

The Factory of Dreams

Tijuana is an industrial park on the outskirts of Minneapolis. Tijuana is a colony of Tokyo. Tijuana is a Taiwanese sweatshop.—RICHARD RODRIGUEZ, *Days of Obligation*

My city is not only a street full of stupid gringos living an endless summer and two-colored Indians who sell paper flowers, of striped donkeys and suitcases full of cheap jewelry, of broken sad eyes with a Sony videocamera, of terraces full of motherfuckers who take poppers and kiss the ground looking for a Mexican señorita. . . . My city is a cage of illusions full of mirrors, wise poets and wannabe pop stars. Poverty is in the suburbs and God is in every church, in the digital spots of the TV.—RAFA SAAVEDRA, *Buten Smileys*

There are many Tijuanas. Each one of them is half myth, half temporarily out of service.—HERIBERTO YÉPEZ, A.B.U.R.T.O.

There were dancers in matching red-and-yellow mechanic suits balancing on rusting steel railings. There were DJs tweaking mixing boards, blasting cavernous dub from hollowed-out Volkswagen vans. Abandoned auto parts became makeshift sculptures. Spray-paint stencils of wrenches and demolished cars covered four stories of towering cement walls. There were television monitors to watch. There were T-shirts to buy.

This was Tijuana in the fall of 2002, at the Nuevo Ferrari *yonke*, or junkyard, on boulevard Díaz Ordaz, where a local artist collective inspired by junkyard aesthetics of rescue and recycling, YONKEart, had organized the *Yonke Life* party—a multimedia art happening that fell somewhere between a rave and a gallery installation featuring some of the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century Tijuana art and music scene's more familiar names, the street artist Acamonchi and house music specialist Tolo among them. Up on the junkyard roof, beneath the burned-out Ferrari sign and in front of stacks of crushed car frames, an audience of bundled-up young *tijuanenses* sat in upholstered car seats salvaged from Ford Rangers and watched a locally made indie film that ended with a kid telling his father he wants to be

a rapper, not a mariachi singer. Off in the distance, Tijuana was a swelling ocean of flickering hillside lights, spilling out in bejeweled waves that seemed to go on forever.

In many ways, YONKEart was a kind of sequel to a similar event held a year earlier, only then the site was not a still-active junkyard, but a no-longer-active jai alai stadium in the heart of the city's main tourist artery, Avenida Revolución. Billed as Maquiladora de Sueños, or Factory of Dreams, it was a party/art show wrapped around a high concept: instead of a maquiladora factory that assembled foreign parts into products for export and foreign consumption, this factory would assemble art and culture for local consumption. The notion was literalized in an installation of grainy photo portraits of women workers from Tijuana's thousands of maquiladora factories accompanied by audio recordings of their self-testimonies of everyday factory life, in a collection of found objects culled from factory floors, and in a live "dream-sweatshop" performance where young women dressed as maquiladora workers assembled packets of wishes and dreams out of spare wires, memory chips, power boards, and PC parts. They were joined by a range of projects that blurred art and life: small-scale architecture models of Tijuana *colonias*; border checkpoint tourist kitsch made of old computer parts; custom border-transit pants designed by the local art and design company Torolab to accommodate visas, permits, and passports; and a line of "cyber-norteño" clothing that featured high-tech ponchos, Day-Glo mesh serapes, and parachute dresses with vaquero stitching. The artist Jaime Ruiz Otis scavenged maquiladora dumpsters for polyethylene bags and rubber gloves, filled them with foam, and then hung the new creations from the ceiling of the jai alai so they swung above the dance floor like deindustrial pendulums—humble chandeliers of high-finance manufacturing. For Ruiz, the suspended bags were meant to be reminders of labor, hours of brutal, tedious assembly-line work looming over the pleasures of a party.

The event was the brainchild of Pedro Beas, a member of the Nortec Collective, then a six-member group of electronic musicians, producers, and DJs who were rising to local and international fame for their clever merger of electronic dance music with the accordions, tambora, and tuba-laced brass of Mexican norteño and banda sinaloense. After forming in 1999, Nortec's musical and cultural mash had rapidly made them the poster boys for both millennial Tijuana and the city's millennial generation, the software-generated and digitally compressed soundtrack—where traditional and acoustic regional Mexican styles bled into newly minted global club cultures—to a sprawling and combusting border city that was then, as it is now, facing massive challenges in the age of free trade and economic globalization.¹

Maquiladora de Sueños and Yonke Life were both products of global Tijuana and vibrant, grassroots expressions of it, and they both aspired to translate (and grapple with) the impact of asymmetrical global economics, uneven international information networks, and ravenous neoliberal trade and fiscal policy into locally conceived cultural events and performances. The mergers they represent—between culture and economics, art and politics, the analog and the digital, the infinitely virtual and finitely material, the promise of the global and the pain of the global—are the mergers that helped inspire the impetus for this book. Both events engaged Tijuana as a city of both assemblage and deassemblage, a city of internationally bankrolled industrial parks and three-story, binational chop shops where stripped luxury scrap parts are given new life in the automotive Frankensteins (German-Italian mechanical mutts) that swerve across Tijuana’s rotary circles.

Tijuana Dreaming is our attempt to explore the many dimensions of this globally impacted Tijuana, from the mid-sixties up through the futurist digital urbanisms that the Tijuana writer and blogger Rafa Saavedra has called *TJ2020.html* (we include a “mixtape” of some of Saavedra’s self-chosen “greatest hits” here). While scholarship and press on Tijuana has tended to favor either highly utopian (“City of Postmodern Tomorrow,” “Artistic Mecca”) or highly dystopian (“Global Junkyard,” “Slum of Empire”) views, we have been inspired by cultural events like Maquiladora de Sueños and Yonke Life in that they live somewhere in the middle and reveal a city that is actively shaping its identity on the rocky ground between culture as global critique and culture as global capital, and between globalization’s perils and its tempting, taunting promises.

Tijuana, Reassembled

In recent years, Tijuana has been the subject of numerous battles over definition. “This is Tijuana,” one anthology declared, while another insisted that, no, “Here is Tijuana.” As Humberto Félix Berumen, a leading Tijuana scholar, shows in his essay that we include here, Tijuana is a city of multiple discourses and archetypes that only relatively recently emerged as a “narratable city,” a city of legible narratives and comprehensible ideas. Trendy and appealing for some, horrific and frightening for others, Tijuana has invariably been described, in both print and new media, as “hybrid,” “not Mexico,” “the End of Latin America and the beginning of the American Dream,” “the happiest place on earth,” “a laboratory of postmodernity,” “a third space,” “a porous border,” “a Walled City,” a “drug capital” on the U.S. travel advisory list.

Historically often a city of passage and increasingly a city of immigrant destination, narco networking, and Homeland Security intensity in post-9/11 geopolitics, contemporary Tijuana is a city of superlatives: Tijuana the most-crossed space in the world, Tijuana the ugliest city in the world, Tijuana the most violent, Tijuana the most creative, Tijuana the most dangerous. These are all, as Heriberto Yépez explains in his contribution here, “Tijuanologies,” academic theories, cultural myths, and pop culture hyperboles that have come to be more visible than any of the city’s own social realities.

Tijuana lives on multiple maps. Situated at the edge of the Mexican post-revolutionary nationalist imaginary, Tijuana is a waiting room for undocumented migrants from Latin America and continental Mexico and a passageway (for anything) to the other side. Situated at the edge of the U.S. national imaginary, Tijuana has historically been a pleasure playground for the U.S. tourist in search of cheap, nearby thrills and a financial playground for the global CEO looking to maximize Pacific Rim profits with cheap nonunion labor. Or as Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez puts it in his essay here, “Tijuana can be read as an outpost in the middle world between the first and the third.” As such, it has a vexed relation to any one particular national formation and harbors a singular confluence of cultural differences that nonetheless elude, or even reject, contemporary notions of cosmopolitanism. Tijuana has emerged as a unique site for contemplating the drastic and devastating asymmetries and inequities—the “negative globalization” that is increasingly synonymous with globalization itself—that characterize the global experience. “Today’s globalization is radically different from its predecessors on one essential point,” Daniel Cohen writes. “It is difficult to be an actor but easy to be a spectator. . . . The new global economy creates an unprecedented rupture between the expectations to which it gives birth and the reality it brings about.”²

This collection approaches Tijuana from its coordinates on the map of this new global economy where liquid flows are put into action only through the proliferation of immobile partitions, control mechanisms, and security environments (the Tijuana novelist and writer Luis Humberto Crosthwaite gives us border crossing as border immobility, border flows as border waiting, in his short story included here). These essays are all aware of Tijuana’s place along what Thomas P. M. Barnett, a former secretary of defense strategist, has dubbed “the political equator,” the dividing line between the world’s “functioning core” and its “non-integrating gap” that is guaranteeing that globalization is not actually a global phenomenon.³ The geographer Harm de Blij similarly contends that the global map is divided between a global core and a global periphery, and what keeps the two sectors apart is “the Western Wall

around the global core,” a series of borders that keep the inequities and asymmetries of globalization in place.⁴ Of the eleven control sites he and other economic geographers have identified (southern Spain–northern Africa, North Korea–South Korea, and Israel–West Bank, among them), the U.S.–Mexico border at its Pacific edge—the home turf of Tijuana—is number one on the list.

Tijuana Dreaming investigates Tijuana’s place on this global map of flows and partitions, actors and spectators, winners and losers, by approaching the city’s history according to two distinct, though intertwined periods. First, the *age of tourism* (1889–1965), which begins with the city’s founding as a small, family-owned cattle *rancheria* in 1889 and extends through its Prohibition-era development into a tourist outpost and “city of sin” vice magnet for U.S. pleasure seekers heavily financed by Alta California entertainment entrepreneurs, media tycoons, and railroad barons. Though Tijuana’s tourist heyday began to dwindle in the late 1960s, in some sense the city remains forever locked in the sombreros and curio shops of tourist postcards, in a black-and-white 1920s-tinted image of itself as a Las Vegas–Old Mexico hybrid of tequila hangovers, casino smoke, and cheap, dirty sex where the mythic Donkey Show still has some gravitational pull. In her essay for this collection, Jennifer Insley-Pruitt shows how this history of myth and black legend has been transformed by some of Tijuana’s leading contemporary literary figures, and Berumen, Vaquera-Vásquez, and the Mexico City writer Guillermo Fadanelli all return to Tijuana’s tourist haunts and nightclub utopias in order to make sense of the city in the present tense.

But the essays in this volume are born mostly from this second historical period, the *age of globalization* (1965–present), which begins in earnest with the transformation of Tijuana into a city of export-oriented assembly with the passage of the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in 1965, a proposed Mexican remedy to the end of the U.S. Bracero Program that rescinded the labor invitations that had brought so many Mexicans north beginning in the 1940s. The BIP, aimed at generating employment and economic development along the border, was a monumental piece of legislation that would radically alter Tijuana’s social and economic landscape by removing international tariff barriers, opening Tijuana (as well as other border cities) up to the arrival of foreign maquiladora assembly plants, and setting the stage for the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement nearly thirty years later.⁵ Indeed, as the sociologist Leslie Sklair has argued, the BIP did far more than simply create new border jobs. It aimed to redefine the border region into a “development zone” and “dynamic growth pole” whose very essence and identity were rooted in its value as an economic resource for northern Mexico’s entrance

into the global economy.⁶ Early Tijuana maquiladora assembly plants like Litton Industries and Fairchild, for example, shipped their memory boards and electrical transformers from Baja California to Alta California and were instrumental in the growth of Silicon Valley's multibillion-dollar global tech industry.

The 1965 BIP legislation—which had early roots in 1930s drives to cast Baja California as a “free perimeter” or “free zone” for industrial imports—was preceded four years earlier by the Programa Nacional Fronterizo, or PRONAF, Mexico's first internally driven attempt to pump money and investment into the consumer and industrial markets of its northern border, urging Mexican nationals to “buy Mexican” and reframing the border as a consumer zone, “Mexico's show window.” PRONAF and the BIP both paved the way for the free trade policies and economic border deregulation of NAFTA in the 1990s, and taken together all three powerfully shaped Tijuana's entrance into the global economy. And all three powerfully impacted the city's own identity as an emergent hub of globalized urbanism characterized by chronic population explosions, fragile urban infrastructures and emergency architectures, booming industrial parks and fading tourist industries, and a massive community of working poor that grows alongside both an ascendant middle class and an ascendant narco culture of quick wealth, ephemeral bling, urban terror, and fragile human life.

It is this Tijuana that emerges in Josh Kun's contribution here, a beleaguered and militarized city marred by sadness and beset by kidnappings and drug violence, where so much can be lost in the desperate hunt for power and wealth. If, as the pioneering Tijuana journalist Jesús Blancornelas once wrote, “corruption is the mother of drug trafficking,” then uneven economic globalization is at least one mother of that corruption.⁷ The post-1965 economic transformation of Tijuana helped turn the city into fertile soil for the economic desperation and social instability that drug cartels thrive on, and with the arrival of the Arellano-Felix cartel in the early 1990s, Tijuana's pivotal position as a drug route between the United States and South America was secured. While drug violence had been a part of Tijuana's urban profile since the early nineties, it was in the following decade that the violence spilled out beyond the world of narcos, politicians, and millionaires. When Tijuana's murder rate reached its all-time high in 2008, the city seemed as if it were under siege. Innocent people were dying, kindergartners were caught in shoot-outs, military tanks hovered over thoroughfares, and the killings got more and more grisly. The *encobijados*, or bodies wrapped in blankets, of the nineties had become the three hundred bodies dissolved in acid by El Po-

zolero in 2009. The wealthy fled north to San Diego, the middle classes bulletproofed their windows, and the city's working poor, including so many thousands of maquiladora workers who still left their colonias every morning at dawn for the assembly plants, were more vulnerable than ever before.

If the capital of tourist Tijuana is the infamous downtown main drag of Avenida Revolución—the fabled multiblock strip of clubs, bars, curio shops, and pharmacies that is usually the first, and often only, stop on the itinerary of the Tijuana tourist—then the capital of this vulnerable global Tijuana is the zone known as the 5 y 10. Named for a former five-and-dime store, the 5 y 10 cluster of shops, malls, markets, and pedestrian bridges lies at the heart of the eastern La Mesa district and is the chief commercial center and transportation hub for Tijuana's working classes. Over the river from the city's central bus terminal and a short distance from both the La Mesa prison and some of the city's maquiladoras and maquiladora housing colonias, it's an overcrowded and exhaust-choked crossroads that's the bustling epicenter of global Tijuana's everyday hustle. While many of these essays are shadowed by Tijuana's tourist past and informed by its tourist myths, we see them all in dialogue in some way with the city that is reborn daily at the 5 y 10. It's here where investments in border industry cross paths with divestments in border ecology, health, and economic justice; it's here where low-wage workers employed by global corporations do their daily consuming before returning to homes without sewage and clean water (an estimated 40 percent of the city lacks proper sewage and water). It's precisely this world that is documented in *Maquilapolis*, the 2006 film by Vicky Funari and Sergio de la Torre about this “city of factories,” which figures centrally in Tarek Elhaik's piece for this collection.

Beginning in 1965, Tijuana became one of many international cities that felt the brunt of widespread deindustrialization campaigns and drives toward outsourced manufacturing. David Harvey has argued that it was in the post-1965 period that “the production of geographical difference” begins to become a hallmark of globalization.⁸ By focusing on Tijuana in this historical period, this collection examines the impact of capitalism's “uneven geographical development” on one city, a further reminder that the most intense dramas of globalization continue to occur not on global stages, but on local and regional ones. Tijuana is an ideal site to follow through on Saskia Sassen's important urgings that globalization does not minimize the role of nations and cities, but that globalization actually exists through nations and cities which function as “enablers” and “enactors” of the global.⁹ The essays in this collection look nothing like a world made flat, its national differences evened out by globalization's helping hand, but instead show us—whether in

Tito Alegría's debunking of cultural integration myths or Teddy Cruz's attention to ecological and infrastructural disjunctures or even Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's meditation on the border-crossing line itself—how the economic changes that swept through Tijuana in the late 1960s still require national differences to maintain the very exploitations and inequalities that successful economic globalization requires.

They also remind us of the connections that Alejandro Lugo has recently insisted upon in his own study of the impact of assemblage economies on border lives: the globalization of border cities is not born of a historical vacuum but is “a socio-historical product of the politics of conquest of two global empires—the Spanish empire (1521–1810) and the American empire (1848–present).”¹⁰ Tijuana is a global city, then, not only because it has been made to play a contemporary role in free trade's reorganization of North America and neoliberalism's reimagining of social life, sovereignty, and subjectivity, but because it inherits two imperial lineages, both of which set the stage for the domination and administration of the Mexican working classes that the current era of assembly and manufacturing still depends upon. For Sassen, a global city is characterized by two central traits: it is a site “of the overvalorization of corporate capital and the further devalorization of disadvantaged economic actors” on the one hand, and on the other, it is a “strategic site for disempowered actors because it enables them to gain presence, to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power.”¹¹ The essays gathered here reflect on both of these traits as they've emerged in Tijuana, where since 1965 intense corporate investment and economic development have been coupled with both local struggles for economic parity (through both formal and informal, legal and illegal, industries) and struggles for social and cultural visibility.

Yet one area where some of the more foundational scholarly accounts of global cities—or “world cities” and “international cities”—have shed less light is culture. The sociologist Kathryn Kopinak, whose overview of Tijuana's relationship to economic globalization is included here, has written at length on what she calls “the social costs of industrial growth” in the Tijuana region, but the essays gathered here also force us to consider the cultural costs and the cultural results of industrial growth, how Tijuana's “urban imaginaries” are expressed and articulated through cultural performance and cultural production.¹² The pieces we've included from Ejival, Jesse Lerner, René Peralta, and Tarek Elhaik explore these “urban imaginaries” by looking at Tijuana's musical countercultures, its architectural ruins and ghosts, and its contemporary cinematic archives. Even in his primarily historical and economic 1993 study of

maquiladoras, Sklair made it clear that the border's economic restructuring has distinctive cultural impacts. "The concrete manifestations of the globalization of capital are apparent on the export oriented assembly zones," he wrote. "But their effects are being felt more widely in politics and culture."¹³ Indeed, as Margath Walker has shown, culture has played a central role not only in the imaginaries of young grassroots artists, musicians, writers, designers, and other creatives hoping to make sense of Tijuana, but in the policies and planning of the city of Tijuana itself where, to borrow George Yúdice's phrase, culture becomes expedient, an economic resource of global visibility and global policy. One of Yúdice's key case studies in this area is inSITE, the internationally recognized art triennial that since 1992 has been staging large-scale art installations and performances that focus on the San Diego–Tijuana region. While Yúdice applauds inSITE's role in fostering artistic growth in the border region and putting Tijuana on a global map of artistic interest, he also sees it as a kind of artistic corollary of NAFTA's free-trade economic policies, only here it's culture that is assembled with foreign money by local workers, it's culture that acts as capital, and it's culture that is imbued with economic value for global investors and consumers. He goes so far as to dub inSITE "an artistic maquiladora whose executives (the directors of the art event) contract with managers (the curators) to map out the agenda for flexible workers-for-hire (artists) who in turn produce or extract (cultural) capital by processing a range of materials."¹⁴ The extent to which Tijuana's city officials themselves seem to be embracing a free-trade approach to cultural capital and investment can be seen in the 2005–2007 city municipal plan, which contained over twenty references to fostering cultural development in Tijuana. For Walker, this is an attempt to "embed Tijuana deeply and successfully in the global economy by situating its culture for economic gain."¹⁵ Or in the words of Tijuana's municipal planners: "Our border position has converted our city into an open space of stimulating innovation and tolerance whose economic vitality and cultural creativity has projected to the international scale."¹⁶ A similar language and developmental logic was at the core of 2010's Tijuana Innovadora, a privately funded \$5 million two-week conference and image makeover held at CECUT, the city's leading cultural institution, designed to showcase Tijuana as a center of innovations in technology, science, and culture. Aimed at hundreds of elite global attendees (Al Gore and a cofounder of Wikipedia among them), the event, in the words of the conference's official video promo, was designed to showcase Tijuana as the capital of "the intelligent frontier" and in language that echoed PRONAF and BIP in the sixties, thereby "generate national investment that will expand the region's economy."

“It’s Time for Tijuana”: Global Myths, Global Realities

With over two million people, Tijuana is the second largest city on North America’s Pacific Coast (smaller than Los Angeles, bigger than Seattle and San Francisco). When paired with San Diego to the north, the two cities are responsible for an estimated \$6 billion a year in exports and an estimated \$8 billion in cross-border trade. The Web site for the nonprofit Tijuana Economic Development Corporation—available in English, Japanese, and Chinese—announces to potential corporate clients that “It’s time for Tijuana,” advertising the city’s rich, seemingly endless resources of “human capital” and promoting its prime Pacific Rim import-export real estate—“globally strategic, yet very near-shore.” As the site puts it, “Having your business in Tijuana not only means you’ll be in a great city next to US markets—it also means you get access to Mexico’s globally-oriented menu of free trade agreements.”¹⁷

Since the launch of the BIP in 1965, the lure of this regional wealth and the strength of this regional industry has made Tijuana a destination not only for companies looking for tariff-free trade corridors, but for all that “human capital,” those millions of migrants from the south looking to find work on the factory floors of the city’s thousands of maquiladoras (which, it’s estimated, on average employ a million workers at a time). As Berumen reminds us in his essay, others, of course, begin by simply seeing Tijuana as a *ciudad de paso*, a city there to be crossed and passed by on the way into the United States, a necessary gateway to the world that beckons on the other side of the rusting border wall. While many make it across, more do not, and for them, the maquiladoras are always waiting. The hillsides with views of San Diego and the shantytowns out beyond the official Tijuana city grid are waiting too, and before long migrants become residents, the *ciudad de paso* becomes a hometown where families are raised, where generations pass.¹⁸

These processes are at the core of Lawrence Herzog’s many writings on globalization’s impact on the social and ecological infrastructures of Tijuana. For Herzog, Tijuana is an “an ideal laboratory for understanding how globalization is shaping a new kind of urbanism,” this city that sits at the most-crossed land border in the world and cradles the U.S.-Mexico border’s largest port of entry.¹⁹ Yet while the essays in this collection have much in common with Herzog’s portrait of “global Tijuana”—which he outlines according to a taxonomy of various ecologies of trade, consumerism, and community—they stop short of celebrating it as a completed global project, an imaginary border utopia free of disjunctures and economic injustices, where global factories and free-trade policies simply generate new kinds of

freely participating border consumers who become “global citizens” of a new cross-border global order.

Instead, we see Tijuana as a global city precisely because of the uneven, precarious, and often destructive nature of globalization itself, which might produce new markets and new consumers as neoliberal victories, but also produce a border citizenship that is unstable and fragile and a combustive urban infrastructure defined by informal, or “shadow,” economies (including drug and human trafficking) as much as by the formal flows of global industry. Instead of a city of “global citizens” participating equally in globalization, tijuanaenses are more frequently part of what Josiah Heyman has called the border’s “consumer proletariat,” people alienated from both the means of production and the means of consumption.²⁰ As Harvey has reminded us, globalization indeed moves across national spaces, but does so unevenly; some sites and spaces are more resource rich for globalization’s abundances, others more resource rich for globalization’s scarcities.²¹ Tijuana falls into the latter category; part of what makes it global is its scarcity in the service of affluence.

It is, after all, a city born from not just any geopolitical border, but from the only one in the world that divides one of the world’s poorest nations from the world’s richest, which, as Alexis McCrossen has shown, makes it highly attractive to markets, which are by definition attracted to the kind of “accumulation of asymmetries in such close proximity” that has become a primary characteristic of Tijuana’s urban profile.²² Or as Andreas Huyssen has written of cities in the age of globalization, “Rather than producing connectivities and flows equally between all regions of the planet, globalization functions in horizontal clusters through and among which global, local, and regional dimensions are ricocheting with varying intensities and breadth.”²³ Tijuana is a ricochet city, a cluster of connectivities and flows that can be as smooth as they are rough. Things cross and things are detained. There’s traffic and there’s waiting. Flows become inspections. Tijuana constantly reminds: the global is also gridlock.

In much recent U.S. scholarship on Tijuana, that gridlock, while always present, is frequently overshadowed by theories of transnational traffic, cross-border networks, and transnational urban planning. A 2000 study by a former city architect of San Diego, Michael Stepner, and a San Diego city planner, Paul Fiske, for example, included Tijuana–San Diego in the world’s most important “global city regions,” with Tijuana as one half of a rich binational pairing that ought to attract investors and urban planners alike (it was an idea previously explored in 1974 by Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, who had tempered their binational visions by wondering if the region was a “temporary paradise”).²⁴ Three years earlier, Herzog had already begun developing this idea

when he wrote of the Tijuana–San Diego region as a “transfrontier metropolis” that was a “prototype of global urban space.” Like Stepner and Fiske, Herzog focused on the shared traffic: combined population numbers, binational commuters, binational consumers, cross-border tourists, global factories, cross-border bedroom communities, shared infrastructures, shared fates of urban design. “The age of land warfare is past,” he wrote. “Global markets and free trade are the new dominant realities, and property at the edges of nations is attracting investors, businesses, and governments. Industrial parks, highways, rail systems, and airports that once bypassed international frontiers are relocating there.”²⁵ We worry about just how close a “transfrontier metropolis” is to the “Tijuana–San Diego megaregion” promoted by the maquiladora industry, which uses Tijuana’s human capital and tariff-free industrial parks as incentive for future global investment that, contrary to any vision of cross-border parity, will only increase the economic divide between San Diego and Baja California. We have included the work of San Diego–based architect and planner Teddy Cruz in the collection precisely to address these contradictions and these innovations in regional planning as he represents one of the leading contemporary voices in reimagining the infrastructures and public spaces of the cross-border landscape.

The increasingly popular view of the border megacity, where national edges function more as market openings and less as state partitions, reappeared in the influential 2003 collection *Postborder City*, from Michael Dear and Gustavo LeClerc. The volume shed much-needed light on the history of Baja California and on Tijuana’s central role in the inter-California region, but did so by anchoring Tijuana in a transnational geography the authors named “Bajalta California,” a Southern California–northern Mexico zone of trade, culture, and community where the geopolitical border takes a backseat to the idea of a “postborder” where flows of ideas, culture, and finance shape a porous Bajalta border region.²⁶ While the essays in *Tijuana Dreaming* certainly participate in and contribute to a transnational body of ideas and culture, and while they certainly understand Tijuana’s key coordinates on the Southern California–northern Mexico map, their approach to the city begins on the southern side of a border partition that keeps San Diego’s gross domestic product roughly eleven times that of Tijuana. Viewed from Los Angeles or San Diego, the Tijuana–San Ysidro border may be a zone of free trade and free-flowing economic traffic with edges ripe for investment and planning, but viewed from Tijuana it is first and foremost a barrier and partition between core and periphery, a surveilled zone of Homeland Security policing and economic unevenness, a key example of what Ruth Wilson Gilmore

means by a “fatal power-difference coupling.”²⁷ Like the prisons Gilmore writes about, the national edges of the new global economy are also mechanisms and icons of domestic militarism, “geographical solutions to social and economic crises, politically organized by a racial state that is itself in crisis.” Especially since the vicious 1994 legislative tag team of NAFTA (opening the border to free movement of goods and parts) and Operation Gatekeeper (closing the border to the free movement of people), Tijuana has been a key site for witnessing what Heyman has described as the border’s “mobilities-enclosures continuum”—where some are allowed to move (“kinetic elites”), while others remain detained. The border becomes a risk-management hub, a filter for “safe” travelers and against “risky” travelers that produces “differential mobility effects.”²⁸

Alejandro Lugo has gone one step further and argued against the alleged common sense of borders as places of crossing, insisting instead that borders are primarily places of inspection characterized by the “pervasive pattern of cultural surveillance.” To speak only of the crossings themselves masks the inspections that take place before and after crossing (if crossing is even permitted). For Lugo, then, national borders are far from being the romanticized zones of flux, hybridity, and postmodern deterritoriality that became the familiar subject of so much cultural theory in the 1990s; rather, borders can be redefined as “ethnographic objects that are mainly characterized by supervision and scrutiny.”²⁹

As you might expect, theories of Tijuana’s role in a cross-border global megacity have had less currency in Tijuana itself, where scholars and critics are typically more focused on local asymmetry, not inter-California regional prosperity, and have tended to approach globalization not in terms of transnational flows and transnational geographies but in terms of how shifts in global economics have impacted highly localized struggles around culture and politics and local struggles around social equality and civic health. Leading the way has been the Tijuana scholar Tito Alegría (we include a sample of his recent work here), whose 2009 study *Metrópolis transfronteriza* offers a passionate and thorough refutation of the “transfrontier metropolis” and “megacity” ideas. He argues that Herzog, Dear, and Leclerc confuse interaction with integration. “The flows [between Tijuana and San Diego] are the means of a relationship,” he writes. “But they are not sufficient for an integration.”³⁰ There is no doubt that Tijuana is the product of more than a century’s worth of cross-border influence (indeed, one cannot imagine the birth of modern Tijuana itself without the Prohibition-era investments of U.S. capital) but Alegría contends that there has been no integration of Tijuana into

the north-of-the-border economy that fuels cities like Los Angeles and San Diego. Alegría names three “brakes” that slow transfrontier integration: the increase of impediments to south-to-north migrations, the increasing disparities between U.S. and Mexican salaries and prices, and the increasing difficulty for tijuanaenses to cross the border north into San Diego County with everyday frequency (he estimates that less than half of the city can do so legally). As a result, where others see U.S.-Mexico transnationalism, Alegría sees structural differences between the United States and Mexico. If there is “interurban binational flux,” he says, it exists precisely because of structural disparities and inequalities.

These disparities became particularly acute as part of a broader post-9/11 condition, which cemented the border’s role less as an instigator of interaction and more as a consolidator of difference. Two key exceptionalities developed. First, an Agambian state of exception was increasingly applied to the border as a zone that was almost constantly alarmingly “orange,” dangerous, and fertile ground for terrorist invasion. Second, a cultural exceptionality developed that, as the curator Lucía Sanromán and the photographer Ingrid Hernández demonstrate in their pieces here, emerged from within by leading Tijuana filmmakers, anthropologists, architects, and artists eager to interpret and represent their globalizing city through a new generational lens, and from without by curators, cultural critics, and arts journalists who enthusiastically characterized the city as a cultural and artistic hot spot. Or as the *New York Times* put it (in a piece they headlined “It’s Hot. It’s Hip. It’s Tijuana?”), “Its fabled lawlessness has become a kind of freedom and license for social mobility and entrepreneurship that has attracted artists and musicians, chefs and restaurateurs, and professionals from Mexico and elsewhere.” Tijuana’s sudden hipness took on particular force in the art world with Tijuana’s art scene landing on the radar of international curators and journalists, suddenly making it the trendiest art city in Mexico between 2003 and 2006. Between 2005 and 2006 alone, three major exhibitions showcased Tijuana-specific art: 2005’s *Tijuana Sessions* (for ARCO in Madrid, Spain) and *Tercera Nación* (Tijuana), and 2006’s *Strange New World* (MCASD, San Diego).³¹ This recent art boom has at least a few roots in the successes and global recognition of inSITE, which has long been perhaps the most vocal and consistent proponent of Tijuana as both a site for art (a destination for artists, curators, and critics not from the Tijuana–San Diego region) and a site of artists (the artistic home base of artists living and working in Tijuana). While many celebrated this new attention on Tijuana as a place for something other than violence and vice, others worried that art that was critical of the onslaught of

globalization became an (perhaps inadvertent) advertisement for it. Dubbing Tijuana's art boom "arte NAFTA" that was spun by curators into a "pop optimism" about the border, Heriberto Yépez wrote that "border art is being manipulated to invent a favorable image of Mexico's cultural integration with the U.S."³²

As Yépez's own critique made clear, the international attention given Tijuana's art scene was often paired with the common characterization of Tijuana as the ultimate postmodern city of the third world, the archetypal "third space" of liminality and in-betweenness once theorized by Homi Bhabha. Tijuana's role as a kind of theorist's darling begins in 1990 with the publication of Néstor García Canclini's watershed book, *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*. "During the two periods in which I studied the intercultural conflicts at the Mexican side of the border, in Tijuana, in 1985 and 1988," he wrote in a passage now famous among borderlands scholars, "it occurred to me at more than one time that this city is, along with New York, one of the greatest laboratories of postmodernity."³³ For García Canclini, Tijuana's bilingualism, its continuous cultural mixtures of North and South, its meetings of first and third worlds, made it an exquisitely hybrid city. His characterization gradually helped make Tijuana synonymous with global hybridity and postmodern urbanism, a notion that spread through the popular press, academia, and the art world (Heriberto Yépez's essay in this collection offers a critique of this trend).³⁴ Yet in an interview included here, García Canclini revisits his earlier claims with a more critical eye toward hybridity and the uncritical reappropriations and use of his writing on Tijuana by fellow critics.

As Diana Palaversich and Eduardo Barrera have both noted, García Canclini's characterization of Tijuana as a postmodern capital was undoubtedly influenced by the 1980s and 1990s performance art work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the Border Arts Workshop.³⁵ Their important performance interventions into discourses of cultural nationalism and cultural purity—launched from the San Diego–Tijuana border—frequently portrayed Tijuana as an ideal site for thinking about binational cultural flows, polyglot tongues, and improvisational borderlands identities that move across the border's "gap between worlds."³⁶ While acutely aware of this tradition (and in some cases, overtly grappling with it), the essays in *Tijuana Dreaming* do not extend this theoretical current and instead go behind the often too-easy romance of Tijuana postmodernism and hybridity to explore the city's culture and identity through critical lenses that we believe are more generative for understanding the city so that it is not wholly defined by, or synonymous with, the borderline

itself. The conflation of Tijuana with *border* has helped enable, to borrow a phrase from Palaversich, Tijuana's "international blessing as one of the first examples of the brave new postmodern world," which has tended to distract many scholars and critics outside of the city from examining the social, political, and economic fractures that continue to shape it from within.³⁷

Tijuana may be the Mexican city most visited by U.S. tourists and one of the Mexican cities most referenced when media talk turns to the "crisis" of contemporary border life, yet scholarship and critical writing about Tijuana available in English is scarce. Only one of Tijuana's contemporary novelists (Luis Humberto Crosthwaite) has had work translated, and not one of the city's contemporary generation of scholars and critics has seen their long-form work available in English for students, faculty, and interested readers north of the line. As a result, Tijuana is much talked about, but little heard. Courses on border issues tend to rely on the scant, and often very dated, pieces of writing available. Tijuana has been, historically, a city defined by its misrepresentation in myth and fantasy, synonymous with a kind of critical ventriloquism that leaves its own critical and intellectual and artistic voices all too silent in transnational conversations.

This anthology aims to correct that imbalance by including a number of essential articles by leading scholars from Tijuana and greater Mexico in translation for the very first time. The essays explore Tijuana's cultural life through four central prisms: *panoramas* that view the city in its broadest cultural, historical, and discursive terms and position contemporary cultural life in Tijuana in the context of the city's representational history; the new *urbanisms* that have energized urban planning in Tijuana, new theories of social and civic life and domestic innovation that respond to the city's unique infrastructural, demographic, and environmental pressures; the *cultural developments* in visual art, literature, and music that have taken Tijuana's artistic life beyond conventional discourses of "border art" as they have been deployed in the art world and the academy alike; and *globalisms*, views of the challenges facing Tijuana in the global age, the ghosts of its cinematic past that cloud its future, the violence and fear that have begun to reshape the city's sense of itself.

Yet even in the face of this violence and fear, in the face of so many asymmetries and ruptures, the essays in this collection all seem to come back to a love of the city that borders on obsession and is fueled by a critical passion. "In my lifetime," Yépez writes, "I have not felt a love as profound as the confusing passion that I feel for Tijuana, an obsession that does not preclude criticism and which more accurately provokes sudden repudiation. Tijuana

elicits a crazy love, a narcotic love. Tijuana is addictive.” *Tijuana Dreaming* is our attempt to pay tribute to that love in all of its diversity, to take those addictions seriously by creating a collection that will help enrich conversations about Tijuana’s role in the current global landscape. Or, to paraphrase something Teddy Cruz once told the *New York Times* when he was asked why he has focused so much of his work on Tijuana, we assembled this collection because we believe that to study Tijuana is, quite simply, “to be in the midst of the argument.”³⁸

Welcome to (a new) Tijuana.

Notes

- 1 For more on Nortec, see Alejandro Madrid, *Nor-Tec Rifa! Electronic Dance Music from Tijuana to the World* (Oxford University Press, 2008); and José Manuel Valenzuela (ed.), *Paso del Nortec: This Is Tijuana!* (Trilce, 2004).
- 2 Daniel Cohen, *Globalization and Its Enemies* (MIT, 2007), 6.
- 3 Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the 21st Century* (Putnam, 2004).
- 4 Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization’s Rough Landscape* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.
- 5 To be clear, we do not believe that tourism and globalization are mutually exclusive economic and cultural regimes, but that they are in fact very much entangled with one another. It’s a theme that the essays in this collection constantly grapple with: the relationship between the new cultural networks and social structures that emerged in Tijuana in the 1960s as a direct result of border industrialization and previous cultural regimes tied to the binational flows of tourist dollars and tourist fantasies.
- 6 Leslie Sklair, *Assembling for Development: The Maquila Industry in Mexico and the United States* (UCSD, 1993), 27.
- 7 Jesús Blancornelas, *El Cartel* (Plaza y Janes, 2002), 39.
- 8 David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (University of California Press, 2000), 78.
- 9 Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 1.
- 10 Alejandro Lugo, *Fragmented Lives, Assembled Parts: Culture, Capitalism, and Conquest at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (University of Texas Press, 2008), 2.
- 11 Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New Press, 1999), xx; for a helpful treatment of different “world-city” and “international city” approaches, see Steven Erie, *Globalizing L.A.: Trade, Infrastructure, and Regional Development* (Stanford University Press, 2004).
- 12 Kathryn Kopinak (ed.), *The Social Costs of Industrial Growth in Northern Mexico* (UCSD Center for US-Mexican Studies, 2006).
- 13 Sklair, *Assembling for Development*, 11.

- 14 George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Duke University Press, 2004), 288.
- 15 Margath A. Walker, "The Cultural Economy of a Border Renaissance: Politics and Practices in the City," *Space and Polity* 11, no. 2 (2007): 185–200.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 191.
- 17 Tijuana Economic Development Corporation, <http://www.tijuana-edc.com>.
- 18 For a different take on the ciudad de paso as it is manifest in Tijuana's oldest residential neighborhood, La Libertad, see Omar Pimienta's outstanding poetry collection *La Libertad: Ciudad de Paso* (CECUT, 2006).
- 19 Lawrence Herzog, "Global Tijuana: The Seven Ecologies of the Border," in Michael Dear and Gustavo LeClerc (eds.), *Postborder City: Cultural Spaces of Baja California* (Routledge, 2003), 120.
- 20 Cited in Alexis McCrossen (ed.), *Land of Necessity: Consumer Culture in the United States–Mexico Borderlands* (Duke University Press, 2009), 34.
- 21 Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 23 Andreas Huyssen, *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Duke University Press, 2008), 15.
- 24 Michael Stepaner and Paul Fiske, "San Diego and Tijuana," in *Global City Regions: Their Emerging Forms* (Spon Press, 2000); Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, *Temporary Paradise? A Look at the Spatial Landscape of the San Diego Region* (Report to the City of San Diego, 1974).
- 25 Lawrence Herzog, "The Transfrontier Metropolis," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1997), 2.
- 26 Dear and Leclerc, *Postborder City*.
- 27 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," *Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1 (2002): 16.
- 28 Josiah M. Heyman and Robert Pallitto, "Theorizing Cross-Border Mobility: Surveillance, Security, and Identity," *Surveillance and Society* 5, no. 3 (2008): 318.
- 29 Alejandro Lugo, *Fragmented Lives, Assembled Parts: Culture, Capitalism, and Conquest at the US-Mexico Border* (University of Texas Press, 2008).
- 30 Tito Alegría, *Metrópolis transfronteriza: Revisión de la hipótesis y evidencias de Tijuana, México y San Diego, Estados Unidos* (COLEF, 2009), 24.
- 31 For just two of many examples of the press attention paid to Tijuana's "hot" arts and culture scenes, see William L. Hamilton, "It's Hot. It's Hip. It's Tijuana?" *New York Times*, August 25, 2006; and Elisabeth Malkin, "Tijuana Transforms into a Cultural Hotbed," *New York Times*, June 8, 2006.
- 32 Heriberto Yépez, *Made in Tijuana* (ICBC, 2005), 67.
- 33 Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (Grijalbo, 1990), 233.
- 34 In his 1990 book, Michael Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition* (John Wiley, 2000), 174–75, continues this idea by making Tijuana a key case study for his analysis of postmodern urbanism.
- 35 Diana Palaversich, *De Macondo a McOndo: Senderos de la postmodernidad latinoamericana* (Plaza y Valdes, 2005), 172.

- 36 For example, see Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *Warrior for Gringostroika* (Graywolf, 1993); and Gomez-Peña, *The New World Border* (City Lights, 1996).
- 37 Palaversich, *De Macondo a McOndo*, 172.
- 38 Nicolai Ourossoff, "Shantytowns as a New Suburban Ideal," *New York Times*, March 12, 2006.