

Lines in the Sand: Movement as a Practice of Spatialization and Wildernization.

A case study of the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness, Arizona

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ABSTRACT

Understanding how wilderness emerges as a specific place and space out of specific imaginings and practices is affected by the epistemological paradox of it being at the same time both imagined (i.e. constructed) and real, simultaneously independent and full of human agency. In order to understand the variety and scope of the current uses of a specific wilderness area, one has to look beyond communities and groups as studied traditionally by anthropology, and embrace spatial tactics as they occur at the level of individual ‘visitors’ to such areas. On this level, the most important factor for the experience of wilderness is physical, bodily presence (or non-presence). Using the ethnographic example of the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness in Arizona, USA, this article focuses on movement as one of the crucial practices in the processes of ‘wildernization’, a term the author derives from van Loon’s (2002) ‘spatialization’. Paying special emphasis to the two lines that have the largest influence on movement through and within the area, i.e. the wilderness boundary and the US – Mexico border, the movement of individual people belonging to loosely defined categories of ‘visitors’ to the area (such as Native American groups, ranchers, Ajo inhabitants, hunters, recreational visitors, Border Patrol agents, Fish and Wildlife Service officials, migrants and drug smugglers) is analysed in order to gain an anthropological insight into the concept of wilderness.

KEYWORDS: wilderness, place and space, movement, wildernization

Introduction

Understanding how wilderness emerges as a specific place and space out of specific imaginings and practices is affected by the epistemological paradox of it being at the same time both imagined (i.e. constructed) and real, simultaneously independent and full of human agency. Thus it is what Bruno Latour (1999) calls a ‘factish’ (1999), i.e. a combination of fact and fetish (and as applied to nature in Roepstorff and Bubandt 2003). The dialectical relationship between the two was explored using the example of nations by Benedict Anderson (1991), who demonstrated how imagining is in itself a form of practice

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that perpetuates more practices, and these substantiate and modify the imaginings. Imagining is not just the grasping or conceptualizing of that which is ‘out there’, but also implies an attempt to render an idea real by making it a model for future action.¹ Designating an area as wilderness reflects the moment when a conservational social impulse becomes politicized and legalized (though not always with a full social consensus), and at the same time determines new rules of encounter for visitors and the managing agencies in order to keep this area unchanged, i.e. wild, and in line with the values such designation embraces. The wilderness designation is therefore a form of practice that perpetuates but also modifies imaginings and practices of such places and spaces.

Since the wilderness designation by definition excludes human habitation, and since such areas are open to the public and there are no individual integral communities or groups living there or using the areas, a methodological question arises regarding researching such areas as places and spaces. The process of designation itself lends itself to fruitful research, yet writing about wilderness can easily fall into the conceptual trap of creating another disembodied and distant ‘paper landscape’ (Tilley 2004: 27), derived from the reproduction of historical or social discourse on the basis of maps, paintings, archives and texts, i.e. from a ‘paper perspective’ (ibid.). In order to understand the variety and scope of the current uses of an area, one has to look beyond communities and groups as studied traditionally by anthropology, beyond homogenous narratives, and embrace spatial tactics as they occur at the level of individual ‘visitors’ to such areas. On this level, the most important thing for the experience of wilderness is physical, bodily presence (or non-presence). Focusing on a case study of the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness, this article therefore focuses on movement as one of the crucial practices in the processes of ‘wildernization’, a term I derive from van Loon’s (2002) ‘spatialization’.

The Cabeza Prieta Wilderness and the legal concept of wilderness

Ed Abbey considered the Cabeza Prieta our greatest intact desert wilderness – largely unknown, unvisited. I wonder if the Feds know what they’ve got here: the last best shot at a big, self-regulating ecosystem in the Lower 48, a once-in-a-lifetime chance to create true wilderness in the closing years of the 20th century (Doug Peacock’s *Desert Solitary*, published in Audubon, March-April 1998).

The Cabeza Prieta Wilderness is the largest refuge wilderness and one of the largest wilderness areas in the United States outside of Alaska, comprising 803,418 acres (325,142 ha) “[...] of the most isolated, rugged, and pristine desert landscapes in the Southwest” (Wilderness Society 2007a), offering

[...] brilliant night skies, unmatched desert scenery (especially when, after a wet year, desert wildflowers are in bloom), the opportunity to see wildlife and desert fauna like no other place on earth, exemplary desert backpacking and hiking, and a deafening desert silence (ibid.).

¹ See also Geertz’s distinction between a ‘model of reality’ and a ‘model for reality’ (1973: 93).

It was designated as wilderness by the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act in 1990, and this designation protected almost 93% of the area of the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.²

The Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (hereinafter ‘CPNWR’, the ‘Cabeza Prieta refuge’ or ‘the refuge’) lies in southwestern Arizona, just west of the small town of Ajo and State Highway 85. It is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and is the third largest wildlife refuge in the lower 48 states. The refuge is 60.5 miles across and 38 miles north to south at its widest point, and comprises 860,010 acres (348,046 ha, i.e. 3,480 km²); on its southern border it shares 56 miles of the international boundary between the United States and Mexico (see Figure 1). CPNWR is a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is the only federally owned system of lands managed primarily for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources. Nowadays, the refuge plays a critical role in the recovery and protection of the federally endangered Sonoran pronghorn, as well as offering habitat to a wide variety of desert animals and plants.

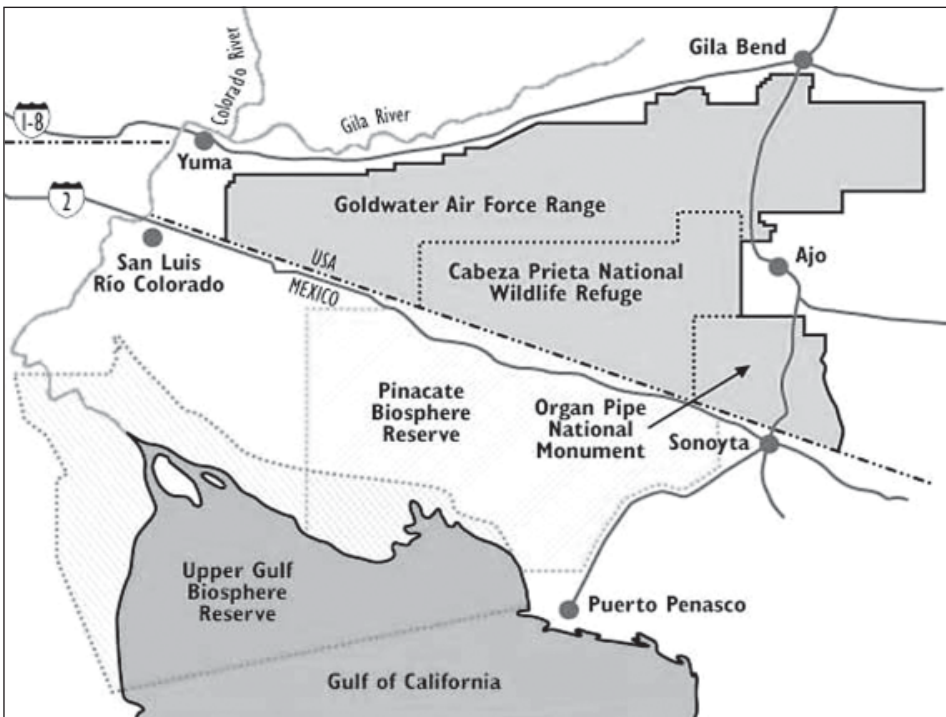


Figure 1: Map of the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge

² Areas excluded from the wilderness designation in 1990 are the so-called Tule Well exclusion, approximately 14,975 hectares (37,000 acres) along the southern boundary, and a 61-meter (200 foot) travel corridor along El Camino del Diablo and the Christmas Pass Road. The designation also left out the easternmost part of the refuge south of the Charlie Bell Pass Road, roughly east of the Growler Mountains and north of the boundary with the Organ Pipe Cactus NM, where most of the remains of past human use remain visible.

This refuge is one of six protected areas in the heart of the Sonoran Desert,³ which altogether span across 210 miles (338 km) from San Felipe, Baja California, to just southwest of Phoenix Arizona, encompassing 7,515,221 acres (3,041,410 ha), which is the largest zone of contiguous protected desert anywhere in the Americas (Felger et al. 2007: 3). This land was feared as a *despoblado* (uninhabited land) by the Spanish conquistadors (see Anerinno 1999: 9) and had little economic value for grazing, mining, homesteading, or settlement (Felger et al. 2007: 8), but cross-border conservation efforts were begun as early as the 1930s (Felger et al. 2007; Chester 2006). As pointed out by conservationists, these areas are as delicate as they are harsh, and any human impact can leave traces visible for hundreds or even thousands of years (Felger et al. 2007: 7). They are still in near-pristine ecological condition, and “[...] no other desert region in the world can match [its] ecological wealth,” but once degraded, “[...] these lands cannot recover even in our lifetime” (ibid.: 26).

The designation of ‘wilderness’ is a legal ‘protective overlay’ that Congress applies to selected portions of differing categories of public lands (Scott 2004: 1-2). According to the Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness is defined as “[...] an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation” (Sec.2 (c)).⁴ Wilderness areas can be found in national forests, national parks and monuments, national wildlife refuges and other public lands, and are managed by four federal agencies: in addition to the above-mentioned Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management (all in the Department of Interior) as well as the U.S. Forest Service (Department of Agriculture). Wilderness areas are very diverse in many respects: in geography and ecosystems, in size, in their context and setting, as well as in their degree of wilderness – some being as close to pristine as possible, and others having a history of past development and human impact but are recovering under natural forces (Scott 2004: 11). However, each wilderness area must be managed so as to “[...] preserve its natural conditions [...]” and the “[...] wilderness character of the area” (Wilderness Act of 1964).

Although the term ‘wilderness character’ is not defined in the Wilderness Act, it is generally considered to include the following four traits: 1) untrammelled – wilderness is ideally unhindered and free from intentional modern human control or manipulation; 2) natural – wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization; 3) undeveloped – wilderness has minimal evidence of modern human occupation or modification; and 4) outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation – wilderness provides opportunities for people to experience natural sights and sounds, solitude, freedom, risk, and the physical and emotional challenges of self-discovery and self-reliance (Leopold Institute 2004, as cited in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 238-239).

³ In addition to the CPNWR, there are Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Sonoran Desert National Monument in Arizona, and Reserva de la Biosfera El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar in Sonora, Mexico, Reserva de la Biosfera Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado in Sonora and Baja California, Mexico, and a sixth de facto area, the Barry M. Goldwater Range in Arizona, which is not a protected area per se but generally is managed as one (Felger, Broyles et al. 2007: 3).

⁴ On the legal history of the wilderness concept, see Scott 2004.

The trouble with protected areas and wilderness

When speaking ‘for nature’ one is effectively speaking ‘against people’ (Berglund and Anderson 2003: 4)

Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the History and Romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children’s children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interest skin your country of its beauty, its riches, or its romance (Theodore Roosevelt 1903).

Ethnographers and anthropologists have stated that protected areas are as a rule highly contested places and spaces (see Anderson and Berglund 2003; Simončič 2006). Environmental discourse – understood as ‘violence’ and a practice we impose upon things and events in the Foucaultian sense (cited in Kaarhus 2003, 63-64) – can be primarily seen as a discourse about power. In the struggle over conservation, issues of the repetition of discourses of primitiveness have been raised (Kuper 2003), and the replaying of the historic relationships of disempowerment were exposed by revealing how the people who inhabit the affected regions become marginalized, discriminated and dispossessed (Nygren 2003; Adams 2003; Frost and Wrangham 2003). Projects to protect spaces are linked to myths of state identity or national progress.⁵ Conservation invokes metaphors of bounded space in order to separate people from their lands. Indeed, the very act of the creation of protected areas is extremely problematic, since designating places for specific and limited uses differentiates between those with authorized access and those who are excluded, and is thus a form of discrimination (Berglund and Anderson 2003: 5; see Halder 2003; Chatty 2003; Sullivan 2003; Ellis 2003).

Berglund and Anderson identify two steps in the creation of protected areas: first, stripping a particular place of human history, and second, linking places to a state myth that legitimates protectionist action (Berglund and Anderson 2003: 5). The roots of protecting natural areas in the United States stem from the doctrines of 1) the sublime (i.e. reverence for the awe inspiring dramatic natural landscape vistas in the presence of which a mortal might catch a glimpse of God or the divine), 2) primitivism (according to which man’s happiness and well-being decrease in direct proportion to his degree of civilization), and 3) the frontier mythology, according to which it was the vigour, independence, and creativity of pioneers that gave rise to the American democracy and national character, which under ‘Manifest Destiny’ also justified the advance of Euro-americans and the subsequent elimination of indigenous populations (Nash 1982; Cronon 1996; Nabokov and Loendorf 2004). Protected areas, and wilderness in particular, are thus closely linked to the creation myth of the United States and what are perceived as true American values: individualism, freedom, and masculinity. Writing about Yellowstone in 1905, President

⁵ See Witoszek 2003 on nature and ideology in Germany and Scandinavia.

Theodore Roosevelt observed that the preservation of nature was “[...] essentially a democratic movement,” benefiting rich and poor alike (cited in Sellars 1997: 14), and Aldo Leopold (1925) called wilderness “[...] the very stuff America is made of.”

However, stepping outside the framework of the legal definition, the concept of wilderness reveals itself as extremely troublesome. At the beginning of his detailed history of the idea of wilderness, Roderick Frazier Nash (1982: 1) defines the problems:

There is no specific material object that is wilderness. The term designates a quality (as the ‘-ness’ suggests) that produces a certain mood or feeling in a given individual and, as a consequence, may be assigned by that person to a specific place. Because of this subjectivity, a universally acceptable definition of wilderness is elusive. One man’s wilderness may be another’s roadside picnic ground [...]. Moreover, the number of attributes of wild country is almost as great as the number of observers. And over the time the general attitude toward wilderness has altered radically. Wilderness, in short, is so heavily freighted with meaning of a personal, symbolic, and changing kind as to resist easy definition.

Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language defines wilderness primarily as a “[...] wild and uncultivated region, as a forest or desert, uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals”, i.e. “[...] a tract of wasteland” (1989: 1633). Together with desert and waste, the word wilderness refers to areas which are uninhabited, and “[...] emphasizes the difficulty of finding one’s way, whether because of barrenness or of luxuriant vegetation” (ibid.: 390).⁶ Etymologically, the term means “wild-dēor-ness”, the place of wild beasts (ibid.: 2), yet since the etymological roots of the term stem from the languages of northern Europe, wilderness is more precisely understood as a forested land (ibid.). As such, it implied the absence of men, and “[...] as a region where a person was likely to get into a disordered, confused, or ‘wild’ condition” (ibid.) The actualities that today describe the meaning of the word wilderness are lands that are not cultivated or otherwise developed, and the absence of men and the presence of wild animals. Equally important, though, are the feelings they produce in the observer: “Any place in which a person feels stripped of guidance, lost, and perplexed may be called wilderness” (Nash 1982: 3).

Nash claims that it is our civilization that created wilderness, and that it was with the advent of herding, agriculture, and settlement that lines began to be drawn and the distinction between controlled and uncontrolled, domesticated and wild spaces became meaningful (ibid.: 1). Wilderness is therefore more an idea, or to use his expression, “[...] a state of mind” (ibid.: 5), i.e. a perceived rather than an actual condition. For Cronon, the state of mind that today most defines wilderness is wonder (1996: 88). If wilderness is the ultimate Other and Otherness of the western culture (ibid.), it must be emphasized that its

⁶ This connection between the words wilderness, desert and waste stems from the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Bible, where wilderness is given a central position both as a descriptive aid and as a symbolic concept (Nash 1982: 13).

value lies in the fact that it seeks to define and protect the sense of the otherness, and teaches about feelings of humility and respect as well as the importance of self-awareness and self-criticism as we exercise our ability to transform the world around us, helping us set responsible limits to human mastery (ibid.: 87).

Yet applying the term wilderness to a specific area raises several further questions, especially when combining the abovementioned legal and psychological criteria for wilderness with the physical ones. Letting the term define itself (i.e. wildernesses are those places that people think of or call wilderness) does not yield any workable definitions beyond subjective and individual ones (Nash 1982: 5-6), yet this lends itself as a starting point for an anthropological exploration of the concept.

Movement as a practice of place-making and spatialization

Life on the spot surely cannot yield an experience of place, of being somewhere. To be a place, every somewhere must lie on one or several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere (Ingold 2007: 2-3).

Anthropology has had increasing recourse to ‘write movement’ (Rapport and Overing 2000: 265), and concepts like Appadurai’s ‘deterritorialization’, Hannerz’s ‘creolization’ and Bhabha’s ‘hybridization’ (1994: 1-39) have tried to apprehend how human beings generally conceive of their lives in terms of a moving-between – between identities, relations, people, things, groups, societies, cultures, environments and times (Rapport and Overing 2000: 268). While the issues discussed in this paper touch on anthropological issues of migration, boundaries and identity, this paper’s primary focus is the way we perceive the world around us, which is conditioned by the specific ways of moving, i.e. our ‘body hexis’ (Bourdieu 1977: 87) that we acquire within a specific ‘habitus’ (ibid.: 72), whereby existing boundaries disappear and new ones appear, and a different categorization of the world is created. As Rapoport indicates, movement allows that “[...] space, as a system of settings, can be organized without its having to be divided into mutually exclusive, ‘owned’ territories.” (2002: 487).⁷

In his analyses of place-making in the hills of the Scottish Borderlands region, Gray (2003), following de Certeau’s lead (1984), rejects the distancing and totalizing landscape perspective which treats localities as “[...] an ordered system of objects, a text” (Duncan, cited in Gray 2003: 227) and as mental spatial representations that are to be read (this type of landscape perspective was also used by Basso (1996) in his analyses of Cibecue Apache toponyms and place making). Gray instead focuses on movement as a formative act of Heidegger’s ‘dwelling’ (2003: 232-233), and by recording and analyzing the nonverbal practices of walking (and nowadays increasingly motorcycling) exposes the processes of ‘embodiment’.⁸ He shows how shepherds appropriate the physical space

⁷ As an example, he mentions Australian Aborigines, who ‘belong to the country’ rather than own it, and how their ritual movements can also be seen as a form of spatial organization (Bourdieu 1977: 87).

⁸ ‘Embodiment’ as defined by Csordas (and cited in Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:2), is an “[...] indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world.”

kinaesthetically through practices of movement (ibid.: 224-225), thus making their view of the hills a close one, and one “[...] that does not include the total area covered by shepherds in their tracks” (ibid.: 227). This view is also “a sensual view in which knowledge of the hills is gained through lived experience” (ibid.), eluding normative meanings presumed by cartographers and planners (de Certeau 1984: xiii-xiv) as well as the semantic meanings of a place name.

The dualities between relative or subject-centred place, and non-relative, ‘absolute’ or ‘objective’ human space⁹ were understood by Lefebvre (1984) as a ‘field of action’ and a ‘basis for action’ (191). Lefebvre’s ‘field of action’ can also be viewed as a ‘mobile spatial field’, i.e. “[...] space defined by reference to an actor, its organizing center” (Munn 2003: 94), which is a culturally defined, corporeal-sensual field stretching out from the body at a given locale or moving through locales. (ibid.) People therefore make places by moving through them, within them or even by avoiding them. Moving can be deconstructed as consisting of acts of coming and going, and it is only through moving that one can yield an experience of place.

Movement in and through the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness Area

Of all the people who have ever loved the Pinacate or the Cabeza, none of them have ever tried to live in it [...]. They’ve always lived on the edge and just visited. Actually, it’s a model of how people should behave. The whole sad history of the frontier is people loving it to death. But not here. The land refuses (Chuck Bowden, in Broyles 2006: 169).

There has always been more movement *through* the Cabeza Prieta NWR area than specifically *in* it. Archaeological evidence suggests that people have been moving through the region for 12,000 years, if not longer (Ahlstrom 2001: 7). Movement of humans in this area, be it on foot, horse, wagon or motorized vehicle, has always been heavily affected by the topographic and geological setting, as well as the heat and aridity.¹⁰ CPNWR is a broad, flat expanse interrupted by a series of mostly northwest-southeast trending mountain ranges, with flat areas lying between these ranges called ‘deserts’ and ‘valleys’.¹¹ The

⁹ I follow the established terminology differentiating between *space* as empty, existing in advance and absolute, and transformed by people into meaningful *places* (see Gupta and Ferguson 1992; for an opposing view see Casey 1996). In this terminology, space is a situational context constructed by and for human action, and places are “[...] centers of [...] human significance and emotional attachment” (Tilley 1994: 15). Both concepts, place and space, including their temporal dimension, are increasingly being seen as a process or as in process (Crang and Thrift 2000; van Loon 2002; Muršič 2006).

¹⁰ There are no naturally occurring perennial bodies of water on the refuge. Natural surface water is limited to occasional rapid runoff events after rainstorms, ephemeral pools in playas and tinajas (depressions in rock that collect and hold water after rains). In addition to naturally occurring ephemeral surface waters, there are currently 30 developed water sources for wildlife on the refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 211-213).

region's valleys would have facilitated movement from place to place, whereas the mountains would have constrained it. As a result, travel would have been easier along north-south axes than along east-west axes. However, east-west movement is not impossible, since the mountains are not continuous but are in fact separated by gaps and interrupted by passes, and climbing the mountain ranges, as strenuous as it is, is also possible. The interior of the refuge, nevertheless, remained quite isolated until recently (Ahlstrom 2001: 21-2).

Little is known about the lifeways of the region's first inhabitants (Ahlstrom, Chenault, Wroblewski 2001: 65), yet all prehistoric peoples of the Sierra Pinacate and far western Arizona appear to have made trails as well as trail shrines, sleeping circles and intaglios that remain clearly visible to this day. Such trails were subsequently used by other groups in this region; in fact, archaeologists cannot establish with certainty which group created which trail and when, nor what their purpose was, i.e. where they were coming from and where they led (Rick Martynec, pers. comm.) It is known, however, that this area, which roughly corresponds to the centre of what is called Western Papaguería, played a major role during the prehistoric period in the movement of two commodities, obsidian and especially marine shells (Ahlstrom, Chenault, Wroblewski 2001: 109), which can still be found scattered in the desert. In addition, salt collecting ritual journeys could have led across what is now known as the CPNWR (Broyles 2006: 119-123).

Historically, this area was mostly used by a small group of O'odham, the Hia-Ced O'odham or Sand Papago, i.e. 'Sand People' (Erickson 1994: 51; see Fontana 1989: 47; Zepeda 1985; Thomas 1991; Bell, Anderson and Steward 1980). Their hunter-gatherer lifestyle was characterized by extreme mobility: agriculture was nearly impossible in their habitat (except on the very eastern portion of what is now the CPNWR), and life depended on knowledge of small desert water holes or 'tinajas' for drinking purposes, following the movement of game, and upon gathering certain desert plants for food, as one or two families travelled together in the dry, mostly barren land (Ahlstrom, Chenault, Wroblewski 2001: 119; Erickson 1994: 15).¹² The designations in the 1930s (as a national monument,

¹¹ The mountain ranges from west to east are: the Cabeza Prieta Mountains, the Tule Mountains (mostly south of the Cabeza Prietas), the Sierra Pinta, the Mohawk Mountains, the Bryan Mountains (south of the Mohawks), the Granite Mountains, the Agua Dulce Mountains (South of the Granites), the Growler Mountains and the Childs Mountains. Groups of relatively low hills are scattered throughout the area, the principal one being the Antelope Hills. The highest range in the Refuge is the Growler Mountains, whose highest point is Temporal Peak at nearly 3,300 feet. West of the Cabeza Prieta and the Tule Mountains is the wide flat expanse called the Lechuguilla Desert. This is bounded on the west of the Refuge by the Tinajas Altas Mountains. Between the Cabeza Prieta/Tule Mountains and the Sierra Pinta to the east is the Tule Desert. To the southeast of the Tule Desert and south of the Sierra Pinta is an extension of the Mexican Pinacate lava field. Surrounding the lava field is the Pinta Sands area formed from sand blown northward from Mexico. This dune-containing area extends to the base of the Sierra Pinta (Cabeza Prieta Natural History Association 2007).

¹² Fontana defines the territory of the Hia-Ced O'odham as spanning from the head of the Gulf of California through the Pinacate Mountains and northward to the lower Gila River, thus living the farthest west of all O'odham groups. Records from the late 1600s and early 1700s described them as being "[...]poor and hungry... little given to work. They live on roots and wild fruits, which the region produces at various times of the year. They also eat shellfish, worms, lizards, iguanas, and other animals considered repugnant by us, and with bow and arrow hunt for wild sheep (and deer). The men go about naked, and the women are scantily clothed in a few tatters of antelope skin (or small pieces of hare fur) extending from waist to mid-calf [...] At certain seasons of the year they live on fish (from the Gulf of California)." (Captain Manje, cited in Fontana 1989: 39)

refuge, and Air Force Range), effectively removed most of the remaining land in the US that the Hia-Ced O'odham traditionally used, thus leaving them with virtually without land (Erickson 1994: 158).¹³

When, in 1974, the majority of the refuge was proposed to be included as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, Congress ordered the Fish and Wildlife Service to manage all areas proposed as wilderness as de facto wilderness, pending study and final designation (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 13-14). As the last remaining Hia-Ced, Chico Shuni, who resided on the east part of the refuge, was allowed to live and die in peace, the existing grazing rights of the few Ajo ranchers were eventually cancelled; some ranchers still feel that the revoking of the grazing permits and their subsequently being pushed off the refuge was not fair and not done properly. The proposal and the designation itself also brought a shift for the inhabitants of Ajo: whereas before they could go onto the refuge at anytime and anywhere, the new rules (especially with regard to driving) are perceived as a serious infringement of their freedom and the free use of 'their' public lands. All three of these loose groupings (i.e. Hia-Ced and Tohono O'odham, ranchers and Ajo residents), who now visit the present-day designated wilderness area only occasionally, do not perceive the area as wilderness (as described above), but speak of them as 'home', 'the homestead', 'outdoors' or 'the desert'.

Nowadays, in addition to the lines in the landscape, movement within the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness Areas is mostly affected by two man-made lines: the wilderness boundary and the international boundary. These boundaries can be viewed under the assumption that the entire world is divided into domains, and the domains are named (or labels are attached), so there are always rules about who does what, where, when, and including or excluding whom. The boundaries are thus drawn around such domains to remind people within a specific cultural context of the situation and hence of how to act appropriately; the marking of boundaries is thus a mnemonic, and boundaries are in the first place cognitive (Rapoport: 483), but the process of drawing lines always includes the process of differentiation.

Both of the boundaries have characteristics of what Tim Ingold calls 'ghostly lines'. A ghostly line is a line that is drawn on a map but is in a sense more imagined or metaphysical than real, more a phenomenon of apparition than experience (2007: 47); yet it can have very real consequences for people's movements, as both boundaries do. The wilderness boundary can be compared to the border line in their exclusive character: they both dictate specific rules and behaviour, and they both (at least in theory) encircle and contain a value, a desired land. However, it is through crossing both lines that the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness becomes a place of coming and going and thus a part of a network of places that people and their mobile spatial fields create as they move through them.

¹³ From the 19th century on, they were officially presumed to have disappeared; only recently have they reorganized themselves under the Hia-Ced O'odham Program of the Tohono O'odham Nation, and are currently undergoing a process to become recognized as a district of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

The wilderness boundary

The imperative in preserving wilderness is to draw lines – and to draw them firmly. Unless boundaries are established around each wilderness area, one new development after another nibbles away at wild places in an insatiable, creeping process fatal to wilderness (*Scott 2004: 15*).

The wilderness boundary in the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness exists primarily on the map and does not coincide with natural features such as rocks or mountain ranges; instead, man-made clues such as fences and signs have to be used. While the refuge itself has a boundary surrounding it, supposedly mainly to prevent access to stray cattle, there is no actual fence or boundary on the refuge signifying wilderness. Instead, signs are posted (on ‘sign language’ see Altshul 2007), and even then only sporadically. For example, a wilderness sign is located on one of the two roads designated for public use which reads: “National Wilderness Area – Administrative Trail – For Wilderness and Wildlife Management Purposes Only – Closed to All Other Motorized Vehicles – Violators Will Be Prosecuted” (see Figure 2). This sign is also the only indicator of where the wilderness begins. The signs are constantly being posted and renewed, and this is the only boundary-establishing practice connected with wilderness. The wilderness thus does not stand out on its own, but is primarily a cognitive and cartographic category, blending in with the rest of the desert once you are ‘out there’.



Figure 2: Wilderness sign at Charlie Bell Pass

However, no matter how ephemeral the wilderness boundary is, it does bring an entire set of rules with it, in addition to (and almost interchangeably with) those which apply to the entire refuge. In order to enter the refuge (and the Cabeza Prieta wilderness), one must obtain a Refuge Entry Permit (valid for a year) and sign a Military Hold Harmless Agreement. This applies to all visitors, including the Native Americans (Hia-Ced and Tohono O'odham) and ranchers, regardless of their reasons for visiting. Visitors are expected to refrain from activities that are prohibited by the FWS,¹⁴ as well as practice a 'leave no trace' ethic that applies to all wilderness areas.¹⁵ The entire refuge area is closed to all (legal) visitors during the Sonoran pronghorn fawning period between March 15th and July 15th every year.

As mentioned above, with the establishment of the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness, no vehicle traffic is allowed on the refuge except on the two designated public use roads, i.e. Charlie Bell Pass Road in the north-east corner, and the longer and perhaps more (in)famous El Camino Del Diablo,¹⁶ which runs along the southern edge of the mountain ranges in the Cabeza Prieta NWR close to the International Boundary; the area around both roads was exempted from the wilderness regime. There are other requirements one should follow when travelling by vehicle.¹⁷ Travelling on the El Camino has become a part of local outdoors lovers' and adventurers' lore (see Broyles 2006: 11). However, the El Camino has been changing: due to border-related activities, the road is being driven more than ever, especially by the Border Patrol.¹⁸ In addition, most of the road is being 'dragged', meaning cleared of

¹⁴ Such as dumping of litter, sewage, or liquid waste on the refuge; removal or disturbance of sand, rock, gravel, or minerals; rock hounding; excavating or removing objects of antiquity, cultural artifacts, or paleontological artifacts; trapping; collecting, disturbing, injuring, destroying, or removing any plant or animal.

¹⁵ For a list of the rules see 'Leave No Trace: Center for Outdoor Ethics' (Wilderness Society 2007 b).

¹⁶ Camino Del Diablo was the primary land route from Sonora, Mexico, to the Colorado River and California and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The first documented trip along the Camino del Diablo occurred in 1540, by a party under the leadership of Melchior Diaz, a lieutenant of Coronado who was one of the conquistadors searching for the fabled city of Cibola, and was directed by Coronado to undertake a journey to the mouth of the Colorado, near the present-day town of Yuma. Three trips are also documented by Father Eusebio Kino in 1698, 1699 and 1701. (Ahlstrom, Chenault and Wroblewski 2001: 117-8). In 1849, a flood of 49ers passed along the Camino del Diablo on their way to the gold fields of California (ibid.: 118-9). It was then that Mexican travelers bestowed the name 'Camino del Diablo' on the route, since at least 400 travelers are estimated to have died of thirst along the road. Lack of water was not the only danger: Apaches, Mexican Bandits and Hia-Ced O'odham all raided the travelers, making migration along the route an extremely hazardous proposition (ibid.: 129).

¹⁷ Foremost, high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles are required. They can be parked only up to 50 feet of the centerline of the roads in areas previously used by other vehicles. All other off-road travel is prohibited. Visitors should refrain from travel during wet conditions due to possible damage to refuge roads. Driving in wet areas is prohibited. One has to carry two spare tires and other spare mechanical parts in case of a breakdown. All visitors must bring their own water (taking water from tinajas and animal water sources is prohibited because of the disturbance of animals, as well as strongly advised against), at least 1 to 1½ gallons per person per day on cool days of 100 degrees or lower (official rules, as given by FWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2002).

¹⁸ The Border Patrol also establishes field camps along El Camino del Diablo, and although the camps' footprints are entirely within the non-wilderness corridor, they degrade the undeveloped appearance of the nearby areas of wilderness (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 240).

traces using tires attached to the back of a vehicle, so that new tracks can be more easily 'cut' by Border Patrol agents. The prospect of losing what used to be a historic trail has recently prompted several walks along the El Camino in an attempt to catch a disappearing glimpse of the past, and crossing the Camino on foot still presents a personal challenge.

The entire wilderness area is open to the public for walking and backpacking, thus attracting a particular kind of visitors to the area whom the FWS calls 'recreational visitors'. Even though both roads allow easier access to wilderness, the wilderness designation effectively made foot travel the only way to travel on the north-south axis, as well as on the east-west axis outside the designated roads (again leaving aside 'illegal' movement). Hikers must come prepared for harsh environmental conditions in a remote area where mobile phones do not work and the nearest human at any point is tens of miles away¹⁹ – if something goes wrong, you are on your own. Overall, the refuge gets very few hikers. During the busiest months of the year (most of the hiking is done during the winter), the author observed that more than 95% of the people who stop at the refuge office in Ajo (usually passing through on their way to Mexico and the seaside) do not even consider taking a walk in the wilderness. The same applies to Ajo residents.

There are no established or maintained hiking trails on the refuge.²⁰ In addition to the exclusive character of the wilderness due to its dangers and level of challenge, it is actually the *lack* of trails that for many designates a true wilderness area, revealing one of the core values attributed to wilderness, i.e. the (desirable) possibility of getting lost. As a local 'desert rat' (a colloquial term for someone who enjoys spending time in the desert) put it, he does not believe in trails; "Why should someone else dictate where I should go?" He likes to 'just go': "Ten feet in one direction, look around, see something interesting, and go there, and then again look around and so on." For him it is all about freedom: freedom of movement translates into freedom of thought, which then translates into existential freedom.

This kind of walking ('bushwhacking') which is dictated by the desert environment, flora, fauna and one's personal fancy, can be compared to the mode of travelling that Ingold calls wayfaring, whereby the wayfarer becomes the movement and his path (2007: 75-76). As a person becomes his movement and movement is seen as a way of being, people are recognized according to whether they walk and where they walk: "Him? He's a desert rat. He's out there all the time." To face the wilderness is to face a danger, a power that is greater than we are and can hurt you and even kill you; challenging this power bestows more empowerment, both personal and social. Those who do choose to go out into the 'prickly, stinky, sticky, paining' desert to do strenuous hikes enter somewhat mythical local lore, joining folk heroes such as Edward Abbey and Douglas Peacock.

The majority of those who go for a hike in the wilderness usually come from somewhere else, and they come with a specific intention to hike. However, the intention to

¹⁹ The most important thing to bring is water, but also a compass – or increasingly GPS devices, maps, food, first aid, fuel for fire, a comb for removing cholla cactus thorns etc.

²⁰ This is the main difference between the refuge and the neighboring Organ Pipe National Monument, which is managed by the National Park Service and which also draws the majority of visitors to the area.

hike is mostly described as a wish to do some desert hiking in an unspoiled Sonoran desert environment and to get away from people and ‘it all’ for a while, but is not specifically defined as wilderness hiking. It seems that the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness area ‘merely’ fulfils such requirements to a high degree, especially since, as of the winter of 2007, the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument completely prohibited backpacking due to border-related safety issues; on the other hand, there are other public areas around Ajo, and people who do a lot of hiking might not feel exclusive about hiking in Cabeza at all. Furthermore, those who often walk within the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness area, e.g. some of the refuge officials, might not consider this area as wilderness at all, at least not after becoming more familiar with it. It seems that as one’s personal level of knowledge of the area increases, the perceived level of its wildness or wilderness character decreases.

The International Boundary

I often wonder how in the world a guy can even think he can come across that desert, walking thirty, forty, fifty miles [...] but if that was the only way to feed my family, I’d sure be trying to come up here (Joe M. McGraw, retired man hunter, U.S. Border Patrol, cited in Annerino 1999: 83).

The migrants’ situation is desperate. Many of the migrants had been abandoned by larger groups, or had become disoriented and lost their direction only to walk aimlessly for days. All were dehydrated, out of water and without food. Some had feet covered in blisters that were so painful, they were no longer able to walk. Some were aware of the distance required to reach their destination, but others believed that New York was a day’s walk and that Los Angeles was but an hour west (Kate Lynch, a volunteer with the humanitarian-aid group, cited in Rubio-Goldsmith, McCormick, Martinez and Duarte 2006: 33).

The U.S.-Mexican border, which was created by the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, presently accounts for the majority of movement across the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness Area, even if that movement is far from the above-discussed recreational hiking and does not follow any wilderness rules. It also makes the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness at present the most troubled wilderness area in the United States (Di Rosa 2004), while in 2004 Defenders of Wildlife declared the refuge to be one of the ten most endangered refuges in the United State. Due to the heightened national interest and controversy, wilderness impacts at Cabeza Prieta Wilderness have greater contextual importance than would similar impacts occurring on a more obscure wilderness area (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 239).

Up to the near present, the border on the Cabeza was marked only by a few wires and posts (see Figure 3), with sections of the wire missing. Because of its remoteness and isolation, the Cabeza was heavily affected by the so-called ‘funnel effect’,²¹ which was brought about by the prevention-through-deterrence measures of the U.S. immigration

²¹ In 2004 it was estimated that according to sensors along the border, 4,000-6,000 illegal immigrants a month may have crossed the eastern portion of the refuge in the spring (Di Rosa 2004), which is substantially more than the estimated number per year as late as the 1990s.

control policies installed in the mid- to late-1990s.²² The majority of crossings occur at night, and the primary travel routes are up the broad valleys and through the mountain passes, in the general direction towards the north or northwest. The illegal traffic is continuing to grow, and is increasingly spreading into more western, i.e. more desolate and isolated areas. In February 2007, a vehicle barrier began to be installed on the eastern part of the refuge, which is designed to prevent vehicle entry while allowing foot traffic and animal movement.



Figure 3: Border posts and wires

²² These policies redirected hundreds of thousands of unauthorized migrants away from previously busy crossing points in California and Texas into Arizona's perilous and deadly landscape of the Sonoran desert (Rubio-Goldsmith, McCormick, Martinez and Duarte 2006). Both the refuge and the wilderness were put in the spotlight of public attention (as well as that of anthropologists) in 2001, when a group of illegal immigrants from Veracruz, Mexico got lost and 14 died due to dehydration and heat exposure (as described vividly in Urrea's book *The Devil's Highway* 2004; for accounts of crossings see also Annerino 1999).

Garbage, footpaths, vehicle tracks and abandoned vehicles speak of intense human use, including that of the border law-enforcement activities, thus impairing the wilderness's naturalness, undeveloped character and scenic value as well as opportunities for solitude (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005: 241), which are the four traits of wilderness character defined at the beginning of this paper. Many recreational users surveyed particularly expressed negative impressions of seeing and hearing border patrol operations (ibid.: 240), but not many report encountering the illegal traffic. Yet the tracks left behind contribute to the atmosphere of fear that developed in the United States after 9/11; they also make some people feel that the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness is not wilderness anymore and would never be designated as such if the designation were being made today.²³ Thus, the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness can be seen as both the ultimate desert wilderness and a parody of the very idea of wilderness.

Conclusion: Wandering lines and disappearing boundaries

There is no need for turning back 'cause all roads lead to where we stand. No matter what we may have planned (Crossroads, Don McLean).

A person with a clear heart and open mind can experience the wilderness anywhere on earth. It is a quality of one's own consciousness. The planet is a wild place and always will be (Gary Snyder, as cited in Cronon 1996: 89).

Paraphrasing Foucault's discussion on sites of medical discourse (2004: 56-57), we can view a legally designated wilderness area as an institutional and therefore prominent site of discourse on wilderness (even though, as shown above, not an exclusive one); it is here that activities, thoughts and feelings connected to wilderness are the most funnelled into a standardized proceeding with determined schedules, rules of behaviour and boundaries, thus establishing a general idea of wilderness as well as a general 'sense of wilderness'²⁴ and tending towards the annihilation of individual variants, i.e. individual wilderness areas, be they in Arizona or Alaska.

Wilderness areas are the subject of multiple imaginings of places from a distance, and exist regardless of whether people ever visit them (on abstract places imagined from a distance which exist through their names and evocative words see Augé 1995: 90-93). On the other hand, it is the general mobility of people that creates wilderness areas, through imagining them as destinations by ascribing certain values to them (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 29; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; 1997), since they have to come from somewhere to be in wilderness for a while, and then they have to leave. Setting of the official wilderness boundary affects movement in several ways, especially through rules codifying behaviour that the designation brings, thus affecting the previous 'users' and substituting them with 'visitors'. Wilderness areas therefore also arise as Augéian 'non-places' (1995), places of

²³ Such opinions are also expressed in relation to a series of intervention activities by the FWS in designated wilderness areas on the refuge as dictated by the Sonoran pronghorn recovery program.

²⁴ I derive the term from Basso's 'sense of place' (1996).

coming and going with suspended social relations and identities, ruled by the imperative of the present where individuals are simultaneously alone and one of many.

I have argued that it is bodily movement (or the lack thereof) that continuously creates places of wilderness, and is thus seen as a crucial practice of ‘wildernization’. Movement is the process through which meaning is created (or denied), and wilderness is constituted, defined and organized, as well as trampled and destroyed, as a specific place and space which goes beyond a legally prescribed spatial category. In moving in or through it, the distance between person and place dissolves and a form of engagement is brought forth that is neither conceptualized nor articulated, but arises through being in the world rather than through scrutinizing it. In addition, movement has a referential function: places of wilderness not only reveal themselves as coherent wholes, but also become bound up in relations to other places a moving body encounters. They become entangled in ‘webs of meanings’ (Geertz 1973: 5) together with the other places people go through, either in the past or the future, their experiences of them, and symbolic representations of them. As Merleau-Ponty (1945) showed, in the process of perception the essences of persons and places become intertwined, and a unity is formed between the perceiver and the perceived: they simultaneously not only mutually adjust to each other but also constitute each other, to the point where the person can become the place (Gaffin, cited in Tilley 2004: 25). Movement thus blurs the boundaries between different places of wilderness as well as between person and wilderness, since the concept of mobile spatial fields entails the unity of the two through the ongoing process of perception.

Following the lines of movement on the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness, whether made by Hia-Ced and Tohono O’odham, ranchers, Ajo inhabitants, hunters, recreational visitors, Border Patrol agents, Fish and Wildlife Service officials, migrants or drug smugglers, to mention just a few loosely defined categories, the wilderness area appears as a ‘zone of entanglement’ of what Ingold calls ‘lifelines’, i.e. strands of movement and growth (2007: 75), where “[...] there are no insides or outsides, only openings and ways through” (ibid.: 103). In addition, the lines and structures that confine, channel and contain (such as the wilderness boundary and the border line) are not immutable, but are ceaselessly eroded by the tactical manoeuvring of the visitors to the area and their – in de Certeau’s words – ‘wandering lines’ (*lignes d’erre*) or ‘efficacious meanderings’ (1984: xviii). These ‘wandering lines’ also erase clear distinctions between the concepts of desert, wilderness, the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness, ‘out there’, the outdoors, and nature; instead the concepts loosely overlap and freely flow into each other and from each other; trying to encapsulate imaginings and experiences as wilderness imaginings and practices almost seems like a brutal act of overlaying a specific mode of thinking onto the reality on the ground, not necessarily shared or even appreciated by those actually doing the moving. The designated wilderness area, seen as a unit from a distance, disintegrates in practice into numberless experiences dictated by sensations. How people approach it might be somewhat unified by the rules of wilderness behaviour. Nevertheless, being there and movement, on an individual level, produces an endless variety of images that elude articulation, and when they are put into words, and especially when written down, they are further selectively distilled.

Wilderness can be understood as a particular yet continually changing locale that ‘mobile spatial fields’ occupy while people move, while their deterrence from some spaces is also a part of the interaction with that space, only in a negative mode, by “[...] carving out a negative space” (Munn 2003: 95). If the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness area is now specifically perceived as a place where physically fit people (and not everyone) can go, it is not the drawing of the wilderness line on the map that “[...] projects a signifier of limitation upon the land or place” (ibid.); nor is the putting on the signs on the roads; it is the distancing from the wilderness, i.e. not entering it, that forms transient but repeatable boundaries out of the moving body. Thus, both going into the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness and not going into the Cabeza Prieta Wilderness at once produce and re-establish a wilderness boundary that does not necessary correspond to the one drawn on the map, but is conditioned primarily through having a choice whether to go there at all, and secondly by the individual levels of fitness, comfort and safety of the moving bodies. Moreover, as the wilderness boundary is on one hand created by omission, it is also eliminated by people who use other areas (which are not necessarily designated as wilderness areas) in search of a wilderness experience, as well as by people such as migrants, drug smugglers and Border Patrol agents who move in this area for purposes completely different from those set up through the wilderness designation. Regardless of their intention, the movement of individuals continually erases and (re)draws a different set of lines and boundaries subject to individual states of mind and bodies to the point where no general definition of wilderness is possible except by arguing that wilderness is actually the people who move through it and around it.

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POVZETEK

Kako divjina nastaja kot specifični prostor in kraj na podlagi specifičnih zamišljanj in praks je odvisno od epistemološkega paradoksa, da je divjina istočasno tako zamišljena (ustvarjena) kot resnična, neodvisna od človeka in hkrati polna človeškega delovanja. Da bi lahko razumeli raznolikost in obseg aktualnih rab določenega območja, ki je pravno imenovano za divjino, je potrebno poseči onkraj skupnosti in skupin, ki so tradicionalno predmet preučevanja antropologije, in se lotiti prostorskih taktik, ki nastajajo na nivoju posameznih 'obiskovalcev' takšnih območij. Najpomembnejši dejavnik za izkušnjo divjine na tem nivoju je fizična, telesna prisotnost (oziroma odsotnost le te, neprisotnost). Na podlagi etnografskega primera Cabeze Priete, pravno določene divjine v Arizoni, ZDA, se članek ukvarja z gibanjem kot eno izmed najpomembnejših praks v procesu 'divjinjenja', izraz, ki ga avtorica izvaja iz van Loonovega (2002) koncepta 'prostorjenja' (Muršič 2006). V iskanju antropološkega razumevanja koncepta divjine in s poudarkom na dveh črtah, ki imata največji vpliv na gibanje skozi in znotraj območja divjine, to je mejo divjine, ki je načrtana z zakonom, in mejo med ZDA in Mehiko, članek analizira gibanje posameznikov, ki jih lahko na grobo razdelimo na nekaj kategorij 'obiskovalcev' tega območja (kot so skupine staroselcev, živinorejci, prebivalci Aja, lovci, rekreacijski obiskovalci, agenti obmejne policije, uslužbenci Službe za ribe in divje živali, migranti in tihotapci drog).

KLJUČNE BESEDE: divjina, prostor in kraj, gibanje, divjinjenje

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