pass through it yet, because we have no passport stamps and no desire to hand money over to the guards, since tonight we will stay in Haiti. We simply observe the armed Dominican soldiers who open and close the large gates for trucks, the man with a badge around his neck who seems to collect a cash payment from each truck-driver, as well as the cluster of edgy young men wearing dark glasses who seem to informally control the pedestrian gate, one holding a menacing steel rod. There are no instructions, and we are not sure who is in charge or why some vehicles and people are stopped, while others are let through.

We hear Kreyol and Spanish, and someone starts speaking to us in German. Languages are frayed at the border, and translators present themselves as informal brokers. Money changers sit by the gate, waiting for business. For now we merely pick up our sonar bathymetry equipment, which a Dominican colleague passes to us

across the gate; there do not seem to be any officials interested in what we are doing, and no one questions our Dominican colleagues who walk through the gate to give us the equipment. We retreat back the way we came quickly, again passing through all the blue metal gates without stopping and without questioning.

Fig. 3. A stand selling duty-free alcohol in the border zone.
Source: Mimi Sheller

The atmosphere of the border is thick with tension, produced in part by the narrowing physical infrastructure, the tight traffic of trucks and motorbikes, and the passage through the series of guarded gates. It is permeated by a kind of static electricity in which it feels that conflict could be sparked at any moment. This is not a smooth bureaucratic space of lines and rules, but an unruly transit through social uncertainty and a state of limbo. Trucks come and go, mostly carrying goods from Santo Domingo into Port-au-Prince: rolls of iron rebar for construction; second-hand clothing; bottled water; plastic furniture; canvas bags of charcoal burned from the little scrub remaining on the mountainsides. We are told that Haitian trucks and drivers can no longer enter the Dominican Republic, a new law of some kind, though promulgated by whom we are unsure. As Galemba describes a similar situation on the Mexico-Guatemala border:

> Residents' practices illustrate the need to understand borders beyond dividing lines as larger regions of social interaction and crossings where multiple logics of territoriality, membership, and authority intertwine [Nevins 2002; Sahlins 1989, 4]. Local interpretations reveal the principle of territorial sovereignty as a contested sociopolitical construction with internal inconsistencies and multivalent interpretations rather than a universal truism. [Galemba 2012, 832].

The road itself has a temporary quality – it clings to the edge of the lake, but the lake eats away at it crumbling its edges. On the other side of the road are great white gashes in the mountainsides, where men with shovels gnaw away at the flanks, shoveling gravel and sand into waiting trucks, the land itself being hauled off to build more roads (see Figure 4). As the trucks pass, the gritty road surface blows up into the air mixed with a choking haze of diesel and lead fumes. Rock. Water. Sand. Metal. Who will win? People say that the road will probably have to be moved up into the mountains, crossing the border elsewhere, shifting entire markets and passages of trade. All around us we are acutely aware that the lake is creeping upwards. The territory of the state is literally disappearing under the waters, and the roadway itself is under threat, like an umbilical cord about to be cut. No state engineering projects seem capable of stopping the vast lakes, moving, unmoved.

The bordering and debordering taking place around this frontier are indicative of the asymmetries between territory and territoriality, in which the latter is a form of multiple legal jurisdictions and mediations: it speaks to both the "emerging instability of traditional versions of territoriality, partly as a consequence of globalization" [Sassen 2013, 24], partly as a consequence of conditions of "postcoloniality" [Mignolo 2007], and we might add, partly as a consequence of global climate change. All these forces are strongly at play in the Caribbean, and there are therefore clashing legal jurisdictions contesting claims to power over its territory as well as diverse tactics of resistance, even as the environmental forces of climate change, fault lines, and sheer gravity slowly re-shape the very ground beneath our feet.

F<small>IG</small>. 4. Gravel and sand mining is eating away at the mountainsides, as the lake water rises, threatening the road, next to National Highway 3, Haiti.

Source: Mimi Sheller

4.2. The First Crossing

On the day of our crossing we are a complex assemblage moving towards the border: two Haitian-Americans with Haitian passports, one German with an EU passport, one German with a US passport, and one American with a US passport. We are in an American-made (imported) truck, with Haitian license plates and some private rental documents, but no insurance or customs duty papers. We have an official-looking CCNY emblem magneted onto the side (which everyone seems to look at as we pass), and matching blue baseball caps, trying to look like a team with a purpose. The truck bed is full of boxes of expensive imported equipment for measuring rainfall, wind, solar radiation, soil humidity, lake levels, etc. We have the phone number for someone in the Haitian Ministry of the Environment who is supposed to help us if we have any problems.

We take the decision to stop at the very first Immigration office, to get exit stamps in our passports, otherwise we believe it may be difficult to re-enter the country. This is perhaps our first mistake. Should we just have kept driving, and hand-

ing cash to men by the gates? Now we are surrounded by men offering to guide us. One civilian, who looks the most official, although we are uncertain of his status, tells us that we need to get papers for our truck from an office back in Port-au-Prince. He says he is an official and offers to get us the papers here, for US$50. He discusses this with our Haitian colleague, who serves as a translator. We call the Ministry of the Environment, and our advisor there tells us we should pay. An arrangement is struck and the man offers to advance us all the way to the Dominican border.

We go inside the immigration office, hand in our landing cards and get our passports stamped. We are informed that this costs 200 Gourdes per person, according to a sign taped on the window by the "Ministry of the Interior and of Territorial Collectivities" (Figure 5), the only official information we can find. Then the guide gets on a motorcycle, carrying our passports in one hand, and leads our vehicle through the first blue gate, where we are immediately stopped at the National Police check point. Now several armed and uniformed police officers inspect our truck and after a certain amount of negotiation demand that we hand over another US$40 and we are allowed to proceed. It becomes increasingly clear to us that "the gaps in state power that locals seek to exploit result not necessarily from the absence of the state but from its selective presence, silence, and collusion with legal and illegal entrepreneurs and emergent local and transnational forms of governance" [Galemba 2012, 834]. Indeed, the very fact of our "transnationality" makes us subject to myriad social mediators, especially since the rules governing our mobility are unclear.

Another blue gate opens, and we pass into and through some kind of no-man's land, where empty trucks are parked for no apparent reason. We now come to what appears to be the first Dominican gate, although the exact border line is not obvious to us. We pass through, easily led by the Haitian guide, and are immediately flagged down and turned off to the side where we see the Dominican Immigration and Customs office. Here our Haitian guide takes leave of us, his authority at its end. Now a young man who has followed us from the first stop in Haiti, where we thought he was Haitian, presents himself as a Dominican (speaking Kreyol and Spanish), and says he will explain what needs to be done. We cannot shake him, and he and his associates grab our passports and entry cards, filling them in for us, unbidden (Figure 6).

FIG. 5. A notice posted by the Haitian Ministry of the Interior and of Territorial Collectivities informing all Air, Land and Maritime transporters that there is a 200 Gourdes fee for a Debarcation Card.

Source: Mimi Sheller

We have advanced through the border gates as if entering a giant metal grater, with arrays of serrated edges scraping monetary payments off of our multi-national trans-territorial assemblage. We are caught in its machinery, which is operated by both state-actors and non-state-actors, legal and illegal mechanisms, at many different scales. We inch forward, hemorrhaging cash, dollars, gourdes, pesos, at every gateway. In exchange we garner passport stamps ($10), customs stamps ($20), car

permits ($50), insurance documents (5000 pesos), tax receipts, landing cards, and above all: open gates (Figure 7). At each point tensions rise, men stand toe to toe. We feel duped, and powerless. At the border, the fiction of the state's legal construct of territoriality as exclusive jurisdiction is evident as a multitude of quasi-authorities, illegal actors, breakdown of trust, and communicative confusion. A kind of informal jurisdiction abounds, that is loosely allied with the state, but also exceeds or escapes state control.

Fig. 6. Men filling in our immigration cards at the Dominican border, which they will hand over to be stamped, along with US$30 per person.

Mimi Sheller

Anssi Paasi [2012, 2305] reminds us that "Borders are relational in the sense that they are produced, reproduced, and transformed in diverging social relations and networks." We certainly feel as though our specific experience of the Haitian-Dominican border forms around our particular assemblage, which presents an opportunity for various social actors to glom onto us. "Also," Paasi continues, "territorial jurisdictions are sites of complex relational juxtapositions, and fold different scales in, around, and in-between each other [Healey 2006]." Though we operate at a kind of international scale, a multinational team doing National Science Foundation funded work on a cross-border project in two different countries with support from

various national ministries in each country, here on the border we cannot even identify national authorities to communicate with. We are reduced to dealing with local actors, translators, money-changers and guides who seem to have their own agendas and little regulation. They have taken advantage of the structural holes of the absent state to catch a large fish in their net.

FIG. 7. Money changes hands between our "escort" and some kind of "official" – soldiers open the gate, under a billboard promoting a construction project by the Dominican President.

Source: Mimi Sheller

Nevertheless, this is not a territory of resistance to the state, for it also "produce(s) new modes of belonging and marginalization that may overlap with, challenge, or augment existing inequalities" [Galemba 2012, 834]. What Haitians call "Grand ans" (or Big Men) continue to run things, and the state continues to benefit from some of the activities here. Above all, these selective (de)bordering "practices reproduce and intensify ethnonational borders" (ibid), reinforcing the biopolitical divisions between Haitians and Dominicans, as well as outsider "blancs".

4.3. The Second Crossing

We complete our work in the Dominican Republic, and now need to return for a flight out of Port-au-Prince. At our hotel in Jimani we meet a retired commander of the Dominican National Police, whom everyone calls "the General." He offers to send someone with us to help us cross the border; he also introduces us to some Haitian Immigration officers who happen to be there. They look at our passports and point out that we are missing Dominican customs stamps, a small triangle that should have been stamped over the corner of the entry stamp (although we thought we had paid for these). So we accept the General's offer of assistance, and we head towards the border with a new guide. This time it takes only forty minutes, but it still costs US$50 for the car, plus 200 pesos per person, just to leave. The guide tells us he will report back to the General which border guards have been taking pay-offs; apparently in retirement he still wields some degree of power. We get exit stamps, and a customs inspector looks over our truck. The gates open.

We pass through the no-man's land, traffic is light; but back on the Haitian side we are stopped again. We see someone we know from some interviews we had done the previous week, who works for the truck drivers union. He puts in a word with a knot of police and customs officers who have gathered around us, saying what we do not know, but we are allowed to pass. We stop at the Immigration Office and fill in landing cards. The desk officer, as close as we have seen to an actual government employee sitting at an actual desk, behind a window, lingers over my passport, looking at the picture, paging through all the stamps in my passport, seemingly imagining my life of travel (Figure 8). Then he stamps it, signs it with a flourish, and very slowly hands it back to me, faintly smiling.

Now we are "free" to continue our travels. His smile also seems to confirm what we already know, "that extralegal activities may be conducive to state power," as Roitman [2004; 2005] argues for the Chad Basin in Africa: "while the enabling of unregulated activities has the potential to undermine state authority it may also 'contribute to the viability of the state through the production of new rents and possibilities for redistribution among strategic military, political, and commercial personalities'" [Roitman 2004, 216; cited in Galemba 2012, 836].

Fɪɢ. 8. The Haitian Immigration Officer at work.
Source: Mimi Sheller

Where was the border during our three approaches up to and over it? Paasi argues for abandoning the view of borders "as mere lines and the notion of their location solely at the 'edges' of spaces":

> This has helped to challenge strictly territorial approaches and to advance alternative spatial imaginations which suggest that the key issues are not the 'lines' or 'edges' themselves, or not even the events and processes occurring in these contexts, but nonmobile and mobile social practices and discourses where borders—as processes, sets of sociocultural practices, symbols, institutions, and networks—are produced, reproduced, and transcended. [Paasi 2012, 2304]

This view is extended by Brighenti, who observes that territories "exist at the point of convergence, prolongation and tension between the material and immaterial, between spaces and relationships, between extensions (movements) and intensions (affections and passions)" [Brighenti 2010, 223; cited in Sassen 2013, 26]. Certainly the affections and passions of our particular crossing are very different than those of a Haitian seeking to trade goods or find work in the Dominican Republic. We are very "privileged" in one sense, yet we are still made to pay for our privilege.

Our double transit across the Haitian-Dominican border seems to have contributed to the sociocultural practices that reproduce that border dividing the island into two state territories. It certainly triggers a point of passionate interests. Our Haitian colleague mentions the 1937 massacre as we approach the frontier, and once in Jimani we see sharp social divides between Haitians and Dominicans, some of whom also seem to blame each other for the deforestation which they believe may be contributing to the rising of the lakes. Despite the thousands of Haitians who live in the Dominican Republic, working in menial jobs, many undocumented, stateless and now especially subject to deportation since the passage of the new citizenship law, neither nation can imagine a time when this border will not divide them, when Ayiti will be one again (Figure 9).

FIG. 9. Haitians waiting to get into the Dominican Republic, paying a fee posted in US$ rather than either gourdes or pesos (which are equivalent in value).

Source: Mimi Sheller

For both states the border is fuzzy. Both states experience the rival power of "national-state jurisdictions that deborder territoriality" (such as the free trade zone that straddles the two countries with non-taxed export factories) and "non-state jurisdictions that escape the grip of national-state territoriality" (such as the UN humanitarian apparatus) [Sassen 2013, 28]. Yet they nevertheless adamantly maintain

the friction (and to some extent the fiction) of the border. It is in fact one of the few places where the state can assert its dominion over foreigners, when otherwise so compromised by extra-territorial jurisdictions. If there is one thing both states (and the various groups of men who operate the border apparatus on behalf of those states) can agree on, it is the need to maintain this border between them, through thick and thin. Together they collude with the non-state, extra-state, and infra-state actors to produce an illusion of sovereign territoriality.

5. Conclusion: The Jurisdiction of the Lakes

Human and non-human actors shape territories, their mediations both challenging and forming territorialities. Various jurisdictions and extra-juridical networks control the border crossing between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, catching, slowing, or stopping border-crossing assemblages in complex ways that operate across many scales and with various gradations and rhythms. While the border may appear to be an edge between two states, or a line on the map, in practice it represents many other cross-cutting scales, ambiguous meanings, and intermixed territorialities. The border is itself an assemblage, with roads, passengers, vehicles, passports, gates, guards, goods, money, water and dust all part of its materiality.

Ultimately, though, any human social bordering processes are dependent upon their relation to the seemingly unavoidable expansion of the twin lakes, which know no law. Their flooding may elicit further transnational jurisdictions to manage a looming environmental catastrophe, and specifically to govern its mobilities. If a state cannot contain water within the bounds of its territory, nor keep the water from submerging its roads, farms and towns, it may lose exclusive claim to govern that territory. Outside agencies will be brought in to fund and build alternative highways, to move towns, to control moving populations, and eventually to reconstitute the border in a new physical location.

The Dominican government has already begun building a large roadway connecting Jimani to Boca de Cachon, on a route that runs between the two lakes near where an older road was flooded out. The height and size of this engineering project suggest that it will also function as a kind of barrier to keep Lake Azuei out of Dominican territory, or at least to control its overflow. Some Haitians suspect that this structure is contributing to overflow on their side by not allowing the water to drain out. Others blame the state for not cleaning out canals that they believe would drain the lake to the sea, via Trou Caiman to the west. Still others think that international organizations could and should help them lower the level of the lakes, perhaps by

draining Lake Azuei into the Dominican Republic, and then cleaning a canal system that will drain Lake Enriquillo out towards the sea to the southeast. Everyone holds the President responsible for controlling the flooding, in both countries, even though there is little the national state can do [Sheller and Deleón forth.].

The road holds for now, but only by a thread (Figure 10). It is a temporary construction, a semiotic handle of state sovereignty as temporary as the border itself. For now the trucks and people, motorbikes and goods, continue a stuttering but steady flow between the two countries along this tenuous route, but all are aware they are ultimately subject to the "natural" jurisdiction of the lakes.

FIG. 10. The lake is eating the national highway, and the land around it; soon there will be no more possibility for a border crossing here.

Source: Mimi Sheller

In this article I have tried to show how the process of border crossing is caught up in the production of Haitian and Dominican territoriality, even as both states' territory is juridically and symbolically being eaten away by extra-state and infra-state actors wielding their own strategies of "governmobility" at various scales, while literally being eaten away by the rising lakes and changing climate.

In giving this "thick description", my aim was to demonstrate the many different scales of action governing mobility: from the most immediate interactional scale of

riding in a large motorized vehicle down a dusty highway, to the unstoppable power of water embodied in the lakes and in global forces of climate change that are re-shaping the Caribbean bio-region. In between these extremes are a whole range of mediators, both physical and symbolic: the social negotiation with state-empowered and non-state actors to open various gates; the state-level processing of passports, visas and customs officers; the potential interventions of "higher up" state actors, ministries, and foreign powers; the transnational jurisdictions such as the UN or World Bank that interfere in state borders; and last but certainly not least the underground economies and illicit trafficking that find tactics to cross the border and mediate its flows.

I have also tried to show that the contemporary bordering and debordering of Haiti and the Dominican Republic are deeply embedded in longer-term historical relationships that entrench both divisions and connections across the border. Historical memory informs the very different cultural practices, languages, and customs on both sides of the border, even as historical forces drive Haitian laborers, migrants, and small traders into the Dominican Republic, and Dominican trucks, commodities, and businesses into Haiti. These bi-directional mobilities and strategies of "govern-mobility" are the very forces that produce the territory of each country, at the same time that they produce structural holes of circumvention and illicit networks of trade, traffic, and contraband. And at the same time the island of Hispaniola is caught in the net of globalizing mobilities that first brought Christopher Columbus there, then French and Spanish colonists and armies, then German and American financiers, and eventually U.S. invading forces, United Nations stabilization forces, global humanitarian organizations, and last, and in this case perhaps least, academic researchers. Next time we "blancs" might choose to fly, a freedom of mobility that leverages a different assemblage of global advantages, even while putting us into the jurisdiction of other kinds of governmobility at the airport.

In sum, the approach taken here suggests some of the many strands and scales that inform critical mobilities research and critical border studies, and shows how they can be put into action in a particular interpretation of a bordering situation. In particular, it rests on a relational understanding of mobility, space and power that shows how these are all in process as part of the forming and performing of territoriality. It also bridges the human and non-human realms, drawing inspiration from science and technology studies. And it acknowledges the role of affect, atmosphere, and other elements of the subliminal transit of inter-subjectivity. While this is only a limited description of one border-crossing, I hope that it is indicative of the potential of mobilities research to open up new fields of inquiry that are relevant to the study of borders, migration, territory, power, and the impacts of climate change in re-shaping all of these in the future.

References

Adey, P., Bissell, D., Hannam, K., Merriman, P., Sheller, M. (eds)

2013   *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*. London: Routledge.

Andreas, P.

2000   *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Baerenholdt, J.O.

2013   "Governmobility: The Powers of Mobility." *Mobilities* 8 (1): 20-34.

Brighenti, A.M.

2010   "Lines, Barred Lines. Movement, Territory and the Law." *International Journal of Law in Context* 6 (3): 217-227.

Cresswell, T.

2010   "Towards a Politics of Mobility." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (1): 17-31.

Das, V., Poole, D. (eds)

2004   *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Galemba, R.B.

2012   "Remapping the Border: Taxation, Territory, and (Trans)national Identity at the Mexico-Guatemala Border" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30 (5): 822-841.

Geertz, C.

1973   "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." Pp. 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Geopolitics

2012   17 (4) *Special Issue on Critical Border Studies*.

Hannam, K., Sheller, M., Urry, J.

2006   "Mobilities, Immobilities, and Moorings." *Mobilities* 1 (1): 1-22.

Harvey, D.

2003   *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Healey, P.

2006   *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: a Relational Planning for Our Times.* London: Routledge.

Heyman, J., Cunningham, H. (eds)

2004   "Special Issue: Movement on the Margins: Mobility and Enclosures at Borders." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11 (3): 287-287.

Howard, D.

2001   *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner *and* Oxford: Signal Books.

2007   "Development, Racism and Discrimination in the Dominican Republic." *Development in Practice* 17 (6): 725-738.

Jensen, A.

2011   "Mobility, Space and Power: On the Multiplicities of Seeing Mobility." *Mobilities* 6 (2): 255-271.

Jensen, O.B., Richardson, T.

2004   *Making European Space: Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity.* London: Routledge.

Joseph, G. M., Nugent, D. (eds)

1994   *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Klauser, F.

2012   "Thinking Through Territoriality: Introducing Claude Raffestin to Anglophone sociospatial theory." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30 (1): 106-120.

Lundahl, M.

1983   *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Mignolo, W.

2007   "Delinking: the Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality." *Cultural Studies* 21 (2–3): 449–514.

Mountz, A.

2010   *Seeking Asylum: Human Smuggling and Bureaucracy at the Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Nevins, J.

2002   *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the Illegal Alien and the Making of the US-Mexico Boundary.* New York: Routledge.

Paasi, A.

2012   "Commentary: Border Studies Reanimated: Going Beyond the Territorial/Relational Divide." *Environment and Planning A* 44: 2303–2309.

Packer, J., Wiley, S.

2012   *Communication Matters: Materialist Approaches to Media, Mobility and Networks.* New York and London: Routledge.

Popescu, G.

2011   "Controlling Mobility." Pp. 91-120 in *Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-first Century Understanding Borders*, by G. Popescu. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Raffestin, C.

1977   "Paysage et Territorialité." *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec* 21 (53/54): 123-134.

1980   *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir*. Parsi: LITEC.

1984   "Territoriality - A Reflection of the Discrepancies Between the Organization of Space and Individual Liberty." *International Political Science Review* 5 (2): 139-146.

1986   "Territorialité: Concept ou Paradigme en Géographie Sociale?" *Geographica Helvetica* 2: 91-96.

Richman, K.

2005   *Migration and Vodou*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Roitman J.

2004   "Productivity in the Margins: the Reconstitution of State Power in the Chad Basin." Pp. 191-224 in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, edited by V. Das and D. Poole. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

2005   *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sahlins, P.

1989   *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Salter, M. (ed.)

2008   *Politics at the Airport.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sassen, S.

2005   "When National Territory Is Home to the Global: Old Borders to Novel Borderings." *New Political Economy* 10 (4): 523-541.

2008   *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages.* Pronceton: Princeton University Press.

2013   "When Territory Deborders Territoriality." *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1 (1): 21-45.

Scott, J.C.

2009   *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sheller, M.

2003   *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies.* London and New York: Routledge.

2010   "Air Mobilities on the US-Caribbean Border: Open Skies and Closed Gates." *The Communication Review* 13 (4): 269-288.

2012   "Islanding Effects: Mobility Systems and Humanitarian Logistics in Post-Earthquake Haiti." *Cultural Geographies* 20 (2) April 2013: 185-204.

Sheller, M., Deleón, Y.

Forth.   "Assessing Citizen Understanding, State Action, and Capabilities in Responding to the Rising Waters of Lake Azuei (Haiti) and Lake Enriquillo (Dominican Republic)." Submitted to *Geoforum*, Special Issue on Climate Justice and the Caribbean, edited by A. Baptiste and K. Rhiney.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J.

2006   "The New Mobilities Paradigm" *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207-226.

Sur, M.

2013   "Through Metal Fences: Material Mobility and the Politics of Transnationality at Borders." *Mobilities* 8 (1): 70-89.

Torres-Saillant, S.

1998   "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity." *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 100, 25 (3): 126-146.

2010   *Introduction to Dominican Blackness.* Dominican Studies Institute Research Monographs. New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute.

Vukov, T., Sheller, M.

2013   "Border Work: Surveillant Assemblages, Virtual Fences, and Tactical Counter-Media." *Social Semiotics* 23 (2): 225-241.

Walters, W.

2002   "Mapping Schengenland: Denaturalizing the Border." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20 (5): 561-580.

Mobility, Mediation and Territoriality on a Haitian-Dominican Border Crossing

Abstract: This article considers mobility regimes at a specific border crossing between the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as a material and performative site of mobility, bordering and debordering through which territoriality is practiced, mediated, and contested. Employing both an autoethnography of the border crossing and a deeper macro-history of colonial and post-independence mobility regimes that have formed and transformed the island of Hispaniola, it extends relational and processual approaches to mobility, bordering and territoriality. It builds on Claude Raffestin's relational concept of territoriality especially as interpreted via recent Anglophone socio-spatial theory, while also drawing on multi-scalar sociological approaches to territory and debordering, critical border studies, and mobilities research. Examining the ways in which friction, turbulence, borders and gates are central to contemporary mobilities, this thick description of multiple jurisdictions and social actors at this border crossing shows how "fuzzy" control of mobility ironically produce the fiction of state territory even within competing forms of territoriality. Through acts of bordering and debordering, a territory is at once produced, stabilized, and sometimes deterritorialized.

Dr. **Mimi Sheller** is Professor of Sociology and Founding Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy at Drexel University. She is founding co-editor of the journal *Mobilities* and Associate Editor of *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies*. As co-editor, with John Urry, of *Mobile Technologies of the City* [Routledge, 2006)], *Tourism Mobilities* [Routledge, 2004] and several key articles, she helped to establish the new interdisciplinary field of mobilities research. Her recent books are *Aluminum Dreams: The Making of Light Modernity* [MIT Press, 2014]; co-edited *Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* [Routledge, 2014]; and co-edited book *Mobility and Locative Media* [Routledge, 2014]. She received her A.B. from Harvard University (1988), MA (1993) and PhD (1997) from the New School for Social Research. She held recent Visiting Fellowships at the Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University (2008-09); Media@McGill, Montreal, Canada (2009); Center for Mobility and Urban Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark (2009); and Penn Humanities Forum, University of Pennsylvania (2010-11).