

# THE POWER OF A BORDER

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A binational metropolis, straddling two countries with a [walled border](#) . To the north, **El Paso** (Texas-United States) the city is built based on measured and structured rules and urban operations that leave a territory delimited by the classic structures of the [American city](#): a downtown looking for the height of the skyline, residential areas looking for the heights of the hills, the commercial areas with their large car parks, the communication infrastructures, the areas for the university and even the military zone. A treatise on the perfect suburbanized city, a debatable but functional model at least, which helps to generate a scenario of social coexistence. To the south, **Ciudad Juárez** (Chihuahua-Mexico), the city is half-made, it is a city in quotes, it is a city in its name and in its spirit but it is a city with thousands of empty houses, with subdivisions installed in the territory without a clear meaning, with development without quality or aesthetics or trace of the function of public space. A city stretched out along the desert, with well-defined and urbanized industrial developments but surrounded by makeshift colonies with very low-quality housing and in an environment of lack of respect for the law and growing insecurity.



The city of the south serves the city of the north, is due to it, looks to the north and depends on the north. The city to the south is today suffocated by military convoys, metal bursts that leave the habit of ten deaths a day and unlimited corruption spread like social gangrene. They say that to the south, this city is today what it always was, nothing more than that.

A city split in two by **a line in the desert**, the thickest, firmest, most forceful line one can imagine. A line made by a large and rough river, even though it flows almost without water, a line that is measured in the hours it takes to cross it, either by car or on foot, between controls and visas that every border requires. Even if it is to go from one side of the same city to the other.

Nothing like this example to understand how a dividing line marked on the ground can suppose so much contrast. The most insecure city in the world, they say, aside; one of the safest cities in the United States, to the north. And the two are interconnected as a single city, although that dividing line wants to deny it. Its two economies are intertwined, and industrial and commercial life takes place on both sides. But today things are not enough to feel on both sides and reality forces a decision: either you are on this side of the river, or you are on the other, and being on one side or the other is no longer a matter of preference.

There are borders in the world that mark great differences and that make it clear that it is not the geographical conditions that are transcendental in the **economic and social development** of a place, but rather the model of institutionalization of coexistence and the role that the actors of the economic and social system have played and play. And this is how the same city can be split in two, have two names, two histories and two completely contradictory presents.

Image taken from the blog [Tom Diaz](#).

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