

**Mobile Crossroads: Reflections on the Mediation of Mobility**

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Mobile phones have come to play an increasingly important role in the social and economic activities of the poor throughout the world (Donner and Ling 2009; Horst and Miller 2006; Ling and Horst 2011). The mobile phone's capacity for storing and sharing information, credit and other forms of value provides many poor and low income individuals with the opportunity to create, shape and transform their social and economic mobility and to participate in a broader palette of state, commercial and financial organizations. Drawing upon recent ethnographic research among Haitian migrants living at the Haitian-Dominican border, this presentation focuses upon the intersection of mobile access, money and socioeconomic practices in light of the poIr dynamics – the dependence of Haitian workers on geographic mobility, irregular income, illegality and discrimination - that shapes cross-border movement. Like other migrants and displaced populations (Fortunati, Pertierra and Vincent 2012, Horst 2006, Madianou and Miller 2012, Wallis 2013), Haitians use technologies such as mobile phones to keep in touch with their families and maintain social relations while also organizing economic activities and the circulation of remittances. The focus upon the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti seeks to make ‘ethnographically visible’ the continuing salience and subversion of the state bureaucracy, mobile phone companies and related infrastructure that increasingly mediate different forms of mobility and the potential of migrants’ use of mobile phones to mitigate the limits of their poverty and marginality.

This presentation speaks to the conference themes of closure, disclosure, belonging and exclusion through its attention to the role of mobile phones in the everyday movements of Haitians living in this border region. Situated at the intersection between two nation-states with distinctive governance, languages, currencies and mobile infrastructures, this article will specifically address the ways in which Haitians navigate and, at times, exploit these different infrastructures. It further highlights the ways in which the material structures of communication facilitates and restricts new and ‘traditional’ forms of action and interaction, enabling us to reflect upon the broader contributions of research located in border zones and other crossroads for our theoretical frameworks around mobile media, communication and society.

‘Borders shape our perception of the world ... border thinking is a major component of our consciousness of the world’ (Rumford 2006:166).

## **I. Introduction**

It is five minutes to eight on a hazy Monday morning in the dry season. On the southernmost border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, hundreds of people wait behind a chain fence for the guards to open the gate. Tellingly, they are all on the Haitian side of the fence, laden with goods to sell in the market that is right on the border, jutting against the Pedernales River, which divides the two nations. They chat to each other in Haitian Kreyól as they wait. Women with bundles of clothes tied up in sheets, small automatic transmission motorbikes weighed down with non-perishable foods, money changers and mobile credit vendors for part of the crowd that jostles for space, keen to reassert their claim over their favorite spot in the market.

Once the border is open for the day, crossing the border is merely a matter of walking over a footbridge that spans the tree-lined Pedernales river and passing through a flimsy wire gate, that remains open between eight in the morning and five in the afternoon. In the dry season it is possible to walk over the border through the dry riverbed. Passports are generally not requested, and even national identity cards normally stay in one’s pocket. Corruption certainly exists - Haitians crossing into the Dominican Republic are expected to pay guards a fee. As feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1994) noted some time ago, places are

“Not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations . . . their ‘identities’ are constructed through the specificity of their interaction with other places rather than counterposition to them.” (Massey, 1994: 121).

Throughout this project I envisioned the border as a porous space created through state formation and solidified through laws and regulations as well as a place constituted in and through social and material relations. I have been particularly interested in the ways in which ‘the border’ became constituted in and through everyday practices – what Long (2011:459) has described as a process of ‘bordering’. Rather than focusing upon borders as spaces of difference or a ‘third space’ set apart, the notion of ‘bordering’ enables us to understand, in Long’s words, “ the affective charge and powerful symbolic weight that our informants’ claims about bordering have, even when they seem to be inconsistent and contradictory.” The notion of bordering also acknowledges the ways in which the border may become more or less significant and, indeed, have greater or lesser material ‘effects’ in people’s everyday lives.

Indeed, from the outset a key question was the extent to which the idea of the border existed at [1] all. Compared to Haitians who move with their physical bodies across the border on a routine

basis, many Dominicans rarely cross the border into Haiti. To what extent are different populations living in the border region engaged in the process of bordering and what did this look like? What was the role of bodies, objects and commodities in understanding people's relationships with the border?

Given the extensive work on the ethnography of infrastructures by STS-scholar Susan Leigh Star (1999) and more recently Genevieve Bell and Paul Dourish (2012) which highlights the material, bureaucratic, regulatory, institutional and social dimensions of infrastructures, how and in what ways are different infrastructures in the processes of what we might think of as 'em-bordering' and 'disem-bordering'?

Borders and borderlands have also been studied as a distinct social system. One of the consistent challenges of studies of borders and borderlands involves the desire to pigeonhole particular characteristics of border regions in much the same way that culture areas. Speaking of the iconic 'US-Mexico' border, Alvarez (1995) observes that studies of migration, immigration and transnationalism destabilize the notion of the territorialized border. He also calls for the need to historicize borders and their long-term relationships. As Alvarez observes (1995: 462): "Rather than maintain a focus on the geographically and territorially bounded community and culture, the concepts inherent in the borders genre are alert to the shifting of behavior and identity and the reconfiguration of social patterns at the dynamic interstices of cultural practices...I need to examine paradox, conflict, contradiction, and contrasts. These concepts identify the multiplex and constantly hybridized behavior of people in the global political economy."

Long (2011: 459) argues that focusing upon the act of bordering as "ethically consequential" rather than merely focusing upon borders as spaces of difference or liminal third spaces "opens a new terrain for exploring the affective charge and powerful symbolic weight that our informants' claims about bordering have, even when they seem to be inconsistent and contradictory." Alongside our focus on the objects and bodies that move in and around the border, the materiality of infrastructure clearly shapes the social relationships that are important and/or need to be prioritised. As STS scholar John Law (1994:2) observes, "what I call the social is materially heterogeneous: talk, bodies, texts, machines, architectures, all of these and many more are implicated in and perform the social". Susan Leigh Star's (1999) seminal work on the ethnography of infrastructures is particularly instructive in its attention to the importance of human organization in creating infrastructure. Indeed, living on the border - with all of the unevenness structured into the material and social relations - renders the infrastructures almost constantly visible and the navigation of these differences means residents constantly are aware of and manage these different infrastructures. And like the sociotechnical infrastructures Star describes in her work, one of the challenges of infrastructure is that no one central entity or person is in charge. For Dourish and Bell (2012), the sociopolitical dimensions of infrastructure

and the experience of infrastructures represent two key areas where our understanding of infrastructures should be further developed.

Throughout this talk today I will focus upon the role of various infrastructures - social, political, economic, regulatory and other - in the lives of residents of living on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the south coast of Hispaniola. It encompasses the towns of Anse-a-Pitres in Haiti (pop. 14,000, located immediately west of the border), and Pedernales in the Dominican Republic (pop. 18,000, approximately two kilometers east of the border). Like all borders, Pedernales and Anse-a-Pitres are at once connected and separated. From the perspective of political economy, however, what makes this border zone particularly interesting is the relationship between the two countries.

Despite the structural constraints of the border infrastructure, I outline how maintaining and managing relationships dominated everyday use and practices around mobiles and other material culture. Specifically, throughout this report I will focus upon three key relationships - relationship with family, relationships with work and/or employers and relationships with the state. I begin by describing the significance of the border region and the particular constraints that emerge for migrants and residents moving within and across the two countries. I then turn to two forms of mobility, sending remittances and the movement of people, looking at the role that mobiles (and other objects) play in mediating resident's mobility. My final section will focus upon the role of the state in the process of em-bordering and dis-embordering and the implications of this perspective for future research on mobiles and mobility in some of the more marginal regions of the world.

## **II. The Materiality of the Border**

*“Y a mí también, si yo tuviera mi casa, y me fuera a trabajar en casa de familia, pudiera estar en mi casa y hacer mi propio trabajo. Y vivo la vida feliz. Es que ese es el problema que tiene entre los dominicanos y haitianos, entonces los pobres que no tienen un buen recurso con que vivir, coge para acá, se puede dar un mal golpe hoy y mañana vengo, pero en Haití no se puede quedar. Aquí es que hay su comida, tú me entiendes?. El país vecino que puede entrar a pie es aquí. No puede ir para Miami a pie.”*

*(Alain, Haitian resident in Pedernales, 2012)*

*“And for me too, if I had my house, and would go to work in my family's house, I could stay in my house and do my own work. And live happily. It's that this is the problem between the Dominicans and the Haitians, so the poor that don't have any means with which to live, they come here, they can receive a bad blow today and come tomorrow, but they cannot stay in Haiti. Their food is here, you understand me? A neighboring country that one can enter by foot is here. You cannot go to Miami by foot.”*

*(Alain, Haitian resident in Pedernales, 2012, English Translation)*

The porosity of the border makes life easier for thousands of Haitians, yet it also represents a long-standing historical problem of cross-border relations and economic inequality. The presence of the market and the fence that separates them highlights the dependency upon the Dominican Republic has a long history tied to their dependency has three primary sources: their isolation from Haitian bureaucratic centers, a weaker national and local economy and the lack of services and employment in Anse-a-Pitres. They cross the border not only to work, but also to access health and education, use services such as Internet, pay bills, send money, buy phone credit, and travel.

The fact that they depend upon the border being open, week after week and year after year, and with just a few short meters to travel out of their own country, speaks volumes about the peculiar nature of this particular border crossing. Unlike Jimaní, the primary crossing located 80 kilometers to the north, this crossing between the towns of Pedernales on the Dominican side and Anse-a-Pitres on the Haitian side allows undocumented crossing (Martínez 1995, 1999). Jimaní has a reputation of being an unfriendly place - and, indeed, its material appearance reaffirms that perception (Derby 1994). With high walls, barbed wire and stern-faced guards all set in a bleak landscape, the Jimaní crossing is an unpleasant experience. Anse-a-Pitres was thus a popular place to cross the border after the earthquake of January 2010, seeing hundreds if not thousands of Haitians entering the Dominican Republic to seek refuge with their relatives in Pedernales and beyond.

It is far more agreeable - and simpler - to cross the border at Pedernales and Anse-a-Pitres on the island's south coast. Crossing is merely a matter of walking over a footbridge that spans the tree-lined Pedernales river and passing through a flimsy wire gate that remains open between eight in the morning and five in the afternoon. In the dry season its possible to walk over the border through the dry riverbed. Passports are often not requested, and even national identity cards normally stay in one's pocket. Corruption certainly exists - Haitians crossing into the Dominican Republic are expected to pay guards a fee of 50 pesos or gourdes. Yet, economic and state barriers to entry are far lower than at other border crossings. As a result, Haitians will travel from as far away as Port-au-Prince to cross here. This border post's relative openness is a significant part of why this isolated region is central to an important trans-island trade route.

Dominicans also cross the border into Haitian territory; however, they do so with far less frequency, and often with a rather different modus operandi. First, the exodus of from Anse-a-Pitres to Pedernales that is observed daily as Haitians make their way to construction jobs, private homes to work as domestic servants, or to market on Mondays and Fridays, is almost always on foot. If you travel against the crowd in the early morning, you will see few Dominicans heading in the other direction - and they are almost without exception riding

motorbikes or scooters, either self-owned or motorcycle ‘taxis’ (motorconchos). Their visits are generally for business, only occasionally to visit friends or family, or attend church on the Haitian side. Many Dominicans, despite living one or two kilometers from the border their whole lives, haven’t crossed it since they were children. They will go as far as the market to buy cheap imported goods, but never walk through the open gate.

Often the people travelling back are actually Haitians or their descendants who now live on the Dominican side, sometimes transiting from their usual place of residence in Santo Domingo or the eastern part of the Dominican Republic, to visit relatives in Haiti’s south. They catch a bus to Pedernales, hire a motorconcho to take them as far as the border, then walk across the river into Anse-a-Pitres, where on market days they wait on the beach for an open boat to transport them overnight to Marigot, located approximately 60 kilometers to the west. Motorcycles also travel as far as Belle-Anse, located 40 kilometers west of Anse-a-Pitres, but at 800-1000 gourdes are far more expensive than the 250 gourde boat trip. Heading north, a newly paved road leads as far as Thiotte, but bad roads and missing bridges make the remainder of the journey to Port-au-Prince onerous for the daily trucks that traverse the route, laden dangerously with goods and passengers.

Despite being a central node on an important trade route, it is notable that Anse-a-Pitres is severely isolated from other parts of Haiti in terms of travel, communication, and bureaucratic integration. Indeed, residents explained how Anse-a-Pitres is like an island, with the Dominican border on their east, the sea to their south, and wilderness to the west and north. Nevertheless, goods get through in both directions. Boats from Marigot bring goods as diverse as tinned and packaged food, imported Chinese plastic goods and beauty products, televisions and mobile phones to sell in shops and the border market. In the other direction, Dominicans bring trucks from as far as the Samaná Peninsula in far east of the island, taking advantage of the far better roads on the Dominican side of the border. They come laden with rice and coconuts to sell to Haitians, who export them to Marigot and beyond.

### *Materiality of Locality*

The character of the border, and the life experiences of its residents, is constituted by the materiality of the region and the things that pass through it. Whether we are talking about state bureaucracy, the trade of goods, people’s foot passage, consumption, dress, or relative poverty and wealth, Anse-a-Pitres exhibits significant material differences from Pedernales. Some of these material differences are due to the greater poverty of Haiti. Pedernales is a classic, Spanish grid-shaped town with concrete houses, a central park and plenty of sports fields, constant electricity and a selection of hotels. It is small and quiet, and struggling in its own as the capital of the poorest region of the Dominican Republic. However, as spatially proximate as it is, Anse-a-Pitres is a world apart. While homes are increasingly being converted to concrete, electricity is

but a dream for all but a tiny portion of the town's approximately 8,000 residents (27,000 in the region). Women cook their families' one or two daily meals on carbon sourced from the eroding Haitian countryside or illicit incursions into well-forested Dominican territory. Rather than plumbed housing, river water is used for cooking, bathing and often drinking. It flows through the streets in purpose-built concrete drains in which children play, occasionally being delivered to a central point via a communal tap. Few streets are paved, and plots of vegetables are shared with chickens or the occasional pig, giving the town a distinctly rural appearance. Old-style Haitian wooden buildings dominate the architecture on the main street, doubling as residences and shops.

Other material differences between Pedernales and Anse-a-Pitres are cultural. While there is no doubt that Anse-a-Pitres is becoming more like Pedernales as it develops<sup>1</sup>, some things change far more slowly, or not at all. What's striking about the border is how much local culture is retained despite the proximity of the two towns. Many Haitians speak Spanish and some Dominicans speak Creole, but in the main the two towns retain their own language. Housing decoration and gardening practices create a visibly different aesthetic. In terms of dress, Haitian women still prefer skirts, while Dominicans appear to be glued into their jeans. Even with commonly shared clothing, style is different, with embellishments such as diamantes far more likely to be sported on the Dominican side. Haitian men are more likely to wear long pants and collared shirts, versus Dominican men who wear t-shirts and sometimes shorts. While religion shares vast similarities across the border (Catholicism being the largest religion with various Pentecostal churches following in second place), voodoo is still regularly practiced on the Haitian side of the border. So close geographically, the border and the bodies that move through them has therefore become much more than a physical infrastructure.

### **III. Research Design and Methodology**

I examine the materiality of the border in terms of the objects, their role in a 'set' of objects, and the broader material ecology in which they exist and through which repertoires of practices and meanings emerge. Contextualized within the broader study of life the region we initiated in 2010, our aim was to understand the mundane ways in which people strategized and carved out a space for movement in light of the different currencies, citizenship status, telecommunications infrastructures, languages, economic opportunities and power relations that distinctly shape the ways in which mobility and movement is possible. To gain a deeper understanding of mobility on the border, our team conducted interviews with 25 individuals with residents living in the

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<sup>1</sup> This is part of a joint research project between Horst and Taylor funded by the IMTFI. Taylor has been travelling to the border since 2005 and has witnessed significant changes in the town's architecture and infrastructure, including the replacement of wooden or stick houses with concrete dillings, paving of streets, the installment of water canals and taps and a new beachside hotel catering primarily to a Haitian clientele.

border region. We also carried out a survey with 200 respondents, primarily with people who worked in and around the market that spans the border. With a subset of individuals, we also carried out a modified version of Ito, Okabe and Anderson’s (2009) “Portable Kit Study” which examined the use of objects by young urban professionals living in Los Angeles Tokyo and London which was designed to understand “how portable devices mediate relationships to urban space and infrastructures”(Pg#).

For our research, we focused upon the portable kits of border residents carried with them as they lived<sup>2</sup>, worked and socialized in and around the border region. Whereas previous portable kit studies included the latest gadgets such as music players, laptops and mobile phones as well as the more mundane objects such as credit cards, transit cards, keys, ID cards that were incorporated in daily movements, portable kits in this border region consisted of objects such as mobile phone(s), keys, currency, ID cards, bibles, hand cloths and a range of other objects. Yet, while objects such as ID cards, mobile phones and forms of currency were common features, the highly politicized context of the border and the differing infrastructures meant that having “papers”, IDs, a mobile phone that would work in the destination and enough money to facilitate this movement took on heightened meaning. Given the regulation of movement in the border region, we also extended our study to the pockets, shoes, hats, jewelry, and clothing and, in one case, a motorbike.

We recruited portable kit study participants primarily from our initial interview and survey pool. In most cases, background interviews focused upon their mobile use and their impressions of the border region were completed. Where time had passed or an initial interview was not conducted, we started the portable kit interview with a set of background questions. Upon the completion of the background questions, we then requested that participants open and display all of the objects they carry with them on a ‘normal’ day living on the border on a flat surface. After an initial discussion of the objects, we then worked with each participant to distinguish between the items that they carried with them on an everyday basis and those they carried less frequently. We then asked participants to sort the objects in terms of their importance (from most important to least important). Interviews ranged from 45 minutes (in the case of one participant who had been interviewed multiple times and did not carry many items) to 3 hours.

Importantly, we initially planned for most of the interviews to be conducted in the person’s homes. Although interviews were conducted in four of the twelve border resident’s homes, it was also necessary to locate other spaces for some individuals who were not able and/or comfortable doing conducting the interview at home. We therefore also carried interviews in the accommodations where the members of the research team were residing; one benefit of this was the ability to greater control privacy and noise. All interviews were audio recorded and video

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recorded. In keeping with our ethics requirements<sup>3</sup>, participants given the option of revealing their face; three of the participants (all women) requested their faces be hidden. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and Haitian Creole with the assistance of a (Dominican) research assistant and a translator (where requested or necessary); most participants were fluent in Spanish<sup>4</sup>.

#### **IV. Materializing Relationships**

Throughout this project, we looked at the process of bordering through the ways in which objects, bodies, commodities, money and other cultural forms circulated. More specifically we focused upon what Michael Rowlands and others – including Jenna Burrell in her new book (Burrell 2012) - thinking through the relationship between materiality and immateriality have termed ‘relative materiality’ of these objects in acts of bordering. What this meant was that effectively we acknowledged both the infrastructures and affordances of material culture as well as the social and cultural dimensions of objects, bodies and commodities wherein the materiality of the objects and infrastructures that support them are effectively subsumed within their broader social purpose. Relative materiality does not privilege the social over the material (or vice versa) and emphasizes the multiple ways that the same objects become embedded in different practices – and different relationships – involved in acts of bordering.

From Annette Weiner’s seminal work on the Kula ring in Melanesia to more recent work on mobility and the movement of commodities, media and consumer goods (Appadurai 1998, Miller 1988, Skuse 2005), material culture and consumption scholars continue to explore the seminal role that objects play in the development and maintenance of relationships across a range of scales and contexts. Stallybrass (1998), for example, highlights the ways in which in poverty in rural India influenced the meaning of exchange and value noting that wealth and value are often stored in objects around the house rather than in banks, noting that social status was often negotiated in relation to the extent to which objects circulated rather than the practice of storing and stockpiling that we see in many western and wealthier contexts.

The material culture of separation and loss takes on a different character and expressions. Exploring the annual ‘casser maison’ (‘breaking the house’) ritual in urban Montreal, Marcoux (2001) focuses upon the role of objects in the context of mobility and loss, arguing that the ability to place objects with different people enables one to situate oneself within the longer-term family and kinship network. Reflecting upon displaced populations, Parkin (1999) describes how for displaced populations such as refugees mementos literally become transitional objects

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<sup>3</sup> Ethics approval was initially received at the University of California, Irvine in 2010; In 2011, I completed the ethics review process at RMIT University. Approval was granted in September 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Twelve additional interviews were also conducted with Haitian migrants living in Santo Domingo; these interviews will be analysed, compared and contrasted with the border portable kit studies at a later date.

allowing people to bridge the present and past as well as the spatial separation experienced during displacement.

Throughout this study we were continually struck by the extent to which having and maintaining relationships motivated practice in and around the objects and ‘kits’ carried in everyday life, almost to the exclusion of other forces such as aspiration and economic gain. One of these surprises was the number of people who carried around ‘symbolic money’ alongside their small amounts of pesos, gourdes and US Dollars. Unlike my own portable kit where foreign currency appears due to my neglect to either spend or store unspent currency after travel, the money in our participants’ kits had never been used by the individuals and had no effective exchange value in their day-to-day movements. In a few cases, people had an expectation or aspiration to exchange or travel to these countries to spend the currency but in most cases they are gifts and symbols of relationships.

### **A. Families and Households**

One of the core relationships for our research participants was their relationship with family members and the household. Like other places in the Caribbean (Besson 2002, Fog Olwig 2006, Schwartz 2009), Haitian families are recognized as a large and complex social institution that extends beyond the nuclear unit. During plantation slavery in Haiti, a system called *lakou* emerged wherein a series of ‘families’ lived in a cluster of domestic units located near each other (Lundahl 1983). Led by the eldest male in the community, lakous involved an extended kinship network as well as members of the wider community who effectively became fictive kin. Lakou units worked together, shared food, money, goods and care work for the young, elderly and infirm effectively became a social support network which enabled members to cope with the precocity of life on the margins of the plantation and, after independence, to prevent the plantation system from returning. Religious beliefs and practices (such as voodoo) solidified the importance of lakou. For many scholars of Haitian society, the lakou represents an important social structure of cooperation and egalitarianism and an emblem of sorts for the endemic egalitarianism of Haitian society writ large.

Since the days of the peasantry, lakous have changed and adapted taking on new form in Haitian society. Lundahl (1983) and others note the shift from extended family to nuclear family households often lamenting the decline of the lakou and, in turn, the extended family as a form of social support in the face of economic, social and political instability (Larose 1975). Instead, the burden of the family now falls to the nuclear family and/or the individuals heading the nuclear family. For example, Edmond, Randolph and Richard (2007) argue that poverty and globalization have disrupted the lakou system have led to people being unable to fulfill their obligations to the broader community. With around 70% of Haitian households now headed by females, the decline of the lakou represents a particular burden for women many of whom live in

a situation of chronic poverty with the burden of childcare and parenting. Others, however, stress the persistence of the lakou as a social structure. Smith (2001) contends that the decline of the lakou, exchange patterns and the extended family has been overstated. As she summarizes,

"...contemporary lakou-s remain important and multi-faceted centers of family and community life. As the headquarters of the extended family economic activities, they are commercial centres; as dwellings for the lwa-s and ancestors (who partake in rituals held for them there), they are religious and ancestral centres; and, finally, as locations for daily interactions between neighbors and for organizational meetings, they are important community centres" (Smith 2001:80-81).

In effect, while the physical structures of the lakou - as a cluster of households - may no longer be present throughout rural Haiti, the basis principles of lakou - social support, exchange, cooperation, shared beliefs and belonging - continue as Haitians move to towns and other urban centres such as Port au Prince.

As Haitian society becomes increasingly transnational and diasporas form in locales as disparate as Santo Domingo, South Florida, New York, Montreal and elsewhere (Fouon and Schiller 2001; Richman 2009), the prime importance of the lakou involves making decisions for the household and extended family (Richman 2002, Stevens 1998). In the following section I highlight the role of the mobile phone in contemporary lakou maintenance in Pedernales.

### ***1. Object: Mobile Phone***

New communication technologies, such as mobile phones, connect migrants and their transnational households (Goldring 1998; Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Vertovec 2003). The availability and ownership of mobile phones has in many ways collapsed the distance between migrants and their families creating, in some instances, sense of involvement in each other's everyday lives (e.g. Horst 2006, 2012, Madianou and Miller 2012, Wilding 2006), enabling the expression of care and connection among family members. Among the Haitian migrants who participated in our study, the desire to stay connected to and support family dispersed throughout Haiti and the Dominican Republic was often realized through the mobile phone. For example, in our interviews and portable kit study I asked people to list the last three people they called (and vice versa). Among women and men, two out of three of the last three calls were to family members such as mothers, sisters or partners. The third person was usually a close friend. In fact, the primary reason people gave for owning a phone was the ability to be contacted and/or contact someone in the family.

Out of approximately 35 people we interviewed on the border (21 Haitians, 14 Dominicans), just two people did not have their own personal phone. One of these, Alain, owned a phone but lent it

permanently to his girlfriend. Another, Frederline, did not own a phone; if she needed one, she would buy a calling card of 50 pesos and borrow a phone from a neighbor. This virtual ubiquity reflects penetration rates in the Dominican Republic (at X percent) and Haiti (at X percent).

Staying in touch with family and friends via the mobile phone often took effort. Anse-a-Pitres is serviced primarily by the mobile phone company Digicel, but also receives some service from the newly launched Natcom, although the closest transmission tower is thirty-five kilometers away in Thiotte so reception is not ideal. On the Dominican side, both Claro and Orange service Pedernales. While most people living in Pedernales owned a Claro or Orange phone to coordinate their lives and stay in touch with work, friends and relatives living in the Dominican Republic, it was not uncommon for Haitians to own two mobiles in order to communicate at national call tariffs with relatives, trading partners, and services in both countries. Calls could be made from either side of the border as signals can reach up to forty kilometers into foreign territory, although in this particular town the services are more limited to up to 1km across the border on each side.

The need to keep the phone charged, keep funds on two phones in the event of an emergency or even make a phone call took coordination and planning as residents could not cross back into the Dominican Republic after 6pm when the border closed. As most residents of Anse-a-Pitres do not have electricity at home, they would charge their phones while at work in the Dominican Republic, at a friend's house or shop on the main street of Anse-a-Pitres for free, pay a fee at a shop to (including the microcredit bank Fonkoze), or buy a small solar panel for the roof of their house (bought primarily to charge phones and play music).

Maintaining a mobile phone could also be costly. As Alain noted in his portable kit interview, once you have a mobile phone,

“You are obliged to call people, and if you have to call Haiti and you have trouble talking, then you spend a lot of money. You look at your clock and it's already dinnertime, you're going to end up not having any dinner. ...The positive thing about cell phones is to be able to greet your people, to know about your most important friends. For example, you are my friend, I need to talk to you, let me call my friend to see that how you are. 'Hi Fulano, where are you? I'm in Pedernales, sitting here and drinking a juice. I'm resting, I'm dining, I'm bathing, I'll call you later, I send you greeting.' I call my mother, my old woman, and I ask her how her day is going. Because these people are so far away that you can't see with your own eyes whether they are okay or not.”

Miguelina, a Haitian woman in her mid-twenties who lives in Anse-a-Pitres, has just three people's names stored in her phone - her mother, a male in-law (cuñado), and a female friend (amiga). She is perhaps an extreme example of the preoccupation with staying connected almost

exclusively to family members. Miguelina notes that she spends about 20 pesos per week (USD\$0.50) calling her mother. On the first of each month she also will put 50 pesos (USD\$1.25) to double her money and she plans for this money to last her the whole month. Although Miguelina is aware of the offer where you can call at night for free (midnight to 6am), she has never used it because she's too sleepy at the hour. In other words, meeting social obligations to check up on people or stay in touch requires funds to add minutes to your account and access to charging facilities. You can't simply own a phone and let the credit and money run out; you must keep money on the account..

Men in particular felt the burden of mobile phone costs. A number of men we interviewed noted handing over their mobile phone to their female partners or girlfriends. While the focus remained on ownership rather than the purchase of the latest, trendy phone, providing a phone for a girlfriend had become almost obligatory as part of the sexual and emotional exchange between girlfriends and boyfriends. 24-year-old Evens, for example, postponed his migration to a more (potentially) lucrative migration destination in order to earn enough money to give his girlfriend a phone and others are living without a phone because they had given their phone to their girlfriend. Married men made an effort to keep their wives mobile phones charged and other men agreed to share ownership with their wives, often leaving the mobile behind at the house for their use when they are out for the day. Given the predominance of female headed households in Haiti and the central role that women play in social, cultural and economic life (see Fouron and Georges 2001), men are obligated to provide their girlfriends and wives with a mobile phone

In sum, the importance given to maintaining a mobile phone was its importance in maintaining and strengthening connections in the tenuous worlds in which they lived. Like *lakou* in previous generations, the mobile phone enabled social support, forms of exchange and cooperation; it also facilitated care and a sense of belonging. For many, in fact, the mobile phone was the connector for the modern day *lakou* in its ability to connect and bring together their family scattered throughout the Haiti, Dominican Republic and beyond.

## ***2. Body and Relationship to the Household***

If the mobile phone is the object that facilitates the modern practices of *lakou*, one could also argue that the (female) body is central to the household. While many of the participants had been living in Pedernales for some time, movement and mobility remains a fact of life for border residents. Indeed, and as work on notions of home highlights (e.g. *Migrants of Identity* - Dawson) and the distributed nature of *lakou* suggests, a physical abode can no longer be seen as the most logical or 'safest' place to keep money and other valuable items. Instead, the body itself becomes the site or location of home. In Santo Domingo, people will leave items that are economically, socially or administratively valuable at home wherever possible, in case they are robbed. In Pedernales, there is very little crime, and so people are more likely to carry these

items on their bodies. In fact, some see home as a relatively unsafe place: there is a small risk of theft by opportunistic visitors or passers-by, but the main risk is that children or other family members will damage or misplace property.

When at home, Bronte keeps her small bag inside a larger bag in the bedroom where there is less traffic. In a sense, this bag is an extension of her body that accompanies her whenever she leaves the house. Some of the most important items she carries with her relate to her own health and that of her children: the family's health care cards, her hospital receipts, prescriptions, and an article that she saved from a glossy magazine about how to check one's own breasts for lumps. As the primary wage earner and domestic carer, Bronte plays the lead role in her family's ill-being. However, after giving birth to her youngest child in February, she followed the local custom of keeping the baby at home for the first six months of its life, unless absolutely necessary. Bronte also stayed home, even though a younger sister came to help with the baby. Many of the tasks that normally fell to her Ire taken over by her husband.

Fredeline is an example of just how much bodies can be trapped in places, despite a great deal of mobility happening around them. Although she identifies as Haitian, she and her mother Ire both born in Aguas Negras, a very small agricultural town located half an hour's drive north of Pedernales. Fredeline has never lived anywhere else and her four children Ire all born in Aguas Negras. Her mother lives close by and but her nine siblings live in various parts of the Dominican Republic, including Aguas Negras, Pedernales, Santo Domingo and San Pedro de Macoris. Fredeline married a man from Higüey, in the east of the Dominican Republic, in order to be able to feed her children. He spends most of his time working away from home in construction but he always sends her money. However, Fredeline herself rarely leaves Aguas Negras.

The things that Fredeline carry with her reflect her unusual situation. She normally carries her hospital papers, her Haitian identity card and receipts for money transfers. She will sometimes travel to Pedernales to sell agricultural produce in the market or to pick up money sent by her husband. If her husband calls her to say that he's sending her money, she writes down the transfer number on a piece of paper and puts it in the bag with her identity card. If she's not returning the same day she will also take her hairbrush and some clothes. Apart from this, she has only travelled as far as Barahona once, never even making it as far as Santo Domingo.

Fredeline's only knowledge of Haiti is Anse-a-Pitres where she went to apply for a Haitian identity card so that her children would inherit her citizenship and 'get to know Haiti one day.' Despite being second generation-born Dominican, Fredeline was never registered in the Dominican Republic and does not have citizenship. She has only registered one of her children's births. This administrative isolation is not the case for most of her brothers and sisters, who Ire born in hospitals the east of the Dominican Republic. Aguas Negras, however, acts as a kind of

outpost of Haiti, with many Haitians working in agriculture. Dominicans growing up in the area tend to have vastly more knowledge of Haitian culture and language than their counterparts who grew up in towns such as Pedernales.

Evens is far more mobile, albeit within a short distance. A 24-year-old man from Thiotte in Haiti, he has been periodically living in Pedernales for the past four years. He is still completing high school in Thiotte, but he resides in Pedernales with his girlfriend during summer breaks and at the time of interview was having a semester off his studies in order to earn some money. He first began working in Pedernales alongside his father, who has been working in construction sites there for the past seven years. Evens has a Haitian identity card but no passport. He always carries with him his identity card, mobile phone, pen, notebook, house keys, and keys to a suitcase that is in his house. This is the suitcase that he uses to travel between Pedernales and Thiotte, and he keeps the keys for his house in Thiotte inside it.

Bronte, Frederline and Evens point to the physical separation of family members and mobility between different residences. Dominicans tend to be far more sedentary than Haitians, especially when comparing women's activities. Whereas Dominicans have traditionally followed a custom of assigning women to the domestic sphere, Haitian women traditionally run the country's informal market system and therefore travel extensively. Men may migrate to find work and stay away for long periods of time, but they rarely accompany women as they travel to buy or sell goods. Haitian families therefore often spend a great deal of time apart from each other. For example, Patricia travels to Port-au-Prince every two weeks to buy goods to sell in the border market, where she has a ill-stocked stall. Her husband, who rents a field across the border, stays home to tend the vegetables and mind the home. Claudine has a rather more unusual vocation. She rents a house in Anse-a-Pitres but is away for two weeks of every month. She travels by boat to a Dominican island where she purchases small fish from Haitian fishermen. She dries them in the sun, then brings them back to Anse-a-Pitres to sell to buyers who resell them in Marigot, Jacmel and Port-au-Prince. Her children are young adults and care for each other with the help of a young woman who sublets a room in their house.

Bodies form households and extend them beyond the physical house and are constituted across space. This is nothing new for Haitians, who have been engaging in economic migration and travel for over a century, both domestically and internationally. However, the constitution of households across national boundaries takes on a different temporal flavor in the border region. Rather than seasonal migration or yearly visits to family, the border's porosity allows for the quotidian constitution of families across it. An enhanced capacity to engage in cross-border arbitrage to enhance livelihood and well-being.

### **C. Experiencing the State: A Living Fence**

When we talk about state relationships on the border, we need to keep in mind that we have not just one state but two to contend with. Both Haitian and Dominican states guard the legal border and set rules about how people and goods move across it. In certain ways, the fences, bribes, and military accoutrements on the border bring to mind John Torpey's description of the modern state's increasing interference in human mobility:

“modern states, and the international state system of which they are a part, have expropriated from individuals and private entities the legitimate ‘means of movement,’ particularly, though by no means exclusively, across international boundaries.” (Torpey 1998: 239)

In keeping with this focus, elsewhere Torpey (2000) discusses the growing import of the passport, a discussion that links up with recent changes in citizenship laws in the Dominican Republic. Until recently, children born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents were constitutionally granted Dominican citizenship. Bartlett et al (2011) point out that illiteracy among Haitians exacerbates inequalities as it makes it difficult for them to exercise their rights.

On the Haitian side, state ‘techniques’ are also gaining momentum. There are plans to roll out a biometric identity system that will capture face photographs and full fingerprints of all Haitian citizens (Space Daily 2012), turning the body into a “password” (Aas 2006) and increasing the state's ability to “monopolize movement” (Torpey 1998: 240). Indeed, there has been a surge of scholarly work of digital forms of ID cards and passports (see, for example, Lyon 19; Sparke, Forthcoming) predicting the kinds of effects this identity digitalization may have on citizen-state relations.

However, one could equally argue, in the case of Haitians, that a lack of state presence motivates their movement across the border. The Haitian state has an uneven role in the lives of its citizens. While Haiti is now more urban than rural, state services and institutions can be patchy beyond the cities and towns, and there are still pockets of countryside where the state has a minimal presence. Nesbitt (2008:21) notes,

“Barthélemy describes how Haitian peasant society, which has always appeared to the outside world as a regressive, aberrant failure of the process of development, in fact has long represented an organized, systematic refusal to adopt this model. Instead, Haitian rural society is an “egalitarian system without a state.”

In contrast, the capital city is sometimes colloquially referred to as “the Republic of Port-au-Prince” as a comment on its distinctiveness to the rest of the country, with the implication that its

residents ignore the fact that the rest of the country exists. Indeed, the capital city and the border are arguably the two sites in which the Haitian state's present is felt the most.

What differentiates experiences of the state in urban areas from the border is that in the latter, state influence comes from more than one source. While any Haitian may encounter the Dominican state if they migrate or travel, border residents live with it daily. A lack of state services in Anse-a-Pitres compels to cross into the Dominican Republic to access services, including hospitals and schooling, and to engage in economic activity.

However, this is not the only structure that draws the boundaries of their lives. Haitian lives and livelihoods are inextricably wound up with a political economy of materiality in which states is just one part of the production of hierarchy. To get to the heart of the political economy of the border, one could invoke the spectre of Marx, with his descriptions of the historical constitution of relations of production. One could also invoke Bourdieu, for whom class distinction is conferred through elite control over taste and expressed symbolically in the domain of consumption. Foucault is also relevant to a border zone in which authorities surveil the population and citizens internalise discipline. The perspectives of these theorists could be fruitfully brought to bear upon a large body of literature that describes Dominican-Haitian relations largely in terms of race, ethnicity and nationalism.

Yet this kind of synthesis fails to ethnographically capture lived experiences as they play out on the border, especially how relationships with the state are tied to the family and work relationships I have described above. Our intent is to present an account of what I see 'actually occurring' that may benefit from a metaphorical comparison with one of Sidney Mintz's observations. He published a journal article in 1962 that described the "living fences" of Haiti's countryside, which, though built as containers and barricades, had the additional effect of being aesthetically pleasing. The border is not unlike these living fences. At once porous and closed, inclusive and exclusive, the official national border is constituted by the people and objects that cross it daily as much as it is by state regulation. Far from being a constant force dominated by security concerns by placing a too-consistent constraints on residents' lives (through stringent regulation), or a stifling insecurity (such as through unpredictably closing the border), the border has for decades been a place that is constituted by human relations and activities that involve cooperation and creativity as much as subordination and restriction.

This was also the case a hundred years ago, when Haiti was the wealthier economy and Dominicans the dependent parties (Martínez 1995, 1998). The shifting of power from one side of the island to the other has not transformed the living fence into a panopticon of alienation. Instead, authorities struggle to impose some rules, change the interpretation of other rules (and their responses to them), and completely ignore a host of regulations in the spirit of practicality and sociality. Bourdieu's distinction, while applicable to certain symbolic-hierarchical relations,

quickly develops holes when applied to two social groups who are proud of their cultures and do not necessarily view the other as subordinate. And Marx, of course, in favoring production, is not enough to explain contemporary consumption.

How, then, to understand the role of states in the ‘living fence’ of the border zone, its residents and visitors? The objects that people carry with them - and don’t - provide many clues. When encountering states, there are three main material forms that Haitians use to facilitate relations: money, documentation and the body. James Scott’s (1998) *Seeing like a State* highlights the importance identifying and sorting populations through objects such as ID cards. With documentation, travelling is far more secure. However, money for bribes may still be required depending on the person travelling. In fact, money is arguably more important than documentation. With money alone, Haitians can cross the legal border, and even travel to Santo Domingo by paying around 5000 pesos in bribes on the way. At every military checkpoint, all Haitians are requested to pay 100 pesos in bribes even with a passport and a visa. Not all pay: Haitians who are used to this trip and not afraid to stand up for themselves refuse to meet the military's demands. Even Dominicans encounter the state in this way, having to pay bribes if they forget their ID card while travelling. The third form is the body, as looking ‘respectable’ through care in one’s appearance and dress can greatly facilitate travel.

In this section I examine identity cards and bodies to illustrate how the effects of states vary widely depending upon the circumstances of individuals and how they are embedded in relationships. Because money is often inseparable from any of these relational transactions, I discuss it alongside these two material forms.

### ***1. Objects: Identity Cards and Money***

Jhonny woke up early in the morning to catch the first bus to Barahona. He had to travel there to pick up something for his boss, a foreigner who employed him to help renovate his house and run errands. A 19-year-old Dominican who had lived all his life in Pedernales, Jhonny knew the bus driver and most of the people travelling with him. His social networks did not, however, stretch so far as to grant him familiarity with the border guards en route. Normally this wouldn’t be a problem: as a citizen, he had right to free passage. This day, however, he had a problem. He had left his Dominican identity card at home, and now every time the bus stopped at a military post - which was often - the guards wanted a bribe to not fine him for travelling without identification. At the end of the day, the return trip cost him 800 pesos.

Alain, who I met earlier in this report, has incentive to be more organized than Jhonny. As a Haitian who does not possess a Dominican visa, Alain can reliably travel to Barahona or Santo Domingo without ID - but it costs more: up to 3000 pesos in bribes. Rather than do this, he

always travels in a private jeep and pays the driver, which is cheaper, more comfortable, faster, and less bothersome, as the military do not stop private cars.

Interestingly, affective relationships can both facilitate and restrict relationships with the state and the utility of ID cards. Chimia is an excellent example of how relationships can help one break state rules and regulations. He is a young Haitian man who works as a motorconcho driver. He went to school with various border guards, and is one of the few people who seems to be able to cross the border freely, without documentation. Not only can he take his motorbike across every day, he actually lives on both sides of the border. However, his networks do not extend geographically far enough to give him free passage to Santo Domingo.

In terms of restricting mobility, Bronte is an unusual case. She has an extremely high level of mobility across multiple borders - perhaps the highest of just about anyone I encountered due to her dual citizenship and habitus. But she is married to a Haitian, who, while he has adapted and has learnt to 'pass' within Pedernales due to his dress and language skills, he would be quickly identified as Haitian outside of the region. The family are stuck in place until Emmanuel gets a visa. Otherwise would have to go to Port-au-Prince to access the potential benefits of living in a capital city. [but she wants to be stuck].

Bronte was born in the Dominican Republic to a Haitian mother and a Dominican father. She grew up in Thiotte, Haiti and moved to Pedernales seven years ago with her partner and baby daughter. In Pedernales, the couple notes that they have advantages such as electricity and piped water in their modest rental apartment located between the town centre and the border. While she still has a small Haitian accent and identifies culturally with Haiti, her Spanish is excellent and she feels that she has no trouble passing as both Haitian and Dominican. She currently lives with her partner and their two children; her daughter is now 8 years old and her son is just a few months old. Over the past few years, Bronte has been working at a local hotel for around 6 hours per day, 5 days per week and studies languages at university (UASD) in Santo Domingo on Fridays and Saturdays; since having her baby she has been on leave from her job.

Bronte's partner, Emmanuel, is also from Thiotte but was educated in Port-au-Prince. While educational opportunities in Port au Prince are generally considered a privilege, he did not have the money to go to university after completing secondary school. He currently does ad hoc jobs, using his motorbike to carry passengers and collect and carry things for people. The couple acquired the motorbike after Bronte took out a loan at the co-operative bank to buy the bike; they are able to pay off the bike last year. Because work is irregular, Emmanuel also takes an active role in caring for his children.

Although Bronte and Emmanuel are, in many respects, doing ill, they feel insecure about their prospects in Pedernales and the Dominican Republic generally over the longer term. This is

primarily connected to the fact that Emmanuel doesn't possess official Dominican documents. The couple have collected and started to complete the visa forms, but they have not yet been able to pull together the funds for the visa application. If they are unable to acquire a work visa for Emmanuel, Emmanuel might have to go to Port-au-Prince to find work, with Bronte and the children joining him once he is established – this is an option that neither one relishes but knows may be inevitable.

Not surprisingly then, when we carried out the portable kit study, Bronte identified the five most important items in her portable kit (in her case a small black wallet): her Dominican identity card (cédula), her social security card, her handkerchief, her mobile phones (Claro / Digicel), and her house keys. Bronte explained that the identity card is the most important of these, because with it she acquired her social security card and her phones. Bronte carries a Digicel (Haitian) phone and a Claro (DR) phone, both of which she bought in 2011 to speak to people on both sides of the border (her family are spread between Thiotte, Pedernales, Santo Domingo and Port-au-Prince); she has owned phones consistently since 2006[i]. Her routine social networks are quite small; she primarily speaks with her mother in Thiotte, her father and sister in Pedernales and, on occasion, a friend in Santo Domingo. She also shares her mobile phone with Emmanuel when his credit is running low and/or he needs to cross the border.

Mahler and Pessar (2001) describe as the “gendered geographies of power,” a concept that accounts for the spatial and social scales, social location and the types and degrees of agency expressed and exercised in transnational spaces (see also Pessar and Mahler 2003). While her documents (and her cultural dual status) enables Bronte to navigate the complex infrastructures of two connected nations, her partner Emmanuel possesses a more ambivalent relationship to the mobility that their position on the border might have facilitated. Through Bronte’s networks and the use of objects such as the motorbike and mobile phone, Emmanuel is able to mediate some of the broader structural constraints that impinge upon his daily life.

Yet Emmanuel is also experiencing what Cara Wallis (2013), in her study of young, rural migrant women in Beijing has termed “immobile mobility”. “Immobile Mobility” describes the “ways of surpassing, but not erasing, limiting material conditions to gain inclusion in expanded and enriched social network” that represents a “socio-techno means of surpassing spatial, temporal, physical and structural boundaries” (pg#TBD). Yet, at its most fundamental level he is still unable to completely realize his aspirations to fully live in, make a living and support his family in the Dominican Republic.

## ***2. Bodies, Border Guards and Money***

In addition various identification cards, the body is also inculcated in the interactions with the state. As Khosravi (2010:63) observes in his autoethnography of borders and border crossing, border crossing entails performativity and ritual. As he notes,

“If you are self-assured, you can cross any border even with the worst passport in your hand. But your body can betray you, and border guards can recognize the tell-tale signs at once. It is the body of the border crosser that displays the signs...Body performance is the central part of the ritual. The body should be disguised and trained to move.”

Haitians who travel to Santo Domingo on the bus are well aware of the connection between their appearance and their ability to circumvent or minimize surveillance. Cassandra, for example, takes a different approach to Jhonny. She has a Dominican visa, so she should have the same rights to travel freely. However, as Jhonny discovered, possessing the correct documents is no guarantee. Just after the buses leave Pedernales, they pull into the military fort where all passengers are asked to step off the bus. The military identify who they think is Haitian, take them to a nearby building, and collect 100 pesos from every person, regardless of their documentation. Cassandra avoids being singled out as Haitian by ‘looking respectable’: she dresses in long pants and a blouse, modest jewellery, and straightens her hair. She exudes an air of calm confidence and speaks excellent Spanish. Her habitus signals to the guards that she has local knowledge, and they leave her alone, not wanting to create problems.

One of our Haitian research assistants told us that, in the main, it is the ‘congos’ who pay bribes to travel to Santo Domingo. This is a term Haitians use to describe their fellow citizens who lack the ‘techniques of the body’ (Mauss) to adapt sufficiently to escape surveillance. Inexperienced with border mobility, possibly travelling for the first time or crossing infrequently, these Haitian fall victim to the Dominican guards because they ‘do not know enough to protect their rights’ (Emmanuel). It is not only that they don’t know the law, or are too afraid to enforce it; they also lack familiarity with the symbolic landscape they are entering and how it integrates with institutions and legal structures. The implication of the term ‘congo’ - and example of Haitian racism - is that these travellers are ‘fresh off the boat’.

Laura is another young Haitian woman who has never had to pay bribes while travelling to Santo Domingo (she used to live in the northeast of the Dominican Republic), . She has a passport with a visa, and she attributes her luck to dressing “simply.” Nor does Laura pay bribes to cross at the border, but for quite a different reason. Laura is a Haitian who moved to Pedernales with her family after the January 12, 2010 earthquake. She is a Jehovah’s Witness and crosses the border into Anse-a-Pitres at least three days per week to evangelize. The guards do not charge her to cross because they know, by virtue of the bags full of pamphlets and bibles that she carries, that she is engaged in religious activity. Laura carries approximately 100 pesos when she goes

evangelizing, mostly to pay for motorbike taxis. She carries her ID card but leaves her passport in her house in Pedernales.

Viewing the border guards - state representatives - as human beings is crucial to understanding how relationships facilitate crossing. On the one hand, guards extort money from those crossing. But on the other hand, the guards are sometimes friends with those who cross, and even act as protectors who save women from rape or other kinds of sexual abuse, or who capture the perpetrators of these crimes.

Miguelina has experienced both the positive and negative sides of border security. In the past, she would sometimes cross the border informally at a spot upstream in order to avoid paying the bribe. This spot is actually closer to her house and more convenient. However, market day in 2007 she was nearly raped by a Dominican man, and was saved by a Haitian man who reprimanded her for walking around by herself in isolated areas. Since then, she has crossed at the border, preferring to pay the guards than risk bodily harm. In fact, she explicitly states that the border guards provide protection, citing a case in which Dominican and Haitian military officers have collaborated to catch a Dominican racist, who is now allegedly in jail in Jacmel. Notwithstanding this feeling of protection, she limits what she carries (as do many others) to avoid attracting the attention of the guards.

State relationships, then, are just part of what is involved in the construction of relationships and livelihood across national borders. In comparing these different forms of relationships, it becomes clear how much they are constituted by the ability of both Dominicans and Haitians to engage in a kind of cross-border arbitrage, that takes advantage of differential prices of labor and goods, but also of social and cultural factors. Hence while material objects facilitate relationship just as they would anywhere else, in the border zone they taken on particular properties and capabilities due to these heightened differences.

## **Conclusion**

Border crossings, and the border itself, are constituted by the ability of both Dominicans and Haitians to engage in a kind of cross-border arbitrage, that takes advantage of differential prices of labor and goods, but also of social and cultural factors. Hence while material objects facilitate relationships just as they would anywhere else, in the border zone they taken on particular properties and capabilities due to these heightened differences. The border has for decades been a place that is constituted by human relations and activities that involve cooperation and creativity as much as subordination and restriction.

This leaves us with the question of how to understand issues of power and privilege. Access to the means of mobility are available to some people more than others. Military officers, people

who own private cars, or people who can afford to buy visas and dress 'respectably' have far greater scope to move than those who don't. However, the borders never seem to close down absolutely. Even in a worst-case scenario, such as during the cholera scare of 2010 when the border 'shut down' for a few weeks, Haitians found ways to conduct business and travel across the border. In recent years, the mobile phone and other objects that confer mobility have become particularly important in negotiating moments such as these and engaging in dis-embordering that is, breaking down the barriers that have been installed.

In other words, the lowest common denominator in everyday life appears to be not class, race, nation, but the border itself, a living fence that is constituted equally by humans and material forms, including objects, spaces, and the human body. This materialist framework I have outlined has broader applications than just border zones, because it integrates analytical tools from political economy and symbolic anthropology. Material things aren't just resources, they are integral parts of people's social and cultural lives.

**Texture of the relationships:** In the broader literature on relationships in the Caribbean in recent years scholars have highlighted one of the particular features of Caribbean cultures is the valuing of openness and expansiveness. However, residents of Pedernales and Anse-a-Pitres were primarily concerned with maintaining, strengthening and deepening their already existing social ties and networks. Indeed, and in contrast to Horst's previous work on mobile phones in Jamaica wherein there was a strong focus upon "link up", or extending and building social networks, residents of the border region were far less concerned with openness and expansiveness.

**Tie this to the practice and engagement with the infrastructures of the border:** Skuse (2005), building upon Kopytoff's (1998) focus on the social life of things, focuses upon the practice of radio listening in Afghanistan. Noting the significance of radio listening for engaging with broader publics, he describes the acts of purchasing batteries, using electricity and other forms of maintenance as a form of enlivening media objects. By maintaining objects by locating affordable batteries, careful preservation, repair and other acts individuals also maintain and enliven their connections to the wider world. In the context of poverty enlivening is often a conscious choice between other competing expenditures; the choice of buying money for batteries, charging a phone, adding minutes or even lending a phone to a family member is often an indication of the importance of an object in enlivening a social relationship.

In literature on the Caribbean (among other places), there remains a great deal of emphasis on new configurations of space and scale as the region becomes further embedded in new forms of global capitalism, be it offshore finance in Bermuda and the British Virgin Islands (Maurer 2004), tourist centres, flexible industrial spaces (Freeman) and other formations. Yet, mobility and immobility as a logic and practice must be historically contextualized and situated in the

particular sets of relationships the varied and uneven forms of infrastructures in the region represent.

[Will conclude by reflecting upon how Sideways and the Mobile Africa conference moves this forward in new ways]

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**Table 1: The Materiality of Relationships on the Border**

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Intimate</b>	<b>Family or Household</b>	<b>Employers or Livelihood</b>	<b>Nation</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>Objects</b>	bibles clothing (presenting the body)	mobile phones; money; money transfer slips	mobile phone	money; mobile phone; business cards; bodies	music; clothing; bodies (comportment - ways of walking)	ID cards; motorbikes ; goods; bodies (display and presentation)
<b>Definition of Relationship</b>	being a better person and ethos or moral code for navigating the world	relationships between people who are sexually and/or emotionally intimate; this would often include husband and wives or girlfriends and boyfriends, although there are a range of relationships	relationships between blood relatives and/or people who have married into relationships [refine this - not accurate];  in Haiti/D R families are expansive and include	characterised by paid work, economic activity and livelihood	sense of cultural belonging connected to the sense of being “Haitian” or Dominican,	relationship between the formal and bureaucratic mechanisms of the state, often quite intimate in practice

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		historical ly that suggest Haitians may have more complex (even polygam ous) relations hips - find family literature	extende d families, cousins, second cousins and others			
<b>Mechanis m/ Processes</b>	objects facilitat ing, enablin g and extendi ng persona l develop ment	Obligatio n & Reciproci ty	obligati on and sense of belongin g; sense of reciproc ity	relationshi ps facilitate objects; objects facilitates relationshi ps;  employee- employer relationshi p srepresents a special case where ndebtednes s and patronage relationshi ps dominate more than reciprocity	objects are often symbols and/or extensions of connectio n	relationships both structure access to particular types of objects and objects (e.g. ID cards) are symbols of a relationship to the state and facilitate access to the state; poIr plays a key role