European University Studies

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Kumeyaay Courses *astride la línea*

An Account of Cross-Border Contacts and Collaborations of an Indigenous Community at the California Border

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Quests for orientation – an introduction

i. Potentials and confinements in a border situation

I define borders as inherent components and underlying structural patterns of relationships and as imperative preconditions for communication between positions.
The existence of borders, to name some aspects of a possible framing, hints toward an imbalance of meaning between "center" and "periphery," between an authorized or somewhat dominant and agreed-upon status quo and its border, whose subject matters are more "out of scope" and of a different intensity and influence in meaning.[1]
But the border, vice versa, is not necessarily delineated by, or from, the "center." It is only a partly dependent entity that might generate marginal meanings that have the potential to become central. Therefore, the border is unthinkable without the center and the center has no reason to exist without the border.

The post-colonial debate on "hybridity" and the emergence of "subaltern voices"[2] indicates the symbolic importance of the US-Mexican border as "the birthplace, […] of border studies, and its methods of analysis,"[3] while approaches like transnationalism and trans-migration[4] and a wide range of global-

1 The anthropologist Richard Jenkins describes this interrelation: "The centre traditionally stands for the place of the symbolic concentration of values and power. Following the tradition of Western metaphysics, the centre symbolizes that whole in which the founding meaning of origin and truth is concentrated. The centre articulates the representation of space by delineating outlines (fixing limits) and simultaneously graduating the degrees of intensity between the middle (point of greatest saturation of meaning) and the borders or edges: zones in which the loss of clarity issues in a lack of definition" [Richard Jenkins, *Social identity* (London/NY: Routledge, 1996) 72].

2 The term "hybridity" goes back to colonial times. Contemporary discussions on the term, nevertheless, are preoccupied with its potential for inclusion although the different definitions by Bhaba and Hall show that it is not to be seen as stable concept in postcolonial theory. Subaltern voices, another topic in postcolonial studies, draw attention to the potential of counter-hegemonic practices as such. [Homi Bhaba, *The location of culture* (London/NY: Routledge, 1994); Stuart Hall, Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of cultural identity* (London: Sage, 1996); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, eds. Cary Nelson, Larry Grossberg (Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 1988) 271-313.]

3 David Johnson, Scott Michaelsen, *Border theory: the limits of cultural politics,* (Minneapolis/London: U of Minnesota Press, 1997) 1.

4 It should be noted that the connection between the long-existing phenomenon of international relations and "presently emerging" transnational relations "point much to the retrieval of pre- and non-modern society as to a new world order." The sociologist and historian Martin Albrow reminds us that the specific terminological shift from "inter-" to "trans-" "ought to be seen against the background of the historical reception of the

ization theories came into being because of the international border's changing function.
In this way, the border has become an academic subject, and more importantly, a theoretical approach and analytical tool in the observation, categorization and understanding of different types of demarcated territories, localities and nation-states, social groupings, cultures, and identity conceptions.
From the field of sociology and anthropology, studies of the border increasingly became the subject of literary criticism, in which important works of this new course in "border studies" have been Gloria Anzaldúa's The borderlands: the new mestiza = la frontera (1987), Renato Rosaldo's Culture and truth: the remaking of social analysis (1989), and Emily Hick's Border writing: the multidimensional text (1991) in the late 1980s and early 90s.[5] These books were very influential on ethnic studies, feminist studies and anthropology.
After dominating various fields for some time, critics have addressed several shortcomings in these theoretical approaches for being too general in the concrete political and economic environments of the (US-Mexican) border. So critiques circulated around the exclusionary character of border theory and its essentializing tendencies toward cultures that were to be crossed (Johnson/Michaelsen).

"Mainstream" border studies and their portraits of the border made from the US side have been criticized by Mexican scholars as a perpetuation of entrenched US colonial practices.

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idea of the international, used by Jeremy Bentham in 1780, as a new word to refer to the law of nations which took a dramatic turn with its adoption by the International Working Men's Association in 1864." [Martin Albrow, "Frames and transformations in transnational studies" (U of Oxford: paper delivered to the ESRC Transnational Communities Programme Seminar, Faculty of Anthropology and Geography, 1998) 2.]
Cornerstone works for anthropological research have been, for example: Arjun Appadurai, "Global ethnospaces: notes and queries for a transnational anthropology," *Recapturing anthropology*, ed. Richard Fox (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991) 191-210; Michael Smith, L. Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from below* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998); Michael Kearney, "Borders and boundaries of state and self at the end of empire," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4.1 (1991): 52-74, and "The effects of transnational culture, economy and migration on Mixtec identity in Oaxacalifornia," Michael Smith, J. Feagin., eds., *The bubbling cauldron. Race, ethnicity and the urban crisis* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1995); and Ludger Pries, ed., "The approach of transnational social spaces: responding to new configurations of the social and the spatial", *New transnational social spaces: international migration and trans-national companies* (London: Routledge, 2001) 3-33.

5 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: the new mestiza = la frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987/1999); Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and truth. The remaking of social analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989) and Emily Hicks, *Border writing: the multidimensional text* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1991).

María Tabuenca Córdoba[6] points out that for those who do these kinds of studies on the Mexican side, it is difficult to think about the border only as a metaphor, and that what began as a movement to give voice to the previously marginalized Chicanos has become a movement marginalizing Mexican nationals and scholars in silencing their voices. According to Eduardo Barrera, another specialist in research on borders and communication, one such example is the work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and his scholarly legitimization by important "hybrid" scholars like Néstor García Canclini and Homi Bhaba:

> The use of Goméz-Peña by García Canclini and Homi Bhaba is not a mere coincidence. The artist's texts are the product of this fascination with the border's syncretism, and it would be ingenious to think that he has not been influenced by the poststructuralist literature. While the academians "prove" their arguments with Goméz-Peña's texts, he constructs his border using the same theoretical sources. This quasi-incestuous relationship becomes a circuit that excludes the primary referents. Goméz-Peña's border becomes García Canclini's and Homi Bhaba's "Border," and the artist becomes "the Migrant." This migrant is a […] migrant in which the sign has totally replaced the matter.[7]

Another problem, seen by Tabuenca Córdoba, is Anzaldua's tendency to describe US whites as "them" and border-crossers or US Chicanos in general as "us," whereas all the other actors, immigrants from Central America, or native Mexicans, remain voiceless in their function to bear the Chicano's "traditional heritage" and "true identity."

The two diverging tendencies in border studies, one essentializing identities and glorifying indigenous cultures (Hicks 1991; Anzaldúa 1987), and the other immersed in a worldview where any identity at the border is always crossed and open to outside cultures (Johnson/Michaelsen 1997), deserve a closer look.

Departing from the task to investigate, explain or even construct "border identities," the positions from which such enterprises are carried out as well as their theoretical trajectories remains critical. In the case of Anzaldúa and Hicks, considerable emphasis is drawn on the saving of individual cultures, especially the pre-modern, indigenous culture to which Anglo or white cultures are labeled as the condemned "other." In their writing, the path to salvation (for the Chicano especially) is to embrace the act of border-crossing as an "elevated state" of acceptance of the repressed indigenous roots. In so doing, the project aims to essentialize the authors' "own" indigenous culture, and asks the reader to cross their own essentialized cultures in order to meet somewhere in between (under guidance of the culture that possesses privileged access to the whole which is, not coincidentally, Anzaldúa's and Hick's).

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6 María Tabuenca Córdoba, "Aproximaciónes críticas sobre las literaturas de las fronteras," *Frontera Norte* 9 (1997): 85-110.

7 Pablo Vila, ed., *Ethnography at the border* (Minneapolis/London: U of Minnesota Press, 2003) 311.

The categorization of the "idealized hybrid" as an enterprise of personal fulfillment is opposed by Johnson and Michaelsen on a different project.
To them, no presupposed cultures can be reified because a border is always crossed and crossed again without the possibility of the "trans" cultural.
Here, cultural studies scholar Pablo Vila comments: "These authors try to circumvent the logic of difference/identity: if you cannot identify totalizing differences, there is no way to identify totalizing identities either" (Vila 314).
Their claim that all are "hybrids" and "border-crossers," ignores the possible difference between the two notions, as well as the fact that borders are also reinforced. Moreover, their view misses any mentioning of power relations that relate subjects to a given power structure. Vila argues that Michaelsen and Johnson perform a postmodern version of ethnocentrism in emptying their own subject position of any content: "[Their] new model is not a model, [it] is a non-model that presupposes and circumscribes nothing" (Vila 316).

Questions of difference and the aspect that differences indeed matter very much thus cannot be fruitfully posed. These types of border studies and their theories subsequently "fail to pursue the possibility that fragmentation of experience [as occurring in the border space] can lead to reinforcement of borders instead of to an invitation to cross them" (Vila 317), Vila rightly concludes.

In order to move beyond the privileged position of the "hybrid" and the "border-crosser" occupied in border studies, it seems necessary to abandon the idyllic picture of the border as no more than an intellectually inspiring place. To complete the border picture, one should consider the many silent narratives of people living at the border: Anglos, Native Mexicans and Americans, Blacks, Mexicans and other nationals that do not necessarily embrace the figure of the "border crosser."

In its later development, border studies have moved away from issues related to the US-Mexican border to broader themes, in which the metaphor of the border is used to represent any situation where limits are involved. The object of inquiry is thus more the psychic than the physical space about which it is possible to address problems of borders.

A major representative of such later scholars, Claire Fox, declares: "the border is now to be found in any metropolis – wherever poor, displaced, ethnic, immigrant, or sexual minority populations collide with the 'hegemonic' population, which is usually understood to consist of middle and upper-class WASPs."[8]

8 Claire Fox, *The fence and the river: culture and politics at the U.S.-Mexico border* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1999) 61.

ii. Proceedings of an anthropological study

Working from the viewpoint of an anthropologist, the border is far more than a dividing line imposed on people: it is also maintained. As a result, it should be associated more with active thinking and conduct.[9] Carrying out anthropological fieldwork at and around the border, accordingly, means to switch back and forth between positions and to relate diverging structural patterns to an announced set of references.
To look closely at the border region means to look closely at different ideas and concepts. In the course of my writing, I will draw attention to diverse processes and re-affirmations of (national) belonging.
The main focus will lie on the changing and situational "positionings"[10] of the Kumeyaay indigenous community, on their active participation in and tolerance of relevant fields of interaction, migratory movement and communication at and around the Californian border. In this sense, I understand the individual as an acteur within greater social, political and economic contexts.

The Kumeyaay's specific involvement in the crossroads of identity, nationality and cultural belonging generates, by my account, a view on different kinds of separation and signification within the field of identity formation and cultural politics,[11] which as a theoretic approach, will influence and support the argumentation of my work.
In order to find out about linkages between the above-mentioned constituents, I carried out my fieldwork in autumn 2003 and 2004, and from July to November 2005.
The dissertation aims to give some insight into the different aspects of agency I encountered, aspects of "Kumeyaay courses," as I name them here, at and around the US-Mexican border.

In regard to the very different historical backgrounds and political environments that have influenced the Mexican and US Kumeyaay communities, I anticipated divergent entries to the field.

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9 Here, I relate to Dieter Haller's elaboration on "border anthropology." [Dieter Haller, "Entwurf einer Ethnologie der Grenze," European conference "Moderne Zeiten, Europäische Räume – Grenzfragen," Grüne Akademie, February 23-25, 2001.]

10 Term used by Trinh T. Minh-ha for the purpose of combining the concept of identity and difference. [Trinh T. Minh-ha, "An acoustic journey," *Rethinking borders*, ed. John Welchman (Hampshire/London: Macmillan Press, 1996) 1-17.]

11 With the term "cultural politics," I allude to Donald Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, eds., *Race, nature, and the politics of difference* (Durham/London: Duke UP, 2003). They understand: "[…] cultural politics as an approach that treats culture itself as a site of political struggle, an analytic emphasizing power, process, and practice. Cultural practices bear tangible political effects: they forge communities, reproduce inequalities, and vindicate exclusions" (Moore 2).

On the US side, I predominantly talked to representatives of museums, tribal councils or speakers at conferences, whereas field contacts on the Mexican side were predominantly upheld with private individuals or families. My research was determined by prevailing and nationally differing frameworks of power and specific community interests in the foreground of unequal social, political and economic settings.

The dynamics of borders are manifold and continuously shifting as they reflect the nations' political requirements for either closed or open boundaries at their periphery. The border between Mexico and the US has been rather unbolt since it was drawn in 1848[12] and remained an unattended barbed wire fence with small checkpoints until "Operation Gatekeeper"[13] came into effect and, more recently, until the border's relative hermetic closure after September 11, 2001.

A restricted permeability of the border is followed by diverse legal and illegal border-crossing strategies that adapt to the tightening regulations. The migratory flux across the border reflects the economic imbalance between the two nations, regardless of the border's affirmed administered and fiercely controlled state. Apart from long distance migratory movements into the US, short distance migration is also affected, prevalent among numerous indigenous communities split by the border like the Tohono O'odham, the Yaqui or the Cucupá and Kumeyaay along the California/Baja California and Arizona/Sonora borderline.

The border community of the Kumeyaay has received my special interest because they are not on the cognitive map of indigenous groups of US or Mexican citizens, or the majority of people in general. They belong to the many "invisible" indigenous groups[14] that, until now, were not significant – or better, not used - for the makings of public awareness and national representations in the US or Mexico.

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12 A US governmental webpage gives the following account on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: "In December 1845, the U.S. Congress voted to annex the Texas Republic and soon sent troops led by General Zachary Taylor to the Rio Grande (regarded by Mexicans as their territory) to protect its border with Mexico. The inevitable clashes between Mexican troops and U.S. forces provided the rationale for a Congressional declaration of war on May 13, 1846.Hostilities continued for the next two years. […]
Mexican officials and Nicholas Trist, President Polk's representative, began discussions for a peace treaty [in] August. On February 2, 1848 the Treaty was signed in Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled as U.S. troops advanced. Its provisions called for Mexico to cede 55% of its territory (present-day Arizona, California, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado, Nevada and Utah) in exchange for fifteen million dollars in compensation for war-related damage to Mexican property," http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/ghtreaty [June 22, 2009].

13 The devaluation of the Peso in 1994 and the economic crisis in Mexico in 1995 resulted in a considerable increase in illegal entries into the US. The US responded with a series of border patrol operations designed to prevent illegal border crossings. Through "Operation Gatekeeper," the border in the San Diego area became more difficult to cross than at any time before in Border Patrol history.

14 The problem of "visible" and "invisible" indigenous groups has been mentioned to me by the musician and anthropologist Steven Elster.

Now, after centuries of existence in a state of more or less complete invisibility, and in the shadow of the two dominant bordering nations, the Kumeyaay undergo a process of reemergence into the public eye.[15]

Among important political and economic factors that contribute to this phenomenon, is the simple fact that the Kumeyaay territories are located on both sides of the international border. This split of a people continues to cause great loss as families and knowledge resources are torn apart, and through the passage of time the two sides become alienated from each other. However, the focus of this work will be a look at current states of cross-border ties and agencies that aim to reinforce and stabilize immediate contacts and common political agendas. The presently ongoing emergence of alliances and personal contacts are by no means "new" in the history of the Kumeyaay since migration, and visits across the border have been prevalent practices among families and individuals since the drawing of the international border in 1848. Nevertheless, the major difference between those times and today is that formal ties are on the increase such as collaborations between Mexican communities and (I)NGOs [international non-government organizations], as well as official invitations, seminars and workshops organized and held by various US reservations and Mexican indigenous ejidos. Additionally, the interest from academic researchers and filmmakers in the Kumeyaay amounts to a slowly growing public awareness of the existence of local indigenous people in the California borderlands.

15 In Mexico, for instance, such "public emergence" happened in the course of pan-indigenous political information exchanges organized by the EZLN [Zapatista Army for National Liberation]. During the second visit of EZLN representatives in a Kumeyaay village [the first one was in October 2006], one of the indigenous commanders, David, admits that no member of his group has previously heard of or known about the Kumeyaay. On April 15, 2007, he declared in San José de la Zorra:
"El Subcomandante Marcos ya nos informó, ya nos platicó pero también venimos a conocerlos directamente. Nosotros somos los que estamos representando el EZLN [Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional], junto con el SCI Marcos, somos los que formamos parte de la comandancia general del EZLN, y ahora pues estamos por todos lados. Queremos pues, hacer realidad nuestro plan de que la lucha de los zapatistas, la lucha del EZ, tenemos que llevarlo en todos los rincones de nuestra patria. Y lo estamos tratando de hacer. Queremos llegar hasta los últimos rincones. Por ejemplo aquí es una comunidad que nosotros ni sabíamos. Hay otros lugares, hay otras pueblos indígenas sabíamos que existieron decíamos nosotros, pero nadie nos cuenta si todavía viven, si todavía existen, o se acabaron y resulta que ahí están." –
"The sub commander Marcos has already informed us, he has already told us, but anyhow, we came in person. We are representing the EZLN, together with the SCI Marcos, we are the people that are forming part of the headquarters of the EZLN, and now we are everywhere. We want to make our plan a reality, our plan for the Zapatista fight, the fight of the EZ, we have to bring it to every corner of this country. For example, this community [the Kumeyaay community] was one we had no idea of. There are other places, there are other indigenous communities that we knew of, but nobody told us that you [the Kumeyaay] are still around, that you still exist, or if you have vanished completely, and it turns out that you are here," http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/comision-sexta/703 [June 10, 2009].

The separation of the Kumeyaay people and their subsequent partial incorporation into two entirely divergent national entities and social structures, has resulted in an uneven preservation of cultural knowledge and practices which now, in times of an indigenous cultural renaissance, invites the Kumeyaay to seek respective lost cultural components on the other side of the border. The border situation thus bears a productive moment, a potential to reclaim what was lost. For communities on the Mexican side, those trans-border ties become increasingly attractive, as some of the US reservations have engaged in gaming activities that, in the interim, generate unprecedented opportunities for new sources of income and projects of development.

In the fissure between one of the leading Western nations and a partly developing country, and along one of the most problematic borders between nations, indigenous claims fall on deaf ears, as national interests are being pursued in a sphere of high socio-political alertness.
The current US border policy has a strongly negative impact on the formerly uncomplicated border-crossing conventions for members of the numerous Kumeyaay communities, and for those wanting to head north to find better-paying jobs.
Nevertheless, the new laws are accompanied by additional new legal directives that are aimed to balance some of the negative effects of the problematic border situation. These new legal options, like the institution of the "Kumeyaay Border Task Force" that assists in the issuing of a new form of laser visas, will be dealt with in the course of my writing about cross-border agencies in the realm of border-crossing rights and practices.
Other provisions, such as the bi-national political agreement for environmental protection in the border region, called "Border 2012 Program," will likewise be a topic that afflicts some Kumeyaay communities at present.
But, apart from such formal aspects of border policies and migration-related impacts on the Kumeyaay, it will be my central concern to describe personal and community-based agencies of collaboration.

iii. Indigenous communities and indigenous sovereignty

> The notion of tribal sovereignty is not confiscable, or earth bound; sovereignty is neither fence nor feathers. The essence of sovereignty is imaginative, an original tribal trope, communal and spiritual, an idea that is more than meters and bounds and treaties.[16]

16 Gerald Vizenor, *The heirs of Columbus* (Hanover/London: Wesleyan UP, 1991) 7.

As a point of departure for a jaunt into the territory of community-related agencies, I chose to focus on applicable concepts of community and indigenous political agency to locate my findings in a broader analytical context. To that extent, I will explain what I understand by indigenous communities and indigenous sovereignty.

A certain combination of decent, culture and place brings the notion of community into existence. And as culture cannot be possessed nor ancestry shared per se, people have to elaborate these traits into the idea of a community. In this sense, I understand communities, and the differing meanings given to them, to be in a permanent state of construction and re-construction.
More to the point of the named self-constitutive character of communities, it is important to consider not only internal, but also external dialectics of community formation in the sense that both processes, internal identification and external categorization, are likely to feed back upon each other. Likewise, a notion of community implies similarity and difference within itself and in opposition to other social entities. This mostly symbolic notion of community is therefore based upon a related idea, called into being by the exigencies of social interaction.
The beginning and end of a given community is marked by its (symbolic) boundaries whose perception and creation are tied to individual members and their realization of the community's specificity and distinctiveness. The meaning given to these boundaries is decidedly essential, although the nature of these boundaries might be more tangible in one instance and more symbolic in the other.
The anthropologist Anthony Cohen defines the diversity of community boundaries as follows:

> The manner in which they [the boundaries] are marked depends entirely upon the specific community in question. Some, like national and administrative boundaries, may be statutory and enshrined in law. Some may be physical, expressed, perhaps, by a mountain range or a sea. Some may be racial or linguistic or religious. But not all boundaries, and not all the components of any boundary, are so objectively apparent. They may be thought of, rather, as existing in the minds of their beholders. This being so, the boundary may be perceived in rather different terms, not only by people on opposite sides of it, but also by people on the same side.[17]

In the face of this variability of meaning and appearance, the consciousness of community has to be continuously kept alive by means of either reiteration, modification or a partial neglect of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of a community's boundaries, and therefore of the community itself, depend on their symbolic construction and embellishment, whereby the centrality of power in such processes has to be taken into consideration.

17 Anthony Cohen, *The symbolic construction of community* (London/NY: Tavistock Publications, 1985) 12.

Among the more important contexts within which communal identification becomes consequential are therefore institutions and, particularly, organizations or "task-oriented collectives" (Jenkins 25) as Richard Jenkins defines them.

To write about indigenous people necessarily entails a definition of what is understood by "indigenous." Indigenous people are the descendents of the original inhabitants of a geographical region prior to colonization, who have maintained portions of or relate to specific linguistic, cultural and organizational characteristics. Sarah Radcliffe, longtime observer of South American indigenous movements, contends that definitions like these are "used broadly by indigenous political movements, as well as by international agreements, multi-lateral and bi-lateral policy-makers."[18]
In this sense, there are endless perspectives from which definitions are formulated, indigenous positions and non-indigenous positions, normative official declarations and personal ones.

The political meaning of indigenous identity is given particular urgency because the concept emerged in response to colonial relations. It is therefore a special form of ethnicity because it contains the twofold suggestion that indigenous people were both prior and original occupants of the land (which separates them from later groups of immigrants that are defined as ethnic minorities today) and that they have suffered as a result of the settlement of their territory.
Furthermore, Native American and Native Mexican ethnicity is to be seen in the foreground of a growing development referred to as "ethnic renewal." In her book American Indian ethnic renewal,[19] Joane Nagel states that the number of enlisted American Indians has risen considerably between 1960 and the mid 1990s from little more than 500,000 to nearly 2 million. More than a decade later, in 2006, the estimated rate is 1% of the total US population.[20]

At this instant, it is important to differentiate between indigenous communities and sovereign tribes or nations that are "politico-legal entities" as anthropologist and ethno-historian Raymond Fogelson underlines.

18 Sarah Radcliffe, Nina Laurie, Robert Andolina, "Indigenous people and political transnationalism: globalization from below meets globalization from above," paper presented to the Transnational Committees Program Seminar (U of Oxford: School of Geography, February 28, 2002) 3.

19 Joane Nagel, *American Indian ethnic renewal: red power and the resurgence of identity and culture* (Oxford/NY: Oxford UP, 1996).

20 Native American population in 2006: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_(US)#Population [June 25, 2009].

"Tribes," he contends, "were not primordial polities but institutions created to facilitate interaction with states."[21]
But, what entitles an indigenous community to become a governmentally acknowledged band, tribe[22] or nation?
In the US, guidelines and regulations vary from tribe to tribe, but next to blood quantum and community affiliation, entitlement to self-government is tied to "cultural specificity." However, to prove this distinction is problematic because it promotes the idea that indigenous rights are best reserved for those communities whose cultural identities are significantly different from the mainstream. This would mean that the more cultural practices have been assimilated, the less it needs indigenous rights, since the respective community will have lost the basis of its cultural differences and thus the need for special protection. The result is that cultural identity is reified, or taken as given and permanent.

However, discourses on indigeneity do converge around the idea of cultural specificity:

> Notions of indigenous cultural specificity provide a powerful discourse around which indigenous issue networks come together, and which crosses multiple scales from the local to the international. Looking at the ways in which indigenous, multilaterals, consultants and advocacy INGOs talk about indigenous culture reveals a construction of notions of culture as being discrete, transcendent and holistic (Radcliffe 10).

The Kumeyaay, as well, effectively position their culture around a set of practices and spaces by which community boundaries are inscribed and reproduced.
Culture bears an explicitly political momentum. In Race, nature, and the politics of difference,[23] anthropologists Moore et al. state:

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21 Raymond Fogelson, "Perspectives on Native American identity," *Studying Native America: problems and prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1998) 51.

22 I use this term to refer to a certain political unit. More generally, I would adapt Bernt Glatzer's definition from his chapter "The Pashtun tribal system:" "By tribe I understand a social segment based on a genealogical concept of social structure" [Bernt Glatzer, "The Pashtun tribal system," *The concept of tribal society*, eds. Georg Pfeiffer, Deepak Behera (New Delhi: Concept Publishers, 2002) 265-282].

23 The "politics of difference" are informed by feminist critiques on socially reproduced inequalities shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, and other forms of identity and belonging [Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Women, Native, Other. Writing postcoloniality and feminism* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the oppressed* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2000); Jaqui Alexander, Chandra Mohanty, eds., *Feminist genealogies, colonial legacies, democratic futures* (London/NY: Routledge, 1997].
In political philosophy and social theory, as well, analysis has been sought in the realms of identity claims and the exclusion of marginalized groups within multicultural societies [Iris Young, *Inclusion and democracy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990; William Connolly, *Identity/ difference: democratic negotiations of political paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991)].

> We understand cultural politics as an approach that treats culture itself as a site of political struggle, an analytic emphasizing power, process, and practice. Cultural practices bear tangible political effects: they forge communities, reproduce inequalities, and vindicate exclusions. Yet they also provide the means by which those very effects are challenged. Cultural politics insists that such struggles are simultaneously material and symbolic […] (Moore 2).

The political right to an existence as sovereign people has a long history of struggle in the US.[24]

By the mid- and late 1960s, indigenous minority activism and writing proliferated within and outside dominant cultural formations as a growing number of politically viable institutions and discourses. This period, known as the Indigenous Renaissance, witnessed the foundation of the AIM in 1967. Some years later, in 1974, the "World Council of Indigenous People" (WCIP) had its first assembly. The imperative necessity for the WCIP was the building of an activist indigenous minority politics within the paradigm of a nation-to-nation status encoded in the discourse of treaties.

As a council of indigenous people, they most importantly needed a designated stance of who belonged and who didn't belong within the criterion. Here, the most striking feature of its 1975 definition of "Indigenous People" is that it was forged not as a list of "objective" criteria but rather as a narrative. It thus created an auto-ethnography or collective repossession of definitional control. Defining and defending indigenous (minority) identities unavoidably led to disagreement over whether biological kinship, language, culture, group consciousness, community endorsement, personal declaration, or some combinations of these "objective" and "subjective" criteria should be used to recognize "authentic" indigenous status. Terms and their potential meanings form a complex set of interactions, a juxtaposition and integration of "real" and "imagined" genealogies, physical and metaphorical ancestral land bases, and narratives of "factual" and "invented" histories.

Today, the indigenous right to self-government, as in the US, has moved away from the realm of discourse and advocacy into the realm of emerging political practice. And although there are different approaches that provide normative justification for indigenous political rights, prevalent emphasis is paid to concepts of indigenous identity, coupled with culture and nationhood. These attributes of identity are understood to underscore historical and moral claims to self-government. It is justified because it sustains an indigenous right to cultural survival and because it restores residual powers of sovereignty.

The political scientist David Wilkins[25] defines indigenous sovereignty as follows:

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24 The following short historical account is inspired by Allen Chadwick, *Blood narrative: indigenous identity in American Indian and Maori literary and activist texts* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).

> Our sovereignty, that is inherent tribal sovereignty, is original and it is natural and it was not crafted by human made laws or actions […]. The US as a government wields legal sovereignty and it's vested in the institutions and in the agents of government. And there is also something called political sovereignty! And this rests in the American population, in such expressions that again the US constitution has: "in the people of the US!" So, from an American perspective, sovereignty is more about legal competence, rather than absolute power, and it means the power of the people to make governmental arrangements, to protect and limit personal liberty by social control. Tribal sovereignty, as it is now exercised, has certain similarities with the way Western law defines it, that is, it has, first of all, a legal political dimension. Sovereignty can be defined as a relative independence of a First nation and their people combined with the right and power of regulating their internal affairs without undue foreign dictation that includes forming their own government. [...] And only governments can wield that kind of power and tribes are fundamentally that, they are governments, but we are more than just that, aren't we? We are also cultural and spiritual communities and I define sovereignty in a cultural-spiritual sense like this: I say that tribal sovereignty is the (intangible) spiritual, moral, and dynamic cultural force that's inherent in a given native community. And that force empowers the community people and the community's leaders toward political, economic and cultural integrity.

And concerning the symbolic dimensions of the concept, he adds:

> It's about that sense of "we know who we are" that we have the right to fulfill our community's needs. Tribal sovereignty, or, put it another way, Lumbeness or Dakotaness, is in my mind, the most important of the concepts that I've been discussing tonight, because it is, it doesn't really represent, but it is the collective and integrated soul of each indigenous community! It is, in fact, the dignified essence of each tribal community as evidenced by the actions of the people themselves, not the economic elites, not the most educated among us, and not even the elected leaders either, but you, the people! And all your parents and grandparents at home who are working and laboring to maintain our homelands, our communities, because it is you, the people who are most directly affected by the community's decisions and those of the elected or unelected political leaders.

A consequence of framing sovereignty in terms of culture and nation is that the relationship between sovereign nations is identified in terms of unequal access to power. Undeniably, one could now argue that indigenous leaders feature attributes of culture and nation as central to their communal identities because they justify an equitable standing with other constitutionally protected cultures or nations. However, what could get lost in the process is the possibility of developing models of politics that are less antagonistic, and identities that are more complex, layered, and overlapping.

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25 David Wilkins is associate professor of American Indian Studies, Political Science, and Law at the University of Minnesota. On October 7, 2004, he gave a keynote presentation to the symposium "Manifest Sovereignty: The origin, evolution, and contemporary status of indigenous nations" at San Diego State University (SDSU).

On the other side of the border, the Kumeyaay are recognized in a wholly different way. It is essential to understand that official recognition of indigenous groups in Mexico does not take account of a special political status as a comparative to the sovereignty model inherent to the US Constitution.
In Mexico, they are officially recognized by the National Institute of Indigenous People as indigenous people, meaning descendants of the original inhabitants prior to colonization, who have maintained linguistic, cultural and organizational characteristics.
In contrast to identification procedures in the US where "blood quantum" plays a central role, self-identification is a fundamental criterion to determine who is considered indigenous. But also here, exact definitions and legal statuses remain ambiguous topics. The right to communal auto-definition is one of the main requests coming from indigenous communities.

The so-called "indigenismo," at first an exclusively mestizo intellectual movement initiated to reconstitute the nation according to its Indian heritage, was born during the time of the Mexican revolution of 1910.
Thirty years later, in 1940, President Cárdenas called upon the first "Inter-American Indigenous Congress" in Pátzcuaro where the National Institute of Indigenous People (INI) was founded with a theoretical basis of assimilation.
Three main phases of indigenist policies can be differentiated: the "colonial phase" of controlled "conservation of indigenous cultures" under the dominion of the colonizers, the "republican phase" of enforced assimilation, and the "modern phase" of partial integration aimed at conserving "certain aspects" of indigenous cultures.
During the modern phase starting in the 1970s, bilingual teachers from indigenous communities were officially allowed to teach at primary schools, and bicultural education was more and more accepted. This "ethno development," a first step toward an understanding of indigenous people as subjects, was adopted by the National Institute of Indigenous People (INI) and the Secretary for National Education.

Because living conditions for indigenous people in Mexico have not changed much over the years, small portions of Chiapas' Indians formed the EZLN and armed themselves to fight for their political demands. Their reclamations list encompasses mostly basic human rights such as the right to live under human conditions, the right to education, justice, and paid work.
Now, some 15 years later, this social movement has institutionalized itself, channeling most of its energy into a war of paperwork.
In the first 2005 edition of the academic journal "Latin American Cultural Studies," Analisa Taylor clarifies the interrelation of the emergence of EZLN and the "ends of indigenismo in Mexico:"

> While indigenismo played a fundamental role in bolstering the PRI's[26] state-as-benefactor image, it has proven to be an especially ineffective mechanism for dealing with the nationally-connected, globally minded indigenous and popular movements that have gained visibility in recent years.
>
> The neo-Zapatista indigenous uprising which has surfaced in Chiapas in 1994 has been most effective in calling attention to the disjuncture between the post-revolutionary "mestizo nationalist" ideal – of ethnic homogeneity, economic modernization and national belonging promoted by the post-revolutionary single party state government – and the reality of a multiethnic society struggling to overcome a neo-colonial system of discrimination and impoverishment.[27]

The EZLN upheaval was also and undeniably a product of the national economic crisis of the 1980s and the rise of neo-liberalism with its subsequent withdrawal of state support from social and cultural institutions.
It should have come as no surprise, Taylor adds, "when in May 2003 President Vicente Fox announced his decision to close the ailing National Indigenist Institute (INI) and open a smaller agency, the CDI (National Council for the Development of Indigenous People)" (Taylor 79).

Within this historical context, the Kumeyaay have come "into existence" in gaining entrance into INI's official register as late as the 1970s.
The initiator of this process, Jon Meza, describes the circumstances of his mission in the year 1969 when he tried to establish his (bi-nationally divided) family's right to their aboriginal land in Tecate, Mexico:

> My aunt [a US Kumeyaay] told me: "Do you know what, son? Do you know that the Tecate ranch," she said. "It's my property, son, and those X [another US Kumeyaay family] are selling it," she said. "And I want you to fight for it," she said. "I'm going to give you all my rights. I am going to give you power of attorney," she said, "So that you can fight for it as the owner. But to do that you have to go to Mexico City to get the original papers." […]
>
> Then, when I went to Mexico City, when I arrived at one of those offices [INI], they said: "No, in Baja California there are no Indians. There aren't any," he said. "Yes, there are. I come from there, see. I have papers. I have my dialect. I sing in the dialect, I speak the dialect. My tribe is called Kumeyaay. I come representing all the Indians of Baja California," I said. […]

A long and difficult odyssey followed from department to department ending with a talk with President Echeverría:

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26 The PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) is a Mexican political party established in 1929. It continuously provided the nation's presidents until Vicente Fox, candidate of the National Action Party (PAN), won the national elections in 2000.

27 Analisa Taylor, "The ends of Indigenismo in Mexico," *Latin American Cultural Studies,* Volume 14 (March 2005): 81.

> We were talking with him. Me, talking with him. He said: "Sir," he said, "Look," he said, "Now, if it's true that there are Indians in Baja California, I'll put an office there. I am ordering it. I order that the INI put an office there. I am ordering it." […][28]

Since the communities' official recognition during the presidency of Echeverría, one could say that some progress had been made on the subject of "public relations:"

> Mexican President Vicente Fox visits Kumeyaay in Baja California. 02/03/2003 – La Huerta, Mexico. […] During his visit, the Mexican president spoke to the assembled members of local indigenous communities and neighboring ejidos about his administration's commitment to helping the country's indigenous people. He pointed out that the Commission for the Development of Indigenous people [formerly called INI] has recently formed a National Indigenous Council made up of representatives from all of Mexico's indigenous communities to formalize channels of communication between tribes and the federal government. Baja California has currently four members on the Council. […] Fox recognized the important work of indigenous community members to preserve their culture and traditions, and he told reporters that he had called for all three levels of government to carry out a coordinated effort to immediately begin work on rescuing Baja California's native languages, all of which are considered of disappearing.

The article ends portraying the more practical facts that awaited the noble visit: "President Fox lunched at the home of 85 year old traditional authority Teodora Cuero. When asked what was on the menu, the ever-feisty octogenarian replied, 'Rice and beans, of course! What should he expect? We are poor, that's what we eat!'"[29]

iv. Questions and assumptions regarding the case of the Kumeyaay

The Kumeyaay are a comparatively small group almost non-existent in the public awareness of both nation-states of which 13 reservations are located in the US and 4 Kumeyaay ejidos, or communal lands, in Mexico. Despite their marginal position, however, - or because of it – one of their bands has been selected for one of the first permanent exhibitions of the newly built and indigenously led "Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian" (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. Together with eight other US Indian nations, they represent an average number of 600 indigenous communities in the US. Their exhibition space is filled with an array of artifacts, photos, and everyday

28 Shortened and reordered sequence from a translated interview with Jon Meza carried out by the linguist Paula Meyer. Paula Meyer, "Indigenous language loss and revitalization in Tecate, Baja California," diss., San Diego State University, Claremont Graduate University, 2006, 127-130.

29 Michael Wilken, "Mexican President Vicente Fox visits Kumeyaay in Baja California. 02/03/05 – La Huerta, Mexico," http://www.kumeyaay.com/news/news_detail.html?Id=2572 [March 10, 2005].

utilities, and quickly brings to mind their characteristic distinctiveness: the territory of the Campo Kumeyaay Nation directly borders the international boundary line and as a result falls into a space of multiple and unruly intersection. This obstinate existence characterized by a tightening separation[30] is hardly dramatized but claimed as positive challenge in the exhibition.

This extraordinary situation led to my central hypothesis, namely that the tightening socio-political situation at the US-Mexican border after 9/11 actually fortifies the establishment of a "new" Kumeyaay cross-border community with a growing consciousness of affinity.

As an account of the complex and difficult situation of the Kumeyaay, past and present, the subsequent story about the choice of their proper name should be told. Some bands are highlighting their affiliation to the history of the San Diego mission as the Barona Band of Mission Indians and some are underlying their status as an indigenous nation like Campo or the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation. The Kumeyaay historian and politician Michael Connolly replied to my question concerning the differing names of bands on the US side:

> The Ipay, when Florence Shipek [US anthropologist that worked with the Kumeyaay since the 1950s for almost half a century] interviewed some of the elders in Mesa Grande and St. Ysabel [two of the US Kumeyaay reservations], they told her that Kumeyaay had been their name for themselves a long time ago, but somehow or another it got lost. And one of the things that happened in the US was, after the Mexican-American war, the territories that were incorporated into the US from Mexico, the US really did not want to recognize any land claims by Indians who had not been under Mexico, who couldn't claim land rights through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and that was throughout Arizona and New Mexico and California. So, we negotiated our treaties in 1852, and supposedly we had a big treaty land set aside for us in the county, but they secretly voted down the treaty and hid it from us, so people didn't understand why their lands weren't protected.
>
> In the 1870s, they finally started creating reservations, but it was all these Indians who really made a case for being tied to the Missions, like the Pala reservation and St. Ysabel. […] But they ignored the Indians back here [refers to the Kumeyaay living inland. The Mission was built at the coast and many Kumeyaay living close by became missionized while others fought back or fled eastward and to the south], who really had no ties to the Mission system, who had been the rebels against the Mission. And in the 1870s, the BIA said that all the Indians in this part of the county should be considered renegades and should all be rounded up and shipped to Mexico. And they didn't want to

30 In October 11, 2004, the executive director of the "Kumeyaay Border Task Force," Luis Guassac, described the situation: "The Kumeyaay have traversed the border region separating the US and Mexico for thousands of years, the international border literally splits our aboriginal territory in half! It wasn't really a problem until 'Operation Gatekeeper' went into effect. That was approximately in 1988" (field notes, October 11, 2004).

recognize any Indians out here, the mountain area, Campo, Manzanita, La Posta, Laguna.

> […] Then, in the 1890s, there was an act that was passed to create reservations for the tribes that were living out in the mountain areas, in the desert, and so every tribe put "Mission" in their name! And we did, too. We called ourselves the "Campo Band of Diegeño Mission Indians". And that's our official name in the federal register. […] So, the late 1800s was a period when people did not want to call themselves Kumeyaay, they wanted to call themselves Mission Indians, wanted to call themselves Diegeño, because it's named after the Mission in San Diego, and I think they raised their kids that way! And I think it was during that period that people told their kids: "Don't let anybody call you Kumeyaay!" And the reason was: they were worried about losing their land! And so, it just got ingrained into people, generation after generation, and that's why you see such an acceptance [of the name Kumeyaay] south of the border, but when you come up here, then you don't see that! And, when I was a teenager, I asked one of my uncles one time: "Are we Kumeyaay?" And he said: "We are not Kumeyaay! Only the Mexican Indians are Kumeyaay!" And I said: "But don't we have family that's on that side of the border, and they call themselves Kumeyaay?" And he said: "Oh! They've been brainwashed! They're not Kumeyaay!" And he just got mad![31]

According to these circuits of history, the scope of research is broadened and includes not only the specifics of a community split by an international border, but commonalities and differences that intersect and bind all parts of the community.

Factual categories discerned will be thereby the diversity of living conditions, (natural) environments, and attitudes towards cultural life and its connection with history.

However, the realization of plans and initiatives – on either side of the border – is necessarily tied to financial resources. Since the opening and spread of casinos on some of the US Kumeyaay reservations, the spectrum between the poor and wealthy has increased. In the NMAI exhibit, the following connection between ancestral and contemporary ways of subsistence is put in a gripping picture:

> The acorn has been with us for a long time. Our ancestors survived on this resource. Today, we have the Golden Acorn Casino to remind us of the past and to provide for the future (Jane Salazar, 2001).[32]

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31 Interview with Mike Connolly, Campo EPA office, October 11, 2005.

32 Cited from www.kumeyaay.info/museums/onlinemuseums.html [August 11, 2008]. Less than half of the 13 US Kumeyaay bands live off casino revenues. Although the running of gaming facilities is legally protected through the Kumeyaay's status as sovereign nations, political and public reactions can be rather critical: „While campaigning against Propositions 68 and 70 [predominantly casino-friendly legal propositions] Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger commented that 'The Indians are ripping us off.' Later, at a LAX news conference he refused to apologize for his comment that some have labelled racist" (Courtney Gable, "Propositions 68-70. California Tribal Gaming Compacts. Pros and Cons", LOS ANGELES ABOUT, November 1, 2005,

Inspired by theoretical concepts of transnationalism that examine and categorize multiple forms of transnational processes, I will focus on everyday practices, forms and items of exchange, as well as the agents involved in these transactions.

Sociologist and anthropologist Sarah Mahler evolves in the distinction of two major kinds of transnationalism: "transnationalism from above" and "transnationalism from below." The former considers mainly the so-called macro-level business structures operating in two or more nation states, such as multi-national corporations or the media whose structures are by and large controlled by powerful elites. "Transnationalism from below," on the contrary, is concerned with "everyday practices of ordinary people" in the border region and, in relation to this, the formation of a very specific new social space."[33]

I assume that the "new" cross-border community creates such new social space struggling, among other things, with differences in cultural knowledge and practice. But, in how far can they be related to the specific national, economic and political conditions? What kind and frequency of transnational activities and ties can be found? How do the Kumeyaay enter the public sphere and what political arenas do they walk in?

And concerning the different kinds of exchange, the question arises as to whether they are part of an explicit indigenous solidarity network.

Moreover, the fact that every single activity is carried out by a certain group of people or by individuals, leads to the question of who is involved and what their objectives are. To see different sites and mechanisms of these processes and to be able to qualify established kinds of borders, it will be especially important to include interest groups from the "outside" such as academics, journalists and NGO members.

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www.losangeles.about.com/od/politicsanddelections/i/voteprop70.htm [August 11, 2008].

33 Sarah Mahler, "Theoretical and empirical contributions toward a research agenda for transnationalism," *Transnationalism from below*, eds. Michael Smith, Luis Guarnizo (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998) 64-100.