

# INTERSTICES 20

*Journal of architecture  
and related arts*

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INTERSTICES 20

# Peripheral territories: Imagining common worlds differently

## Introduction

At the beginning of spatial struggle is separation: a perception of what is in, or outside, one's body, one's house, intimate group, kin, neighbourhood, and polity. We all have vague or even detailed ideas of that separation—but that this we performs the very separation we imagine often goes unnoticed.<sup>1</sup> For instance, we tend to associate a *territory* with a nation state and a homogenous population, while a *periphery* appears to lack connection and substance. Thus, Aotearoa New Zealand was for some time peripheral to a colonial centre in the Atlantic world, from where non-Western worlds were attributed “congenital and even delinquent peripherality” (Said, 1994: 317).

Then as now, metropolitan centrality relied on urbanisation and industrialisation, involving “massive and multifarious movements, migration and transfer of people” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 157). Ignoring this history has contributed to xenophobia in Western societies, and—together with prejudices grounded in religion and *scientific racism*—eventually led to events like the 2019 Christchurch and Halle terror attacks. Yet, supposedly homogenous nations have always resembled “archipelago[s] of small islands” more than coherent land-masses; today, those sharing a territory are mostly “fated to coexist” (Hobsbawm, 1992: 157). Many societies find this a difficult challenge after forty years of global neoliberal politics. Natural catastrophes and violent conflicts have displaced an estimated 92.8 million people worldwide (Pladson, 2019; Suliman et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2019), while marginalised groups in the *developed* world fear globalisation for its impact on the “existential frailty and precariousness of their social standing and prospects”, and migration for “yet more competition on the labour market” and diminishing chances for improvement (Bauman, 2016).

If architecture is “thinking applied to the space [...] we inhabit” (Biennale di Venezia, 2017), then these issues are deeply relevant for architecture. They concern freedom, because “freedom of movement is historically the oldest and also the most elementary”, but also a certain free space that is necessary to establish a world where many voices tell the “events and stories that develop into history” (Arendt, 1955: 9).

Against this backdrop, this paper explores the politics of place and mobility,

exemplified by one site each in the Mediterranean and the Pacific, to raise an urgent contemporary question: how can a balance be found between the freedom of movement, on the one hand, and the protection of Indigenous land rights and self-determination, on the other?

### Sovereign borders

In settler societies, in particular, populist demands for sovereign borders are beset by internal contradictions. For example, the very nation conducting Operation Sovereign Borders and deporting immigrants to extraterritorial camps, namely Australia, owes its sovereignty and territorial control to a violent land appropriation still contested by Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders (Chambers, 2015: 412). The settlers, who, by a cruel irony, themselves arrived by ship, had no claim to citizenship under the legal fictions of *jus solis* (citizenship by birth) or *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by bloodline)—by which they now deny refugees entry. Rather, their rights, under the now universal Kantian principles (first published in 1795), would have been those of all citizens of the world, namely “restricted to conditions of universal hospitality”, the mere right to visit (Kant, 1897: 115). Today, Australia’s national presence in the Pacific demonstrates the paradox of the *nation*, which “makes nativity or birth (that is, of the bare human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty” (Agamben, 1995: 116). This dilemma was exasperated by the initial denial of citizenship precisely to those who were born on Australian territory. Australia also demonstrates a connection between “the cruelty of a policy that interns refugees in hellish Pacific-island camps” and devastating, authoritarian environmental politics: protesters against the causes of bushfires (which environmentally impacted the Pacific region) “face up to 21 years in jail for demonstrating” (Flanagan, 2020).

In the longer term, mass migration from Europe to the colonies (not only to Australia, of course) caused counter currents.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, the migrants from the peripheries are perceived as the avant-garde of ominous global forces at their destination and remind locals “irritatingly, infuriatingly and horrifyingly, of the (incurable?) vulnerability of [their] own position and of the endemic fragility of [their] hard-won well-being” (Bauman, 2016). And so, border patrols (sometimes calling themselves “hunters”, Agier, 2016: 5), operate camps and detention centres, at the US-Mexican Wall, on the Mediterranean and in the Pacific, filtering friends from enemies.<sup>3</sup>

Border walls indicate failures across zones of “in-between, exception and uncertainty” (Agier, 2016: 36), where relationships are articulated and negotiated. Normally, such negotiations institute individuals’ places in relation to their environment and produce varying constellations of inside-in-relation-to-outside, inscribing “a given collective, a ‘group’ or ‘community’ of humans in the social” (Agier, 2016: 18) and establishing relationships with others. Walls, like other non-negotiable lines of in- and exclusion, are intended to bring these negotiation processes to an end. Michel Agier argues that the “obsession with borders” is really the obsession with identity, producing a “desire for walls” (2016: 17) and cements identity-based distinctions and discriminations. For populations bearing the brunt of neoliberal politics, collective experiences of feeling insulted, ignored, or humiliated can erode self-worth and increase vulnerability. They may compensate by asserting a special, superior identity which is, by definition, “closed to others”

(Mazlish, 1999: 25). Thus, Western Identitarians use white identity to vindicate exclusion and *remigration* of non-white migrants.<sup>4</sup> In Aotearoa New Zealand, the mythical unity and purity of a European people served to justify the terrorist attacks on the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch.<sup>5</sup> The terrorist's argument is absurdly twisted: the European culture he wanted to defend was imported to Aotearoa—and chronically operates in breach of the Treaty between Māori tangata whenua (people of the land) and the British Crown.

The “massive [nineteenth- and twentieth-century] out-migration of Europeans to the Americas, North and South, and in lesser numbers, to Africa, Asia, and Oceania” not only “sealed off ‘native’ populations in enclaves or compartments” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1055), but created political boundaries that led, more or less directly, to today's “push factors” of migration (Casas-Cortes & Cobarrubias, 2019). Furthermore, while ethnic identity movements may often be “reactions of weakness and fear, attempts to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world” (Hobsbawm, 1992: 170), these responses are structurally and substantially different in different constellations.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, the respective prevalence of individual and collective aspects of identity may well play a crucial role in border negotiations. Liberal and neo-liberal thought is “blind to the political because of its individualism” (Mouffe, 2013), which leaves scant room for plural identities and connections with the natural world that still prevail in large parts of the globe. Yet, grasping worldly reality from a single perspective is impossible:

If someone wants to see and experience the world as it ‘really’ is, he can do so only by understanding it as something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against one another. (Arendt, 2005: 129)

Relational conversations also facilitate collective identifications across different positions and temporalities. Crucially, not everyone can talk to everyone else at all times, and conversations at the centre often differ from those at the *peripheries*: what can be talked about in each case depends also on the conceptual apparatus available. Recall Said's (1994: 317) above argument that the Atlantic world once seemed central and that “congenital and even delinquent peripherality [was assigned] to non-Western regions”. Such attribution of stable power to *territory*, and diminishing power and significance to *periphery*, is typical of imperial practices.

Today, we cannot afford to perpetuate assumptions of Western superiority; we need adequate concepts for a multi-centred, globalised world. The etymological relationship of the German word for territory with the cultivated earth around a settlement (Pfeifer, 1993) might provide clues; or the surprising association of periphery with movement (*peripheria*, “carrying around”, from *peripherēs*, “rounded, moving round, revolving”, see *periphery* (n.), in Harper, 2001-2017). Then, relationships between regional centres can emerge—across space, through “ocean and deserts”—creating “zones of transition” to neighbouring and distant others (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1045). In the Pacific, Epeli Hau'ofa (2008) has vividly described how Polynesian peoples traditionally built and sustained vast relational networks between multiple centres; for millennia before colonisation,

the ocean was their highway in a “sea of islands”. Elsewhere, regional autonomies, “maintained by spatial distantiation and linked by specialized mediators and interlopers, organized the world at least until the middle of the nineteenth century” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1045). Each part of this world was in relationship with others, but the connections looked different from every vantage point (1047).

Transitional zones have shrunk significantly. First, colonialism brought massive waves of European migrants to the colonies; then, the industrial metropolises (built with colonial resources and labour) received immigrants as recruited labour migrants or as part of the “boomerang effect of imperialism” (Arendt, 1950: 155).<sup>7</sup> In the process, “the gaps between the West and the rest, once established by distance” morphed into transnational exchange channels, along which “migrants move back and forth across borders” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1056). Regional migration also affects settler societies, so that Aotearoa New Zealand residents, for instance, are increasingly born overseas (25% in 2013, 40% in Auckland). The country is the fifth most ethnically diverse in the OECD (NZ On Air & Research New Zealand, 2018), with visible and firmly established diaspora cultures. Globally, the “basic human condition” seems to be returning as mass migration—under industrialised and environmentally precarious conditions (Mazlish, 1999: 23). To think in terms of national identities, bounded to territories by sovereign borders, has become utterly inadequate; a global consciousness of “relationships of interdependence and overlapping” (Said, 2005a) is no longer just a conceptual possibility, but an experience shared by the millions traversing borders, too often forced by violence and catastrophe.

### Catastrophe

Like the imperial boomerang effect, catastrophes in the human world can be an effect of human fabrications striking back (Arendt, 2005: 107).<sup>8</sup> Some, though, are not simply misfortunes but turning points: impactful reversals of expected trajectories and unanticipated unfoldings. The two catastrophic scenes I want to present here both changed direction during the drafting of this paper. The first is CARA di Mineo, a camp in Italy that—as part of Europe’s extended system of sovereign borders—*processes* refugees. The second is Ihumātao, a Māori ancestral landscape south of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and the scene of occupation since 2016. On both sites, opposite movements of keeping-in and keeping-out converged in attempts to deal with, but also to evade, the consequences of earlier histories.

At its peak, CARA di Mineo in Catania Province (Sicily), one of the largest *migrant reception centres* in Europe, housed over 4,000 migrants in facilities designed for 2,000 (Garelli, 2015). The name reflects an Italian discourse of hospitality (DeBono, 2019): CARA stands for *Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*, and *accoglienza* means welcome or reception. Yet, it was established in 2011 to curb the “human tsunami” (Silvio Berlusconi) from North Africa, and to keep (most) migrants out of Europe. The Italian Civil Protection, in its *North Africa Emergency Plan*, presumed not that “the body of the refugee” was vulnerable first and foremost, but that Italy was at risk from “the refugee influx” (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013: 1008). The policy developed a “precise formula for spreading the refugee influx over the vulnerable body of the nation” but little to assist the

refugees (1009). The “territorial border workers” (DeBono, 2019: 351) receiving the migrants too often practice a “plastic hospitality” that masks Europe’s implication in the push factors driving migration. It renders hospitality as cosmopolitan, paternalistic and voluntaristic benevolence: “By definition, the guest can never be the one dictating” (DeBono, 2019: 351). By contrast, Ahmed, a refugee from Sudan, appeals to something much closer to pre-modern traditions of European hospitality (Murphy, 1965: 13, 42): “what kind of hospitality is this? Where I come from, guests are treated well, they are given the best seats at table. But [...] I have to beg for closed shoes because I feel cold with these flip flops” (DeBono, 2019: 340).

The guests at CARA di Mineo lived in 404 pink-and-orange houses, with front



Davide Mauro, Wikimedia Commons (2017). CARA di Mineo [Photograph]

and back yards. Idyllic looking from a distance, they were overcrowded and under intense surveillance. As in other refugee camps, migrants were reduced to mere bodies (Luhmann, 2013: 26) or “bare life” (Agamben, 1995) and made to spend their lives waiting, their indeterminate status stretching out indefinitely.

In circumstances where everyone creates a place of their own in a new situation, stable identities dissolve and new communities emerge—if only momentarily (Agier, 2016: 154). This condition, which Hannah Arendt knew from experience, can be exemplary for a “new historical consciousness” (Agamben, 1995: 114): refugees, having lost all rights, yet unwilling to assimilate at all cost, gain “one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to them”; “expelled from one country to the next [they] represent the avant-garde of their people” (Arendt, 1994: 119). Arendt, for whom politics is an art in which subjectivity arises through the performance of deeds (1998: 206), draws attention to the power of “moments of initiation” and unexpected new beginnings: when CARA di Mineo residents joined locals in demonstrations in the streets of the nearby port of Catania, claiming space and rights, they and their allies “created



Davide Mauro, Wikimedia Commons (2017). A closer view of CARA di Mineo [Photograph]



Hiruka komunikazio-taldea (2018). Expanding Borders demonstration, Catania [Photograph, flickr.com/photos/hirukaeus/29716416658/in/album-72157698946704594/]

relational spaces of freedom [...] where none existed before” (Beltrán, 2009: 3). In these moments, a momentary space of appearance arose, in which those reduced to “bare life” (Agamben, 1995), as new emerging subjectivities, regained initiative to influence their place in the world (Agier, 2016: 18).

Residents in Catania (where 100,000 rescued migrants went ashore in 2014 alone) were “largely sympathetic to the migrants’ plight”, remembering Sicily’s own history of poverty driven emigration (Williams, 2015). Conversely, descriptions of the camp’s operations are a chilling read. Mafia boss Salvatore Buzzi remarked that “[d]rug trafficking is less profitable” (in Garelli, 2015: 109)—unsurprisingly, several managers were charged with embezzlement of public funding in the *Mafia Capitale* scandal.<sup>9</sup> In July 2019, using the violent operations of Mafia Capitale and associated Nigerian gangs in Mineo as pretext, far-right minister, Matteo Salvini announced the camp’s closure—returning Sicilian territory, in his words, “to Sicilian citizens” (Paynter, 2019).<sup>10</sup>

A return of territory was also the goal of the SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape)-led occupation of Ihumātao, a Māori ancestral landscape south of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), in Aotearoa New Zealand. Another commonality between the two antipodean sites is the institution of new beginnings.

In July 2019, when police moved in to evict, one might have felt reminded of Operation Sovereign Borders were it not for the different directions of these forces: offshore detention centres are to keep migrants outside of territorial borders, so that, inside, “the life of trade may continue to grow, accelerate, and intensify, with as little impedance as is possible” (Chambers, 2015: 432). The role of police at Ihumātao, by contrast, was to remove tangata whenua (local people) and their supporters from the territory, so that international capital could operate undisturbed (McCreanor, Hancock, & Short, 2018: 147). The term *territory* may, however, be ill-fitting: until Ihumātao was confiscated, its relationship with Auckland was neither territorial nor peripheral, even though tangata whenua in the 1850s cultivated the land to supply Auckland settlers; there were different forces at play.

In a nutshell, Ihumātao belongs to the oldest continuous human settlement in the area, dating back about 800 years. It is *tūrangawaewae* (place where one belongs, with a right to stand and speak) for several groups who were evicted by colonial troops during the 1863 Waikato invasion. The Crown confiscated the land in 1865 under the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863 and granted it to a settler in 1867 (Waitangi Tribunal—Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, 1985). In 2014, his descendants sold Ihumātao to Fletcher Residential Ltd, conditional on a re-zoning as a Special Housing Area—a scheme created in response to Auckland’s affordable housing shortage.<sup>11</sup>



Tuputau Lelaulu (2020). Kaitiaki (guardians) and protectors *karanga* (call) towards *tūpuna maunga* (ancestral mountain) Puketaapapatanaga-a-Hape during day seven of the reclamation [Photograph]

SOUL intends to preserve public access to the land as a heritage site. As the controversy unfolded, it became obvious how the original violent dispossession is everything but a dead fact, and how current business, local, and government politics repeat colonial patterns: misinformation, duplicitous dealings, and threats. It also revealed the weakness of government vis à vis the demands of (national and international) capital.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it articulated “the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions in the overlapping territories” that Said identified as consequences of imperialism (1994: 332).<sup>13</sup>

The notion of overlapping territories seems crucial here, yet Western imaginations of territory and periphery simplistically presume unambiguous and unequal relationships. There is no space here to explore this dilemma adequately; suffice it to say that, before the introduction of “inflexible boundaries” through Anglo-settler courts, relationships in Aotearoa were regulated by an intricate system of “layered and overlapping whanau, hapu, and iwi rights” (Waitangi Tribunal Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, 2009: 107), in which iwi and hapū (extended kinship groups) negotiated land rights—be they in perpetuity, or temporal occupational or usufructuary rights (197).<sup>14</sup> However, even those sophisticated protocols could not satisfactorily regulate relationships after Ihumātao’s misappropriation through the Crown. Intense overcrowding—compressing “two iwi and several hapū into two marae” (Taonui, 2019c)—overstressed already complex webs of mutual rights and obligations. Eventually, both council officials and Fletcher ended up consulting with the wrong people and ignoring others, and misleading media reporting replicated an erroneous comment by a former Minister, that he had signed a 2014 Treaty Settlement including Ihumātao (Taonui, 2019b).<sup>15</sup>

Power and place work differently in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). *Mana* (power), for instance, is fundamentally reciprocal (Mika, 2017). *Mana whenua* (power relating to land) both derives from the land and obligates its holders to care for the well-being of everything there. Thus, significant differences exist between *whenua* and the instrumental conceptions of land underlying Fletcher’s, local council’s, and the New Zealand Government’s strategies. *Mana tangata* (power relating to people) “recognises and validates the overlapping kin rights possessed by different hapu and iwi over certain lands” (Waitangi Tribunal—Te Rōpū

Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, 2009: 87). For Māori, people and land as *taonga* (a kin group's treasures)<sup>16</sup> belong to each other in various ways—in contrast to colonial and neo-colonial systems, where people own land and relationships between land and people are regulated through exclusive possession and capitalist exchange. The occupation at Ihumātao has brought into focus questions about the relationship between *tūrangawaewae* and *mana whenua* under the conditions caused by confiscation and subsequent, ongoing Treaty breaches. However, as public discussion has amply demonstrated, Māori *tikanga* facilitates the confrontation of *hoariri* (angry friends) over diverging positions. This is one crucial difference between Ihumātao and CARA di Mineo: at the refugee centre, a face-to-face encounter of the two sides of hosts and guests, to put it euphemistically, was difficult even to imagine.



Tuputau Lelaulu (2020). Police defensive forces encroach upon kaitiaki sleeping quarters, two days after kaitiaki and *whānau* (extended family) were evicted from their *whenua* [Photograph]

Another difference concerns the relationship to territory: Fortress Europe, with its deep pockets of processing centres, relies on exclusive access rights (and their defence through borders), even at the cost of human life and human rights violations. At Ihumātao, two contrasting forms of relationship clash—one based on exclusive property rights consistent with an extractive, individualistic world view, the other claiming self-determination of a collective (though still allowing public access) consistent with historical precedent, current plural identities and a reciprocal relationship to land. The first approach resembles the establishment of non-negotiable border lines in that it tends to end negotiations as soon as possible. The second approach aims at indefinite negotiations based on reciprocity. These sets of relationships rely on very different forms of identity. They produce different understandings of *we* (e.g., Matteo Salvini's versus SOUL's) and thereby different filters through which to conceive the world.

### Cosmopolitanisms

With some re-rigging of terms, the occupation at Ihumātao fits with Agier's observation that territorial struggles are about "opposite legitimacies" between "an

open world versus protection, or national sovereignty versus cosmopolitanism” (2016: 6). To begin with, the state protected international capitalist interests in real estate at Ihumātao—this type of cosmopolitanism was put back on the agenda by neo-liberal globalisation (2016: 155).

However, there are other forms of Western cosmopolitanism that focus on practical morality and global justice (e.g., Nussbaum, 2019), or human rights and cosmopolitan ethics and politics (e.g., Benhabib, 2006). They recognise, after Kant, a “common possession of the surface of the earth”, on which humans cannot spread indefinitely “but must finally endure living near one another” (1897: 115). In his seminal text, “Eternal Peace”, Kant laid out the conditions for peaceful cohabitation: in a world approaching “a state of world-citizenship”, people must have visiting rights, which include the right not to be treated with hostility or to be expelled if that could cause destruction. However, guest rights depend on the “degree of social intercourse with the old inhabitants” (115).<sup>17</sup>

Since Kant, competing forms of cosmopolitanism claim to respect global plurality, yet many foreground a (Eurocentric) universalism.<sup>18</sup> Martha Nussbaum, for instance, identifies some flaws of classical cosmopolitanism, like the omission of a duty of material aid (2019: 5) or problematic aspects of Kantian personhood (2002-3).<sup>19</sup> Her proposed alternative, the *capability approach*, nevertheless centres on a list of capabilities that takes their (unacknowledged) Western basis as universal and ignores contextual particularity (Charusheela, 2008; Menon, 2002). It also disregards alternative, sophisticated models of rights, like the laws granting legal personhood to land, mountains, or rivers in Aotearoa (Winter, 2019) or Bolivia and Ecuador (Mignolo, 2011). Nussbaum overlooks that “globality has always been organized [and articulated] locally, in one place after the other, according to particular circumstances and conditions” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1057). That most Western intellectuals took this unacknowledged Eurocentric basis for granted, and lacked interest in the objections of their colleagues from the Global South,<sup>20</sup> did not help the reception of cosmopolitanism outside the West—nor that its reinvigoration ran parallel with the neoliberal advocacy of globalisation (Mignolo, 2011: 13).

Hannah Arendt and Chantal Mouffe offer alternative versions of cosmopolitanism—that is, of politics as active engagement with differentiated perspectives and positions, involving particular kinds of space. Arendt, in contrast to Nussbaum, was concerned that Kant’s moral imperatives are based on a single truth and cannot take account of the plurality and embeddedness of human life. Nevertheless, she discovered plurality in his work on aesthetic judgement, where he first “consider[ed] men in the plural, as living in a community” (Arendt, 2003: 1420). Their *in-between*, as she calls it, first makes worldly reality possible. The in-between is bounded, yet its borders are constantly reconsidered from positions that are open to all sides and from standpoints that can be (ex) changed. Training one’s imagination to go visiting across borders is part of a politics that includes many perspectives and opinions. By strengthening, but also constantly transforming, identity and plurality, it changes the world (Herzog, 2004). Whenever the power of people to act and speak together is actualised, a space of appearance arises from infinitely complex, “intersecting and interfering intentions and purposes” (Arendt, 1955: 147)—as long as words are used “to disclose realities”, and deeds “to establish relations and create new realities” (1998: 199-200).<sup>21</sup> Action, operating on the world, creates relationships—of which each

enters “a web of ties”, triggers new links, and changes “the constellation of existing relationships” (2005: 186-7).

Mouffe argues that Arendt, despite her emphasis on political plurality and difference, fails to acknowledge plurality as a source of antagonistic conflict. The consensus by persuasion producing public space has hegemonic traces and at some point inevitably leads to antagonism (Mouffe, 2013: 15), often fuelled by collective identities. Hence, no understanding of democratic politics is possible without “acknowledging ‘passions’ as the driving force in the political field” (13). In fact, *us/them distinctions* are constitutive of politics—in question are their compatibility with pluralism and the recognition of conflicts arising from pluralism. It is crucial that:

the others are not seen as enemies to be destroyed, but as adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned. To put it in another way, what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an ‘antagonism’ (struggle between enemies) but the form of an ‘agonism’ (struggle between adversaries). (14)

This corresponds to the conceptual underpinnings of the Māori notion of *hoariri*, as someone with whom one fights but “whose mana in defending their position is respected” (Hoskins, 2012: 94).

Every political act involves a moment of decision, the “determination of a space of inclusion/exclusion” (Mouffe, 2013)—and this is what Mouffe thinks Arendt overlooks, thereby failing to recognise a necessary closure and to address thorny questions about the conditions of radical democracy. In Mouffe’s view, cosmopolitan approaches generally postulate “the availability of a world beyond hegemony and beyond sovereignty” and consequently negate conflict and antagonism. If the political is always concerned with the formation of collective identities (every identity is relational, every “us” requires an opposing “them”, Mouffe, 2013), politics must include a degree of antagonism: “consensus around one single model eliminates the possibility of legitimate dissent, thereby creating a favourable terrain for the emergence of violent forms of antagonisms”. However, Mouffe notes new types of cosmopolitans that recognise the realities of power and foster political solidarities, bringing “cosmopolitanism down to earth” (Mouffe, 2013).

Walter Mignolo, for instance, urges that cosmo-politics must be geopolitically diversal and pluricentric and connect the former peripheries from below:

If you can imagine Western civilization as a large circle with a series of satellite circles intersecting the larger one but disconnected from each other, diversality will be the project that connects the diverse subaltern satellites appropriating and transforming Western global designs. (2000: 765)

No longer will territory and periphery be organised in relation to a single centre; rather, the movements circling the peripheries, and traversing overlaps with the territories of other centres, become discernible. In Māori thinking, this is not unusual or novel, as we know from Waitangi Tribunal reports (2002, 2009) describing overlapping regimes of simultaneous usages, rights, and obligations by different groups.

Agier explores an ordinary cosmopolitan condition “born in border situations”

(2016: 137), arising de facto, without intent, from the uncertain relationships and in-between spaces of the borderland. It intersects with “the debate on cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics” (8), yet the contestation here is not about global integration generally, but about who determines the terms and conditions (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1058). Another *cosmo-politics* is born in occupied or settled territories, where people exist “between the old empire and the new state”, with the tensions and irresolutions caused by imperialism layered onto already overlapping territories (Said, 1994: 332).

All these writers (including Arendt, Mouffe, Mignolo and Agier) are still oriented by or against a Western perspective. Comparisons with local, Indigenous perspectives and decolonial approaches are required that offer conceptions of plural, relational, and embedded identities, cognisant of the realities of power and the importance of political solidarity. The remainder of the paper explores some implications of this situation.

### Common worlds

If globalisation, climate change, and mass migration extinguish the transitional zones on the earth’s surface, and if personal and collective identities need some form of territorial base (Mazlish, 1999: 22), our global challenge is to imagine the world differently. Respecting already existing home-lands, we need to create new, non-exclusive, locally specific, and reciprocal relational spaces. If there are to be common worlds, they will not be found ready-made but have to be built from multiple existing and anticipated ones (Latour, 2004: 455). *Overlapping territories* and *interdependent relationships* not only exist factually but offer a useful metaphor for thinking about a world in common.

Climate change currently creates a greater and more inclusive sense of urgency to understand local and global relations in a shared world. When the “great oceans were opened up” by and for Europeans (Schmitt quoted in Chakrabarty, 2015: 150), Europe’s (previously land-based) division and distribution of space changed. A desire to know and to master led to the expropriation of land and sea, and to the subjugation of Indigenous peoples. Exploration of the ocean, however, does not have to take this path. Polynesians, who crossed the Pacific on their waka centuries before the Europeans, retained in their cosmologies connections to sea and land that function very differently from the political and spatial boundaries “carved out in Europe from the seventeenth century” (Waitangi Tribunal - Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, 1999: 133-4). These latter, though, were subsequently imposed on colonial territories.

The re-negotiations of a common world at Ihumātāo are thus also about the rejection of an alien, simplistic spatial order, which cannot adequately reflect complex changing spatial relationships over time. More generally, a greater “awareness that we are not always in practical and/or aesthetic relationship with this place where we find ourselves” (Chakrabarty, 2015:

Tuputau Lelaulu (2020). After seven days behind police borders, kaitiaki and protectors gain access to their whenua, where they join in karakia (prayer) and waiata (song) [Photograph]



183) is required to curb indifference, alienation, and homelessness.

The occupation/reclamation at Ihumātao is also an attempt at prising open a public space of freedom, an active, agonistic, and relational border space arising out of confrontations about indigeneity. Debates about definitions, lineages, and formations (the *emplacements* and *displacements* Agier refers to) highlight questions about how cosmo-politics might accommodate all people on the surface of the Earth. The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2019: 6)<sup>22</sup> recommends strengthening *mana whenua* and continuing the 26 July 2019 halt on construction to create space for negotiation. It recognises that Ihumātao can be “a turning point for the protection of indigenous rights in Aotearoa New Zealand” and “a real opportunity to move the nation forward” on a new trajectory.

Many have observed *manaakitanga* (hospitality) during the occupation at Ihumātao: looking after participants and visitors took place beyond monetary concerns. By all accounts, the occupation also generated extensions of personal and collective identity through *whakapapa* (genealogy, lineage), *whanaungatanga* (relationships), *utu* (reciprocity), and reciprocal connections with *Papatūānuku* (the earth, the natural world, see Mika, 2016 for a more complex discussion)—that is, “between people (past, present and future generations)” and natural resources (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2019: 10). Another outstanding feature was the acceptance and cultivation of plurality: difference featured as strength rather than weakness. Not surprisingly, the occupation was supported by many different ethnic, political, and cultural groups, who often recognised not just a particular injustice but the systemic failure of a neo-colonial, neo-liberal society.

Tuputau Lelaulu (2020). Waves of protectors meet the boundary demarcated by police officers. Protectors join in *waiata* as they show their support for the *whānau* of Ihumātao [Photograph]



Both CARA di Mineo and Ihumātao can help identify blind spots in Western societies and develop new imaginations.<sup>23</sup> The migrants moving towards Europe’s borders are in “places of encounter, crossing and conflict”, where a cosmopolitan reality takes shape (Agier, 2016: 156). There, relationships “require unprecedented translations and exchanges” through which the border can regain its “fundamental role as a space, time and ritual of relationship” (156). European

locals' engagement with alterity, their participation as official or volunteer border workers in these relationships, decides not only individual migrants' fates but that of a common world. If "global foreigner[s], invisible and phantom-like" (156) transform into persons to whom we relate in spatio-temporal continuity, their perspectives may disturb the prevailing consensus and help us to see our world in new ways.

In a different local constellation, Māori have already dealt with displacement in their own country and developed survival strategies. Pre-colonial Māori communities did not rely on dividing boundaries but on whakapapa (genealogical ties), and their organising principle was not exclusivity but association. The determination of "dividing lines was usually a matter of last resort" (Waitangi Tribunal—Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, 1999: 131).<sup>24</sup> In recreating local worlds after colonisation, Māori shared with other colonised peoples selective patterns of collaboration and resistance. At times, they appropriated the colonisers' ways to their own ends, "creating in the process a more integrated world", though not "as Western imperialists had intended" (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1049). Throughout those transitions, they retained a common ground in which "the individual is understood as integrally woven into a collective fabric based on *whakapapa* (kinship) and relationships" (Thornley, Ball, Signal, Lawson-Te Aho, & Rawson, 2015: 30) including "trees, rocks, birds, reptiles, fish, animals or human beings" (Salmond, 2003: 244). Kinship of this sort includes environmentally responsible relating—in imagining, planning, and action.<sup>25</sup> Within such relationality, space is neither clearly delimited nor definitely limited, and the possibility of a different, more generative, and energetic way of imagining space opens up. With space no longer perceived as a finite, contested resource, migrants no longer have to be experienced as a threat and can instead help cultivate a shared territory, bringing with them new knowledge, or wisdom the locals may or may not have lost sight of. Indigenous and land-based traditions across the globe (including some pre-modern or minor European ones and some alternative modernities) share approaches to land, people, and the entire cosmos that have been forgotten in dominant Western thinking.

Arendt provides a hint at the possible recovery of forgotten European traditions; for her, the meaning of past events "remains potentially alive in the reproductive imagination" and can be activated, shared, and experienced vicariously, revealing the "past's presence in the world" (Kohn, 2005: xii). Thus, the inspiration Pacific people can provide might help Europeans to retrieve aspects of their own history that diverge from currently prevailing versions of Western thinking. Andrew Benjamin argues that the latter's "founding form of singularity" leaves forms of primary plural relations unthought (2015: 1). Yet, relationality is not a lost possibility, for through the "almost archaic presence" (2) of an original mode of existence, "being-in-common [...] and being-in-place" (219) can be recovered. Simultaneously, the recognition of the social (non-natural) foundations of borders, as a condition of being in the world, is as crucial as the "reciprocal recognition of self and others" (Agier, 2016: 16). Only in relationships do Self and Other, Us and Them, arise; politics is established *between people*, in the "back-and-forth of exchanged speech", in the "space in which everything else that takes place is first created and then sustained. What in political language is called a 'breakdown in relations' is the abandonment of that in-between space" (Arendt, 2005: 193).

Even if both CARA di Mineo and Ihumātao result from a mixture of politics

serving a (Western) will to power and possession, and an unwillingness (and/or inability) to comprehend overlapping territories (see Taonui, 2019a; Berbner, 2017), and even if neither are simply misfortunes but also unexpected turning points, their stories nevertheless unfold differently. Little is known about the *guests* at CARA di Mineo because, while some reports mentioned protests (2014) and demonstrations of solidarity (2019), the overall media coverage rendered “undocumented people’s existence ‘invisible and inaudible’” (Rinell2016: 45). By Cruz and Forman’s criteria (2019), and by comparison with the successful model of Riace, Calabria (2018), the CARA *hosts* stayed on the gestural side of hospitality, falling well short of *manaakitanga*. And yet, in the few reports discussing details of the migrants’ situation, there are glimpses of the irruption of other subjects in changed contexts, of regained initiative through political action—influencing places, lives, and communities – the very opposite of victimhood imposed by circumstance (Agier, 2016: 154).<sup>26</sup>

Reporting on Ihumātao became more nuanced, detailed, and conceptually informative since July 2019, due partly to the occupants’ media savvy and their ability to engage with public institutions and stake holders. Their successes at re-telling and re-casting the story, and garnering support from varied sources, are exceptional and will influence history at Ihumātao and beyond. Political action at Ihumātao has highlighted how, in our global age, “the world’s pasts are all simultaneously present, colliding, interacting, intermixing” (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1042), and demand intelligent and generous understanding and solutions.

By contrast, Australia’s so-called “Pacific solution” (deporting migrants to extra-territorial outposts) is neither a solution nor informed by Pacific values. Clearly, in a world where too many people are already compressed into place and/or displaced, such imaginations of territory and periphery are deadly for migrants and dead ends for most people. We need better ways of realising connections between people and place, and, to develop alternatives to a politics of blame or hostility, we need to understand overlapping territories (Said, 1994: 19), collective, plural identities and rights (Mouffe, 2013: 12), and relational selves (Strathern, 1999: 40-41). The Waitangi Tribunal’s report on the Te Rohe Pōtae, a nearby district on the West Coast of the North Island, makes an interesting connection between commonly overlapping and interwoven territorial rights and roles in Māori nineteenth-century social organisation (2018: 53, 60) and the perception and intention of *rangatiratanga* (leaders) who signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi: in the pre-settlement order, each *hapū* had “their own *kāinga* and spheres of influence”, yet “the boundaries were fluid, resources were shared, and responsibilities overlapped” (55). By extension, the Tribunal found, *rangatira* saw the Treaty as providing “distinct Māori and Crown spheres of influence within a single state [...] for ‘two authorities, two systems of law, and two overlapping spheres of population and interest’”. The areas of overlap were to be managed “through dialogue and negotiation, in a spirit of partnership” (175). The aspiration was a “mutually beneficial alliance with common and overlapping interests” and benefits, providing a place “for both peoples—and for their cultures, traditions, systems of law and government, and relationships with the natural world. It was an arrangement that allowed both forms of authority to co-exist” (187-8). Such fluid forms of spatial separation between Us and Them would allow for a different and better appreciation of the relationships of interdependence that are part of the human condition.

However, naïve expectations of a world beyond hegemony and sovereignty are

not likely to bring about peace—the unavoidable antagonisms that plurality also produces need to be brought into a space of appearance where the effects of power are visible and solidarities possible. Māori tikanga for the confrontation of hoariri (someone with whom one fights but whose mana and diverging position one respects) is a local example from Aotearoa, but there are other Indigenous perspectives and decolonial approaches that offer new concepts and processes as solidary alternatives to the cosmo-politics of power and control.

A contrapuntal approach, perceiving intertwined and overlapping historical experiences like a polyphonic work rather than a dominant (imperial) melody accompanied by (peripheral) background arrangements (Said, 2005b), expands overlaps between metropolises and ex-colonies. It gels with Arendt's emphasis on the importance of plural perspectives. It is also sympathetic to her idea that humans appear in the world equipped with the capacity for beginnings. Rather than remaining victims of the consequences of past deeds, our ability to ask for, extend, and receive forgiveness liberates our capacity for action and allows us to make new beginnings (Arendt, 1990: 211).

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## ENDNOTES

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*We* (like *here*) is a shifter, and changing positions are a characteristic condition of our times and, indeed, central to this paper.

2 The destabilisation of whole regions like the Middle East, another effect of "miscalculated, foolishly myopic and admittedly abortive" interventions by Western powers from nineteenth-century colonisation to present day trade wars (Bauman, 2016), add to the flows. "We are here, because you were there" (Benhabib, 2011: 191; Varadharajan, 2000: 146) proclaim those who have reached the (post)colonial centres.

3 Globally, border walls have tripled since the Cold War (Vallet, 2016: 2).

4 The Identitarian movement spread, after the 1960s, from France across Europe and then the US, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand.

5 The shooter's manifesto was entitled "The Great Replacement" claiming that "black and brown

migrants are invading Europe to destroy white culture" (Darby, 2019). The Great Replacement assumes that, due to European women's low birth rates, an ethnic replacement by migrants from Africa and the Middle East will ensue. (Schwartzburg, 2019).

6 Agier does not really consider Indigenous resistance against colonialism, or today's neo-colonial regimes. He claims that "no human has ever been 'indigenous'" (2016: 34). By contrast, UNESCO endorse criteria for indigeneity proposed by WGIP in 1995 (Stavenhagen, 2002: §99). Carolin Emcke, who thoughtfully distinguishes between collective identities based on (1) difference (in the field of tension between universalism and particularism), (2) individual self-determination (in the tension between liberalism and communitarianism), and (3) issues concerning the rights of ethnic-cultural group rights of Indigenous peoples in the US, Canada and New Zealand (2010: 17), still does not engage with the difficult question of descent-based identity and connection with land as an important aspect of Indigenous forms of identity. There is a substantive difference between appeals to traditions by Indigenous populations resisting neo-colonial encroachment and attempting to regain misappropriated lands, on one hand, and nativist, white supremacist claims to territorial rights, on the other, under which non-whites exist only on sufferance. James Baldwin calls "the Negro problem", an invention by white Americans to "safeguard their purity", motivated by "a guilty and constricted white imagination", a "bottomless and nameless terror", perhaps related to unacknowledged crimes of slavery and to the uncomfortable fact that the US infrastructure and economy have only become what they are due to the forced or cheap labour of generations. "My blood, my father's blood, is in that soil" (Baldwin & Peck, 2017).

7 Effectively, they have "become host to growing numbers of the world's poor" (Geyer & Bright, 1995: 1056)

8 Arendt, whose concern is primarily the human world, would presumably agree that other-than-human elements of the

world participate in collective human fabrication.

9 See <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc/erm/factsheets/cara-di-mineo>.

10 Some residents protested against the closure – partly out of solidarity, and partly over the loss of employment generated by the CARA.

11 Given the type of projected residential units, increased real estate value is a more likely motivation for development (Malva, 2018).

12 Rod Drury, ex-CEO of tech company Xero, reported that all senior US VCs he has met "own property down here [...] billionaires in the US do treat New Zealand as a bit of a bolthole" in anticipation of a global catastrophe. Murtola (2018) attributes to Aotearoa New Zealand the role of canary in the coal mine, whereby the intensity of the global elites' interest indicates the general outlook for the world.

13 For overviews of the developments prior to occupation, see Waitangi Tribunal—Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi (1985), McCreanor (2018) and O'Malley (2019). Documents concerning the claim (number 2547) to the Waitangi Tribunal can be accessed at <https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/WT/>.

14 Additionally, the status of land could and can change from noa (unrestricted, ordinary) to tapu (restricted, sacred) and back.

15 The media reported partially erratically and, in the early years of occupation, sparsely.

16 English renderings of *taonga* have evolved over the last decades to "include all resources of the land and seascape, prized, tangible, material items such as canoes, carved meeting houses, cloaks and other woven items, and intangible things such as knowledge and tikanga [...] encapsulates notions of ancestral associations and reciprocity" (Kawharu, 2000: 364-5).

17 In this text, Kant (though racist elsewhere) condemns colonialism and the colonisers' assumption of *terra nullius* and the fact that "the [old] inhabitants they counted as nothing" (115). In a world in

which the community of men is no longer separated by distance and time, “an injustice in one part of the world is felt in all parts”, so that cosmopolitical rights become necessary to regulate the coexistence of states and peoples (116).

18 For a detailed critique of universalism, see Appiah, Benhabib, Young, & Fraser (2007), Benhabib (1992, 2006, 2011), Appiah (2006), Mignolo (2011), and de Sousa Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito (2005).

19 Nussbaum comes frustratingly close to the possibility of recognising flaws in her own conception of social justice, for instance its unreformed individualism and Eurocentrism.

20 See Nussbaum’s comment about the merely ancillary role of cross-cultural discussion (2001), as well as Carusheela (2008) and Menon’s (2002) analysis.

21 While Rancière parts ways with Arendt over what he regards a repression of politics in her thinking (Schaap, 2012)<sup>UK</sup>, he nevertheless shares with her a conception of necessary disruptions and new beginnings. These happen through politics, which he defines as a disagreement over the distribution of the sensible, about what counts as speech and who can share in “what is common to the community” (Rancière, 2004: 12) and thus affect reality.

22 See the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Adequate Housing and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

23 Social theories of modernity wrongly assume universal developmental paths. This false universalism “cannot be uncovered by looking at Europe from a European standpoint” but only from non-European perspectives, “that is with ‘Asian eyes’ (or ‘African eyes’, etc.), in other words by practising methodological cosmopolitanism! Methodological cosmopolitanism not only includes the other’s experiences of and perspectives on modernization but corrects and redefines the self-understanding of European modernity” (Beck and Grande,

2010: 424). Migrants can, in a meeting of alterities, not only highlight the particularity of assumed universalism but also help locals to imagine differently.

24 Many of these factors also applied to the pre-colonial social organisation of many of the migrant groups now present at Italian CARAs.

25 It also helps, after some re-articulation, to build resilient diasporic communities, able to respond to public crises better than mainstream society. This was evident when Te Puea Marae took the lead in housing the homeless during the winters of 2016-8.

26 As one of my interlocutors pointed out, the comparison of Māori and refugees in Europe could be seen as a reinforcement of colonial ideology if it suggested that “all people of colour are homogenous and engaged in struggle, or incapable of expressing xenophobic attitudes themselves”. This is clearly not the case, and there are many differences between and amongst them. However, there are some values and practices that most in the first two groups would subscribe to, distinguishing them from the advocates of international capitalist freedom of movement.