

EXCLAVES AS APPENDICES: The Strait of Gibraltar

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BORDER CONDITIONS CONFLICTS AND TENSIONS

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Ceuta, a Spanish exclave on the Moroccan coast, and Gibraltar, a British Crown Colony on the edge of the Spanish mainland, face one another across the Strait of Gibraltar, forming a zone where the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea connect. The rocks that are located in the vicinity of both cities are believed to be the 'Two Pillars of Hercules'. While in Greek mythology these pillars marked the end of the known world, they later formed, during the period of expanding European colonization, the entrance gate to the New World. Ever since these ancient times, both rocks have been a strategic objective for numerous empires to besiege and conquer. Historically, the two 'pillars' have been the site of battles for control over this major trade route. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 only increased its importance. This turbulent history continues into the present, as the claim for both 'overseas territories', by Spain and Morocco respectively, remains a key political issue. Furthermore, Ceuta has become a gate to Europe for African and Asian migrants. The Ceuta exclave, however, is oriented towards Europe and fortified by a protective wall. Gibraltar, on the other hand, has established an open frontier to all EU citizens, but has its proud face turned away from quarrelling Europe.

Although nowadays both Gibraltar and Ceuta seem to be rather indifferent to each other's existence, their relation has simultaneously similar and contradictory characteristics. Both are places of refuge, Gibraltar for wealthy European retirees while Ceuta shelters asylum-seeking Sub-Saharan migrants. In both cases, the motives of the 'refugee' are economically driven. The British colony houses many Spaniards, while the Spanish exclave houses many Moroccan nationals. For lack of connection to the British mainland, the Gibraltar colony can appear more British in character than Great Britain and is rapidly becoming a caricature of itself, as the old British rule has turned into a decadent, nostalgic remnant. As a result, Gibraltar has

a largely inward orientation, becoming an introverted city that is guarded by numerous fences. However, the fence is, in this respect, an exaggeration: Gibraltar manifests itself as the last post of civilized Europe. In fact, that post has shifted across the Strait of Gibraltar to Ceuta where the protective barrier of fortified Europe actually is situated. Formerly, Europe ended at the tip of Gibraltar's rocky outcrop, though it now starts at the razor-wired fence between Ceuta and Morocco. Both cities can be regarded as economic free zones, but in both cities, a strip of no-man's land establishes a zone of extreme control: Gibraltar's airport runway versus Ceuta's barbed-wire fence. The historic relationship between the two cities remains apparent even today, as both territories exist as an 'exclave as appendix'.

These similarities and differences find spatial expression in the different border zones that constitute their territories. From a historical perspective, the orientation of the Strait of Gibraltar has shifted profoundly from the East-West direction of the colonizing conquerors to be replaced with a South-North orientation. Initially, the Pillars of Hercules marked the entrance to the world across the Atlantic, but nowadays the Strait forms the fortified gateway from Africa into wealthy Europe. This shift in orientation also means that the character of the Gibraltar-Ceuta zone has changed: from an open gate that facilitated smooth passage to a closed gate that raises barriers rather than bridging gaps. As the last decade has seen an increasing involvement of the European Union's member states to secure their borders, meaning that each new member state has to address the issues of migration as well, the spatial consequences of this policy have been accepted to such an extent that, by now, even the term 'Fortress Europe' is no longer considered problematic. Perhaps the border with Morocco is but one of the many immediate issues that need to be 'resolved' by the European member states, but Ceuta has recently become the symbol of

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this new reality as the attempts of immigrants to cross the border from Morocco to Europe in search of a better future have shown the full spectrum of illegal border crossings, ranging from bold attacks on the razor-wired fences to fatal accidents resulting from overcrowded, unseaworthy boats.

The Gibraltar-Ceuta zone extends beyond its apparent, confined territory from Spain towards Morocco. The borders that mark the different entities within this territory seem straightforward, clear and hard-

edged, but upon closer examination they turn out to be blurry, soft, differentiated and complex. These borders are unstable and shift constantly, the condition may change even between day and night. This poses an important challenge to the general idea of the border constituting a concrete and hard-edged dividing line. Proper insight into the border phenomenon, its complexities and multiplicities, can only be achieved by a concise investigation of the 'daily realities' that make up these borders. The Gibraltar-Ceuta

The list of different borders within the contemporary Ceuta-Gibraltar zone [opposite page]:

- 01 Blurry, fragmented area formed by a cluster of villages inhabited by English retirees living in Spain. The retirees can be regarded as economic refugees taking advantage of the moderately priced properties.
- 02 Zone of spatial influences of the Spanish-English border near Gibraltar.
- 03 Official Spanish border: the Spanish fence transforms the border into a line.
- 04 Neutral zone between the Spanish border and the unofficial British border.
- 05 Neutral zone transformed into a military zone by the construction of the airport runway.
- 06 The runway of Gibraltar airport.
- 07 The official, historical British border. The border zone is a line but turns out to be a round-about when airplanes take off or land.
- 08 Zone between historical border and physical border of the Gibraltar Fortress.
- 09 Threshold of Gibraltar. The city is a walled, introverted city, located at the foot of the Rock, suspended between the coast and the sea.
- 09A Tax free zone: the number of registered companies and enterprises is rather large. Due to the tax policies, the ratio of inhabitants to companies is about 1:10 in Gibraltar.
- 10 The hollow inside of the Rock is a closed military zone. It is said to contain some 30 kilometres of tunnels.
- 11 The military zone between the city and the end of the peninsula, home to 'the last shop of Europe', located next to the mosque.

- 12 The territory is a dividing zone, namely the portion of sea forming the Strait of Gibraltar.
- 12A British territorial waters: Gibraltar controls an area 1,000 times the size of its land. The border to Britain's claim ends near the African continent. The introverted city exerts enormous control over the important trade route.
- 12B International waters.
- 12C Spanish territorial waters.
- 12D Moroccan territorial waters.
- 13 Ceuta's new economic zone, designated as a free port.
- 14 The historical city with its ancient fortress. This part of Ceuta is walled and located at the bottom of the Rock.
- 15 Old historical border, nowadays a green, not clearly evident corridor through the city fabric.
- 15A The area between the old city and the refugee camp (CETI). The promenade is a boulevard used by commuters, workers and leisure-seeking inhabitants.
- 16 Peripheral zone. This Spanish-claimed territory contains annexed Moroccan houses as well as a sizeable population of Moroccan origin.
- 16A Unspecified area used for illegal trading by smugglers.
- 16B Refugee camp (CETI).
- 17 Hard border. The zone is double fenced, razor wired and includes a surveillance area.
- 18 Border crossings for Europeans travelling from or to Morocco. At this point, the border is a filter as border crossing is rather smooth.
- 19 Camps of would-be immigrants, waiting for another attempt at jumping the border. These illegal immigrants may wait for several months in the camps before gaining access to Europe.

The listed borders in the Gibraltar-Ceuta area have several 'temporary states of exception', causing a dramatic change in the permeability of several of the observed borders, as well as changes in orientation and spatial conditions of the zones. These temporary states of exception are provoked by economic, touristic, military, political, religious or social reasons.

For instance:

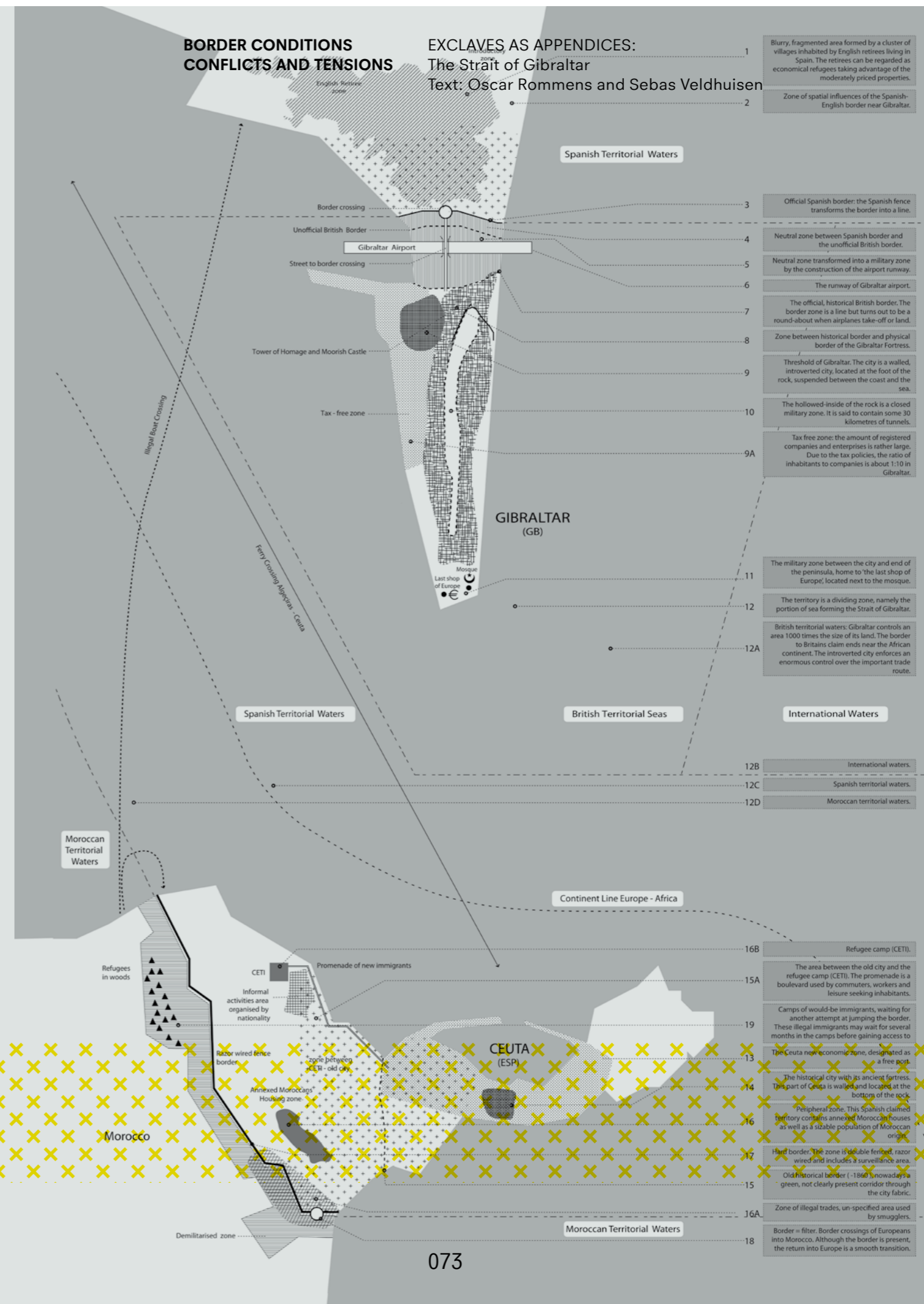
- A The car queue that forms as a result of the thorough border control from Gibraltar into Spain. The length of this queue is announced on the Gibraltar radio stations every 15 minutes.
- B When an airplane is taking off or landing, the runway is completely closed off for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- C The Gibraltar city gates are closed from 1AM until 6AM. The introverted city closes at night.
- D Moroccan workers entering Ceuta in the morning and returning in the evening. Many workers participate in the smuggling activities.
- E Border patrol along the Spanish-Moroccan border.
- F The border violated by asylum seekers. Asylum seekers approach the fences with ladders.

Postscript

As these investigations have shown, the border zones between two countries and two continents have anything but clear borders. Rather, the different border zones consist of unstable sequences of divisions that are fluctuant both in space and time. The lines of divisions are permanently unclear, tend to overlap and may only be temporarily discernible.

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1.1 ZONE

GIBRALTAR — CEUTA

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divide is an extremely subtle, complex and spatially diversified phenomenon that completely lacks the clear-cut appearances the generalized, cliché border image promises. Rather than four clear lines, distinguishing the transition from Spain to Gibraltar, the Strait, Ceuta and into Morocco, one ends up with a multitude of border zones. This hybrid condition is characteristic of almost all sides of the described borders. Even the border with Europe is not a clear object or obstacle, but seems a random line in a differentiated

situation. In geo-political terms, the Europe-Africa division is a nostalgic yet irrelevant separation, maintaining national identities that are becoming more and more obsolete. It is also an acutely contemporary example of economic rifts that maintain the different strategies of segregation, even between continents. In fact, any border works both as barrier and connector or mediator, perhaps most properly described as a barrier with a filtering system. Its permeability is always difficult to control and problematic to monitor.

CEUTA

With eighty thousand inhabitants, Ceuta is not more than a middle-sized Spanish city. The tip of the peninsula is marked by Monte Hacho, a hill with a fortress occupied by the Spanish army. Since Spain joined the European Union, the city has transformed from a free port into an autonomous community within the EU with a low-tax system. Being part of Africa's mainland, both Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla, along with uninhabited islands such as Isla Perejil, are claimed by the government of Morocco. Logically, Morocco draws comparisons with Spain's territorial claim to Gibraltar. The Spanish government rejects these comparisons, on the ground that both Ceuta and Melilla are integral parts of the Spanish state, whereas Gibraltar, a British Crown Colony, has never been part of the United Kingdom. Destitute Africans consider Ceuta the last step towards prosperity. Fortress Europe, as Ceuta ironically is called, is extremely hard to enter, though thousands of refugees manage to climb the razor-blade fences. Under Spanish law, they will not be sent back immediately, instead they have to wait for permission to take a ferry to mainland Spain where a new asylum-seeking procedure awaits them. This situation sets the stage for a flourishing crime scene where illegal goods, drugs as well as people are smuggled into Europe. The second face of Ceuta is the romantic port, popular among wealthy retirees from Europe and America who retreat to this Mediterranean paradise.

GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar, a limestone rock linked by an airstrip to mainland Spain, is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom since 1713. It is said that the British will rule Gibraltar as long as the monkeys inhabit the Rock. With a population of less than thirty thousand, Gibraltar is one of the most densely populated territories in the world, since almost half of the Rock is a nature reserve. Although the land covers only six and a half square kilometres, its official territory is a thousand times bigger. In terms of marine surveillance, Gibraltar is one of the most strategic places on earth, as the British army controls ninety percent of the world's shipping traffic through this strait. The growing demand for space is increasingly solved by reclaiming land on the west side of the Rock. At the same time, many Gibraltarians have purchased property in Spain extending the territory even further. For the EU, Gibraltar is a special member state territory. The economy is dominated by offshore banking, tourism and real estate. There are three times as many companies registered on its territory as there are inhabitants. More than seven million visitors enter Gibraltar every year making it one of the top three most popular destinations for day-trippers from the Spanish Coast. British influence remains strong on the island: although Gibraltarians mostly use an English-influenced Spanish dialect, called Llanito, English is the official language of government, commerce, education and the media.

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1.2 FRAMING

**GIBRALTAR
TALLINN
NICOSIA
ANTWERP
BENIDORM
MARSEILLE
BELFAST – NICOSIA**