Ethnicity, Gender and Geopolitics along the Ecuadorian – Colombian borderland

The gendering of a border: Maps, Policy and Feminist Geo-politics

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Glossary of Terms

CONAIE: Confederation of Indigenous People and Nationalities of Ecuador

CODENPE: National Council of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Ecuador

ENDEMAIN: National Demographic and Maternal Health Statistics of Ecuador

INEC: Ecuadorian National Statistics and Census

PDP-FN: Peace and Development Program for the Northern Border of the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Ecuador

PLAN ECUADOR: Ecuadorian state policy for the northern border region

RESDAL: Defence and Security Network in Latin America

SENPLADES: The National Secretariat of Planning and Development of Ecuador

SETECI: The Technical Secretariat on International Cooperation of Ecuador

UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency

UN WOMEN: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Abstract

The Ecuador-Colombia borderland is a highly complex area typically characterized by the “spill over effects” of the Colombia conflict, which entail militarization, organized crime, exploitation of natural resources and trafficking of arms, drugs and people. In response to these dynamics, this space has received significant international and national attention in the form of a merging of development, securitization and conflict prevention policy and project initiatives. This study seeks to examine how national stakeholders such as the Ecuadorian military and government, and international stakeholders such as the United Nations have addressed gender issues along this space from official policy and maps. I argue that these actors view gender on the borderland through an essentialized binary gendering of space and bodies where women are categorized as victims of gender based violence and men are either protectors or propagators of this violence. The gendering of bodies is dependent on a gendering of space whereby static gender roles are upheld by rigid notions of space. Through three methods: map and visual analysis, discourse analysis and interviews as well as three feminist theoretical frameworks: feminist international relations, feminist geography/geopolitics and “third world” feminism, the complexity of the Ecuador–Colombia borderland is dismantled and the consequences of this limited and oversimplified vision of gender and the border are carried out. The embodied, everyday experience of the Eperara – indigenous group regarding the borderland and gender is contrasted to that of official stakeholders. The result is an exposing of the disjunction of policy and practice based on exclusionary gender policy by official stakeholders and local inhabitants.
**Introduction**

**Background: The Ecuador – Colombia Borderland**

The Ecuador – Colombia borderland stretches for 590 km from the pacific coast, through the Andean highlands, finishing in the Amazon where both countries border with Peru\(^1\). On the Ecuadorian side, this area is made up of five provinces: Sucumbios, Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura and Orellana. On the Colombian side there are two departments: Nariño and Putumayo. The population along the borderland is 2,664,471, with 1,097,697 inhabitants in Ecuadorian territory. On the Colombian side there are 1,896,332\(^2\) inhabitants. The population is predominantly mestizo, with minority ethnic groups including five bi-national indigenous groups (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE 2012\(^3\)) and a significant afro-descendent population (Technical Secretariat of International Cooperation, SETECI 2011\(^4\)).

Historically Ecuador - Colombia border populations have enjoyed bi-national relationships based on commerce and kinship despite fluctuation in government diplomatic relations (Ramirez, 2009). The arrival of Plan Colombia\(^5\) in 2000, however, marked the beginning of a new era for governmental and civilian dynamics characterized by the fumigation of coca plantations and militarization of the border (Murcia, 2008). While fumigations have ended...

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\(^1\) CIA – The World Fact book

\(^2\) http://new.paho.org/hss/dmdocuments/GRT_Analisis_Sectorial_ZIF.pdf

\(^3\) http://www.conaie.org/nacionalidades-y-pueblos

\(^4\) SETECI: *Cooperamos* (Quito, 2011)

\(^5\) James Petra (2001) has characterized Plan Colombia as the “continuation of US policy of intervention in Latin America –that seeks to eradicate drugs, trade and eliminates guerrilla factions, but in essence it is aimed at reconsolidating American power in the region”.
by reaching the Plan’s goal of reducing the production of coca plantations by 50%, militarization has continued (El Tiempo March 4th, 2008).

In 2008 Colombian military raided a FARC\textsuperscript{6} camp on Ecuadorian territory, resulting in the break of diplomatic relations between both countries, with Ecuador reclaiming national sovereignty by positioning 10,000 male soldiers along the northern border with Colombia (RESDAL, 2011). President Santos came to power in Colombia in 2010. He reinstated diplomatic relations with his Ecuadorian counterpart, Rafael Correa, while also launching a Plan for Border Prosperity, which states that the Colombian government will invest in development projects on the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador with which it shares most of its border space (Ramirez, 2011). President Santos’ interest in Colombia’s borders exemplifies a renewed directing of international and national attention to the borders surrounding and affected by the Colombian conflict.

Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions remarked on his official visit to Ecuador in 2010 that the Colombian conflict had effectively spilled over to Ecuadorian territory in which civilians are trapped between FARC, ex-paramilitaries, drug traffickers and Ecuadorian armed forces. He added that there is extensive activity of illegally armed groups, an increase in military presence and the pressing need for civilian protection in the region. Military relations have been strained, moving from positive relations with the community to an aggressive approach from the military in efforts to gain information from civilians (Alston 2010). The highest homicide rates in Ecuador are in the

\textsuperscript{6} Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are a Colombian revolutionary guerrilla organization involved in the Colombian armed conflict.
northern border provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbios, reaching 100 for every 100,000 inhabitants, making them some of the highest in the world (Alston, 2010). This is further aggravated by a seeming legal impunity; for every 100 killings; only one perpetrator is convicted in Ecuador (Alston, 2010).

The largest cocaine plantations in Colombia are in two of the three provinces that border with Ecuador, Putumayo and Nariño (SIMCI 2008). The largest operating FARC camp is found in one of the border provinces, making the spill over effect of the drug-trafficking route particularly potent. Recent studies have indicated that these routes are also the same routes by the arms trade and trade in human trafficking, mainly of women for sexual purposes (FOSIN, 2012). Other transnational phenomena affecting the Ecuador-Colombia border is Peru’s recent status as the largest exporter of cocaine in the world (DEA, 2011), with Colombia in second place. Ecuador is therefore geographically between two of the largest cocaine exporters in the world.

On the Ecuadorian side of the borderline, agro-industries such as mono-cropping of African palm trees and deforestation has affected Esmeraldas disproportionately in comparison to the rest of the country, with an estimated 700,000 hectares of the natural forest of the Esmeralda province destroyed. The Esmeraldas and Sucumbios province on the Ecuadorian side are home to two important oil drilling sites in Ecuador while both large-

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7 Integrate System of Illicit Crops
8 FOSIN. Fomenting Integral Security Project. La trata ante el espejo. Una aproximación a la explotación sexual en trabajo esclavo. Ecuador Frontera Norte 2012
9 Drug Enforcement Agency
10 Ecuadorinmediato online newspaper. INIAP denounces alarming rate of lost forest resources in Ecuador. July 23rd 2012.
scale and local mining activities are rampant (Martinez, 2011). The environmental affect of these dynamics has effectively polluted the soil and rivers of this space (Martinez, 2011).

In addition, flows of asylum seekers pour into Ecuador via illegal border crossings from Colombia, making Ecuador the country with the most refugees in South America. By June 2011, the Ecuadorian Government had recognized 54,500 refugees \(^\text{11}\) the majority of Colombian origin.

There has been a recent trend towards emphasizing the transnational and bi-national element of the borderland, which challenges the notion that the “problems” originate only from the Colombian side. Socorro Ramirez, a leading scholar on the Colombia-Ecuador borderland, has highlighted that the rupture in diplomatic relations between Ecuador and Colombia only benefited transnational organized crime at the expense of border populations who have historically had commerce and kinship relationships (2009). The Pasto and Eperara indigenous nationalities of Ecuador and Colombia have claimed that the term bi-national signifies the harmonious and historical relationship between indigenous peoples that were present on the border before the imposition of nation-state territorial borders. Nevertheless, the concept of “bi-nationality” is still being utilised in relation to governments rather than civilians.

\(^\text{11}\) It is speculated that in Ecuador there are between 130,000 and 200,000 Colombians in need of International Protection. (UNHCR 2012)
Ecuador and its Northern Border

For the purposes of this study I will focus on the borderland from the perspective of Ecuadorian national stakeholders and international agencies based on the Ecuador side, as well as the Eperara bi-national indigenous group.

The Republic of Ecuador is a representative democratic republic in South America with Colombia to the north, Peru to the south-east and Pacific Ocean to the west\textsuperscript{12}. It is a medium income country (Human Development report 2010) with a population of 14,483,499 (Ecuadorian national census 2010, INEC).\textsuperscript{13} 9\% of the Ecuadorian population lives on the borderland, with an average of 60\% of this population living on less than two dollars a day (Plan Ecuador, 2012\textsuperscript{14}).

Northern Border: A territorial response versus sectorial approach

In response to the highly complex political and social situation described above, the Ecuadorian government, military and international aid agencies have understood the borderland from a particularly unique place, meaning that this space has been defined from the borderland as “la frontera norte” or in English as “the northern border”. Each stakeholder has given the “northern border” priority over a sectorial or thematic approach. Meaning that the dynamics of the territory are given more attention than the agenda of a

\textsuperscript{12} CIA- World Fact book
\textsuperscript{13} 77.4\% population are self-identified as Mestizo, 7.4\% Montubio 7.4\%, Afro-descendent 5\%, indigenous 7\%, White 10.5\% and other 3\%. (INEC, 2010)
\textsuperscript{14} Plan Ecuador, www.planecuador.gob.ec
particular ministry or institutional entity in the northern border. Given that this study analyzes the response of these stakeholders to this space, a brief overview follows. The Ecuadorian constitution (2008: article 249) states that 40 kilometres inland from the Ecuador- Colombia frontier line will be given economic and political priority due to the complexities of its situation. Plan Ecuador, the government northern border’s policy since 2007, is designed to coordinate state institutions and prioritize assistance to this region. According to the Ecuadorian National Secretariat on International Cooperation, the geographical area with the most amount of international non-returnable cooperation (2007-2010) in Ecuador is the northern border zone with 12.9% (SETECI 2011). This signifies the amount of money or technical assistance invested in the northern border by different international aid agencies via projects ranging from human rights consciousness to building schools. The Technical Secretariat on International Cooperation (SETECI) created a “Northern Border and International Aid” working group in 2010, to monitor what international aid agencies were doing in this region. In contrast, the Ecuadorian Military has deployed 10,000 military men to this territory, prioritizing this space more than any other territory in Ecuador (RESDAL 2012). Meanwhile, the United Nations system set up its own office to monitor the northern border, PDP-FN (Peace and Development Program for the Northern Border). Finally, at the bi-national level, the Ecuadorian and Colombian Ministries of Foreign Affairs have established a set of bi-national governmental committees.

15 “The counties whose territories are total or partially within a border of forty kilometres, will receive preferential attention to strengthen a culture of peace and socio-economic development, through comprehensive policies that ensure sovereignty, natural biodiversity and intercultural relations. The law shall regulate and ensure the implementation of these rights”. (Article 249, Ecuadorian 2008 Constitution)
16 In 2012 via a Presidential decree every Governmental Ministry is obliged to give Plan Ecuador 3% of its budget (Interview A4 June 2012)
17 The donors with the highest investments have been the United States, Spain and United Nations, in that order.
which have five sub technical committees on the environment, economy, infrastructure and energy, social and cultural and border issues.\textsuperscript{18}

**Gender policy on Ecuador’s Northern Border**

Each of these institutions, the Ecuadorian government, military and United Nations, have addressed the issue of gender within their policies for the northern border at different moments and with varying degrees of successful implementation. The Ecuadorian Government made the eradication of gender based violence a state policy in 2007, prioritizing placing GBV attention centres (attention centres designed to attend women/men affected by gender based violence) along the northern border region. This however, has not taken effect to date\textsuperscript{19}. The only entity to date that has successfully developed a gender and northern border analysis and policy is the United Nations. Despite initial resistance\textsuperscript{20}, it has developed a gender and northern border analysis and a subsequent three-year Gender and Conflict Prevention strategy (2007-2010) for the northern border. Gioconda Herrara (2001) states that the majority of gender studies in Ecuador have been carried out by gender consultants working for international agencies rather than by feminists within academic institutions. I argue that this is also the case for gender analysis concerning the northern border. Most analysis reached by gender consultants considers the gender roles of women.

\textsuperscript{18} Interview Ruiz July 2012

\textsuperscript{19} National Eradication of Gender Based Violence towards children, adolescents and women Ecuadorian State Policy

\textsuperscript{20} In 2004, when ex – President of Ecuador, Lucio Guiterrez requested to Kofi Anan, then Secretary General of United Nations, that a UN evaluation of the northern border be carried out, a “gender analysis” was not carried until after the study was concluded
and men; highlighting the demographic increase of men over women in particular parts of the borderland and the “masculinisation” of the territory. For these consultants, the consequences of this “masculinisation” are understood to be gender based violence and sexual based violence. The analysis carried out by the United Nations system, for example, demonstrates a “gendering” of the northern border. The gendering entails a masculinisation of the borderland through the presence of military, oil workers and irregular groups, causing women to be perceived as vulnerable victims subject to sexual violence and gender based violence. In this scenario, gender based violence is translated to mean violence towards women.

Currently, an emerging agenda on Women, Peace and Security\(^{21}\) has begun to take form. It stems from initiatives within the Ecuadorian Military and armed forces. In 2009, the Ecuadorian Military created a Human Rights and International Humanitarian division within the Ministry of Defence, which holds a permanent gender position in charge of gender mainstreaming\(^{22}\) within the institution (RESDAL 2011). This division has carried out multiple gender analyses on the northern border including an in depth gender analysis of the Ministry of Defence and its armed forces along the northern border in both 2010 and

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\(^{21}\) Defined by Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, but also by subsequent resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889,1960. These five resolutions compromise the Women, Peace and Security Thematic agenda of the Security Council and international security policy framework.

http://www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/about-women-peace-and-security-agenda

\(^{22}\) UN Women defines Gender Mainstreaming as “a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resources allocation and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects”.

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm
2011, and a study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325\textsuperscript{23} and UNSCR 1820\textsuperscript{24} along the northern border region. Throughout 2012, the Ministry of Defence will be developing the first UNSCR 1325 Plan of Action for Ecuador and the Andean region\textsuperscript{25}. Analogous with the gender and northern border view held by the United Nations, the analysis carried out by the Ecuadorian military also partakes in the conceptualisation of dangerous masculinities and women victims of gender based violence.

In this way, a complex territory is reduced to an overly simplified and linear understanding of gender and border cultural and political landscape. This study reveals how these notions of space and gender are embedded in policy and maps, made by the Ecuadorian military, Ecuadorian government and United Nations. It also considers those that are excluded by these rigid conceptions.

**Deciphering official Gender/Border Policy**

Official stakeholders’ pre-conceived notions towards femininity, masculinity, and the borderland itself are often rejected by the border population. At a local level, autonomous mestizo women’s groups along the northern border have existed since the late 1980’s and have made a local impact in terms of advocacy and providing limited services to women in the province of Sucumbíos (Fedaracion de Mujeres de Sucumbíos, 2009)\textsuperscript{26}. These groups have rejected the United Nations gender and northern border analysis as they consider it a

\textsuperscript{23} UNSCR 1325 ratified in 2000 by the United Nations Security Council is the first international framework to call on member states to recognize gender within conflict and post-conflict situations and involve women in peace negotiations as well as peace keeping missions.

\textsuperscript{24} Following on UNSCR 1325, this resolution looks specifically at sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions08.htm

\textsuperscript{25} Interview Fernanda Carrillo June, 2012

\textsuperscript{26} There are autonomous women’s groups in the Sucumbios province and Esmeraldas province and to a lesser degree in the Carchi and Imbabura province.
poor representation both of their reality as women and of the borderland. They have cautiously partaken in the Gender and Conflict strategy mentioned previously. They are suspicious of the Ecuadorian military given ten documented cases of human rights violations by military men onto civilian women. While working with the government’s Plan Ecuador, has fluctuated from disastrous to excellent.

Local indigenous groups and women are not mentioned by the official stakeholders’ gender and northern border policy, despite the fact that indigenous women’s groups within indigenous nationalities have existed on the northern border since the early 1990’s (Codenpe 2012). While “gender” is equated with “women” on the border, this conflation implies Colombian and mestizo women whilst disregarding indigenous women. This study will argue that indigenous populations have been largely ignored by border policy, that they are regarded by official stakeholders as a “pending issue”.

From the perspective of feminist geographies, multiplicities of scales are utilized in this analysis from the state to bodies, from policy to the everyday in efforts to challenge the dominant gender discourse regarding this particular space. The reason why I am interested to do so is because of the exclusions it creates towards other groups of people that do not fit the “woman victim role”, such as indigenous peoples and men who are affected by gender based violence on the border. As was mentioned previously, the Ecuadorian government, military and the United Nations have a strong presence in this space. The ways in which they perceive gender and the border affects the everyday lives of the local population.

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27 Interview A1 May 2012
28 Interview A3 June 2012
Furthermore, this work challenges the notion that women are merely passive victims of the masculinisation of the borderland, as depicted by Ecuadorian military, government and United Nations. I wish to contrast this with the local geographies of a bi-national indigenous group living on both sides of the borderland and the alter-geopolitics\(^2\) (Koopman, 2011) that they are developing based on their particular notions of border and gender. For this I will draw on feminist geographical and geopolitical reflections as well as feminist international relations and third world feminism.

**Literature Review**

**Frontier, border, borderlands and la frontera**

There are multiple discourses producing images of borders within academia (Lugo, 1997). Literature on frontier, border, borderlands and *la frontera* ranges drastically from security studies to Chicana/o studies and border studies; from a material borders to metaphorical borders. Given the multiplicity of scales and perceptions from which the Ecuadorian – Colombia border is analysed, this study places particular focus on borders as sites of statecraft performance and as material and symbolic borders.

Geopolitical borders have shifted from being tied to the territorial nation-state to acting as increasingly mobile territorial borders (Weber & Bowling 2004 in Pickering 2011). The transnational flows of capital, ideas and people ingrained in globalization and the growth of supra-state regions -such as the European Union - threatens territorial borders (Anderson and O’Dowd, 1997). Nevertheless, nation-state borders are still the basis for security as

\(^2\)Koopman describes alter-geopolitics as non-violent action to create alternate securities.
well as dominant forms of identity and conventional representative democracy. “The modern, sovereign, “territorial nation-state” provides the basis of the state’s system in which states claim sovereignty and immunity from outside interference within their borders” Anderson and O’Dowd (1997:598). This is the notion of border that is upheld by Ecuadorian government, military and United Nations system in Ecuador. This is reflected in institutional policy and maps. For the Ecuadorian government and military the bounding of the territory of the state is the primary focus of economic, political and cultural identification for Ecuadorian citizens. For the United Nations the location of the border defines their agenda and mandate for a particular country and space. The problem with this perspective is that it fails to coincide with symbolic borders of gender, class, culture or ethnicity that are part of the cultural landscape of borders.

Consequently I turn to border studies in US and Mexican academia, which have placed the “border” as an object of study, analytical tool and as a site for progressive political work (Johnson and Michaelsen 1997). I will draw from this literature the definition of borderland given by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987:3): “Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants”.

Daniels and Cosgrove (1988: 1) define landscape as “a cultural image as “a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial. They may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces – in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water and vegetation on the ground.”
The production of the discourse of the *Borderlands* (Anzaldua, 1987) speaks of language of fluidity, migration, post-colonialism, displacement and subaltern identities (Elenes, 2005). It describes experiencing the in-betweeness of living the imaginary border of the US and Mexican cultures, as a discourse and identity of difference and displacement that moves beyond and questions binary constructions. Anzaldua’s definition of borderlands links the study of ethnicity, immigration, sexuality and gender to that of international relations and empire. This definition of borderlands allows for an ampler, fuller discussion of gender, ethnicity and the border. This is key to understanding the multiplicity of scales and discourse on the Ecuador – Colombia border.

A final approximation to the borderland is the notion of political landscapes, which builds on cultural landscapes in order to consider landscapes as a political concept and discourse; as outcomes of political processes (Till, 2004). In this sense, Eleanor O’Gorman (2011) provides another essential framework from which to define the dynamics of the northern border, given that it is neither identified as an only conflict ridden territory, or where solely development policies take place. Rather it is an example of the emerging conflict and development field, in which both discourses and policies co-exist.

**Gender, borders and women, peace and security**

In Latin America, literature on gender and borders has focused on the US-Mexico border to exemplify sexual violence along fortified border regions. Ciudad Juarez brings up issues of state violence, femicide (femicidio) and citizenship debates (Camacho, 2005). The gender analysis and institutional response to the Ecuador – Colombia border, however, has placed
the gender discussion in regards to women, peace and security given the proximity with the Colombian conflict. Unsurprisingly, literature on women, peace and security within the Latin American region, focuses on the continuum of gender based violence within Colombia, in which violence against women is used as weapon of war. What is lacking, however, are feminist analyses of Latin American borders, particularly those affected by the Colombian conflict. Given my interest in moving beyond gender based violence, in order to highlight other elements such as ethnicity and multiple scales (state and embodied experience), I look towards feminist theoretical frameworks such as Feminist Geography (in particular feminist geopolitics) feminist international relations and third world feminism, to articulate a deeper feminist analysis of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland.

**Feminist Geography**

Feminist Geography emerged in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s in North America and the UK as a part of radical geographies that challenged positivist geography (Hyndman, 2004; Nelson and Seager, 2005). Early feminist geographical work focused on the spatial constraints affecting women. Later, during the 1980’s feminist geographers began to work on the analytical significance of gendered spatial divisions (Machenzi 1986). Feminist geography has grappled with the construction of gendered identities through different conceptual frameworks embedded in the “three waves of feminism”. The 1990’s marked a new era for feminist geographers. During this time geographical contexts became important for feminism, as third world feminists and women of colour in the United states were emphasizing geographical contexts in order to question the “northern, white, middle class
woman” (Nelson and Seager, 2005). “Feminist geographies of difference” mark a cultural turn in geography (Pratt 2000 in Hyndman 2004). This results in a spatialized analysis of sexuality, gender and race, as well as geographies of masculinity (Nelson and Seager, 2005).

Critical geographies, in particular feminist geographies, are essential for looking at the northern border. These geographies argue that places are fluid, ambiguous and constantly changing. Furthermore, it is socio-spatial practices that are defining places and in return highlighting the relations of power and exclusion (Massey 1992) that are essential for feminist analysis of the Ecuador-Colombia borderland. Power relations are at the basis of defining place and the rules that govern and create boundaries. This renders boundaries simultaneously social and spatial in defining who is included/excluded (McDowell, 1994).

As Massey (1994) argues, space is neither inherently and or essentially male as described as such in geography, but rather reflects the dichotomous masculinity and femininity of the “sexist society” we live in. As this study will explore, the Ecuador – Colombia borderland reflects the inclusion/exclusion of femininity/masculinity in space/place. Rose suggests that, “while women are excluded, masculine understandings of the feminine are not” (1993:62).

For Rose, masculinity defines itself through a rejection of the non-masculine and in doing so implements a distance between the masculine self and its others. Though she looks into the dualistic gender thinking present within the study of human geography, I extrapolate this to the borderland in relation to the dualistic feminine/masculine found in official policy and maps for this space.
Feminist geopolitics: a subsection of Feminist Geography

Feminist geopolitics emerges out of the intersection between feminist geographies and political geography. Along side this, much global literature on gender and borders stems from feminist geographies. Jennifer Hyndman (2001) defines feminist geopolitics as a new spatial order and approach for looking at global issues. This framework builds on feminist international relations and transnational feminist studies. It examines politics at scales ranging from the nation-state to embodied experiences of the everyday; with emphasis on the latter. While it does not precisely question the women, peace and security agenda, it does challenge concepts of human security in contrast to state security, ultimately arguing for a more embodied and responsive geopolitics (Hyndman, 2001).

The notion of alter-geopolitics (Koopman, 2011) builds on Hyndman’s conception of feminist geopolitics, in order to look at the geopolitics of the streets. This geopolitics might focus, for example, on grassroots organizations or women’s collectives that are not represented in academia; in this sense they are “off the page”. It is a feminist geopolitics constructed through actions in which people come together to create alternative securities. Koopman (2011) raises the example of protective accompaniment, which puts bodies that are less at risk next to bodies that are under threat within the Colombian conflict. In focusing on resistance to hegemonic geopolitics whilst highlighting alternative material and discursive securities, this perspective generates highly beneficial results.

Lastly the notion of scale is a key theme throughout this study. I will be using the definition given by the dictionary of human geography (Derek et al., 2009) where scale is defined as
the resolution of maps or data collected from the micro (body) to the macro (globe) (2009: 664).

Map studies: a subsection of Feminist Geography

To demonstrate how the northern border is understood and acted upon by the Ecuadorian military, government and international agencies, three maps pertaining to these key stakeholders make up part of my empirical evidence. Consequently, in order to use maps as a medium of spatial knowledge, topographical analyses are necessary, as are critical visual methodologies which - as Rose (1993) would suggest - signifies looking at social practices and power relations as well as cultural significance.

Harley (1988) views maps as “value-laden images” and political statements, where content, signs and styles of representation have been particularly selected to exert influence onto specific social relations. He asserts that the manner in which projection, scale, and most importantly symbolism are used on maps generally manifests a one-sided view of geopolitical relationships and political power. Silences are central to these political manifestations; as with other mediums, what is omitted is as influential as what is emphasized (Harley 1988). Finally, Monmonier (1991) has written extensively that maps inherently “lie” since they cannot convey the entire “truth”.

Feminist International Relations

Mary Burguieres (1990) identifies three schools of thought for feminist analysis of war and women. An initial focus on the maternal female stereotype as a foundation for a peaceful society characterises the first school. The second school rejects this stereotype and makes
the claim that women can perform military roles to the same level as men. The third school points to the relationship between structural power in the promotion of military as a manifestation of patriarchy where the subordination of women and femininity is dependent on the valorization of men and masculinity.

This study will focus on the third school of Feminist IR, given my interest in the relationship between femininity and masculinity in regard to the Ecuadorian military, Ecuadorian government, international agencies and the Eperara indigenous nationality on the borderland. Cynthia Enloe (1989, 1993, and 2000) has extensively studied the usage of femininity and masculinity in times of war. Whilst the Colombia–Ecuador borderland is not a “war situation”, her reflections are highly relevant due to the militarization of this territory. Enloe (2000) argues that militaries rely on presumptions about femininity and masculinity. She explains that in conflict situations masculine men and feminine women are expected to react in opposite but complementary ways, where a man’s masculinity is enacted by the role of the protector or perpetrator and women will be responsive to this (1989). Furthermore, (Enloe 1993) highlights a problematic practice found in conflict situations, referring to women and children together as “womenandchildren”, which she argues essentializes gender relations that would otherwise vary across time and space. Essentializing women and children into a static category of vulnerability, as passive victims is an inaccurate picture of the ways in which global systems and power operate (Enloe 1989). Within my discussion of essentialism I will be using Cynthia Cockburn’s notion that “essentialism is not merely an interesting theoretical…it is a dangerous political force, designed to shore up differences and inequalities, to sustain dominations” (1998:13). The
difference that is hidden from the borderland is ethnicity; it is the silence of the maps and policy in which indigenous women are excluded through the strategic deployment of an essentialising gender binary.

As Enloe writes in Maneuvers (2000), the issue of militarization and women has not only to do with the military, but also with government. In the Ecuador–Colombia borderland both government and military respond to gender and the border through a women, peace and security agenda. For this reason, I will also be using particular Feminist IR critiques of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions. Charlie Carpenter (2006) makes an important case concerning the gendered assumptions about men and boys in UNSCR 1325. He writes that the portrayal of men and boys as the perpetrators in conflict excludes them from the possibility of also being “victims” of gender based violence, sexual violence or political violence. Meanwhile, Laura Shepherd (2008) analyzes how international security and gendered based violence are constituted through a discourse analysis of UNSCR 1325, reproducing a gendering of gender based violence. The conceptualization of violence in UNSCR 1325 pathologizes gender as dichotomous and essential through the representation of gender based violence as violence against women (Shepherd, 2008). This, Shepherd argues, is a violent reproduction of gender in which essentializing violence against women is gendered and gendering (2008).

Sally Engel Merry (2006) demonstrates how UNSCR 1325 is translated from a transnational level which she describes as a deterritorialized and disembodied space of UN meetings and conferences onto local and culture specific spaces.
Jennifer Fluri (2010), Jennifer Hyndman and Malathi De Alwis (2004) have made important strides in connecting feminist geography and feminist IR, analogous to those made in feminist geopolitics, as described above. They claim that within conflict, security is spatialized and corporealized. Bodies become “the most immediate and delicate scale of politics and markers of gender and national identity” (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004). This approach avoids macro analysis and responses to conflict zones regarding place and civilians. In this way, the gendering of the everyday, “apolitical” sites and situations of civilian security operate at a corporeal scale (Dowler and Sharp 2001). The spatial and contextual understanding of place in regards to security is central to understanding how and with whom civilians negotiate for everyday survival. This also emphasizes the importance of depicting bodies as subjects rather than as war’s effects or in the words of Hyndman (2007) “collateral excess”. This further emphasizes the importance of feminist geopolitics, feminist geography and feminist IR for analyzing the different scales from government to indigenous populations on the borderland.

Third World Feminism

A focus on Eperara indigenous women necessarily requires a feminist framework that accounts for difference in regards not only to gender and class but also that of race and ethnicity. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Paramar (1984) have rejected feminisms, which “use Western social and economic systems to judge and make pronouncements about how Third World women can become emancipated” (1984: 4). At the heart of this discussion is culture, in which culture is seen as an excuse from which third world women must be taught the
“ethos of Western feminism”. Amos and Paramar (1984) critique the euro-centric and ethnocentric theories of Euro-American Feminism; liberal, radical and socialist.

Furthermore, Chandra Talpade Monhanty has criticised the production of “third world women” as a homogeneous, powerless group of victims within Western feminist colonizing discourse, ridding them of their agency (Mohanty 2003). Ella Shoat has added that the notion of “third world women” reproduces Eurocentric notions of culture under the sign of global feminism. In this sense the western feminist gaze in producing the category of third world woman as victims to their “backward cultures” is analogous to the process of militarization defined by Enloe (2000) and that which occurs in implementing UNSCR 1325 as stated by Shepherd (2008).

Throughout this study I will, therefore, not be referring to the Eperara indigenous women as “third world women”, but rather as they want to be addressed, as “Eperara indigenous women”. Similar to Mohanty (2003), Eperara women’s agenda is in line with an antiracist feminist framework that is devoted to decolonization and anti-capitalism, at the same time emphasizing inclusion of Eperara men in their initiatives.

I aim to challenge the gender binary found in official policy and maps from national and international stakeholders, as a way to contest the imperial western feminism found within them. The fact that indigenous women are absent from maps and policy of gender border policy does not imply that they are not affected by western feminism. Andean indigenous women experience gender ideologies and practices that originate from places other than
their own (Radcliffe, Laurie, Andolina 2002). Eperara indigenous women have received “gender and women’s rights” training from local government and international aid agencies.

There is an important transnational element of producing new and transforming knowledge concerning gender relations with Andean indigenous movements. The importance of international meetings, for both female and male indigenous participants, has meant that meanings of gender are constantly being altered and reconstructed (Choque 2000 in Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolina 2002). In this sense, and as highlighted by the Eperara women in this study, their primary demand is to partake in the communal decision making on an array of topics (Choque 2000 in Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolina 2002). While Andean development has focused on depicting female and male activities and identities, indigenous movements have focused on female leadership (Radcliffe, Laurie, Andolina, 2002). This is exemplified by the importance that political participation holds for Eperara women.

Finally, it is important to note that I am not undermining the experiences of domination and struggle in the formation of the identities of indigenous men and women. Undoubtedly, my concern with gender binaries as they play out on the lives of the inhabitants of the northern border is influenced by postmodernist theory towards the questioning of all forms of essentialism. Despite this, I am careful not to impose this idea on localized questions of experiences and identity as is the case of indigenous women along the northern border, who identify as women and honour a particular notion of gender equality for their community. In other words, I am questioning the essentialism of imposed pre-conceived gender conceptions, while respecting the gender identities of the Eperara indigenous people.
**Positionality and Methods:**

Prior to the MPhil in Multi-disciplinary approach to gender studies at the University of Cambridge, I worked on the Ecuadorian – Colombian Borderland as a gender consultant for international aid agencies. As a gender consultant, I experienced first-hand how gender concepts were developed in transnational policy and implemented at a local level, without serious considerations and analysis of specific contexts. Concepts such as “gender equality” and “gender mainstreaming”, amongst others, departed from the premise that there was a socially constructed feminine and masculine world where gender was synonymous with women, acknowledging a gender binary in which the highlighting and eradication of women’s oppression is important. I participated in the construction of gender manuals and trainings in which the masculine world and feminine world were depicted for the Ecuadorian context without much consideration for other intersecting variables such as ethnicity, sexuality and class. This approach departed from Gayle Rubin’s sex/gender system; it was heavily influenced by radical feminism and a limited conception of masculinities. This was the definition of gender applauded by international aid agencies. It was also accepted by national and local government and some of civil society organizations in Ecuador. During the six years that I worked on the borderline, I noticed that this “gender discourse” did not match the longings of different social groups along the borderland, because it took neither context nor their own perceptions of gender into account. My interest and motivation to carry out this dissertation is based both on this experience and the drawbacks I have observed in implementing this notion of gender.
Methods and Methodologies

This study employs a combination of methods and mediums as a way to broaden the empirical scope of the study and access issues that haven’t previously been highlighted regarding gender and the northern border. I will use three methods within this research: map analysis, discourse analysis, and qualitative open-ended interviews. This combination of methods and mediums proved to be a crucial aspect for this study, because it permitted for creation of a valid and reliable picture of the institutional and local dynamics of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland. Combining visual analysis of maps with interviews and discourse analysis of policy documents enables a filling in of the gaps that became present when using only one method of analysis.

Feminist methodologies have proven to be crucial in the study of government, military and international aid agencies; they are reliable ways of analysing global power and elites (Conti and O’Neil, 2007). While there has been constant debate on what defines feminist methodologies, I will be using the following definition, “researcher accountability to knowledge claims and critical examination of the micro-politics of research” (Conti and O’Neil, 2007). As Harding (1987) has explained, the researcher must be located on the same critical plane as the subject matter and, in doing so, within the research frame of the study. Furthermore, Haraway (1988) has defined feminist objectivity as a form of situated knowledge and location, contrasting it against a positivist definition in which objectivity is attained through “the transcendence and splitting of subject and object” (1998: 254). In this sense, the objectivity of the study lies not in the distancing of myself from the empirical
material used, but rather in my ability to explore the complex subjectivities and social locations of myself and those interviewed, as well as the subtleties of the texts used for this study.

**Map Analysis**

Maps are treated in this analysis as texts, in an expanded definition originating from cultural anthropology, taken up by human geographers as cultural productions (Barnes and Duncan, 1992) and cultural systems (Harley, 1988). The textuality of maps allows for a wider interpretative process where the deconstruction of the map demonstrates the presence of power in the map’s apparent objectivity (1988:232). Visual methodologies (Rose 2001) are used to analyse three maps from respective stakeholders: the Ecuadorian military, government and UNHCR (United Nations Agency for Refugees). This means that the site of production, image and audience are analysed from three modalities: technological (topographical), compositional and social (Rose 2001).

The three maps used in this study are thematic maps, in which the emphasis is on the symbolic rather than the topographical. Each map is part of a series of maps for each institution. I use them to demonstrate the ways in which a particular institution represents the northern border as well as its institutional priorities for that space. The maps are situated in the context of policy and political statements as well as the transcripts of the interviews made with staff /consultants of the stakeholders.

I translated the maps from Spanish to English and Dr. Phillip Stickler of the Geography department, aided me in adjusting the maps formats in order to insert them in this study.
**Discourse Analysis**

Policy documents for Ecuadorian government, military, and United Nations were collected, using the criterion that they discuss gender and the northern border. I collected and analysed a total of fifteen policy documents addressing gender on the northern border; these are mentioned in detail in appendix 3. Policy documents like the maps will also be treated within an expanded definition of “text”, where they are understood as cultural practices of signification rather than just as referential duplications (Barnes and Duncan, 1997). Policy as texts constitutes discourse, when discourse is defined as “frameworks that embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices, each relevant to a particular realm of social action” (Barnes and Duncan, 1997: 8). The particular discourse framework that I would like to draw on for this study is Foucault’s (1969) analysis of discourse and institutions in which he affirms that discourse’s association and material basis in institutions is what gives it power. It is this relationship between power and discourse that I wish to explore along the Colombia – Ecuador borderland.

Texts as discourse are practices of signification in this study and are constraining while at the same time enabling (Barnes and Duncan, 1997). Post-structural discourse theory assumes that discourse varies among different groups of classes, races and genders, whose interests may clash (Barnes and Duncan, 1997). This allows for different perceptions of gender and the northern border to co-exist and for multiple influences to affect discourse. Barnes and Duncan (1997) remind us that the relationship between concept and referent is socially constructed and so while gender and the northern border are mentioned in policy and maps, their users may not be aware of how they are using the terms. This is crucial to
this study because the discourse in institutional policy, depends on the stakeholders interpretation of policy

Finally, I have distanced this study from partaking in the discursive colonization that Mohanty (1986) criticizes and characterizes in western feminist studies on “third world” women’s lives and struggles, by not studying down onto marginalized people of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland (such as the Eperara indigenous group). Instead, I believe that this research provides the people on the borderland with a resource from which to understand what the discourse on their territory and bodies signifies for their everyday lives.

Almost all of the policy documents were in Spanish. As a bilingual English and Spanish speaker who is also knowledgeable of the context, I was able to translate the documents.

**Interviews**

I have chosen semi-structured interviews employing open-ended questions as a qualitative data-gathering technique to complement the previous two methods mentioned in this study. Hilary Graham (1984) has defined semi-structured interviews as “a research approach whereby the researcher plans to ask questions about a given topic but allows the data-gathering conversation itself to determine how the information is obtained” (Graham 1984 in Reinharz 1992). The open – ended interview “explores people’s view of reality and allows the researcher to gender a theory” (Reinharz, 1992: 18).

Fifteen interviews were carried out with staff of the Ecuadorian government, military, United Nations and the Eperara indigenous men and women. For each institution I chose to
interview technical experts that were working on the northern border (when possible on gender as well). The power dynamic between myself and those interviewed varied. This is an important aspect to draw out because feminist research has shown how the power dynamic between researcher and informant shapes knowledge (Conti and O’Neil, 2007). Informants within the United Nations, Ecuadorian government, military and Eperara indigenous people with whom I had had previous professional connections were more open to revealing the internal dynamics of the institutions and give me “off the record” information. The Ecuadorian government was the least willing to share information that was not either in institutional policy or procedures.

The open-ended questions towards Ecuadorian government, military and United Nations concerned how the northern border and bi-national were conceived in terms of their problems and opportunities, on one part. As well as how gender and interculturism were conceived within the institution and on the northern border in particular. I was also interested in institutional responses and programs to conceptions of gender, the border and bi-national. For specific questions and interview process please see Appendix 2.

To contrast against this, I chose to carry out open-ended interviews in order to obtain political statements and demands from the Eperara nationality regarding the northern border and gender issues. I chose to look at the Eperara nationality for several reasons. First, because of their bi-national character I was interested in understanding how their perception of the border would be different than the government, military and (to a certain extent) UN. Second, because they highlight a recent dynamic of indigenous groups reclaiming their ties
with those on the “other side”\textsuperscript{31}. Last and contrary to other bi-national indigenous groups along this space, I had met them in March, 2011.

There were a couple of limitations to the interview approach. The first was that I had hoped to interview more Eperara women individually, but the representative of the women’s group did not permit this. I interviewed her and she discussed the questions with the women’s group, whereafter a representative was elected to talk to me. Another limitation was that all the interviews were done via skype or telephone given the distance between Cambridge and Ecuador\textsuperscript{32}.

**Ethics**

My methodology for interviewing indigenous populations merited particular attention and ethical considerations.\textsuperscript{33} As an Ecuadorian non-indigenous woman studying at an institution in the northern part of the world, indigenous communities could interpret my work as taking their experience and knowledge and using it purely for my personal and individual academic benefit. There is a constant concern that research benefits the outsider (Kothari, 1997) and will not be of use to the community. As mentioned by Tuhiwai Smith (1999), it is crucial to understand and address the tense relationship between research methodology and indigenous peoples as embedded in historical and contemporary issues of imperialism and neo-colonialist practices. Furthermore, Radcliffe (1994), highlights that feminist

\textsuperscript{31} In 2010, CONAIE (Confederation of indigenous nations of Ecuador) organized the first international meeting of bi-national indigenous groups between Ecuador and Colombia.

\textsuperscript{32} To reach the Eperara nationality, which I interviewed via telephone, one needs to take a 45 minute plane from Quito, the capital of Ecuador, to Esmeraldas city of the province of Esmeraldas. From there one would take a three hour bus drive to Borbon, and then take a 45 minute canoe trip up river to the Eperara community.

\textsuperscript{33} As highlighted by the American association for Geographers and the “Nine guidelines for Research with indigenous peoples” (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian 2009),
geographers must address issues of communication and representation along a cross-cultural terrain. This brings into play the issue of not imposing western ideas of feminism and gender onto either the women interviewed or the subsequent analysis. Lastly, given the influence of the Colombian conflict in this region, there were two indigenous women of the Pasto Nationality who were initially recruited but did not want to participate because of security concerns and because they were not familiar with my work.

With the Eperara indigenous women and men, I provided the research questions in advance, together with an explanation of the reasons for this research and why I think their experience is crucial for the research project. In other words, I sought their informed consent for participation in this project.

To ensure that I would not be imposing a western perspective on gender, I gave particular attention to how questions were phrased and opted for more open-ended questions. I am aware, however, that the Eperara have previously worked with international agencies, which ask for a gender element to be in place within the structures of their communities in order to receive funding, which means that western conceptions of gender and feminism could have already been imposed prior to my research. Furthermore, and in light with feminist methodology as defined by Harding (1987), I put myself on the same analytical level as I ask of them, and at the end of the interview gave my background experience as well as thoughts on gender and the border.
In regards to security issues for all the interviewees, I have stressed that this dissertation will not be published and that their names will not be addressed individually in the dissertation, unless otherwise stated.

Another ethically complex area of consideration is the use of military, governmental and United Nation maps of the northern border region. Given the sensitivity of information and the difficult security situation of the northern border region, the maps that I used are either maps that are available in the public domain or those I have received permission to use.

**The structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into three interlocking parts which show through different perspectives and mediums the gendering of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland and the impact of this on segments of the population that do not fit the gender stereotypes projected onto this space. In this sense, this dissertation responds to the following three questions: What is the perception of official stakeholders on the Ecuador- Colombia borderland and gender in this space? What are the political makings of femininity and masculinity in this space and what policies are used to enforce this perception? Are these perspectives analogous to those of bi-national Indigenous groups and bi-national indigenous women’s groups?

In Chapter 1 I demonstrate the borderland as an imagined geography where official stakeholders simplify its complexity and legitimate exclusion through preconceived notions of femininity and masculinity. I examine the representation of gender found explicitly and implicitly on the maps produced by Ecuadorian government, military and United Nations.
Chapter 2 reviews gender and northern border policy from United Nations system in Ecuador to highlight how these initiatives reconfigure the gendered assumptions built onto the maps in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 shifts attention from the state onto finer scales such as the experience of Eperara bi-national indigenous group. The focus is on the Eperara women’s groups and the consequences of the official gender and northern border discourse onto inhabitants of the northern border who are excluded from the dominant gendering of space and bodies. Furthermore, I wish to demonstrate the agency of the Eperara women’s groups in the pursuit of security and alter-geopolitics.

**Contributions of this work**

This study is a unique contribution to both policy and theory. It provides initial reflections on the emerging women, peace and security policies enacted by militaries in the Latin American region, in particular on its exclusionary effects towards indigenous women and bi-national indigenous groups. It is also a contribution to feminist IR and feminist geography/geopolitics literature on the workings of femininity and masculinity in space, specifically in war zones, by including “third world” feminist literature such as Chicana/o Studies. Fluri (2010) emphasizes blending gender politics with other forms of identity politics in conflict zones; I have done this with the use of Anzaldúa’s “borderland” to place ethnicity at the heart of the material and symbolic border. In this study this notion of the borderland is embodied and corporealized through the Eperara bi-national indigenous group. In this way it reconfigures the possibilities for gendered bodies in conflict zones, enabling a movement beyond either “victims” or “perpetrators of violence” (Enloe 2000, Shepherd 2008, and Carpenter 2006). Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolini (2002) have demonstrated the

Chapter 1
Gender distortions, absences and lies in the Maps of the Ecuador–Colombia borderland

In this chapter I will analyse three maps produced by the Ecuadorian military, the Ecuadorian government and the United Nations respectively, each representing the Ecuador-Colombia borderland. As mediums of spatial knowledge, I interpret these maps in conjunction with specific institutional policy and eleven interviews with personnel from the corresponding institutions to elucidate the relationship of gender and space at the northern border.

To discern the gendering of the maps, I draw on Rose’s visual methodologies to highlight the topographical, compositional and social production and use of each map. To draw out the topographical and compositional aspects I have placed particular attention to the maps’ three basic attributes: scale, projection and symbolization. According to Monmonier (1991) each one of these elements is a source of distortion and together they describe the map’s
possibilities and limitations. Therefore these elements are analysed under the premise that the exercise of transforming complex and three-dimensional realities into two-dimensional images inevitably changes real life images and landscapes. Monmonier (1991) asserts that maps reflect an intentional distortion of reality to serve particular institutional purposes or interests pertaining to specific groups. He further suggests that this distortion is the cartographic paradox. An accurate map must tell “white lies” and because users tolerate these “white lies”, more serious distortions can potentially become normalized. In this way maps become “deliberate falsification or subtle propaganda” (Monmonier 1991:1). Hence the importance of the social production of the map and why it must be treated like text whereby it has its own sets of rules and codes (Harley, 1988).

The three maps in this chapter are thematic maps because they lack in topographical elements and emphasize the symbolic. I am interested in what the symbols on the map can tell us of the gendering of the northern border. By gendering of space, I am referring to Nelson and Seager’s 2005 affirmation that there is a spatialized construction of feminity and masculinity – as an ideology, materiality and practice. Feminist geographers (Rose 1993, Massey 1994) and third world feminists (Anzaldua, 1987) have challenged static gender roles in regards to space and borderlands while Feminist IR (Enloe 2000, Shepherd 2008, O’Gormon 2011) have challenged this to conflict and development situations. Hyndman and D’Alwis (2004) and Fluri (2010) from the perspective of feminist geopolitics allows for a critique of both the gendering of space and conflict by identifying how security becomes spatialized and corporealized. Analysis from these perspectives onto the maps of
Ecuadorian military, government and UNHCR and excerpts of interview and policy will highlight the gender notions that prevail along the Ecuador-Colombia border.

Image 1: Source: Ecuadorian Armed Forces 2008

Image 1 is an official map produced by Ecuadorian Ministry of Armed Forces for the Ecuador–Colombia borderland in 2008. Variations of this map have been published in national Ecuadorian newspapers (El Comercio and El Hoy) to demonstrate the militarization of the northern border region. According to interviews I conducted with military personnel, this map is part of a series that is shared with other governmental and international aid agencies to disseminate information regarding the northern border among

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34 In the other maps that make up the series, FARC, ELN and organized crime are also highlighted as are their preferred routes of mobilization.
decision-making entities. Topographical analysis of the map, demonstrates the only element of scale on the map with an extension limit of 720 Kilometres showing the territorial border between Ecuador and Colombia. The rest of the map remains symbolic and in its composition highlights the number of Ecuadorian military men, Ecuadorian policemen and Colombian military men, on the border as is evident from the key of the map. In 2008 there were 7000 military men stationed along the northern border, currently there are 10,000 military men deployed on the northern border (Arboleda 2010).

McDowell (1999) has asserted that “places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries that are both social and spatial and define who belongs to a place and who is excluded as well as the location and site of experience” (1999:4) In the map above, emphasis is on the militarization of the border by military men while excluding and making invisible women on this space. As the following quote affirms, this is due to high-ranking military men not permitting women to be located on the border.

“Taking women out of the border was seen as a measure to protect women in the armed forces from men within the same institution. There was a rape attempt by one lower-ranking military official onto a lower ranking women military official, and the high-ranking military men made the decision to take women out of the northern border. Men are under a lot of stress in this particular zone because they are constantly on mission and because of the dynamics of the territory. In the northern border, they tend to violate military regulations more than elsewhere. They often escape at night to clubs and meet women, which is against military regulations. Under this scenario and despite the fact that women in the armed forces want to be stationed on the northern border, there is an unwritten rule that women are not allowed and to be protected because they are more vulnerable to gender based violence.” – Interview Fernanda Carrillo June 2012

35 According to my interviews, there are two types of military maps. Those that are public and distributed by the Geographical Military Institute,(IGM) and those belonging to each military operation. The latter are top secret because they show exactly where both Ecuadorian and Colombian paramilitary, organized crime and military both Ecuadorian are stationed.
Though women are invisibilized in the above map, masculine notions of the feminine are still present (Rose, 1993). Military women along the northern border are viewed as more vulnerable in comparison to men to be victims of gender based violence by military men. For this reason high ranking military officials justify taking women out of the northern border in order to “protect” them from fellow military men. This notion of high ranking military official as the “protector” of lower ranking military women, from lower ranking military officials, exemplifies how security becomes corporealized and spatialized in conflict zones (Fluri 2010, Hyndam and D’alwis 2004). This is explicit in high ranking officials controlling which gendered bodies can be stationed on the border and which can’t. The protection of military women by elite military men from un-elite military men is an example of how bodies are the most immediate representation of scale politics (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004) as well as markers of gender and class.

This also exemplifies how militarization is a systematic and thought out process whereby everything is controlled and derived from the military (Enloe, 2000). The desires of both lower level military men and military women to be placed on the border are disregarded, because neither group participates in the decision making processes that sustain militarization (Enloe, 1993). Militarization in this sense is the “socio-spatial practice that define places and whose practices results in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries, constituted and maintained by social relations of power and exclusion” (Massey 1991 in McDowell 1999: 4). Militarization often treats a certain notion of femininity and women as side-shows while the main event(s) are defined by elite
men as a performance of a particular masculinity (Enloe, 2000). This is further exemplified by military women making up only 1.4% of the active armed forces in Ecuador, none of whom are indigenous and only a few afro-descendent

“It has been a huge achievement for us, to address gender issues in the military; we are not at the point of discussing indigenous issues. We know that we have never enlisted an indigenous woman, but this is a pending issue.” – Interview with A2 June 2012

The woman military official prone to gender based violence is not the only stereotype within the Ecuadorian Military, she is also not indigenous. This representation of non-indigenous women in the military further invisibilizes a certain type of women and femininity. Massey (1994) mentions that space reflects the dichotomous masculinity and femininity of the “sexist society” we live in, I would argue that this also reflects the racist society we live in. In the case of the Ecuador – Colombia militarization of the northern border not only has consequences for women within the armed forces but also trespasses the confines of this institution. I will refer to two examples in which the political makings of femininity and masculinity affect the cultural landscape of the northern border and in turn demonstrate the gendering of the northern border and the bodies on this space. Thinking of the northern border as a cultural landscape allows for a representation of cultural image made up of symbolizing surroundings (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). This lets us understand how the northern border is experienced and expressed by the local inhabitants (Rose 1993). The following anecdote demonstrates the effects of a gendered

36 Interview with Fernanda Carrillo, June 2012
and racialized militarization on the visual character of the landscape and the experience this creates.

“I went to the border with an Afro – Ecuadorian woman military official. After visiting a border military unit, we went to eat in the village and we noticed that a group of young boys were surrounding us, finally one said to her...”So are you a woman or you a military official”? – Interview Fernanda Carrillo June 2012.

The absence of Ecuadorian women military officials on the borderland makes the possibility of a woman who is also a military official non-existent for a local boy. The effects of only seeing military men invoke particular gendered and racialized notions to that landscape’s inhabitants. The border as a social and material construction that McDowell (1999) addresses not only annuls military woman but also facilitates the gendered perception of the young boy’s landscape. This anecdote represents how place/gender are interconnected and mutually constituted (McDowell 1999).

Furthermore it is the binary division that is determining the social production of space (McDowell 1999). A recent report published by the Ministry of Defence in 2011, analyzed the implementation of UNSCR 132537 and 182038 in Ecuador, with a focus on the northern border. An emphasis on the northern border was due to the following justification “given the effects of the internal Colombian conflict on Ecuador and the deplorable conditions of poverty in this particular territory….the human rights of women and children are the most


38 This resolution follows up on resolution 1325 to emphasize sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict scenarios.
vulnerable” (RESDAL/Military Report 2011). Furthermore this report highlights the desire of the armed forces to implement UNSCR 1325 and 1825, “It is up to the armed forces to implement UNSCR 1325 and 1820 as a means to protect women’s rights on the northern border. It should be in the hands of the military because of our presence of more than 10,000 soldiers. Because the military is in charge of security for the northern border region we have a role to play in eradicating gender based violence” (RESDAL/ Military Report 2011).

While high level military men protect military women by not sending them to the border for fear of misconduct from lower level military men, they state that their presence on the border gives them a reason to eradicate gender based violence to which local women and children are vulnerable. The differential gendering of women and men, based on assumed group traits and particular contexts is an example of the political makings of femininities and masculinities on the northern border and the contradictions embedded in these constructions. The binary division is not only in terms of gender, but also in regards to class and military hierarchies. While high ranking military men view both military and civilian women as prone victims to gender based violence, they have different responses in how to protect “their women” and civilian women. In this sense both military women and civilian women are to be protected by military men (high ranking or lower ranking). However, military women are to be protected by elite level military men from lower level military men where as in the case of civilian women, lower level military men are to protect them from civilian men.
The importance of illustrating the gendering of space and bodies along the Ecuador – Colombia borderline by Ecuadorian military rests on the fact Ecuadorian military is prioritizing gender policy within their institution. The Ecuadorian Armed Forces in 2010 carried out an investigation titled “Women in the Armed Forces in Ecuador” with the financial and technical support of UN Women that looked to carry out a gender analysis of the institution. Particular attention was given to the northern border and masculinities in this region, as requested by the Minister of Defence at that time, Javier Ponce. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Defence since 2009\(^{39}\) has created the department of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. This department in 2011 created a permanent gender post and since then has carried out multiple gender studies, revised existing military personal regulations and is currently elaborating specific gender policies. This department’s primary responsibility is to elaborate gender and “ethno-cultural” plans for the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces. To date, gender has been prioritized over indigenous issues, which according to the director of the department is a pending issue to be addressed at a later moment. Amongst the other pending activities is the definition and consensus on what a peace, security, gender policy would look like for the northern border. If feminist perspectives on militarization and feminist geo-politics are not involved in these future decisions and discussions I fear that more inclusion of women into the Ecuadorian Military or Peace keeping forces as UNSCR 1325 calls for, will not change the gender bias of the groups identities and expectations. What needs to be addressed are the gendered

\(^{39}\) According to the RESDAL military report (2011), the Ministry started to work on these issues in 1992 because of a case in Putumayo (Northern Border) in which military men were accused of torturing and killing farmers, when they were mistaken for guerrilla members. This case was taken to the Inter-American Court of Justice.
assumptions of masculinity and femininity whereby for Carpenter’s (2006) plea for understanding boys and men as victims of gender based violence, political violence and sexual violence in conflict scenarios, are also considered.


Image 2, like the previous military map, is a thematic map. It differs in that rather than focusing on militarization, it emphasizes the refugee flow from Colombia. Red arrows pointing toward Ecuador make the connection between the dynamic of displaced peoples (3.6 million internally displaced persons) and the number of recognized refugees (52,452)
in Ecuador\(^{40}\) apparent. The presence of UNHCR field offices and headquarters are also visible and detailed in the key. The field offices are located in each of the three border provinces, prioritizing the northern border, as the main area for reception of asylum seekers\(^{41}\).

This map is part of a series made available on the UNHCR Ecuador website, showing different numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and “persons of concern”\(^{42}\) coming from Colombia to Ecuador. According to UNHCR staff interviewed, the map’s use is to depict an image of where and how many refugees, asylum seekers and “people of concern” are located. Maps are not used to carry out planning and programming on a regular basis rather they are used occasionally to understand the context of the border in relation to refugee flow and to demonstrate to the general public where refugees are on the map\(^{43}\).

UN agencies produce profiling of refugees based on experiences in other places that are then conceptualized and made into UN policy as a one size fits all package (Hyndman 2011). This creates several distortions of this map that I wish to reflect on. Identifying people only as refugees, asylum seekers and “persons of concern” strips them of multifaceted identities including gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age and class. This reduction of complex identities will undoubtedly affect how these diverse individuals experience

\(^{40}\) Ecuador has the largest refugee population in Latin America. By, June 2012, there were 56,398 (UNHCR First Trimester report, 31 March 2012) registered refugees living in the country with eight out of ten Colombia asylum seekers in Ecuador.

\(^{41}\) UNHCR in Ecuador does not operate refugee camps as part of its humanitarian program. It offers legal assistance on the acquiring refugee status and carries out community development projects (UNHCR Ecuador website)

\(^{42}\) “People of concern” is a term used by UNHCR to define people that are of interest to UNHCR meaning asylum seekers but also those that don’t seek asylum but could seek. (Interview Daniela Balseca May 2012)

\(^{43}\) Interview Daniela Balseca May 2012
border crossing because the ways in which people are classified on the map influences how they are treated within humanitarian planning.

The second distortion of the map is the red arrows that point only towards the Ecuadorian side of the border. This disregards the large numbers of people who commute daily between both sides of the border between home and work or (many whom only have a refugee ID card) or for mobility across the border for bi-national indigenous groups who live on both sides of the border⁴⁴.

The third distortion of the map is the failure to represent the 1500 Colombia asylum seekers that enter Ecuadorian territory every month (UNHCR report 2011), most of whom are refused for refugee statuses by the Ecuadorian government⁴⁵ and often left in clandestine situations.

All three distortions mentioned reflect how the reader of the maps is mislead concerning who crosses the Ecuador- Colombia borderland and regarding the borderland itself. The reader of the maps would have to turn to UNHCR policy and data bases to get a more detailed idea of how UNHCR is dealing or not dealing with the distortions highlighted.

With regards to how refugees, asylum seekers and “people of concern” are described UNHCR has institutionally addressed their gender. Hyndman (2011) has acknowledged

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⁴⁴ Interview Daniela Balseca May 2012
⁴⁵ According to the UNHCR interviews for this study, Ecuadorian government since 2008 has changed its migration and refugee policy drastically. In 2008 Ecuadorian constitution opened its borders and declared that no human being would be considered “illegal”. In 2009 Ecuadorian Government with UNHCR implemented a faster legal process where an asylum seeker could be given or rejected refugee status in one day in comparison to the three months it previously took. Since 2010 the Ecuadorian government has started to reject refugee applications in alarming rates claiming that the increasing insecurity in Ecuador is related to Ecuador opening up its borders. UNHCR interviews mention that there were inadequate migration policies in 2008 where as the refugee policies were elaborated in great detail with clear implementation procedures. Consequently “economic migrants” were applying for refugee status.
that UNHCR gender based programming and mainstreaming of gender, is an impressive mix of liberal and socialist feminism. A main criticism however, has been essentializing the category of “women” placing the female difference over other dimensions of difference (Hyndman 2011). The following quote from the gender focal point of UNHCR Ecuador illustrates this point:

“In the field we respond to the global age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy of UNHCR as well as the global strategy for eradication of sexual violence. It is up to the UNHCR representative in each country to implement and interpret these strategies for each specific context. For Ecuador and Colombia in terms of gender I would think the most important topics are the eradication of gender based violence and sexual violence. We understand gender to mean equal rights for both women and men, but women are the most vulnerable to gender based violence so our focus is on women, when we discuss or implement gender initiatives. In terms of indigenous populations we do not have a real response; I think that while we have good work on gender, in regards to indigenous issues we do not have a real response.” – Interview Cesar Cherez June 2012

Cynthia Cockburn (1998) reminds us that essentializing is a political force where differences and inequalities are sidelined to serve dominating forces. Analogous to the limitations found in relation to the military map and policy for the northern border, gender in this context is translated to signify women and in particular non-indigenous women. The difference based on ethnicity is not addressed in UNHCR gender policy where as the “woman victim” vulnerable to gender based violence stereotype prevails. This is the dominant representation of women on the northern border across institutions from Ecuadorian military to UNHCR.

46 There is one gender focal point within each UN agency that is in charge of assuring that gender is being mainstreaming in programming. They are “in charge” of gender for their respective offices.
Violence towards women is the focus for UNHCR’s work on gender. It is important to note that for the time period of 2012 to 2016, UNHCR Ecuador has launched a large-scale project to eradicate sexual gender based violence. This project states the following: “Women make up 48% of the refugee population, while the remaining 40 percent are children and adolescents.” If this figure were accurate, then only 12% of the refugee population would be adult male. These figures contradict UNHCR sex-segregated statistics\textsuperscript{47}, which demonstrate that more men than women apply for refugee status and that more men are given refugee status than women. The project mentions an interest in working with boys and men as well as LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and Intersex) community on SGBV (Sexual and gender based violence). There is no mention of working with indigenous population or any allusion as to how working with LGBTI and male communities could change the focus of the strategy. According to the interviews with UNHCR staff working on LGBTI, male and indigenous populations, remains a pending issue.

Cynthia Enloe (1993) draws attention to the common, yet problematic practice of referring to women and children together “womenandchildren”. She refers this in relation to the common statement that 80 percent of the world’s refugees are women and children. Joining “womenandchildren” together Enloe remarks says nothing to their specific conditions about being a women or child in particular contexts. What would otherwise vary across time and space is created into a neat cultural icon. Consequently, less attention is paid to the everyday gendering of UNHCR’s strategies (Hyndman 2011). The focus as the excerpt

\textsuperscript{47} UNHCR data is divided into accepted refugee, refused refugee, asylum seekers and abandoned cases. These four areas are sex and age segregated and specific to particular provinces.
from the interview and policy demonstrates is on the global strategy but not on the everyday scale of how gender plays out, because this has already been preconceived. Focusing on the everyday, meaning how women experience their multiple identities across geographies and scale (Hyndman 2001), would be out of mandate and demand responses that are not in institutional policy and programs. As a result fixed notions of what makes up refugees, asylum seekers, men refugee, women refugee amongst other possibilities are created and adhered to.

Furthermore, I argue, that the fixed identities addressed in UNHCR mandate require a fixed notion of space. Where you are on the map, or located along the borderland determines if you will receive legal assistance or other benefits from UNHCR and similar institutions. For UNHCR, the location of the border, defines their agenda and mandate. The following quote exemplifies how UNHCR Ecuador relies on static notions of territory:

“We work on bi-national topics with a great deal of caution and with hesitation. In principle it is not in our framework of priorities or intervention due to one logistical aspect, it is not in our mandate. Our mandate is protection of refugee peoples and with that we understand that the Ecuadorian state is guaranteeing international protection for people that the Colombian state cannot. So we are concentrating our attention on Ecuador and its capacity to respond and guarantee protection to refugee peoples. We will support activities that other institutions do in a bi-national manner but we will not proactively create initiatives on this topic. We started to work with two bi-national indigenous groups, but we are just beginning. We are interested in assisting them in regards to their identity, and how both states can acknowledge that they are bi-national. We have to focus on governmental response to their bi-national identity, because that is determined by our mandate “– Interview Cesar Cherez June 2012

Anzaldua’s (1987) understanding of the borderline as an artificial construction where its inhabitants are “prohibited and forbidden”, strikes resonance in terms of bi-national indigenous groups mentioned in the above quote. Bi-national indigenous people do not fit
the identities sponsored by UNHCR nor is their conception of a bi-national community acceptable because it traspases the confines of nation – state borders. UNHCR mandate preconditions the bi-national to that of modern statecraft and state sovereignty via the enforcement of national boundaries (Pickering, 2011). An internally displaced person will not receive UNHCR attention until that person has left Colombia and come into Ecuadorian territory seeking refugee status. In this way UNHCR’s mandate upholds the government’s notion’s of nation-state borders as the basis for security as well as for dominant forms of identity (Anderson and O’Dowd, 1997). Being “in-between” (Anzaldua 1987), meaning not pertaining to and adhering to a material border but rather living and negotiating the symbolic borders created by an imposed series of binary constructions (men/women, Colombia/Ecuador, indigenous/white) is not a possibility for UNHCR. This could explain why UNHCR has not developed a LGBTIQ strategy, worked with men on gender based violence or addressed indigenous issues in its programming. Neither of these “groups” fit UNHCR criteria in terms of identity and conceptions of space.

Image 3 is a thematic map with no indication of projection or scale, in this sense it differs from the previous maps because there are only symbolic elements placed along the border. A red arrow signals that Colombia lies towards the north and Peru is visible in small black writing on the right hand side. Another four arrows point towards other cities and regions within Ecuadorian territory while the rest of the symbols illustrate the different development projects that the Ecuadorian government wishes existed along the northern border. These development projects include hydro-electric projects, rural infrastructure,
marine ports, bio-medicine centres, airports that together make up the “desired territorial model”, for the Ecuadorian government.

This map was made by, SENPLADES, the National Secretary of Planning and Development of Ecuador, which is the governmental institution responsible for implementing the Ecuadorian constitution via the national plan for wellbeing 2009-2013. The map was employed in a power point presentation at a round table for international agencies positioned along the northern border region in December, 2010. The presentation aimed to demonstrate where and what international aid agencies should be investing their money in the northern border region. In this sense the “value-laden images” meaning concept, signs and styles of representation (Harley, 1988) have been particularly selected by SENPLADES, to exert influence onto international aid agencies. The message sent from the Ecuadorian government to international aid agencies was to invest in the development projects shown in the above map.

Given the overt use of development symbols in this map, the silences within the map are essential to explore. Harley (1998) has warned us that what is omitted on a map is as influential as what is emphasized. There are two striking features in the above map. The first is that there are no references to the effects of the Colombian conflict and second that people (inhabitants, refugees, indigenous populations) are invisibilized. In many ways the

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48 Since May 2010, and via an executive decree, Ecuador’s territory has been constitutionally divided into nine zones; Zone 1 is the Northern Border. The national plan for wellbeing (buen vivir) 2009 – 2013, is the main national planning tool to implement the constitution and to which SENPLADES zone 1 adheres to. The socio-economic development plans for this space are depicted through its symbols on the map and also through it policy.
development model shown in the map could be in any other territory within Ecuador. The development projects proposed do not deal directly with organized crime, drug trafficking, refugee flows or the other multiple complex dynamics along the northern border that have been discussed in this study. In order to fill in the silences of this map we draw on policy from the same institution concerning the northern border.

“The most critical exercise in territorial sovereignty is carried out on the country’s borders. Generalized poverty in the northern border demonstrates that this region has been historically abandoned by the state, a situation that has just been acknowledged and is being reversed under the current government. …for not only does the government have to increase the number of security forces on the border, but also construct an Ecuadorian collective imaginary through a state that promotes development. This is of outmost importance in these regions, because poverty is the denominator factor that generates insecurity and all types of violence’s, in particular violence against women and intra-family violence….This is the reason the constitution has responded in prioritizing the northern border area. This perspective of development is amongst other things, a way for the public sphere to alleviate violence. This is a peaceful response by emphasizing a culture of peace accompanied with socio-economic development as the best way to exercise and reclaim sovereignty, while guaranteeing integral security of inhabitants, respecting ethnical and cultural diversity. -” Diagnostic of Zone 1, National Plan of Well being

This policy excerpt gives a more thorough glimpse of the government’s political strategy for the northern border. A first important aspect to highlight is that the northern border symbolizes sovereignty and immunity from outside interference for the government (Anderson and O’Dowd 1997). The second remarkable aspect is that governmental response to this space is two-fold; security via militarization and poverty alleviation through development projects. The third striking aspect is that for the government, the northern border corresponds to a site of geopolitics and state power strategically used as a political mechanism (Till 2004). Meaning that the creation of an “Ecuadorian imaginary” as mentioned in the text is the bounding of territory whereby the government’s primary
concern is creating a common and dominant identity for Ecuadorian citizens. Finally this excerpt is important because this is the only official SENPLADES policy document for the northern border in which women (or any other collective identity) are mentioned. Poverty is understood as the root cause for violence against women and therefore development projects are carried out to decrease poverty, which is assumed will reduce violence against women. Enloe (2000) mentions that the issue of militarization has not only to do with the military but also government. Ecuadorian Government controls both military and development interventions and therefore corresponds to a common desired political landscape for this space. Like the Ecuadorian military and UNCHR, women are once again categorized as victims of violence for this space. In this case their “protector” is the Ecuadorian government responding by poverty reduction mechanism and placing military officials on the borderland\textsuperscript{49}.

\textbf{Chapter 1 Conclusions}

UNHCR, Ecuadorian government and military reflect a political landscape in which the territorial border, defines each institutions mandate and how each institution understands and responds to gender in this space. They share one common aspect; they demonstrate a bounded and stable notion of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland as well as of gender relations and gender identity while excluding indigenous identity. The static and

\textsuperscript{49} For the analysis of the governmental map, I interviewed the governmental officer in charge of gender and indigenous issues for SENPLADES northern border region. I was told that the governmental response to gender and indigenous issues along the northern border was to create governmental bi-national committees on both topics. The gender bi-national committee had met a couple times in 2012 while the bi-national committee on indigenous is still a pending issue. Only national and local governmental actors make up these committees with no representatives of civil society from the borderland partaking in these meetings.
essentialized notions of the gender binary are justified by a fixed spatial notion of the borderland, in this sense they are interdependent of one another. For the three institutions, gender on the northern border has been referred to as gender based violence, sexual based violence, violence against women and intra-family violence. All three scenarios disregard the possibility of gender based violence occurring towards men and concentrate on violence against women generating a dominant stereotype of “woman victim to violence”. Indigenous issues remain “pending issues”, as if the possibility of indigenous women on the borderline did not exist.
Chapter 2

Tensions in translating UNSCR 1325 discourse onto the northern border

In this chapter I shift the focus from map and policy analysis of official stakeholders to gender policy elaborated and implemented by the Peace and Development Program for the Northern Border (PDP-FN), a specific program of the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System\(^\text{50}\) for the Ecuador-Colombia borderland. Ideally, I would have liked to follow up on the previous chapter and analyze how the Ecuadorian government, Ecuadorian military, and UNHCR implement their respective gender/northern border policies in the field. However, only PDP-FN has actually implemented specific gender programs and policies for the northern border territory. The Ecuadorian government has not succeeded in implementing a project geared towards gender and northern border dynamics despite previous attempts in doing so\(^\text{51}\). The Ecuadorian military is undergoing several institutional changes from within designed to include a gender perspective in their operations and regulations. However, gender community projects are not in place as of yet nor are the contemplated\(^\text{52}\). As a result, the Peace and Development Program for the

\(^{50}\) The Resident Coordinator is the person in charge of all of the United Nations Agencies (United Nations system) within a particular country. They are the official representatives of the United System in a particular country and their office has the mandate to coordinate all of the different UN agencies present for a specific country. Their office in Ecuador employs five people, including the director of the Peace and Development Program for the northern border mentioned.

\(^{51}\) In 2007, the current president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, declared the eradication of gender based violence as an official state policy. The state policy included setting up a pilot project to implement a centre for eradicating gender based violence along the Ecuador – Colombia borderland as well as in the Ecuador – Peru borderland. This project was to receive significant funds from United Nations Headquarters in New York, however due to governmental administrative obstacles the funds were never executed. There was a second initiative to gender mainstream Plan Ecuador, the Ecuadorian Northern Border policy. This initiative funded by UN women, consisted of hiring a gender expert to mainstream Plan Ecuador during nine months in 2008 (Interview A1: May 2012)

\(^{52}\) Neither is there a current debate regarding a change of policy to include women military officials on the northern border area nor a change of policy towards military men and civilian women outside the confines of military units.
Northern Border (PDP-FN) as part of the United Nations system, is the only actor analyzed in the previous chapter that has specific gender projects geared towards the northern border and its inhabitants, and whose programs have been systematically implemented since 2007.\(^{53}\)

In 2004, the Offices of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Ecuador created the Peace and Development Program for the Northern Border (PDP-FN). PDP-FN is a high level office set up to foment conflict prevention\(^{54}\) within the UN system in Ecuador and to support the Ecuadorian government in dealing with the “spill over effects” of the Colombian conflict. The designers of the program did not officially include gender as a topic for regional analysis, or take it seriously within their programming, until 2007. As Karin Anderson in June explained in a 2012 interview,

“Gender was not initially a priority for the project. The project manager believed there were more important topics to cover in the region than gender, but when funds were available, things changed, and gender was considered. However, since we did not know how to fit gender into conflict prevention we hired an international consultant to develop the gender and northern border study. Within the UN system and in Ecuador there was an expertise in gender and development, but we were looking to work within our mandate which is conflict prevention and the international framework for this was UNSCR 1325” – Interview Karin Anderson June 2011

To bridge the conceptual gap between gender and development and gender and conflict prevention, PDP-FN hired an international consultant. The consultant’s directive was to develop a gender analysis from the perspective of conflict prevention based on UNSCR

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\(^{53}\) European Union has heavily funded one project in 2011 with a gender focus (not to be confused with a gender project) called FOSIN (Fomento de Seguridad Integral en la Frontera Norte del Ecuador/ Fomenting Integral security on the northern border with Ecuador). The Spanish Development Fund and German development agencies have sporadically financed small projects in terms of funds and time periods. (Interview A2: June 2012)

\(^{54}\) Conflict prevention in this study is understood as “structural prevention in which factors do not trigger or enable conflict – such as the availability of small arms and light weapons, unregulated exploitation of natural resources, o the prejudicial practices of “hate media.” (O’Gorman 2011: 72).
1325 for the northern border, which resulted in a final report titled “Gender and the Northern Border”, in 2007. This analysis justified the creation of a gender and conflict prevention strategy for all the United Nations agencies in Ecuador from 2007 to 2010 and throughout the three provinces on the Northern Border.

The “gender and northern border” document created by the United Nations system in Ecuador (2007)\textsuperscript{55} describes four premises for the study in its introduction. First “it assumes that Ecuadorian society, has profound gender divisions”; second, that “in the northern border zone there exists serious tensions whose structural dimensions are most visible with regard to personal security, stemming from the spill over effects of the Colombian conflict and that specifically victimize women”; thirdly “human security and its diverse dimensions allow for an articulation of conflict sensitivity, gender, and a right to preventive development; fourth “ gender refers to the distinct social significance of being a man or a woman” (Genero y Frontera Norte, Naciones Unidas 2007: 8-9).

What these premises demonstrate is that the concepts of gender and the northern border were pre-determined, before the actual analysis was carried out. In this context, gender is defined as a binary, and women are victimized by the structural violence caused by men. The northern border is described as the source of the violence, a place where conflict dynamics occur because of the “other side”, meaning Colombia. The report alludes to a vague connection between territories, gender based violence and inequity, which is exacerbated by the findings of the study. The analysis explicitly concluded that the sexual

\textsuperscript{55} This was the only comprehensive and published gender analysis of the northern border, carried out by any international aid agency. (Interview A1 May 2012)
exploitation of young Colombian women along the borderline is due to the presence of oil workers and those pertaining to other industries. The report accentuates the connection between territory and gender based violence and discrimination by stating that the closer to the border, the higher the vulnerability of women and children’s rights because of the masculinisation of the territory. Demographic data is highlighted to demonstrate that from a certain age (18 years) there are significantly more men than women present along the northern border. The masculinisation mentioned in the report alludes to the change in demographic data caused by male migration to work in oil, mining, timber industries or the Ecuadorian military. This notion of masculinities is in line with the male perpetrator and male protector apparent in Chapter 1. For it is assumed in the report that the increased presence of men increments the demand for sex work and trafficking along the northern border.

The overarching policy framework for this document is the *International Framework of Women, Peace and Security* defined by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution calls on UN member states to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout all conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace negotiation, and peace-building activities. Additionally, it reaffirms women’s rights to be involved in decision-making as well as to hold leadership positions (Olonisakin 2011:2). In my earlier analysis of the Ecuadorian military in Chapter 1, I demonstrated the military’s desire to develop a national women’s, peace and security policy based on UNSCR 1325 for the Ecuador-Colombia borderland in the near future. The United Nations’ system, through its PDP-FN program, has already carried out a gender and northern border analysis and program based
on UNSCR 1325. Consequently, I wish to draw on the experience of PDP-FN program in implementing resolution UNSCR 1325 to argue that essentialized categories of the gender binary and space that were apparent by national and international stakeholders in Chapter 1 have been intensified by the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on the Ecuador – Colombia borderland.

UNSCR 1325 is intended for conflict and post-conflict scenarios and in this sense was not designed for the situation of the Ecuador – Colombia borderland. The border is not considered a conflict or post-conflict zone, but rather as a space affected by the “spill over effects” of the Colombian conflict where conflict prevention mechanisms are to be employed. Nevertheless, the consequences of an already fabricated relationship between gender, conflict prevention, and human security embedded in UNSCR 1325 needs static categories of space and people. The UN justifies the gendering of territories and bodies by UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888, and 1889) with the notion that conflict affects men and women differently. In this sense, when diplomats, aid workers, and the military are looking to see how the conflict affects women and men in a distinct manners, they automatically express preformed notions of “feminine” and “masculine”. This exacerbates the already existing essentialized gender binary highlighted in chapter 1.

The following quote illustrates this point:

“I have never heard of a gender expert asking how the northern border dynamics are affecting us (men and women) in the same way. We are told to look for the differences in how the northern border territory, the conflict on it, affects women and men in different ways, this because we have specific beneficiaries for the projects we implement. These beneficiaries are always women. When we think about gender on the border, we think of gender based violence, which in practice, meaning in our projects, we are really talking about violence against women.” – Interview A1 May 2012
Shepherd (2008) argues that gendered violence in UNSCR 1325 discourse is the violent reproduction of gender by “reproducing specific gender orders in dividing and controlling gender identities and groups through violence” (2008:15). Her analysis of UNSCR 1325 discourse demonstrates how this policy is directly implicated in the production of particular subjectivities, while, normalizing the stereotypes of “women victim prone to gender based violence” and the “male protector or perpetrator of violence” against women. This is the same configuration of gender order that was depicted in chapter 1 through map and policy analysis of Ecuadorian military, government and UNHCR.

Implementing UNSCR 1325 as a global human rights discourse in a local context also raises issues concerning its transnational nature. Like other international human rights frameworks, UNSCR 1325 is elaborated and held in a “deterritorialized and disembodied space” as defined by Sally Engel Merry (2006). She defines this as “the world of UN conferences, transnational NGO’s and academic, legal and social services”(Engel Merry 2006:29). Paradoxically, UNSCR is a deterritorialized and disembodied framework that demands a neatly defined territory and static categories of bodies. Engel Merry (2006) has argued that the translation\textsuperscript{56} of international frameworks requires that target populations be redefined according to the specific policy framework; I argue that this is also true for territory. UNSCR 1325 depends on both territory and gender relations being fixed categories. This is emphasized by Engel Merry (2006) in the following quote:

\textit{“Transnational programs and ideas are translated into local cultural terms, but this occurs at a relatively superficial level, as a kind of window dressing. The laws and programs acquire local...”}

\textsuperscript{56}Engel Merry (2006) describes the process of developing international frameworks in one setting and replicating them in another setting as appropriation whereas translation is the process of adjusting the rhetoric and structure of international frameworks to local circumstances.
symbolic elaboration, but retain their fundamental grounding in transnational human rights concepts of autonomy, individualism and equality. The programs are appropriate and translated but not fully indigenized. To blend completely with the social world is to lose the radical possibilities of human rights” (Engel Merry 2006: 177 – 178)

Hesitation on the part of international human rights frameworks to “blend completely” with local space and people for fear of losing its “radical possibilities” is exemplary of Shepherds (2008) notion of the violent reproduction of gender based violence within UNSCR 1325 discourse. It also demonstrates a clear imposition of international frameworks onto localized understandings of gender and territory that disregards any possibility of discrepancies in opinion. Not surprisingly, as is explicit in the following quote, there is local resistance by women’s groups of the northern border to UNSCR 1325 and to the gender and northern border report produced by PDP-FN in 2007:

No women’s group along the border space talks about resolution 1325 or any of the UN resolutions that talk about women and conflict such as 1820, 1888 and 1889. There was an outright rejection of the gender and northern border analysis done by the UN system in 2007 because it was written in a month by a foreign consultant, without the participation of any women’s group from the border. The opposition was due to how UNSCR 1325 would inevitably classify their homes as conflict areas. There is resistance by some of the women from local organizations to acknowledge that their territory is a conflict zone. They will talk about guerrilla, paramilitary and military, but will not acknowledge that the border is a conflict area. What they do talk about is violence against women or gender based violence as something that happens to all women in times of peace and war” – Interview Isabelle Auclair May 2012

In rejecting that their territory be denominated as a conflict zone, the women’s groups to which Auclair makes reference are in effect rejecting the impositions of UNSCR 1325 onto their space. Furthermore, it is striking that the women do not make a connection between gender based violence or violence against women and the political and military dynamics of the northern border. For these women, gender based violence is a priority but it is not defined by the territory they inhabit. In this sense, the agency of women along the northern
border should be defined in having the ability to decide how to categorize the space they live and inhabit. I argue that these women are denied agency not only when they are categorized as victims in UNSCR 1325 (Shepherd 2008), but also when outside actors impose the category of conflict-zone onto their territories. Both forms of translation of UNSCR 1325 determine material and symbolic consequences for their everyday lives.

**Chapter 2 conclusions:**

This chapter has argued that UNSCR 1325 exacerbates the essentialized categories of the gender binary and space that was apparent in the maps and policy of national and international stakeholders in Chapter 1. Through the experience of PDP-FN (Peace and Development Program for the Northern Border, Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Ecuador) in implementing UNSCR 1325 on the Ecuador–Colombia borderland I have explored the frictions inherent in translating this policy onto the northern border. The report on gender and the northern border, developed by PDP-FN and based on UNSCR 1325, was rejected by local women’s groups of the northern border on the basis that the report considered their everyday space a conflict zone. This example illustrates the ways in which UNSCR 1325 discourse not only constructs specific gender subjectivities (Shepherd 2008) but also depends upon static conceptualisations of territory: either as a conflict or post-conflict situation. This is problematic for the Ecuador-Colombia borderland, which is neither a conflict nor post-conflict scenario but rather is better described as a recipient of the “spill over effects” of the Colombian conflict. Finally, the local women’s groups do not make a direct connection between the northern border and gender based violence, which was the principal premise found in the maps and policy of the
Ecuadorian government, military and UNCHR in Chapter 1. In this sense, local women’s groups question the gendered construction of the women victim role as upheld by official national and international stakeholders. This section’s conclusion will now be further explored through the experience of bi-national indigenous women living on the Ecuador-Colombia borderland.

Chapter 3
The Eperara Bi-national women’s alliance, an example of feminist geopolitics on the Ecuador- Colombia borderland

In chapters 1 and 2, map and policy analysis demonstrated that official stakeholders, as well as the women, peace and security international framework (UNSCR 1325), essentialize gender, spaces and bodies along the northern border. This final chapter focuses on the Eperara, a bi-national indigenous group that lives along the Ecuador – Colombia border, and the exclusion they face from the dominant gendered discourse of space and bodies. Anzaldua (1987) and Chicano/s studies have stressed the need to include ethnicity and race on the borderland and speak of those who live “inbetween” the border. This is the case of the Eperara – binational indigenous group who live on both sides of the border and do not uphold the Westphalia territorial border, but rather oscillate between official border territories within their indigenous conception of space. To show the disjunction between policy discourse and the everyday dynamics of the people of the northern border, this study goes further onto finer and coarser scales and in doings so, draws attention to alternate notions of space and gender occurring on the border.
Indigenous women, men, children, and elders are not included in the essentialized gender identities on the border. They were neither visible in the maps or policy nor in my interviews with Ecuadorian government, military, and United Nations System representatives. Indigenous issues were “pending issues”, meaning something to be dealt with at a non-specified future moment. Gender issues along the Colombia – Ecuador borderland were translated to mean working with women victims of violence, but this did not include indigenous women. Meanwhile, in mainstream approaches above mentioned, the bi-national was related to nation states and not to indigenous peoples whose communities live on both sides of the territorial border. The following quote illustrates this point:

“We were completely ignorant of indigenous issues and bi-national indigenous groups were never discussed. We thought that doing gender along the northern border was a big deal, indigenous women would have been an extra.” – Interview: Karin Anderson June 2012.

As Karin Anderson mentions, indigenous issues were not addressed within the PDP-FN program. This quote demonstrates the lack of knowledge concerning indigenous issues where bi-national indigenous groups were ignored and indigenous women were considered a disposable topic. The exclusion of bi-national indigenous women and men in official discourse and policy illustrates the multiple negative consequences involved in gendering space and bodies. Cockburn (1998) mentions that essentialism “operates through stereotypes that fix identity in eternal dualisms: woman victim, male warrior; trusted compatriot, degenerate foreigner” (1998:14). The dualism of male perpetrator/male military official and female victim in the Ecuador – Colombia borderland explored in chapter 1 is an
example of the fixed dichotomous identities that demand a fixed notion of territory, as explored in chapter 2. In this chapter I add one more element to this dynamic and address the fact that gender essentialism of territory and bodies requires a fixed identity regarding ethnicity as well. Because in fact, the woman victim subject who official stakeholders create at the northern border is not only defined by being a victim; she is also ethnically defined. As is evident from the interviews and policy documents, the “woman victim” is of Colombian origin or non-ethnically identified Ecuadorian.

“We have not addressed indigenous women on the borderland. Normally we work with Colombian women because they are part of the refugee /asylum seeker population that crosses over from Colombia to Ecuador. What we do know about indigenous women is what is always said in policy and academic circles in Ecuador. Indigenous women are marginalized in three ways: because they are women, because they are indigenous, and because they are poor.” – Interview: Isabelle Auclair May 2012

This notion of “triple marginalization” is often raised in discussion with indigenous women’s struggles (Rabasa, 2008). Through this notion, indigenous women are also essentialized based on class, gender and ethnicity and because they are thought to be more prone to gender based violence than white or mestizo women in Ecuador (Bueno, 2009). National policy makers across sectors and even within Ecuadorian academia (to a lesser extent) consider indigenous women to be more affected by gender based violence based on both cultural assumptions from the dominant mestizo population and statistical data57 showing indigenous women most affected in comparison to women of other ethnic

57 (Endemain 2004, INEC 2011) Both of these national governmental databases demonstrate that indigenous women suffer more from gender based violence than the rest of the Ecuadorian female population.
groups (Bueno, 2009). This stereotype, however, is not upheld by national and international stakeholders and therefore does not translate into policy or maps of the northern border. It is paradoxical that although indigenous women are generally thought to fit the stereotype of “victim” of violence against women most closely, than indigenous women would be the ideal candidates for gender policy of official stakeholders along the northern border and therefore included in policy. What then is particular about the exclusion of indigenous women from the gender discourse along the northern border? I argue that bi-national indigenous groups are also affected by the dominant gender spatial discourse, but that indigenous women respond in ways that distance themselves categorically from the dominant discourse due to their distinct perspective on the cultural and political landscape of the northern border and gender dynamics on this space. In comparison to the fixed identities and space found in dominant gender discourse for the northern border by official stakeholders, indigenous women express fluid conceptions of space in which their connection to land is paramount but does not demand an essentializing gendering of identities. For this reason indigenous women do not serve the strategic and nationalistic project of gendering space and bodies that is upheld by official stakeholders and are consequently excluded. Bi-national indigenous women do not fit within the “woman victim role” in the northern border, nor do they share the notion of the nation-state border of the Ecuadorian government or military. This makes them unfit for the nationalistic project of upholding the nation-state border and in no need of the “male protector” represented by the Ecuadorian military official. In the following segment of this chapter I aim to dismantle the dominant gendered-spatial discourse by animating the specific narratives of the Eperara indigenous group along the northern border, in particular that of Eperara indigenous women.
The Eperara nationality was officially recognized by the Ecuadorian state on the 5th of November 2001 (Carrasco, 2010). Originally from the southern Choco region of Colombia, the Eperara indigenous group live in Ecuador, Colombia and Panama. Since 1946, the Eperara have immigrated to Ecuador initially for economic reasons and later to escape the Colombian conflict (Carrasco, 2010). In Ecuador, the Eperara families settled in different parts of the Esmeraldas along the northern border until 2001, when a local church helped the Eperara acquire 347 hectares in the Borbon region of the Esmeraldas province (Carrasco, 2010). The territory, denominated Santa Rosa, is a communal landholding, whereby each family is given a parcel of 3.5 hectares (Carrasco, 2010). Their community sustains itself through agriculture and fishing on the river Cayapas, and has no further economic recourse. According to the community’s records, there are 600 people for an area of 347 hectares; 53.6% women, 46.7% men; and 37.8% of the population is below the age of twelve

Within the Esmeraldas province, official stakeholders currently consider the area that the Eperara inhabit to be the most dangerous zone along the northern border. The area around Santa Rosa is home to the most important drug, arms and people trafficking routes leaving South America towards Europe and the US. Esmeraldas has the highest homicide rate in Ecuador (United Nations Special Rapporteur 2010) and hosts the highest number of paramilitaries and organized crime groups. However, in the interviews carried out with Eperara women and male leaders, the most pressing issues where not directly related to the

58 http://www.naese.org/
59 Interview Molina June 2012
60 Interview Molina June 2012
drug trade, homicide rates, or presence of paramilitaries. Rather they cited the following issues: the pollution of their land by government development projects; the constant influx of Colombian Eperara fleeing the Colombian conflict; the need to acquire more land in order to assure the survival of the Eperara indigenous group; and according specifically to the Eperara indigenous women’s group, their inclusion in bi-national Eperara meetings.

The land inhabited by the Eperara is surrounded by mono-crops such as the African Palm and is affected by deforestation by transnational timber companies (Ecuadorinmediato, July 23rd 2012). Both of these agro-industries cause the contamination of the river Cayapas and the deterioration of the soil in Santa Rosa, issues that have been ongoing since the Eperara acquired the land in 2001. What is different now is that further upstream towards Colombia in land inhabited by the Chachi indigenous nationality, the Ecuadorian government is carrying out a large-scale mining project. According to the Eperara men and women interviewed, this mining project is seriously polluting the river where they bathe and fish for food.

“We can not complain about our situation to anyone or any authority because it is the government that is contaminating the river. Who could we complain to?” – Interview A5 June 2012

Given their reliance on the land and river as a means of daily subsistence, government mining initiatives that further contaminate their environment constitute a major problem for the Eperara. In this sense, the government map which was reviewed in Chapter 1, and that highlights the development discourse for this space, is relevant to the everyday life of the Santa Rosa community. Even though the Eperara were absent from the government map in Chapter 1 and its respective policy, the material consequences are of great importance to
the Eperara. This reaffirms Harley’s point that “maps are pre-eminently a language of power, not of protest” (1988: 301). The Eperara are not on the map because they do not serve the interest of the powerful, but rather they resist the activities that appear on the map. The map thus reflects the interests of the powerful on the Eperara’s land and simultaneously represents the obstacles to protesting governmental initiatives along the northern border. The following quote demonstrates how this is also similar for the Eperara’s relationship with the Ecuadorian military;

“The Military did not allow us to campaign against the government in March of this year. They told us that if we were to organize and take a bus to Quito, they would imprison us. So we didn’t take the bus and go to Quito to protest, because we need the military for protection. It’s better to have them, then not to have them at all” – Interview A7 May 2012

This excerpt demonstrates the control exerted on the mobility and agency of the Eperara people by the military for the purpose of the government’s national agenda of development based on extraction of natural resources (Martinez, 2011). Massey (1993) argues that different groups of people have distinct relationships to mobility; she calls this “power-geometry”. She highlights the production of space through power relations and affirms that mobility is political. In this case, the accounts of the Eperara reaffirm the power relation between the government and the military that was apparent in policy and interviews. The mobility of the Eperara is determined by the political agenda of the Ecuadorian government, which has systematically denied indigenous groups the right to protest against government extraction of natural resources (Martinez, 2011).

The movement of people along the borderland is a contentious issue that renders the biopolitical management of populations and geopolitical management of territory an
inseparable matter (Hyndman, 2012). In other words, the control of land and its resources is intimately connected to the control of the people on that land. This affects the mobility of the Eperara between Colombia and Ecuador:

“The Military is not allowing our brothers and sisters to come to Ecuador. They are asking them for documents. They don’t understand we are from the same community. For us an Eperara is not Colombian or Ecuadorian, he or she is primarily Eperara, the border does not exist for us” – Interview A5 May 2012

According to the CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) there are six Indigenous Bi-national groups on the Ecuador – Colombian borderland: Eperara, Pasto, Siona, Cofane, Awa and Chachi. The Eperara, like the other five bi-national groups mentioned, live on both sides of the borderland and do not conform to the notion of the Westphalian nation-state border enforced by the Ecuadorian government, military, and the United Nations. Boundaries are not necessary for the conceptualization of place (Massey 1993,) and for the Eperara the notion of place is based on social and kinship relations.

Their ethnic identity transcends nationality based on territorial borders and so the Eperara do not wish to be restricted in pertaining to only side of the border. However, despite a different notion of the territorial nation – state border, the Eperara are not immune to the dynamics of the northern border. Due to an escalation of violence on the Colombia side of the border, an average of 10 Eperara “Colombian” members are crossing the border to

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61 http://www.conaie.org/
62 Interview A8 May 2012
settle in the Ecuadorian side on a monthly basis. By crossing over to the Ecuadorian side, members of the Eperara are recognizing the territorial border, because it serves as an outlet from which to escape the conflict in Colombia. Nevertheless, as was analysed in chapter 1, indigenous displaced peoples, refugees and asylum seekers are not present in UNCHR map, policy or statistical analysis. This means that even when the Eperara uphold a static territorial notion of the border, their indigenous identity still excludes them from the dominant discourse. For even though the Eperara don’t share the same conceptions of territory and identity they do share a reality that they are less subject to violence on the Ecuador side of the border, that is upheld by official stakeholders.

As a political response to the lack of recognition by national and international stakeholders mentioned above, the Eperara have emphasized strengthening bi-national Eperara relations between Ecuador and Colombia. The first Eperara bi-national meeting was held on the 21-22 of May 2010 and has met yearly for each subsequent year. The Eperara political demands are analogous to those of indigenous movements in the rest of the Andean Region in that they encompass issues of self-determination, claims for land, and different levels of autonomy in regards to justice and health systems (Selverston 1994; Van Cott 1994). In Ecuador and Bolivia, indigenous demands generally focus on issues of self-determination,

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63 Interview A7 May 2012
64 The bi-national Plan of 2010 included in its agenda the following points: Create unity within the Eperara Siapidada people of Colombia. Ecuador and Panama with the objective of creating one sole Eperara pueblo; work to obtain territory for the Eperara nationalities; work for intercultural health and justice systems; work together to demand the recognition of their collective rights.
which range from campaigns for land titles to the elaboration of bilingual or intercultural education programs amongst others (Van Cott 1994; Radcliffe 2002).

The important issues for the Eperara community are shared by all members of the Eperara community, however there is one major concern specific to the Eperara women. The main concern for the Eperara women’s groups is that they are excluded from the Eperara bi-national political meetings. The bi-national meetings on the Ecuador and Colombia side have only included male leaders and explicitly excluded indigenous women as the following quote demonstrates:

“We are told that we cannot participate because the women in the Colombian side do not participate. This is the reason why we want to go to the other side to teach Eperara men, women, youth and children about gender equity. We want to know what is happening to the women on the other side, how are they affected by the conflict. We can only do this if we participate politically and create political strategies together” – Interview A5 June 2012

The nation state border between Ecuador and Colombia has affected Eperara gender dynamics in relation to political access at the bi-national level. The border has succeeded in prohibiting indigenous women from participating in the bi-national meetings, illustrating the effects that Anzaldúa (1987) mentions towards the borderlands inhabitants. Hyndman states that international borders are sites that “serve to naturalize difference, refuse political alliances, and obscure commonalities between discrete space and linked oppression (2004:310),” which clearly extends to the case of the Eperara. Despite the fact that the wider Eperara community (men and women) does not uphold the divisive border from, the symbolism of the territorial border permeates through their bi-national social organizing and creates divisions within the community in regards to political access and based on
gender. Consequently, the most pressing issue on the agenda of the Eperara autonomous women–only group is to create a bi-national women’s group and teach gender equality to the Eperara community on the Colombia side.

The actions of the Eperara women speak of resistance within sites of resistance. The Eperara indigenous women are not waiting for the state, the military, international agencies. Nore are they waiting for the Eperara men. Rather they are coming together in non-violent manner for political participation. This is an example of alter-geopolitics Koopman (2011) or feminist geopolitics accomplished through the coming together of people to create alternative securities. The Eperara women are joining together despite systematic exclusion from the Ecuadorian government, military, United Nations, and the men in their community. In this sense they are challenging the borderline by contesting material domination and dominate representations of gendered space (Koopman 2011).

The creation of the bi-national women’s alliance is what Radcliffe, Loaurie and Andolina (2002) define as the “new socio-spatial relations which challenge the politics of scale played out”. This initiative is an example of the political force of the Eperara women on the Ecuadorian side in solidarity with the Eperara women on the Colombia side. By fostering bi-national relations, the Eperara women are themselves pushing back and moving rather than being moved from above (Koopman 2011). This is exemplary of Routledge’s (2003) geo-politics from below, which challenges the hegemony of the state and elites in both material geopolitical power and representations. In regards to gender in the Eperara community, a representative of the Eperara’s women’s groups shared the following with me:
“Gender equity is understood by our community. The elders, the young children and the men understand it. We are going to go to the other side to teach men, women and the children about gender equity. We are going to create a bi-national women’s alliance, along with the men, because it is not worth creating a separate mechanism. What we have on the Ecuador side is not perfect, but gender equity is respected and understood by the majority, on this side” – Interview A5 June 2012

Eperara Women speak of gender equality, as an optimal relationship that includes children, youth and elders. In this sense, gender is not confined only to Eperara men or women but is part of the collective identity of the Eperara. In my interviews with them, Eperara woman distanced themselves from women-only oriented politics for their community and stressed that the bi-national women’s alliance was to be created in conjunction with the men. This contrasts to the type of gendering of identities, deployed by the Ecuadorian military, government and international aid agencies, which treat the category of “woman” uncritically without accounting for culture, nation and race (Radcliffe, Lourie and Andolina, 2002). This is also distinct from the women, peace and security policy represented by UNSCR 1325, which addresses gender based violence prevention and eradication mechanisms as the most important gender element to work on in conflict zones.

The Eperara women are not primarily concerned with gender based violence or violence against women. Rather, political participation, being able to participate in the bi-national Eperara meetings, is the main priority of the Eperara women’s group. Epera women’s collective agency is a result of defining their own issues and not those imposed by institutional gender and northern border policy. In highlighting political participation at the bi-national level, Eperara women challenge the process of essentializing binaries of
male/female, which would have otherwise placed them in the women victim role by dominant gender–spatial discourse.

In regards to space, the Eperara women trespass the confines of the territorial nation state border and create a place as Massey (1995) defines “a space imbued with meanings”. Creating a bi-national women’s alliance transforms the borderland from a divisive element in the community to a place as defined by Hyndman (2011), where women move beyond past experiences of conflict and transform bodies and space. The Eperara women are reconstructing the borderland by enacting an alter-geopolitics that recreates gender dynamics between Eperara women and the larger Eperera trans-national community. In doing so they are striping the nation-state border of its colonialist and imperialist divisive force, and aligning it with bi-national notions of kingship across space. For the Eperara women have not only protected themselves from the monolithic gendered violence upheld and imposed from official stakeholders, but presented real alternatives for recreating gender and space. In this manner the Eperara women are challenging the notions of gender and borderland as held by national and international stakeholders. This, in turn, has transformed the borderland into a place of gendered resistance and solidarity. The Eprara women through their alter-geopolitics are a glimpse of the possibilities that their actions and perspectives offer the whole of the Eperara community and other indigenous bi-national groups along the Ecuador–Colombia borderland.
Conclusions Chapter 3:

This final chapter has built on the gendering of space and bodies demonstrated through map and policy analysis in chapter 1 and enforced through discourse analysis of UNSCR 1325 in chapter 2. This chapter has added the element of ethnicity to the borderland, keeping in mind Anzaldúa’s (1987) and Chicano/a studies’ claims that the borderland must speak of ethnicity and race. I highlight the case of those who live “inbetween” (Anzaldúa 1987) the borderland, as is the case of the Eperara bi-national community who live on both sides of the borderland and do not uphold Westphalian notions of the territorial border. I illustrate how indigenous people are invisibilized from official border discourse and how indigenous women, in not representing the women victim role, do not fit the dominant stereotype and are therefore, excluded from the official gender border discourse. In order to conclude this study, I now focus on the feminist geopolitics (alter-geopolitics) that the Eperara women are creating by establishing a bi-national women’s alliance. This feminist geopolitics challenges the notion of the territorial border state, while questioning the gendered-spatial conceptions upheld by official stakeholders, as well as by Eperara men.

Conclusions

This study has made the case that the Ecuadorian military, the Ecuadorian government and the United Nations system along the Ecuador – Colombia borderland create static categories of people and space based on an essentialized gender binary. Intensified by the women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325) framework, the complexity of the northern border is boiled down to a linear and simplistic idea of space and bodies. On this over-simplified rendering of the situation, “woman are victim to gender based violence” caused
by the “male perpetrator” and protected by the “male military official” due to an imagined geography of the masculinisation of the northern border. In the near future, the Ecuadorian military is planning on developing the first women, peace and security UNSCR 1325 action plan for Ecuador in which the spatial focus is the northern border. I fear that the essentialized gender discourse brought to light in this study will prevail, effectively enforcing the negative consequences that this study has highlighted onto bi-national indigenous groups and local women’s groups. The dominant gender view of the Ecuador-Colombia borderland upheld by official stakeholders displaces ethnicity despite the borderland being home to six bi-national indigenous groups. Within this context men are not considered possible “victims” of gender based violence dynamics; simultaneously, women are stripped of agency through their primary representation as “victims” of male-induced violence.

The Eperara bi-national women’s alliance depicts the disjunction between gender border policy and the gender priorities of the Eperara women’s group. The Eperara women do not define themselves in terms of gender based violence, but rather in terms of political participation. This is analogous to the women’s group, mentioned in chapter 2, who reject the United Nations gender and northern border report because of the ways in which it misrepresents their space and their multiple identities. In this sense there is a gendered resistance to an imposed gender binary of bodies and space where local women do not make the connection between space and gender based violence that is assumed in UNSCR 1325 and by the Ecuadorian military, Ecuadorian government and United Nations.
One solution to the problem of essentializing space and bodies within future policy making and academic analysis of the northern border lies in the choice of methods and academic frameworks employed by official stakeholders. Policy making in Ecuador, as defined by interviews with members of SENPLADES, depends on the outcomes of regional diagnostics of space. It is in this process of institutional spatial analysis therefore, that feminist geography - understood as the gendering of space in which there is a spatialized construction of femininities and masculinities - should be addressed. An envisioning of space as cultural and political landscapes would assist both in interrogating the dynamics that are normally ignored within traditional territorial planning methods and in looking at the border in ways other than as a bounded nation state. Feminist geopolitics would deliberately focus the analysis on a multiplicity of scales from the nation-state to the everyday lives of the people that inhabit the northern border. This would draw out variables of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, age, immigration status and the endless number of identities and situations that make up the lives of border inhabitants. Feminist IR could contribute in deconstructing the essentialized gender binary through accounts of the negative consequences of this perspective in processes of militarization and in implementing UNSCR 1325 without adequately contextualizing the framework onto local space. Finally, a feminist methodological approach, in which there is a critical examination of micropolitics, an acknowledgment of complex subjectivities as well as social locations and where the researcher is accountable to knowledge claims is coherent with third world feminism, feminist IR and feminist geopolitics as approached in earlier sections of this study.
**Future Research**

In this study I have highlighted the consequences of the imposition of preconceived gendered notions of bodies and space onto bi-national indigenous peoples along the Ecuador – Colombia borderland. Within a more extensive and in-depth analysis of the negative effects of this discourse on the northern border, I would conduct interviews and focus groups with larger and more distinct groups of men and women of other ethnicities. In this way I could further dismantle the essentialized gender border discourse from the everyday lives of a larger pool of inhabitants that live on northern border. This would in turn give for a greater variety of perspectives and arguments which have been precluded by the scope of this study.

The Ecuador–Colombia borderland also makes for an interesting case example for a further combining of Chicano/a border studies, queer theory and feminist geopolitics. Because Chicana/o studies place ethnicity at the heart of the border (in conjunction with subaltern studies, sexuality, post-colonial studies and politics of mobility) further interdisciplinary work with feminist geopolitics would make for an interesting feminist border analysis. Utilising a queer theoretical perspective, furthermore, would challenge any future study to consider analyses from an explicitly non-gender binary and anti-heteronormative standpoint, calling for a new set of questions regarding space and bodies. Queer, Chican/o and feminist geopolitics are critical of fixed symbolic and material borders towards bodies, space and politics. I believe they could take discourse on gender policy and analysis in conflict zones into unexplored areas both in academia and in policy initiatives. Finally, I believe that this would be of particular importance to other complex border sites in Latin
America such as the Mexico/US, Mexico/Guatemala and Colombia/Venezuela border, where similar dynamics as those mentioned regarding the Ecuador – Colombia borderland are currently taking place. The regional dynamics within Latin America call forth a dire need for feminist conceptions of material and symbolic borders.
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**Appendix 1: Interview Contacts**

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Ecuadorian Military: 3  
Ecuadorian Government: 3  
Eperara Nationality: 4  

UNHCR: United Nations Agency for Refugees

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<td>Senior Program Assistant for UNHCR Ecuador</td>
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<td>May 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cessar Cherrez</td>
<td>Gender Focal Point for UNHCR Ecuador</td>
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PDP-FN Peace and Development Program

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<td>Karin Anderson</td>
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UN Women

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<td>June 5(^{th}), 2012</td>
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**Ecuadorian Government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ahmad Nicolas Amhaz Ruiz</td>
<td>Director of Investment and Evaluation for the Northern border “Zone 1” SENPLADES Technical Bi-national committee focal point (gender and indigenous issues)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>July 21(^{st}), 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilo Molina</td>
<td>Consultant for the Northern Border cooperation table for SETECI (Technical Secretariat for International)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>June 25(^{th}), 2012</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cooperation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Consultant for Plan Ecuador – Ecuadorian State policy for the Northern Border</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>June 10th, 2012</td>
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Eperara Nationality

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Post</th>
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<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Eperara Women and Family affairs Leader</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>June 4th, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Eperara Women’s Movement representative</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>June 16th, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>Eperara leader of Bi-National Male Alliance</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>May 4th, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8</td>
<td>Eperara member</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>May 25, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Interview Procedure and Questions

Introduction:

My name is Sofia Zaragocin I am an MPhil candidate for Multi-disciplinary gender studies at the University of Cambridge. I would like to interview you for my dissertation topic: Gender, Ethnicity and Geopolitics at the borderland, which looks at how gender is conceived in relation to territory and people from official stakeholders and bi-national indigenous groups on the northern border. You have been chosen for this study, because of your particular (institutional, academic, everyday) relationship to the northern border of Ecuador.

The information collected will remain in the Geography Library of the University of Cambridge for a period of 5 years. If at any moment, you do not want to continue with the interview, please just let me know and we will stop.

Before we start if you can answer the following questions:

1. Can I tape record the interview?
2. Would you like anonymity when the interview is used in the dissertation?
3. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about the dissertation or myself?

General Questions:

Ecuadorian Military

1. What is the situation of the northern border in regards to violence, displacement and relationship between civilians and military?
2. How are bi-national relationships in this moment?
3. Are bi-national indigenous groups taken into account?
4. What is the gender concept used in the Ecuadorian Military?
5. What is the intercultural concept used in the Ecuadorian Military?
6. How is gender being implemented in the Ecuadorian Military?
7. Why have there been recent initiatives to work on gender issues within the Ecuador Military?

8. What have been the obstacles and advances in implementing a gender focus in the Ecuadorian Military? Along the northern border, is it similar or distinct?

9. Why are only military men allowed to serve along the northern border, and military women aren’t?

Ecuadorian Government

1. What are the objectives of your particular government entity/program on the northern border?

2. How is gender conceived for your institution?

3. How is inter-culturism conceived for your Institution?

4. Is there a particular specific notion of gender and inter-culturism for the northern border?

5. How are bi-national relationship conceived?

6. How are bi-national indigenous peoples taken into account?

7. Are maps used by your institution to plan or understand the northern border? Can I have a copy of those maps?

Eperara

1. What is it like to live on the northern border and in Esmeraldas in particular?

2. How long have you lived in Santa Rosa?

3. How many Eperara members cross over to Ecuador on a monthly basis?

4. How would you describe gender for the Eperara?

5. What are the priorities of the Eperara women’s alliance?

6. How is the bi-national conceived?

7. Where is the border for the Eperara?

8. What does the border signify?
9. What is the relationship between the Eperara and the government, military and international aid agencies?

10. What are the advantages and obstacles in living on the northern border?

**United Nations (UNHCR/PDP-FN/UN WOMEN)**

1) What was the gender concept used for your specific agency/program?

2) With what civil society groups did your agency/program work with?

3) What are the gender and northern border dynamics along the northern border?

4) How were inter-ethnic relationships considered in your agency/program?

5) How is the bi-national conceived?

6) Are bi-national indigenous groups taken into account by your particular agency/program?

7) Do you use maps or any other instrument to understand the territory? Can I have a copy of those maps?
Appendix 3: Institutional Documents Reviewed


_Ecuadorian Constitution_. Quito, Ecuador (2008)


_Mandate of indigenous women of the Department of Nariño* (2011)

Conclusions of the first Bi-national meeting of the Eperara Nationality. Santa Rosa Community, Esmeraldas – Ecuador 21-22 May (2010)


_Cooperamos SETECI* (Technical secretariat of International Cooperation), Quito (2011)


UNHCR Sexual violence strategy (2012-2014)

UNHCR National Statistics for Ecuador (2011-2012)


SENPLADES (National secretariat of planning and development of Ecuador) *territorial diagnostic of Zone 1: Northern Border*.

_Plan de Buen Vivir/ National Plan of Well being* (2009-2013)