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Paper title: Trump’s Big Beautiful Wall: Utopia, Heterotopia, and Dystopia

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Abstract:

President Trump campaigned on the promise of building a “big beautiful wall” in 2016. He stated that he distrusts the mainstream media and prefers using his twitter account to get his message directly to his base. Trump’s proposed budget for FY 2018 has $1.6 billion as a down payment on his pledge to build his wall, with the assumption that more walls will be built in subsequent years. The number of CBP and ICE agents are scheduled to be incrementally increased for border security. Most of the proposed wall projects submitted to Congress are designed to reinforce current infrastructure – e.g., replacing obsolete or dysfunctional fencing and other apparatuses along the USA-Mexico border. Trump’s vision is open to debate as to the possible implementation of his policy to rid the USA of undocumented border crossers – or illegal aliens – as proponents view the wall as an effective end to illegals taking American jobs and reducing criminal activity, bringing forward a utopian ideal to end illegal migration. Problems arise, however, when private property owners along the border have their land taken under federal laws such as the Real ID Act of 2005 and the Secure Fence Act of 2006, among others, rendering “taken” property as a no-man’s land akin to Foucault’s concept of heterotopia. The efforts by the USA’s DHS to stem the flow of migrants from mostly Central American countries and Mexico have resulted in numerous deaths and imprisonment – conditions associated with a dystopia and a violation of basic human rights.

Keywords: Border wall, border security, utopia, heterotopias, dystopia, media spectacle
“Tweeting” is candidate (now president) Donald J. Trump’s regular means for mass communication to the public. Twitter is used internationally as a social medium to send 140-character blurbs for whatever reason. Social media like Twitter is instantaneous and produces a footprint that is difficult, if not at all possible, to completely redact. In particular, the analysis offered here will be conducted using the case of the tweet-effects on USA-Mexico border dwellers particularly situated along the Rio Grande, the middle of which is the international boundary between Mexico and Texas.

The paper examines social construction as it pertains to primarily the border region, the effects of Trump’s tweets to the area – categorized in a manner that demonstrates the evocative nature and crisis management-mode prevalent during current budget negotiations as they pertain to the border wall, the consequences of the border wall-threat to the people dwelling in the region, and concluding with an overall analysis and discussion of current events using a critical approach for public policy and administration.

A Social Construction of Reality: The Border Wall as a Utopian, Heterotopian, or Dystopian Existence
The building of President Trump’s “big, beautiful wall” would be a monumental task simply due to the logistics. USA Today recently conducted an extensive analysis concerning the implications for the border wall project to the USA public as to the consequences that would likely occur if constructed. A portion of the news article is presented here…

In Texas, any new wall would have to be built some distance from the border, because the line itself runs down the middle of the Rio Grande. To gauge the possible impact, the USA TODAY NETWORK used the state's open-records law to obtain digital property maps from all 13 Texas counties with border frontage. (A 14th county touches the border only at one point, accounting for a single parcel.) All told, a network analysis shows, about 4,900 parcels of property sit within 500 feet of the border in Texas…Most Texas land is privately owned, a fact that could complicate and delay efforts to build a wall in a state that reveres private property rights…There is no public map of exactly where, or for how far, a future border wall would run. Some of the wall would surely be on land already owned by the federal government, such as levees. But the 4,900-parcel swath gives a sense of the massive land seizure and cost that the federal government could face (Ryman, et al, 2017, para. 1-4; italics added for emphasis; capitalizations by the authors).

The proposed border wall public works project is a massive undertaking and will have mostly adverse effects on people dwelling along the Mexico-USA border. The political, legal, economic, social, and environmental consequences that will occur if the project is passed into law will have changed the landscape architecture and most likely will restrict the rights of USA citizens living in the area as well as any border crossers.

A few of the definitions used for this paper include: (1) utopia = no real place; (2) heterotopia = the other place; and, (3) dystopia = the bad place (all concepts Greek in origin). Utopia can never be achieved in the sense that it is a “perfect” place. Philosophers have argued, for example, that workers could own the means of production and establish a society whereby each person takes according to his need, thus eliminating the need for a government apparatus (see Marx [1867/1984], Das Kapital and Marx and Engels The Communist Manifesto [1848], for example). Smith makes the case that the invisible hand of capitalism will provide for a more
perfect society with a minimal government only providing essential services such as a military, post office, and diplomatic relations (see *The Wealth of Nations*). Kant (1795/1983), building on Smith, posits that liberal democracies will eventually prevail over authoritarian regimes, creating a state of perpetual peace due to liberal democracies trading with each other and having no need to ever go to war (see *Essays on Perpetual Peace*). Utopias, as they are “no real place,” can never be achieved in reality. Michel Foucault (2008) notes on Kant’s vision of perpetual peace that it is an *appearance* of governmental rationality based on the nature of man that encompasses …

1. Men can have relations of exchange with each other individually, supported by property, etcetera, and this prescription or precept of nature will be taken up in legal obligations and become civil law.
2. Commercial relationships cross the world, just as nature intended, and to the same extent as nature intended the whole world to be populated, and this will constitute cosmopolitan law or commercial law…. Perpetual peace is guaranteed by nature and this guarantee is manifested in the population of the entire world and in the commercial relationships stretching across the whole world. The guarantee of perpetual peace is therefore actually commercial globalization (pp. 5-7).

Foucault objects to Kant’s political calculations for liberalism on historical grounds. Liberalism thus practiced as described by Foucault is “the art of government formed in the eighteenth century [that] entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship [with] freedom. [It] must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats…” in favor of free trade over democratic values (p. 64). The art of government under such a regime favors commercial interests as against labor where “the freedom of the workers must not become a danger for the enterprise and production” and the central problem of liberalism is “the economy of power” by the “interplay between freedom and security” (p. 65). A perfect balance of freedom and security can never be achieved.

The modern case of the border wall is the embodiment of the problem between freedom and security. As a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 2006/1981; Garrett and Storbeck, 2011), the wall
does not represent peace or security. It represents profits for corporate wall-builders, security technology, deaths and violence, and loss of migrant and local citizen human rights (Garrett, 2010; Garrett, 2012; Pope and Garrett, 2012; Garrett, 2013). If anything, there is an increasing militarization along the Mexico-USA border as the wall moves migrant into dangerous desert and mountain areas resulting in over 7,200 migrants dying crossing the border (O’Dell, Gonzalez and Castellano, December 14, 2017). With an increase of 17% in deaths at the border over the first seven months of 2017, The Guardian reports that in the previous year “the US Border Patrol has reported that about half as many migrants were apprehended during border crossings in the first six months of 2016 compared to the first six months of 2017 – down from 267,746 people to 140,024 people” (Holpuch, August 5, 2017, para. 3). However, the Mexico-USA border is increasingly becoming a zone where migrants perish. US citizens oppose the border wall by 62% to 36% according to a December 13, 2017 Quinnipiac poll – and it has been a clear majority against the wall previously – and by a margin of 7 to 1, those polled said that DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival] immigrants should stay (Quinnipiac University Poll, December 13, 2017). A question is raised as to whether the USA is still a democracy. The USA has lost its “full democracy” status in 2015 according to The Economist (2017) and is a now considered a “flawed democracy” ranked 21st in the most recent democracy index due mostly to a movement since 2016 towards “illiberal democracy” and “new authoritarianism” (p. 5). Agamben (2005), analyzed President George W. Bush’s reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as 9/11) and stated the presidential administration created an authoritarian state reaction (or state of exception) thereby jeopardizing the USA’s status as a representative democracy without due regard for human rights and civil liberties. The erosion of political rights continues since 9-11.
Today, what is referred to as neoliberalism, defined as an “ideological system born of struggle and collaboration in three worlds: intellectual, bureaucratic and political” (Mudge, 2008, p. 703) is the ideology behind the creation of the wall in the USA, having begun in earnest with presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, albeit driven with extra zeal more recently by President Trump and his supporters due to perceived crisis concerns about undocumented border crossers. Concomitantly, government contracts to wall construction are central to the security apparatus industry with a current legislative agenda favored by the president and the Congress that allows for up to $25 billion in border infrastructure construction in exchange for an opening for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to be granted citizenship (Rampton and Cornwell, January 24, 2018). Following Foucault, Lemke (2001) submits that the American neoliberal…

...governmentality not only focuses on the integral link between micro- and macro-political levels (e.g. globalization or competition for ‘attractive’ sites for companies and personal imperatives as regards beauty or a regimented diet), it also highlights the intimate relationship between ‘ideological’ and ‘political-economic’ agencies (e.g. the semantics of flexibility and the introduction of new structures of production). This enables us to shed sharper light on the effects neo-liberal governmentality has in terms of (self-) regulation and domination. These effects entail not just the simple reproduction of existing social asymmetries or their ideological obfuscation, but are the product of a re-coding of social mechanisms of exploitation and domination on the basis of a new topography of the social domain (p. 203).

Neoliberalism and the concomitant state of exception are the driving force that is moving the USA towards a security state due to the large scale public works projects of the Department of Homeland Security such as the border wall. The wall comes at the expense of the general public and migrants attempting to enter the USA from its southern land border.

The paper will now examine the dispositional settings among various groups, politicians, bureaucrats, and others in the USA. Neoliberalism is the ideological context that influences partisans and controls the majority of the general public regardless of political party persuasion.
Neoliberalism enables the political and media spectacles (Kellner, 2016; Garrett 2012), or the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967/1994). An analysis will be made as to whom benefits and who is adversely affected economically, politically and socially using the distinct categories of utopia, heterotopias, and dystopia.

**Utopia:** The wall along US border with Mexico is a combination of paramilitary governmental authorities (e.g., CBP, Border Patrol, ICE, other DHS agencies) electronic surveillance and 18-foot high fence built beyond what was built before in previous administrations (e.g., Bill Clinton and George W. Bush) with the ultimate goal near absolute security – and was a campaign promise by presidential candidate Donald J. Trump. Trump, since his election in 2016 prefers to bypass most conventional media, using mostly social media such as twitter to achieve the ideal of complete control of communication between himself and his constituents without conventional media intervention…

*I use Social Media not because I like to, but because it is the only way to fight a VERY dishonest and unfair “press,” now often referred to as Fake News Media. Phony and non-existent “sources” are being used more often than ever. Many stories & reports a pure fiction!* 2:36 PM - 30 Dec 2017

(Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947235015343202304, see also #28, Appendix).

Twitter is Trump’s primary means to send his messages on border security and the wall (see Appendix for more examples of tweets), circumventing media and governmental institutions, including his White House office, to generate support for policies and programs from his followers. The media spectacle (Kellner, 2016) Trump creates pushes his political agenda to build his wall, and increase the number of additional border patrol agents by up to 5,000, even though the USA Government’s Department of Homeland Security has to spend $297 million to help the CBP get them as “Congress requires a force of 21,370 agents, but a report recently said that as of May there were only 19,500 agents. Compounding the problem is retention: between
2013 and 2016 an average of 523 agents were hired, while 904 left” (Moran, December 12, 2017, para. 14).

_Heterotopia:_ Border wall security coverage creates zones – or lands divided by the structure that separates homeowners, universities, farmers, businesses and ranchers from their property. Heterotopias created by the power (Foucault, 1980) of the state are ostensibly designed to separate territories through land barriers on the border. In the instance of the Mexico-USA border in Texas, the Rio Grande is a natural barrier that is supplemented by emplacements (fences, walls, surveillance apparatuses) at times and places up to two miles or more inland. Most border structure follows levees designed to prevent flooding. As the river naturally curves and bends, the building of a wall directly on the banks is impractical. Foucault (1970) analyzes heterotopias as places that exist outside of the sacred and profane. Heterotopias are other places, such as prisons, amusement parks, museums, and walls, among other phenomena.

_Dystopia:_ There is a strong fear, or a perception of fear (Correa-Cabrera and Garrett, 2014) of another 9-11-style terrorist attack with terrorists coming through the border with Mexico used to justify building an extensive security apparatus for “illegal immigration” – although the 9-11 terrorists never came through the Mexico-USA border. Similarly, failure to produce or extend the wall would result in a loss of contracts for wall building by corporations. Politicians raise the fear of levee failure _a la_ New Orleans along the Rio Grande (Garrett and Storbeck, 2011), and a fear of separation of culture and society by the authoritarian State (based on George Orwell’s _1984_).¹ There would be a corresponding loss of commercial and social

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¹ See George Orwell’s _1984_ for examples of a “dystopia.” To wit:

“…by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian. The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realizable. Every new political theory, by what ever name it called itself, led back to hierarchy and regimentation. And in the general hardening of outlook that set in round about 1930, which had been long abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years— _imprisonment without trial, the use of war prisoners as slaves, public executions, torture to extract confessions, the use of hostages_...”
transactions with neighbors and customers from Mexico leading to economic calamity as the border wall will lead to increased criminal activity along the border.

Berger and Luckmann (1980) and Schutz (1967) note that reality is socially constructed and not separate and outside of what people experience. Questions arise as to whether experiences from people dwelling outside of the Mexico-USA border region have any bearing of empathy or appreciation towards people living in the area. Social constructions and their variation matter. The ability to have any capacity for fellow citizens or neighbors in other states (within the USA) and countries starts with basic perceptions. Merleau-Ponty (1948/2008; 1962/2009; 1964) submits that perception precedes all application of “science” or other rational behaviors in terms of knowledge accumulation and how people come to experience, application of science and practice. What one knows through first-hand experience living on the border is different from others living farther inland, for example, and how they perceive the border wall or border security.

A further philosophical inquiry into the social construction of lived experiences – or what amounts to potential lived experiences – is in order. At this point, we have examined the social construction of images used to forward political agendas ostensibly designed to prevent another 9-11 or mitigate natural disaster. Foucault (1970) offers the following analysis of perceived ideals of reality that is relevant to the assessment of the border “wall”:

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*and the deportation of whole populations—not only became common again, but were tolerated by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive*” (pp. 168-169, italics added for emphasis).

The section has a bearing on the border fence issue, especially with regard to DHS and INS tactics – imprisonment without trial, torture (with regard to captured alleged terrorists), and the deportation of whole populations. Examining Orwell’s critique seems realizable in the present tense, at least for people being adversely affected – in this case, along the border of the U.S. and Mexico.
Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together’. This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the fabula; heterotopias … desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences (xviii, italics in original).

As such, the DHS – through President Trump – proposes the wall …

…as a means to bring about an end to fears of potential terrorism – at least through the border with Mexico – and an end to illegal immigration. These proposed policies constitute a utopian ideal, primarily from senior executive government officials who do not dwell along the US-Mexican border and therefore lack any experience with the local reality. American citizens living in the Rio Grande Valley are affected by the border ‘wall’ and see the possibility of a hideous structure ruining the aesthetical value of the area, destroying long-cherished personal and friendly relations with their neighbors in Mexico, and the potential destruction of the ecological system important for quality of life and eco-tourism. What was first described as the neighborly ‘fence’ in 2007-2009 is now to be foisted upon the residents of the Rio Grande Valley having become the ‘wall; designed to cut off families, culture, and history of good will between friends on both sides of the river. [The border “wall” becomes “the other place” – the heterotopia or dystopia for them.] There is no hope of a reprieve [given prior experience with the wall building of 2007-2009 and the current political climate” (Garrett 2010, p. 311) … [of now Trump’s big, beautiful, wall.] (Note: this section was written in 2010 and is updated to include material from 2018. Not much has changed with regard to the wall in nearly a decade, except the current executive leadership).

Garrett (2010) wrote “Since the border ‘wall’ is now seemingly a fait accompli, people and their local government representatives have sought to make the most out of an untenable situation. The question remains as to whether those dwelling in the heterotopia will be living in a dystopia – if the violence and chaos ensues from the construction of the border wall” (pp. 311-312). What was true in the previous decade is once again true in 2018. The hardship of the wall remains for the people of the lower Rio Grande Valley.
In the next section, President Trump’s Tweets will be considered for their policy and program ramifications for the border security. The president’s Twitter account actions provide insight as to his thinking and aspirations for the border wall. Therefore, the presidential tweets will be analyzed for policy content and consequences.

Categorizing President Trump’s Tweets

With regard to President Trump’s tweets, his intentions as to where he wants to go regarding border security policy are comprised of three primary interrelated initiatives: (1) more personnel (i.e., Customs and Border Protection [CBP] and Immigration, Customs, Enforcement [ICE]); (2) increased use and more acquisition of surveillance technology; and, (3) more border wall infrastructure. This paper is concerned with the expansion beyond the current 670 miles of fences and walls along the 1,954-mile Mexico-USA border. The tweets on the subject of the border wall that are ostensibly designed as attempts to get the Congress and the public on board with the wall project and may be categorized as (1) addressing, manufacturing (or creating) crises; (2) abusing or shaming public officials for border wall acquiescence or compliance; (3) reinforcing President Trump’s political base to inform them of his commitment to campaign promises; or, (4) using other policy initiatives (such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA) to negotiate completion of the border wall project for inclusion in the FY 2018 budget. These categories are not mutually exclusive but are provided here (Table 1) to analyze President Trump’s push for the Mexico-USA border wall:
### Table 1: Categories for President Trump’s Border Wall/Security Tweets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Management</th>
<th>Acquiescence/Blame</th>
<th>Maintaining the Base</th>
<th>Policy Negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Border Security and Corresponding Budget Compliance through Crises, Wrapping Compliance with Patriotism</td>
<td>Blame Democrats and Party and/or the Media, Rogue Republicans and/or Mexicans for Migration, Border Security and Other Problems</td>
<td>Reaffirming Commitment to the Wall Pledge and Getting Agency or Party Support</td>
<td>Using DACA as a Wedge to Win the Wall via the Border Wall and/or Budget Extensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See Appendix: 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, 19, 25, 31, 33, 34</td>
<td>See Appendix: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36</td>
<td>See Appendix: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 26, 27, 31, 34</td>
<td>See Appendix: 2, 6, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected examples: 31. Putting Pelosi/Schumer Liberal Puppet Jones into office in Alabama would hurt our great Republican Agenda of low on taxes, tough on crime, strong on military and borders... &amp; so much more. Look at your 401-k’s since Election. Highest Stock Market EVER! Jobs are roaring back!</td>
<td>35. The problem with agreeing to a policy on immigration is that the Democrats don’t want secure borders, they don’t care about safety for U.S.A.</td>
<td>34. Border Patrol Officer killed at Southern Border, another badly hurt. We will seek out and bring to justice those responsible. We will, and must, build the Wall!</td>
<td>36. Any deal on DACA that does not include STRONG border security and the desperately needed WALL is a total waste of time. March 5th is rapidly approaching and the Dems seem not to care about DACA. Make a deal!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Leaving Camp David for the White House. Great meetings with the Cabinet and Military on many very important subjects including Border Security &amp; the desperately needed Wall, the ever increasing Drug and Opioid Problem, Infrastructure, Military, Budget, Trade and DACA.</td>
<td>14. We need the Wall for the safety and security of our country. We need the Wall to help stop the massive inflow of drugs from Mexico, now rated the number one most dangerous country in the world. If there is no Wall, there is no Deal!</td>
<td>7. Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budget, no C.R.’s!</td>
<td>2. I have offered DACA a wonderful deal, including a doubling in the number of recipients &amp; a twelve year pathway to citizenship, for two reasons: (1) Because the Republicans want to fix a long time terrible problem. (2) To show that Democrats do not want to solve DACA, only use it!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** See Appendix (this paper) for corresponding tweets signified numerically 1-36. Some tweets overlap categories. These tweets span the timeframe for budget negotiations from October 10, 2017 to February 5, 2018. Not all tweets were used in the table, but are available to the reader.

Table 1 offers a few snapshots of President Trump’s tweets to place into some context as to where he stands with regards to border security, border wall and DACA issues. President Trump clearly wants the “big, beautiful wall” constructed and will blame his opponents – defined by his
Tweets as Democrats, uncooperative Republicans, and Mexicans – for being anti-security and unpatriotic for opposing the structure. He will use DACA as a bargaining tool to obtain the border wall.

President Trump’s tweets have a direct bearing on the Mexico-USA border region. In the next section, the policy ramifications of the directives contained in the tweets will be analyzed and assessed as to how they impact the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. A significant portion of Trump’s proposed wall infrastructure, if approved by Congress, will find its way to the region, impacting federal wildlife refuges, private conservation preserves, farmers, ranchers, businesses, and landowners. Additionally, another group impacted directly by the border wall are the DREAMers living along the border as addressed here, but elsewhere throughout the USA.

**Consequences for Trump’s Big, Beautiful Wall and What It Means for the Rio Grande Valley of Texas**

*Wildlife Refuges, Conservation Centers, and Eco-Tourism*

People dwelling in the Rio Grande Valley have had problems with previous border wall construction, particularly during the 2007-2009 timeframe. Wildlife refuges such as the Sabal Palm Sanctuary are surrounded by the border wall. Visitors pass through a gap in the wall with a Border Patrol agent present, wondering if they are still present in U.S. territory. The estrangement sensation is demonstrated by “Gloria Regis, a visitor from Michigan, [who] says it’s peaceful but also ‘feels like no man’s land. I wouldn’t want to know I’m not considered in the U.S. on this side of the Rio Grande’” (Schwartz, March 10, 2017, para. 20). President Trump’s new border wall proposal includes building a wall on the levees in Hidalgo County including the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge and the National Butterfly Center (which is privately owned). A map of the location of the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge is shown in **Figure 2**.
Additionally, the World Birding Center has nine locations in the lower Rio Grande Valley. One of the centers is located near Hidalgo, Texas and is shown in Figure 3…

Access would be cut off for birders and others wanting to view wildlife unavailable anywhere else on the continent with further construction of the border wall similar to what occurred in 2008 at the Hidalgo World Birding Center.

The lower Rio Grande Valley is heavily dependent on eco-tourism. Birding centers, wildlife center visitations, and hiking are important to the local economy. Continued construction may completely destroy environmental destinations that have not yet received the border wall.

Nelson (November 27, 2017) notes in the lower Rio Grande Valley …

More than 165,000 nature tourists visit the region each year, infusing $463 million into the local economy and sustaining 6,600 jobs, according to a 2011 Texas A&M University study…. Creating the ecotourism industry has taken decades of hard work, fundraising and public-private cooperation…. Army Corps of Engineers maps show plans for 28 miles of new levee wall and 32 miles of new border wall in the Valley, slicing through the wildlife corridor. Congress has approved $341 million to repair and strengthen existing fence, far short of the $1.6 billion the Trump administration has requested, but it’s enough to worry wildlife advocates. In addition to nearly 3 miles of levee wall and fence through Santa Ana, the expected path of the fence would cut through or build around the 100-acre National Butterfly Center preserve; Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, a 797-acre preserve; and the Ro... (Wildlife Refuge) is slated to receive an 18-foot steel bollard fence atop a concrete-base levee wall. The project would also clear a 150-foot “enforcement zone” adjacent to the fence, all of which would cost an expected $45 million, Corps of Engineers records show (para. 10-16).

Opposition to the border wall being placed particularly in the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge has escalated. USA Today reporter, Rick Jervis, after interviewing several environmentalists noted that “The Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge — a 2,088-acre tangle of trees, animals, birds and butterflies straddling the U.S.-Mexico border in South Texas — could become the site of one of the fiercest standoffs between federal engineers on one side and locals and environmentalists opposing a border wall on the other” (February 9, 2018, para. 4). The proposed border wall extension, upwards towards $30 billion proposed in this year’s budget negotiations, threatens the environment and economic prosperity for the area and will likely face extensive local resistance.
Property Owners and Eminent Domain

Eminent domain for private landowners is a problem for border dwellers along the Rio Grande as there have been problems of lowball offers for property as “many of them received initial offers that were far below market value. And dozens accepted those amounts without seeking any legal help, only to discover neighbors had won far larger settlements after hiring attorneys” (San Antonio News Express, October 18, 2012, para. 3). Examples of these discrepancies include: (1) a trucking business owner who was offered $1,600.00 for sixty feet of property, but with legal help received $40,000.00; (2) an entertainment district developer was offered initially $233,000.00 for land, refused the offer with attorney advice and received $4.7 million; and, (3) the Sabal Palm Preserve (Nature Conservancy) settled for $1 million when the initial government offer for 8 acres of land was $114,000.00. About 400 landowners were impacted by the border wall in 2007-2009 and some of the early lawsuits brought about by a group of “28 landowners who asked for juries, the half who settled received additional checks that were on average 1,200 percent more than the original offer” (para. 22). There were 320 lawsuits in U.S. District for South Texas Judge Hanen’s court and as of April 2017 there were about 90 cases still unresolved (Garrett, 2018). Not all property owners fared well, however, as those individuals who did not have legal counsel took the initial U.S. government offer at what constituted less than fair market value.

Property owners, some of whom have had the land in their families since the Spanish land grants in the 1700s, who do not have attorneys or other legal skills impacted by the next stages of border wall construction could be receiving some support from the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP). Efrén Olivares, TCRP’s racial and economic justice director, stated, “Under the
rules governing federal condemnation actions, a landowner who disagrees with the amount offered by the government has the right to request a jury trial…Our team at the Texas Civil Rights Project is ready to represent landowners, as well as train and deploy legal volunteers to ensure that all landowners have the representation and respect they deserve” (Aguilar, April 19, 2017, para. 3).

Dreamers and DACA

The DREAM Act (The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act passed in 2001 was intended to provide relief to immigrant children (now referred to as DREAMers) brought into the USA by their parents. The legislative goal was to …

…provide a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to gain a pathway to permanent legal status; provided those individuals achieved certain milestones, including:

- Attending or graduating from an institution of higher learning;
- Be of a certain age to apply;
- Be physically present in the U.S. for a certain number of years;
- Have good moral character; and,
- Not have violated other immigration laws

…The term has been used to define individuals in the U.S. who were brought to the country at an early age without documentation but have assimilated to U.S. culture and have been educated by U.S. school systems (LawLogix, July 29, 2013, para. 1).

DREAMers are generally stressed and in legal limbo because Congress has yet to pass comprehensive legislation that would grant them a clear path to citizenship and provide better protection from deportation to the original country of their birth. President Trump and some of the Republicans in Congress are using DREAMers as a bargaining chip (Jervis, February 7, 2018; see also Table 1 “policy negotiations”) in ongoing budget negotiations to garner Democratic support for the extension of the Mexico-US border wall. Jervis states, “Last month, the government briefly shut down when Senate Democrats voted against a short-term spending
bill because it didn’t include protection for DREAMers. Around one in five of the 3.6 million DREAMers in the U.S. live along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border, according to the Southern Border Communities Coalition” (para. 7). A few of the DREAMers interviewed by the reporter commented that “Even if there’s a deal, we don’t want a wall” (para. 6) and “We’re Americans by heart, just not on paper,” (para. 19). The DREAMers interviewed were all from the lower Rio Grande Valley and all would be adversely impacted by the border wall in their respective communities. Clearly, DREAMers live in a state of anxiety as they await some positive movement in policy for their capacity to continue dwelling in the USA – and possibly become citizens.

Summary and Post Case Study Analysis: Implications for Public Administration and Policy Theory

This paper began with an examination of the social construction of reality as to whether the effects of President Trump’s implied policy statements – via tweets – and how those social media comments impacted the perception of people dwelling along the Mexico-USA border in a utopian, heterotopian, and/or dystopian manner. In the areas of the environment and ecotourism, property rights and eminent domain, and human rights for the DREAMers, most are coping with the perceived attacks and crises emanating from the White House. People who care about wildlife refuges and do not want them destroyed by the border wall are facing a dystopian crisis based on Agamben’s (2005) theory of the state of exception – the USA is under a state of siege – which is used as a justification and that appears to them to be completely unnecessary for border security. Landowners are fearful of more border walls being constructed and not receiving just compensation – not only in terms of remuneration, but loss of properties that have been in some
families for generations. DREAMers risk deportation to countries they left as children and no longer know.

Far from being utopias, the towns and cities along the Mexico-USA border provide a sense of community that the people dwelling in the region have enjoyed for many years. The border wall strips people of their livelihoods and dignity and represents an affront to them as USA citizens. Corporations eager to build President Trump’s wall do not care about the borderlands other than whatever profits they may obtain. Walls create heterotopias – no man’s land between the where the walls are built and the actual border – the Rio Grande in Texas (Garrett and Storbeck, 2011; Garrett, 2012). Previously what occurred in the construction of the border wall is that profits are made without regard for the people. Security is not the issue as most analysts conclude that the wall is unnecessary and other means – such as technology and more personnel – are far more beneficial. Neoliberal ideology in the USA continues and the border wall project represents a small part of the whole. As the former governor of Arizona and former DHS Secretary, Janet Napolitano stated in 2005 about border walls “You show me a 50-foot wall and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder at the border…That’s the way the border works” (Lacy, July 19, 2011, para. 5; Garrett, 2018). Communities along the Mexico-USA border will have the additional experience of extra border wall – with all the security-apparatus accoutrement included: invasive surveillance technology and a larger Border Patrol presence.

The DHS and President Trump will continue to press their bureaucratically and politically-induced claims for the necessity of the border wall – thoughtlessly over the objections of the people who have much to lose, in an economically disadvantaged region of the United States, perhaps as part of the barter for extending time to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) for the DREAMers or other legislation and/or executive orders. DREAMers have
apparently received something of a reprieve from being deported as President Trump’s Executive Order rescinding former President Obama’s DACA Executive Order has been challenged in federal courts, thus delaying implementation by up to one year (Gomez and Kaplan, March 5, 2018). The mis-perception of border violence (Correa-Cabrera and Garrett, 2014) will have its “state of exception” (Agamben, 2005; Garrett and Storbeck, 2011) narrative heard through the media by the federal government, including tweets from President Trump, for public consumption. The DHS will be supported in their promotion of the border wall by the iron triangle of members of respective legislative committees and corporate interests – as well as President Trump. Building the big, beautiful border wall is manufactured under the guise of security, although building it will only have deleterious policy consequences for the borderlands. The tweets will likely continue.

References:


Garrett, Terence M. (2018). Where there’s a wall there’s a way: The end (?) of democratic discourse regarding immigration and border security policy. *Maryland Journal of International Law*, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law for the Fall 2017 Symposium, Friday, October 20, 2017, *The U.S. Mexico Relationship in International Law and Politics*. (publication forthcoming).


APPENDIX

Appendix notes – Selected Donald J. Trump Tweets Regarding or Related to Border Security and the Wall (Chronology – Retweets, Likes, and Photos Redacted – October 2017 to January 2018). Please note that these tweets and the timeframe correspond roughly to the first government shutdown through the approval of a budgetary extension for three weeks. The border wall, DACA, immigration, military spending, and other issues were subjects of President Trump’s tweets and indicates his predisposition towards these policies. Since this paper is primarily concerned with the border wall, those tweets were selected for this project. All tweets are headed thusly ….

Donald J. Trump Verified account @realDonaldTrump
Follow @realDonaldTrump

1. Democrats are not interested in Border Safety & Security or in the funding and rebuilding of our Military. They are only interested in Obstruction! 8:08 PM - 27 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957465263129219073

2. I have offered DACA a wonderful deal, including a doubling in the number of recipients & a twelve year pathway to citizenship, for two reasons: (1) Because the Republicans want to fix a long time terrible problem. (2) To show that Democrats do not want to solve DACA, only use it! 7:58 PM - 27 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957462746060206080

3. Thank you to Brandon Judd of the National Border Patrol Council for his strong statement on @foxandfriends that we very badly NEED THE WALL. Must also end loophole of “catch & release” and clean up the legal and other procedures at the border NOW for Safety & Security reasons. 3:55 AM - 27 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/957220637705109505

4. DACA has been made increasingly difficult by the fact that Cryin’ Chuck Schumer took such a beating over the shutdown that he is unable to act on immigration! 9:16 AM - 26 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/956938973326098432

5. Cryin’ Chuck Schumer fully understands, especially after his humiliating defeat, that if there is no Wall, there is no DACA. We must have safety and security, together with a strong Military, for our great people! 8:07 PM - 23 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/956015565776277510

6. Nobody knows for sure that the Republicans & Democrats will be able to reach a deal on DACA by February 8, but everyone will be trying....with a big additional focus put on Military Strength and Border Security. The Dems have just learned that a Shutdown is not the answer! 5:34 AM - 23 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955795912374267907

7. Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budget, no C.R.’s! 4:35 AM - 21 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955056249925750784

8. The Democrats are turning down services and security for citizens in favor of services and security for non-citizens. Not good! 5:07 AM - 22 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955426609326100480

9. Great to see how hard Republicans are fighting for our Military and Safety at the Border. The Dems just want illegal immigrants to pour into our nation unchecked. If stalemate continues, Republicans should go to 51% (Nuclear Option) and vote on real, long term budget, no C.R.’s! 4:35 AM - 21 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/955056249925750784
10. Democrats are holding our Military hostage over their desire to have unchecked illegal immigration. Can’t let that happen! 6:27 AM - 20 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954722155463430145

11. Democrats are far more concerned with Illegal Immigrants than they are with our great Military or Safety at our dangerous Southern Border. They could have easily made a deal but decided to play Shutdown politics instead. #WeNeedMoreRepublicansIn18 in order to power through mess! 3:17 AM - 20 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/95467415714477696

12. Not looking good for our great Military or Safety & Security on the very dangerous Southern Border. Dems want a Shutdown in order to help diminish the great success of the Tax Cuts, and what they are doing for our booming economy. 6:28 PM - 19 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/5/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954541219970977793

13. Government Funding Bill past last night in the House of Representatives. Now Democrats are needed if it is to pass in the Senate - but they want illegal immigration and weak borders. Shutdown coming? We need more Republican victories in 2018! 4:04 AM - 19 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/954323750949982208

14. We need the Wall for the safety and security of our country. We need the Wall to help stop the massive inflow of drugs from Mexico, now rated the number one most dangerous country in the world. If there is no Wall, there is no Deal! 5:16 AM - 18 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/953979393180950528

15. ....The Wall will be paid for, directly or indirectly, or through longer term reimbursement, by Mexico, which has a ridiculous $71 billion dollar trade surplus with the U.S. The $20 billion dollar Wall is “peanuts” compared to what Mexico makes from the U.S. NAFTA is a bad joke! 3:25 AM - 18 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/95395136532876800

16. The Wall is the Wall, it has never changed or evolved from the first day I conceived of it. Parts will be, of necessity, see through and it was never intended to be built in areas where there is natural protection such as mountains, wastelands or tough rivers or water..... 3:15 AM - 18 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/953948941674078208

17. Statement by me last night in Florida: “Honestly, I don’t think the Democrats want to make a deal. They talk about DACA, but they don’t want to help..We are ready, willing and able to make a deal but they don’t want to. They don’t want security at the border, they don’t want..... 4:57 AM - 15 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/9528887520790040576

18. Sadly, Democrats want to stop paying our troops and government workers in order to give a sweetheart deal, not a fair deal, for DACA. Take care of our Military, and our Country. FIRST! 4:50 AM - 12 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951798415301718017

19. ....countries which are doing badly. I want a merit based system of immigration and people who will help take our country to the next level. I want safety and security for our people. I want to stop the massive inflow of drugs. I want to fund our military, not do a Dem defund.... 4:09 AM - 12 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951788342647107584

20. The so-called bipartisan DACA deal presented yesterday to myself and a group of Republican Senators and Congressmen was a big step backwards. Wall was not properly funded, Chain & Lottery were made worse and USA would be forced to take large numbers of people from high crime..... 3:59 AM - 12 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951785587765280768
21. The Democrats seem intent on having people and drugs pour into our country from the Southern Border, risking thousands of lives in the process. It is my duty to protect the lives and safety of all Americans. We must build a Great Wall, think Merit and end Lottery & Chain. USA! 8:42 PM - 11 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951675713089888256

22. The United States needs the security of the Wall on the Southern Border, which must be part of any DACA approval. The safety and security of our country is #1! 3:07 PM - 10 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/951229113897013248

23. As I made very clear today, our country needs the security of the Wall on the Southern Border, which must be part of any DACA approval. 4:16 PM - 9 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950884128379035650

24. Thanks to all of the Republican and Democratic lawmakers for today’s very productive meeting on immigration reform. There was strong agreement to negotiate a bill that deals with border security, chain migration, lottery and DACA. http://45.wh.gov/POTUS45 2:51 PM - 9 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950862709599465472

25. Leaving Camp David for the White House. Great meetings with the Cabinet and Military on many very important subjects including Border Security & the desperately needed Wall, the ever increasing Drug and Opioid Problem, Infrastructure, Military, Budget, Trade and DACA. 6:33 AM - 7 Jan 2018
Retrieved 1/7/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/950012437788585985

26. Thank you to the great Republican Senators who showed up to our mtg on immigration reform. We must BUILD THE WALL, stop illegal immigration, end chain migration & cancel the visa lottery. The current system is unsafe & unfair to the great people of our country - time for change! 3:53 PM - 4 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/949066181381632001

27. Thank you to Brandon Judd of the National Border Patrol Council for your kind words on how well we are doing at the Border. We will be bringing in more & more of your great folks and will build the desperately needed WALL! @foxandfriends 5:44 AM - 2 Jan 2018
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948188264858603520

28. I use Social Media not because I like to, but because it is the only way to fight a VERY dishonest and unfair “press,” now often referred to as Fake News Media. Phony and non-existent “sources” are being used more often than ever. Many stories & reports a pure fiction! 2:36 PM - 30 Dec 2017
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947235015343202304

29. The Democrats have been told, and fully understand, that there can be no DACA without the desperately needed WALL at the Southern Border and an END to the horrible Chain Migration & ridiculous Lottery System of Immigration etc. We must protect our Country at all cost! 5:16 AM - 29 Dec 2017
Retrieved 2/4/18 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/946731576687235072

30. Democrats refusal to give even one vote for massive Tax Cuts is why we need Republican Roy Moore to win in Alabama. We need his vote on stopping crime, illegal immigration, Border Wall, Military, Pro Life, V.A., Judges 2nd Amendment and more. No to Jones, a Pelosi/Schumer Puppet! 3:17 AM - 4 Dec 2017
Retrieved 12/4/17 at https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/937641904338063361

31. Steinle killer came back and back over the weakly protected Obama border, always committing crimes and being violent, and yet this info was not used in court. His exoneration is a complete travesty of justice. BUILD THE WALL! 3:03 AM - 1 Dec 2017
33. Will be calling the President of Egypt in a short while to discuss the tragic terrorist attack, with so much loss of life. We have to get TOUGHER AND SMARTER than ever before, and we will. Need the WALL, need the BAN! God bless the people of Egypt. 10:49 AM - 24 Nov 2017

34. Border Patrol Officer killed at Southern Border, another badly hurt. We will seek out and bring to justice those responsible. We will, and must, build the Wall! 5:29 PM - 19 Nov 2017

35. The problem with agreeing to a policy on immigration is that the Democrats don't want secure borders, they don't care about safety for U.S.A. 3:18 AM - 10 Oct 2017

36. Any deal on DACA that does not include STRONG border security and the desperately needed WALL is a total waste of time. March 5th is rapidly approaching and the Dems seem not to care about DACA. Make a deal! 6:36 AM - 5 Feb 2018