

PROOF

Technocreep
and the Politics of
Things Not Seen

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Uncivil Technoscience

Anti-immigration and Citizen
Science in Boundary Making

It was one of those days, difficult to differentiate from the others that came before, when the sun exposed almost all of the entities of the Sonoran Desert to its violent force. Even in the shade, if they could find it, their bodies were still reached by UV lights and exposed to their negative effects. Under the cover of a saguaro or a creosote bush during the midday, partial shade could be lifesaving, though the superheated ground around them continued to be a reminder of the energetic reservoirs awaiting their flesh. To hide from the sun's sheer spectral power in this landscape was to embark on a losing fight. The vast, cloudless blue skies were a mirror image of the ways this landscape was bare to the all-seeing "eye" above. A whistling wind accompanied the whirring noise of air-conditioning units nearby when a robotic woman's voice announced: "Person Red." Near the Arizona-Sonora border, a seismic ground sensor installed

by members of American Border Patrol (ABP) picked up vibration signals, which the barrier detection system broke down into data patterns. These data patterns led the system to identify the entity responsible for the vibrations: a human body traversing the desert. Geolocated data from the sensor were sent to a nearby small unmanned aircraft system (sUAS) waiting on a helipad. The barrier detection system automatically deployed the sUAS toward the source of the vibration signals, now named “Person Red.” The color coding denoted the urgency of the sensor trigger and what this human figure represented to the system: imminent danger. The barrier detection system was patented by Glenn Spencer and Michael S. King for Border Technologies, Inc., a tech start-up founded in 2003.¹ Like the all-encompassing force of the sun casting its ultraviolet light over the Sonoran landscape and its entities, the barrier detection system made inconspicuous human movements perceptible by making certain kinds of data capturable even if their source hid in plain sight.²

Members of ABP set up their operational space in this spot in southeastern Arizona to research, develop, and test their various technological systems premised on a sense of care for the nation. Co-founded by Spencer in 2002, ABP is a registered nongovernmental organization that describes its mission as “monitor[ing] the border on [a] regular basis” and “educat[ing] the public about border control issues and solutions via internet and other media.”³ The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated ABP as a “hate group” for its anti-immigrant rhetoric, while Spencer has a long trajectory as an anti-immigrant activist, starting in the early 1990s when he created Voice of Citizens Together. In a 1999 video, this organization described how “an invasion is spreading across America like wildfire, bringing gangs, drugs, and an alien culture into the very heartland of America.”⁴ Voice of Citizens Together was involved in the fight to get Proposition 187 passed in California, which sought to institute a statewide citizenship verification system and prohibit unauthorized migrants from accessing nonemergency health care, public education, and other state services. Zeroing on ethnic Mexicans, Voice of Citizens Together and ABP are part of a larger network of xenophobic and racist organizations that imagine the US nation as under threat by a nonwhite, foreign, enemy force. The nation conjured by these organizations is a “heartland,” a domestic space governed through racialized discursive practices of respectability that prioritize the inclusion of those (white) populations that can be assimilated and the exclusion of those deemed impossibly foreign.⁵ Rhetorics of contagion and alien impurities have long been part of US anti-immigrant politics clamoring for the protection of the domestic sphere—both the home and the territory of the nation.⁶ As American studies scholar Amy Kaplan shows, metaphors of the domestic are

weighted tropes “imbued with racialized and gendered associations of home and family, outsiders and insiders, subjects and citizens.”⁷ Considered to be involved in “Civil Rights, Social Action, and Advocacy,” ABP was classified by the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities as a charitable organization. This chapter interrogates the purported charitability of this organization through the incivility of its technoscientific practices. To care for the nation, the group draws boundaries of belonging and expulsion and participates in the long history of nonstate actors enrolled to execute state violence.⁸ The citizen at the heart of its organizational practices is a privileged subject position tending and protecting the purported purities of the imagined community—its peoples, culture, and territory.

I ask, What kind of citizenship is enacted in the technoscientific projects of nongovernmental organizations such as ABP? While its practices are often articulated in narratives of care for the nation, ABP reinforces the treatment of ethnic Mexicans, Latin Americans, and immigrants more broadly as “enemies” of the nation. Its care for the nation is premised on the technocrep of the white ethno-state, a nationalist populist project anchored in mistrust of government institutions, antiglobalist and antic cosmopolitan visions, claims of defending working-class interests, and animosity toward immigrants and racialized others.⁹ As Neda Atanasoski and Nassim Parvin argue in this book’s introduction, one of the core dimensions of technocrep is its slow and gradual movement. The caring citizen and its technopolitical projects steadily ensconce and enact racialized, gendered, and settler colonial logics. White masculinist fervor is called upon to mark the spaces through might and wit where humanity is differentially produced and recognized. The fact that ABP and its operations were characterized as charitable—conducting “advocacy” and “civil rights” work—speaks to the methodical, imperceptible creep of such logics and their recognition and integration within the apparatus of the US empire-nation.

ABP contributes to the development of what I call the border technopolitical regime, a sociotechnical arrangement of entities enrolled in the production and governance of the material boundaries of the US nation. This chapter traces the collaborations between ABP, defense contractors, and the federal government in the articulation of a regime premised on a gradually growing, persistent technocrep—of data capture and processing, and bodily apprehension, displacement, and elimination. These collaborations take place through a citizen science framework that positions public expertise as outside of formal scientific institutions yet contributes to the scientific enterprise. Doing so sheds light on the limitations of citizen science and calls into question its unanimous acceptance as a democratizing endeavor. I build on the work of

scholars who have shown the relation between citizen science and neoliberal governmentality, and the capacity of civil society, generally seen as central to citizen science, to be uncivil.¹⁰ I argue that, in the context of the United States, citizen technoscience has been central to the articulation of a white power sovereignty. The uncivil practices of ABP contribute to the border technopolitical regime's diverse modes of knowing anchored in sensing techniques predicated on removal—the extraction of data from unauthorized border crossers, their ejection from US territory, and their expulsion from the right to have rights.

Citizen (Techno)Science

Scholars in the social and natural sciences often treat the concept of “citizen science,” first proposed by Alan Irwin, as falling into two camps.¹¹ Related to Irwin's original conceptualization of citizen science, the first camp highlights the need for scientific research to be democratized.¹² Irwin, concerned with questions of sustainable development and the environment in the mid-1990s, argued that public expertise was fundamental in the pursuit of scientific research related to environmental issues. Public expertise comprised the knowledge produced outside of the confines of professional scientific fields and their associated institutions. Citizens outside of the “formal” spaces of science worked with scientists who were engaged in tackling critical questions. Their interactions brought together vernacular and scientific knowledges that helped citizens respond to issues impacting their immediate communities. The inclusion of the wider public in a range of practices, like problem definition, data collection, and dissemination, not only expanded participation in the scientific enterprise but allowed scientists to examine previously ignored issues. Science moved from the enclosed space of the laboratory and into an area where it could be enacted by a range of previously excluded actors. The second camp of citizen science is one in which public involvement in scientific research is determined and managed by scientists. Caren Cooper and Bruce Lewenstein call this the contributory, or participatory, model.¹³ Citizens might work on the collection, submission, or analysis of data, yet the methods, contours, and problems to be addressed all fall under the exclusive purview of scientific experts. The public is seen mostly as a source of volunteer labor (as in the case of amateur bird-watchers submitting information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology) or, perhaps, as subjects of study themselves.

The democratizing model of citizen science has meant an increasing engagement between scientific and nonscientific groups around matters of concern. Commenting on David Hess's sociological assessment of the impact of globalization in the scientific enterprise, Sandra Harding contends that science now includes a range of practices that expand public engagement. In the social

sciences, for example, researchers from within and outside the university collaborate through methods such as participatory action research to tackle scientific and technical problems affecting the latter's communities—particularly around issues of health and the environment.¹⁴ Citizen advocacy is another realm within which members of the public raise new questions on existing science grounded in their experiences of various phenomena such as health. An emblematic example of this is the “lay expertise” of AIDS activists in the later 1980s and early 1990s, which helped reconfigure the boundaries of participation in scientific practice, the kinds of questions that could be asked and the kinds of research that could be funded, the treatment of participants, and more.¹⁵ The contributions and importance of citizen science to contest and transform normative understandings of ways of being should not be undervalued. Still, other dynamics merit analysis.

Wider participation in science seems to suggest an expansion of who is included within the bounds of citizenship. To be a “citizen” who participates in scientific practice is to inhabit and enact specific relations—such as becoming a legible and validated subject by scientific practitioners—as well as to be produced by these relations.¹⁶ Who has been included within the category of the citizen has varied across time and space. During the emergence of an independent United States in the eighteenth century, as American studies scholar Lisa Lowe argues, liberal colonial discourses steadily identified the rights of settlers, traders, and others to wage labor, free trade, and sovereignty, in contrast to racialized non-European peoples. These discourses described othered subjects “as unfit for liberty or incapable of civilization”; they were incapable of becoming citizens, of being subjects of the state.¹⁷ And while, over time and through persistent struggles, incorporation within the boundaries of citizenship led to a more capacious figure, the “citizen” continues to be articulated in relation to an excluded other. This is what science studies scholars Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora call the “surrogate human effect.” The freedom of the modern citizen, the archetypal “liberal subject,” “is possible only through the racial unfreedom of the surrogate.”¹⁸ The liberties awarded to the “citizen” are stitched to the unfreedoms of the Other. Citizen science is nested within this tethering.

Our present is marked by the unfolding of neoliberal capital, and practices of citizen science need to be understood in relation to it. In her book about food policing in post-Fukushima Japan, Aya Hirata Kimura shows how citizen science is part of a logic of accountability that puts “pressure on citizens to take responsibility for their own well-being and hence driv[e] them to collect data that are necessary for their health and safety.”¹⁹ The individual citizen is the starting point for neoliberal logics; all else follows this subject.

They are the agents of their own destiny, to paraphrase President George W. Bush, even if they are also the subjects of specific modes of governing that treats individuals and populations as living resources. Neoliberal political rationality is undergirded by moral and economic logics of individual responsibility and efficiency.²⁰ These logics help extend and disseminate market values to all kinds of institutions and spheres of action.²¹ The need for self-reliance and self-sufficiency to supplement the social abandonment of a receding government apparatus has led to a growing network of nongovernmental organizations that pursue scientific projects to protect or support vulnerable communities and the environment. These organizations constitute the civil dimension of civil/citizen technoscience. In their work and as part of “civil society,” they help further the machinations of the state by constituting the sphere through which consent is manufactured.²² The fact that ABP pursues technoscientific projects on border enforcement and security, realms exceedingly well funded by the federal government, shows a different facet of citizen science in a neoliberal context. ABP’s projects can sustain hegemonic conceptions of citizenship even as they further normalize and develop sociotechnical systems of governance.

There are those, like Luigi Ceccaroni, Anne Bowser, and Peter Brenton, who challenge the role of citizenship in citizen science. These authors claim that “the status of a person recognized under custom or law as being a member of a country . . . plays no role in ‘citizen science.’”²³ As evidence, they cite the turn of various groups and organizations to rebrand citizen science under such terms as *community science*, *public science*, and *public participation in scientific research*. Yet this euphemistic redrawing of boundaries avoids addressing who is included and excluded in the making of science. Sidestepping citizenship in *citizen science* reproduces the purportedly universal project of liberalism that had, in fact, only successfully tethered the liberties of the citizen to the unfree conditions of the racialized Other.

Redeployments of Settler Techniques

The trope of a “flooded” border overwhelming US government officials is a recurring theme in debates about border and immigration enforcement, with particular intensity since the Cold War. Framing the border as “out of control,” actors in government, the press, and industry justify renewed investments and commitments to treating some populations as “intruders,” “threats,” and “enemies” of the nation.²⁴ In the early 2000s, anti-immigrant paramilitary organizations like ABP pushed the US government to expand and innovate its security operations in order to counter the migrant tide. Redeploying the “Latino threat narrative,” as anthropologist and border studies scholar Leo

Chavez suggests, these organizations denounced Latino migrants as not intending to integrate into dominant US culture. Anti-immigrant organizations imagined them as undoing US sovereignty by entering the nation's territory without authorization, violating the law.²⁵ ABP, the Minutemen Project, and other similar nongovernmental organizations used sUASs, streaming cameras, and crowdsourced labor from internet users to augment the reach of border enforcement.²⁶ These nongovernmental organizations should be understood not only as paramilitary organizations but as citizen technoscience ventures that emerge from the (neo)liberal program of the settler colonial state. These ventures position the citizen as responsible for democratically making the material implements and techniques that uphold the exceptions of imperial formations. Citizen technoscience enrolls the citizen as part of the border technopolitical regime and its reproduction of the state. The kind of citizen such a program makes possible is not just one that broadens participation but also one that is illiberal—one that works to police, discipline, and exclude the migrant Other. The “citizen” of technoscience, then, requires a critical disposition from the analyst to account for the creeping (as in gradual and slow-growth) boundary work such a figure is tasked to perform for the US empire-nation.

ABP was founded in 2002 in Arizona as the American Patrol, after Glenn Spencer left California, to fight back against what the group considered to be displacement caused by Mexican migrants. In a statement posted on the American Patrol's website, Spencer noted how “Americans, especially White Americans, should get out of California—now, before it is too late to salvage the equity they have in their homes and the value of their businesses.”²⁷ Using the trope of an ensuing Mexican “invasion” bent on a plan for “*reconquista*” (reconquest), ABP imagined itself as protecting the US nation from this insurgency. In his video *detournements*, built from mixing snippets of interviews, congressional hearings, and news reports framed through overdub narrations, Spencer showed how this supposed *reconquista* unfolded, who was willingly or unwittingly supporting it, and who denounced it.²⁸ These videos can be read as part of the history of conspiracy theory narratives designed to get (white) “Americans” to rise up and fight back for “their” country.²⁹ In doing so, they fulfill expectations of the (neo)liberal citizen to be responsible and self-reliant, all the while maintaining their domestic sovereign space. The citizens in this situation are crucial, for it is they who are tasked with caring for and cultivating the US nation.

ABP's plan was to highlight cheap, effective means to enforce border security that the government could adopt. In a somewhat autobiographical and self-aggrandizing overview of the efforts of ABP and his role in the organization, Spencer said ABP was established to focus “on assessing how secure the border

was, and efforts by the government to do the job. Particular attention was paid to technology.”³⁰ Spencer’s technological emphasis can be read in relation to his work experiences in operations research at a think tank in Washington, DC, and in geothermal energy and the oil industry. As the federal government discussed how to best tackle the new threat of post-9/11 international terrorism, conservative politicians and activists pushed for investments in border security and the recruitment of more agents for the reorganized Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and the Transportation and Security Agency, both under the newly established US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). ABP began experimenting in May 2003 with attaching sensors (such as infrared) to remotely controlled fixed-wing aircraft. The group invited members of the press to the launch of its unmanned aircraft system (UAS) Border Hawk, which had cost them five thousand dollars to assemble and operate, and garnered local and some national media coverage. In doing so, the group convinced Arizona’s congressional representatives to support the idea that UASS should be used in border security operations. Senator John McCain and Representative Jim Kolbe wrote to the secretary of DHS endorsing the idea.³¹ Even though the sensors on the Border Hawk were not reliable and the drone itself was difficult to operate, by the end of the month, DHS announced “border drones” were indeed on the horizon of possibility for the agency.³² In addition to flying over the rugged terrains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, military UASS would now creep into the domestic space of the nation, where they would direct their sensors on a range of border crossers, all treated the same—from unarmed migrants to coyotes and drug smugglers. The Border Hawk helped cement the reputation of ABP among a growing network of anti-immigrant paramilitary outfits in the Southwest. The citizen technoscience practice of ABP was a public relations success, because it got the federal government to implement a technological concept designed by the nongovernmental organization.

When it came to ABP’s next project, Spencer relied on his experience in oil exploration to understand the usefulness of seismic sensors for monitoring human and nonhuman movements in the Sonoran Desert borderlands.³³ The use of these sensors, Spencer argued, was linked to a technical debate at the heart of border enforcement: how to measure the totality of unauthorized border flows. To answer this question was to propose “border metrics.” Senator Elizabeth Dole told Congress in 2007 that “it’s not just promises, it’s proof that people want. The American people want to see results [in the US-Mexico border region], control of our borders. And we need to establish standards or metrics and then show that they’ve been achieved.”³⁴ In citing the senator’s declaration in his video on operational control, Spencer was legitimating the

efforts of his group by showing how various political figures had been advocating for “border metrics,” something ABP had been doing for many years. A Rand Corporation report from 2011 contended that “DHS leadership must define concrete and sensible objectives and measures of success.” The Government Accountability Office agreed with Rand when it called on CBP to come up with “a performance goal, or goals, for border security between the [ports of entry] that defines how border security is to be measured, and a performance measure, or measures—linked to performance goal or goals—for assessing progress made in securing the border between [ports of entry] and informing resource identification and allocation efforts.”³⁵ In other words, the Government Accountability Office’s report makes an argument in favor of metrics as a means to measure the effectiveness of investments in border security. Border metrics become a feedback loop designed to govern the effective operations of border enforcement. By drawing on the words of elected and government officials, and technicians from think tanks, Spencer makes an argument for the need of objective measures that can be leveraged in the pursuit of operational control of the southern border, which, as the Secured Fence Act of 2006 states, means “the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States.” In doing so, Spencer insists on his barrier detection system as being strategically placed to offer CBP and government officials the metrics they have needed all along. And these metrics allow for clear goals to be set for the US Border Patrol and for its performance to be assessed in its pursuit and fulfillment of these goals. Cybernetic logics inform how border enforcement comes to be organized through the administration of information as technical matter.

ABP’s intervention on the controversy of border metrics speaks to the growing synergy between this organization and the border technopolitical regime. Sensationalized coverage of these kinds of organizations occludes the gradual entanglements between anti-immigrant activists and government officials. In examining these entanglements through the framework of technocreep, we get to flesh out how the bodies of unauthorized border crossers become extractive ventures for defense industries and uncivil technoscience in the making of a technopolitical regime. In 2010, Spencer demonstrated a different technological concept to Arizona legislators. Back then he described his sonic barrier as more than just a detection system, because it could also be integral to a “border accounting system” that would allow actors to count the bodies that attempt entry into the United States without inspection on the border.³⁶ Human life in the desert borderlands was treated through the abstraction of numbers, of data to be captured, sorted, and fed back into the system for effective operations. The demonstration relied on members of ABP to perform the role of “unauthorized border crossers,” their

movements triggering the seismic sensors installed on Spencer's ranch. Legislators watched as data visualization from the sensors showed increasing noise, a sign that humans were approaching the barrier detection line. The elected officials were intrigued. This demonstration was part of Spencer and ABP's efforts to build relations with government officials, especially Republicans, and to show the benefits their technological systems could provide CBP in "securing" the nation. Spencer continued working on the sonic barrier system for Border Technology, Inc., with his colleague Michael S. King until they finally got a patent approved in 2015, with a second one granted in 2017. This second patent corresponds to the seismic detection and ranging mechanism (SEIDARM), which is connected to the sUAS called Hermes. SEIDARM comprises a network of continuous, solar-powered ground sensors collecting environmental data for potential human and vehicle movements in close proximity, such as low-flying aircraft. Each ground sensor has a range of about five hundred feet per one walking individual. The concept of operations for SEIDARM is based on an information system that records, processes, and mobilizes "border metrics" to guide border enforcement practices in "real time" and after the fact. The system's persistent technocreeper functions as a "side arm," quickly accessible to the gunslinger in the necropolitical administration of bodies in the frontier.³⁷ Actors within this regime continue to draw from settler colonial fantasies of a wild frontier where unauthorized border crossers are imagined as indomitable dangers to the nation.

When Border Technology, Inc., presented the SEIDARM system at a US Air Force event in Las Vegas, Spencer found himself again showing how the citizen technoscience of ABP worked as part of the border technopolitical regime. The event in Las Vegas was part of AFWERX, a technology accelerator from the US Air Force meant to bring together innovators from within and outside the service. Spencer presented his system to AFWERX on April 6, 2018; engineers from Northrop Grumman were in the audience and offered Spencer the opportunity to integrate into SEIDARM a device developed by their company. It was the Mobile Application for UAS Identification (MAUI); installed on the Hermes UAS, this acoustic sensor would allow operators to identify other small drones nearby. And while SEIDARM/MAUI was tested for the folks at AFWERX in late June 2018, it is not clear whether the system was adopted by the US Air Force or is in use by another federal agency. DHS also invited Border Technology, Inc., to demonstrate SEIDARM/MAUI, but it appears nothing came out of the department's engagement.³⁸ Even though Border Technology's system is not part of the official arsenal of CBP, Spencer claims ABP has used SEIDARM to tell CBP agents where to intervene and apprehend unauthorized

border crossers.³⁹ ABP's concept of operations, slowly developed since 2003, is strikingly similar to the Lattice platform and Ghost sUAS system developed by the Silicon Valley tech startup Anduril Industries and currently in experimental use by the CBP.⁴⁰

At the heart of ABP's concept of operations we find a sociotechnical articulation of "vigilance" and citizenship. To be vigilant is to care for the nation. Thinking about this vigilant care through the work of feminist science and technology studies scholars on the politics of care means that to hold something in concern is to approach it in an attentive and thoughtful fashion. But that this care does not necessarily entail a moral good. Instead care lacks innocence, and much violence can be committed in its name.⁴¹ Vigilance here is not an optical relation but an informational one. To sense, record, process, and communicate unauthorized border crossers as data—core processes I have elsewhere described as a cybernetic border—is and has been the dominant approach in US border enforcement operations since the end of the twentieth century.⁴² What is significant in the uncivil technoscience of ABP is that shows us how border enforcement, as a sovereign operation, is not limited to the actions of government officials. Border enforcement enfolds a wide array of actors. And the citizen holds a privileged role for drawing the racial boundaries of the nation. The production of such boundaries unfolds through constant vigilance. This vigilant care is embedded within ABP's sensor networks and related to the performance of citizenship. Like the slow creep of "smart dust," information technologies are seemingly passive and harmless. But to be a citizen is to responsibly care for the nation by deploying information as the "difference that makes a *social* difference"; to be a citizen is to enact relations of informational dominance over surreptitious, racialized subjects.⁴³ To be a citizen is to exclude the migrant/alien Other. To subject them to the violence of an informational, multisensory regime designed to produce bodily capture, incarceration, and deportation. Uncivil technoscience democratizes boundary-making practices that make bodies and entities legible to the state and, consequently, excludable from its territory and the right to have rights.

These seeming (un)official interactions between CBP and ABP, as well as the multiple system demonstrations performed for state, federal agency, and military officials, demonstrate the uncivil character of ABP's technoscience. They seek to normalize and legitimize the treatment of unauthorized border crossers as "enemies" and "intruders" to be managed technologically. Renamed "Person Red," these crossers are sensed by a system that treats them as warning signs for a white ethnoracial order. Technoscience is recognized by the members of ABP like Spencer for its capacity to shape regulatory policies and modes of

governance.⁴⁴ Science is taken as the final arbiter in the resolution of controversies over border security and border metrics. Considerations of sociocultural factors are seen as merely muddying the waters of the cool gaze of objectivity. In the eyes of ABP members, the historical relation between ethnic Mexicans and the Southwest or the imperial dynamics of global US racial capitalism are unnecessary considerations in the production of border security. Border security is, after all, associated with the preservation and reproduction of a kind of universal (white) sovereignty—the capacity of US society to institute a specific social and imaginary racial order. ABP’s citizen science affords its members the capacity to perform the role of “constructive and helpful citizens—subjects who resourcefully take care of themselves” and of the nation.⁴⁵ They are paradoxically self-interested yet disinterested actors, objective in their care for the nation—represented by their conception of who belongs and who ought to be excluded from this imagined community.

Even when Border Technology is a separate entity, it is impossible to disentangle it from ABP. Documents from the Corporation Commission in Arizona show Glenn Spencer is registered as Border Technology’s secretary and president. He is also the chairman of ABP’s board of directors, where he joins former CBP chief agents (Bill King and Ron Sanders) in leading the organization. With elected state officials like former Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio and state legislators attending many of the organization’s technological concept demonstrations and social events, it is equally complicated to sever the ties that bind these communities together.

Conclusion

ABP is part of a contemporary uncivil society involved in the making of the nation-state. The group’s incivility is made evident in its members’ vitriol against ethnic Mexicans and Latinos more broadly. Construed as “threats,” “intruders,” and “enemies,” these populations are impossible subjects beckoning constant vigilance. They justify and reproduce an enduring technocrep—a never-ending sociotechnical disposition that treats humans as the objects and subjects of data. The citizen technoscience of ABP is but an articulation of how the federal government enrolls and is enrolled by vigilante violence in the management of racialized populations. For some political scientists and government officials, ABP and Border Technology, Inc., are emblematic of what they see as the growth of nongovernmental actors involved in a changing landscape of drone operations and “threats” along the US-Mexico border.⁴⁶ But the creep of their operations is stowed away from these concerns. Technocrep can be found in the gradual growth and the persistence of government

actor–nongovernment actor collaborations in border enforcement. The democratizing narrative of citizen science finds its limit in these collaborations. They demonstrate that the liberties afforded to the citizen, both foil and product of technoliberalism, simultaneously making and being made by it, are of a particular kind of racialized subject made legible to the state and another made unrecognizable. Citizen science in the context of US border enforcement opens up the category of “citizen” to critique and highlights its racial politics.

The harm inflicted on migrant communities branded as “enemies” of the nation are many. Chief among them is the way that sociotechnical systems like SEIDARM/MAUI are part of a vast assemblage that, since the development of “prevention through deterrence” in the 1990s, has been responsible for the death of thousands of border crossers every year. An American Civil Liberties Union report concluded in 2009 that “immigration policies have severely restricted legal entry, and border security policies have forced unauthorized entry through dangerous routes in perilous conditions.”⁴⁷ This resulted in an estimated death toll ranging from 3,861 to 5,607 from 1994 to 2009. ABP’s uncivil technoscience is not different from the systems developed and used by DHS in the production of harm—they are all part of the same “necroviolence” that instrumentalizes the desert environment.⁴⁸ Their practices work to normalize the pursuit of technological concepts against ethnic Mexicans and Latinos. As this chapter shows, ABP should be understood as the invisible infrastructure of the border technopolitical regime and its racializing politics of enmity.

NOTES

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1. Spencer and Davis, barrier detection system and method, US patent.

2. Glenn Spencer, “SEIDARM HERMES FOR NG,” April 27, 2019, YouTube video, 3:49, www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kHcm1o8mMU. Many of the documents related to ABP were made by members of ABP itself and often tend to overvalue the group’s success. My engagement with these materials is done primarily through attention to discourse and the articulation of imaginaries. Whenever I can’t verify their claims through other independent sources, I state so.

3. NGO information obtained from “American Border Patrol,” GuideStar, accessed October 31, 2023, www.guidestar.org/profile/42-1542666.

4. “American Border Patrol/American Patrol,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed October 31, 2023, www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/american-border-patrol/american-patrol.

5. For more on respectable domesticity, race, and the US empire-nation, see Shah, *Contagious Divides*; and Wexler, *Tender Violence*. For migration, race, and US nation-making, see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; and Stern, “Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood.”

6. Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?*; Stern, *Eugenic Nation*.

7. Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture*, 3.

8. This practice stretches back into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the Texas Rangers and the mob lynching of ethnic Mexicans in Texas in the 1910s. See B. Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*; Levario, “Home Guard”; and Muñoz Martinez, *Injustice Never Leaves You*.

9. Hugh Gusterson, cited in A. Chávez, “Gender, Ethno-nationalism, and the Anti-Mexicanist Trope,” 5.

10. Kimura, *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists*; Beittinger-Lee, *(Un)Civil Society and Political Change in Indonesia*; Chambers and Kopstein, “Bad Civil Society.”

11. Ceccaroni, Bowser, and Brenton, “Civic Education and Citizen Science”; Cooper and Lewenstein, “Two Meanings of Citizen Science.”

12. Irwin, *Citizen Science*.

13. Cooper and Lewenstein, “Two Meanings of Citizen Science.”

14. Harding, *Objectivity and Diversity*, 16.

15. Epstein, *Impure Science*.

16. Chilvers and Kearnes, “Remaking Participation in Science and Democracy,” 349–50.

17. Lowe cited in Atanasoski and Vora, *Surrogate Humanity*, 10.

18. Atanasoski and Vora, *Surrogate Humanity*, 5.

19. Kimura, *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists*, 15.

20. Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*.

21. Brown, “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.”

22. Buttigieg, “Gramsci on Civil Society,” 4–7.

23. Ceccaroni, Bowser, and Brenton, “Civic Education and Citizen Science,” 9.

24. L. Chavez, *Latino Threat*; Chaa López, “Sensing Intruders”; Chaa López, “Alien Data.”

25. L. Chavez, *Latino Threat*, 135–56; Navarro, *Immigration Crisis*.

26. Raley, “Border Hacks: Electronic Civil Disobedience and the Politics of Immigration.”

27. “American Border Patrol/American Patrol,” Southern Poverty Law Center.

28. Glenn Spencer, “Newt Gingrich Interviews Glenn Spencer 2001,” July 14, 2019, YouTube video, 16:02, www.youtube.com/watch?v=uub98fQgOmY.

29. Belew, *Bring the War Home*; Stern, *Proud Boys and the White Ethno-state*; Uscinski and Parent, *American Conspiracy Theories*; J. Walker, *United States of Paranoia*.

30. Glenn Spencer, “My Border Report,” American Border Patrol, 2019, accessed February 1, 2021, www.americanborderpatrol.com/IMAGES/190627/ATTACHMENT_1_MY_BORDER_REPORT.pdf.

31. Ignacio Ibarra, “Border Watch Takes to the Air,” *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson), May 1, 2003.

32. Spencer, "My Border Report"; Ignacio Ibarra, "Border Drones Possible by Year's End," *Arizona Daily Star*, May 23, 2003. 1
33. Spencer, "My Border Report." 2
34. Glenn Spencer, "NO 3 OPERATIONAL CONTROL," November 21, 2018, YouTube video, 6:52, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdiEUU1Xr4M. 3
35. US Government Accountability Office, *Border Patrol*, 40. 4
36. Glenn Spencer, "Sonic Barrier Demonstration AZ Legislature," June 11, 2013, YouTube video, 15:00, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcTUtrrMGXo. 5
37. De León, *Land of Open Graves*; Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey, *Fencing In Democracy*. 6
38. Spencer, "My Border Report." 7
39. Glenn Spencer, "SEIDARM AIDS BORDER PATROL," August 20, 2016, YouTube video, 3:49, www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-_3-ru-Ro. 8
40. See contract no. 70B02C20D00000019 of July 2, 2020, between Anduril Industries and DHS, at a cost of \$24.8 million for over forty sensor towers and at least one Ghost sUAS. Will Lennon, "The Virtual Wall: Documents Show CBP Plans for Surveillance Towers at US-Mexico Border," *Shadowproof*, April 8, 2021, <https://shadowproof.com/2021/04/08/the-virtual-wall-documents-show-cbp-plans-for-surveillance-towers-at-us-mexico-border>. 9
41. Martin, Myers, and Visser, "Politics of Care in Technoscience," 627, 632. 10
42. See Chaar López, *Cybernetic Border*. 11
43. The idea of information as the "difference that makes a social difference" comes from Jonathan Beller's reformulation of Gregory Bateson. See Beller, *World Computer*, 13–14. 12
44. Sheila Jasanoff argues in *Design on Nature* that the normalization of science is central to neoliberal state-making. 13
45. Kimura, *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists*, 17. 14
46. *Preventing Emerging Threats Act of 2018, Countering Malicious Drones: Hearing on S. 2836, Before the Comm. on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*, 115th Cong. (2018) (statements of David J. Glawe, Undersecretary for Intelligence and Analysis, US Department of Homeland Security, and Hayley Chang, Deputy General Counsel, US Department of Homeland Security). 15
47. Jimenez, *Humanitarian Crisis*, 12. 16
48. Jason De León develops the concept of necroviolence to describe the operations of a human/nonhuman assemblage that performs "corporeal mistreatment" and instrumentalizes such mistreatment for "its generative capacity for violence." De León, *Land of Open Graves*, 69. 17
49. Jason De León develops the concept of necroviolence to describe the operations of a human/nonhuman assemblage that performs "corporeal mistreatment" and instrumentalizes such mistreatment for "its generative capacity for violence." De León, *Land of Open Graves*, 69. 18

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Contributors

NEDA ATANASOSKI is professor and chair of the Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, and associate director of the Artificial Intelligence Interdisciplinary Institute at Maryland (AIM). She is the author of *Humanitarian Violence: The US Deployment of Diversity* (2013), coauthor of *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots and the Politics of Technological Futures* (2019), and coeditor of *Postsocialist Politics and the Ends of Revolution* (2022).

KATHERINE BENNETT is a PhD student in digital media at the Georgia Institute of Technology. They research aesthetics of Black feminist and queer technoculture, in particular the representational landscapes of Afrofuturist literature and visual media. Their writing and low-tech artifacts and installations examine connections between art and nature. Katherine has practiced and taught landscape architecture in the United States and South Korea.

IVÁN CHAAR LÓPEZ is assistant professor in the Department of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and principal investigator of the Border Tech Lab. He is the author of *The Cybernetic Border: Drones, Technology, and Intrusion* (2024) and a coauthor of Precarity Lab's *Technoprecarious* (2020).

SUSHMITA CHATTERJEE is chair and professor of ethnic studies and women's and gender studies at Colorado State University. Sushmita's research interests include postcolonial studies, animal studies, feminist-queer theory, and visual politics. Her book *Postcolonial Hauntings: Play and Transnational Feminism* is forthcoming from the University of Illinois Press in 2024.

HAYRI DORTDIVANLIOGLU is a PhD candidate and a Fulbright Scholar in the School of Architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Hayri's scholarly interests include architectural history, theory, design, critical computation, representation, craft, and fabrication. He utilizes speculative mapping and data visualization to question the interaction between humans, their environments, and technology.

JACOB HAGELBERG is a PhD candidate in cultural studies at the University of California, Davis, with designated emphases in science and technology studies and critical theory. He is finishing up his dissertation, titled “Techlash Media: Credit, Credibility, and Crisis.” He also teaches computer science ethics as well as a media theory course on *Black Mirror*.

SANAZ HAGHANI, an interdisciplinary artist and faculty member at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, specializes in installations, art books, and handmade paper that delve into themes of womanhood and cultural identity. Holding a master of fine arts degree from the University of Georgia, her art has been featured in significant exhibitions, most notably *Paper Routes: Women to Watch 2020* at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia.

JENNIFER A. HAMILTON is professor and chair of anthropology at Bates College. She is a sociocultural anthropologist whose interdisciplinary research and teaching focus on feminist science and technology studies, medical and legal anthropology, ethnography, and the politics of indigeneity. She is the author of *Indigeneity in the Courtroom* (2009) and is currently revising her second book manuscript, *Settler Science and the Politics of Indigeneity*.

ANTONIA HERNÁNDEZ is an artist and assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University. She combines art practice with theoretical investigation to explore the poetics of governance and the infrastructural dimension of intimacy. She has presented her work and creative methods extensively at conferences, exhibitions and art talks. Her current project, *Hydrofictions*, investigates imaginaries about water, including financial and speculative ones.

MARJAN KHATIBI is assistant professor in the Department of Design at San Jose State University. She holds an MFA in digital arts and new media from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is an interdisciplinary visual designer from Tehran, Iran. She specializes in virtual reality and augmented reality and design for social change. She has presented research at conferences such as the AIGA Design Educators Community, the Broadcast Education Association, and the University and College Designers Association.

TAMARA KNEESE is senior researcher and project director of the Data and Society Research Institute’s Algorithmic Impact Methods Lab. She is the author of *Death Glitch: How Techno-solutionism Fails Us in This Life and Beyond* (2023) and a coeditor of *The New Death: Mortality and Death Care in the Twenty-First Century* (2022).

ERIN MCELROY is assistant professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Washington, where they run the Anti-Eviction Lab, and is cofounder of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project and the *Radical Housing Journal*. Erin is the author of *Silicon Valley Imperialism: Techno Fantasies and Frictions in Postsocialist Times* (2024) and coeditor of *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement and Resistance* (2021).

VERNELLE NOEL, PhD, is a computational design scholar, architect, and artist and director of the Situated Computation and Design Lab. Using interdisciplinary approaches, she builds new frameworks, methodologies, and tools to explore social, cultural, and political aspects of computation and emerging technologies for new reconfigurations of practice,

pedagogy, and publics. Areas include craft, vernacular, and digital practices and automated and emerging technologies.

JESSICA OLIVARES is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Bioethics at the University of Texas Medical Branch. In 2023, she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at Rice University on the surveillance state. She received a joint MA in anthropology and women's, gender, and sexualities studies at Brandeis University.

NASSIM PARVIN is associate professor at the University of Washington Information School, where she also serves as associate dean for inclusion, diversity, equity, access and sovereignty. Dr. Parvin's interdisciplinary research integrates theoretically driven humanistic scholarship and design-based inquiry. Her papers have appeared in design, Human Computer Interaction (HCI), and Science and Technology Studies (STS) venues. Her designs have been deployed at nonprofit organizations and exhibited in venues such as the Smithsonian Museum. She is an award-winning educator and one of the lead coeditors of *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*.

BETH SEMEL is assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Princeton University. Drawing from linguistic and medical anthropology, science and technology studies, and surveillance studies, her research explores the technopolitics and sensory politics of machine listening in American mental health care.

RENEE SHELBY is a visiting fellow at the Justice and Technoscience Lab in the School of Regulation and Governance at Australian National University. She researches and writes about the social impacts of technology, with a focus on how to develop technologies that promote equity. Her approach is informed by her background as a public sociologist working with antiviolenace and LGBTQ organizations in the US South.

TANJA WIEHN is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen. In 2021, she received her PhD from the University of Copenhagen with her thesis on algorithmic intimacies. In her research, she investigates algorithmic systems, digital culture, and artistic (research) practices through feminist epistemologies.