

# Review of: "Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula"

Henrik Dorf Nielsen<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Eastern Finland

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

I will be commenting on the article: Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula by Ruben Garnica-Monroy from the point of view of a geographer, whose main research interest and expertise is in border research.

There are several things which intrigue me in this article. First, I liked the author's idea of creating several maps and then layering them to identify overlapping areas. Furthermore, I found the article quite informative, delivering a lot of information and results, yet it is most often unclear exactly how these results have come about as the method and data are ill-defined. Point in case is the data collected from the online news; there is no description of the selection criteria of either news outlets or news selection, time (frame) of collection, number of articles retrieved, and we are only presented with limited insight into the data retrieved from the collection.

In general, I agree when many of the theoretical statements are being made. However, the article would benefit from more sources, not only would it help to position the research within the existing literature and give the reader a chance to dive deeper into the topic, but it would also help bolster the arguments made by the author especially on some of the topics which are more contested than the article implies. Point in case is the definition of border and boundaries which is quite complex (see e.g., Langer and Fernández-Götz 2020). Also, the definition of boundary as symbol of "dichotomic condition of the territory" (Garnica-Monroy 2023: 5) would benefit from a few sources as the consensus is that borders are not only dividers, but also gathering points (Nielsen 2021; Langer and Fernández-Götz 2020).

The lack of sources also adds confusion regarding certain claims and statements. It becomes unclear whether a statement stems from data, literature, or some other source. This is amplified by the use of quotation marks, which seem to be used not only for quotations—at least citations are not always given—which leaves the reader guessing the meaning behind the use. This confusing is in part also due to the structure of the article. Instead of collecting the methodical approaches and data collection in one section, the article is divided into two sections, one dealing with the maps, and one dealing with the public policies and news article, each explaining the method and data collection. This is again confusing for the reader and creates an unnecessary divide in the paper.

I enjoyed the mixing of an architect approach with border studies, yet I would have expected the concept of landscape to be more prominent, especially as it is also useful in the urban vs rural debate (see e.g., Eker & Houtum (eds.) 2013). There are also other concepts that could have been utilized e.g., bordering and borderland, yet I acknowledge that it might

take the research in a slightly different direction.

Finally, as mentioned in the beginning I find merit in the laying of the different maps, yet it is not made clear how these maps are supposed to be read and understood, e.g., figure 2 has a map with the text; “Elderly population (15% - 80%)” but it is unclear what elder population means and what the 15%-80%—which is a very large span—means. Finally, I would like to commend the author for suggesting solutions to the issues encountered in the paper, something that often is overlooked in academia, yet a more rigorous description of the methodology and data collection would be needed in order to evaluate the results, and likewise and a more stringent structure would increase the readability of the paper which it deserves.

### References:

Eker, M. and Houtum, H. van (eds) (2013) *GRENSLAND / BORDERLAND – Geschiedenis en toekomst van het grenslandschap; atlas, essays en ontwerp*. Eindhoven: Blauwdruk.

Garnica-Monroy, R. (2023). Redefining borders in the contested territory between San Pedro and San Andres Cholula. *Qeios*. Available at: <https://www.qeios.com/read/QIUXJ0>

Langer, C. and Fernández-Götz, M. (2020) ‘Boundaries, Borders and Frontiers: Contemporary and Past Perspectives’, *eTopoi. Journal for Ancient Studies* Special Volume 7, pp. 33–47. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-28207>.

Nielsen, H.D. (2021) ‘State and Non-State Cross-Border Cooperation Between North Karelia and Its (Un) Familiar Russian Neighbors’, *GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY*, 14(2), pp. 42–49. Available at: <https://ges.rgo.ru/jour/article/view/1865>