

Chapter 6

Boundary as a Dot

Introduction

The overall aim of the thesis is to make an effective intervention in current debates on the boundary from the perspective of categories. For this purpose, chapters 1 and 2 investigated the political significance of categories in relation to state boundaries. Reviewing BM scholarship, chapter 2 identified that, although BM scholarship is successful in addressing the implications of categories for resistance and control, it fails to explore the implications of continual reliance on category-vocabularies. This persistent reliance on categories derives from contexts where bordering practices no longer support the image of the boundary as a line. What then is the implication of this persistence on the image of the boundary? If the tenacity of category-vocabularies is what the diffused bordering practices do, it might be possible that the focus on this tenacity is a key to investigate the image of the boundary which is no longer imagined as a line.

On this basis, chapters 3, 4 and 5 looked at migrant worker activism in Japan to examine various instances where people resort to categories of citizen and foreigner. The examination on migrant activism proved to be productive as it pointed to two important findings. Firstly, categories of citizen and foreigner were used to identify who the participants in activism were and regulate how they behaved according to the categories given to them. This was especially demonstrative in chapters 3 and 4. In both cases, the

Boundary as a Dot

category of citizen was associated with action and speech, while that of foreigner with passivity and silence. Chapter 3 showed how this was done to silence people identified as foreigners only to increase the legitimacy of people identified as citizens. Chapter 4 demonstrated the FWC union members setting up an independent union to challenge the helpless and voiceless status assigned to them in the Nambu. Secondly, all three chapters demonstrated that the categories of citizen and foreigner failed to identify people by giving names. Both chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated that people pretended to be a part of the categories of citizen (in chapter 4) and foreigner (in chapter 3), while chapter 5 showed that people switch their roles as citizens and foreigners depending on the context.

The aim of the present chapter is twofold. Firstly, it aims to develop a reading of the tenacity of categories by using the findings of the previous three chapters. Secondly, it aims to translate the tenacity of categories into the image of the boundary, so that it addresses what the boundary might look like if it is no longer a line. The second aim is based on a reading developed as a result of the first aim, and in this respect, both of these two aims contribute to the overall aim of the thesis. In a way, the present chapter aims to translate, figuratively speaking, the perspective of categories back into the debates on state boundaries.

In order to achieve the first aim, the chapter will begin by returning to the findings of the previous three chapters to examine the implications of these findings for boundaries. I will argue that the findings of the previous chapters point to the need to regard category-vocabularies as a

Boundary as a Dot

representational tool and develop a reading of categories which embodies the gap between what categories represent and what they fail to represent.

In the second section, I will develop a reading of Alain Badiou to explain how the representational failure can be theorised. I will argue that Badiou uses the mathematical concept of the void in set theory to show each category, or group, in his words, always entails something that cannot be categorised as a part of the group. To categorise is to expose the failure of categorisation. In this way, the idea put forward by Badiou elucidates the gap between what can be classified and given names and what cannot be named, that characterises categories.

Having identified, with help from Badiou, how the slippage of representation can be understood, I will move on to develop the image of the boundary that reflects the representational slippage. This is the task of the third section. In this section, I will propose the image of the boundary as a dot and explore the implication of this image on resistance with reference to Badiou. Reflecting on resistance from the image of the boundary as a dot is crucial because it was the BM scholarship's approach to categories as generating resistance that pointed to the tenacity of categories, or drawing a boundary-as-a-line, to begin with. I will reflect how the image of the boundary as a dot might suggest the need to rethink how resistance is currently understood in BM scholarship.

The final section of the chapter will further investigate the implication of the image of the boundary as a dot on community, with reference to Jean-Luc Nancy. As I discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, one

Boundary as a Dot

dominant image attached to the political community of the state is bounded community, a community surrounded by the borderline. If complexity of bordering practices challenges this image of the boundary as a line, and what comes out from the diffusing bordering practices is a dot, surely we need to rethink what we mean by the political community of the state. Therefore, the final section explores how we might image a community through the image of the boundary as a dot.

Tenacity of Boundary Realised in the Representational Slippage

Category Politics between the Pedagogical and the Performative

As Bhabha argues, a bounded community, what he calls the nation, is written in the split between the pedagogical and the performative.¹ For a community to maintain its unity to bind people together, it provides a story to justify and corroborate its unity. People are *taught* to be a part of it, as ‘the historical “object” of a nationalist pedagogy’.² Crucially, they are not just taught but they make sense of who they are on their own. Their stories might also expose the heterogeneity of themselves, disturbing the otherwise simplified story of a community. In this respect, the people are also ‘not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address’.³ In this respect, a community is also a site where people

¹ Bhabha, Homi K. (1994) *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge).

² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.145.

³ Ibid.

Boundary as a Dot

engage in the production of their own stories. What we call 'the' people is not a mere signifier of the nationalist pedagogy of who they are, but is articulated in 'an ambivalent *movement* between the discourses of pedagogy and the performative'.⁴ A bounded community is produced, or narrated, in Bhabha's term, in this gap between the pedagogical and the performative.

By looking at how people engage in category-vocabularies, the previous three chapters looked at the ways in which people played their parts in this gap between, borrowing Bhabha's terms, the pedagogical and the performative. As I argued in chapters 1 and 2, categories are the language of the state. They are vocabularies available to the state to make the movement of people apprehensible to it. Categories are not labels to be applied objectively to those possessing these names, as if people called citizens and foreigners existed a priori. Instead they are a device for the state to identify what the movement means to the state boundaries. By employing different sorts of statist boundaries such as voluntary and involuntary, regular and irregular, and inside and outside, human mobility is made into *the* movement of *the* people, so that their movements become comprehensible to a particular view of the world where lined borderlines constitute the political community of the state. Otherwise unnameable movements are translated, so to speak, into the vocabularies available to the state: such as the movement of refugees and that of the trafficked. In this way, categories reflect the state's desire to produce, what Nyers calls 'a unitary political subject',⁵ in its bounded

⁴ Ibid., p.149.

⁵ Nyers, Peter. (2010) 'Dueling Designs: The Politics of Rescuing Dual Citizens', *Citizenship Studies*, Vol.14, No.1, p.59.

Boundary as a Dot

community. By assigning various labels to people, the state captures people by ‘impart[ing] particular kinds of subjectivities’.⁶ In this way, categories manifest the pedagogical understanding of what one is in a community surrounded by a line, and such understanding is imposed upon otherwise nameless people.

At the same time, categories are also produced through the performative in the sense that they are necessary tools for people to make sense of the world. As Cloke and Johnston aptly articulate, in order to make sense of the world we are living in, categories are there for us: ‘to survive in the world we simplify it [via categories]’.⁷ People make sense of the world through categories. ‘Without such simplifications, societies could not exist: they could not operate without placing people or things into categories’.⁸ If categories manifest the state’s desire to produce a graspable political subject, people engage in this desire by using categories on their own and making sense of the bounded world view produced by these categories. In this respect, categories are an articulation of the pedagogical and the performative: they reflect the pedagogical understanding of a world divided by state boundaries as well as an interpretation of such a world with dividing lines.

Therefore, as I argued in chapters 1 and 2 in particular, the analysis of how people rely on categories via the movement between the pedagogical and the performative leads to an examination of how people play their parts in the

⁶ Anderson, Bridget, Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright. (2010) ‘Editorial: Why No Borders?’, *Refuge: Canada’s Journal on Refugees*, Vol.26, No.2, p.6.

⁷ Cloke, Paul and Ron Johnston (2005) ‘Deconstructing Human Geography’s Binaries’, in *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography’s Binaries* (London: Sage), p.1.

⁸ Cloke and Johnston, ‘Deconstructing Human Geography’s Binaries’, p.2.

Boundary as a Dot

tenacious reliance on the image of the boundary as a line. Since categorisation is what the boundary as a line, or bordering, does, the persistent reliance on category-vocabularies is reflective of the persistent dividing practice of the lined boundaries. By looking at instances where category-vocabularies, in this case, categories of citizen and foreigner, were used in migrant activism, my intention was to examine closely what was going on when the image of the boundary as a line is continually relied upon. This was designed to examine the tenacity of the boundary-as-a-line image from the perspective of the politics of categories, of the ways in which people engage in the part played by category-vocabularies.

Categories as the Signifier

The previous three chapters demonstrated that people engaged in the politics of categories in two different ways. Firstly, the participants in migrant activism used categories as the signifier, a device of identification. Categories were used to identify whether they were citizens and/or foreigners. Having identified with these categories, people were bordered by a statist boundary which delineated the inside of the political community from the outside, between citizens and foreigners. As I argued in chapter 3 with references to Rousseau and Arendt and in chapter 4 with reference to Rancière, this division had a significant implication on the notion of politics. Being inside the political community, that is, being categorised as citizens, qualified one to speak, while being outside of it was to be placed outside the realm of politics.

Boundary as a Dot

Furthermore, as Anzaldúa's pithy observations on linguistic boundaries indicate, the realm of politics where citizens monopolise speech overlapped with that of citizens' tongues. The ability to be understood and legible politically was equated with the ability to be understood in citizens' tongues. In this way, the boundary drawn around the realm of speech and citizenship paralleled the linguistic boundary drawn between citizens' tongues and foreign tongues. A particular tongue was used as a signifier to represent the political community of the state, while other tongues were made foreign and illegitimate.

The examples provided in the previous three chapters demonstrated, albeit in different degrees, how people used categories as the signifier. At meetings and demonstrations, some people were identified as citizens and others as foreigners. These occasions were crucial to pressure the government and employers on labour-related demands. On these occasions, people made their demands not as, say, workers, union members, or members of 'civil society' or residents of Japan, but as citizens and foreigners. Despite the large number of non-Japanese speakers attending the demonstrations and meetings, Japanese was used exclusively and little translation was provided for migrant workers who did not understand Japanese. In this way, people with the citizens' tongue, in this case, the Japanese-speaking activists, dominated the discussion with government representatives and took leading parts in street demonstrations to appeal to the public and to pressure employers. Meanwhile people identified as foreigners provided their visible yet silent presence to increase the authority of the citizens who were making

Boundary as a Dot

claims on their behalf. Instead of being equal speaking partners to people categorised as citizens, those identified as foreigners were deprived of their voices which were only to be uttered through the voices of the citizens. In this way, the claims of the citizens were corroborated by the silent endorsement of foreigners attending the meetings and demonstrations.

Using the category-vocabularies as the signifier, the Nambu FWC members challenged the category of foreigner assigned to them. Being identified as foreigners, they were relegated to people who need support from the 'mommy and daddy' of other union members identified as Japanese. By using the idea of democracy, the FWC members argued that despite equal status among union members, they were excluded from the realm of speech because they were identified as foreigners. The Nambu members' refusal to have discussions with the FWC members over the union's management epitomised the speechless status assigned to the FWC members. Furthermore, in order to materialise the idea of democracy, it was crucial for the Nambu FWC members to be informed of union activities and, thus, to be able to join discussions. Since most of them could not use Japanese, their demand to participate in union activities was inevitably linked with the question of tongues: whether they were given sufficient translation services so that their voices could be heard in Japanese. Alongside the linguistic boundary drawn between Nambu FWC members and Nambu members, the categories of citizen and foreigner were used as a tool to identify who they were *not*.

The CJVA members, the immigration lawyers and interpreters/mediators used categories as the signifying framework. They did

Boundary as a Dot

this, more or less, to carry out their jobs rather than to problematise categories like the FWC members did. Both the activities of the CJVA and the immigration lawyers were based on the assumption that there was something unique and specific about the 'Japanese' which sets their clients apart from the 'Japanese' and makes them 'foreigners' who were unfamiliar with the 'Japanese' way of behaving and dealing with issues. Applying categories as the signifier, the CJVA members and the immigration lawyers risked silencing their clients as foreigners who were unfamiliar to Japanese practices, despite their best intentions. The interpreters/mediators did not directly use categories of citizen and foreigner in their work. However, by controlling which voices were translated and how they were translated, interpreters/mediators were in charge of the realm of speech itself which separates some as citizens and others as foreigners. In this respect, their jobs, too, were inevitably related to the categories as a device to draw a boundary between citizens and foreigners.

Categories as the Signified

Secondly, the analysis of migrant activism in Japan also demonstrated that category-vocabularies were not only the signifier but also the signified, or what was actually signified by the categories. The participants in migrant activism used category-vocabularies as a tool of representation, as a convenient way to represent themselves to carry out their occupational duties or to achieve their personal gains. Since categories were merely a representational tool, what was actually signified by the categories of citizen

Boundary as a Dot

and foreigner did not match what these categories were supposed to signify. If the role of category-vocabularies is to signify people and to draw a line to classify some as citizens and others as foreigners, the failure to do this indicates that people slip away from this dividing practice of the boundary as a line.

The CJVA members, immigration lawyers, and the KCU union members most clearly demonstrate the signified aspect of categories. The CJVA members and the immigration lawyers used categories with pragmatic purposes to carry out their occupational duties. The CJVA members simply conducted their activities in accordance with the purpose of their organisation, which was to act as a bridge between Japanese and Chinese living in Japan. For this aim, they realistically changed their identification depending on who they were talking to. In order to help the Chinese residents to understand the perspective of Japanese society, they acted as the representatives of the Japanese people, that is, people who know how things work in Japan. At the same time, the CJVA members became the representatives of Chinese people to demand realisation and respect for the rights of foreigners in Japan.

With the intention to seek the best results for their clients, the immigration lawyers guided their clients to adopt strategies conceived by the lawyers as most suitable in the context of Japanese legal practice. In doing so, the lawyers represented themselves as Japanese citizens while identifying their clients as foreigners who were unfamiliar with proper Japanese legal behaviour. At the same time, the occupational duty of the lawyers was also to legally represent their clients. For this purpose, the lawyers behaved as if

Boundary as a Dot

they were representatives of foreigners, arguing fiercely for the interests and rights of foreigners in front of judges and employers. In order to bring the best result for clients, the lawyers used categories as a convenient tool to represent themselves, depending on the people they worked for.

For some KCU union members, the purpose of attending demonstrations was to ensure that their labour disputes were taken care of by the union. Participation in demonstrations and meetings was a chance for the demonstrators to exhibit their enthusiasm in front of other protesters who would eventually handle their labour disputes. Especially in the context where people belonged to labour unions to resolve their cases, it was understandable that some protesters would do anything to make sure that the unions put enough effort and attention to their labour disputes. For this reason, what mattered most for these union members was to attend the event and play the part given to them. In the case of the KCU union members, this was the role of foreigners. Therefore, they shouted what they were told to shout in Japanese, sang songs in foreign languages when they were told to sing, and remained silent when they were expected to be silent at demonstrations and meetings. For them, the category of foreigner was a useful device to act as if they were people called 'foreigners', so that they achieved their own personal goal, to have their labour disputes solved.

In the case of the Tozen, the break-away union formed by the Nambu FWC members, the categories revealed that they did not correspond to the group of people who were supposedly identified with them. This was shown in the category of citizen which included the excess within itself. The Tozen was

Boundary as a Dot

designed as an antithesis of the Nambu, and therefore the Tozen members identified themselves as the people who have voices to be heard. Since English was the only language used in Tozen activities with little translation provided, the people representing the Tozen became English-speaking union members who monopolised the domain of speech and, in this way, became 'citizens'. Meanwhile, the non-English speakers were relegated to a speechless status, and became 'foreigners'. However, the latter group still identified themselves as representatives of the democratic ideal of Tozen: they acted as if they were citizens (English-speaking union members) who could express their voices in union activities. In this way, the category of citizen included an excess, that is, the category of foreigner. This suggests that what the category of citizen signified did not match what was signified by this category.

As I discussed in chapter 5, the interpreter/mediators did not use categories directly to represent themselves as either citizens or foreigners. However, they controlled whose voices were to be translated and how they were translated at negotiations for the purpose of bringing the greatest benefit to the migrant workers. By doing so, the interpreters/mediators controlled the realm of speech itself. It is in this realm of speech where possession of voices becomes political, and where the categories of citizen and foreigner are produced in a struggle over voices. In this way, the interpreters/mediators were in charge of creating the categories of citizen and foreigner. Therefore, their ability to freely determine which voices would become the voices of citizens and foreigners suggested that the voices

Boundary as a Dot

represented by categories were necessarily a result of manipulation by interpreters/mediators. This indicated the representational slippage between what the categories signified, in this case, the voice of people called citizens and foreigners, and what were actually signified by them, the voice manipulated by interpreters/mediators.

As I discussed in detail in each chapter, the gap between what categories signified and what were actually signified by these categories remained hidden in migrant activism. It was because for some participants, categories were used as a tool to represent themselves so that they would achieve some specific purposes. Some demonstrators assumed the silent role of foreigners and exhibited their pretended enthusiasm for the movement, so that their labour disputes would be taken care of by the unions they belonged to. The CJVA members aspired to achieve their organisational objective while keeping their involvement hidden from the public eye. They did this by solving the problems between Chinese and Japanese before they developed into confrontations which required official intervention. For the lawyers and interpreters/mediators, the purpose was none other than to maintain professional integrity and reputation by concealing their involvement in shaping the voices of their clients, hence initiating the crack of categories. In the case of the Tozen members, the pretence exhibited by non-English speaking union members meant that the excess within the category of citizen was concealed.

Therefore, the tenacity of category-vocabularies closely interrogated with various examples of migrant activism suggests that the tenacity of the

Boundary as a Dot

lined boundary is realised in the representational slippage between categories as the signifier and the signified. Drawing a line to produce categories of citizen and foreigner is made possible by the gap, the slippage, between what categories signified and what were actually signified by these categories. The former, the categories as the signifier, was what the boundary as a line was supposed to do. It was supposed to draw a sharp line among the participants in migrant activism so that some were categorised as citizens and others as foreigners. The latter, the categories as the signified, was what maintained the image of the boundary as a line. Categories failed to name people perfectly because some switched their names between citizens and foreigners for their own purposes; some pretended to be foreigners to achieve their personal goal; and others pretended to be citizens to demonstrate their sympathy to the cause of the union. Since each group of people had their own reasons to hide the representational gap, the boundary-as-a-line appeared intact, seemingly successful in neatly classifying some as citizens and others as foreigners.

Theorising the Representational Slippage

Badiou and BM Scholarship

The investigation on the tenacity of the boundary as a line started from my desire to interrogate the image of the boundary if it is no longer a line, as the extant debates on the boundary suggest. In order to carry out this investigation, I took Walker's call seriously: political possibilities and imagining these possibilities derive from the boundary-as-a-line thinking of

Boundary as a Dot

the modern state sovereignty, both intellectually and territorially.⁹ Taking a cue from his suggestion to ‘pay far greater attention to what goes on at the boundaries [...]’,¹⁰ the thesis turned to what the boundary-as-a-line does, that is, categorisation. By bringing the perspective of categories into the analysis of the boundary, the thesis identified that tenacity of categories was not effectively addressed by a group of work, what I call BM scholarship. By problematising and challenging categories, BM scholarship examined the complexity of bordering practices, which challenges the image of the boundary as a line. However, in challenging categories, BM scholarship, perhaps inadvertently, showed the tenacity of categories with a range of examples where categories were merely replaced by other categories. Considering that the continual reliance on categories was demonstrated in the context where the boundary was no longer imagined as a line, the thesis took the tenacity of categories as the focal point in exploring what the boundary might look like if it was no longer a line.

The investigation on the tenacity of categories was greatly advanced by the insights obtained from the analysis of migrant worker activism in Japan. The analysis indicated that drawing a line was realised in the representational gap between what a line was supposed to do and what a line failed to do. The former was shown in the ways in which people used categories as a signifier. The latter, the failure to draw a line, was shown in what was actually signified by these categories. My findings from migrant

⁹ See, for example, Walker, R.B.J. (2010) *After the Globe, Before the World* (Oxon: Routledge).

¹⁰ Ibid, p.2-3.

Boundary as a Dot

worker activism suggest that, this representational gap sustains the tenacity of categories, and hence, the image of the boundary as a line. Since this tenacity of categories is my focal point in investigating the image of the boundary, this section will turn to the work of Alain Badiou whose work I read as theorising the slippage of representation.

To be sure, Badiou's work alone does not suffice to fully investigate implications of the tenacity of categories realised in the representational slippage in drawing a line. There are others who might also be able to offer useful avenues to conduct this investigation.¹¹ In this respect, the present section should be read as an initial attempt to do that. The thesis also turns to Badiou in search of different resources from those, such as Agamben and Rancière, used in BM scholarship. By doing so, the thesis aims to expand resources available in BM scholarship to critically examine categories.

Looking for alternative sources other than Agamben and Rancière does not mean that their works cannot be helpful guides to thinking about the tenacity of categories. As I argued in chapter 2, the contradiction of using categories while challenging them in BM scholarship pointed to the need for close examination of the tenacity of categories. It is plausible to argue that BM scholarship pays less attention to this contradiction because of its specific readings of Agamben and Rancière. The scholarship tends to pay too much attention to the inability of categorisation, or bordering, and hence assuming

¹¹ For instance, I read Spivak's work as a potential resource to explore the representational slippage. Given that she discusses this in the specific postcolonial context between the coloniser's tongues (English) and the colonised tongues, however, I was hesitant to extend my reading of Spivak to the findings coming out from migrant worker activism in Japan. See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. (1993) 'The Politics of Translation', in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge), pp. 179-200.

Boundary as a Dot

that the production of categories is to be challenged or avoided because of the obsolescence of classifying people. As discussed in chapter 2, Agamben and Rancière are generally read in the scholarship to address such futility of drawing a line.

It might be possible, however, to read the works of Agamben and Rancière as showing how the image of the boundary as a line plays critical parts in the understanding of categories. Both Agamben and Rancière certainly address the futility of categories and argue that categories cannot be sustained because drawing a line, that is, categorisation, is to produce uncertainty. For them, social order is problematic because it generates categories to draw a line which decides what one is. For Agamben, it is sovereign power, as an embodiment of social order, that divides the values of life between *zoē* and *bios* and categorises the forms of life accordingly. For Rancière, it is police logic, as social order, that divides the senses and classifies some into the realm of speechlessness. Thinking in this way, both conceptualise social order through the image of a line. By highlighting ambiguity of social order through the specific image of the boundary as a line, their works can be read as hinting at a persistent desire for, or almost inevitability of, a line as categorising thinking, as it were, in problematising categories. In this way, by reading their works through not only 'territorial' boundary (of the state) but together with 'intellectual' boundary (of how we think), it might be possible to read both Agamben and Rancière as insinuating that categories are meaningless and yet constantly needed in our own thinking.

Boundary as a Dot

However, it was not my reading of Agamben and Rancière that initially addressed the tenacity of categories. As I argued in chapter 2, it was the continual reliance on category-vocabularies exhibited in migrant activism, in BM scholarship, that pointed to the contradiction of using categories while challenging them. Only in retrospect, I reflected that the mixing intellectual and territorial boundaries might be able to develop a reading of Agamben and Rancière that points to the tenacious reliance on categories.

Furthermore, little attention paid to the tenacity of categories might not simply reflect particular ways of reading Agamben and Rancière in BM scholarship but also indicate the need to find alternative resources which directly address this tenacity. As I will discuss below, Badiou certainly is useful in this regard because he theorises the tenacity of categories. For him, this tenacity is expressed as what he calls ‘the state of the situation’ which produces and preserves the system of counting. Though counting, previously nameless worlds become ‘the’ world with dividing lines where people are neatly identified by categories and given names. By turning to Badiou’s work, my intention is to enrich theoretical resources available to BM scholarship so that it is well equipped with the task of examining categories critically.

Representation as the Signifying Mechanism

Badiou’s theoretical edifice was built upon set theory developed by Georg Cantor. The starting point of set theory is that every element is a part of a set, a larger group. This unique starting point invites Badiou to develop his theory of mathematical ontology: what ‘is’ is determined not by inherent

Boundary as a Dot

traits unique to each element, or each 'being', but by belonging to a group.¹² What 'is' is realised only by way of being a part of a specific set (group). Its 'existence' cannot be recognised on its own because what 'is' is always a part of a particular set which determines the 'is' of something.

Badiou argues that what 'is', is determined by a counting mechanism called representation, or the state of the situation. Representation is a kind of metastructure to assume that things are countable and nameable. The role of representation can be seen in the relationship between subsets and sets in set theory. That an element is part of set X means that, the elements of group X can be categorised differently to be a part of other sets other than set X. These grouped elements, subsets of a set X, do not completely belong to set X but partially belong to it, or in Badiou's term, are 'included' in set X. Their inclusion is partial because there are other elements within this subset that do not belong to set X. Inclusion of subsets into a set indicates that there is an underlying operational mode which groups being into a part of a specific set. This operational rule stabilises being, so that subsets are firmly tugged to a particular set they belong to.

Inclusion must not arise on the basis of any other principle of counting than that of belonging. This is the same as saying that ontology must proceed on the basis that the count-as-one of a multiple's subsets, whatever that multiple may be, is only ever another term within the space of the axiomatic presentation of the pure multiple, and this requirement must be accepted without

¹² Badiou does not argue that everything is explained mathematically but argues that there is no significant ontological persistence to explain ontology via set-theory.

Boundary as a Dot

limitation.¹³

Representation indicates this power of inclusion which stabilises and maintains subsets as parts of particular sets. It classifies the attributes of what is, so that being is given a specific name as a part of a specific group, and in this way, to borrow Badiou's term, being finds its place of 'belonging'. Representation determines being via knowledge, or what Badiou calls, 'the encyclopedia of the situation', 'through concepts of the language on the basis of indices of recognition attributable to all the terms of elements that fall under this concept'.¹⁴

Badiou calls this realm of representation as the state of the situation. As Žižek points out, Badiou uses the word, the state, somewhat equivocally, to equate the state both as a status (of something) and a political organisation (of the state, as we know it).¹⁵ The state ensures that multiplicity is counted-as-one. That is, under the gaze of the state, multiplicity is named with legible language which identifies its inclusion to a specific location. Representation arranges what was formally uncountable in a specific way to capture inconsistent multiplicity and to identify it as consistent multiplicity. The state is a mechanism to do so.

The state secures the count-as-one of all the [...] subsets
[...] of the situation. It re-counts the terms of the situation

¹³ Badiou, Alain. (2006) *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum), p.101.

¹⁴ Badiou, Alain. (2004) *Theoretical Writing*, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum), p125.

¹⁵ Žižek, Slavoj. (1998) 'Psychoanalysis in Post-Marxism: The case of Alain Badiou', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol.97, No. 2, pp.236-237.

Boundary as a Dot

inasmuch as they are presented by such sub-multiples.¹⁶

In other words, the state is ‘a kind of primordial response to anarchy’.¹⁷ It is through the state that all subsets of the situation are recognised and identified as parts to be counted, so that they are included into a particular group and no inconsistency is left in the state of the structure.

The state is a sort of metastructure that exercises the power of the count over all the sub-sets of the situation. Every situation has a state. Every situation is the presentation of itself, of what composes it, of what belongs to it. But it is also given as a state of the situation, that is, as the internal configuration of parts of sub-sets, and therefore as re-presentation.¹⁸

Badiou’s idea of representation illuminates the role of category-vocabularies as the signifier identified in migrant activism. The previous three chapters showed that people taking part in activism were identified by categories through which their relationship with the state was made legible. The specific sets, in this case, the categories of citizen and foreigner, were exclusively used to name the participants of activism. They could have been presented as, for instance, workers, union members and residents. Instead, the categories of citizen and foreigner were used as a sorting-out device. The protesters were made legible in the language of the

¹⁶ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.102.

¹⁷ Hallward, Peter. (2009) *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp.96.

¹⁸ Badiou, *Theoretical Writing*, p.157.

Boundary as a Dot

state and identified through their relationship with the political community of the state. In Badiou's terms, the situation of migrant activism was counted. That is, the participants were identified with specific groups, citizens and foreigners. Through this counting, the participants of activism were made readable to the state, and in this way, are *included* in the state of the situation. As Badiou argues:

The State is fundamentally indifferent to belonging yet it is constantly concerned with inclusion. Any consistent subject is immediately counted and considered by the State, for better or worse, because it is matter of representation.¹⁹

The inclusion of the participants in migrant activism is completed by grouping them vis-à-vis the boundary of political community, which enables the State to comprehend its relationship with these participants.

The Void as the Slippage of Representation

As Badiou is quick to point out, this seemingly air-tight apparatus of the state inevitably entails ungraspability, or what he calls the void, within itself. In set theory, every set has the void, an empty subset, which belongs to no situation. To be a part of a group means having elements which belong to this group. Since the void does not have any element, that is, it belongs to no situation, no situation can avoid having the void as its part. Precisely because

¹⁹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.107. Emphasis original.

Boundary as a Dot

the void belongs to no situation—and hence it has no definable feature to prevent it from being a part of a particular group, it is included in every situation. In this way, the void is ‘a kind of ontological vagrant’.²⁰ It does not belong anywhere and hence it is everywhere and it is to be everything.

The ubiquity of the void in the system of counting means that the logic of counting, that is representation and what the state does, somewhat paradoxically guarantees that there is always something uncountable—the void—in counting, something that is failing to be counted. As I argued above, the state is a metastructure which ensures that everything is counted as part of some group or category. If the result of this counting is that every group contains the void which is unrepresentable to any group, to count is to assume the void and to expose the state’s inability to count. This is ‘the price to be paid’ for the state to have a desire to capture everything, says Badiou.²¹

In ontology, the state’s “anti-void” functions are not guaranteed. In particular, not only is it possible that the fixation of the void occur [sic] somewhere within the parts, but it is inevitable. The void is necessarily, in the ontological apparatus, the subset par excellence, because nothing therein can ensure its expulsion by special operators of the count, distinct from those of the situation in which the void roams.²²

In Badiou’s ontology, the void is this unrepresentableness that slips away

²⁰ Hallward, *Badiou*, p.102.

²¹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.101.

²² Ibid.

Boundary as a Dot

from the state's desire of counting. While the state craves to count everything to represent a situation and to create consistent multiplicity out of inconsistent multiplicity, the void exposes what the state fails to count.

Not belonging to any situation, the void is empty in the sense that it remains unclear exactly what the 'void' is. Because of its emptiness, 'a situation cannot encounter its own void. Set theory itself cannot in any meaningful sense know what lies "under" the proper name Φ [the mathematical symbol to denote the void]'.²³ This unrepresentableness of the void is presented only through the language which designates the word, 'VOID', to this unnameable being. 'Since it is unrepresentable as being, all that the void can present is its name. It is the void as name that provides ontology which is presentable, its "absolutely initial point"'.²⁴

In other words, that emptiness of the void can be recognised as being unrepresentable through the language, in this case, the word VOID, means that this emptiness is already captured in the state of situation.

But the nothing is *neither a place nor a term* of the situation. *For if the nothing were a term that could only mean one thing; that it had been counted as one.* Yet everything which has been counted is within the consistency of presentation. It is thus ruled out that the nothing [...] be taken as a term. There is not a-thing, there is "nothing", phantom of inconsistency. By itself, *the nothing is no more than the name of unpresentation in*

²³ Hallward, *Badiou*, p.102.

²⁴ Hallward, *Badiou*, p.100.

Boundary as a Dot

*presentation.*²⁵

Therefore, in Badiou's thoughts, language is a sort of device to make the unrepresentable presentable and to identify what 'is'. For Badiou, while representation is called the state of situation which is a metastructure of counting and called the state of situation, presentation is called situation which makes inconsistency to consistency. What 'is' previously inconsistent is recognised as INCONSISTENT in language. It is through the field of presentation, that inconsistency is incorporated into the regime of representation and made into the target of counting.²⁶

What the void does is to reveal that the field of presentation can only manage to capture inconsistency, or something ungraspable, in language, and conversely reveals that there will always be a gap between what is represented in language and what slips away from it. To put it differently, that the void is only presentable in language means that language is the only way to embody this gap between the two. Language makes perceptible what is left out in representation. However, this language alone—for instance, the word, VOID—does not specify what the VOID actually is. 'Everything that exists belongs to a situation, and everything present in a situation is counted as one; since it is not a one, a unit, the void itself can never be counted; it can never be presented'.²⁷ In this respect, language is a quiet sign of that which escapes representation as the void. It leaves a trace of what escapes from the arms of the state into the field of presentation. It is through language that the

²⁵ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.55. Emphasis mine.

²⁶ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.25.

²⁷ Hallward, *Badiou*, p.100.

Boundary as a Dot

slippage of representation is manifested as the void.

Badiou's idea of the void elucidates the representational slippage identified in migrant activism. This slippage is the gap between what categories are supposed to signify and what are actually signified by them in migrant activism. As the example of the KCU showed, some demonstrators performed the role given to them for a pragmatic reason, to solve their labour disputes. Since they merely pretended to be the people called 'foreigners', they were not quite 'foreigners' despite the category assigned to them. If they were not identified as foreigners, then, what should we call the protesters who were *named* as foreigners in demonstrations and meetings, but were merely acting like 'foreigners'? The CJVA members, the immigration lawyers and interpreters/mediators used categories of citizens and foreigners as a convenient tool to carry out their jobs effectively. For this reason, they acted as if they were citizens and foreigners depending on the contexts of their work. If they were merely acting like both citizens and foreigners simultaneously, who exactly were they? By associating themselves with the cause of the Tozen, some non-English speaking Tozen members identified themselves as belonging to the realm of speech which was monopolised by English-speaking members. In this way, the category of citizen, assigned to English-speaking members, included the excess, the category of foreigner assigned to non-English speakers. If the category of citizen includes the excess, what can the Tozen members be called?

Badiou situates ontology in the void to argue that subjects emerge in the representational slippage, in the crack between what is represented and what

Boundary as a Dot

escapes from the regime of representation. The subject is not something to be captured with a concrete name, that is the subject exists like 'being', but it is in disappearing into inconsistency, the opposite of appearing, that subjects are thought of. Thus, subjectivisation, where one becomes a subject, is 'an occurrence to the void'.²⁸ Badiou's ontology suggests that subject is realised in this crack between what is represented and what cannot be represented. The instances where the participants in the migrant activism failed to be represented by categories were moments of subject formation. The categories were unable to represent exactly what the protesters were. Despite this unrepresentableness, the participants neither changed the categories given to them to other category-vocabularies available to the state nor invented new categories. Instead, they resort to the exact same categories, of citizen and foreigner, to dislocate themselves, to slip away from the state's desire to name them, and in this way, to make themselves invisible to the omnipresent gaze of the state. In this way, their subjectivity was articulated in an interstice of what they are represented as with the categories of citizen and foreigner and what they cannot be represented as by these categories. They appeared through the category-vocabularies, in the regime of representation, and yet, disappeared into the void and became invisible. This invisibility and ungraspability constitute the ways in which the participants invent new subjects, in a slippage of representation.

Boundary as a Dot and its Implications for Resistance

²⁸ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.393.

Boundary as a Dot

With reference to Badiou, I argue that drawing a line, that is, categorisation, is realised in the void, an empty hole through which ungraspable-ness spreads, if this is the right verb to describe 'the' ungraspable. The void is like a black hole where no light, no electricity and no X-rays are emitted from this surface because of too much gravity operating within. In the universe where each planet is made visible through lights, electricity and X-rays, ungraspable-ness of the black hole is made visible only through its sheer darkness, beyond which lies no visibility to capture what is within the hole. In this respect, the void is like the black hole. It is only made graspable through the language, as Badiou argues, but the language does not show exactly what the void is. The void remains an empty hole within which lies no language to represent its emptiness.

Reading the representational gap identified in migrant activism together with Badiou, I argue that drawing a boundary necessarily accompanies the void. When a boundary is drawn to categorise people with a sharp line, the empty hole of the void, appears together with a line. As Aradau reads Badiou, 'every situation is doubly structured' that 'there is presentation and representation'.²⁹ Visibility comes with invisibility. What fails to be represented, that is, the void, appears in the regime of representation. Category-vocabularies of citizen and foreigner both identify and dis-identify the participants of migrant activism. Since categorisation is also failing to name people to perfection, drawing a line is necessarily failing to make the 'boundary' into a traceable line.

²⁹ Aradau, Claudia. (2008) *Rethinking Trafficking in Women: Politics out of Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p.124-125.

Boundary as a Dot

Thinking in this way, we are no longer able to uphold the image of the boundary as a line that neatly groups people into separate categories such as citizen and foreigners. Rather the boundary is a point of intersection between what can be named and what fails to be named. The boundary emerges every time people are represented through category-vocabularies. It is not an a priori line to identify people with different categories. Rather bordering produces the point of intersection of what a line does and what a line fails to accomplish. This point of intersection is a dot realised by both the desire to draw a line, and the failure to draw it, the exposure of the void. The boundary is a dot composed of both the representational ability of the boundary as a line and its representational inability. Therefore, thinking of the boundary in the slippage of representation is to imagine the boundary as a point of intersection, a dot, of what bordering tries to do *and* what it fails to do.

I suggest a dot as an apposite image of the boundary because a dot mirrors two opposing desires demonstrative in bordering. On one hand, the dot is trying to become a line in order to identify some as citizens and others as foreigners. A dot mirrors a desire to develop a line from a dot so that bordering classifies people into groups. On the other hand, the dot remains as a dot because it fails to develop itself into a line to categorise some as citizens and others as foreigners. It is reflective of the inability of bordering.

In migrant activism, people slipped away from bordering practices that were intended to name who they were and assign specific status to them. The participants in migrant activism were articulated in a point of intersection, in a dot, where they were visible and invisible both at the same time. They were

Boundary as a Dot

made visible with category-vocabularies which identified them as citizens and foreigners. They also became invisible because categories failed to verbalise them and to make them legible in the vocabularies available to the state. In this point of intersection between ability and inability to draw a line, the very people represented through category-vocabularies quietly escaped from the state's desire to capture them. They were doubly made visible and invisible, readable and unreadable, consistent and inconsistent, at the same time in the language of the state.

The image of the boundary as a dot seems to have serious repercussions on the way resistance is discussed in BM scholarship. What does it mean to resist the practices of drawing a lined boundary if this boundary is already realised in the representational gap? By using Badiou, I have been arguing that bordering is doubly structured between the graspable and the ungraspable. If this is the case, does it mean that drawing a line might already paradoxically entail resistance to a line because a line can never be realised without failing to draw a line? Putting it differently, what does resistance mean to the boundary realised in representational slippage, that is, the boundary imagined as a dot? As I will argue below, Badiou offers some insights in exploring these questions and in discussing the void in relation to, what he calls, the event.

Badiou argues that the void cannot be revealed unless there is an event. As a kind of wake-up call, the event unveils the crack between what is represented and what slips away from representation. Events trigger the revelation of the void by breaking the representational order which counts

Boundary as a Dot

things in a particular way. A taken-for-granted way of categorisation is questioned and other possible ways of grouping are presented by events. In this way, the event initiates ‘a breakdown of the rule, [...] something that, including in order of appearing itself, in the way in which the situation is simply given, no longer remains within the bounds of the analysis [...] something that no longer is of the same order as before’.³⁰ In a way, the event ‘traverses’ the void, in order to show that other ways of counting are possible.

Importantly, the event is a ‘conceptual construction’,³¹ in the realm of counting where everything becomes presented and made visible. That is, possibilities of other ways of counting always lie under the currently adopted way of counting. In this respect, ‘the event can be only thought by anticipating its abstract form’.³² The possibilities of what can happen are always anticipated, but exist only in anticipation. Once an event takes place, it is explained as the ‘event’ in retrospect. Since the event belongs to the regime of counting, events are given meaning and represented as ‘the event’ retrospectively. The event ‘can only be revealed in the retroaction of an interventional practice which is itself entirely thought through’.³³ Therefore, although the event is ‘the moment of rupturing’, ‘it is not a total rupture or completely new beginning’.³⁴

³⁰ Bosteels, Bruno.(2005) ‘Can Change be Thought? A Dialogue with Alain Badiou’, in Gabriel Riera (ed.) *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and its Conditions* (New York: State University of New York Press), p.249.

³¹ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.178.

³² Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.178.

³³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.178.

³⁴ Aradau, Claudia.(2009) ‘Alain Badiou’, in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (New York: Routledge), pp.47 (pp.42-53). See also Žižek, Slavoj. (1998), Psychoanalysis in Post-Marxism: The case of Alain Badiou, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol.97, No. 2,

Boundary as a Dot

That the event is constructed as a part of the regime of counting is a crucial point. Like the void, the event is not something which can be pinned down with a specific name when it 'is' taking place. It is called an event with a specific name only in retrospect, in a regime of representation. Therefore, the moment when an event is taking place is not a capturable and definable moment. Instead, it only appears at an interstice between what might happen and what might have happened. In this respect, as Žižek argues, the event marks a beginning of the uncountable, a glimpse of sheer emptiness.

The event reveals "the inadmissible empty point in which nothing is presented," and this is why every event indicates, in principle, a pure beginning, the inaugural or uncountable zero of a new time.³⁵

I read Badiou by arguing that the status quo is disruptive not because the regime of the counting, and the normality of the status quo sustained by this regime, can be disrupted at any moment but because the event might be already disrupting the regime without being recognised as such, and hence not realised as 'the event'. As Badiou is saying, the event is included into the regime of counting; and it is through this event that the slippage of representation, the void, is revealed. If this is the case, as I assume it is following Badiou, the slippage of representation is not only always structured in the regime of counting, but also, more importantly, might be already revealed without any definable moments which identify these revelations of

pp.237.

³⁵ Hallward, *Badiou*, p.114.

Boundary as a Dot

the slippage, or the void. These revelations might not be noticed just yet simply because no names are attached to them so that they can be recognised as 'the event(s)'.

Thinking in this way, it might be possible to situate resistance within the state, as both political organisation and the status quo, rather than outside of it. If we were to consider the boundary as a dot and categories as realised in this dot, being captured in the regime of counting is not a dismal defeat or a challenge to be conquered. Being represented is being failed to be represented. Categorisation is capture and flight at the same time. In this regard, the regime of categorisation already contains an escape from this capture, and might be already revealing that something is escaping from the regime of representation quietly and continually.

I discussed in chapter 2, BM scholarship regards categories as generating resistance. It draws on various empirical examples where people contest categories assigned to them. This contestation is, by borrowing Rancière's word, politics. It is a moment to disrupt social order which takes it for granted that people are attached to specific names through particular categories. When staging protests of various sorts, people directly challenge the status quo maintained by social order to show that they are not what they are named by categories. These protests mark the visibly disruptive moments of social order. Or, as BM scholarship would say by using Rancière's term, these protests are tantamount to disruption of police logic which assigns categories to the protesters. In this way, disruption of the status quo is considered as a promised route to another world, a world differently

Boundary as a Dot

articulated from the present one where a particular way of distribution of categories is taken for granted.

I read Badiou by regarding the status quo as already disruptive, unlike resistance and disruption situated as opposed to the status quo. As discussed above, for Badiou, the situation is always doubly structured by both the state's ability to categorise and its inability to categorise. The status quo is realised in the representational slippage between what is named and what fails to be named. In other words, categories are not a tool to resist control imposed by the status quo, or sustained by police logic if I borrow Rancière's term. Rather categories embody disruption of social order itself, because they always fail to name people when naming them. Therefore, the event, which reveals the void, or the representational gap, is saturated into the state. It permeates the state where category-vocabularies are persistently used to identify people with names. The ubiquity of resistance makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly where resistance is because resistance is not signposted as the definable occurrence to the status quo and as visible and definable moments of disruption. Instead, resistance is embedded into the status quo and realised in the desire to maintain the status quo. Hence, resistance does not lead to any alternative world where people acquire specific names that they want to acquire. Instead, alternative worlds are already realised within the present world, within the world where categories persistently capture people.

This is a provocative suggestion and certainly forces us to further reflect what resistance is. In the context where the state, again, both as political

Boundary as a Dot

organisation and as the status, embodies the preservation of the present governing logic through categorisation, resistance to the state might not be articulated as visible forms of protest. Yet, this does not mean that resistance is not taking place. Rather, it might be that people resist while accepting the status quo. It is in accepting the status quo, and using categories that people become nameless because of the slippage of representation. Therefore, as Badiou argues, what matters in organising resistance is ‘requiring something from the state, or formulating with respect to the state a certain number of prescriptions and statements’.³⁶

We used to be convinced that a new political state [scène] had to be built, a stage for the masses, that would be radically external or foreign to the mechanism of the state. We tended to leave the state outside the field of politics in the strict sense. Politics unfolded according to the interests of the masses, and the state was the adversary.³⁷

In BM scholarship, drawing a line and categorising people are fiercely resisted because categories regulate and govern subjectivity. As a way to resist categories, the scholarship highlights various occasions where people challenge the names and particular subjectivity imparted to them and reclaim their voice in declaring who they are on their own. For instance, some people challenged the category of the illegal to argue that they were sans-papiers, people without papers. The moment when sans-papiers staged a

³⁶ Badiou, Alain and Peter Hallward. (1998) ‘Politics and Philosophy: An Interview with Alain Badiou’, *Angeliki*, Vol.3, No.3, pp.114.

³⁷ Badiou and Hallward, ‘Politics and Philosophy’, p.114.

Boundary as a Dot

protest and appears in streets and squares marked a disruptive moment brought on by people previously silenced and invisible because of illegality attached to them. As I argued at the end of chapter 2, even these moments might not be so 'disruptive' since the category of illegal is merely replaced by another category of sans-papiers. People regain another name by challenging the name previously given to them.

The image of the boundary as a dot challenges categorisation itself by showing that the ability to categorise people and distribute names is a twin sister of the inability to categorise people. In this line of thinking, resistance is articulated not in resisting categories, since it merely reproduces other categories. Instead, resistance is paradoxically realised in accepting and using categories. As was shown in the examples of migrant activism in Japan previously investigated, the resistance, or the glimpse of the event in Badiou's term, was seen not when people challenged categories, like the Nambu FWC members because it simply led to reproduction of the category of citizen. Rather, resistance to categories, if resistance is the right word, was seen in accepting category-vocabularies for obtaining their personal goals and using categories to carry out their professional duties. It was these moments of enacting category-vocabularies that categories reveal their inability to categorise, the gap between what categories signify and what is signified by categories. The participants in migrant activism did not disrupt the social order and categories that were assigned by this order. Instead, by simply accepting social order as it is, and in this case, enacting category-vocabularies that embody social order, they became nameless.

Boundary as a Dot

Boundary as a Dot and its Implications for Community

By reflecting on the two findings of the previous three chapters, the category as the signifier and the signified, I argued that the boundary is not a line but a dot, a meeting point of what categories try to represent and what they fail to represent. I argued that Badiou's idea of the void aptly elucidates the gap between the categories as the signifier and the signified demonstrated in migrant activism. The previous section reflected the implication of this image for resistance currently understood in BM scholarship. By looking at Badiou's idea of the event in particular, I argued that resistance is realised not in resisting social order and refusing to use categories, but in following social order and using them.

In the final section of this chapter, I will explore the implications of the image of the boundary as a dot for community. What a community might look like if it is surrounded by the boundary as a dot? As I discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, an investigation of the concept of the boundary is inevitably linked to that of community because a particular image of the community is shaped by a particular image of the boundary. For example, thinking of a community as being surrounded by the boundary as a line, it is imagined as a circle, an enclosed space. If a community is surrounded by the boundary as a dot, in the representational slippage, what then might a community look like? If a community is realised by the boundary as a dot, surely its shape is different from a circle. Animated by these questions, I will turn to Jean-Luc Nancy's idea of inoperative community. As I will argue in

Boundary as a Dot

this section, his idea is apposite to my final exploration in the thesis because it challenges the community based on a lined-boundary and rethinks a community through the boundary as a dot, like Badiou.

With the idea of inoperative community, Nancy argues that community is a shared mode of being. Community is a process in which one's way of being is shared with one another. In this process, a mode of being is shared through interaction: singularity is articulated through plurality. Nancy argues that this process itself is a community. His idea of community radically differs from the prevailing assumption of community as either 'com+munis' – a community is formed by a collection of a priori being, or com+unus – that individuals are always a part of a community.³⁸ As Morin puts it, Nancy's idea of community is not a form in which a group of people gather together: 'not an essence, not an identifiable totality which receives its meaning and determination from a transcendental signified'.³⁹ Instead, it is where 'an irreducible multiplicity of singular beings' is realised relationally.⁴⁰ In other words, as Edkins points out, the starting question for Nancy is, 'how it is that we have come to consider ourselves separate in the first place'.⁴¹ For Nancy, community is neither what individuals gather together to form a group because they share some common essence. Nor it is what individuals are

³⁸ Coward, Martin. (2009) 'Jean-Luc Nancy', in Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge).

³⁹ Morin, Marie-Eve. (2006) 'Putting Community under Erasure: Derrida and Nancy on the Plurality of Singularities', *Cultural Machine*, Vol. 8, <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/37/45.1>> [Accessed 1 February 2010].

⁴⁰ Hutchens, B.C. (2005) *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (Buck: Acumen), p.124.

⁴¹ Edkins, Jenny. (2005) 'Exposed Singularity', *Journal of Cultural Research*, Vol.9, No.4, p.383.

Boundary as a Dot

realised in an already existing group. Instead, 'being' (singularity) emerges together with 'others' (plurality in Nancy's terms), and community is the process of sharing itself.

We do not have ourselves as 'we,' as a 'we.' Rather we have to dis-identify ourselves from every sort of 'we' that would be the subject of its own representation, and we have to do this insofar as 'we' co-appear.⁴²

The heart of community – which is a shared mode of being – is communication. Nancy argues that communication reveals the inevitable reliance on others in articulating 'I': without someone who listens to, the act of speaking itself cannot be realised. 'Every spoken word is the simultaneity of at least two different modes of that spoken word: even when I am by myself, there is the one that is said and the one that is heard, that is, the one that is resaid'.⁴³ To articulate 'I' who speaks is to articulate 'others' to whom the speech is targeted. In other words, communication exposes the inevitable connection between singularity and plurality. The act of speaking reveals that it is inevitable to 'be[ing]-with' others in articulating one's existence. Thus, 'every voice is in itself opened, plural, exposing itself to the outside world'.⁴⁴

For Nancy, communication is tantamount to translation. The inevitable

⁴² Nancy, Jean-Luc. (2000) *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Bryne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p.71.

⁴³ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p.86. See also Nancy, Jean-Luc (1991) *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), p.76.

⁴⁴ Devisch, Ignaas. (2006) 'The Sense of Being (-) With Jean-Luc Nancy', *Cultural Machine*, Vol.8, <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/36/44>> [Accessed 1 February 2010].

Boundary as a Dot

reliance on one another, the idea of being-with, is embodied as the idea of translation whereby a word comes into life in its inability to be understood alone. Translation exposes a word to its own limit, the limit of not being able to be fully translated into a foreign language. In comparing the word 'community' between Japanese and French, Nancy points out that these two words can never be entirely translated because each word is associated with different meanings.⁴⁵ The Japanese readers understand the word, *kyodotai* (community in Japanese), differently from the French readers who have a specific understanding of the word, *comunauté* (community in French). Nancy argues that that this 'untranslatability' between the two words shows that each word shares its own limits with respect to one another.

These two [words] meet, as if two ships come across each other and move side by side. Touching each other's body, each ship makes its own limit the other's limit. Each ship becomes the other's limit.⁴⁶

For Nancy, it is in sharing these limits with one another that a word comes to life. Without being fully translated, each word, community in Japanese and French, 'does not really have an existence of its own'.⁴⁷ What it

⁴⁵ Nancy, Jean-Luc. (2001) 'Watashitachi no Kyoutsu no Hakanasa (Nihongoban no Tame ni)' [Our Sharing of Exposure (for the Japanese Translation)], in Mui no Kyoudoutai [Inoperative Community], trans. Osamu Nishitani and Shinichiro Yasuhara (Tokyo: Ibunsha). No English translation of this paper is available because Nancy specifically wrote this piece for the Japanese readers of his book, *Inoperative Community*.

⁴⁶ My translation. Nancy, 'Watashitachi no Kyoutsu no Hakanasa (Nihongoban no Tame ni)' [Our Sharing of Exposure (for the Japanese Translation)], p.226.

⁴⁷ Nancy, 'Watashitachi no Kyoutsu no Hakanasa (Nihongoban no Tame ni)' [Our Sharing of Exposure (for the Japanese Translation)], p.226. My translation (from

Boundary as a Dot

has is its inability to be understood by the other, its own limit exposed through translation. Once translated from French to Japanese, the French word, *comunauté*, cannot be fully translated into Japanese but only appears in the Japanese word, *kyodotai*, that carries its own memories and experiences that are foreign to its equivalent in French, and vice versa. Yet, it is through translation into the Japanese language that the French word, community, appears in Japanese (becomes known to Japanese-speakers), and vice versa.⁴⁸ For instance, Nancy's idea of community, written in French, is explained to the readers in Japanese who have a different understanding of the original French word. Thus, through translation, each word exposes its own emptiness and shares its own inability to have its own meaning, to stand alone on its own. By sharing its own limit, each word appears as what it 'is'.

In other words, translation is not simply about an exchange of two different languages. Rather, it is 'trans(fer)-(re)relation: it is "trans-lation" in the sense of a "stretching or spreading out [tension] from one origin-of-meaning to another'.⁴⁹ As I argued elsewhere, Nancy's idea of trans-lation can be understood as follows:

Each voice is made audible only in relation to other voices.
Every meaning is made sense of only in relation to other meanings. Every voice is translated *into* everyone else's voice. Without translation of voices, each voice remains

Japanese to English). Emphasis original. The original text is: "*Sorera* [the Japanese word "community" and the French word "community"] *wa douitsusei wo sonaeta sonzai wo yuushite orazu.*"

⁴⁸ Nancy, 'Watashitachi no Kyoutsu no Hakanasa (Nihongoban no Tame ni)' [Our Sharing of Exposure (for the Japanese Translation)], p.227.

⁴⁹ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p.87.

Boundary as a Dot

inaudible and nonexistent. In the space of translation, each voice exposes its inability to exist alone. And such exposure, the sharing of such exposure with others, makes each voice come into being. [...] It [translation] transfers/transmits voices relationally between 'I' and 'you'.⁵⁰

For Nancy, such understanding of translation, or communication, embodies his idea of community as a mode of sharing. Like translation, community is exposure to the inevitability of being-together. Through sharing in this exposure and vulnerability, being emerges in plurality, and hence community emerges.

In this way of thinking, community is not an entity to be completed but unworkable, or inoperative in Nancy's and his translators' terms. As we have discussed, Nancy does not consider community either as com+munis or com+unus. Thinking that community is an aggregation of individuals or that that community exists prior to individuals is thinking that community is a project to be accomplished. This project is to ensure the unity of the community: all individuals share the same commonality to be achieved to create a community or to maintain the purity of the community, so that each individual can be categorised into specific communities. On the other hand, in thinking community as a shared mode of being, community takes place every time sharing takes place. Community is not designed to form an entity, or circle, but itself is sharing of being, always the beginning of everything, not

⁵⁰ Shindo, Reiko. (2012) 'Rethinking Community: Translation Space as a Departure from Political Community', *International Political Sociology*, Vol.6, No.2, p.153.

Boundary as a Dot

the project that needs to be finalised.

In other words, what Nancy is proposing with the idea of community is a way of thinking about the boundary in a different way from a boundary-as-a-line. In community-as-a-circle thinking, community is enclosed with a lined-boundary which creates a clearly demarcated space of inside as opposed to the outside. Drawing a line is crucial to making the community 'workable' because doing so guarantees the purity and unity of the community. On the other hand, in thinking of community as appearing through translated communication, the boundary appears as a dot because it does not lead to a production of any entity, or any enclosed space, called community X or Y. Instead, each time sharing of being takes place, a boundary appears like a dot. Every dot is a beginning of a community, and accumulation of these dots is a community.⁵¹

This community has no unity because each dot does not share any common features: a dot — or boundary appearing as a dot — has no commonality from one another because each dot is just an embodiment of a moment of sharing-of-being together, each time different. The community has no shape, either, because a dot takes place every time sharing takes place, and it does not aim to produce any oeuvre with clear shapes. Since there is no unity to be achieved through the aggregation of dots, the community is unworkable, or more to the point, unrepresentable. Community is realised in

⁵¹ I argued elsewhere that this community, an accumulation of a dot, is an open-ended line which does not have any inside nor outside. Here, I am thinking more as an assemblage of dots. Though what is imagined is different, community as a line, or community as an assemblage of dots, the underlying idea is the same that the boundary which constitutes the community is a dot, and hence, the community does not have any shape. See Shindo, 'Rethinking Community'.

Boundary as a Dot

failing to be identified with specific names to ascribe some characteristics to it. Realised in translation, the inoperative community is an accumulation of dots, or a boundary-as-a-dot, which has no commonality and consistency of its own. It is an inconsistent accumulation of boundaries-as-dots. The inoperative community is therefore unrepresentable.

Nancy's idea of inoperative community is helpful not only in terms of how we might rethink community but also how community is understood as a specific image of the boundary-as-a-line, and how it can be imagined through the boundary as a dot. By asking why we think of community as a circle to begin with, Nancy directs our attention to how community is made. Thinking community as a project to be completed, it is imagined as a circle drawn by a lined boundary (boundary-as-a-line). Instead, Nancy argues that translation-communication lies at the beginning of community. It is through being exposed to its own vulnerability of being alone, through communication, that community emerges. In this way of thinking, community is not an entity enclosed with a boundary-as-a-line. Rather it emerges through an occurrence of the boundary, a dot, articulated in the moment of being-with. Therefore, community is an accumulation of dots, each of them unique and inconsistent.

Chapter Conclusions

The overall aim of the present chapter was to translate back category-vocabularies into the concept of boundary in order to interrogate the image of the boundary. This translation was a final crucial step for the thesis which ultimately attempted to contribute to the extant debates on the

Boundary as a Dot

boundary by addressing the implications of the tenacity of category-vocabularies for the concept of the boundary. For this purpose, the present chapter started by reflecting on two important findings on category-vocabularies of migrant activism in Japan. These two findings demonstrated that, firstly, categories were used as the signifier to identify the participants of the activism, and secondly, categories were used as the signified, or what failed to be identified by the categories. These opposing representational practices indicate that categorisation is realised in the representational gap between what categories are supposed to identify and what they fail to do.

I argued that this understanding of categorisation would greatly advance an understanding of ‘what goes on at the boundaries’⁵² to show that the boundary is an embodiment of the representational slippage between what categorisation, or bordering, aims to achieve and what it fails to achieve. In the former, the boundary attempts to classify people to perfection by drawing a sharp line around each category. In the latter, the boundary fails to categorise people and assign appropriate names to them.

By drawing on the work of Badiou, I moved on to investigate what the boundary might look like if the representational slippage, not the sharp line, characterises the boundary. Badiou was particularly helpful for this investigation because he directly theorises the gap of representation with his idea of the void. I read Badiou’s idea of the void as equivalent to the gap between what categories are supposed to signify and what escapes from such

⁵² Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World*, p.3.

Boundary as a Dot

signifying power of categories. What the void is to Badiou is what a dot is to my investigation on categories and boundary. A dot is a manifestation of the representational gap, of what the boundary as a line can do *and* cannot do.

I argued that a dot is a helpful image because it highlighted two different aspects of the boundary as a line. On one hand, a dot mirrors the desire of the boundary to develop a line out of a dot. Hence a dot is just an inception of the line to be drawn later. On the other hand, a dot also mirrors the inability for the boundary to draw a line. Hence a dot remains as a point.

The interrogation of the image of the boundary was driven by my frustration that the extant debates on the boundary remained somewhat reticent about the tenacity of the boundary-as-a-line image in discussing bordering practices which no longer sustain such an image. Taking this tenacity as the starting point of investigation, the thesis brought the perspective of categories into examining the image of the boundary. Such an approach proved to be productive since it led to the concluding suggestion of the present chapter that the boundary is a dot.

An examination on the tenacity of categories derived from a particular relationship between categories and resistance exhibited in BM scholarship. As I identified in chapter 2, BM scholarship generally regards categories as generating movements to challenge control imposed by social order. The thesis pointed out that, in this approach, categories are merely replaced by other categories, which suggests the tenacity of category-vocabularies in challenging categories. Therefore, the thesis took this tenacious appearance and re-appearance of category-vocabularies as the focal point of investigation.

Boundary as a Dot

Since this investigation led to the concluding suggestion that the boundary is a dot and categories are realised in the slippage of representation, it was necessary to reflect back on resistance in relation to the image of the boundary as a dot.

Reading together with Badiou's idea of the event, I argued that thinking of the boundary as a dot might raise the need to reconsider what we mean by resistance to the state. Since the state as an entity is surrounded by representational slippage embodied as a dot, resistance might be articulated not as opposed to or outside of the state but within the state. The boundary-as-a-dot thinking points to the idea of resistance which permeates throughout the state and is an integral part of it, instead of locating resistance, and disruption initiated by resistance, outside the state.

Lastly, the thesis also reflected back on the relationship between community and boundary from the perspective of the boundary as a dot. This was also a necessary task of the present chapter because community is based on a particular image of the boundary. Therefore I asked: what might a community look like if the boundary is a dot? Reading together with Nancy's idea of inoperative community, I argued that the image of the boundary as a dot might address a need to rethink the terms of grouping, or community, itself. Since a community is not surrounded by a line, the assumption of community, which is grouping to form the collective, might be changed.