Program and Abstracts

Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities and Flows

5th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network

Kathmandu, Nepal
12-14 December 2016

Venue
Hotel Annapurna, Kathmandu, Nepal

Organizers
Social Science Baha; International Institute for Asian Studies and the Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)
CONFERENCE THEME

Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities And Flows

Borderlands in Asia are often seen as marginal, isolated and remote. Social scientists are now recognising that borderlands generate a *dynamism in and of themselves*, and that cross-border linkages are far more central to historical change than previously acknowledged. In recent times, development across Asia has been markedly unequal and this has led to new borderland dynamics - both productive and destructive - that urgently need to be addressed.

Borderlands are also 'dynamic' in the sense that the realignment of borders and the creation of new kinds of borders are recurrent processes throughout history. Think of the exchange of hundreds of enclaves in India and Bangladesh, disputes over the construction of new island territories in the South China Sea, or the liberalisation of some Asian airline services.

In this conference we place a special emphasis on borders and cross-border flows of people and objects that have not been highlighted in previous conferences, such as maritime borders, high-altitude borderlands, borderlands with a high risk of natural disasters, and nomadic and migratory communities.

During this 5th Asian Borderlands conference in Kathmandu, panels and papers will address the following themes:

- **Livelihoods**: In the borderlands of Asia, everyday lives are increasingly subject to state power and/or neglect. What are the effects of changing infrastructures and access to resources on people's livelihoods in borderland areas? How do environmental and political crises affect cross-border labour, trade connections, and gender and class relations? In what ways can we highlight the dynamism of borderland livelihoods through research on topics such as tourism, infrastructure, development discourses, cross-border investments, militarization, education, overfishing in territorial waters, and the smuggling of (il)licit goods?

- **Communities**: New border alignments have considerable impacts on diverse ethnic, religious, and occupational communities, and these communities respond to such transformations in different ways. Papers will address diverse cross-border communities, as well as other kinds of 'border communities,' including border guards, security personnel, borderland rebels, refugees and displaced persons living in border camps.

- **Flows**: Panels will explore the flows of people, goods, and ideas across Asian borderlands, as well as obstructions to and redirections of such flows. Several papers will present new perspectives on less-tangible flows across borders, such as environmental hazards or diseases; the movements of animals and plants across state boundaries; and riverine border issues.

**Organizing Committee**
- Dr Deepak Thapa, Social Science Baha, Nepal
- Dr Bandita Sijapati, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Nepal
- Dr Sara Shneiderman, University of British Columbia, Canada
- Dr Tina Harris, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Prof. Willem van Schendel, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Dr Erik de Maaker, Leiden University, the Netherlands
- Ms Rita Bhujel, Social Science Baha, Nepal
- Ms Martina van den Haak, International Institute for Asian Studies, the Netherlands
Scholarly and political boundaries divide Asia artificially into units, such as South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and so on. These divisions not only mask the many and varied commonalities that transcend such boundaries, they also reinforce the marginalisation of people who live in the so-called border areas. Yet a better appreciation of these ‘transitional zones’ is in fact critical to our historical understanding of processes of social and cultural change in the states lying beyond them. Nonetheless, such a focus remains peripheral to area studies and the disciplines which feed into them.

The Asian Borderlands Research Network has been developed in order to recognise the links, both historical and contemporary, that connect people in these borderlands, focusing on the border regions between South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, where the prevailing notions of area studies have been particularly limiting.

The purpose of the network is to encourage academic exchange between both local and foreign scholars from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Its concerns are varied, ranging from migratory movements, transformations in cultural, linguistic and religious practices, to ethnic mobilization and conflict, marginalisation, and environmental concerns. Its aim is to generate new knowledge and methodologies in order to better understand these transitional zones, and to contribute to a reconfiguration of theoretical and methodological approaches to borderlands in general. We particularly want to invite scholars from any of the regions involved to participate in the network, its conferences, and to contribute to the organizational effort.

The Social Science Baha is an independent, non-profit organisation set up with the objective of promoting and enhancing the study of and research in the social sciences in Nepal. Established on 1 January 2002 with the primary focus of starting a social science library, the Social Science Baha was initially hosted at Himal Association, a non-profit organisation located at Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur. By the time of its formal registration as an independent entity on 15 January 2007, however, the Baha had diversified its activities and become involved in other areas as well, namely: i) conducting the four-month-long Immersion Course on Contemporary Social Issues; ii) hosting lectures, discussions, workshops, and conferences; iii) publishing books, occasional papers and journals; and iv) conducting research.

The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a global humanities and social sciences research institute and knowledge exchange platform that supports programmes which engage Asian and other international partners. Aiming to contribute to a more integrated understanding of present-day Asian realities as well as to rethink ‘Asian Studies’ in a changing global context, IIAS works to encourage dialogue and link expertise, involving scholars and other experts from all around the world in its activities. IIAS thus acts as a global mediator, bringing together academic and non-academic institutes in Asia and other parts of the world, including cultural, societal and policy organisations. IIAS adopts a thematic approach to the study of Asia, fostering research that, by its nature, transcends disciplinary and regional boundaries. The three research foci of IIAS are Asian cities; the uses of culture and cultural heritage; and Asia’s projection into the world and intra-Asian connections. In addition, IIAS remains open to other possibly interesting areas of investigation.
In addition to supporting international research networks and programmes, IIAS organises different types of academic events throughout the year, many of them in Asia. These include conferences, workshops and seminars, as well as thematic roundtables and Summer/Winter Schools for PhD students. IIAS runs an international fellowship programme and a publication programme and publishes ‘The Newsletter’, its free periodical on Asian Studies which enjoys a worldwide readership of 50,000. IIAS hosts the secretariat of various networks, including the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) and the European Alliance for Asian Studies. All of these activities are based on international cooperation. It is this fundamentally collaborative and inclusive nature that has allowed IIAS to become the most global research-led meeting ground in the field of Asian Studies.

CONFERENCE VENUE

Hotel Annapurna
Durbar Marg
Kathmandu, Nepal

REGISTRATION

Sunday 11 December
15.30 – 17.00 Central Hall, Hotel Annapurna

12-14 December
8.00 – 17.00 Central Hall, Hotel Annapurna
PROGRAM

MONDAY 12 DECEMBER

08.00  Registration

09.00-10.30

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<th>Restaurant Hall</th>
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<td>Wen-Chin Chang</td>
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<td>Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, Academia Sinica, Taiwan</td>
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<td>Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig, Germany</td>
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<td>Yuk Wah Chan</td>
<td>Willem van Schendel</td>
<td>Franck Bille</td>
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<td>City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong S.A.R., China</td>
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<td>Anthropology Department, University of California, Berkeley, United States</td>
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<td>Edyta Roszko</td>
<td>Samuel Berthet</td>
<td>Sören Urbansky</td>
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<td>Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
<td>Shiv Nadar University, India</td>
<td>University of Cambridge, United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Maritime Territorialisation and “Patriotic Commodities” of the South China Sea: Connecting the local, national and international</td>
<td>Linking China and the Bay of Bengal: shipbuilding technology and culture in Bengal-Chittagong-Arakan</td>
<td>Many shades of yellow: Anti-Chinese sentiments in Vladivostok</td>
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<td>Jayani Bonnerjee</td>
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<td>James McDougall</td>
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<td>Quilting Ghosts of Departed Values: Tracing Disappearing Borderlands through the Chaoxiu Embroidery Industry in the Chaoshan</td>
<td>Across multiple borderlands: diasporic existence of the Kolkata Chinese community</td>
<td>Chinese and Kazakhstani at once: The cross-border production of modernity by a Dungan community</td>
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<td>National University of Singapore, Singapore</td>
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<td>Wen-Chin Chang</td>
<td>&quot;Monk with tiger&quot;: from Bengal to China, Buddhism to Islam</td>
<td>Roving Epistemes: Knowledge Circulations in the Study of ‘Risky’ Coastal Borderlands</td>
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<td>Yunnanese Chinese traders and Rotating Markets in northern Shan State of Burma</td>
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<td>Yuk Wah Chan</td>
<td>Old routes, New Dreams: Bengal and the Silk Road Initiative</td>
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<td>City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong S.A.R., China</td>
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10.30-11.00  Coffee break
5th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network
DYNAMIC BORDERLANDS: LIVELIHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND FLows

11.00-12.30

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<th>Meeting Room II</th>
<th>Banquet Hall</th>
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Convenor
Vilashini Somiah
National University of Singapore, Singapore

Chair and Discussant
Itty Abraham
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

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Simon Christian Rowedder
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Transnational Flows (Re)Producing National Boundaries: The Case of Thai Fruit Trade in the Yunnan-Laos-Thailand Borderland
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Thary Gazi
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Dung Beetles and the Socio-Ecological Frontier: Looking at new “Boundary Objects”
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Vilashini Somiah
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

“The Sea is my Country, The Sea is my Ally” : Irregular Migrants and the Water as Resistive Agents of State Borders
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Zi Hao Tan
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Peeking from the Shadow: Sea Nomads as the Sculptors of Light

Convenor
Makiko Kimura
Tsuda College, Japan

Chair
Sanjay Barbora
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Discussant
Duncan McDouie-Ra
University of New South Wales, Australia

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Kabita Chakma
Independent scholar, Australia

Glen Hill
University of Sydney, Australia

‘Development’ in a Conflict Zone: The Case of the Pre and Post Accord Chittagong Hill Tracts
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Anjuman Ara Begum
FORUM-ASIA, India

Border haats in Meghalaya - Mission Revival Possible
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Takahiro Kojima
Tsuda College, Japan

Local Villagers’ Lives and the Endless Conflict in Myanmar: Cases of T’a’ang from Northern Shan State
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Makiko Kimura
Tsuda College, Japan

Enduring Conflict in Bodoland: Riots and Encroachment by Forest Dwellers in Assam, India

Convenor and Chair
Oliver Walton
University of Bath, United Kingdom

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Purwo Santoso
Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Aftab Lall
Centre for Poverty Analysis, Sri Lanka

Nathan Bond
School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia

Shahul Hasbullah
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Convenor
Eva P. W. Hung
Department of Social Science, Hang Seng Management College, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Chair
Tak-Wing Ngo
University of Macau, Macao S.A.R., China

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Eva P. W. Hung
Department of Social Science, Hang Seng Management College, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Ngai Pun
Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Negotiating Border-Crossing: Parallel Traders and Borderland Politics in Southern China
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Hasan Karrar
Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan

Sost, Gilgit-Baltistan: A Village, a Road, and a Bazaar on the Edge of China
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Tak-Wing Ngo
University of Macau, Macao S.A.R., China

Underground Flows of Capital across Borders in Southern China
12.30-13.30  Lunch

13.30-15.15

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<td>Sean Dowdy</td>
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<td>University of Oklahoma, United States</td>
<td>The Recent Chinese Migrants, Neoliberal Policies of China and its influence in Mekong Borderland</td>
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<td>John Kelly</td>
<td>Can Gastronomy Climb Hills? Cooking without Cookbooks and Spices in Zomia</td>
<td>Martin Saxer</td>
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<td>&quot;Dalang aru Duar&quot;: Or, the Chimeric Arts of History and Border Making in Assam</td>
<td>Private Roads: Local road construction initiatives in the Himalayas</td>
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<td>Impacts of North-South Transit Route Development on Local Architectural Heritage of Sacred Sites: Tsum sbskyid-mo-lung</td>
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15.15-15.45  Coffee/tea

15.45-17.15

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<td><strong>11. Infrastructure and Communities: Walls, Nodes and Border Maintenance</strong></td>
<td><strong>12. New Border Alignments and the State</strong></td>
<td><strong>13. Cross-Border Livelihoods</strong></td>
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<td>Sahana Ghosh</td>
<td>Anuradha Sen Mookerjee</td>
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<td>Yale University, United States</td>
<td>Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland</td>
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<td>'The borderland as barracks: “Community” for and by the Indian Border Security Forces at the India-Bangladesh border</td>
<td>Changes in Border Policy and Border Identities: Post LBA transitions in the former Bangladeshi enclaves in Cooch Behar, India</td>
<td>Multiple Borders: A Chinese Village in Hong Kong Border Crossing with Shenzhen and Modernity via Japanese Department Stores</td>
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<td>William Callahan</td>
<td>Babika Khawas</td>
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<td>London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom</td>
<td>University of North Bengal, India</td>
<td>Madhu Giri</td>
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<td>Swatashiddha Sarkar, University of North Bengal, India</td>
<td>Tribhuvan University, Nepal</td>
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<td>Border without the State: Locating Indo-Nepal Border Culturally</td>
<td>Continuity and Change on Cross-Border Robbery: Narratives of Violence at Southern Siraha</td>
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<td>Robert Winstanley-Chesters</td>
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<td>Australian National University, Australia</td>
<td>Tashi Tsering Ghale</td>
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<td>Navigating Geo-Politics at the Mouth of the Amnok/Yalu: Sindo and its Fisherpeople</td>
<td>Dolpo Indigenous Development Center, Nepal</td>
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<td>Linda Lumayag</td>
<td>Contestations: Boundary, Chharka and Bharbhong</td>
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<td>University of Malaya, Malaysia</td>
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<td>Immigrants' Quest for Survival and their View of the Ecosystem: An Ethnographic Study of Two Fishing Communities in Kudat, Sabah</td>
<td>Changing Linkages at Nepal's Himalayan Border: Exploring Livelihoods in the Earthquake-Affected Region of Lapchi</td>
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17.15 – 17.30  Short break

17.30-17.45  Words of Welcome – Kumari Hall
Rajendra Pradhan, Dean, Nepal School of Social Sciences and Humanities / former Chair Social Science Baha
Tina Harris, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

17.45-18.45  Keynote speech – Kumari Hall
Patricia Uberoi Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, India
Gender, Trade and New Connectivities: Reflections on India’s Northeastern Borderlands

18.45  Conference Dinner
# 5th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network

**Dynamic Borderlands: Livelihoods, Communities and Flows**

## Tuesday 13 December

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| **14. Borderland Representations and Memory**<br>Chair<br>Erik de Maaker<br>Leiden University, the Netherlands<br>---<br>William Singh Nongmaithem<br>Pachhunga University College, Mizoram, India<br>**Old and New: The Mizo Network**<br>---<br>Kei Nagaoka<br>Kyoto University, Japan<br>The Recreation of Transcultural Space in Tawang, Northeast India<br>---<br>Brigitte Steinmann<br>University Lille I, France<br>**Short history of a forgotten borderland Walungchung gola 1920-2015**<br>Chair and Discussant<br>Sara Shneiderman<br>University of British Columbia, Canada<br>---<br>Catherine Warner<br>Harvard University, United States<br>Excluded Subjects: Defining Imperial Belonging in the India-Nepal Borderland, 1850-1880<br>---<br>Scott Relyea<br>Appalachian State University, United States<br>Obstructing Flows and Exerting Authority in China’s Southwest Borderlands: Rupees, Tea, and Textbooks in Eastern Tibet<br>---<br>Benno Weiner<br>Carnegie Mellon University, United States<br>How to Distinguish Hoodwinked Headmen from Bandits and Spies: Making a Borderland “Legible” in China’s “Early Liberation” Period<br>---<br>Rune Bennike<br>University of Copenhagen, Denmark<br>Frontier Commodification: Governing Land, Labour and Leisure in Darjeeling<br>**15. Carving Boundaries of Exclusion and Inclusion: Colonial and Contemporary Trajectories**<br>Chair and Discussant<br>Sara Shneiderman<br>University of British Columbia, Canada<br>---<br>Catherine Warner<br>Harvard University, United States<br>Excluded Subjects: Defining Imperial Belonging in the India-Nepal Borderland, 1850-1880<br>---<br>Scott Relyea<br>Appalachian State University, United States<br>Obstructing Flows and Exerting Authority in China’s Southwest Borderlands: Rupees, Tea, and Textbooks in Eastern Tibet<br>---<br>Benno Weiner<br>Carnegie Mellon University, United States<br>How to Distinguish Hoodwinked Headmen from Bandits and Spies: Making a Borderland “Legible” in China’s “Early Liberation” Period<br>---<br>Rune Bennike<br>University of Copenhagen, Denmark<br>Frontier Commodification: Governing Land, Labour and Leisure in Darjeeling<br>**16. Transboundary Environments in the Himalaya Flows of Resources, Representations and Practices I**<br>Chair<br>Douglas Hill<br>University of Otago, New Zealand<br>---<br>Christoph Bergmann<br>Heidelberg University, Germany<br>Transboundary Himalayan Landscapes: Examining the Political Genealogy of a Re-Scaled Geography<br>---<br>Rohan D’Souza<br>Kyoto University, Japan<br>All Unquiet on the ‘Great Himalayan Watershed’: India, China, Bangladesh and a Trans-Border River<br>---<br>Alka Sabharwal<br>The University of Western Australia, Australia<br>Conservation on Borders: The Cultural Politics of Wildlife Conservation in the Indian Trans-Himalayan Borderlands<br>---<br>Krishnendra Meena<br>Jawaharlal Nehru University, India<br>Problems of Ethnicity in a Trans-boundary Environment: A Case Study of Madhesis at Indo-Nepal Border<br>**17. Looking beyond ethnicity in South/Southeast Asian Borderlands I**<br>Chair and Discussant<br>Ellen Bal<br>Vrije Universiteit<br>Amsterdam, the Netherlands<br>---<br>Bengt Karlsson<br>Stockholm University, Sweden<br>---<br>Fariba Alamgir<br>University of East Anglia, United Kingdom / University of Copenhagen, Denmark<br>Beyond Ethnic Dimension of Land Conflict: Multiple Identity and Land Claims of Bengalis in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh<br>---<br>Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh<br>Vrije Universiteit<br>Amsterdam, the Netherlands<br>Land and the usurping neighbour: Survival of small tribal communities in Assam<br>---<br>Éva Rozália Hölzle<br>Bielefeld University, Germany<br>‘Moving On’: Agency Beyond Indigenous Activism at the Bangladesh-Assam Border

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>09.00-10.30</td>
<td>Meeting Room II</td>
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<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>Coffee/tea</td>
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<td>Banquet Hall</td>
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</table>
| **18. Productions and Transformations in Cultural Borderlands: Views from In and Out of Nepal**<br>Convenor and Chair<br>Mark Liechty<br>University of Illinois at Chicago, United States<br>---<br>Megharaj Adhikari<br>Tribhuvan University, Nepal<br>**Hanumandhoka Durbar Square: A space of Cultural production in the Border**<br>---<br>Mark Liechty<br>University of Illinois at Chicago, United States<br>**"Missing Links": The Himalayas and the "Indo-Tibetan Interface" in the Western Mind's Eye**<br>---<br>Ben Linder<br>University of Illinois at Chicago, United States<br>**Thamel as Borderland: The Spatial Production of Cosmopolitanism in Kathmandu**<br>---<br>Premila Van Ommen<br>London College of Fashion, University of Arts, London, United Kingdom<br>**Kpop, Kathmandu and Camden: Transnational Trends of Nepali Style in Britain**<br>---<br>**19. Forced Across Borders: Research on Displaced and Resettled South Asian Migrants**<br>Convenors<br>Christoph Bergmann<br>Heidelberg University, Germany<br>---<br>Douglas Hill<br>University of Otago, New Zealand<br>Chair<br>Christoph Bergmann<br>Heidelberg University, Germany<br>---<br>Kelly Alley<br>Auburn University, United States<br>**5th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network**<br>*DYNAMIC BORDERLANDS: LIVELIHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND FLOWS*
| **11.00-12.45**<br>Banquet Hall<br>Meeting Room II<br>Restaurant Hall<br>Kumari Hall | **20. Transboundary Environments in the Himalaya Flows of Resources, Representations and Practices II**<br>Convenors<br>---<br>**21. Looking beyond ethnicity in South/Southeast Asian Borderlands II**<br>Convenors<br>Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh<br>Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands<br>**Indigenous Activism Research as a Means to Move Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Potentials and Pitfalls**<br>---<br>Nasrin Siraj<br>Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands<br>**Kpop, Kathmandu and Camden: Transnational Trends of Nepali Style in Britain**<br>---<br>**Borderlands as transitional zones: Liminality and migration at the western borders of Rajasthan, India**<br>---<br>Calynn Dowler<br>Boston University, United States<br>**Tides of Change: Environment, Migration, and Identity in India’s Sundarban Islands**<br>---<br>Aditi Mukherjee<br>Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, the Netherlands<br>**Transboundary Cryoscapes: Scientific, Cultural and Political Dimensions of Glacier Changes on a Himalayan Scale**<br>---<br>Douglas Hill<br>University of Otago, New Zealand<br>**Contesting hydroscapes in Himalayan borderlands**<br>---<br>**Looking beyond an ethnic lens at the Bengali migrants in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh**<br>---

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Discussants<br>Kamryn Warren<br>University of Connecticut, United States<br>---
Sunita Basnet<br>University of Waikato, New Zealand<br>Sunita Basnet<br>University of Waikato, New Zealand<br>---
Big feelings, small places: Former Bhutanese refugee women and girls in New Zealand and their sense of community<br>---
Kamryn Warren<br>University of Connecticut, United States<br>The Politics of Who Stays and Who Goes: How Bhutanese Refugees are Navigating the End of Encampment<br>---
Srishtee Sethi<br>Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India<br>**Public Enterprises for Private Purposes: Dams, Development and Corruption in Himachal Pradesh, India**<br>---<br>Marcus Nüsser<br>South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany<br>**Transboundary Cryoscapes: Scientific, Cultural and Political Dimensions of Glacier Changes on a Himalayan Scale**<br>---<br>Douglas Hill<br>University of Otago, New Zealand<br>**Contesting hydroscapes in Himalayan borderlands**<br>---

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22. Diplomatic Efforts to Overcome Border Disputes in Southeast Asia
Convenor and Chair
Sukawarsini Djelantik
Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia
Timotius Triswan Larosa
Indonesian Air Force, Indonesia
Diplomacy on South China Sea Borders Disputes
Vivi Pusvitasary
Pasundan University, Indonesia
Indonesia-Timor Leste land and Maritime Borders Diplomacy (1999-2014)
Amelia Maya Irwanti
Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia
Diplomacy of Cambodia-Thailand on Overlapping Claims Area in the Gulf of Thailand

23. Cross-Border Trade in Environmental Products
Convenor
Abhoy Das
Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal
Chair
Carsten Smith-Hall
University of Copenhagen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, Denmark
Arjun Chapagain
Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal
A complete cross-border painting? What do we know about commercial medicinal plant trade from Nepal?
Dipesh Pyakurel
Agriculture and Forestry University, Nepal
Root it up! Quantification of the cross-border trade in medicinal plants from Humla District, Nepal
Niels Fold
University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Out of the dark: Transnational production networks for medicinal plants from Far-western Nepal
Deep Jyoti Chapagain
Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Sustainability of harvest of the commercially threatened medicinal plant Aconitum spicatum (Briihl) Stapf in Central Nepal

24. Intersecting Highland Boundaries
Convenor
Jean Michaud
Université Laval, Canada
Chair
Dan Smyer Yü
Center for Trans-Himalayan Studies, Yunnan Minzu University, China
Sarah Turner
McGill University, Canada
Frontier Trade Dynamics in the Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands: Clashes and Compromises over Cardamom
Yunxia Li
Yunnan Minzu University, China
From Poppy Planters to Rubber Growers: The Akha and their Experiments with Opportunities on the Northwestern Lao Frontier
Dan Smyer Yü
Center for Trans-Himalayan Studies, Yunnan Minzu University, China
Trans-Himalayan Secularities: Buddhist Governance and Social Engagement in Modern Burma, India, and Tibet
Jean Michaud
Université Laval, Canada
Imodernity, Agency And Life Projects in the Trans-Himalayan Region

15.15-15.45 Coffee/tea
15.45-17.15

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<tr>
<td><strong>25. Cross-border family dynamics: negotiating states, securing livelihoods, practicing citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Convenor</td>
<td>Abhoy Das, Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal</td>
<td>Convenor and Chair</td>
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<td><strong>Convenor</strong></td>
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<td>Elena Barabantseva, University of Manchester, United Kingdom</td>
<td>Nils Fold, University of Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
<td>Carsten Smith-Hall, University of Copenhagen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, Denmark</td>
<td>Bernard Ellorin, California State University Dominguez Hills, United States</td>
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<td><strong>Coping with isolation: reflections on Vietnamese brides networking in rural China</strong></td>
<td>Into thin air: mapping and quantifying the national-level trade in medicinal plants from Nepal</td>
<td>A Seventeenth-Century Cham Musical Memorial to Malays Lost at Sea</td>
<td><strong>Transcultural Sangbai: The Sama-Bajau Music Industries of Maritime Southeast Asia</strong></td>
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<td>Haiimei Shen, Yunnan Minzu University, Yunnan Provincial Ethnology Research Institute, China</td>
<td>Mariève Pouliot, University of Copenhagen, Denmark</td>
<td>Lawrence Ross, University of Malaya, Malaysia</td>
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<td>Jinghua Yang, Nanjing University, China</td>
<td>Mukti Ram Poudeyal, Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Nepal</td>
<td>Mohd Anis Md Nor, Nusantara Performing Arts Research Center, Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Marriages and Business Partners on the Sino-Vietnamese Border</strong></td>
<td>Variation in life history traits of a commercially threatened medicinal herb, Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora, along an environmental gradient in alpine Himalaya, Nepal</td>
<td>Yangong and Changgung: Dances of the Thai-Malaysia Borderland Communities</td>
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<td>Gaëlle Lacaze, Sorbonne University, France</td>
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<td><strong>The “women’s flight” from Mongolia</strong></td>
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17.15-17.30 Short break

17.30-18.15 Lecture – Kumari Hall
*Sanjib Baruah, Bard College, United States*
**Bringing the Frontier back in: Borderland Studies and Northeast India**

18.15-18.45 Opening photo exhibition – Kumari Hall
*Wayfinding: A photoethnography ofigenous migration by Andrzej Markiewicz, Dolly Kikon and Bengt G. Karlsson*
The photoethnography exhibition will be opened by a musical performance by *Ronid Chingangbam*
**Wednesday 14 December**

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**Convenor**
Monica Janowski  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom

**Chair**
Erik de Maaker  
Leiden University, the Netherlands

---

**Frances O’Morchoe**  
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

---

**Lahu Origin Stories and Border Contestation between China, Burma and Siam**
Valerie Mashman  
Unimas Universiti Sarawak Malaysia, Malaysia

**The Story Of Lun Tauh, Our People: Narrating Ethnicity Across Borders in The Kelabit Highlands**
Vibha Joshi Parkin  
University of Tuebingen, Germany

**Myth, Legends And Unforeseen Consequences—The Naga In The 21st Century**
Shikha Lakhanpal  
University of Illinois, United States

**The Black Hole in the Af-Pak Border: Its Making, Influence and Future**
Li Hu  
Peking University, China

**The Making of the Durand Line: Rahman’s tactics to Play with Britain**
Liang Xu  
Beijing International Studies University, China

**Study on the Evolution of China’s Attitude towards the Border Dispute between India and Nepal**
Jagannath Panda  
Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, India

**Core vs. Contiguous: The China-India Boundary Dispute**
---

**Convenor**
Yuanmei Yao  
The Cold War Study Center, East China Normal University, China

**Chair**
Liping Xia  
Tongji University, China

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Yuanmei Yao  
The Cold War Study Center, East China Normal University, China

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**Core vs. Contiguous: The China-India Boundary Dispute**
---

**Discussant**
Dipak Gyawali  
Nepal Academy of Science and Technology / Nepal Conservation Foundation, Nepal

---

Shikha Lakhanpal  
University of Illinois, United States

**Shifting boundaries: Hydropower and Re-territorialization of nature in the Indian Himalayas**
Matthäus Rest  
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

**The Dams to Come: Nepal’s Promise of Becoming a Hydropower Nation**
Christopher Butler  
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal

**The Jewel in the Crown: the Upper Karnali Dam in Nepal**
---

**Convenor**
Adrienne Joergensen  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

**Chair**
Anna Gasco  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

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**Anna Gasco**  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

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**The Airport and the Territory: Cross-border Urbanism in the SIJORI Region**
Keng Ng  
National University of Singapore, Singapore

**Second home ownership in South Johor’s borderlands: Remaking SIJORI’s regional configurations, identities and imaginaries**
Adrienne Joergensen  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

**Can Paradise and the City Co-Exist?: Tropical Tourism on the Singapore Strait**
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10.30-11.00  Coffee/tea
### 5th Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network

**DYNAMIC BORDERLANDS: LIVELIHOODS, COMMUNITIES AND FLOWS**

#### 11.00-12.30

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</table>

**Convenor**
- Erik de Maaker
  - Leiden University, the Netherlands

**Chair**
- Monica Janowski
  - School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom
- Klemens Karlsson
  - Konstfack: University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden

**The Origin and History of Chiang Tung in Local History Narratives and Symbolic Performances**
- Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai
  - MIT University, India

**Stories Of Manasa Mangal Kavya And Behula-Lakhita: Travelling Tales Of Man And Nature From Oral Traditions to Global New Media**
- Stephanie Morgan
  - Independent scholar, United States

**The Spirit-Hero Jesus, And Other Questions From The Mendalam Manuscripts: Kayan Dayaks Of West Kalimantan (Indonesia)**
- Avishek Ray
  - National Institute of Technology Silchar, India

**Animal Smuggling and the Differential Dimensioning of Borders in the Indian Himalaya**
- Ekaterina Mikhailova
  - Moscow State University, Russia

**A Bridge Too Far: Detached Cities on the Sino-Russian Border**
- Natalia Ryzhova
  - Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russia

**Fear and Desire Among the Ruins: On Life in Militarized Islands on the Sino-Russian Border**
- Lallianpuii Lallianpuii
  - Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

**Traversing States, Subverting Subjects: explorations and imperial geography in the borderlands of upper Brahmaputra basin**
- Aparajita Majumdar
  - Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

**Colonial State and Resource Frontiers:tracing the politics of appropriating rubber in the northeastern frontier of British India**
- Rolua Puia
  - Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, India

**Bamboos, Bullets and Ballots: The Mizo Movement in North East India**
- Lallianpuii Lallianpuii
  - Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

**Colonial and Post-Colonial Modernity: The Making of a Border District in Nepal**
- Suresh Dhakal
  - Tribhuvan University, Nepal

**Making of Multicultural Morang: An Evolution of a Border Town in Eastern Tarai of Nepal**
- Amanda Snellinger
  - University of Washington, United States

**Supra-national, national, and sub-national sentiments: Belonging along the Parsa/Bihar border**
- Krishna Hachhethu
  - Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University, Nepal

**The Madhesh Movement and Its Limitations: Common Regional Identity versus Fragmented Multiple Cultural Identities**
- Avishek Ray
  - National Institute of Technology Silchar, India

#### 12.30-13.30

**Lunch**
13.30-15.00

Restaurant Hall

37. Communities in the Precarious Borderscape: Livelihood, Perception, and Negotiation within the Shifting Spatiality and Temporality

Convenor and Chair
Busarin Lertchavalitsakul
Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Discussant
Karin Dean
School of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia

Paiboon Hengsuwan
Department of Women’s Studies, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Still not Despondency to the Shore Dreams: Border Women’s Perspectives on Poor Governance in Environmental Management on the Thai-Burmese Border

Kunnawut Boonreak
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Cross-border Muslim-community Networks: Newly-Arriving Rohingya Displaced Migrants Entering into the Thai border town of Mae Sot, Tak Province

Busarin Lertchavalitsakul
Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Living with the Wa Invisible Polity: Shan Communities in the Militarized Borders

Banquet Hall

38. Learning to love the city in India’s north-east borderland

Convenor and Chair
Duncan McDuie-Ra
University of New South Wales, Australia

Dolly Kikon
University of Melbourne, Australia

Dimapur

Bengt Karlsson
Stockholm University, Sweden

Shillong

Sanjay Barbora
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Dibrugarh

Duncan McDuie-Ra
University of New South Wales, Australia

Imphal

Kunnawut Boonreak
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Convenor
David Gellner
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Chair
Amanda Snellinger
University of Washington, United States

Discussant
Krishna Hachhethu
CNAS - Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Tula Narayan Shah
Nepal Madhesh Foundation, Nepal

Migration and Livelihood in Terai/Madhesh

Fraser Sugden
International Water Management Institute, Nepal

Political economic change in the Nepal-India borderlands: agrarian change and landlordism in an era of globalisation

Krishna Adhikari
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

David Gellner
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

From Zamindars and Dacoits to Co-ops and Democratization: Marchawar since the 1970s

Mallika Shakya
South Asian University, India

"I can see India from my house": Local and national voices representing Nepal-India border

15.00-15.30 Coffee break
## 15.30-17.00

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- **Disquiet India-China Borderlands (1962): Oral Narratives on Flows and Border Communities**
  - Muthumanickam Matheswaran
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- **Security Dynamics of Borderlands in South Asia**
  - Vidya Nadkarni
  - Department of Political Science and International Relations University of San Diego, United States

- **Border Flows: The Old Silk Road and China’s New Silk Road Initiative**
  - Andrew Tirrell
  - University of San Diego, United States

- **A Tale of Two Treaties: What can we learn from outcomes of the Indus Waters Treaty and the Mekong River Commission**

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17.00-17.15  **Short break**

17.15-17.45  **Closing session – Kumari Hall**

Chaired by Duncan McDui-Rea (University of New South Wales, Australia)
ABSTRACTS

SPECIAL EVENTS

Monday 12 December

17.45-18.45  Keynote speech – Kumari Hall

Patricia Uberoi
Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, India

Gender, Trade and New Connectivities: Reflections on India’s Northeastern Borderlands

This Asian Borderlands Conference is being held at a very critical historical moment. Against the destabilizing background of increasing challenge to the Bretton Woods compact from emerging economies in Asia and elsewhere, crisis in the European Union in the face of unprecedented refugee migration from West Asia as well as the BREXIT vote, and rising protectionist and nationalist upsurge in Europe and America, Asia is striving to build the basic infrastructure of regional and sub-regional economic integration and connectivity in accordance with the hitherto received models of trade and development. Simultaneously, however, the multiple connectivity projects of national governments and international development agencies currently under way in the Asian region have suddenly been overtaken by, and in many cases subsumed within, China’s grand new design for overland and maritime Eurasian connectivity, known as the ‘One Belt One Road’ (OBOR) project.

Nested within this geo-political and geo-economic frame, this presentation draws on my personal and institutional experience of several years’ engagement with a ‘Track II’ initiative in sub-regional integration known as the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM). Deploying the rhetoric of the historical ‘Southern Silk Route’, the BCIM seeks to link Kunming in China’s southwestern province of Yunnan to the Indian port city of Kolkata through northern Myanmar, northeastern India, and Bangladesh. As with other such initiatives, the BCIM assumes that trade facilitation through improved transportation infrastructure will automatically result in the overall and socially inclusive economic development of the sub-region concerned, a ‘win-win’ outcome for all. In this presentation, I seek to highlight a social development issue – the relationship of gender and trade – which has been almost completely neglected in the calculi of the costs and benefits of cross-border connectivity projects in this unique region at the intersection of East, Southeast and South Asia, but which has an intimate bearing, both direct and indirect, on the welfare of women and children.

As is well known, in many parts of the world marketing activities are undertaken conspicuously, even predominantly, by women, who operate more or less independently of their husbands and within qualitatively different risk structures, often substituting labour for capital and contributing importantly to linking producers with wider local and global commercial networks. A number of ethnographic studies on the roles of market women have been conducted in regions where women traders have been particularly prominent: in Africa (especially West Africa), the Caribbean, Latin America and, increasingly, Southeast Asia. Strangely, and notwithstanding the traditionally high visibility of women in markets and trading enterprises in the region, there are very few studies of the role of trading women in India’s Northeast. In fact, the prominence of women in trade is a typical characteristic of northeastern communities in India that is shared with communities (many of them ethnically closely related) through Southeast Asia, as well as in China’s southwestern provinces populated by a high proportion of ‘minority’ peoples.

In this inaugural presentation, I will seek to draw lessons from the comparative literature on the role of ‘trading women’, traditionally and in relation to new global trade networks and value chains, and to piece together the miscellaneous scraps of data at hand with a view to commending this field as one of present and future importance in the context of Asian borderland studies.
Tuesday 13 December

17.30-18.15  **Lecture** – Kumari Hall

**Sanjib Baruah**
Bard College, United States

*Bringing the Frontier back in: Borderland Studies and Northeast India*

Frontiers’ and ‘borders’ have some meaning in common but they are not alike. Thanks to the thriving field of Borderland Studies, we understand Northeast India much better today than we did some years ago. But Borderland Studies leaves out a number of themes classically associated with the frontier. Northeast India was a geopolitical frontier of British Imperial India and it became one in independent India. It has had a long history as a settlement frontier, and as a resource frontier as well. Frontiers are often portrayed as zones of disorder, danger and risk. The place name ‘North East India’ itself has its roots in such a constructed geography of danger. Such representations enable power configurations that tolerate the use of lethal violence. The story line about Northeast India is changing. But it is unlikely that the region will overcome its frontier predicament any time soon.

18.15-18.45  **Opening photo exhibition** – Kumari Hall

*Wayfinding: A photoethnography of indigenous migration by Andrzej Markiewicz, Dolly Kikon and Bengt G. Karlsson*

Anthropologists Dolly Kikon and Bengt G. Karlsson collaborated with photographer Andrzej Markiewicz to trace Indigenous migrants from the borderland of Northeast India between 2013-2015. Kikon and Karlsson are working on a book manuscript entitled "Leaving the Land: Indigenous Migration from the Resource Frontier to the Urban Sprawl in India". This exhibition is part of a research project titled *The Indian Underbelly* at Stockholm University.

The photoethnography exhibition will be opened by a musical performance by Ronid Chingangbam.
Borderland is opportunity; it is also risk. A border creates differences; yet, it is also because of such differences that make convergence possible. Many border regions around the world are active trading centers and the formation of markets for cross-border trades have been characterized by different currencies, trading skills, exotic commodities and market demand, and all kinds of imagination of a new material world. Trade anchors and proliferates such a material world, offering opportunities for making livelihood, forming transnational networks, developing skills, and reproducing the beliefs and imaginations of different kinds of materiality.

This panel presents four cases of Asian borderlands – that between China, Burma and Thailand, HK and China, China and Vietnam, and within China. All are examined within the realm of the themes on livelihoods, material flows and market mechanism. The papers will examine various types of market formation, cross-border trading and related goods, what kinds of goods and why such goods are in demand, and how these markets are shaped by people’s livelihood strategies, inter-ethnic interactions, and perceptions of materiality. We argue that markets are not merely determined by material demand and supply, they are also shaped by social relations and the cultural imagination of specific materiality desired by those at the borderlands.

Deviating from a predominant state-centered perspective on issues of South China Sea disputes, the first paper by Edyta Roszko adopts a bottom-up approach to explore how fishermen of Hainan Island of China and of Ly Son Island of Vietnam make use of the intriguing situation to carry on their traditional livelihoods and maximize their benefits from obtaining and trading marine goods. James McDougall’s paper, combining both historical and ethnographical research, analyzes the rise and decline of the embroidery industry in the Chaoshan area of southern China. Looking into the embroidery labor market of peasant women, McDougall illuminates different layers of cultural meanings in connection to geography, village structure, gender and material supplies. Based on a perspective of process geographies, Wen-Chin Chang’s paper examines the mechanism of rotating markets in northern Shan State of Burma since the 1960s. Operating on a five-day cycle, these markets facilitate circulations of people, commodities, capital and information, and connect locality beyond state territoriality. Yuk-wah Chan’s paper investigates the shopping craze of Chinese tourists in Hong Kong that characterizes a new form of material cult. Portraying this enormous market boom, Chan explores this material obsession to reveal China’s problematic development.

Edyta Roszko
Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Maritime Territorialisation and “Patriotic Commodities” of the South China Sea: Connecting the local, national and international
The global impact of China’s economic growth and its expanding cultural, political and military influence in various regions—particularly in the South China Sea (SCS)—has recently been a focus of public debate and political contestation giving rise to speculations over the global and local consequences of this competition. Two locations where the competition for (sub)marine resources has erupted in conflict and where we can already clearly see local consequences are Ly Son Island (Vietnam) and Hainan Island (China). In contrast with those studies which analyze the SCS dispute and the increasing competition over natural resources by looking at the major state actors, this paper considers Vietnamese and Hainanese fishermen which bear the historical, geo-political and economic consequences of the territorial dispute over the Spratlys and Paracels. The illicit movement of luxury marine goods, ethnic networks and knowledge of local geographies in Southeast Asian has been analyzed from a historical perspective, but anthropological studies on Vietnam and China’s maritime spaces and population are still lacking. The trade of marine commodities is particularly difficult to manage, control and track due to the dispersed zones of harvesting often highly localized species and the numerous points of exchange involving different ethnic background over many regions. In consequence, the marine goods trading is a part of the larger economic story taking place along the sea border and in the context of the competition for resources and territorialization of the SCS. Based on fieldwork the paper shows how fishermen in China and Vietnam embrace the opportunity to stage their own role in this global dispute by branding themselves as vanguards of the SCS and its maritime goods as “patriotic commodities,” and thus it offers insights into multitude consequences of the territorial conflict for local ecologies and fishermen whose livelihood depends on disputed resources and spaces.

James McDougall
Shantou University, China

Quilting Ghosts of Departed Values: Tracing Disappearing Borderlands through the Chaoxiu Embroidery Industry in the Chaoshan

Borders are not only flexible, they can be created and destroyed. Borders are the essence of territorialization, which is a coding of bounded space. Borderlands bear the mark of a suturing of meanings (such as political, economic, religious, ethnic identities) into a physical landscape as it is territorialized. However, bounded territories can also be deterritorialized and borderlands can disappear when inscriptions of territorial identity and unique social formations within such coded landscapes dissipate. This paper explores the ‘ghost’ of a ‘treaty port’ borderland in the Chaoshan region of southern China. It examines the rise and decline of the embroidery industry and its related labor market of peasant women in Shantou from the 19th century to the Japanese Occupation period in the twentieth century. The paper will share the results of field work in the Chaoshan area, including oral histories collected from three women who have engaged in the industry. It will look at the main embroidered product from this industry, the luxury handkerchief, which was bound to global markets, and a ‘lost borderland’ in Shantou. The paper also traces roots and routes that formed this global embroidery market and the cross-border intellectual and material supply chains organized by missionaries, compradors, and business people that localized international companies. Final, it will demonstrate how an international market on women’s embroidery work has contributed to the formation of a local identity shaped by a treaty port borderland in China.

Wen-Chin Chang
Center for Asian-Pacific Area Studies, RCHSS, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

Yunnanese Chinese traders and Rotating Markets in northern Shan State of Burma

Periodical markets existed centuries in “Zomia” encompassing southwestern China, the Himalayan region, and upland Southeast Asia, and still function as significant venues for economic and social exchanges among various ethnic groups in many parts of these historical borderlands. In effect, they entail flows of people, commodities, capital and information whereby connecting the “peripheral” lands with multitudes of “centratlity” beyond state territoriatlity. While several academic works have uncovered the livelihoods,
social relations and cultural identities of varied ethnic minorities in connection with this economic system in the Himalayan region, and Thai-Lao and Yunnan-Vietnam borderlands (e.g. Harris 2014; Endres 2014; Nishitani and Badenoch 2013; Turner and Michaud 2008; Walker 1999), similar research interests in Burma have encountered greater challenges because of problem of accessibility and safety concerns. Grounded on multiple sites of fieldwork (partly covert) with a perspective of “process geographies” advocated by Appadurai (2000), this paper attempts to examine the mechanism of rotating markets in northern Shan State of Burma, in connection to China and Thailand, and the role of migrant Yunnanese traders. Specifically, it looks into the formation of this five-day cycle marketplace system with reference to demography, topography, cultural beliefs and practices, and politico-economic contexts. In addition, it probes the questions: what goods are traded in different areas? How are they transported in relation to geographical factors? What social interactions do we observe at markets among different ethnic groups as well as between men and women? In particular, the intermediary roles of Yunnanese traders, in terms of economic, political and cultural, are addressed. While illustrating the borderlanders’ livelihoods via this economic system, the paper presents an understudied social history of the area since the 1960s.

Yuk Wah Chan
City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

The Chinese material cult and cross-border tourism in postcolonial Hong Kong

Hong Kong (HK)-China borderland is now one of the busiest borderlands in the world with over 40 million crossing the border each year. The majority of these Chinese tourists cross the border to HK for shopping in the form of borderland tourism. They stuffed their suitcases and bags with fashionable clothing, accessories, Japanese junk food, skin-care and cosmetic products, shampoos and toothpaste, manufactured medicine, and foreign branded milk powder and baby diapers.

In many of the shopping malls lining the stations along the rail line that connects HK to China, one would witness thousands and thousands of Chinese tourists busy churning in and out of boutiques and shops to search for various commodities. Feeling insecure and having doubts about the quality of material goods in China, these millions Chinese tourists flocked to HK to attain a sense of security and guarantee for material authenticity. Such a desire at the same time raises a specific market in the southern cities of Guangdong for products from Hong Kong, locally known as ‘ganghuo dian’ (shops for HK goods). It also generates an enormous market for the illicit petty trading sector known as parallel trading, which has aroused a series of social debates.

This paper examines how the Chinese obsession with ‘ganghuo’ (HK goods) has rendered HK ‘a movable feast’ to satisfy Chinese tourists’ impetuous desire for a ‘lucid materiality’ that contrasts the murky ones in China. It will demonstrate how the HK-China borderland has become a space that attests to China’s problematic development. It argues that the long queue of Chinese tourists at the border and the scenes of moving suitcases in HK are indeed physical representations of a material cult featuring the material lacuna in China, just to be mended by border-crossing activities and borderland material connections.
Both China and Bengal have been distinct geographical spaces, yet connected with communication links through different periods of history with circulatory flows of ideas, culture and human mobility both through land and sea. These transmissions, however, have not always been well documented in academic discourses. Our panel would like to focus on contemporary, as well as historical, flows that have bound Bengal and China together through an exploration of the different facets of activities conducted along the two main routes that connect/ed these spaces. The papers in the panel aim to link the two areas to each other in a circular thread – in the south, through the seafaring itinerary across the Bay of Bengal, and in the north, through pathways which traced the length of Silk Road across these two geographies. People, goods and ideas have flowed through these two routes and all of the papers in this panel are going to explore the historical strands that have kept the two places, so to speak, “tied” to each other. How, for example, has the old Silk Road been evoked to open up new economic corridors between China and Bengal? How does the little-known ship building culture and technology of the Bengal-Chittagong-Arakan region help us to reassess the links with China? What do the Dunghuang paintings representing “monk with tiger” have to do with the Islamisation of southern Bengal? How does the idea of borderland and marginalization engage with the space of Kolkata Chinatown and relate to the notions of belonging and identity in the wider Chinese diaspora? Were the Bengali perceptions of engagements and encounters between different ethnic communities across the Tibetan-Himalayan region informed by imperial orientation? These are some of the questions that the panel will seek to examine and explore.

This panel will make research contributions in the cultural, religious, economic and political linkages between Bengal and China by focusing on the movement of people, ideas and goods between the two places. Coming from different disciplines and perspectives, the contributions of this panel will aim to relate diverse studies and facilitate a new kind of knowledge production and propose to address lesser known aspects of inter-Asian studies.

**Samuel Berthet**  
**Shiv Nadar University, India**

**Linking China and the Bay of Bengal: shipbuilding technology and culture in Bengal-Chittagong-Arakan**

The study of the shipbuilding culture and technology of the Bengal-Chittagong-Arakan (BCA) region is central to the understanding to the role of the corridors linking China and the delta of Bengal. The centrality of the region has been brought forward by Rila Mukherjee through the concept of the Northern Bay of Bengal (NBoB). Regional/local histories but also languages and cultures of the NBoB and neighboring regions such as Sikkim, Bhutan, North East India, North Burma and South West China speak about mobility and exchanges with the arch of the delta of Bengal.

The BCA region represents a major segment in the Eurasian-Africa world system, to use Philippe Beaujard’s framework with regards to the history of world trade. Nevertheless, the role of this region remains marginal both in the corpus of area studies and in the maritime history. The capacity of the BCA to produce sea-going vessels sailors is indeed almost totally unmentioned in the academic corpus. Still in its initial stage of exploration, a reassessment of the shipbuilding and sailing culture in BCA proves the active role of the region in linking South West China and the Himalayan plateau with the BoB and the Indian Ocean at large. It appears that those exchanges and mobility at large even assume a structural dimension in the region. It questions the regional division by area studies and restores the sea-mountains’ synergies with rivers, passes, goods, knowledge, culture and local communities as connectors. It also pictures a cosmopolitan part of the world marked by high mobility in contrast with the representations of landlocked and sealocked isolation of the different contemporary geopolitical units.

**Jayani Bonnerjee**  
**O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India**

**Across multiple borderlands: diasporic existence of the Kolkata Chinese community**

This paper will focus on a scalar exploration of the notion of borders, and its importance in understanding issues of belonging and identity for the Chinese community in Kolkata. The Kolkata Chinese community is
part of the wider Chinese diaspora which settled in the Indian sub-continent during colonial times. Kolkata is an important site for this relatively under-researched diaspora, as it is the only city in the region to have developed a close-knit 'community' structure through its networks of associations, schools and places of worship. Kolkata is also one of the few places where a sense of ‘community’ remained after the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, which affected the lives of Chinese Indians at various levels. Large-scale migration of the community ensued to several places, but most notably to Toronto, where Hakka members of the community have regrouped. Whilst travel back to China became almost impossible in the post-1962 period, many members of the community have been back to visit their ‘homeland’ in different provinces in China in recent times.

This paper will build on debates that engage with a multi-scalar notion of diaspora, as well as the idea of Chinatowns as borderlands to explore how issues of marginalisation at the level of the city, the nation and diaspora affect a sense of belonging for the Kolkata Chinese community. Focusing on both ‘settlement’ and ‘flows’, the paper will explore different notions of borders that the diasporic community negotiates.

Annu Jalais
National University of Singapore, Singapore

"Monk with tiger": from Bengal to China, Buddhism to Islam

There are a few paintings from the Dunhuang caves that represent a monk with a tiger. These have never really been commented upon nor studied; however, they seem to suggest that the coming of Buddhism to certain areas of South-East Asia, and eventually China, were linked to these monks who "controlled" tigers (some are shown on a leash) - a metaphor for wild environments - and by doing so bringing learning and culture though religion. What is interesting, especially if we follow Richard Eaton's historiography, especially as explained in great detail in his "The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier", is that the figure of the "monk with tiger" is also connected with the Islamisation of southern Bengal. Eaton explains how for the Sufi holy man who came via sea routes in the 12th centuries, dominating "wild environments" (i.e. tigers) was seen by the Bengali population as controlling the "wild" as with these holy men came the clearing of frightening forests and the start of agriculture - especially paddy and in lower Bengal. This paper will explore the Dunhuang paintings representing a monk with a tiger and explore the historical possibilities between the wild, religion and the image of the holy man between Buddhist China and Muslim Bengal around the turn of the second millennium.

Jayati Bhattacharya
National University of Singapore, Singapore

Old routes, New Dreams: Bengal and the Silk Road Initiative

In the days of advanced technological revolutions when sailing winds and rugged mountain paths do not determine communication links any more, invoking the Silk-Road connectivities go a long way in rethinking nation-centric paradigms in favour of transnational mobilities and new opportunities beyond the borders. The rhetoric of the ‘Silk Road’ initiative by China has brought about a resurgence of a 2000 year old trade route in public and academic domain. One-Belt-One-Road (OBOR) Chinese proposal has brought the rising power in the centre-stage of economic power-play in Asia. Whether it is the China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC) on the west of India, or the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor in the east, there has been rising optimism of ‘shared prosperity.’ Revisiting the circulatory movements from the past across land and sea from Bengal to strengthen new alignments of communities and economic possibilities have emerged in this space in the new road to Kunming and other regions in China in the east. In the larger framework of such a policy discourse, this paper will look at the strategic significance of Bengal in extending its eastward connections both in the context of the past and the present. Chittagong in Bangladesh is already a significant part of the Chinese scheme of economic corridor in the Bay of Bengal region. Kolkata, interestingly, is the only east Indian city to be a part of the MSR proposal. The southern region of Bengal is almost an overlapping space with the
ancient converging point of the old South Silk Road joining the Bay of Bengal. This article will examine how the historical links from Bengal have been evoked to create new projections and explore resonances of submerged cultural and economic exchanges circulating in this space.

**Monday 12 December, 9.00 – 10.30**

**Transborder Visions of Transition: Circulating Ideas of Development across Asian Borderlands**

**Convenor**
Henryk Alff  
Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig, Germany

**Chair**
Franck Bille  
University of California, Berkeley, United States

Much scholarly attention has been given lately to the social (de-/re-) construction of borders in Asia as resulting from the (or the lack of) interaction between borderland populations or (im-) mobilities of people and objects. However, dynamic but much less tangible transborder flows of ideas have been often overlooked. The proposed panel addresses this gap by bringing together interdisciplinary research tapping the transborder perceptions, influences and outcomes of ideas of development, interlinking cases from the Northeast, Southeast and Central Asian contexts.

Development in the framework of the panel is cast as both an ideology for and as a process of achieving positive change in society. Under this conceptual premise, the panel aims to explore by which different means (transborder trade, migration, political exchange, transnational media) and under which circumstances (e.g. changing border configurations, new technical infrastructures, (re-) emerging social and organisational ties) ideas, values and modes of social change “travel” or rather diffuse across borders. It is thus highlighted, which and how new ideas of social change (e.g. coming along with Chinese modernization, the Singapore model etc.) intersect national or regional containers and how they become inscribed into the constitution of interconnected places in borderlands. At the same time, the papers aim to explore the role of borders on the adaption and re-interpretation of ideas of development.

For making this more explicit, the included papers focus on the agents that are, actively or rather unintendedly, involved in the process of spreading and implementing ideas that are associated with particular development models or strategies. Special emphasis is drawn to the social position of actors in this process and how particular ideas of development have fostered or halted their upward social mobility. Flows of ideas, therefore, are addressed here not only in their transborder dimension, but also with regard to crossing social boundaries.

**Sören Urbansky**  
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

*Many shades of yellow: Anti-Chinese sentiments in Vladivostok*

This paper traces reverberations of the historical yellow peril debate in the local context of Vladivostok. Anti-Asian sentiments in the Russian Far East took force at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly after the Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese War. They entailed several themes: xenophobia towards non-Russian subjects, opposition to East Asian economic activities in the region, and hostility to the Japanese, who defeated Russia in the war. Despite this complex amalgam anti-Chinese sentiments prevailed in the local yellow peril discourse, stigmatizing the Chinese often as filthy, immoral, and dangerous. The post-1991 fears about Chinese immigrants in the Russian Far East often resemble the yellow peril debates about the economic activities of Chinese migrants in Russia’s Pacific region during the first decades of the twentieth century. While these anxieties continue to have currency they intersect with new fears of China’s rapidly growing economy, its increasing military power and rapid modernization.
In my talk I will examine parallels and differences of the historical and present day discourses in Vladivostok, with a particular focus on Sinophobic stereotypes and their negative impact on economic transborder cooperation in the region. Based on archival documents and printed materials in Russian and Chinese I will also relate Vladivostok’s local yellow peril debate to the broader fluctuations and regional variations of this discourse, its related stereotypes and metaphors of Otherness. The primary focus of interest is however the way China’s modernization and development drive vis-a-vis the socio-economic and geostrategic decline of the Russian Far East transformed anti-Chinese sentiments in Vladivostok.

Henryk Alff
Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig, Germany

Chinese and Kazakhstani at once: The cross-border production of modernity by a Dungan community

A large number of Chinese-speaking Muslims, known as Dungans in the former Soviet Union and as huizu across the People’s Republic of China (PRC), have become involved in commercial exchange since the Sino-Soviet rapprochement in the 1980s. In particular Dungan groups in Southeastern Kazakhstan were among the first in Central Asia to fruitfully utilize and validate social ties for highly profitable trade operations across the borderlands of China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. However, outcomes of cross-border social interaction nowadays reach far beyond commercial exchange to the socio-cultural and ideological realms. I argue in this paper that the flow of top-down imposed ideas of development is both shaped by and constantly challenges the Dungan notions of social transformation taking place across interconnected locales in China and Kazakhstan.

The present paper, on the basis of recent fieldwork (2012-14), explores Dungan representations of cross-border exchange with goods and ideas. While a sense of increasing socio-cultural affiliation with China has been noted by my interlocutors (partly due to being economically favorable over the years of extensive cooperation with Chinese partners), Dungan entrepreneurs also constantly re-affirm their inclination to what is denoted officially as Kazakhstan’s modernization. Their flexible and often strategic engagement with powerful ideas of statist development in China and Kazakhstan, in fact, has strengthened their role as important intermediaries in cross-border cooperation. Thus, the paper exemplifies from an actor-perspective how flows of ideas across borderlands emerge as powerful forces of connectivity and tools against societal suspicion.

Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa
Leibniz-Center for Tropical Marine Ecology (ZMT), Germany

Roving Epistemes: Knowledge Circulations in the Study of ‘Risky’ Coastal Borderlands

Scholarly debates on trans-border im/mobilities have predominantly focused on socio-material assemblages, comprising movements and sojourns of not only humans and animals but also of capital, technologies, spiritual beliefs, and lifeways among others. However, the circulations of different types of knowledges and their agency in crossing manifold types of socio-naturally constructed boundaries and b/orders remains vastly under-theorised. This conceptual presentation critically engages with several interrelated strands through which an integrative approach for the study of “epistemic mobilities” (or traveling knowledge forms) could be deepened against the backdrop of borderlands studies.

This presentation draws on examples derived from an ongoing German Science Foundation-funded project on traveling imaginaries, policies, and practices with regard to regional sea-level change in three island mega-cities in Southeast Asia (i.e. Jakarta, Manila and Singapore). As a point of departure, we turn to localised environmental change as a dynamic discursive borderland comprising not only contested risk frontiers that foreshadow futures of uncertainty, but also as an experimental space for “living with the sea”. While distinguishing our work from earlier theorisations on traveling ideas and policy mobilities, our discussion on epistemic mobilities focuses not only on the content of what travels, or how and why knowledges travel but also ways in which diverse boundary-types (i.e. marine versus terrestrially embedded imaginaries, coastal spaces of risk versus leisure etc.) are traversed by virtue of their socio-cultural translation processes that are at the same time historically and institutionally embedded.
NATURE AND THE SEA AS BOUNDARY OBJECTS

Convenor
Vilashini Somiah
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Chair and Discussant
Itty Abraham
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

This panel brings together four papers by junior scholars working at the limits of traditional borderlands studies. Two papers address the movements of natural objects—fruit and dung beetles—across national and comparative boundaries, while another two reflect on the complications of imagining boundaries when social and conceptual movement takes place over a marine space.

Anthropologist Rowedder examines the fruit trade across three national borders encompassed within the common cultural space of Tai-speaking people to find that these movements don’t necessarily produce the expected transnational borderland, but rather reinforce national distinctions. Based on a case study of the China-Laos-Thailand borderland, he argues that the persistence of national differences can also facilitate the creation of transnational spaces. Natural scientist Gazi wants to contrast the meanings of “boundary objects” in the natural and social sciences. Drawing on boundary meanings that come from studies of dung beetles, he contrasts their usage in ecological and the social sciences. His surprising conclusion is that a common and necessary affect for both the sciences and the humanities is empathy, especially for the non-human dung beetle.

Ethnographer and film-maker Somiah explores how illegal Filipino migrants in Sabah, Malaysia, imagine the sea-space between the places they must leave and the places they seek to reach. She finds that far from being liminal or a boundary condition, the Sulu sea (she calls it a “wet borderland”) is imagined as an active and lively agent that is perseketuan: both country—a place to affiliate with—and ally to the illicit migrant. Cultural Studies scholar Tan’s paper seeks to offer a critique of what he calls the “photocentric” bias in canonical Southeast Asian studies. By turning to the sea and the Orang Laut (nomadic “sea gypsies”) rather than the far more familiar terrestrial states that have borne the burden of most theorizing on the region, he argues that the “moving shadow” rather than the “cone of light” offers a very different way of imagining modernity and power. The mobile Orang Laut embody this alternative realm of power by both marking the limits of imperial power while also lying outside it.

Simon Christian Rowedder
National University of Singapore, Singapore

Transnational Flows (Re)Producing National Boundaries: The Case of Thai Fruit Trade in the Yunnan-Laos-Thailand Borderland

Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in the borderlands of Yunnan, northern Laos and northern Thailand, this paper seeks to scrutinise the appealing notion of a transnational (Tai) space of shared ethno-cultural identity. It introduces a case which imposes a national framework of structuring this seemingly unmarked borderland and therefore stresses its rigid national components instead of emphasizing its cross-border fluidity.

This region is naturally linked by the Mekong River and has been for centuries strongly connected in cultural, economic and political terms. Tai-speaking groups, including the Tai Lue, were historically among the most mobile populatations travelling and trading across this area. Thus, recent regional infrastructure and development programs have been often interpreted as enabling a revival of ancient flows of a borderless “Tai World”, allegedly forming transnational communities. Depending on whether
approaching those communities through ethnicity or space, they are understood to share ethnic or particular borderland identities.

Examining the present-day cross-border trade of Thai fruits from a Lue village in northern Thailand to neighbouring Laos and further to China, this case study illustrates that these trade flows reinforce distinctive national Chinese, Lao and Thai labelling and categorizations. They articulate national economic, social and political differences through discourses of taste and quality and associated agricultural sophistication, technological knowledge and development status. They further derive general cultural stereotypes from different buying, consumption and payment behaviours. This paper argues that the logics and success of this trade flow, instead of cultural commonalities, rely on these nationally framed generalizations and simplifications which stress sharp differences and allow traders a clear-cut navigation across this borderland space.

While not denying possible dynamics of transnational ethno-cultural identity formation specific to this borderland, this study seeks to add another way of understanding borderlands as sites of discourses and enactments of (national) differences that paradoxically facilitate transnational flows.

**Thary Gazi**  
University of Malaya, Malaysia

*Dung Beetles and the Socio- Ecological Frontier: Looking at new “Boundary Objects”*

Boundaries are used in both social and natural science, but both disciplines have unique approaches to the same concept. In such a case boundaries become a “Boundary object”, a concept that is shared by several communities but viewed differently by each of them (Bowker and Star, 1999). Using dung beetles as an example, I examine how ecologists use animals to understand and define boundaries, which is then compared to boundaries as understood in social science. The ecologist is both a hunter and an analyst – “entering” the minds of dung beetles in understanding boundaries, an interplay between the imagination, intuition and informal knowledge. Boundaries for the beetle may be in the form of pheromonal borders surrounding the nest tunnel (Social boundaries), the interface layer between dung and the outside world (Physical boundaries) or overlapping zone between two forest types (Ecological boundaries). The analyst executes the process of implementing ideas to collect measurable data to expand existing knowledge. Going beyond empathetic understandings, the analyst must reorient the hypothesis to fit the impartial paradigms of testing models and hypothesis. Comfort/discomfort becomes binary logic, the chances of catching prey become probability distribution curves and hunting grounds become multivariate environmental parameters. The problem must also be generalised to be applicable to more than one situation. From this framework, the previous examples of boundaries can formally be redefined and generalised as a change of probability within a niche space. The cultural differences between physical and social sciences thus becomes evident as comparisons are made between boundary definitions, such as philosophical differences (determinism vs. stochasticity), the application of mathematics, and how both fields view individual cases studies. However both disciplines require some form of empathy to fully understand their subject, even non-human ones.

**Vilashini Somiah**  
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

*“The Sea is my Country, The Sea is my Ally” : Irregular Migrants and the Water as Resistive Agents of State Borders*

The word “Persekutuan” in Bahasa Malaysia, can be translated as both a country and an ally, a term that many irregular migrants in Sabah use to refer to the laut (sea). Sabah, in Malaysia, is home to an estimated 1.9 million irregular migrants, with a majority descended from the Philippines. Since the 1970s, thousands migrate every year through porous sea borders, increasing their numbers exponentially. As a result, the state has responded through policies of detention and deportation. Despite this, many still find ways to return to Sabah by boat. The Sulu sea has traditionally been seen as a passive source of livelihood, sustenance and passage but through the usage of the word “persekutuan”, the water is transformed into
a living and participating member of an informal treaty with these migrants. To identify the sea as such differs greatly from the state’s view, which sees it as an exploited, neglected, porous, vulnerable borderland, incapable of protecting itself from ongoing infiltration. A reading of Latour (2005) posits that agency exists neither from people or things respectively but from their combination. In vein with this, the relationship between migrants and the sea reinforces continuous disregard for borders thus bringing life and vigor to the wet borderlands. Data for this article were obtained from current research in Sabah as well as previous ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2012 and focuses on individual narratives of the sea and encounters with the state. With an understanding of the properties of the Sulu sea, this article frames these experiences within conceptualisations of “borders” and “nationality” as defined by these migrants and how their alliance with the sea ultimately contributes to conscious self-identification as agents of resistance.

Zi Hao Tan
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Peeking from the Shadow: Sea Nomads as the Sculptors of Light

Conceptualisations of power in ancient maritime Southeast Asia tend towards the paradigmatic model of the ‘exemplary centre’. From Benedict Anderson’s ‘cone of light’ to Oliver Wolters’ ‘mandala,’ the seductive metaphor of light is overpowering. While such concepts have benefitted the field of study, they allude to a photocentric bias. Indeed, the model is but a complete picture, for the ‘cone of light’ is not without the shadow that silhouettes its curvature. Underlying the space of shadow is an alternative realm of power, hitherto identified as ‘shadow modernity’. The shadow is to light as the sea is to the sovereigns. Like a fluid milieu of shadow, the sea operates as a potential buffer, as well as a channel, to power. Intersected with locally-engaged and outward-looking clandestine networks, shadow modernity lends the empires their global and modern characteristics. None presents a better case study than the Orang Laut, the ‘people of the sea,’ who were nomadic seafarers known for their loyalty to the ancient Malay empires of Melaka and Johor-Riau-Lingga. The metaphor of shadow accounts for the mobility of Orang Laut: the shadow moves according to a shifting sun and/or a journeying host, yet, it moves without either one of them moving. Similarly, the Orang Laut mimicked the political motivations of the Malay centre, yet, they mimicked without the attempt to catch up. As the expanse of a shadow stretches or contracts according to its distance from the light, the more distant the nomads were from the centre, the more autonomous they became. As vital agents of the sea, the Orang Laut epitomises the features of shadow modernity, providing a non-photocentric perspective towards understanding power and maritime borderlands. The Orang Laut were the sculptors of light. They lurked at the edge of empire, but they determined the limits of its power.

MONDAY 12 DECEMBER, 11.00 – 12.30
LIVING IN A ZONE OF ENDLESS CONFLICT
THE TRANSFORMATION OF BORDER AREAS IN BURMA, NORTHEAST INDIA AND BANGLADESH

Convenor
Makiko Kimura
Tsuda College, Japan

Chair
Sanjay Barbora
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Discussant
Duncan McDui-Rea
University of New South Wales, Australia
The border areas of Northeast India, Myanmar and Bangladesh have gone through large-scale political, economic and social change over the last two decades. Political transformation in Myanmar, plans to open up borders through the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks, and the emergence of large-scale development projects such as dams were expected to bring about a drastic turning point for this region.

It is well known that the area has been host to a large number of ethnic conflicts, many of which have continued for more than six decades. Since the 1990s, there has been hope of an end to these long-standing conflicts as the concerned Governments have started reaching ceasefire agreements, some of which have led to political accord. Moreover, globalization, and democratization in Myanmar in particular, have been expected to open up the blocked borders of Northeast India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to Southeast Asia, and activate trade between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Although some of the above expectations have already been realized, it is hard to say that the change has resulted in the resolution of the conflicts. Although dozens of ceasefire and political accords have been signed, there has been no end to the presence of paramilitary groups, human rights violations, and violence carried out by factions of armed organizations. It seems as though the concerned border area is now established as a zone of endless conflict.

In this panel, based on case studies of the border areas of Northeast India, the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and Myanmar, we will attempt to present how peoples’ everyday lives in the area have or have not changed over the past two and a half decades.

Kabita Chakma
Independent scholar, Australia

Glen Hill
University of Sydney, Australia

‘Development’ in a Conflict Zone: The Case of the Pre and Post Accord Chittagong Hill Tracts

The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord formally ended nearly three decades of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) war for autonomy. The Accord brought hope for peace in Bangladesh. It was welcomed by international communities and earned Bangladesh’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina UNESCO’s Félix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize.

However, after almost two decades, the most important provisions of the Accord – including demilitarisation of the CHT, settlement of land disputes, rehabilitation of displaced persons, elections of regional and district councils – are yet to be implemented. Shantu Larma, the leader of the CHT’s Jana Sanghati Samiti and co-signatory to the Accord, has threatened to begin a non-cooperation movement in response to the failure to implement the Accord.

Bangladesh has been undertaking internationally financed ‘development’ projects in the post-Accord CHT, many without consultation with local indigenous communities. Some projects have involved the security forces, helping them gradually enlarge and strengthen their military establishments, increase their political and administrative control and expand their economic interests.

‘Development’ projects of the sort being carried out at an increasing pace in the CHT have the potential for significant negative impacts on indigenous inhabitants. Even before the peace Accord, ‘development’ projects resulted in detrimental outcomes for CHT’s indigenous communities. In order to understand the range of impacts future projects might have in the CHT, this paper examines the 1970’s Chengi Valley Road Development Project, financed by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB, now AusAID). This road enabled easier access to remote northern CHT, impacting on local lives, livelihoods and the environment. Studying this project’s immediate and long term effects, the paper raises concerns about a major new ‘development’ project, the Chittagong-Rangamati-Thegamukh road connection, financed by the World Bank, which will open up remote central and eastern parts of the CHT to connect to Mizoram State in north-east India.
Anjuman Ara Begum  
FORUM-ASIA, India

Border haats in Meghalaya - Mission Revival Possible

Abrupt closure of haats (weekly markets) in 1971 frozen vibrant trade at the Indo-Bangladesh border. Constriction of borders neglected enormous impact on life, livelihood and economy. The present state of Meghalaya shares about 443 km of international border with Bangladesh out of a total of 4096 kms. Nearly 24 century old ‘haats’ existed before 1971 along this border. Their existence today would have fetched $20 million trade annually.

With the birth of Bangladesh, border is ‘securitized’. Heavy deployment of armed forces and a layer of barbed wire erected in last two decades further constricted the little openings and breathing space unofficially enjoyed by people. The border became a fierce zone with the ‘growth’ of parallel smuggling trade as desperate attempts for livelihood and survival.

The state response to the situation remains militaristic and despotic. ‘Smuggling’, robbery, violence at the border became a reality and continued despite state’s intervention. It’s only recently that the state comprehended that haats needs to be reopened. Despite this late realization, the process of reopening remains slow. In last two decades only two border haats became operational. The haats set up in 2012 at Kalaichar and at Balat allow trade on around 15-16 products. Each haat has fifty stalls in a well fenced area of 5600 sq meters. The trade policy is highly restrictive. Buyer cannot sell and sellers cannot buy in these haats. Number of traders engaging remains minimal. Hence the reopening of haats hardly reopened people’s economic aspirations.

The presentation will be based on ethnographic narrations of people’s experience at these reopened spaces which are marked as ‘success’ in government papers.

Takahiro Kojima  
Tsuda College, Japan

Local Villagers’ Lives and the Endless Conflict in Myanmar: Cases of Tă’ang from Northern Shan State

The conflict between the Burmese government and ethnic minorities started mostly in the 1960s, after the Ne Win regime began. Then, the wars between Tatmadaw, the Myanmar Armed Forces, and the armies of minorities have lasted intermittently until today. During my field survey in the villages of Tă’ang (Palaung) people located in the northern Shan state, which was conducted to study their Buddhist practices, I heard the news that the violence by Tatmadaw had damaged the local society, as human rights organizations have already reported and criticized. Through the field trips in 2015, however, I found that the army of ethnic minorities rather harmed the local society through a variety of actions including conscription and commandeering. Especially, a minority group (Tă’ang) residing inside a minority state (Shan State) has suffered seriously. Some Tă’ang villagers in the Shan State have suffered from the Shan State Army (SSA) or Shan Pyithu Sit, people’s militia, a local armed group controlled by the Burmese military. In some villages, SSA or Shan Pyithu Sit did not come any longer once Tă’ang Nationalities Liberation Army (TNLA) became active in 2011. But ironically, the villagers suffered from conscription and commandeering by TNLA, the army of their own ethnic group, more severely than before. Because of this depressing situation, some Tă’ang villagers move to other villages far from their native place, or to big cities where they were able to escape from these calamities. Of younger generations, some go to foreign countries such as China or Thailand in order to get a job. Particularly, southwestern Yunnan of China is attractive to them because the border area has been economically developed recently due to the Chinese government’s policy. In this presentation, I will explore the dynamism of a local society inflicted by long conflict in the midst of “democratization.”

Makiko Kimura  
Tsuda College, Japan

Enduring Conflict in Bodoland: Riots and Encroachment by Forest Dwellers in Assam, India
The “Bodoland Movement,” being the Bodo movement for a separate state, came to an end in 2003 with the signing by the concerned parties of a Memorandum of Agreement known as the Second Bodo Accord. The Bodo Territorial Council was then established and four Bodoland Autonomous Territorial Districts were carved out. The violence of the 1990s ended in the latter part of the 2000s, and the Bodoland Movement came to be regarded as a successful example of conflict resolution.

The violence erupted again, however, in 2008, 2012 and 2012. After the central government’s decision to grant statehood to Telangana in 2012, the demand for a separate state of Bodoland was revived, and the All Bodo Students’ Union launched the third phase of the Bodoland Movement.

One of the features of the Bodo area conflict is that it took place in the forests bordering Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. This area was once known as “Kachari (an old name for Bodo) Door” and recognized as the traditional territory of the Bodo people. A large tract of the area bordering Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh was reserved after the British colonization, after which the indigenous peoples in the region were prohibited from accessing the forest resources.

Due to the scarcity of cultivable land, many people (both Bodos and non-Bodos) “encroached” on the forest areas. In a way, the Bodo movement for autonomy was a struggle to regain control over the traditional territory. When the confrontation over the Bodo Autonomous Council arose in 1993, the eviction of non-Bodos began. The reserved forests (RFs) have always been the worst hit in the region.

Based on fieldwork in the area, this presentation focuses on how the forest areas have become the centre of the conflict and how people have survived it over the last three decades.
purposes” (Latour 2005). These dual foundations reveal the dynamism, complexity, multi-sited agency and multiple nodes of power surrounding the relationship between brokerage and state practices. Brokerage is riven with its own internal tensions and paradoxes; brokers are ‘Janus-faced’ characters enabling states and markets to ‘reach down’ into localities, but whose interests often lie in the perpetuation rather than resolution of interstitial spaces and conflicts, since it is through mediating such tensions that they derive and retain power (Wolf 1956).

This roundtable will develop ways of theorising borderland brokerage and presenting empirical research on this subject in order to present nuanced understandings of different kinds/categories of brokers and the role of brokerage in producing borderland spaces. Who are borderland brokers? What roles do they play and what can we learn from life histories of specific borderland brokers? Who benefits and who loses out from brokerage practices and why? Is brokerage a career or a transitional phase? How are the livelihoods of borderland communities affected by the changing dynamics of brokerage? Analysing borderland brokerage, and developing life histories of brokers, we believe can tell us much about the unevenness in how markets and states function across borderlands in Asia.

**Participants**

- **Purwo Santoso**  
  Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia
- **Aftab Lall**  
  Centre for Poverty Analysis, Sri Lanka
- **Bashkar Guatam**  
  Martin Chautari, Nepal
- **Nathan Bond**  
  School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne, Australia
- **Shahul Hasbullah**  
  University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

**Monday 12 December, 11.00 – 12.30**

**Politics of Gateway**

**Borderland Politics Beyond the Checkpoints**

**Convenor**

Eva P. W. Hung
Hang Seng Management College, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

**Chair**

Tak-Wing Ngo
University of Macau, Macao S.A.R., China

Borders serve as the gateway for the flow of people and objects, but its politics extends beyond the border checkpoints. Previous studies on the borderlands tend to emphasize the role of state power in shaping and regulating the contour of the border, and state personnel at the checkpoints works to guard the crossings of people and goods. While the border exists to separate and control, it is also its very existence that gives rise to a whole range of shadow economic activities commonly found in the borderlands - the petty trade, tourism trade, shuttle trade, or the smuggling of (il)licit goods. In the remote borderlands of Asia not within the reach of the formal power of the central state, dynamics of the borders are governed not only by local governmental bureaucracy but also by various parties living their
lives in the borderland areas, for example, individual border guards, the ethnic communities, the petty smugglers or the more organized rackets.

This panel brings together four different papers on the politics of gateway that extends beyond the border checkpoints. The gateway of cow smuggling from India over to Bangladesh not only is a killing field of smugglers but it also speaks to the murkiness of government policy and the lucrative profit derived from the illegal trade that makes formal trade relationship impossible (Ahmed). The development of the Pakistani village, Sost, as a gateway to China can also be reflected in changes in the bazaar and a decline in pastoralism in the borderland (Karrar). Regulation over the parallel trade along the sub-border of Hong Kong and mainland China happens not only at the customs checkpoints but extends to the transportation networks as well as local communities protesting against the petty traders, thus serving as guard force of the borderland areas (Hung). In addition, the underground flow of money from mainland China to Hong Kong defies physical control of the border but indeed transcends or even subverts its very existence in separating the two regions (Ngo). Taken together they provide new perspectives of thinking beyond the physical contour of the border. Borderland communities are not only impacted by the border but as gateway to the border flow of people and objects they are part and parcel of border politics.

Eva P. W. Hung  
Department of Social Science, Hang Seng Management College, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Ngai Pun  
Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong S.A.R., China

Negotiating Border-Crossing: Parallel Traders and Borderland Politics in Southern China

This paper focuses on a case study of (il)licit flows of daily consumption items across the ambiguous “internal” sub-borders between mainland China and its two Special Administrative Regions, Hong Kong and Macao. In Aihwa Ong’s (2004) words, the two special administrative regions were created as zones of political exception to communist rule. Within a broader unified national border, sub-borders are maintained to separate the economies and societies of Hong Kong and Macao from the rest of China. With the increasing integration of regional economies, however, the sub-borders have become ambiguous and border control fuzzy. On the one hand, thousands of people are now organizing their lives around the border - they work, they shop, and their children attend schools on the other side of the border. On the other hand, loopholes of the Chinese customs regulations also allow petty traders of both sides of the border to engage in a type of “crowdsourced smuggling” - the evasion of custom duties by having a colossal flow of border-crossers each carrying small quantities of consumer items back to the mainland without being stopped by customs officials. This paper aims to examine how the sub-border becomes the gateway of the (il)licit parallel trade. In particular in Hong Kong, regulation of the border regime extends to the transportation networks of the border towns as the rail and bus companies also control and scrutinize the amount of goods the petty traders carry. Petty traders therefore negotiate their border-crossing not only with the government bureaucracy at the border checkpoints but also with the (un)official guardian of the gateway, the public transport authorities. Furthermore, the proliferation of parallel trade has ignited a series of protests in the border towns of Hong Kong against petty traders from mainland China. Local protesters thus serve also the role of guarding against the crossing of border by the parallel traders. This paper will examine the tactics and strategies deployed by the parallel traders in overcoming the barriers in border-crossing. In so doing it will shed light on not only the checkpoint politics but also the politics of gateway that extends beyond the border.

Hasan Karrar  
Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan

Sost, Gilgit-Baltistan: A Village, a Road, and a Bazaar on the Edge of China

Sost, in Pakistan’s Gilgit-Baltistan province, is the last settlement before the Karakoram Highway winds its way over the Khunjerab Pass (4693m) to Tashkorgan in China’s Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.
Originally one in a series of Wakhi settlements scattered in North Hunza (pop. 20,000) the completion of the Karakoram Highway (1979) and its opening to commercial traffic (1986) transformed this remote, formerly semi-pastoral mountain community. Sost’s distinction of being the last village along the newly constructed Karakoram Highway meant that Sost became the point where the state demarcated its sovereignty through immigration and customs checkpoints and a dry port: Sost became Pakistan’s overland gateway to China. The state’s appropriation of Sost led to the arrival of state officials in the 1980s, followed by merchants and transporters from down country seeking to profit from the nascent, informal overland trade with China.

These changes were articulated through changes in the bazaar, which became the center of public life and the weathervane for new gateway modalities. Since the 1980s, the bazaar saw the emergence of shops, hotels and restaurants, a mosque, and vehicle repair workshops, in addition to government offices. The bazaar also reflected the changing nature of trade; for example, over the 1990s petty cross-border trading was eclipsed by wholesale trade by investors from elsewhere in the country, and the flooding of the Karakoram Highway (2010-2015) during the Attabad disaster led to a sharp downturn in bazaar trade. Additionally, new business opportunities resulted in a significant decline in pastoralism; even when neighboring pastoral communities did not directly engage in the China trade or the auxiliary service industry, better connectivity facilitated migration of formerly pastoral communities to large urban areas.

Tak-Wing Ngo
University of Macau, Macao S.A.R., China

Underground Flows of Capital across Borders in Southern China

This paper examines the massive flow of money across borders between mainland China and its peripheral regions of Hong Kong and Macao. This flow does not only rely on the formal money market and the banking system, but is also channeled via a variety of underground arrangements. In this process, Hong Kong and Macao have become nodal centres in managing the underground network of capital flow that connects China to many parts of the world.

The underground flow of money across the border cannot be seen as purely money laundering. A substantial amount of capital has been shuffled in and out of mainland China for the purpose of profit remittance, investment, pursuing studies abroad, and other legitimate purposes. The strict official regime in restricting capital flow across borders has obliged people and businesses to make use of underground channels.

Checkpoint politics disappears as the flow of money defies physical control at border checkpoints. Conventional authorities guarding borderlands, such as customs and immigrations, ceased to be functional in this case. The void in enforcement is supposed to be filled by non-state actors – in this case banks – under the supervision of the state. However, the paper shows that this is at best ineffective, since a proliferation of underground channels have emerged to facilitate cross-border exchanges in capital.

### Convenor
Sean Dowdy
University of Chicago, United States

### Chair and Discussant
Sanjib Baruah
Bard College, United States

Drawing upon Carlo Severi’s notion of the “chimeric imagination”, this panel proposes a novel heuristic for rethinking the dynamics of borderlands in, of, and for Northeast India—and, perhaps, more generally. As per Severi’s heuristic, “chimeras” are good for action as much as thought. They distort the distinctions...
between what is “given” (nature) and what is “constructed” (culture), between what is an index of a past (“history”) and what is a creative anticipation of action (“future/imagination”), between what is oral and written, and between memory (mnemonic traces) and forgetfulness. Borders are historical objects of our own construction, but they may also imply or intuit limits of human agency (say, the creation of limits or separations due to earthquakes, floods, landslides, foreign wars, forgetting, divine intervention, etc.). They orient action to the past as much as to the future. Seen in this light, borders across Northeast India (precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial) are exquisitely chimeric. Historical and ethnographic records show them to be figures of constant manipulation and hypostatization, sites of dynamic trade as much as ritual centers. Taking these manipulations and hypostatizations into account, this panel asks: How might we write a new ecology of borders from the perspective of the region now known as Northeast India? Can a chimeric theory of borderlands offer an alternative to the political ecology driven notion of “Zomia”? Can it challenge the kind of unidimensional dynamics implied by the concept of “flow”? Can cultural narratives in/of/for borders themselves suggest alternative ways of conceiving ecologies and cosmologies? If so, how, and in what ways? The five papers in this panel, drawing from different disciplines, attempt to address these questions from a variety of perspectives: from memoirs and novels to gastronomy, from riparian life worlds to bridges and mountain pathways, and from Westphalia to feasts of merit.

Amit Baishya
University of Oklahoma, United States

Damaged Life: The Figuration of Spectral Histories in “Frontiers”/”Borderlands” in Northeast India

This paper studies the figuration of refugees and the denizens of no-man’s zones—figures often considered to be epitomes of damaged life—focusing on the representation of two different historical moments set in contiguous geographical areas in Assamese cultural production. The first moment is the period of World War II when people of South Asian descent had to flee Burma as the Japanese entered the country. To explore this period, I will focus on the last sections of Purnakanta Buragohain’s memoir Patkair Xipare Na Basar (Nine Years on the Other Side of the Patkai) and Debendranath Acharya’s novel Jangam (The Movement). Both works deal with the ‘forgotten long march’—Buragohain witnessed it first hand while Acharya imaginatively reconstructs it in his fictional narrative. I contrast the representation of this period with two later fictional narratives by former members of the ULFA—Anurag Mahanta’s Aulingar Jui (A Harvest of Fire) and the semi-fictional narrative that closes Samudra Gogoi’s Ejon Prapton Ulfa’r Swikarokti (The Memoirs of an Ex-ULFA Member). Both these narratives are based in the zones where sovereignty is split between India, Myanmar and a number of independentist groups that have their bases in these areas. Through a comparative analysis of these works, I study how the internal dynamics of the narratives are shaped through the tropes of “movement” and “constriction” in and through space. A trans-historical, comparative study of the use of these tropes in Assamese cultural production reveals how the spectral histories of forms of life damaged by war and postcolonial state-building cross-hatch and clash chimerically with contemporary socio-political formations in these regions.

Zilkia Janer
Hofstra University, United States

Can Gastronomy Climb Hills? Cooking without Cookbooks and Spices in Zomia

The discourse of modern gastronomy has served as a tool for creating and policing civilizational hierarchies. Gastronomy in the European context is unthinkable without written codification, whereas in the mainland Indian context culinary sophistication is defined by the skillful use of spices. The peoples of Zomia, it would seem, lack gastronomy when defined by Western or mainland Indian standards. In this paper I look into the culinary practices of Singphos/Kachins and Nagas to explore how they help us rethink some of the basic tenets of modern gastronomy, like the indispensability of writing and the ideological conceptualizations of spices. Zomia culinary practices constitute a more fully sensorial and affective approach to culinary refinement, different from the aestheticized and disembodied approach that has predominated in Western modernity, which curbs gustatory pleasure in the name of civilization.
Sensible situation theorizing neglects neither subjective nor objective problematics. Perhaps S. Rajaratnam has defined it best, politics as dealing with situations, leadership as sustainably defining them. From Machiavelli on war to Severi on chimera, dynamics of recognition, memory and forgetting play crucial roles in realizations and resolutions of conflict. Feasts of merit sufficed for generations as a vehicle for leadership in much of the Asian highlands, even when, precisely when, the chimeric politics of nats and debts could justify very different kinds of rank recognition and flows of goods and people uphill.

Reconsidering Westphalia as myth stabilized and imported, noticing the chimeric dimensions of European, e.g. Machiavellian, self-styled military realism, enables a much finer tracking than will fantasies of local anarchism of the politics of inner lines, magisterial regimes, decolonization, the Bandung deal and sovereignty predicaments in the highlands. We will seek to grasp the art of managing flow under changing and partly chimeric circumstances.

Sean Dowdy
University of Chicago, United States

"Dalang aru Duar": Or, the Chimeric Arts of History and Border Making in Assam

Beginning with reflections from Georg Simmel’s short essay, “Bridge and Door," this paper explores two histories of conceptual and technological border making in Central Assam: (1) the early-twenty-first century creation and destruction of river-channel bridges at the borders of the the village cluster / erstwhile kingdom of Mayong; and (2) the early-twentieth-century closing of the Southern Duars—the political and ritual centers that once served as “gateways” between floodplains of the Kolong/Kopili Rivers and the Khasi/Jaintia Hills, yet are now conceptualized as a “tribal belt” marking a border between federated states (Assam and Meghalaya). Drawing on local historical narratives, archival materials (including the Datiyalia Buranji), and contemporary ethnographic reflections on the demographic, economic, and political flows and stoppages in these areas, this paper sets out to chart the ways “opening” and “closing” of geo-political spaces reorient cosmological imaginations of who a people are and where they fit into the “appropriate” order of things. More importantly, the paper argues that the historical events that reoriented the flow of people, goods, and ideas toward or away from these “borders” has only further fixed their centrality as reference points for orienting the cosmos. They are now chimeric sites that represent the unity and separation of socio-political, indeed cosmic, wholes. The bridges and Mayong and the Southern Duars are now, in semiotic terms, deictic origos—renewed ritual centers of religious practice, market exchange, and political pageantry—filled with mnemonic traces (goroka) that index history itself as a chimeric art, brimming with imaginative surplus.

Tanmoy Sharma
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

The Great Hydraulic Frontier: Sediments and Sentiments in the Time of Development

As the Eastern Himalayan trans-boundary rivers are now envisioned as the future "power house" of both India and China, this paper seeks to complicate the image of this new “hydraulic frontier” of capitalism with anthropological reflections on the riparian forms of life entangled in it. The paper focuses, specifically, on the socio-ecology of the Subansiri River, the largest tributary of the Brahmaputra, and the local modes of political resistance that have halted construction of a large hydropower dam erected on the river. Drawing inspiration from Bruno Latour’s (2014) recent invitation to turn to "geostories", instead of exclusively "natural" or "cultural" histories, for a narrative reconstitution of our time and place in the world, I turn to the riparian life and livelihood of the Mising ethnic group who not only live and die on the
Subansiri, but with it. Their history reveals a mnemoically dense, and thus chimeric, geostory about the entanglement of water-worlds, political sovereignties, and borderland sensitivities. Now, as the Mising become active subjects in the new riverine theater of politics, the “time of development” confronts the “time of the river”—where the tempo of fishing, cultivation, flooding, and erosion of silt and sand demonstrates that the Latourian collusion between "sediments and sentiments" is not just symbolic, but literal. Just as the sedimented history of Mising lifeworlds puts demands on the reach of frontier capitalism, so too does sediment and water, with their own temporal flows, make demands on its ecological partners.

MONDAY 12 DECEMBER, 13.30 – 15.15

BORDERLAND OF GREATER MEKHONG SUBREGION (GMS): NEOLIBERALIZATION AND RELIGIOUS FLOWS

Convenor and Chair
Kwanchewan Buadaeng
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Borderland of Greater Mekhong Subregion (GMS) has never been marginal and isolated. Bustling markets at various localities in borderlands along trading routes were found in both pre-modern and modern time. Borderland in this area has been also sites of active missionization of many world and local religions. As borderland people are diverse and not fully controlled by the states and their promoted religions, they are rather free to choose and develop their material and spiritual way of living. Since 1950s, the state of Thailand have tried to assert the sovereign power on the borderland, as seen by numerous military and police posts and check points along the border. But the control over the movement of people across the border is always failed due to corrupted mechanism. Also, the state of Myanmar could neither exercise their sovereign power as many ethnic groups are still holding their economic, political and military power in the borderland. At present, where neo-liberalization has ruled the borderland, sovereign power cannot be fully exercised due to the exceptional law, which is proclaimed to promote capital flow and rapid accumulation. In the case of Laos, sovereignty is even commodified to gain income from the more powerful and well-off nations. This panel discusses present situations of the GMS borderlands in which casino complex, special economic zone, markets are increasingly controlled by transnational business corporations. It also further discusses expansion of religious missionization and the construction of religious land following this neoliberalization, which facilitates the flow of people and capital across the border. This revives and reconstructs religious law and communities across national boundaries, and thus undermines state power. The Thai state for example struggles to maintain their sovereign power and obstruct the flow of migration by registering and classifying who are and who are not Thai citizen. This does not stop the flow but create more problems for borderland people. In sum, the panel investigates the neoliberalization process in the borderland, opportunities opened up by that process and impact on borderland people in GMS.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Neoliberalizing Border: Chinese Casino, Special Economic Zones and the Commodification of Sovereignty in Northern Laos

In its fast-track transformation to capitalist economy, Laos has adopted Special Economic Zones as the new economic engine to facilitate a speedy inflow of foreign investment. Vast areas of borderland have been turned into entertainment and tourist complex. Using the case study of the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone at the Lao-Thai border, this paper examines the expansion of the Chinese-style neoliberalism into the frontier of the Greater Mekong Subregion. It investigates the means and mechanism that facilitate the process of civilizing mission by the Chinese investor and demonstrates the paradox between the desire to civilize and the will to survive played out in the transforming process of
the rural frontier. The paper argues that such neoliberalizing border enterprise comprises multiple forms of political economic missions including the turning of the “uneducated” rural communities into entrepreneurial population, the capitalization of national economy through the commodification of sovereignty, and the re-territorialization of the “wild frontier” into the GMS gateway. Such processes have led not only to radical changes in border governance and spatial relation but also a destructive form of “accumulation by dispossession” of the Lao frontier.

Aranya Siriphon
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

The Recent Chinese Migrants, Neoliberal Policies of China and its influence in Mekong Borderland

The new flows of recent Chinese migrants have increased considerably in Mekong borderland since 1990s when border opening and GMS economic regionalization between China and Southeast Asian countries have been implemented. This article examines recent Chinese migrants, focusing on Chinese entrepreneurs and their socio-economic activities in and around Chinese market in Bo Kaew province of Northern Lao border, a site where Chinese entrepreneurs have been growing. This article discloses the intertwining of neoliberal policies of post-socialist states, border landscape and migration patterns, to see how recent Chinese migrants are shaped by the external structural force on one hand, and migrants themselves actively respond to new transnational economic opportunity on the other.

It finds that recent Chinese migrants in the Laos’ northern border arise from different classes in southern China in particular, which encountered with internal migration pressure, highly competitive labor and job markets, laid-off or job-losses in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Mainland China. While faced with high competition in China, policies of Chinese and Laos post-socialist statesand intensification of economic regionalism have assisted facilitating Chinese migrants and their mobility by which the states redraw its “border landscape”, engendering more flexible border flows and various forms of control over the border. This paper also shows the diversifying livelihood practices, entrepreneurial strategies that traders manage risks and uncertainties while operating transborder trade.

Kwanchewan Buadaeng
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Constructing a Buddha-Land across Thai-Myanmar Border: a Case of U Thuzana Karen Charismatic Monk

The paper describes the movement of U Thuzana, a Karen revered monk who is the important patron of Democratic Karen Benevolent (earlier Buddhist) Army (DKBA), which was set up in a mutiny against the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in Thailand-Myanmar borderland since 1994. The monk has actively constructed ‘a Buddha Land,’ which has the monastic center at Myiang Gyi Ngu in the Karen state of Myanmar, covering many parts of the Karen state and across the border to the North and West of Thailand. His movement involves construction of pagodas and monasteries, establishment of moral communities, and organization of Buddhist ceremonies for Karen migrants in Thailand. Moral communities have clearly demarcated territory as members are vegetarian, strictly following Buddhist precepts and devoting themselves for the Buddha-land construction. Crossing at the unofficial border gate and moving and living in Thailand without proper documents is possible in this case because of three things: first, the monk’s movement is supposed to be religious and thus, not to be limited by national sovereignty principle. Second, the religious activities are increasingly held in private factories/shops which hired many Karen migrants; and third, U Thuzana’s defendants and supporters are well-off and powerful and thus have vast networks which can help defending the illicit movement. It is this paper’s argument that in the present situation and at particular context of Thai-Myanmar borderland, religious flows across the border are facilitated by migrants who increasingly request the monk’s visit and blessing, by the flows of information and convenient transportation and by capitalist networks.
Mukdawan Sakboon  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

*Fixed border*, flexible identity: Contesting ideas of belonging in the borderlands

In Thailand, the intricate ethnic minorities’ classification system in coupled with complicated procedures for citizenship consideration is responsible for the existence of stateless and “invisible” people especially in the border areas. The paper investigates the regime of citizenship with particular focus on the border politics of identification card application and its implications for people living in the border zones of Thailand and Burma/Myanmar in terms of local livelihoods and relations to nation-state. It unravels local authorities’ practices and citizenship conceptions which complicate both national and post-national citizenship theories in explaining the struggle for belonging for borderland ethnic people within and without. This situation is a challenge for national development as well as for regional integration, which implies increased mobility and harmonization of legal systems among ASEAN members.

**MONDAY 12 DECEMBER, 13.30 – 15.15**

**BORDERLAND ROADS: PATHWAYS AND PASSAGES**

*Convenor*
Galen Murton  
University of Colorado Boulder, United States

*Chair*
Swargajyoti Gohain  
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India

*Discussant*
Edward Simpson  
London University School of Oriental and African Studies, United Kingdom

In this panel, we explore roads as both pathways and passages. As pathways, roads channel exchange and thereby facilitate or restrict specific types of movement. They open up channels of communication that serve particular means and are conducive to particular forms of social relations. In other words, roads afford certain kinds of movement – or, as we call them, certain kinds of passages. Looking at roads through the dual and interconnected aspects of passage and pathway provides a means to analyze the entanglements of movement and infrastructure across Asia’s borderlands.

As both metaphors and conduits of mobility, roads present disparate objectives and outcomes. Rural shopkeepers, farmers and herders, as well as construction firms, transport ministries, and development experts all have their own visions of the pathway a road is meant to foster and the type of passages it is to facilitate. On the one hand, roads are a fundamental structure of state-building. Undergirded by major development initiatives and backed by international donors and global capital, they are primarily imagined as corridors for the passage of goods between specific destinations. On the other hand, local and place-based experiences with road projects are typically uneven, disruptive, and contested because they directly interfere with existing forms of exchange and wayfaring lifestyles. Thus roads, at once, encourage automobility but also limit how people move, and when they move.

By examining pathways and passages and the ways in which they are both generative and restrictive of mobility, we aim to deepen conversations on the role of roads in the transformation of everyday life for borderland communities, and the realignment of relations between “peripheral” communities across borders as well as between “peripheral” communities and state centers. As roads also help to bring in and reshape the state in borderland spaces, this panel will further explore the place of roads for new conceptualizations of “borderland modernities.”
Alessandro Rippa  
Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Germany

Roads to Development: Socialist New Villages and petty cross-border trade in the Dulong valley

The Dulong valley, one of Yunnan’s most remote corners squeezed between Myanmar’s Kachin state and the Gaoligong Mountains, is home to the Dulong (Drung) minzu, one of China’s smallest ethnic groups. The first road to the Dulong valley was completed in 1999. Soon after, in 2003, the Sloping Land Conversion Program brought to an end the traditional slash and burn cultivation practiced by the Dulong, increasing their dependence on state subsidies (Harwood 2014) and thus generating various social problems (Gros 2011; 2014). In the late 2000s a new road was built along the Dulong river, allowing the government to put into practice another major development plan, which included the relocation of all of the valley’s inhabitants into Socialist New Villages placed alongside the road.

Roads, then, for the Dulong of the valley, were a fundamental conduit for various national policies and development projects. Unlike other border regions in China, moreover, in the area there are no larger plans of transnational connectivity involving nearby Myanmar, nor the valley seems to have any particular strategic relevance for Beijing. For the Lisu and Kachin across the border, however, the new road meant easier access to Chinese goods, and a number of petty traders regularly cross the border on foot to buy various products. Although the trade is tolerated by Chinese authorities, the state does not seem to play any role in this form of exchanges, nor it aims at fostering them -- a situation which differs significantly from other similar settings along the Chinese borderlands.

This paper, based on recent fieldwork in the Dulong valley, analyzes the interplay between China’s comprehensive plans for the development of its borderlands and the small pathways of trade that remains inevitably out of the reach -- and in part out of the control -- of the state.

Martin Saxer  
Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Germany

Nyima Dorjee Bhutia  
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Private Roads: Local road construction initiatives in the Himalayas

The construction of roads – and of border roads in particular – usually follows a top-down approach. Planning and financing are typically in the hands of government agencies, outside companies bid for tenders, and the local population is (at best) involved in the occasional “stakeholder meeting”. In Nepal, however, there are several cases in which substantial Himalayan border road projects started from local grass-root initiatives rather than government schemes. In this paper, we are looking into two such local initiatives in the districts of Taplejung and Humla, respectively. Driven by the particular interests of specific local groups, these private initiatives are directly related to government road projects that are considered either to be taking “too long” or to be following the “wrong route”; in other words, these local initiatives are reactions to what is perceived as a lack of essential infrastructure development and a pervasive feeling of being left behind.

In this context, these private initiatives at hand also have to be seen against the background of old Himalayan pathways of exchange and their current predicament. The visions of former prosperity and future development tied to these pathways are sometimes at odds with both NGO dreams of tourist-friendly “green roads” and official schemes of transport corridors that facilitate the orderly passage of goods and people. We argue that grass-root initiatives pushing for roads are an important aspect to understand the larger dynamics at stake in the Himalayan borderlands.

Galen Murton  
University of Colorado Boulder, United States

What’s Down that Road? Development, Commerce, and Cultural Politics in the Nepal-China Borderlands
Trans-border road development between Nepal and China has proliferated in recent years. In a rapid expansion beyond the single roadway that has long connected these Himalayan neighbors, Kathmandu and Beijing are now engaged in new road development projects at five points across the countries’ Himalayan-Tibetan borderlands. Policy agendas, survey projects, and construction contracts are increasingly making material impacts across these landscapes and reshaping trans-border trade legacies into modern, motorized arrangements. This paper examines trans-border road projects in Nepal’s Rasuwa and Mustang districts to better understand the connections between international infrastructure and the politics of state building in Nepal. I engage this dynamic by looking specifically at the ways in which Chinese investments, transnational infrastructure, and the commercialization of cross-border trade currently shapes Nepali state formations in districts where significant state presence has long been absent. Thinking of roads as both pathways and passages – through the movement of material and ideological things – this study aims to expand conversations on the impacts of Chinese economic and political capital in South Asia and the affects of motorability on highland lifestyles in the context of new borderland modernities.

Swargajyoti Gohain
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India

Dhabas, Highways, and Passage through Small-Town India

This paper examines social relations that grow up in highways through a focus on dhabas or small roadside inns. As infrastructure pathways, roads and highways have historically been constructed to serve military purposes of connectivity, or for linking sites of commerce, industry and governance. While highways facilitate different forms of (auto)mobility, they also afford selective passage or movement, displacing and bypassing many people and places. Marc Augé (1995) thus considers highways among empirical non-places where social interaction is contractual rather than organic. However, in this paper, I look at the micro-communities (Vannini 2012) and human relations that form in the course of road passage.

This paper is based on preliminary research on the Asian Highway project, and especially the NH (National Highway) 37 in northeast India, which constitutes one leg of the Asian Highway. The Asian Highway is a mega project for improving connectivity between Asian countries by building mostly on already existing highways and is primarily funded by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and Asian Development Bank. In 2012, four-laning was completed for NH 37, displacing many traditional livelihoods and small businesses on the roadside, but simultaneously, leading to a sharp rise in the number of dhabas, especially near the junction of NH 36 and 37. Dhabas are a growing business, attracting many entrepreneurs locally and from outside, and creating opportunities for people around a particular spot to earn an income through selling snacks or meals, supplying grains, vegetables, fish, poultry etc. They provide a break for highway commuters as well as serve as meeting places for businessmen and political parties. By examining the political economy and socialities of dhaba culture, this paper seeks to draw attention to how road passage can bring people and things together in new configurations (Harvey 2015).

Sonam Lama
Tsum Nubri, Nepal

Impacts of North-South Transit Route Development on Local Architectural Heritage of Sacred Sites: Tsum sbas-skyid-mo-lung

In 2011, the Government of Nepal began the technical survey for the North- South Transit Route Development (NSTRD) in a remote mountain valley of the central Himalaya. This valley, inhabited by indigenous Tsumpa, is popularly known as the hidden lands of happiness “sbas-yul skyid-mo-lung” identified and concealed by Guru Rinpoche, the 8th century saint who spread Buddhism in Tibet. sbas-yul
are havens for peace, prosperity and spiritual progress and provide safe refuge for spiritual seekers. The valley also falls under the revered skyid-mo-lung pilgrimage route.

However, the NSTRD has not considered its adverse impacts on centuries-old architectural heritage intact and strewn along the trail such as mani walls, shorten, khanyi, manthang, bumpa, mani-tungyur, lha-kang, mani lokor and gonpa. The 17 kilometer motor road surveyed for this thesis coincides with existing trails vibrant with trans-himalayan trade, pastoralism, pilgrimage and trekking tourism. Though the motor road might bring radical changes such as in improving the accessibility to the markets, health centers, education and administration, insufficient involvement of Tsumpa peoples, absence of prior-consultation and lack of local participation suggests that the NSTRD increases its imminent threats on the sacred landscape.

This paper argues that a better understanding on spiritual underpinnings of sbas-yul ensures sustainable integration of the old architectural heritage. More importantly, an alternative development model incorporating local participation has to be taken into consideration in order to reconcile conservation of sacred landscape and fragile mountain eco-system with modern development such as NSTRD.

**MONDAY 12 DECEMBER, 15.45 – 17.15**

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES: WALLS, NODES AND BORDER MAINTENANCE**

*Convenor*

Duncan McDuie-Ra  
University of New South Wales, Australia

Sahana Ghosh  
Yale University, United States

*The borderland as barracks: “Community” for and by the Indian Border Security Forces at the India-Bangladesh border*

‘This Bangal border is the worst, here there is not a moment’s peace. Troops go mad here!’ says a veteran constable in the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) while on duty along the India-Bangladesh border in northern Bengal. With twenty-eight years of service, he deems this to be the worst border location he has ever served at considering the physical and psychological toll it takes on troops, constables and officers alike. This paper examines border security practices and experiences of security force personnel on the ground to better understand the gendered labour that comprise grand projects of national security and border control in India today.

Criticized widely as a ‘trigger happy’ force (HRW 2010) for violences and violations while on duty at the India-Bangladesh border to reduce its porosity in all forms, the BSF are often cast as villains of ordinary life in these densely populated borderlands. This paper, taking them as a key group in the political economy of South Asian borders, examines the knowledge practices that animate their residence and work along the ‘Bangal border’. It interrogates the organizational and practical strategies through which they construct and maintain a community closed off to the civilian domain. This paper asks: what are the terms in which members of the BSF judge the nature of India’s many borders and the contours of their ‘duty’? As a community of salaried armed forces in the employ of the central government, how do they negotiate the disjunctions between their training and the realities of borderland life? I examine the conflicted performances of BSF personnel as soldiers, as citizens, as moral human beings as having far-reaching consequences for the kinds of civil-military encounters that define the quality of life for many living on both sides of the border in India and Bangladesh.
William Callahan
London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

Walls: borders, flows and civilization

While “globalization,” with its free flows of information, goods and people, characterized world politics after the end of the Cold War, the 21st century has been defined by a reassertion of physical, cultural, and legal barriers. Within history, geography and international relations, there is a robust study of the social life of walls. But rather than join together in a comparative study of different walls, most projects are themselves walled in by national / regional boundaries: Americanists study the US/Mexico wall, Europeanists study the Berlin Wall, and Sinologists study the Great Wall of China. This paper will consciously engage in a comparative study that explores how walls are not simply physical constructions, but also theoretical and experiential concepts. Rather than follow mainstream analyses that start with the Berlin Wall, the paper starts with an analysis of the politics of the Great Wall of China, to ask: How did it historically function as a barrier between polities or as a gateway that joined them? As well as being a material barrier, how does it function conceptually to (1) divide “civilization” from “barbarism” in the pre-modern period, and (2) symbolize Beijing’s “defensive foreign policy” in the 21st century? The goal is not simply to understand the specifics of China’s Great Wall. The aim is to start from this Asian example to understand the conceptual and political work done by other (in)famous walls built between the U.S. and Mexico and between East and West Berlin. The paper thus is a theoretical intervention that calls into question the Eurocentric conceptual starting point in the study of walls in Asia. The paper will be accompanied by a short documentary film that highlights the experiential politics of walls as borders and as the site of flows.

Babyrani Yumnam
Binghamton University, State University of New York, United States

Open Borders, Peaceful Development: Politics of Border Connections in Northeast India

This paper examines how state-initiated border connections in the form of transnational highways and trade relations have impacted the lives of border communities in Moreh, a town on the Indo-Myanmar border. In particular, I explore the ways in which these connections have produced a border-centric development discourse that associate cross-border connectivity with peace and material progress in India’s “troubled” Northeastern borderlands. Since 1995, border trade has taken a new meaning of renewed aspirations and hope for Moreh’s diverse communities who have endured years of heavy militarization, ethnic insurgencies, and stagnant economic growth. I contextualize these changes within the paradigm of India’s Look East or Act East Policy that has sought to expand national economic relations in the East via Northeast India, a historically and politically marginalized periphery. By examining how the state’s discourse of development-buys-peace have affected local communities, this paper argues that the “banality of everyday encounters” (Trouillot 2001) between the state and borderland communities mediated by the developmentalist logic reveals those processes and effects that shape and (re)produce local social dynamics. The paper is thus an interpretation of those changes brought upon communities in one of Asia’s remote borderlands by transnational flows and passages of capital, labor circuits, and commodity exchange.
Changes in Border Policy and Border Identities: Post LBA transitions in the former Bangladeshi enclaves in Cooch Behar, India

In May 2015 in a surprise historic move the Indian Parliament ratified the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) with Bangladesh settling the long-standing border dispute between the two countries. It has led to the exchange of the border enclaves, as both territories and populations. Fifty-one Bangladeshi "enclaves" within India became Indian territory and one hundred and eleven Indian "enclaves" became Bangladeshi territory, while the 51,549 people residing in the Indian and Bangladeshi enclaves, were offered the option of choosing nationality of either state. Finally, 14,864 persons who were citizens of Bangladesh living in those enclaves which became part of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal in India acquired Indian citizenship from 1 August, 2015. Additionally, 979 people opted for Indian citizenship from Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, of whom 922 people finally came to India by the deadline of 23 November 2015. This study ethnographically and historically traces the production of marginality through the period of transition for the Chhit-Mahal people from being the 'the non-citizen other' to being 'the citizen'. It addresses two questions, firstly, how marginality was and is being produced in the former chhit-mahals and secondly, how they have provided (in the past) and continue to provide in the present, conditions for forms of political becoming. Towards this end, it investigates the practices, experiences and legacies of marginality that (en)gender different political struggles of these people, not only producing marginality or marginal spaces but also providing conditions for being constituted as political subjects and explores the effects on their newly acquired citizenship, as it is practised and conceptualised. This study is based on multi-sited ethnography undertaken between March-September 2016, across select former Bangladesh Chhit-Mahals in Dinhata and Mekhliganj subdivisions of Cooch Behar, all the three Enclave Resettlement Camps, at Haldibari, Mekhliganj and Dinhata and urban migrant labour sites in Ghaziabad, Haryana and Rajasthan. Research methods include life histories, in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, studying social media, Facebook and WhatsApp groups, and following print media, North Bengal editions, for six months (April-September 2016).

Border without the State: Locating Indo-Nepal Border Culturally

Borders are political constructions inasmuch as they are culturally internalised. They involve spatial representation of power relations and at the same time they are reflected in the minds of the people those who live with, along and beyond the borders. In that borders produce meaning and significance beyond their mere physical existence and that these meanings may not necessarily tally with the politically projected meanings of borders. The assessment of this cultural location of Indo-Nepal border, or any border within South Asian region, is necessary since it interrogates the obsession of collapsing of the state, nation and culture within the territorial exclusivity of one nation state.
This paper claims that while the political connotation of border implies ‘difference’, ‘control’, ‘cartographic anxiety’, and ‘securitization’ as elementary aspects of ‘state power’ the cultural contours of border inscribe mutuality, trust and reciprocal respect and virtually – what James Scott would have it – a ‘state evading paradigm’. In what would constitute the main body of the text we will try to establish how this proposition fits well with Indo-Nepal border which is deemed to be a ‘soft’ one. In a certain sense, Indo-Nepal border sites hints at the effacement of the state and its territorial limits. We argue that this effacement runs far deeper in the cultural plane. Hence we propose to examine how territoriality of the nation state appeals in the way border is internalized culturally? The attempt is therefore to flag up the cultural location of border in the minds of people, in the relations they share, in their traditions, in their spontaneous mundane material world, in their arts and aesthetics. Based on field data collected from Indo-Nepal border sites and pursuing ethnography of imagination over some literary texts, films and songs an attempt would be made to substantiate our arguments raised above.

Robert Winstanley-Chesters
Australian National University, Australia

Navigating Geo-Politics at the Mouth of the Amnok/Yalu: Sindo and its Fisherpeople

From Pyongyang’s urban landscape to Mt Paektu’s sacred architectures, North Korea’s terrain and topography are harnessed in support of history and politics. While the nation’s coastlines are by their nature a little more liminal than its urban or political topographies, North Korean coastal reclamation projects such as Taegyedo have also been important to drive forward its politico-developmental narrative, forging new ‘socialist’ landscapes and geo-political connections from and across the sea. However past research by this author has demonstrated that North Korea’s developmental projects, even large ones and their attendant connectivity have a habit of slipping from institutional focus, becoming peripheral objects/sites of disinterest.

This paper’s in particular addresses the case of the fishing community on Sindo Island. Once a focus of political commitment Sindo was forged from the bed of the River Amnok/Yalu, downstream from Sinuiju/Dandong. A fishing cooperative (visited by Kim Il-sung in 1976), was formed on reclaimed land from coastal communities elsewhere. Sindo has since slipped off Pyongyang’s developmental radar becoming a marginal, half-remembered site. Yet its resident community continued their work. Using analysis of GIS and Remote Sensing databases, close readings of North Korean historiography and connections to interview sets now available to researchers sourced from expatriate North Koreans the paper explores the topographic, social and (geo)political landscapes inhabited by the island’s contemporary residents. The paper considers the fact that Sindo’s working community are now subjected not only to local institutional indifference and capacity issues, but also to environmental issues brought about by global-scale climate change and sea level rise. Finally analysis of the contestation and restriction of Sindo’s fishing, maritime and market access rights by a newly muscular China and wider regional political reconfiguration leads the paper to a determination of the community’s place in newly activated, dynamic political and economic spaces of sovereignty and exchange.

Linda Lumayag
University of Malaya, Malaysia

Immigrants’ Quest for Survival and their View of the Ecosystem: An Ethnographic Study of Two Fishing Communities in Kudat, Sabah

Coastal communities in archipelagic nation-states have never been challenged until recently. One of these challenges is the seemingly unabated flow of people across national borders that put pressure on the social and ecological aspects of human communities. As cross-border peoples, they are often viewed publicly as a national threat and their social conditions are poor. This paper is a product of a preliminary study that examines immigrants’ social conditions in two fishing communities along the South China Sea. Specifically, the paper explores the different socio-psychological strategies of undocumented immigrants to make sense of their survival in a new homeland. It will also probe their access to marine resources in
an already volatile environment, and the extent to which they are affected. How do immigrants capitate and optimize support at the household and community level in order to sustain life? How have informal structures played a primary role in their struggle for survival? What existing ecological precepts regulate their perception and actual use of the sea? Data was drawn from personal interviews and the survey questionnaire method. Interviews, in particular, were made with key informants such as village heads, youth leaders, and conservation activists. Two coastal communities, Kudat and Sudah, that are largely populated by undocumented Filipino immigrants from Palawan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Mindanao are the sites of the research. Ultimately, this paper explores wider sociological themes related to sustainability of coastal communities in the midst of immigrants’ livelihood practices given their precarious citizenship position and their access to available resources.

**MONDAY 12 DECEMBER, 15.45 – 17.15**

**CROSS-BORDER LIVELIHOODS**

**Convenor**
Sara Shneiderman
University of British Columbia, Canada

Millie Creighton
University of British Columbia, Canada

*Multiple Borders: A Chinese Village in Hong Kong Border Crossing with Shenzhen and Modernity via Japanese Department Stores*

This presentation explores flows of goods and people across three different types of borders, across international borders between Japan and China via Japanese department stores or abstracted versions of them built in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, across another kind of border between Shenzhen in mainland China and the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, and across a ‘transzonal’ border between the highly dense cosmopolitan city of Hong Kong and an ancestral village community—one protected by Hong Kong heritage initiatives—separate from but bordering on a Hong Kong mega mall. While attempting to maintain ‘traditional’ village life, villagers also go in and out of the urban mega mall or commuter stations it connects with, and interface with international flows via the Japanese department store within the modern mega mall. Villagers also link with relatives and acquaintances in the nearby but on the other side of the Special Administrative Region border located in or near Shenzhen on the mainland China side. Japanese department stores have been established on both sides of this border in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The focus on the ancestral village at the edge of the Hong Kong mega mall with the Japanese department store allows a window on how villagers in such communities maintain their lifestyles and livelihoods while also showing the effects of their interface with modern and international consumer culture. It also shows how the supposed domestic border within—between Hong Kong and Shenzhen—can sometimes be as fraught with tensions as the international one between China and Japan. Exploring the local ‘zonal’ border between the village persisting within Hong Kong and the cosmopolitan nature of the Hong Kong surrounding it, this paper suggests that the relation between modernity and tradition is not necessarily one of opposition but symbiotic, itself involving a border that is fluid and potentially interwoven.

Madhu Giri
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

*Continuity and Change on Cross-Border Robbery: Narratives of Violence at Southern Siraha*

Cross-border robbery and culture are deeply intertwined, a warp and woof in the fabric of time, place and understanding. Traditional occupation of certain communities was acknowledged as stealing and robbery
based on normative culture in Northern India and Southern Nepal. Gradually, the stealing occupation was transformed into complex cross-border violent robbery of village settlements on borderland throughout Central Tarai (Madhes). The Borderland communities were not only frequently robbed by cross-border gang but also killed during encounter. Because of open border and absence of government security mechanism, people not only lost their property but also suffered from encounters and psychological trauma. They have a lot of stories to tell about cross-border robbery, violence and dynamics of cross-border kinship networks. The degree of violence and frequency of robbery events fluctuated on the basis of state presence at margin and political activities of local political parties. Therefore, the paper try to explore history of cross-border robbery, state response and liminal stage of the community.

Anthropologists have approached the intersection of border violence and culture from a variety of cross-cutting theoretical approaches. Structural functionalists linked violence as functional and embedded with larger social system. Cross-border robbery could be linked at least with 'Zomia Thinking' (Scott 2009), dionysian personality through culture (Benedict 2006), layers of meanings, ritual and cultural knowledge (Geertz 1973, Turner 1970), livelihood strategy, Violence and subjectivity (Das et al 2001). I will try to explore narratives and subjective experiences cross-border robbery as culture, sense of threat trauma and statehood on the margin. Anthropologists take narratives, cultural form of speech, as a key source of analyzing sociality, subjectivity and moral culture. I will employ narratological episteme of storytelling (a fundamental way of giving meaning to experience), case study and KII in a border village in Siraha district.

Contestations: Boundary, Chharka and Bharbhong

The life of the Dolpo community been directly affected in the past 50 years beginning with the closure by the Chinese state of the Tibetan border across the Himalaya and Yarsagunbu (Bauer, 2004). Within Dolpo, people of Bharbhong, where more than 200 people reside cannot use Chyangla Pass, one used by Chharka villagers, but has to go through the hardest 4 day routes from Tingyu. Bharbhong locals’ understanding of their inability to get an access to Chyangay pass via Chharka for their trans-Himalayan Trade to Tibet suggests unequal power relation. Chyangay pass was controlled and closed by the leaders of Chharka only for the locals of Bharbhong, i.e. Punkag, Yarle and Dhu through direct discriminatory practice for many decades. On the other hand, the Chyangay pass has recently led to a new form of conflict which directly affects Bharbhong locals' livelihood. Some Bharbhong's locals were threatened to death by some individuals of Chharka if they use the pass that also forced the locals of Bharbhong to sell salts brought from Tibet cheaply to others at Chyangay pass but using different and harder route of Tingyu to reach the other side of Chyangay pass, i.e. Tibet. On the other hand, Chayngay pass also has an economic impact to the people of Bharbhong with the rise of Yarsagunbu economy. Consequently, tensions over the control of boundary have become evident (Jackson and Molokotos-Liederman, 2015) with the closure of Chyangay pass. In this context, drawing on interviews conducted in 2015-2016 with the locals of Bharbhong, this paper will attempt to explain how the significance of the boundary, drawn by Chyangay pass has subsequently changed vis-a-vis discriminatory practice of Chharka elites. It will also show how such changes have affected their livelihoods and how they are adapting to those changes.

Changing Linkages at Nepal's Himalayan Border: Exploring Livelihoods in the Earthquake-Affected Region of Lapchi

This presentation explores changing trans-Himalayan linkages in Lapchi, an area located on the northernmost fringes of Dolakha District in eastern Nepal, after the earthquake.

Members of the Lapchi community subsist in two villages ranging in altitude from 3,620 to 4,250 meters. Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet, these previously Tibetan villages were exchanged with
villages previously in Nepal in a series of boundary agreements between the new Himalayan neighbors in 1960 for reasons of state security and economic interests. This altered the livelihood of the members of the Lapchi community dramatically. In 2014, the Chinese Army installed a border fence with surveillance cameras. Many people migrated to Kathmandu, leaving only a small number of households in the mountains behind. Yet those living on the country’s periphery are still fairly well connected to areas across the border, albeit on different terms. They are allowed to travel as far as Tashi Khang, the first settlement on the Tibetan plateau, an access point they are dependent on for the purchase of daily essentials.

Eight months after the earthquake struck, walking trails to the lowlands are still blocked by landslides. Due to continuous wrangling among political parties in Nepal no government relief has reached the mountainous community yet. As a protest against the new constitution, a blockade caused by agitating Madhesis (with support from India) has hampered the entering of essential goods into the country and contributed to the needs of border communities being neglected. This only reinforces their marginalization. Upon the local community’s request, however, the Chinese Army temporarily fixed the main monastery in Lapchi and allowed people to store their grain for the winter in Tashi Khang in order to prevent starvation. Given this situation, the presentation also considers the recent shift in state presence and state power in the Sino-Nepalese borderland.

**TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER**

**TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 9.00 – 10.30**

**BORDERLAND REPRESENTATION AND MEMORY**

**Convenor**

Erik de Maaker  
Leiden University, the Netherlands

William Singh Nongmaithem  
Pachhunga University College, Mizoram, India

*Old and New: The Mizo Network*

The international border between India & Myanmar was formally delimited and demarcated following the boundary agreement on March 10, 1967. Yet, the border has not crystallized on the ground, as the border is perceived by the divided kin of the Mizo community as a political marker; not a cultural marker. They define the border as superimposed to the socio-cultural landscape of the Mizo across borderland. As a result, the boundary line cuts across houses and villages, thus dividing them and forcing them to reside as citizens of different countries. Mizo, however continue to maintain strong linkages with their kith and kin across the border.

This paper examines the multi layer relationship among the Mizo across the border. For instance networks between agencies, seasonal migration, cultural ties, memories among the Mizo in Mizoram and in the Chin Hills of Myanmar. The paper will examine the events and facts across the border – trade, literature, festival, lyrics, gospel and popular music that are exchanged and shared among the kith and kin.

On the eve of Indian Independence, there were mixed feelings among the Mizo elders, whether to join India or Burma (Now Myanmar). The paper will examine and revisit the memorandums submitted by Mizo elders to the British Authority and their meeting proceedings on the eve of Indian Independence. The purpose is to compare and examine the networks and ties that exist, at present. This paper will also reflect on field-work findings and narratives of Mizo elders across Mizoram and Chin Hills of Myanmar.
The Recreation of Transcultural Space in Tawang, Northeast India

The paper is an anthropological exploration of the dynamics of relationship between the Monpas and the borderland in Northeast India as a transcultural space. The McMahon line drawn in 1914 took Tawang away from Tibet and awarded to the British India. Later, the Independent Indian government assumed sovereignty over the area. The Monpas who live in the borderland continued to consider their “Mon Yul” (the Land of Mon) as part of Tibet. Trans-Himalayan trade and tribute system to Lhasa continued. However, the Indian army started to take effective control of the area in 1951, and after the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, the Indian government began military buildup and development projects. This meant changes in the networks of movements of people and things, and the progressive incorporation of Tawang into the Indian regime. There is a long history of transcultural interactions in the area, embedded in memories of encounters, conflicts and negotiations between the Monpas and Tibetans, Assamies, and other ethnic groups in the Himalayan region. The border war and modern developments physically reconfigured the relationship between the Monpa people and the space. My discussion focuses on social movements in the last three decades among the Monpas aimed at for recreating and inventing their historical memories of the place. The movement was started in the 1980’s by high lamas for cultural preservation. There, the project was defined as saving Buddhism-based culture endangered by modern developments. Among the lay people, changes in the relationship with different places are experienced physically, through illness, healing and health. I discuss these cases and narratives to explore the recreation of meanings in a borderland space.

Brigitte Steinmann
University Lille I, France

Short history of a forgotten borderland Walungchung gola 1920-2015

Global transformations and regional implications on Nepalese north-eastern borders of Kanchenjunga area (Walungchung gola) from 1920 to 2015: how the ancient conceptions of borders as « international and local migration networks, remote areas with recent introduction of new market and capitalist asian forms of political-economy in the 21st century, together with some historical and geological faultlines which have contributed to isolating the place, can be described and theorized now between Nepal, China-Tibet and India-Sikkim ? We aim at bringing to light some new theoretical points for a global analysis of geo-historical process of structural change on so-called « forgotten » borderlands. Throughout the 20th century up today, the ancient gola of Walungchung with its traditional Tibetan leaders, its territorial administration through a matrimonial system and a "domestic mode of production", which helped also the taxation, political and administrative oligarchic systems of government in the Nepalese Ranas’ time to be implemented, have played a key role in the development of an ancient capitalistic mode of development ? Between the first quarter of the 20th century up today, we shall provide a detailed ethnographic and comparative anthropological analysis, taking into account the co-existence of some local human groups and some international kind of political-economy, related to the transformations of the three great nation-states at the borders : Nepal, China-Tibet and Indian-Sikkim, considered here as a new and wider regional setting of the area of Walungchung seen as a « new center », with a total displacement of the conceptions of « remote areas » and « ancient borders ».
When states and empires endeavoured to make sense of the liminal space at the edges of their authority, naming and categorising its geography and its communities, when they sought to exert exclusive control over its territory and resources, drawing lines on maps and erecting stelae in mountain passes or alongside river banks, they also forged conceptual barriers and distinctions between and among the borderland’s diverse inhabitants. Where the identities of these borderland peoples were perhaps once ambiguous and manifold, their inclusion or exclusion in borderlands newly delineated by encroaching states and empires often transformed and calcified new or old identities, both self-conceived and externally imposed, reorienting relations and exacerbating conflict within borderland societies. The flow of goods, ideas, identity, and authority across these new and often still shifting territorial borders, coupled with new dynamics of resource extraction in the emerging borderland, impacted livelihoods and structured social relations among the borderland’s newly defined constituent groups. Bridging anthropology and history, the four case studies comprising this panel explore different aspects of the processes and ramifications of this exclusion and inclusion of borderland peoples and space in Inner and South Asia from the nineteenth century through the present, particularly where expanding and consolidating national states intersected with imperial formations or their powerful remnants.

Focusing on the India-Nepal border in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Catherine Warner explores tensions between an expansive British definition of “imperial subjects” and the Nepalese government’s efforts to exert authority over its subjects in two incidents which reveal Nepal’s differentiation between its core and peripheral populations. Scott Relyea analyses efforts by Qing China in the first decade of the twentieth century to arrest both material and spiritual flows into the Kham region of ethnographic Tibet in an effort to exert exclusive authority and transform its inhabitants unequivocally into imperial subjects. North of Kham, in the Amdo region of Tibet, Benno Weiner examines local ramifications of efforts by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1940s and 1950s to understand and exert control over a diverse borderland population through the paradigms of class and nationality struggle. Turning south, Rune Bennike explores settlement and alienation in Darjeeling, an early example of global capitalism’s commodification of frontiers, by tracing the historical evolution in global imaginings of the Himalayan borderland from a ‘wild’ space to a wasteland of consumer speculation to a tourist destination.
Company had spent more than fifty years both claiming and disavowing various categories of subjects, including cultivators, political refugees, traders, soldiers, and outlaws.

This paper focuses on two significant moments in the redefinition of borderland subjects in the mid-nineteenth century. First, it will examine negotiations between the Nepali state and the Company and Crown over the 1857 flight of rebels into Nepal's plains. In this instance, the Prime Minister distanced his government from its obligation to protect the lives and property of the people of Nepal's plains where many of the rebels hid. Rather, the government decided to close mountain passes into the Himalayan heartland to isolate the Indian rebels, thus treating the plains residents’ complaints about looting as less important than protecting pahari (mountain) residents. By contrast, in the 1870s the same Prime Minister persuaded the Government of India to bar people from the Nepali plains from traveling to other parts of the British empire as indentured laborers because it undermined Nepalese authority. By comparing these two case studies, this paper examines the simultaneous exclusion of borderland residents from both imperial and Nepali subject status.

Scott Relyea
Appalachian State University, United States

Obstructing Flows and Exerting Authority in China’s Southwest Borderlands: Rupees, Tea, and Textbooks in Eastern Tibet

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, eastern Tibet was a zone of both contact and conflict, a crossroads of Euro-American adventurers and missionaries; Tibetan monks; Qing and Tibetan merchants, and officials. With British India to its southwest, the Kham region, straddling Sichuan Province and central Tibet, coveted by both Lhasa and Chengdu, was also a borderland on the cusp of political and economic change. In the late Qing and early Republican eras, Sichuan officials, informed by absolutist conceptions of territoriality and sovereignty, newly globalising norms introduced in the ideal Euro-American rhetoric of international law, sought to exclude all challenges to their authority in Kham by severing its inhabitants from regional and local influence.

This paper explores their efforts to arrest three interrelated trans-border flows: the material, rupees and tea from British India, and the spiritual, cultural identity entwined with Buddhism from Lhasa. The endeavour was grounded in two misperceptions. First, that Khampa opposition to Chinese assertion of authority was external, fostered solely by the challenge of spiritual authority projected from Lhasa via local monasteries. And second, that Sichuan possessed the ability to arrest such external influence, the absence of which these officials believed would facilitate exertion of absolute and exclusive authority in Kham, thereby legitimating China’s assertion of sovereignty both regionally and globally. The intersection of these misperceptions with the significance of Indian rupees, tea, and Buddhism in forging Khampa identity determined the transformative success of Sichuan efforts to arrest these regional and local flows by minting a new coin, founding monopoly tea companies, and establishing a network of Chinese schools. It was a flawed axiom of state- and nation-builders throughout the world that it was possible—or even necessary—to sever local cultural or spiritual influence on a borderland population to effect its incorporation into the state.

Benno Weiner
Carnegie Mellon University, United States

How to Distinguish Hoodwinked Headmen from Bandits and Spies: Making a Borderland “Legible” in China’s “Early Liberation” Period

The borderland region of China’s southern Gansu and eastern Qinghai provinces has long served as a liminal zone of contact between Chinese and Tibetan cultural and political cores. At the eastern edge of what Tibetans call Amdo, it is home to a multi-cultural, multi-confessional mix of Chinese, Tibetan, Mongol, and Turkic-speaking communities. During China’s Republican Period (1912-1949), the region fell under the rule of the Hui Muslim “Ma Family Warlords,” under whose control the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) later claimed the historical unity between nationalities (minzu) had been severely damaged.
Yet, while inter-community violence was common in “pre-Liberation” Amdo, its underlying causes were often competition over resources rather than expressions of ethnic or religious enmity. As the once-imperial frontier was gradually incorporated into the modern Chinese state, identity could be fluid. Anachronistic assumptions of ethnic and confessional solidarity were regularly transgressed as a variety of local and regional actors contested sovereignty at multiple levels.

When the CCP “Liberated” the region in 1949, Party leaders warned of potential trouble from the region’s Muslim population while cautiously predicting a warm welcome from non-Muslim communities, particularly Tibetans, whom they believed had borne the brunt of the Ma family’s reactionary rule. A series of major insurrections soon erupted across the region. While most were led by Muslim military officers of the defunct Ma regime, several were also led and supported by Tibetan, Mongol, and Kazakh elites.

This paper offers preliminary observations regarding these complex dynamics along the Amdo frontier during the Republican and “Early-Liberation” periods. It analyses how the CCP, equipped with the twin paradigms of class and nationality struggle, sought to render the region “legible,” in part by applying fixed nationality labels to communities in which identity had been more indefinite, while distinguishing potential friends from those considered enemies of the new regime.

Rune Bennike
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Frontier Commodification: Governing Land, Labour and Leisure in Darjeeling

In the contemporary global imagination, Darjeeling typically figures on two accounts: as a unique tourism site replete with colonial heritage and picturesque nature and as the productive origin for some of the world’s most exclusive teas. In this commodified and consumable form, Darjeeling forms part of a wide array of frontier places that are increasingly incorporated into the circuits of global capitalism. In this paper, I argue that Darjeeling is in fact an early and emblematic example of such frontier commodification. By connecting emerging literature on the pre-colonial history of the area with a critical reading of colonial sources, I trace the sleights and erasures that enabled Darjeeling’s transformation from a ‘wild’ Himalayan frontier to a speculative wasteland and, ultimately, to a picturesque and productive ‘summer place’. I uncover the particular assemblage of government and commodification that enabled this transformation and discuss the multiple forms of settlement and alienation, inclusion and exclusion that it has engendered.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 9.00 – 10.30

TRANSBOUNDARY ENVIRONMENTS IN THE HIMALAYA
FLOWS OF RESOURCES, REPRESENTATIONS AND PRACTICES I

Convenors
Christoph Bergmann
Heidelberg University, Germany

Douglas Hill
University of Otago, New Zealand

Chair
Douglas Hill
University of Otago, New Zealand

This panel focuses on the flows of resources, representations and practices through which transboundary environments are produced and reproduced over time between various actors in the Himalayan region. We are particularly concerned with how the just and sustainable utilisation of different kinds of
transboundary environmental goods and services is problematized within active relational fields of social and biophysical processes. We therefore ask how socio-ecological orders that cut across nation-state borders are articulated and strategically mobilized in specific empirical contexts, and what material and political effects these mobilizations have across multiple spatial and temporal scales. The state-centric and technocratic management regimes that prevail in most countries in the region mean that the contestation of the environment continues to be viewed through a prism that privileges the national interest and makes explicit assumptions about the appropriate way to manage resources. This frequently has the effect of reinforcing prevailing power structures, so that marginalized social groups remain disadvantaged. In order to counteract this tendency we are particularly concerned with marginalised epistemologies and ontologies as well as with the agency of the ‘more-than-human world’. The participants of this panel explore various case studies that contribute to a better understanding of how the more abstract spatialities of transboundary policy and law relate to the material and lived geographies of resident groups in the Himalayan region. This will allow us to highlight new eco-political possibilities for managing transboundary environments in and beyond the Himalayan border region.

**Christoph Bergmann**  
*Heidelberg University, Germany*

*Transboundary Himalayan Landscapes: Examining the Political Genealogy of a Re-Scaled Geography*

Over the last decade the concept of ‘transboundary landscapes’ has variously been applied to foster cooperative conservation and resource management initiatives between multiple states in the Himalayan region. These landscapes, which straddle the territorial boundaries of neighboring countries, are defined in terms of ecosystem services and underlying processes that interlink heterogeneous biomes and habitats across upstream-downstream gradients. As an analytical lens the paper uses the case example of the Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KSLCDI), which has been established in the Central Himalayan border triangle between India, China and Nepal. The KSLCDI brings together a diverse number of different ecoregions, including numerous protected areas and sacred natural sites. Following a poststructural reframing of scale in terms of discourse and performance, I historically contextualize the implementation of the KSLCDI as a re-scaled geography. The paper traces the representational and counter-representational practices and performances that various actors have deployed to realize their eco-political agendas in this Himalayan border region. The analysis sets in from the early nineteenth century, when the British East India Company nurtured the creation and maintenance of an anomalous imperial landscape that was characterized by confluent territories and overlapping sovereignties. The paper argues that an actor-oriented understanding of such anomalous spaces, including their extension across boundaries of time, are key to enable a critical engagement with both dominant and alternative ways of seeing, knowing and working with ‘nature’ in transboundary Himalayan landscapes.

**Rohan D’Souza**  
*Kyoto University, Japan*

*All Unquiet on the ‘Great Himalayan Watershed’: India, China, Bangladesh and a Trans-Boundary River*

The mighty Yaluzangbu-Brahmaputra-Jamuna (YBJ) river system is more than a source of political tension between political borders and three national geographies: China, India and Bangladesh. At a superficial level, it appears that the great urgency by China and India to dam several of the flowing arms of the YBJ will bring about the classic crisis of modern river engineering — a zero sum game. A deduction of flow at one point of the YBJ’s sinuous course will bring about an obvious and immediate loss at another stretch of the river system. Volumes lost by some and flows gained by others might become a regular narrative of contention, claims and boiling disagreement. But is this the only possible fluvial framing — the inevitable plot line to explains the fate of every trans-boundary river in times of modern river management? This paper will, however, argue differently. That the current trouble over the YBJ between China, India and Bangladesh is a profoundly definitional and conceptual crisis. Modern hydraulic management
has for too long sought to control rivers as cusec-megawatt flows rather attempting to amplify living-ecosystem-rivers. Once conceptually re-positioned as living-ecosystem rivers, can the crisis of treating the YBJ as standardized volumes, data sets and statistical averages be overcome?

Alka Sabharwal
The University of Western Australia, Australia


This paper focuses on the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary, which is situated on India’s international border with China in southeast Ladakh. Recent scientific conservation discourses concerning wildlife losses in the region assert that the primary environmental threat to the locality is posed by the greed of Changpa pastoralists who accumulate an increasing number of pashmina goats inside the Sanctuary. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the diverse concerns of the Changpa about adjusting their livelihood activities since the boundary war between India and China in 1962. In order to counter the essentialism of the dominant scientific discourses, along with a threat of its ‘ordering’ of the knowledge around human-animal relations, this paper traces the cultural politics of wildlife conservation. On that empirical basis I argue for the need to contextualize the structural constraints on accumulating livestock wealth and the social limits to widespread livestock prosperity in this trans-Himalayan borderland. By bringing to bear critical perspectives into the new pragmatic conservation science, the paper foregrounds the multiple and intersecting fields of power and subjectivities. I propose to focus more strongly on the everyday and lived realities of the Changpa, such as to question the contemporary scientific orthodoxy of wildlife conservation and to appreciate pastoralists’ role in protecting the trans-Himalaya borderlands.

Krishnendra Meena
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Problems of Ethnicity in a Trans-boundary Environment: A Case Study of Madhesis at Indo-Nepal Border

The border between India and the Himalayan state of Nepal has remained an open border since the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950. This circumstance is unique in the context of borders in the global South and particularly so in the context of South Asia. However, in recent years, namely since the change of Nepal’s government to a democratic system, questions of ethnicity have become important. Attempts by the Nepalese elite to formulate a constitution since the election of the Constituent Assembly in 2008 have been rife with apprehensions about equal representation of the Madhesi, an ethnic group close to the Indian population living in the Terai region of Nepal, which forms the border between the two countries. More significantly, people living in the Terai region constitute 51% of the total population of Nepal. Madhesis form 22% of Nepal’s population and through the recent protests after the promulgation of the constitution on September 20, 2015 they are arguing for an adequate representation in the constitution. The two major demands are that of having proportional representation in the electoral system and a proper geographical demarcation of the Terai region wherein the Madhesi’s remain a majority. These questions have a trans-boundary dimension and implications with regards to both ethnicity and geopolitics in South Asia. The paper examines the issues and challenges at the India-Nepal border from a geo-historical perspective.
In the last few decades, the notions of ethnicity and indigeneity have been used by different actors, including indigenous communities living in various parts of the Asian borderlands, in many strategic ways for achieving different ends. This upsurge of ethnic awareness has also spiraled a lot of research addressing ethnic identity formation, ethnic conflict and questions of how ethnicity is understood and used by the indigenous or ‘ethnic’ communities themselves, and how cultural representations of ethnicity have been ‘strategically essentialised’ and ethnic identity instrumentalised for larger political ends.

This panel starts from the assumption that the choice of analytical perspective is not an innocent act and always bears the risk of losing sight of the other issues at stake. In this panel we want to move beyond the ethnic lens and explore the limitations of using ethnicity as an analytical perspective for understanding day-to-day realities of borderlanders in South-and Southeast Asia. We wish to ask which critical issues, significant interactions, conflictual relations, or conflicting interests do we miss out when focusing on ethnicity as the key concern for borderland communities? In other words, which are some of the other issues that are important for the existence and continued survival of such communities besides the question of their ethnic recognition? And conversely, which factors contribute to their continued marginalisation?

In this panel, we invite papers that go beyond the ethnic lens and demonstrate both the value and the limitations of our dominant understanding of borderland communities primarily as ethnic groups. We welcome studies that address some of these new issues, such as migration, livelihood choices, land rights and state policy, that have become increasingly relevant so as to contribute to a broader, alternative and more nuanced understanding of the region as a whole.

Fariba Alamgir
University of East Anglia, United Kingdom / University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Beyond Ethnic Dimension of Land Conflict : Multiple Identity and Land Claims of Bengalis in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh, contestation over land between Hill people and Bengalis is intertwined with politics of identity. My research aims to understand land conflicts between Bengali settlers (who migrated into CHT through government initiated settlement program) and hill people, by focusing on dynamics of property, identity and authority. The rights people have over land as property hinge on how people are categorized. Actors also negotiate over categorization and claim for certain identities in relation to their claims over property in land. Studies conducted in CHT suggest certain identity claims, and processes of identity formation are linked to the hill people’s political and land struggles. Based on my ethnographic research in a Bengali settlement village, I argue, Bengalis also adopt to politics of identity formation as a strategy to consolidate their entitlement over land and to counter hill people’s aspiration to certain identity. It has been found that Bengalis mobilize state actors’ discourses of Bengali nationalism, national interest and indigeneity of Bengalis in Bangladesh (in CHT) to claim legitimacy of owning landed property in CHT. Bengalis not only make land claims based on ethnic identity, they also invoke different identities such as—settlers, landless and Bangladeshi citizen. As citizens of
Bangladesh they call upon equality of all citizens—drawing on universalist conception of citizenship. Therefore, Bengalis settlers’ land struggle is also a citizenship struggle. Besides, there is a religious dimension of politics of difference in CHT. In settlement villages, Bengalis mobilize their Muslim identity to create a space of solidarity, to transcend boundaries between settler/non-settler Bengalis and to create network with Bengali Muslim institutional actor; all of these strategies have consequences for Bengalis to have more control over land. As such, in their struggle over land, Bengalis invoke and mobilize different identities other than their ethnicity.

Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Land and the usurping neighbour: Survival of small tribal communities in Assam

Taking the small Tangsa community living in Upper Assam as an example, I wish to look at the broader question of survival of small tribal communities in Assam, in the light of growing scarcity of land for these groups both due to ongoing in-migration into the area and the loss of land to more resilient and ambitious neighbors as debt repayment or for other reasons. Many of the new settler groups are also numerically larger, better educated and networked, and more pro-active, as a result of which the older tribal groups lose out to them in the competition for scarce economic resources and access to state welfare schemes. Reasons for their discontent and resentment, some of the strategies they adopt for survival as well as the problems in doing so will also be discussed. This will help to understand some of the hard choices these small communities are being forced to make, in the backdrop of the recent resurgence of identity movements and more radical insurgent groups as well as the growth of awareness among many minority groups about the need to write (and sometimes even invent) their histories and traditional practices in order to assert their ‘tribalness’ to make the best of the special provisions for scheduled tribes in the Indian State. The impact of attitudes of the state and other players, in determining the future of these micro-communities will also be discussed.

Éva Rozália Hölzle
Bielefeld University, Germany

‘Moving On’: Agency Beyond Indigenous Activism at the Bangladesh-Assam Border

In the last two decades, indigenous rights discourse in Bangladesh has emerged as a popular frame through which adivasis demanded recognition and inclusion. Furthermore, this discourse rested on a mobilization of hope and buttressed resistance and protest. Today, these strategies have appeared to slowly run out of steam in Bangladesh, and many adivasis have turned to alternative ways of action for securing their existence. One such form of activity is the renouncement of hope. The empirical example through which I will discuss this notion of hope is based on the accounts of the residents of a village situated in northeast Bangladesh, next to the Assam border. Since 2001, the villagers have been put at risk of losing their land due to a nearby ecotourism-park established by the Bangladeshi government. Using the justification of infrastructure development, the park authorities have continuously extended the boundaries of the tourism area, slowly encroaching on the village. The villagers ‘suspect’ these activities will ultimately evolve into a push to take over their land. Simultaneously, they are also restricted in moving freely around and inside the park and negotiations with the local government for an alternative road have failed. Instead of protesting, the residents’ strategy is to abandon their previous expectations and find another place to live. These actions – resting neither on resistance nor invoking a language of indigeneity – can be easily rendered as resignation. How can we make sense of such actions? Moreover, is hope a prerequisite for demonstrating agency? Contrary to common understanding, I will argue that hope and agency are not inherently linked to each other. Rather, one can demonstrate strength by letting expectations collapse. Furthermore, going beyond the frame of indigeneity means not only to detect different articulations of needs but also forms of agency, which deviate from indigenous activism.
Nepal has long existed as a borderland of sorts. Its modern political borders stem from resistance to British forces, and it currently acts as a geopolitical buffer between India and China. The architectural, cultural, and religious heritage of the Kathmandu Valley owes much of its existence to its geographical situation, which allowed it to capitalize on the lucrative trans-Himalayan trade routes. In more modern times, Nepal has acquired a “peripheral” reputation. This occurs politically and economically at the same time as it fuels tourist imaginaries of remote exoticism. Meanwhile, Nepalis themselves transgress borders frequently—e.g., to India, to the Gulf as labor migrants, to Europe and the USA as educational migrants, and to East Asia for business opportunities. At the same time that these various mobilities are structured by geopolitical inequalities and power dynamics, they simultaneously produce new cultural forms at the edges of “Nepali society.” Decades ago, anthropologist Mary Douglas noted the inherent danger and power of transgressing boundaries of all sorts. These papers examine various instances of the productive capacity of real, perceived, contested, and imagined borders. They focus particularly on how practices in such spaces transform, challenge, sustain, and produce cultural forms. How have Nepalis carved out sub-cultural spaces in various types of borderlands, and what do these spaces tell us about patterns of globalization and cultural transformation? Answering these questions in the context of Nepal and the Nepali diaspora challenges many presumptions about transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and the uneven geographies of globalization.

Megharaj Adhikari
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Hanumandhoka Durbar Square: A space of Cultural production in the Border

Individual studies in the Hanumandhoka Durbar Square (HDS) have mainly focussed on the built environment. But the full spectrum of interactions that the HDS has generated has not found adequate attention. The difference in the socio-political and constructed appearance of the HDS is always a contested experience. The spatial contact, transition, and the entanglement of central and peripheral discourses and forms of thought have inspired me to look into the performative sense of the heterotopic existence that is widely circulated in the cultural biography of the HDS.

The spatial dynamics of the HDS can be examined through the lens of performance theory. The performance of the Indrajatra and other ritual forms are designed to resist the oppressive forces and negative stereotypes caused by the transformation from Hindu Kingdom to a secular republic state. The HDS site is a space of cultural performance with its own architectural, historic, religious, aesthetic and archetypal patterns that crisscross genre boundaries.

The HDS is a space where cross-cultural, cross continental and the modes of shifts from sacred to secular dialectics have added more vibrant spatial dynamics and its performativity. The multiple uses of the HDS site make me wary of the variegated nature and political impact of spatial border-crossings in the history of Nepal. The space is active in creating, undermining and reinforcing religious, cultural, and ideological borders. To see the HDS as a heterotopic space is to be aware of ideological and cultural implications and the ways it engages the people in space. I argue is that political agency is inseparable from the spatial configuration of the city and from its shifting patterns of spatial segregation through the cultural performances in the HDS. That precisely forms the core of the phenomenon of border-crossing that merges the anthropomorphic with the cultural forms.
"Missing Links": The Himalayas and the “Indo-Tibetan Interface” in the Western Mind’s Eye.

The idea of “borderland” or “interface” implies a zone of overlap or mixing, a liminal region between two seemingly monolithic and coherent entities. But just as we want to imagine relatively coherent Civilizational Core regions (“Tibet,” “India”), so also do our imaginations enjoy lingering at the borders between regions of imagined coherence. Borderlands become emblems of anti-structure. Many scholars have documented how the Himalayan region—because of its relative political and geographic isolation—has served as a convenient screen on which to project all kinds of Western desires and fantasies for the past few centuries. Disillusioned and disenchanted with developments in the West, counter-culturalists looked to the Himalayan fastnesses as the (hoped for) last bastion of preindustrial human wisdom and dignity. From the “Tibetan Brotherhood” and “Mahatmas” of Mdm. Blavatsky’s Theosophy, to Hilton’s Lost Horizon and “Shangri-La,” to the “Yeti”-hunting craze of the 1950s, Westerners have sought some elusive "missing link" between themselves and their (imagined) pasts that might still exist in the world’s most remote terra incognita. Imagined as liminal borderland, the Himalayas become the hoped-for repository of all that the West imagined itself to have lost.

But how do these imaginings relate to the idea of borderland? This paper looks at how imagined Indias and Tibets get overlaid onto the Himalayas and how the region becomes either more "Indo-" or "Tibeto-" at different historical movements and for different groups of people. It also considers Nepal’s fate as a de facto "tourist Tibet" and the irony of how the (until recently) "World’s only Hindu state" has long been imagined as a "Buddhist country" by tourists.

Thamel as Borderland: The Spatial Production of Cosmopolitanism in Kathmandu

Thamel is a small, global enclave in Nepal. Generally known as the “tourist hub” of Kathmandu, the neighborhood boasts a dizzying array of shops, live music venues, restaurants, and bars. Based on ongoing ethnographic research, this paper will explore the myriad non-tourist dimensions of Thamel, particularly among Kathmandu’s cosmopolitan youth. It will discuss the historical confluence of international tourism, mass media, and urban development that have transformed Thamel over the past few decades into far more than just a “tourist neighborhood.” It highlights the various cultural practices among Nepali youth (and others) in the space, arguing that it is Thamel’s perceived “borderland” character that facilitates, produces, and is produced by these new cultural practices. Attending to these emergent cultural forms among Nepalis situates theoretical abstractions like “globalization” and “cosmopolitanism,” demonstrating the way in which such phenomena emerge in particular (always local) places and as a result of specific practices. In presenting this data, the paper also argues that attending to urban spaces of cosmopolitan production can enrich our understanding of cultural transformation, transnationalism, and urban development. Such an approach takes seriously Nepali youth experiences on their own terms, without reducing them to passive recipients of “foreign” influence.

Kpop, Kathmandu and Camden: Transnational Trends of Nepali Style in Britain

In 2010, when London hosted the second annual Nepali Mela, aunties and elders clapped as beauty contestants paraded barelegged on stage in denim hotpants. Most of the attendants had only lived in Britain no more than five years. By the start of 2014, girls in pinterest worthy PVC skirts sat in the same row as the Nepali ambassador at a fashion show where one of the interval performances was an acoustic cover of the song ‘Your Sex is on Fire’. The show had the diaspora’s photographers, bloggers, vloggers,
models, designers, makeup artists, journalists, animators, and curators amongst many active in fashion and arts related degrees. Selfies were expertly instagrammed while media outlets in Kathmandu picked up images hoping spot the next Prabal Gurung.

Such events will be discussed as sites to explore the contingencies in the consumption, production and promotion of fashion within a Nepali diasporic space in Britain. Building on earlier scholarship of the importance of fashion to Nepal’s urban middle class, the paper will explain how paradoxes in modes of attire in a community demonstrate continuities in concepts of modernity alongside new attitudes brought about by certain conditions of migration and settlement. Fashion becomes disassociated with notions of rebellion, sexuality or loss of culture. These attitudes also foster creativity in individual styles that are developed from particular sets of local and transnational fashion trends. Within these spheres, social media plays a key role between the diaspora and homeland to announce new directions and contests of subcultural capital.

**TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 11.00 – 12.45**

**FORCED ACROSS BORDERS: RESEARCH ON DISPLACED AND RESETTLED SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANTS**

**Convenor and Chair**
Kamryn Warren
University of Connecticut, United States

**Discussants**
Kamryn Warren
University of Connecticut, United States

Sunita Basnet
University of Waikato, New Zealand

South Asia has seen a growing number of people seeking asylum and this trend is likely to continue in coming years. Sustainable livelihoods, reliable community-support networks, and access to specialized services for people with special needs, are some of the main challenges faced by refugees. This panel aims to address the experiences and livelihoods of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced populations that currently reside in or have been resettled from South Asia.

This panel seeks to address multiple points in the trajectory of forced migrations and border crossings in Asia by analyzing 1) the experiences of refugee interactions with the macro level institutions of encampment, status determination, and resettlement 2) the experiences of urban asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced persons navigating host country/society social systems for survival and 3) the experiences of those having crossed out of Asia and into new borders where they maneuver through the task of resettling to life in a third country.

In addition to the above, the panel members will also discuss and address ethical and methodological issues, including the following: who can/should collect documents of forced migration and refugee testimony? Who has the rights to document those collated narratives? Who can be researched? Whose voices should be heard and preserved in archives in the field of forced migration and refugee studies? How can we adequately document and preserve history of forced migration and refugees and through what lens? The members will address these and further issues through the proposed panel.

Sunita Basnet
University of Waikato, New Zealand

*Big feelings, small places: Former Bhutanese refugee women and girls in New Zealand and their sense of community*
This presentation explores embodied feelings and senses of community associated with former Bhutanese refugees, especially women and girls living in Auckland, Christchurch, Nelson and Palmerston North in New Zealand under the refugees’ quota programme. I examine how and in what ways these women and girls experience New Zealand as ‘community’ and their feelings of (not) belonging. The fieldwork is part of my PhD research and was conducted between February and September 2015. The research participants are first generation migrants from Nepal and differ in their socioeconomic status, class stratifications, age and education. A total of 42 in-depth semi-structured interviews with former Bhutanese refugees were conducted. These were mainly with women and girls but also eight men were interviewed. In addition to interviews, I used the other performative methods including five solicited diaries and photo elicitations and five cooking sessions with women and a focus group with four girls aged between 12-15 who sketched images of themselves in their communities. Findings are analysed using recent theorizations in embodied, emotional and affective geographies. First, for participants that have pre-existing social networks/friends in New Zealand this increases their sense of community. Second, participants feel a stronger sense of community when they are involved in informal and frequent neighbour interactions, speak same language, support each other and are involved in neighbourhood day to day activities. Finally, participants in small provincial towns – such as Nelson and Palmerston North - feel a stronger sense of community than those living in the large urban areas of Christchurch and Auckland.

Kamryn Warren
University of Connecticut, United States

The Politics of Who Stays and Who Goes: How Bhutanese Refugees are Navigating the End of Encampment

Humanitarian crises traverse borders and the distribution of aid and resources, the flow of forced migrants and aid workers is arguably one of the most prolific transnational processes of the modern era. Given the current state of the world refugee crisis these forced migrations and humanitarian disasters are unfortunately likely to continue. But what happens when a humanitarian crisis is “over,” what happens to the people who are left behind or relocated entirely?

In 2014 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees removed Nepal’s Bhutanese refugee situation off of the high priority risk list effectively announcing the coming end of an era. Drawing off 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork this paper analyzes the effects of the Bhutanese refugee crisis on both the local host community in Nepal and the refugees themselves. The UNHCR has been in Nepal facilitating aid to the Bhutanese camps for over 20 years and the Bhutanese resettlement effort is nearly unprecedented with over 100,000 individuals now residing in a third country. Now that resettlement is decreasing and thousands of refugees have expressed their desire to remain in Nepal questions arise over the exit strategy of NGOs and INGOs that have brokered their encampment for so long. This research explores how refugees are navigating the end of this refugee cycle and asks questions about the borders (geographic, political, and emotional) that they will cross to get there.

Srishtee Sethi
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Borderlands as transitional zones: Liminality and migration at the western borders of Rajasthan, India

Terms such as borders, borderlands, frontiers and boundaries are used alternatively to describe the space which separates one country from another. They are also considered as ‘transitional zones’ with specific territorial and spatial facets. The India and Pakistan border falls in the same category along with being highly militarised and securitized. The present research looks at identity formation, and citizenship struggles of Pak-Hindu migrants who occupy this contested space at the borderlands. The legal and social assimilation of these migrants involves complexities and negotiations vis-à-vis identity, livelihoods, and everyday practices. The present study is located in Jodhpur, India which has become an entry point for migrants from bordering districts of Pakistan’s Punjab and Sindh province. The role of the state is analysed in restricting such migrant flow and the unequal distribution of state services to this cross-border
community. The flow of people is studied through three phases of migration to understand how they construct meaningful narratives of the place; how they at once establish and transgress the boundaries within which they are able to act as meaningful actors. The Pak-Hindu migrants have neither a citizenship status nor access to State services, and reside as ‘foreign nationals’ in India. A majority of these migrants were historically nomadic and pastoralists, hence they find it difficult to assimilate and re-work livelihood options. These complexities and challenges faced by the community are put forth with the support of oral narratives recorded during doctoral research fieldwork conducted at district court, public hearings, and refugee camp sites at Jodhpur, Rajasthan. This paper tries to put forth an issue for the wider audience to contest the dominant discourse and analyse the policies of the government vis-à-vis people’s flow across Southasian borders as migrants, refugees or simply as displaced persons.

Calynn Dowler
Boston University, United States

Tides of Change: Environment, Migration, and Identity in India’s Sundarban Islands

The final approved text of the December 2015 COP21 Paris Agreement acknowledges growing global concern regarding "displacement related to the adverse effects of climate change," such as rising sea levels and natural disasters. For the Sundarban islands of coastal Bengal, such concerns are particularly salient, as some scholars argue that climate-induced migration is already underway (Bose 2014). Meanwhile, scientists have predicted that much of the Sundarbans may be submerged by water within fifteen to twenty-five years. Despite such dire predictions, few ethnographic analyses of the issue have been undertaken, reflecting the underrepresentation of social and cultural processes in scholarship on climate change more generally. Consequently, we know very little about the experiences of people who live with the effects of rising sea levels, land erosion, saline intrusion, and changing weather patterns in coastal Bengal, or how these phenomena map onto mobility patterns. Drawing on fieldwork with Sundarban islanders and migrants in peri-urban Kolkata, this paper explores the phenomenon of "environmental migration" in relation to the other movements that have shaped the region: Partition migration, cross-border migration during the 1971 Bangladeshi War of Independence, and ongoing economic circulation. While policy and media discussions of "climate migrants" or "climate refugees" in coastal Bengal largely elide these histories and experiences, my interlocutors' narratives reveal that they play an important role in how people understand themselves and their relation to a changing natural world. Thus, this paper seeks to enrich our theoretical understanding of "climate migration" by considering the ways in which it is embedded within the specific cultural landscape of coastal Bengal and therefore layered upon prior histories and experiences of movement.

Aditi Mukherjee
Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, the Netherlands

Negotiating Space and Identity: A Squatters' neighbourhood in the southern periphery of Calcutta

The imprint of decolonisation and associated displacement in South Asia is writ large on the urban landscape and communities of the region. My paper explores the experience of a particular group of urban asylum seekers, the East Bengali Hindu refugees who migrated to Calcutta in the aftermath of the partition of 1947. I focus on the illegal squatters' settlements created by this group of refugees in a specific locality with a high refugee concentration, in the southern suburbs of post colonial Calcutta (the area around the erstwhile Tollygunge municipality). I examine the process of creation of the refugee colonies involving complex negotiations, and capture what it entailed for the landscape and their own identity. My focus is on the politics of space that shaped the refugee dwellings and the entire neighbourhood and the role of the post-colonial state and market forces in the process. I explore the strategies used by the refugees to lay claim to the city’s space at two levels: i) their self initiative in creating a rudimentary infrastructure inside the colonies with local planning practices, and ii) their myriad negotiations with the metropolitan civic authorities for legalisation and development of the settlements. It is argued that the displaced East Bengali Hindu squatters succeeded in achieving rehabilitation and a
connected remarkable urban transformation in the areas they concentrated, and in the process created new social spatial alignment and differentiations at the peripheries of the post colonial metropolis.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 11.00 – 12.45

TRANSBOUNDARY ENVIRONMENTS IN THE HIMALAYA
FLOWS OF RESOURCES, REPRESENTATIONS AND PRACTICES II

Convenors
Christoph Bergmann
Heidelberg University, Germany

Douglas Hill
University of Otago, New Zealand

Chair
Christoph Bergmann
Heidelberg University, Germany

This panel focuses on the flows of resources, representations and practices through which transboundary environments are produced and reproduced over time between various actors in the Himalayan region. We are particularly concerned with how the just and sustainable utilisation of different kinds of transboundary environmental goods and services is problematized within active relational fields of social and biophysical processes. We therefore ask how socio-ecological orders that cut across nation-state borders are articulated and strategically mobilized in specific empirical contexts, and what material and political effects these mobilizations have across multiple spatial and temporal scales. The state-centric and technocratic management regimes that prevail in most countries in the region mean that the contestation of the environment continues to be viewed through a prism that privileges the national interest and makes explicit assumptions about the appropriate way to manage resources. This frequently has the effect of reinforcing prevailing power structures, so that marginalized social groups remain disadvantaged. In order to counteract this tendency we are particularly concerned with marginalised epistemologies and ontologies as well as with the agency of the ‘more-than-human world’. The participants of this panel explore various case studies that contribute to a better understanding of how the more abstract spatialities of transboundary policy and law relate to the material and lived geographies of resident groups in the Himalayan region. This will allow us to highlight new eco-political possibilities for managing transboundary environments in and beyond the Himalayan border region.

Kelly Alley
Auburn University, United States

Obstructions to River Flows in the Borderlands of the Ganga-Brahmaputra Basins

This paper discusses the obstructions to river flows in the Ganga and Brahmaputra basins spanning India, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, looking specifically at the ongoing development of hydropower projects. The paper explores the ways these material obstructions are facilitated or frustrated by citizen and nongovernmental visualizations of them and by the documentation of altered flows through hydrological monitoring and satellite imagery. These borderlands are difficult to access and road infrastructure is weak, so the paper explains the ways that exercises in visualization, documentation and mapping confront and overcome the challenges of terrain as well as the challenges of absent data, undone science, and weak transboundary dialogue. The engineering of river systems across these basins requires a complicated network of canals, diversions and water and wastewater treatment systems and all these components constitute a messy and high maintenance infrastructure that leaks, breaks down or powers off. The paper emphasized that these precarious infrastructures require multi-pronged
engagements by residents, courts, and the many arms of the heterogeneous state to carefully manage energy generation and impacts on critical resources and landscapes in the ecologically sensitive Himalayan borderlands.

Prashant Negi
Jamia Millia Islamia, India

Public Enterprises for Private Purposes: Dams, Development and Corruption in Himachal Pradesh, India

On 8th of June 2014, 24 students and 1 tour operator travelling to the Himalayan town of Manali were washed away when the waters from the Larji Hydro Power Project in Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh (HP), India, were discharged. Proceeding from an analysis of this tragedy, the paper explores the structural complexities of hydropower development and asks whether the dominant discourse of hydropower development as representing a social good holds forth. I specifically address the nature of illegal cooperation within the public and the private sector in HP. This allows me, first, to foreground the local specificities and variations in water management practices and, second, to critically contextualize evolving transboundary development and conservation initiatives in the Himalayan region. The argument is based on an ethnographic exploration of 14 sub-Tehsils across 7 districts of HP, wherein a majority of hydropower projects are located, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Marcus Nüsser
South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany

Transboundary Cryoscapes: Scientific, Cultural and Political Dimensions of Glacier Changes on a Himalayan Scale

Himalayan glaciers and changes in their size and mass balance have recently been at the centre of the global climate change debate. These dynamic and fragile ice bodies have not only become prominent topics of scientific research but have also received international media attention as both indicators and icons of climate change. Despite their crucial importance to freshwater storage and supply, detailed monitoring of contemporary changes only exists for a limited number of these glaciers. Hence, the uncertainties of spatial and temporal extrapolations of local studies on a Himalayan scale remain a research challenge. Beyond their status as physical landscape elements composed of ice, snow and debris, Himalayan glaciers have increasingly become contested and controversial objects of knowledge, susceptible to cultural framing as both dangerous and endangered landscapes. Against this background, the term ‘transboundary cryoscape’ is proposed as a conceptual framework to analyse the emergence of Himalayan glaciers in the context of a dynamic, globally imagined mediascape. The diverse framings are also contextualized in the wider political sphere, so that the glacier debate becomes more and more politicized. The presentation retraces the Himalayan glacier debate in the aftermath of the 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and attempts to put the “vanishing glacier discourse” in a larger picture of environmental change in the Himalayan region.

Douglas Hill
University of Otago, New Zealand

Contesting hydroscapes in Himalayan borderlands

This paper contrasts the contestation of transboundary water resources in two major Himalayan basins to focus on how the environment is discursively constructed and materially contested at a variety of scales in mountainous borderlands. While the Indus and Brahmaputra basins have both been subject to inter-state and intra-state contestation over a sustained period, it is arguable that the pressures to transform the environment has intensified in the recent period. The dynamics of these transformations varies in different parts of the basin but in all cases the dominant ways of viewing and utilising resources in South Asia is currently based on the coming together of discourses of neo-liberal economic integration, on the
one hand, and the state-centric securitised regional geopolitics on the other hand. The rise of India and China as large, fast growing economic entities necessarily entails a transformation of Himalayan borderland regions, since the drive for economic growth entails increasing resource appropriation, particularly as it relates to the harnessing of water for irrigation and energy. At the same time, the acceleration of large-scale hydropower as a driver of water and energy security has occurred alongside a closing of dissent, including in democracies such as India, frequently under the guise of national security. These neo-liberalised spaces of security marginalise alternative epistemologies and ontologies that focus greater attention on localised economies and more-than-human natures. However, recent pan-South Asian movements that seek to open up spaces for alternative understandings of Himalayan development. As the paper demonstrates, while these multi-scalar movements demonstrate considerable potential, they are operating in tightly constrained circumstances that limit their capacity to affect a more sustained and just future for Himalayan borderlands.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 11.00 – 12.45

LOOKING BEYOND ETHNICITY IN SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIAN BORDERLANDS II

Convenor and Chair
Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Discussant
Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff
Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), India

In the last few decades, the notions of ethnicity and indigeneity have been used by different actors, including indigenous communities living in various parts of the Asian borderlands, in many strategic ways for achieving different ends. This upsurge of ethnic awareness has also spiraled a lot of research addressing ethnic identity formation, ethnic conflict and questions of how ethnicity is understood and used by the indigenous or ‘ethnic’ communities themselves, and how cultural representations of ethnicity have been ‘strategically essentialised’ and ethnic identity instrumentalised for larger political ends.

This panel starts from the assumption that the choice of analytical perspective is not an innocent act and always bears the risk of losing sight of the other issues at stake. In this panel we want to move beyond the ethnic lens and explore the limitations of using ethnicity as an analytical perspective for understanding day-to-day realities of borderlanders in South-and Southeast Asia. We wish to ask which critical issues, significant interactions, conflictual relations, or conflicting interests do we miss out when focusing on ethnicity as the key concern for borderland communities? In other words, which are some of the other issues that are important for the existence and continued survival of such communities besides the question of their ethnic recognition? And conversely, which factors contribute to their continued marginalisation?

In this panel, we invite papers that go beyond the ethnic lens and demonstrate both the value and the limitations of our dominant understanding of borderland communities primarily as ethnic groups. We welcome studies that address some of these new issues, such as migration, livelihood choices, land rights and state policy, that have become increasingly relevant so as to contribute to a broader, alternative and more nuanced understanding of the region as a whole.

Eva Gerharz
Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

Indigenous Activism Research as a Means to Move Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Potentials and Pitfalls

While scholars debated the potential danger implied in the usage of categories during the last years, the category of indigeneity has been firmly established. It denotes groups of people who, in concurrence with
the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People conceive of themselves as fitting into the same. This has encouraged activists to organize identity politics around this category and to lobby for collective rights and special policies – a move which has been suspected for bringing about the “return of the native” but also for reaffirming ethnic boundaries - with far-reaching consequences for peaceful co-existence.

In my research on indigenous activism in Bangladesh’s borderland Chittagong Hill Tracts, I focus on the strategies and negotiations at translocal interfaces in order to elucidate the particular ways in which the notion of indigeneity is used and how this relates back to relationships between different actors, e.g. professional activists, local people, politicians and representatives of the state. In the presentation, I highlight the potentials of this perspective for revealing and critically reflecting strategic essentialism in identity politics. Conceiving of indigenous activism in terms of a figuration (Norbert Elias), reveals the relational and processual dimensions of indigeneity and the re-affirmation of its boundaries in everyday politics which do not necessarily coalesce established ethnic boundaries. Moreover, the paper takes up the observation that activism opens a new window of opportunity for tapping into the resources provided by (international) development cooperation. This has encouraged activists to enter into institutionalized arrangements with both, positive and negative consequences. The paper will analyse these processes in a critical way and assesses the potential contribution of an actor-oriented perspective on indigenous identity politics.

Nasrin Siraj
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Looking beyond an ethnic lens at the Bengali migrants in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh

This paper focuses on Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, bordering the Indian state of Tripura and Myanmar. Historically, it is the homeland of twelve distinct cultural-linguistic groups who are at present identified as ethnic minorities. Today however Bengalis, who constitute the largest and most dominant cultural group of the country, also form the majority in the hills. The coexistence of these diverse and unequal groups in the hills has never been featured as peaceful and harmonious. On the contrary, reports by the media and human rights organizations, as well as scholarly accounts, highlight conflict, violence and war in the CHT, particularly between the minorities and the state/army-backed Bengali migrants – viewing their encounters through an ethnic lens.

This paper challenges this approach. It argues that by looking through an ethnic lens local connections are reduced to dichotomous relations between two distinct categories of ethnic minorities on the one side and Bengali migrants on the other. In such a way internal diversity as well as the myriad ways of incorporation across ethnic boundaries are ignored.

I will present and discuss my research findings which were collected during one-year field research (2013-2014) amongst Bengali migrants in the hills, while focusing on their different origins of migration, socio-cultural differences, divergent immigrant statuses, associated rights and restrictions to privileges, variations in labor market involvement, gender and age profiles, settlement locations, and responses of service providers to the neighborhoods. Throughout the paper I will argue that in order to better understand the violent encounters between ethnic minorities and Bengali immigrants we need to go beyond the ethnic lens and include the myriad actualities and particularities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts into our analysis.
The history of European colonization led to different interpretation on borders in countries of Southeast Asia (SEA). Borders issues in most cases led to tensions and open conflict. For example, conflict between Indonesia-Malaysia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, Thailand-Cambodia upon Preah Vihear Temple, and maritime border in the Gulf of Thailand are some examples of bilateral conflicts in the region. Moreover, South China Sea’s maritime borders disputes between China, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia considered as most potential issues creating regional insecurity and instability. Economic interests had increased the tension especially related to the potential of the area that rich in oil and gas resources. Unresolved borders in South China Sea led to overlapping claims that firmly defended to respond the energy crisis. Meanwhile, borders issues between Indonesia-Timor Leste started in 1999, following Timor Leste’s independence. The two countries also facing humanitarian problems especially related to refugee flows in both countries borders towns. After officially gained independent in May 20th 2002, both Timor Leste and Indonesia initiate negotiations to find solution to the problems. On the case of Preah Vihear Temple, both Cambodia and Thailand brought the issue to ASEAN as mediator. However, the regional organization failed to overcome due to the absence of conflict mechanisms in the organization system. Both Cambodia and Thailand also have long-standing maritime border disputes related to overlapping zones in the Gulf of Thailand. In general, land and maritime borders disputes in SEA led to tensions and regional instability. The purpose of study is to analyze diplomatic efforts of conflicting parties to resolve the problems. Another purpose is to study diplomatic effectiveness of each effort. Hopefully the regional stability would be gained through study of diplomatic best practices related to border disputes.

Timotius Triswan Larosa
Indonesian Air Force, Indonesia

Diplomacy on South China Sea Borders Disputes

The overlapping claims and maritime border conflict in Spratly Islands in South China Sea turned as the most potential conflict in Southeast Asia that led to regional instability. The parties involved are China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Philippines and Brunei Darussalam. The most significant reason for overlapping claims is its energy potential resources especially oil and gas. The need to secure for oil and gas resources resulted in overlapping claims that led to open conflict, as demonstrated by the tension between China-Vietnam, China-Philippines, and Malaysia-Philippines. China claims the whole area in 1947, and refuse to conduct a peaceful negotiation. China had conduct a military training in the area, followed by protests from the other claimants. The conflict escalated after the US proposed an initiative to mediate negotiation among the claimants. The US interest on the area indicated on its regional policy. However, US further involvement had been refused by China, argued if the parties of interests should play more important role. China also afraid to internationalize the problem, since US is not the only one interested in the area. Another actor is Japan, with its proposal to establish the East Asia Maritime Forum (EAMF). To overcome the problems, several diplomatic initiatives have been proposed, e.g. ASEAN with its mediating role to prevent the escalation of conflict. The issue was discussed during the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meetings, as well as introducing the proposal of the code of conduct. The initiatives had reduced provisional tension, however, the final resolution had not been reached. So far, diplomatic efforts and negotiation initiatives failed to reach agreement, due to China uncooperative position. China military provocation to other claimants would prevent the issue from being resolved peacefully in diplomatic efforts.
Vivi Pusvitasary
Pasundan University, Indonesia

Indonesia-Timor Leste land and Maritime Borders Diplomacy (1999-2014)

After 24 years as 27th province of Indonesia, the referendum in Timor Leste took place in 1999. The referendum under the auspices of UN, indicated that the people of East Timorese preferred independent from Indonesia. However, the process was followed by series of violence, and instability throughout the region. The tensions led to flows of refugees from East Timor to Indonesian borders town in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara. After officially independent in 2002, the two countries entered a new phase in bilateral relations, by initiating negotiation process. Both countries negotiating bilateral issues related to humanitarian problems, includes human rights violations following countries separation, as well as land and maritime borders. The two countries agreed to establish the Commission on Truth and Friendship to implements all bilateral agreement and to implement reconciliation process. The research aims to discuss bilateral issues between Indonesia-Timor Leste after the 1999 referendum, emphasizing on Indonesian diplomatic efforts towards Timor Leste. The discussion would be focused on humanitarian issues, the establishment of land and maritime borders, as well as reconciliation process.

Amelia Maya Irwanti
Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia

Diplomacy of Cambodia-Thailand on Overlapping Claims Area in the Gulf of Thailand

Cambodia and Thailand have had a long-standing maritime border dispute on the overlapping claims area in the Gulf of Thailand. The maritime dispute occurred when the continental shelf was claimed by Cambodia in 1972 and Thailand in 1973. Disagreement still exists as both parties possess contrasting interpretations of the 1907 French-Siam Treaty and its optional protocol with new concept from UNCLOS providing a new order for the coastal states to claim maritime zone. On the other hand, a massive natural resources deposit in overlapping area is a double-edged sword that can increase tensions between the two countries, and motivate both to seek a suitable resolution to end the dispute and prevent the escalation of conflict. The purpose of this study is to illustrate diplomatic efforts between Cambodia and Thailand to resolve maritime dispute during the period of 1994-June 2015. Cambodia and Thailand have utilized bilateral talks and meetings to resolve the dispute. The research addresses negotiation challenges and outcomes. Preventive and bilateral diplomacy are the main frameworks applied to answer the research question. The conclusion is, bilateral diplomatic efforts between Cambodia and Thailand have helped to maintain the low profile of the maritime dispute and prevented it from escalating into a conflict. Since mid-2015, the status of the maritime dispute stands on the right track. However, both parties should commit to dealing with the disagreement in good faith, and the parties should focus on the positive impact of using multi-track approaches. Public diplomacy should also implemented by providing opportunities for relevant people especially academician and scholars with expertise on maritime law or technology, to participate in forum such conferences or seminars. Therefore, an ideal solution is expected to be found eventually.
### Tuesday 13 December, 13.45 – 15.15

**Cross-border trade in environmental products**  
The dynamics of production networks and livelihoods I

**Convenor**  
Abhoy Das  
Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal

**Chair**  
Carsten Smith-Hall  
University of Copenhagen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, Denmark

Environmental products, harvested in forests and other natural non-cultivated environments, constitute a significant source of income to harvesters, traders, industries and governments in a large number of countries. Such products include medicinal plants, natural and organic cosmetics, flavours and fragrances, functional foods, gums, and timber. Many of these are subject to large-scale cross-border trade that is poorly understood. For instance, rising middle class incomes in China and India appear to drive demand for medicinal plants from Nepal, leading to a huge yet largely undocumented cross-border trade (from Nepal to China, from Nepal to India). This trade involves millions of low income small-scale harvesters, many of which are women, thousands of traders and hundreds of industries; the trade is made up of more than one hundred medicinal plant species, annual traded volumes are thousands of tonnes worth hundreds of millions USD. While anecdotal evidence indicates that the trade has changed rapidly and substantially in the last decade, even to the extent that high altitude rural household total income compositions are radically altered in response to changed livelihood strategies, we know little about the composition of trade, the function and structure of production networks, economic impacts on local communities, or what demand factors are driving the trade as knowledge of what end products are produced is virtually non-existent.

The purpose of this panel is to present recent empirical evidence on the dynamics of the cross-border trade in environmental products with focus on: (i) quantification of product flows, including product-level estimation of volumes and values, (ii) identification and description of the associated dominant production networks/value chains, (iii) assessing the impact of cross-border production networks on rural household incomes in marginalized producer communities, (iv) uncovering evidence of the factors driving demand for cross-border traded environmental products, and (v) understanding the political ecology of cross-border environmental product trade.

**Arjun Chapagain**  
Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal

*A complete cross-border painting? What do we know about commercial medicinal plant trade from Nepal?*

There is a large amount of literature on Nepali commercial medicinal plants. Here we provide a brief overview of the state-of-knowledge on trade in commercial medicinal plants in and from Nepal, based on a review of white and grey literature. While there is some understanding of what products are traded and characteristics of previous transnational production networks, it is also clear that these networks are diverse and dynamic. We identify major research gaps, including the need to understand network governance, trade drivers, and sustainability challenges.

**Dipesh Pyakurel**  
Agriculture and Forestry University, Nepal

*Root it up! Quantification of the cross-border trade in medicinal plants from Humla District, Nepal*
Every year huge amounts of a range of medicinal plant products are harvested in high altitude Humla District bordering the Tibet Autonomous Region. These products constitute a traditional source of income for local households, making up a significant share of income in the trade component of high altitude livelihood strategies. This study (i) identifies all traded products at species level, (ii) quantifies traded volumes and values, and (iii) provides an overview of distribution of profits in the dominant production networks. Data is derived from harvester, trader and wholesaler interviews conducted in autumn 2015; to understand historical changes data is compared to a previous Humla District medicinal plant survey conducted in 1997. Findings show that harvested quantities have significantly increased in recent years, in particular for selected products that display very high price increases. Products are not only traded across the Tibetan border but also south into India. Marketing margin analysis indicates that harvesters capture part of the price increase but also the continued existence of a central wholesaler oligopsony driving down harvester prices.

Niels Fold
University of Copenhagen, Dept of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, Denmark

Out of the dark: Transnational production networks for medicinal plants from Far-western Nepal

A transnational production network (TPN) is the transnationally organised nexus of interconnected functions and transactions by firms and non-firm institutions through which a specific product is produced, distributed and consumed. The TPN framework is conceptually rich but empirically underdeveloped. Here it is applied to the case of medicinal plant trade from the Far-Western Development Region (FWDR) of Nepal to India and China. Analysis focuses on the different types of network configurations and power relations between the actors involved. Particular attention is devoted to relational proximity, i.e. the role of trust in the commercial linkages. Data is derived from harvester, trader, wholesaler, and processor interviews types conducted in the FWDR in autumn 2015 and spring 2016. Data was transcribed, translated, coded, and qualitatively analysed. The dominant TPNs are identified and their distinct characteristics originating from the nature of the product traded, entry barriers, value-creating activities and up-grading strategies are outlined. The findings indicate that collaboration between government institutions, NGOs, and farmer/harvester organisations is required to increase harvester incomes in the face of a string of local monopsonies.

Deep Jyoti Chapagain
Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Henrik Meilby
Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO), University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Suresh Kumar Ghimire
Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Sustainability of harvest of the commercially threatened medicinal plant Aconitum spicatum (Briihl) Stapf in Central Nepal

Cross-border trade of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) among neighbouring countries in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan region is a traditional practice. However, in recent years it has led to indiscriminate harvesting of high-value MAPs due to the growing demand from pharmaceutical industries, mainly in India and China. This development poses serious threats to many high-altitude MAPs. Aconitum spicatum is one such high-value MAP which is threatened due to premature and overharvesting of its underground tuber for cross border trade. A long-term study is being carried out to assess the effect of harvesting on the productivity and life history traits of this species along an elevation gradient in Central Nepal. Stratified random sampling was applied for collecting population data covering three populations along an elevation gradient (3200-3900 masl), each subjected to different levels of harvesting. Harvested and unharvested populations differed greatly in terms of plant density and reproductive traits. Plant density
increased with increasing elevation, indicating higher impact of harvesting in populations at lower elevation. Higher reproductive performance was observed in populations subjected to low levels of harvesting. The present study indicates that the sexual reproductive performance of populations of *A. spicatum* is highly sensitive to human harvesting. The sensitivity, however, varies among habitats and along the elevation gradient. The results of the present study indicate that the sustainability of *A. spicatum* populations largely depend on controlling over-harvesting and premature harvesting of tubers to ensure completion of sexual reproduction and dispersal of viable seeds.

**TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 13.45 – 15.15**

**INTERSECTING HIGHLAND BOUNDARIES**
**VERNACULARIZED MODERNITIES AND LIVELIHOODS RECONSTRUCTIONS**

_Convenor_
Jean Michaud  
Université Laval, Canada

_Chair_
Dan Smyer Yü  
Center for Trans-Himalayan Studies, Yunnan Minzu University, China

This panel stems from an ongoing edited book project with University of Amsterdam Press, aiming to explore the multi-dimensional frontiers of the modern trans-Himalayan region. It will appear in the new series ‘Asian Borderlands’ directed by Willem van Schendel and Tina Harris. A number of challenges currently affecting this trans-Himalayan region are analysed in our book, including environmental concerns and climate change, land grabbing, religious distinction, alternative histories, sense of place, borderlands and boundaries, forms of power, economic niches, gender debates and imbalances, commodification of cultures, urban sprawl, and more. How these multi-faceted processes and trials are resolved greatly impacts the well-being of highland borderland populations and determines in great part how successful – or not – these populations are in adjusting and, one would hope, prospering.

With this panel, we propose one introductory paper and three case studies from the book which illustrate the diversity of human responses to cross-border transformative changes. In the Yunnan-Laotian, the Sino-Vietnamese, and the Burmese-Indian-Tibetan borderlands, our case studies delve into simultaneous destructive and re-creative processes. Here, people are undergoing creative adjustments to trans-regional and global processes, addressing changing social, political, and environmental conditions, and the transregional connectivity of human livelihoods, ethnic differences, and ecological systems.

First, we argue that a fruitful way to analyse these creative adjustments is by delving into how local populations vernacularize – or indigenize as Sahlins proposed – aspects of modernity linked to vectors such as agricultural normalization, livelihoods, trade, and state-peasant relationships in these trans-border contexts. We find that expressions of local agency prove crucial to help borderland populations retain separate identities in the face of persistent pressures towards national cultural integration and market integration. Then we explore how cross-border trade of an increasingly important non-timber forest product, cardamom, is impacting local livelihoods of ethnic minorities on both sides of the Sino-Vietnamese border. Yet not all individuals who are able to, see this as a prosperous band-wagon upon which to jump. Next, we examine how a contested frontier provides the Lao Akha new ways to experiment with a spectrum of social and economic opportunities that proliferating on highly personalized connections. Finally we present a case concerning how the political re-appropriations of a pan-Asian belief system in three neighbouring countries in the trans-Himalayan region generate different social expressions but share their ballast of religious modernism and secularity in the arenas of nationalism, identity reclamation, and social engagement.
Sarah Turner  
McGill University, Canada  

Frontier Trade Dynamics in the Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands: Clashes and Compromises over Cardamom  

Across the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands, rural livelihoods and social relations are in a state of flux. While some upland societies have been cautious about altering long-standing practices that have suited them for generations, others have embraced new prospects offered by agrarian transformations, far-reaching commodity markets, market liberalization, and new infrastructure and communications technology. The dilemmas created by this merging of customary and modern principles and practices are especially palpable in the case of the commoditization of upland non-timber forest products such as black cardamom (Amomum aromaticum).  

Demand for this high-value spice has risen steadily over the last two decades, and many ethnic minority farmers have seized the opportunity to cultivate cardamom under the forest canopy. In Vietnam, cardamom is transported to the lowlands by way of intermediaries, or, more frequently, is exported to China along complex commodity chains that also incorporate cardamom grown in Yunnan’s borderlands. Trade occurs via webs of social relationships, uneven power structures, and differing economic returns among actors who compete to access key resources along the way.  

This paper investigates the power relations among the different actors involved in these complex commodity chains, with a focus on Hmong (Miao) and Yao cultivators and the concerns they face regarding the commoditization of this crop in the borderlands. Competition for suitable land, the need for physical labor of unpaid kin and family members, and a lack of control over market processes mean that cultivators are sometimes abandoning cardamom cultivation when they perceive the risks too great or the returns on their labour too low. Ethnic minority cultivators are savvy when it comes to making a living and do not unduly endanger their culture or identity. This paper examines to what degree they are willing to seize these new borderland trade opportunities, as well as the limits of their engagement.

Yunxia Li  
Yunnan Minzu University, China  

From Poppy Planters to Rubber Growers: The Akha and their Experiments with Opportunities on the Northwestern Lao Frontier  

Fueled by the synergy of cross border trade, investment and development between China and Laos, the Lao State attempts to reassert its domination over the upland areas and population by converting poppy fields into rubber land. However, at the same time, the influx and circulation of money, goods and people resulting from the cross border economic exchanges rework the local social and economic life and produces new forms of sociality. Accordingly, my focus is on the social significance of the interactions between the Chinese and the Lao Akha in Muang Sing and Muang Long. Problemtizing the concept of “frontier”, I argue that this frontier space is of multiple engagements. Significantly, the contested frontier provides the Lao Akha new ways to experiment with a spectrum of social and economic opportunities that proliferating on highly personalized connections. By highlighting the role of aspiration and indigenizing modernity, this examination casts new lights on the Lao Akha’s experience of their livelihood transition from a subsistent-oriented to a market based one.

Dan Smyer Yü  
Center for Trans-Himalayan Studies, Yunnan Minzu University, China  

Trans-Himalayan Secularities: Buddhist Governance and Social Engagement in Modern Burma, India, and Tibet  

This paper is intended to examine the flows of modern secular ideas in the case of Buddhism in the trans-Himalayan region and how their social materialities are manifest in what scholars call Buddhist modernism in the manner of socially engaged canonic exegeses, nationalist movements, and inter-
religious alliance of peacebuilding. It engages with two ongoing theoretical discussions, namely Buddhist modernity/modernism (Queen 2000; McMahan 2008; King 2009;) and the reconceptualization of transregional and trans-Himalayan studies (van Schendel 2002; Michaud 2010; Shneiderman 2010). The former is commonly understood as a co-creation of modern Buddhists in America, Asia, and Europe with a leaning toward giving credits mostly to the West for the birth of modern Buddhism in the context of colonial history, modernization, and globalization. The latter is an interdisciplinary trend for exploring new ways of doing area studies since the last decade of the twentieth century as an attempt to understand the increasingly interconnected world regions and different national units beyond the borders of modern nation-states and/or the ideological/strategic groupings of human communities (Ford Foundation 1997; Schäfer 2010; Sidaway 2011). Trans-Himalayan studies in general and trans-Himalayan Buddhist flows in particular are the cases in point.

In this backdrop, this paper makes two interconnected arguments. First, Buddhist modernity is what the author calls “a trans-historical modernity.” In the cases of contemporary Burma, India, and Tibet (in both geographical and diasporic senses), it is specifically understood as a type of trans-regional, trans-sectarian, and transpersonal secularity with its non-Western historical roots. This Buddhist secularity continues to promote Buddhism as a world religion in a modern vernacular language of humanism (Taylor 2007) and asserts Buddhist ethics and sense of the transcendent in the local arenas of national cause, social governance, and civic movement with a global orientation. Hinged on the case studies of the transregional flows of Buddhist ideas and practices, the second argument proposes trans-Himalayan studies as a type of world-region studies centering upon trans-regional, cross-border impacts of global changes and modern state effects, which thematically engenders common national issues and presents social challenges in different human societies.

Jean Michaud
Université Laval, Canada

Imodernity, Agency And Life Projects in the Trans-Himalayan Region

Jean Baudrillard states that in its popular sense, modernity is mostly understood as a fleeting goal pursued when one tries to escape ‘tradition’. Charles Taylor adds that modernity cannot be a-cultural, and that there is no such thing as a single form of modernity. Indeed, Marshall Sahlins proposed that local cultures worldwide share a fundamental characteristic regarding their dealings with modernity: instead of handing their cultural weapons to the greater forces of modernist change, they ingeniously twist modernity to fit their worldviews. He calls this “indigenizing modernity”. Similarly, Sally Engel Merry argues that when “vernacularizing modernity”, human agents are either replicating the models proposed to them (imitation) or hybridizing them – owning them and altering them.

The consideration of how global pronouncements are invested locally with fresh meaning points to the pivotal notion of agency. Fittingly, for Sherry Ortner, agency is not an entity that exists apart from cultural construction; every culture, every subculture, every historical moment, constructs its own forms of agency. This power to act appears and evolves in context and has to be studied in relation to the circumstances that have formed the acting subjects. In spite of the diversity of discrete local circumstances in a space as large as Willem van Schendel’s Zomia, there are also recurrent themes in the solutions local societies find and implement. There, as elsewhere, Mario Blaser points to ‘life projects’, highlighting an ability by any population to deal creatively with constraints to sustain social dynamism. What this book underscores is evidence of a number of specific signatures to this creative process as it pans out in the trans-Himalayan region.
Close and complex ties bringing together people have been a continuous feature of Asian borderlands and a channel for family and kin relations across centuries. With the rise of modern postcolonial states, new ideologies and governing technologies, and the far reaching effects of global markets, family relations have taken on new meanings and manifestations.

This panel brings together papers examining the changing dynamics of cross-border intimacies and families across Mongolian, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese borders. We look at how the expansion of openness and trade relations, state governing practices, border regulations, and marketization shape family lives across Asian north and south borders. The papers interrogate new channels and infrastructures for cross-border family formations, how these families negotiate border restrictions and state family regulations, deal with societal prejudices, legal restrictions and cultural stereotypes, and make cross-border family lives work. In other words, how do they practice their cross-border familial citizenship?

Coping with isolation: reflections on Vietnamese brides networking in rural China

Sino-Vietnamese marriages have long been a feature of borderlands social landscape. Among them, we can identify various groups. Those Vietnamese women and Chinese men, who live in border provinces, meet during their economic activities, and whose alliances contribute to border trade exchanges. Members of the ethnic groups whose historical and social space set on a large territory that cross the frontiers, continue to marry each other regardless of their nationality. But the largest group of cross-border marriages concerns relatively marginalized individuals who, thanks to various brokers, create mixed families all over China. Although forced marriages are still an issue and many couples do not register and lose legal protection, a large proportion of them agree to stay together. However, Vietnamese women often end up living in remote areas of China. To cope with isolation, they rely on their ability to attract other Vietnamese brides to come and to marry Chinese bachelors around them.

Based on primary material, this paper examines the strategies which Vietnamese women involved in marriages with Chinese rural men implement to sustain a connection with their country, community and family. It also discusses the influence of new technologies on their ability to participate in the establishment of an extended network linking potential partners across the borders, providing help to each other and escaping state agencies control. It aims to moderate recurrent discourse on human trafficking network by showing insiders’ perspective on the social background that brings them into an unprotected life, and the clandestine infrastructure that provides them with a sense of security and solidarity when their citizen’s rights are denied.


Over 15 ethnic groups live across China’s borders with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. The Dai/Tai, De’Ang/Ang, Jingpo/Kachin, Lisu are four main ethnic minorities living across Yunnan-Myanmar border.
Cross-border marriages have a long local history rooted in common ethnicity, language and religions. The government of Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture has faced challenges in governing ethnic marriage practices in the context of the modern nation-state. In 2010, the Dehong local government introduced and started implementing the “Blue Card” policy which provided framework for documenting Registration of Marriage for Border Residents in Cross-border Marriages. This policy represents an important step towards legalizing the status of marriage immigrants in China, and providing a mechanism for documenting previously undocumented cross-border marriages. This paper will provide a critical assessment of this policy and challenges in its realisation.

Jinghua Yang
Nanjing University, China

Ethnic Marriages and Business Partners on the Sino-Vietnamese Border

Based on the fieldwork in the Pingxiang city on the Sino-Vietnamese border and three ethnic villages in Ningning county, this paper examines different dynamics and forms of cross-border marriages in the border urban and rural areas. The paper discusses different models of and channels for cross-border marriages, their social, ethnic and demographic characteristics, and various expressions in the urban and rural areas. The discussion draws attention to the challenges which the cross-border marriages pose to the border management and immigration governing regimes. The paper identifies the shortcomings and contradictions in the formulation and implementation of the border management and immigration policies.

Gaëlle Lacaze
Sorbonne University, France

The “women’s flight” from Mongolia

The feminization of the international migratory flows is notorious in numerous of Central and Oriental Asian countries and, in particular in the postsocialist world. Temporary or permanent migration is a solution to escape their exclusion from the access of the economic resources, their objectification in the economico-sexual exchanges and their banishment in the statutes of wife and mother by the nationalist revival. Itinerant or migrant and foreigner, they become the architect of their own fortune. Kazakh and Mongolian women’s privileged destinations are South Korea and Japan. The western countries are less accessible to them. In the analysis of these migratory routes, we have to admit that the cross-border movements to China and the migrations towards South Korea, two countries knowing a women’s deficit, concern especially women who migrate via the marriage with a foreigner and the prostitution. These two routes are often connected when they serve as an instrument for social and economic emancipation in a migratory process. My presentation examines these mobilities and restores them in the postsocialist context where a patriarchal nationalism faces a "crisis of the manliness " and a "flight of the women".

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER, 15.45 – 17.15
CROSS-BORDER TRADE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCTS
THE DYNAMICS OF PRODUCTION NETWORKS AND LIVELIHOODS II

Convenor
Abhoy Das
Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal

Chair
Niels Fold
University of Copenhagen, Dept of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, Denmark
Environmental products, harvested in forests and other natural non-cultivated environments, constitute a significant source of income to harvesters, traders, industries and governments in a large number of countries. Such products include medicinal plants, natural and organic cosmetics, flavours and fragrances, functional foods, gums, and timber. Many of these are subject to large-scale cross-border trade that is poorly understood. For instance, rising middle class incomes in China and India appear to drive demand for medicinal plants from Nepal, leading to a huge yet largely undocumented cross-border trade (from Nepal to China, from Nepal to India). This trade involves millions of low income small-scale harvesters, many of which are women, thousands of traders and hundreds of industries; the trade is made up of more than one hundred medicinal plant species, annual traded volumes are thousands of tonnes worth hundreds of millions USD. While anecdotal evidence indicates that the trade has changed rapidly and substantially in the last decade, even to the extent that high altitude rural household total income compositions are radically altered in response to changed livelihood strategies, we know little about the composition of trade, the function and structure of production networks, economic impacts on local communities, or what demand factors are driving the trade as knowledge of what end products are produced is virtually non-existent.

The purpose of this panel is to present recent empirical evidence on the dynamics of the cross-border trade in environmental products with focus on: (i) quantification of product flows, including product-level estimation of volumes and values, (ii) identification and description of the associated dominant production networks/value chains, (iii) assessing the impact of cross-border production networks on rural household incomes in marginalized producer communities, (iv) uncovering evidence of the factors driving demand for cross-border traded environmental products, and (v) understanding the political ecology of cross-border environmental product trade.

Carsten Smith-Hall
University of Copenhagen, Department of Food and Resource Economics, Denmark

Sustainability of harvest of the commercially threatened medicinal plant Aconitum spicatum (Briihi) Stapf in Central Nepal

Cross-border trade of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) among neighbouring countries in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan region is a traditional practice. However, in recent years it has led to indiscriminate harvesting of high-value MAPs due to the growing demand from pharmaceutical industries, mainly in India and China. This development poses serious threats to many high-altitude MAPs. Aconitum spicatum is one such high-value MAP which is threatened due to premature and overharvesting of its underground tuber for cross border trade. A long-term study is being carried out to assess the effect of harvesting on the productivity and life history traits of this species along an elevation gradient in Central Nepal. Stratified random sampling was applied for collecting population data covering three populations along an elevation gradient (3200-3900 masl), each subjected to different levels of harvesting. Harvested and unharvested populations differed greatly in terms of plant density and reproductive traits. Plant density increased with increasing elevation, indicating higher impact of harvesting in populations at lower elevation. Higher reproductive performance was observed in populations subjected to low levels of harvesting. The present study indicates that the sexual reproductive performance of populations of A. spicatum is highly sensitive to human harvesting. The sensitivity, however, varies among habitats and along the elevation gradient. The results of the present study indicate that the sustainability of A. spicatum populations largely depend on controlling over-harvesting and premature harvesting of tubers to ensure completion of sexual reproduction and dispersal of viable seeds.

Mariève Pouliot
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

The trade in high altitude gold: estimating trade volume and value of yarsagumba from Nepal
Price increases for selected high altitude medicinal plant products, driven by cross-border demand, has provided communities with increased incomes from wild plant harvesting, reviving the trade component in high altitude livelihood strategies that has suffered from a combination of Tibet-Nepal border closure (restrictions on movement of people and livestock), loss of competitive advantage with the ever-improving infrastructure in both north (Tibet) and south (Nepal), and restrictive trade regulations. Yarsagumba (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is an extreme high value medicinal product which has seen massive increase in its cross-border trade over the past 15 years. This paper estimates the range of current annual trade levels from Nepal. Data was collected through a nation-wide survey, conducted in autumn 2015 and spring 2016 using standardized harvester, trader and wholesaler questionnaires, and interviews with regional wholesalers in India and China. Findings document recent price increases and record-high trade volumes, indicating the need for development and application of measures to sustain the resource-base while maintaining harvester incomes.

Mukti Ram Poudey
Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Henrik Meilby
Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO), University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Suresh Kumar Ghimire
Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Variation in life history traits of a commercially threatened medicinal herb, *Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora*, along an environmental gradient in alpine Himalaya, Nepal

*Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora* is a high-value medicinal herb, belonging to monotypic genera and native to the Himalayan region and China between 3500-4800 masl. It is highly threatened mainly due to overharvesting of its underground rhizome for trade. The rhizomes are collected by local harvesters throughout the Himalayas and air-dried rhizomes are traded along well-established marketing chains from the alpine meadows to cities in India and China. The harvesting pressure at local level is depending upon the level of demand across the trans-boundary trade. Development of a strategy for sustainable management of this species is therefore urgently needed. Management requires an understanding of the variation in life history traits and population performance under different environmental conditions and harvesting regimes. In this study, we compared life history traits of *N. scrophulariiflora* between a relatively undisturbed (protected from commercial harvesting) and a highly disturbed (open for commercial harvesting) site in Nepal Himalaya. In each site, three populations were studied along an elevational gradient (3800-4800 m). Plant density was significantly higher in populations at the relatively undisturbed than at the disturbed site but the variability in plant density among populations within each site was less pronounced. Populations at the relatively undisturbed site were stronger in terms of sexual reproductive performance, with higher number of intact fruit and seed set per individual. Moreover, elevation showed significant negative correlations with fruit and seed set, and seed mass. The results of the present study indicate that *N. scrophulariiflora* populations at sites which are not protected from commercial harvesting suffer from reduced reproductive fitness and that the impact of harvest on such traits increases with increasing elevation.

Tuesday 13 December, 15.45 – 17.15

Maritime Borderlands and Cultural Circulations in Southeast Asia

Convenor and Chair
Mohd Anis Md Nor
Nusantara Performing Arts Research Center, Malaysia
This panel examines cultural flows across Southeast Asian maritime borderlands. It focuses on several genres of music and dance for their power to express social identities and to retell lost histories and the changing circumstances of local populations. Our case studies from across the region—from the Sulu and Celebes Seas, to the Andaman Coast of Malaysia and Thailand, to links between Cham and Malay-speaking worlds—unite around a common theme of cultural circulations that have, to various degrees, been affected by evolving political and social realities over recent decades or centuries. Our findings speak to the types of strategies that local communities inhabiting these borderlands have used to navigate pressures from larger hegemonic entities, and draw attention to efforts in the present day, often those realized by grassroots movements, in which recognizing and promoting shared culture has become a potent means to revive or revisit lost connections among erstwhile neighbors and kinfolk.

Bernard Ellorin
California State University Dominguez Hills, United States

Transcultural Sangbai: The Sama-Bajau Music Industries of Maritime Southeast Asia

Transcultural Sangbai is a comparative study on the modern musics of the Sama-Bajau, a sea-faring ethnic minority found in Eastern Sabah, Malaysia and the southern Philippines. In situ performances in the kampung of Semporna District Sabah, Malaysia and the barangay of Luzon, Philippines reveal similar and distinct musical trajectories revolving around the ubiquitous performance of the sangbai — an improvisatory dance vocal music genre — practiced by communities receiving governmental and non-governmental sponsorship. Overall, this study interrogates their musical interaction with two hegemonic majorities: 1) bumiputera Malay and 2) lowland Christian Filipinos. For this paper, I problematize both Malaysia-based and Philippine-based Sama-Bajau efforts to valorize their cultural identity through the establishment of grassroots and commercial music industries: in the case of the former, by providing musical entertainment exclusively for the purposes of building and maintaining communitas away from hegemonic pressures; whereas for the latter, by encouraging assimilation into the mainstream land-based culture. Using Artur Simon’s concept of musical syncretism for Southeast Asian musics, John Connell and Christopher Gibson’s transnational soundscapes, and Bruno Nettl’s “tune family” concept, I demonstrate how the fluidity of sangbai, as performed in varied contexts, contributes to the study of the trans-cultural flows of music, and how it is used to assert an ethnic identity in the Sama-Bajau diaspora.

Lawrence Ross
University of Malaya, Malaysia

A Seventeenth-Century Cham Musical Memorial to Malays Lost at Sea

This paper examines an historical record of seventeenth-century connections between Champa and the Patani Malay kingdoms preserved today in a musical repertoire of Vietnam’s Cham minority. According to oral and written traditions dating to the Panduranga period, Champa’s celebrated king, Po Romé, returned home from a sea voyage to the Malayan Peninsula, accompanied by a delegation of Malays. But nearing arrival, his flotilla was mistaken for pirates and attacked, resulting in the tragic death of the Malay contingent. Oral tradition relates that Po Romé directed that their deaths be memorialized in music, which remains extant as a repertoire comprising fourteen tunes, each named separately for one of the lost souls. This repertoire is still performed by Cham in Ninh Thuan Province today, and appears exclusively within the non-calendric Rija Dayaup ceremony. It is led by a musical priest, called a maduen, and accompanied by the instrumental gineng ensemble, consisting of frame- and long-drums, a shawm, and gong; — instruments believed to have arrived via the Malay world during the same period. Drawing primarily from ethnographic and musicological fieldwork conducted in Ninh Thuan, Vietnam, in recent years along with comparative analysis of the music of similar ensembles found on the Malayan Peninsula, this paper sheds light on how the Rija Dayaup repertoire functions as an historical monument that chronicles a pivotal period in Cham-Malay relations; one that saw a broadening of shared political, religious, and culture ties, and which deeply influenced the subsequent formation of modern Cham identities.
Mayco Santaella  
Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Toli-toli Sonic and Movement Traditions: Present-Day Cultural Heritages Linking Modern “Borderlands” of Indonesia, East Malaysia and the Southern Philippines

Toli-toli refers to a city, a language, as well as the ethnic identity of a community located in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The region, which faces the Celebes Sea, is in close proximity with, and has historical connections to, east Borneo (including parts of Malaysia and Indonesia) as well as the southern Philippines. Linguistically, the Toli-toli language is part of the Tomini (8) – Tolitoli (2) subfamily (Himmelmann, 2001), manifesting both differences with a larger number of Tominic languages as well as close links to the southern Philippines. With regards to ethnicity, Toli-toli are connected to the Sulu Sea through royal kinship relations, as well as through traditional movements/circulations of people and their musical cultures. Departing from a triadic concept that manifests geographic, linguistic, and cultural links to the historical Sulu Zone (Warren, 1981), this paper posits Toli-toli’s prominent position in Sulawesi as central within the region, yet one that is presently fragmented by national boundaries. In this sense, the conceptualization of these locales as “borderlands” may be viewed as a modern phenomenon of the nation-state era, which negates important historical maritime links among its now-marginalized communities in this once-vibrant region. Through analyses of Toli-toli music—including its gong-row traditions, structured movements, and ceremonial customs—as well as additional geographical and linguistic context, this paper focuses on cultural links that presently connect the Toli-toli region to the historical Sulu Zone. It demonstrates how Toli-toli city, once a strategic commercial port and hub for shared culture within the Sulu Zone, today reflects a historical “mari-cultural evolution” (Andaya 2006) for the region, and how local government efforts to establish maritime trade routes with Sabah and Mindanao (referred to as TOTATA and TOSAMIN) attest to the current relevance of revisiting cultural links within the region.

Mohd Anis Md Nor  
Nusantara Performing Arts Research Center, Malaysia

Yangong and Changgung: Dances of the Thai-Malaysia Borderland Communities

The present-day Thai-Malaysia border, founded in the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty, gave Thailand four of its southern provinces (Satun, Songkhla, Yala and Narathiwat) and Malaysia its the four northernmost states (Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Kelantan). In the 1970s, to curb smuggling, Malaysia and Thailand constructed walls along their common border—mostly between Perlis/Kedah and Satun/Songkhla—and finally agreed in 2001 to construct a single wall located just inside Thai territory. Despite these efforts, these new physical divisions did not completely eliminate cross-border exchanges, demonstrated by the continued sharing of a dance and music between people in Satun and Perlis. Known as Yangong or Changgung, this social folk dance and music originating from this region, continued to flourish in different guises in these two border states. Whereas Yangong in Satun remained part of a larger folk repertoire known as Rong Ngeng, and was performed in the ritualistic local folk theater, Mak Yong Laut, Changgung in Perlis underwent new developments during the 1970s when the Malaysian government designated it as that state’s official dance and music. In due course, this government intervention led to the invention of newly structured dance movements and music repertoire. Yangong in Satun and neighboring parts of Southwest Thailand, in contrast, went through more organic processes whereby it was recast by locals into their contemporary repertoires. This paper looks at the consequences of the modern Malaysia-Thailand border on the Yangong/Changgung social dance and music of Malays in Satun and Perlis from the 1960s to the present, and how these forms have co-existed in spite of the changes and evolutions that took place across this borderland region.
Myanmar borders and Southern Thailand have long experienced border militarization. Both sites are a product of nation-state building projects which attempt to suppress ethno-religious conflicts and subjugate insurgencies in the border areas. As sites of militarization, they are also sites of violence, resource extraction, human rights abuse, mobility of people and ethnic and cultural exchanges. The panel considers the effects of border militarization on Thailand and Myanmar borders through the cases of the Karen National Union, the Shan State Army-South, Thailand’s Deep South and Myanmar military’s infrastructure projects. The panel looks at how today border has become a war zone in many new ways and how border militarization has affected communities and families on both sides tremendously. Border militarization has also fundamentally transformed the borderlands. The spread of militarization of the borderlands in this region urges us to address the larger underlying economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of each different border community carefully.

Amporn Jirattikorn
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Militarization of the Borderland: The Shan State Army at the Thailand-Myanmar Border

The Shan armed struggle against the Myanmar government has been waged for more than half a century. Myanmar political reforms initiated after 2010 election, however, changes the politics of the Shan armed movement. Today, the two Shan armed organizations have signed the ceasefire agreements with the central government. In the face Myanmar military peace process, how has the Shan militant nationalism survived and remained relevant? The paper discusses the current dynamics of Shan armed resistance, focusing particularly on the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), the largest of the Shan armed organizations. It attempts to understand how the SSA-S adapts itself in response to changing political landscape of Myanmar. As over the past decade, the SSA-S has shown its intensive use of cross-border movement, the paper analyzes how in this borderland of Thailand and Myanmar the SSA-S can draw support across the border, gain access to technology, and influence the target population with propaganda.

Robert Farnan
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Ceasefire Assemblages: Infrastructure Development, Counterinsurgency, and Civil War in Myanmar

This paper examines the relationship between infrastructure and counterinsurgency in Burma. Infrastructure developments, like road and rail building, have been part of pacification campaigns for decades but have rarely been theorized as components in counterinsurgency. Recent scholarship on Burma highlights how securitization and development during ceasefires actively appropriates and channels the flow of capital and people through resource extraction contracts with regional commanders and borderland elites, thereby extending the state’s reach into ungoverned territories. Considering Burma’s fragile transition from dictatorship to nominal democracy, and simultaneous state-building exercises in the borderlands through military-private partnerships, this paper recognizes infrastructure building as a technology central to Naypyidaw’s counterinsurgency strategy and governmentality of transition. The connection between land grabbing and resource extraction, referred to as ceasefire capitalism, has been examined in political ecology. However, this paper treats infrastructure not as a
passive foundation of politics but as an agential component integral to political mobilization. Investigating the relationship between infrastructure and development as war-making, this paper examines: the social-material entanglements constitutive of political agency and subjectivity, the affects of uneven development in forming sites of public struggle, and the role of infrastructure in Burma’s transition towards democracy and integration into the global political economy.

Samak Kosem  
Center for ASEAN Studies, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Bad Border: Military’s Perception towards Violence Saga in Thailand’s Deep South Communities

This study focuses on the Thai armies’ perception towards the violence in Thailand’s deep south border after more than a decade of the massacres in Tak Bai, Naratiwat Province and Krue Se mosque, Pattani province in 2004. During the past decade, physical and violent assaults continually occurred in the three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, along with Songkla Province’s sensitive districts. Methodologically, the paper is based on my direct experience as a drafted soldier living with other “Thai” navy officers at one marine unit in eastern Thailand’s Chonburi province in 2012 as well as participant observation and interviews with local soldiers in the deep south between 2014 and 2015. I argue that most of the Thai soldiers, as both insiders and outsiders of the deep-south communities have negative perceptions towards three southernmost border provinces, thereby constructing an image of the border provinces as “culprit” or "phu rai" in Thai, with the ethnic-religious association with the predominance Muslim communities in border provinces. Thai nationalist ideology embedded in Muslim fear is the core mentality of these soldiers based in the deep-south provinces. “Southern bandits” is the term used to call these insurgents. As border militarization has always had an impact on communities and families in the militarized zone, ordinary villagers in the Deep South have been impacted by the Thai military control which has become intense after the 2004 massacres. The rebels in the deep south also resent the fact that the central government has failed to culturally integrate the divested region. In this paper, I also explore how social actors have been living in the shadow of borderland characterized by endless violence and contested notions of Thai nationalism and being a Muslim in the border.

Karin Dean  
School of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia

Underlying political dimensions of the “Kachin conflict” in Northern Myanmar

The armed conflict in Kachin state border areas with China remains one of the few terrains of on-going fighting in Myanmar in 2016. The protracted armed resistance by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) started in 1960, retained to a ceasefire between 1994—2011 and flared up again after President Thein Sein came to power. This armed resistance (as many others by the ethnic nationalities at Myanmar’s borders) has been designated as ethnic conflict, ethnic insurgency, ethnic strife or just ethnic issue, and the antagonists constructed as the state versus ethnic insurgents. The presentation argues that the key issues prolonging the “Kachin conflict” are rather related to the (control over) space. It discusses, based on empirical research, the fiercely contested territorialities, contending security fixations and different understandings of peace at the Kachin border spaces. These all suggest political dimensions to the on-going border militarization.
This panel focuses on the ways in which stories, legends and myths illustrate, substantiate and challenge the ways in which people living in Asia’s borderlands imagine, live out and narrate their relationships with places of residence, origin or longing. Stories, legends and myths which narrate and project this relationship may relate to one or more of the following themes: mythical origins, interactions between humans, spirits and nature, historical or semi-mythical events, migrations across space, memories that place and trace the dead and the use of resources from hunting, gathering, the management of plants and animals to agriculture, mining and hydro dams.

Local narratives always interact in complex ways with those at regional, national and international levels, and this is arguably particularly relevant in a borderland context where the historical relationship between local people and the state to which they belong has often been distant. We are particularly interested in exploring the ways in which local narratives expressed through stories, legends and myths relate to rights to land and resources in borderland contexts. The panel will explore and compare the different ways in which these interactions between narratives at different levels of scale play out across a variety of borderland areas. This includes contexts of increasing contestation between narratives where states territorialize, borders harden, borderlands are opened up for neo-liberal exploitation, and customary laws and national and international laws conflict.

In this panel we want to bring out common themes relating to the role of stories, legends and myths in constructing relationships between borderland peoples and states, notably in relation to access to resources; and explore the particular significance and roles of different types of stories and legends in constructing that relationship. In particular, papers explore how stories, legends and myths: (1) ‘locate’ people and advance claims; (2) create social and cultural boundaries, include and exclude; and (3) travel, circulate and transform. We explore stories and legends through a range of innovative and creative approaches, located in distinct disciplines, which are based on original research.

Frances O’Morchoe
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Lahu Origin Stories and Border Contestation between China, Burma and Siam

The Lahu people have a rich tradition of myths and stories about their origins, migrations, and the origins of ethnic differences. Historians have only debated the importance of these myths in the Chinese context, where the majority of the Lahu currently live. There have been disputes over the role of Chinese scholarship in nation-building, as some historians of the Lahu, including Ma Jianxiong, argue that Chinese scholars propagate incorrect stories of the Lahu’s northern Chinese origins as well as a class struggle narrative of Shan / Lahu interaction. Anthony Walker, another authority on the Lahu people, affirms the Chinese research on the origins of the Lahu in the plains of northern China. He also records the history of the Lahu migration into Burma beginning in the early nineteenth century. I plan to extend the debate on Lahu origin stories over the border into Burma. My sources will be Lahu folk tales recorded by early
Christian converts and missionaries in British Burma, and by Chinese folklorists and anthropologists in Yunnan. By comparing the Lahu origin stories and Lahu stories of migration that were collected in British Burma in the early twentieth century to those origin stories told by the Lahu who remained in Yunnan, I will trace the effects of developments on the Siam/Burma border on the Lahu who moved, and how origin stories have evolved over time with the changing needs of people to locate themselves, differentiate themselves from their new neighbours and perhaps claim the historicity of their way of life.

Valerie Mashman
Unimas Universiti Sarawak Malaysia, Malaysia

The Story Of Lun Tauh, Our People: Narrating Ethnicity Across Borders In The Kelabit Highlands

Through analysis of an oral narrative delivered in a Kelabit longhouse in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo, this paper discusses two distinct ways of understanding ethnicity. The narrative contrasts the concept of lun tauh, ‘our people,’ a fluid notion of inclusive identity acquired through historical processes of peacemaking, alliances and migration in the absence of territorial borders, with the reified, exclusive ethnic construct of ‘the Kelabit’ which confines identity to an ethnoculturally homogeneous population associated with a bounded territory. The paper discusses how these two contrasting but co-existing notions of ethnicity have emerged and how they relate to past and present political concerns and conditions influencing the longhouse population. It suggests that ethnicity in Borneo has varied historically and is intrinsically contextual, and that the ethnohistories of Borneo societies are more complex than often retrospectively assumed.

Vibha Joshi Parkin
University of Tuebingen, Germany

Myth, Legends And Unforeseen Consequences—The Naga In The 21st Century

The Angami of southern Nagaland have over the last four generations almost entirely converted to Christianity. Their myths and legends have been awarded the formal status of “intangible cultural heritage”, alongside such tangible instances as monoliths, rocks, trees and material culture. It is argued that this may be having unforeseen consequences for presentations of self and assertions of territorial dominance in the community. Legends and myths regarding migration and village foundation may bring together cognate groups under one umbrella clan term. They may also sometimes distinguish one group or clan from another, be used to form alliances outside the village, or justify adoption of outsiders into a clan, even non-Naga or spirits. Recent memories of migration refer to groups comprising members of exogamous moieties/clans breaking away from a parent village, searching for suitable land and setting up a new village. While oral narratives of this micro-migration retain the link with the village of origin, the new village over generations develops distinct rituals, material culture and dialectical variation. This local-level cultural diversification is increasingly at odds with the over-arching, more formal declaration and narrative of intangible cultural heritage.

WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER, 9.00 – 10.30

BORDER ISSUES ALONG WITH THE HINDU KUSH AND HIMALAYAS

Convenor
Yuanmei Yao
The Cold War Study Center, East China Normal University, China

Chair
Liping Xia
The School Of International Studies, Tongji University, China
It exists several border disputes along with the Hindu Kush and Himalayas, such as the Af-Pak border dispute, the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Indo-Nepal border and so on. Why? What's its influence towards the local people's livelihood, the Nation’s administration and the games among nations? How do the cross-border people play the game with national governments to keep their freedom and independence? To answer these questions, the panel, which comprises of four scholars, will explore the border issues extensively. Dr. Yuanmei Yao will present her latest paper, The Black Hole in the Af-Pak Border: Its Making, Influence and Future. Ph.D candidate Huli will present her deep research about how the Durand Line came out from the games the Afghan Kings played with Britain and Russia in the 19th century and its further influence. Dr. Xuliang will deliver his paper about the evolution of China’s policy towards the Indo-Nepalese border dispute. Dr. Jagannath Panda will present his paper, Core vs. Contiguous: The China-India Boundary Dispute. The papers in the panel are mainly finished on the basis of archives and transdisciplinarity.

Yuanmei Yao
The Cold War Study Center, East China Normal University, China

The Black Hole in the Af-Pak Border: Its Making, Influence and Future

The Black Hole in the Af-Pak border refers to the big security loophole along with the Af-Pak frontier because of the hopeless-to-fill-up gap between the reality and legality of the Durand Line, and it is a natural shatter for anti-governmental force. It origioned from the Scientific Frontier British built in the North-West frontier of India since 1860s, and took in shape while Pakistan’s born with the Durand Line as the Af-Pak international border. The Black Hole has generated profound influence. It has led the Af-Pak border dispute to break out, and both the Afghan Government and the Pakistani Government tried to take advantage of the gap to support the other’s anti-governmental force to contain the other, hence, there rose several kinds of anti-governmental forces, such as the Pashtun seperatistm, Baloch seperatists, Af-Taliban, Pak-Taliban etc.. And also it let the Soviet Union and America to be trapped into the Afghanistan wars. At present, it is influencing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, embodying into the route-planning arguments. Hence, it is necessary to explore the Black Hole deeply.

Li Hu
Peking University, China

The Making of the Durand Line: Rahman's tactics to Play with Britain

Since 1860s, British tried to build the Scientific Frontier in the Indo-Af frontier, which they planned to forward the traditional border from the lower Indus River to the upper that could protect India scientifically. Firstly, British implement the policy by force, but they met resistance from Pushuts who were called “Hornets”. After the failure in the 2nd Anglo-Afghan war, British decided to get the Hornets’ nest wisely, which they planned to help Abdur Rahman to become the Afghan King, then to ally with him, then to force him to accept a map-border line through a treaty, and then to demarcate it. After Rahman was in power, he knew British motives clearly, hence, he decided to take advantage of them in the context of the Great Game between Britain and Russia. On one hand, Rahman used British help to improve his monarchy power, such as to settle Afghan borders with other countries, to build the Afghan national force and so on. Finally, while he realized he had to deal with the border question with British India, he took advantage of British motive of building the Scientific Frontier to prevent Russia, hence he agreed to sign the Durand Agreement in 1893, through renting those land to British India, and meanwhile he improved his linkage with the tribal chiefs to resist British rule. Hence, British fell into a dilemma of The Durand Line question, since they could not demarcate the Durand Line, but had to spend huge subsidy for the Afghan Government and the local people to keep the frontier in peace. British got out of the dilemma till Lord Curzon, the Indian Viceroy, decided to improve the legality of the Durand Line unilaterally. From then on, the Durand Line started a gap between its legality and reality.
Liang Xu  
Beijing International Studies University, China

*Study on the Evolution of China’s Attitude towards the Border Dispute between India and Nepal*

China has been adhering to the policy of not intervening in the territorial disputes between the other two or in more countries. However, since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the policy has been faced with great challenges. Under special circumstances, Chinese will adjust the non intervention policy and take the policy of peaceful advice or mediation. In the border dispute between Nepal and India, China has always adopted a policy of neutrality. In 1963 and 1980, China protested to the India government about the speech of "Chinese aircraft invaded Kalapani". Until 2001, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman also claimed that China has been observed to the territorial issues between India and Nepal. Nepal and India are China’s friendly neighbor and China sincerely hopes that Nepal and India can seek a fair and reasonable solution through friendly consultations and negotiations. But may 2015, China seems to have changed this policy. It put forward “Two governments will take measures to expand bilateral trade at Lipulekh Pass” (Lipulekh Pass in Kalapani) in the 2015 China and India joint statement which seems to acknowledge that it belongs to India. Nepalese people are very angry. Does China really change its consistent policy in the border dispute? The paper examines the role of China in the border Dispute between Nepal and India and compares the changes of China’s foreign policy since Xi Jinping became China’s top leader. This paper tries to explain the reason and influence of the attitude change of China in the border dispute between Nepal and India. This paper will explain the article will confirm whether or not if this trend is with us to stay.

Jagannath Panda  
Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, India

*Core vs. Contiguous: The China-India Boundary Dispute*

It is a paradox of history that though India and China were the prime architects of the ‘Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’, the novelty of these principles was never executed in the course of their bilateral relationship, particularly in resolving the boundary dispute. Matters bordering on boundary change the complexion of the issue dramatically from its historical perspective, becoming more of a territorial dispute than just a boundary dispute, on account of the resources of land territory and the State’s military and financial authority. As the literature on borders highlights, borders also have an important bearing on space and people in a globalised world. This paper evaluates the current and possible future course of the India-China boundary dispute. It looks at how historical facts have changed with the course of occasion and opportunity. It is divided into three main parts, as follows: (i) the nature of the dispute; (ii) the negotiation process; and (iii) the future of the dispute. In fact, Fifty-four years after the India-China war, it is still debated whether it was the technicalities of the boundary that led to the conflict or the matters relating to the bordering regions that are not directly linked to the dispute. The debate points to the fact that the technicalities were as much a factor behind the conflict as the border or bordering regions, with the landscape of the dispute progressively emerging as core vs. contiguous. A review of the literature on the subject points to the fact that there are two prevailing aspects to the dispute: (i) differing stance on the length of the border; and (ii) the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This paper examines how and where the course of these factors has mutated in course of time.

**WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER, 9.00 – 10.30**

**ENERGY AND BORDERLANDS: MAPPING THE HIMALAYAN HYDROPOWER FRONTIER**

*Convenor and Chair*  
Matthäus Rest  
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany
This panel attempts to investigate a new landscape that is emerging throughout the Himalayas: the hydropower frontier. While this space largely corresponds with the national borders, its coming into being unsettles decades-old perceptions of remoteness and will severely change relations between centres and peripheries. Suddenly, places that were marginal for much of the 20th century have turned into areas of high political and economic importance that are rapidly connected to national and even transnational roads and transmission lines. Eventually, the damming of the Himalayas might reproduce old patterns of extraction on a new level: added to labour power, livestock, natural and spiritual resources, the mountains will in the future provide the cities with an ever-growing amount of electricity, too. At the same time, however, the emerging hydropower frontier will radically change the living conditions for rural communities and their relations with the landscape, the state, private corporations, transnational institutions and NGOs. As scholars of border studies have long argued, frontiers are first and foremost zones of contact, "not the end...but rather the beginning...of the state...expanding into the realm of darkness and the unknown" (Kristof 1959:270).

In the case of the hydropower frontier this rings true not only in its spatial dimension, but also temporarily. It is one of the prime sites where the future of the Himalayas will be shaped. For all these reasons, an early attempt to map the Himalayan hydropower frontier will enable us to explore the entanglement of the three proposed conference themes of livelihoods, communities, and flows.

Shikha Lakhanpal
University of Illinois, United States

Shifting boundaries: Hydropower and Re--territorialization of nature in the Indian Himalayas

Influenced by the global discourse on renewable energy as sustainable development, Hydropower projects are abundant in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. Even as the provincial and national authorities aggressively promote hydropower expansion, there is opposition to such projects where local livelihoods are threatened. The nature and logic of such opposition, however, is compounded when hydel projects are located near areas of conservation concern. It is under such circumstances that the local resistance against hydropower development is mediated by conservation politics. Through a case study of proposed mini-©-hydel projects around the Great Himalayan National Park in India, I argue that the introduction of ‘sustainable’ small hydropower projects facilitates new ways of establishing control over access to natural resources. In the process, I focus upon the emergence of a politically charged arena that seeks to re-territorialize land, rivers and forests through contentious negotiations among diverse actors that traverse local, regional, national and global scales.

Matthäus Rest
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany

The Dams to Come: Nepal’s Promise of Becoming a Hydropower Nation

While only half of Nepal’s inhabitants are connected to the national electricity grid, for many years they have been told they are the citizens of a Hydropower Nation-to-be: every schoolchild knows the fantastic hydro potential of 83,000 MW by heart. Politicians of all major parties habitually claim that the country will turn into the Switzerland of Asia once those proposed dams have materialized and the excess energy will be sold to the rest of South Asia. So far, however, only 800 MW have been installed and those connected to the grid suffer from up to 14 hours of power cut every day.

Based on previous work on the invention and cancellation (in 1995) of the Arun-3 dam, my paper will address how people around a planned dam site have coped with 25 years of uncertainty and the unfulfilled promise of becoming connected to modern infrastructures. In November 2014 the Nepalese...
government signed a contract to finally construct the project with an Indian state-owned company. The involvement of the powerful southern neighbour is further complicating the relationship many people in the Arun valley and throughout the country have had with this invisible dam - even more so given the recent conflict ensuing the long awaited promulgation of a new constitution in Nepal.

The promise of hydropower adds a new set of power potentials to a landscape that is considered inherently powerful by the people who dwell in it. Through an engagement with stories of place-making, migration and marginalisation in a Himalayan border region, I will ask what new forms of power relations and resource extraction become possible between peripheries and centres while a radically alternative landscape is emerging: a massively dammed up Himalaya.

Christopher Butler
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal

The Jewel in the Crown: the Upper Karnali Dam in Nepal

If eventually constructed, the Upper Karnali dam will become Nepal’s first successful mega-hydropower project, generating as much as 900MW of electricity, 88% of which is currently planned for export to India while Nepal continues to endure 12-14 hours of load shedding each winter. This last fact is a major source of contention between Nepal’s government, private sector, and civil society actors, many of whom believe the energy should be used first to address Nepal’s current power needs.

All parties surrounding the Upper Karnali project share competing concerns about how flowing rivers (and flowing capital) are altering Nepali borders. This paper presents a critical history of the Upper Karnali, paying special attention to how various parties vie to influence the planning and construction of hydropower to support their political and economic interests. At the heart of this contestation lies multiple concerns regarding Nepal’s sense of nationhood, its linkages with neighboring states, and the terms on which it enters the global marketplace.

EXPANSIVE SINGAPORE: REDRAWING THE ISLAND-STATE’S REGIONAL SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Convenor
Adrianne Joergensen
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

Chair
Anna Gasco
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

Singapore promotes itself as one of the most modern and compact city-states in the world. While it is true that the island-nation has a distinct geopolitical boundary, its subsistence relies on and impacts the geographic areas, natural resources, and labor forces of the surrounding hinterland located beyond its national border. Through research conducted via the ETH Zürich Future Cities Laboratory in Singapore, this panel brings together architects and urban designers who investigated Singapore’s cross-border phenomena at different scales, from the global to the regional to the individual. Through on-site fieldwork, observations and interviews, they documented the flows of goods, populations and commodities to and from Singapore. These include goods manufactured or grown in surrounding Malaysia and Indonesia, which are stamped ‘Made in Singapore’ and exported through Changi airport; the infrastructure that sustains Singapore’s imported food and water supplies; and images of international tourists sun themselves at Singaporean-operated resorts on Indonesian beaches. The panel aims to portray the ‘tiny red dot’ as a regional agent of change with an expanding sphere of influence. Through a revised representation that integrates Singapore with its surrounding hinterland, the panel visualizes a more comprehensive spatial vision of the geographic, social and economic framework of the city-state.
Ultimately the works presented argue that Singapore’s future is linked to its cross border metropolitan region and make the case for the need of a common strategic regional vision for the future of the Singapore-Johor-Riau agglomeration.

Anna Gasco  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

*The Airport and the Territory: Cross-border Urbanism in the SIJORI Region*

Since Changi Airport opened in 1981, Singapore’s air traffic has grown at an astounding rate: passenger numbers have quintupled and airfreight tonnage has risen by a factor of ten. The increased airflows have been central not only to Singapore’s development, but also—as this research reveals—to the growth of the greater Singapore-Johor-Riau (SIJORI) tri-national region. By focusing on Changi, this paper exposes how Singapore’s geographical conditions coupled with strong ‘extra-territorial’ and ‘centralised’ planning legislations contribute to Changi’s built effects within and outside Singapore’s border. Through fieldwork conducted in Singapore, Johor, and the islands of Batam and Bintan, the research documents how Changi is a one of the key forces in regional integration, unifying SIJORI’s territorial components. Specifically the research traces the regional cross-border flows of Changi and uncovers how this airport has significant urbanisation effects and economic roles in Singapore’s hinterland development. The research also reveals how, as these peripheral regions develop, the small airports they contain expand in support of correlated urban growth. While Changi will continue to overshadow in capacity and connections the smaller airports on the fringe, the work argues that coming changes in Singapore’s airspace control, coupled with the rapid development of aviation in the region, calls for an integrated airport system. In doing so, the paper posits that Changi’s specific regional urbanisation patterns are a critical lens for broadening the cross-border perspective of Singapore and discusses how the Airport’s extended footprint makes a case for the need of a common strategic regional urban vision.

Keng Ng  
National University of Singapore, Singapore

*Second home ownership in South Johor’s borderlands: Remaking SIJORI’s regional configurations, identities and imaginaries*

Investment on second home ownership is a growing phenomenon in many Asian cities. For Singaporeans, possessing a weekend house in South Johor has been a common practice for transborder investment and recreation. This is due largely to the provision of relatively low-price housing and the short-distance between two borders. However, this Singaporean-oriented market of second home has extended to a larger global real estate market. Under the state-sponsored ‘Iskandar Malaysia’ regional development introduced in 2006, an international zone has been created along the 98 kilometre shorelines of the Straits of Johor to cater for the growth of foreign investment. By opening up the borders as a new resource of development, the land has transformed into new homes for transnational buyers. This paper considers how Singapore’s regional sphere of influence is embodied in both physical and symbolic production of second home residency in South Johor. Many of these development projects depict Singapore as a symbol of globality, and a mode of ‘transborder living next to Singapore’ is promoted by developers as the lure and lore of property market in South Johor.

However, the ideology of living in South Johor’s borderlands while remaining proximity to Singapore, cannot be viewed as a normative twin-city phenomenon. Instead, this paper examines critically on how second home ownership would have a substantial effect on SIJORI’s regional configurations, identities and imaginaries. The highlight of borderland dynamics in this paper will premise on the discussion of second home ownership and border-making practices.
Adrianne Joergensen  
ETH Zurich Future Cities Laboratory, Singapore

*Can Paradise and the City Co-Exist?: Tropical Tourism on the Singapore Strait*

Singapore defies the image of a tropical island. Positioned one degree north of the equator, it has a steady, humid climate ideal for tourism. However, its strategic location along the Singapore Strait has historically created an industrial coastline. In its aspiration to become a tourism capital, Singapore has invested in recreating Paradise idylls in the surrounding archipelago. The tourist can easily find an ideal Paradise view in a remote tropical setting, but along the Singapore Strait, where 1,000 ships pass per hour; the resort must shield its tourists from the conflicting demands of industry. This research analyses 25 seaside resorts on Sentosa, Batam and Bintan islands to answer the question, “Can Paradise and the City co-exist?” More than a single entity, each resort is a composition of multiple architectural instruments, such as the arrangement of sight lines, implementation of Paradise icons, and framing of the landscape, that together synthetically create an ideal Paradise view. More importantly, their potentials and pitfalls reveal the resort as a critical lens for understanding the ongoing urban challenges of Singapore and its surrounding region.

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**Wednesday 14 December, 11.00 – 12.30**

**Stories Across Borders**

**Narratives of Origin and their Contestation in the Borderlands of Asia II**

*Convenor*
Erik de Maaker  
Leiden University, the Netherlands

*Chair*
Monica Janowski  
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom

This panel focuses on the ways in which stories, legends and myths illustrate, substantiate and challenge the ways in which people living in Asia’s borderlands imagine, live out and narrate their relationships with places of residence, origin or longing. Stories, legends and myths which narrate and project this relationship may relate to one or more of the following themes: mythical origins, interactions between humans, spirits and nature, historical or semi-mythical events, migrations across space, memories that place and trace the dead and the use of resources from hunting, gathering, the management of plants and animals to agriculture, mining and hydro dams. Local narratives always interact in complex ways with those at regional, national and international levels, and this is arguably particularly relevant in a borderland context where the historical relationship between local people and the state to which they belong has often been distant. We are particularly interested in exploring the ways in which local narratives expressed through stories, legends and myths relate to rights to land and resources in borderland contexts. The panel will explore and compare the different ways in which these interactions between narratives at different levels of scale play out across a variety of borderland areas. This includes contexts of increasing contestation between narratives where states territorialize, borders harden, borderlands are opened up for neo-liberal exploitation, and customary laws and national and international laws conflict.

In this panel we want to bring out common themes relating to the role of stories, legends and myths in constructing relationships between borderland peoples and states, notably in relation to access to resources; and explore the particular significance and roles of different types of stories and legends in constructing that relationship. In particular, papers explore how stories, legends and myths: (1) ‘locate’ people and advance claims; (2) create social and cultural boundaries, include and exclude; and (3) travel,
circulate and transform. We explore stories and legends through a range of innovative and creative approaches, located in distinct disciplines, which are based on original research.

**Klemens Karlsson**
**Konstfack: University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden**

*The Origin and History of Chiang Tung in Local History Narratives and Symbolic Performances*

Chiang Tung is the main town in the Eastern Shan State of Myanmar, bordering Thailand, Kina and Laos. The town and its people (Tai Khun) have close historical and cultural connections with its neighbors since it once was part of the loosely connected state of Lan Na, the land of a “million rice fields”. Stories, legends and myths of the origin and history of the city-state (muang) Chiang Tung has been transmitted through local history narratives and symbolic performances during coronation ceremonies to install Khun rulers (saopha) and an annual New Year (Songkran) festival.

The Tai Loi people (Hill Tai) are the leftovers of the Lawa people who, according to the legends, were defeated by the Tai King Mangrai from Chiang Rai/Chiang Mai in the 13th century AD. From that time they have changed their cultural, religious and ethnic identity in such a way that they are now considered themselves as a Tai sub-group and members of the same political-economic system as the majority Tai Khuen. The relationship between the Tai Khun ethnic group and the defeated Tai Loi bears witness to a long tradition of dominance and subordination. Tai Loi are playing the historical role of the defeated people coming down from the mountains, beating the drum and bringing it down to the river for the wealth and prosperity of Chiang Tung and the “imagined Khun nation”. The Songkran festival is therefore a manifestation of place, belonging and ethnic identity. It is a performed drama expressing the history of an exposed nation and manifesting independence, sovereignty and wealth for the Tai Khun nation. The drum, the frog and the water splashing also highlight the connection of the Songkran festival with fertility rites. This paper describes the festival from observation made during the years 2011 and 2013.

**Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai**
**MIT University, India**

*Stories Of Manasa Mangal Kavya And Behula-Lakhinder In West Bengal Patachitra: Travelling Tales Of Man And Nature From Oral Traditions to Global New Media*

The scroll painters or patuas from West Bengal breathe for a space to maintain their ingenuity of thoughts and expression. Much parts of the subject matter of their performative art has changed according to market demands over the last several centuries. However, they have managed to retain a significant thread of continuity through their performances: the portrayal of the story of the last Purana from India, Manasa Mangal Kavya and the main storyline of Behula and Lakhinder. Following the descriptions, the main characters—Behula and Lakhinder and the merchant Chand—travel well beyond the mere geographical limits of Bengal and reach further east, into Surma Valley (district of Sylhet-now in Bangladesh), and also the far-eastern state of Assam. Thus travelling down the course of history, the story of Manasa Mangal and Behula and Lakhinder, form a part of oral traditions of both Bangladesh as well as West Bengal even in present times.

Across centuries, the wide spread of the story has been reflected variously through puppetry, Jagaranga (sung story), Bhasan Jatra (dramatic performance), the songs of the snake-charmers or bede and pater gaan (scroll painters singing) of the patuas. However, at present, it is only the latter, i.e. scroll painters or the patuas, who have managed to keep the tradition alive and brought it out of the mere village peripheries into the domain of New Media and a global world thereafter. Interestingly, with the stories travelling from oral traditions to New Media, specific modifications resulted in changing the subplots and the characters within. My paper looks into the restructuring and narrowing down of the main storyline due to the influence of popular culture, finally making it a part of New Media in present times.
Stephanie Morgan  
Independent scholar, United States

The Spirit-Hero Jesus, And Other Questions From The Mendalam Manuscripts: Kayan Dayaks Of West Kalimantan (Indonesia) Review The

In mid-2015, in the Mendalam home of the late Kayan Catholic priest Pastor A. J. Ding Ngo, in a heap of files left since his death twenty years earlier, a two-page manuscript was found, written in 1978 by the great singer of tales S. Lii’ Long, transcriber of the nearly 50,000-line Takna’ Lawe’ and six other long epics. Lii’ Long called this short composition a dayung kiaan (doa or prayer, traditionally a harvest-festival circle-dance invocation and spirit-journey sung by high shamans): it is a song of praise to Jesus Christ, his mother Maria and his divine Father, using poetic formulas applied in the Takna’ to the spirit-hero Lawe’, to noblewomen and to Tipang Tanangaan, the Creator. A comparison of this text with traditional formulaic celebrations of spiritual power suggests that the singer, consciously and creatively detaching poetic form from its old content, chose to omit most metaphors specific to noble social status and ceremonial responsibilities, prowess in war and spiritual power as deadly-dangerous, and to foreground metaphors that relate to nobility by divine descent, physical return from death, spirit-possession as shelter and inspiration, and spiritual power as kindly or healing. Much of this literature is now being returned in hard copy and on computers to the Mendalam, via “reading gardens” that I helped set up in 2015, and as PDFs through Facebook to other Kayans and friends worldwide. People of Kayan communities in other regions and nations, where much of the traditional oral literature has been lost or rejected, can show now that they too have long been “people of the book”, though their books were sung and spoken. The short song to Jesus as spirit-hero is an example and symbol of how elements of tradition, selected and recontextualized, may become sources of prideful identity.

Avishek Ray  
National Institute of Technology Silchar, India

Between Spaces: The Originary Myth of the Romani and Indian-ness

A large number of Orientalist scholars have provocatively claimed that the (European) Romani community had originated from India. The premise of these claim usually rest on the phonetic similarity between Romani and Indian languages. This paper aims to examine the credibility of such claims and problematize the methodological apparatuses deployed therein. Given that phonetic similarity arisen out of a ‘family resemblance’ between the two languages is inadequate for making an(y) ‘originary’ claim, this paper investigates: why, when and how did the claim gain currency? Why and how did the originary myth of the Romani travel across borders? Why despite an arguable methodology this myth/claim was widely accepted? Why are linguists and scholars since the eighteenth century and some until very recently obsessed with ‘re-discovering’ the ‘primordial’ connection between 'India' and the ethos of wandering? Finally, what is so enduring that still keeps alive the myth in some ‘modern’ texts? The propensity for (theoretical) concepts – in this case, the originary myth of the Romani – to travel and be domesticated, as Edward Said (2000) insists, gives rise to a diverse range of discursive meanings, contingency and implications when it comes to regional adaptations, and even more so, in the context of South Asia within the vast complexity of issues on ethnicity, religion, caste, language and gender etc. Taking off from here, this paper critically uses two ‘modern’ texts – Ghumakkar Shastra (Hindi; 1948) by Rahul Sankrityayan and Gypsir Paye Paye (In the Footprints of Gypsies; Bangla; 1994) – from two different timeframe of the twentieth century as case studies to illustrate how the cultural inheritance of the myth is directed toward an (imaginary) idea of ‘Indic’ revival, which renders the thematic trope of (national) ‘origin’ function as a leverage to mount nationalist ethos, in other words, as characteristic of Indian(ness).
This panel takes as its jumping off point Stuart Elden’s (2012) recent call for more attention to be accorded to volumes in analyses of the nation-state. Too often the focus remains on the horizontal, land-based border and, as a result, crucial spaces above and below the ground fall out of view. This insight is especially important in the field of border studies. At the edge of the nation-state, borders are always three-dimensional. They extend both above, with a partitioning of the airspace, and below, with claims to subsoil resources or continental shelves – yet this is rarely given sufficient attention. Over the last decade, geography, anthropology and other social sciences have been witness to a veritable efflorescence of border-themed publications and conferences. This literature has been dominated by ethnic issues and the management of movement of people and trade across borders. Much focus has been accorded notably on the arbitrariness, historical contingency and injustice of borders. While the unnaturalness of borders—and the social suffering this has frequently caused—certainly deserve attention, all too often the “border” remains an abstract line on the ground, something to be controlled, bypassed, eluded or deconstructed.

This panel proposes to take the materiality of borders seriously and to give more attention to the terrain, fauna, flora, atmosphere, as well as the human-made infrastructure that together cohere into creating and sustaining borders. In doing so, the presentations in this panel will bring in aspects of “borderwork” that are found both beyond the horizontal and beyond the human, looking at the vertical and maritime limits of the nation-state, the management of wild animals such as tigers, the decision (or reluctance) to erect bridges, and the lasting affect of war-time military ruins on the social life of border populations. The papers will seek to foreground the entanglements that exist between the human/nonhuman, animate/inanimate, and organic/inorganic, and thus engage productively with current debates on new materialisms, as well as theorizations of the inert, the posthuman, and the “inhuman.” Looking at borders in this way will, we hope, offer a new perspective on an already rich body of literature and suggest new avenues of research.

Tina Harris
University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

‘Skirmish Season’: 4D Bordering in the Himalayas

How long does a border take to erode, to be created, to become more or less porous, to shatter, to vanish? In this paper, I argue that paying attention to temporality as a potential fourth dimension in ‘more-than-human’ (Braun 2005) bordering practices in the Himalayas may help us better understand the production of new intersections between capital and security. I will examine several examples of bordering in two sections of the Himalayan range: first, the disputed western borders between Pakistan, India, and China based on secondary source material; and second, an eastern Himalayan mountain border crossing that was reopened for trade between China and India in 2006, based on ethnographic research. Both areas are currently facing climate change related issues, such as increased landslides that affect existing infrastructure and diminished grazing land for cattle and yak, drawing non-human actors and bio-processes further into the production of geopolitical tensions in the borderlands. Seasonal changes, such as the freezing-over of mountain passes, are processes that contribute to both human and state inaccessibility, particularly in mountainous — ‘vertical’ — regions of the world. The oscillation between
seasons; the material remains left on the ground by different political and non-political actors; the movements of animals along established routes as well as across borders — all of these are particular to the passage of time in a vertical dimension. But how do the limitations of human activity intersect with state attempts to control this combination of height and time; in Stuart Elden’s words, attempts to ‘secure the volume’ along borders? The paper ultimately aims to demonstrate that a deeper exploration into the attempt of states to access vertical borders — and yet never quite reaching them — is crucial for a broader, comparative understanding of borderland studies in general.

Nayanika Mathur  
University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Animal Smuggling and the Differential Dimensioning of Borders in the Indian Himalaya

This paper studies the dimensioning of borders in South Asia through a focus on the flows and stoppages of animals across two national borders. It makes an argument for grasping the differential construction of borders through a focus on the nonhuman, terrain, and movement. On the basis of long-term ethnographic research in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand in northern India, I discuss the regimes of making of the states’ borders with Nepal and Tibet. Uttarakhand/India’s border with Tibet/China appears to be of a qualitatively different ‘type’ due to its supposedly sealed-off nature. Border guards boast that not even a fly can cross from India to Tibet at the Uttarakhand border, even as their major task appears to consist of chasing back ‘Chinese’ yaks that aimlessly (or not?) stray onto Indian soil. The Nepal border, on the other hand, is notoriously porous and forms the main conduit for the smuggling of poached animals and their commodified body parts from India. In addition to the well-known illegal flow of big cats, musk deer, bears, and their body parts, I discuss the recently unearthed rings of pangolin poaching and smuggling from India to Nepal. In contrast to the closures emphasized in the case of the Tibetan border, narratives on the Nepali border highlights its historic and inherent openness to series of practices including animal-smuggling. I build upon interviews with patrol guards, forest officials, anti-poaching organisations, wildlife conservationists, and writings in local newspapers, to show that the narrative making of the two borders only partially echo the nationalist discourse on Sino-Indian and Indo-Nepali relations. A focus on flows of the nonhuman, instead, disrupts standard accounts of territorial sovereignty by discerning the contingent fixities and fluidities of borders.

Ekaterina Mikhailova  
Moscow State University, Russia

Chung-Tong Wu  
Western Sydney University, Australia

A Bridge Too Far: Detached Cities on the Sino-Russian Border

Despite publicly stated intentions by China and Russia to develop cross-border cooperation, the Sino-Russian borderland in general and specific cross-border regions have not yet flourished. Using the border cities of Heihe and Blagoveshchensk we examine the failure to build a bridge linking the cities to explore the materiality and three-dimensionality of the border, the role of human-made infrastructure and their temporal dimensions. Although the two cities are separated only by some 750 metres of the Heilongjiang (Amur River), there is no permanent physical connection between them. Discussions on linking the two cities have been on-going for almost 30 years involving a variety of linkage projects, including a cable way. However, these initiatives have yet to move beyond signed agreements. The advantages of a physical link do not seem to be in dispute because during the winter months when the river freezes over, a temporary pontoon bridge for vehicles has been built since 2011. During the warmer months, the only means of cross-border transportation is via ferry or hydrofoils. The paradox is that during the months when traffic demand is the highest, the transport link is more difficult.

Treating the absense of a bridge as a symptom of broader issues, we examine the underlying reasons for the disjointed coexistence of these urban areas. This paper posits that the detached adjacency
of Heihe and Blagoveshchensk testifies to a profound mismatch of economical, political, social and cultural priorities of the two cities, their respective regions and countries. In the cases of cross-border development between nations that are competitors, we argue it is crucial to take into account the potential obstacles posed by history, conflict between national and regional politics, impacts of the grey economy and cultural misunderstandings.

Natalia Ryzhova
Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russia

Fear and Desire Among the Ruins: On Life in Militarized Islands on the Sino-Russian Border

Many islands along the Sino-Russian border were highly militarized during the Soviet period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the military vacated many of these islands and numerous border garrisons were left disused and fallow. Apartment buildings, office blocks, canteens, and club-houses were deserted and it took some time before civilians were allowed to make use of the existing facilities. When they finally did, only residential buildings were occupied while other edifices and structures were left to rot. As a result people found themselves living in partly uninhabited – and increasingly decaying – spaces. This state of affairs has caused considerable anxiety for the local residents who feel they have been left behind and abandoned by the state.

Occasionally, reports that the central or local authorities are planning development projects to revitalize the area help alleviate widespread fears and uncertainties. The construction of a bridge linking the mainland to Russkyi Island and its university campus, or projects for the development of Bolshoy Ussuryiskiy Island for example have been perceived by the locals as a lifeline for the future. Unfortunately realities on the ground rarely match expectations: dreams are dashed, and new challenges emerge.

Using ethnographic material collected on the two islands of Bolshoy Ussuryiskiy and Russkyi Island, the paper will explore the affective resonance of uneven materialities on the life of local residents. It will look in particular at how recent Russian and Chinese projects become embedded, entangled, and occasionally mired, in an urban environment of modern edifices interspersed with ruins and discarded military constructions, and how this has a crucial and lasting bearing on the evolution of the Sino-Russian border.

Wednesday 14 December, 11.00 – 12.30

The ‘Untameable’ Highlanders: ‘Then’ and ‘Now’ of Trans-Border Mobility in India’s North-East

Sanjay Barbora
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, India

In the conventional regional geography of Asia, the mountainous North-East of India, stroking the territorial limits of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar exists as a space that harbours the tensions and negotiations contingent within the making of borderlands. In an extensive chronological span encompassing the colonial and the post-colonial, we bring comparative and interdisciplinary studies on the region that together provide insights on the ‘then’ and ‘now’ of cross-border rendezvous. They illustrate that borders depicted often as the immutable margins of the state, in practice, exist not as ‘edges’ but as zones of relentless interactions. Inquiry into such interactions enables one to comprehend how the state and the people complemented, resisted and at times negated each other in the exercises of defining and delineating spaces.

However, the ‘then’ and ‘now’ temporal distinction, i.e., before and after 1947, may at times be paradoxical, because it presupposes a rupture between the colonial and the post-colonial worlds. The paradox emerges especially in comprehending statecraft in borderlands, where the necessities of territorial self-sustenance made both the colonial and the independent nation-state strikingly similar in their attempts at regimenting trans-border mobility of people, commodities and ideas.
Borders etched in India's North-East, however, have historically displayed a ‘fluidity’ that has resisted and reworked such constraints. Resistance to state overtures has manifested in myriad forms, with the peoples of the region curving out their own mechanisms to circumvent restrictions on mobility in their physical and mental worlds. Whether it was the undermining of colonial border policing through trans-frontier trading relationships in rubber or the transculturation of imperial geo-spatial and geo-political articulations, the people of this region left a considerable impress on the imperial regimes of extractions and explorations.

Post 1947, the Indian nation-state emerged as the dominant and overarching source of identification. Certain identities in the region assumed as ‘peripheral’ to the Indian state, like that of the Mizos, adopted imaginative means to keep the avenues of cross-border transactions intact, with novel conceptualisations of sovereignty, ethnicity and belongingness. At one level, political organizations calling for a regional unification under a pan-Mizo identity attempted a transcendence of the territorial limits imposed by the Indian state. At another level, Mizo media broadcasts from Aizawl found an eager audience among their ethnic counterparts in Myanmar; an instance of the ways in which trans-border identities continue to be negotiated today.

Bikram Bora  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Traversing States, Subverting Subjects: explorations and imperial geography in the borderlands of upper Brahmaputra basin

Travels, explorations and imperial geography are often symbiotic. Mobility, despite being ‘in conflict with imperialism’s paradigms of order and control’, was indispensable to imperial terrain movements, while in narratives of travels it was again neatly spatialised and synchronised (Smethurst, 2009). Colonial states’ paradoxical association with mobility is illustrated by the borderland transactions in India’s north-east, where the ‘knowability’ and ‘governability’ of the terrain was analogous to imperial geographical explorations.

Taking cue from the production, packaging and consumption of geographical knowledge via these explorations, this paper investigates the multitude of spatial experiences in the upper Brahmaputra river basin between Assam and South-east Tibet, in the 19th and early 20th century. The crux of the exercise is to comprehend how mobility in the region was defined, regimented and understood: in imperial official circles, in the geographical societies of the metropole and in the local mindscapes. In contrast to the manicured geographies of the colonial state, arbitrary cartographic arrangements and regimentation of mobility was habitually eluded by people, ideas and commodities in the region. And as territorial annexation was simultaneous or subsequent to the explorations, the orderly imperial geography was increasingly informed by the disorderly mobility of travellers and explorers, to conceptualise the region as a coherent geo-political entity.

However, a state-centric examination often mutes the other issue: how people of the borderlands translate geo-political categories emanating from the state or other non-localised sources into their quotidian vocabulary and vice versa? ‘Indigenous’ practices, texts and narratives of geographical knowledge in India’s north-east, and attempts by the imperial regimes of exploration to comprehend them interacted and intersected in myriad manners. Inquiry into these interactions will enable one to understand what meanings the translation and transculturation of these categories into routine, indivisible and comprehensible entities entailed for both the colonial state and the people.

Aparajita Majumdar  
Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Colonial State and Resource Frontiers: tracing the politics of appropriating rubber in the northeastern frontier of British India

Any attempt at studying resource appropriation occurring in areas referred as ‘frontier spaces’, has to firstly keep in mind that, there is nothing innate or natural about the existence of such spaces. As noted
by anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, in her study on the making of a resource frontier in Kalimantan, Indonesia, 'Frontiers are not discovered at the edge; they are projects in making geographical and temporal experiences. Their wilderness is made of visions and vines and violence; it is both material and imaginative'. Indeed, the central analysis of this paper involves the exploration of this ‘wilderness’, arising out of the state’s zeal to acquire resources in areas where it possessed little political control, the discursive trail of policy institutions and legal apparatus initiated by the state at various points of time to materialize resource acquisition and the ideological elements that got inscribed onto spaces where such exercises took place. The state that figures in this paper is the British colonial state in India and the resource over which the colonial state is attempting to gain control is natural rubber, discovered in the forests of Assam and the surrounding frontier areas, in early 19th century.

At one level, the paper shows how the ‘trans-frontier rubber bearing tracts’ were incorporated within colonial extractive regimes variously by institutions like ‘rubber mehals’ that transcended political boundaries, and legal authorities like the Inner line regulation of 1873 that regulated cross border mobility by dividing the region within an ideological geography of ‘savage hills’ and ‘civilized plains.’ At another level, the paper builds a critique of state pervasive analysis by showing that the existence of other local functionaries in the rubber trade like the speculators, Marwari merchants and tribal rubber tappers made the operation of these seemingly stable colonial arrangements of resource extraction quite unpredictable.

Roluah Puia
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, India

Bamboos, Bullets and Ballots: The Mizo Movement in North East India

The paper intends to take a closer look at the Mizo movement under the Mizo National Front (MNF). The MNF movement as it is known defies both state sovereignty and its boundaries by calling for an ethnic and territorial unity that will later comprise ‘Greater Mizoram’. A pan-Mizo identity was invoked that traverse both state and national boundaries. While independence is at the heart of the movement, the focal point of the paper extends beyond this by unveiling the dynamics and complexities of the movement. In doing so, the paper re-traces the emergence of the MNF and its trajectories till the singing of the memorandum of settlement in 1986. The paper connects the MNF movement to the larger borderland, both state and national, socio-political dynamics and display how the MNF movement was shaped, defined and at times influenced by such dynamics. It is therefore the argument of the paper that the MNF movement needs to be studied and understood beyond the territorial borders of Mizoram so as to capture the larger question posed by the movement.

Lallianpuii Lallianpuii
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Transnational Mizo Broadcasting: Sites for the Articulation of Belonging.

Cable network started in Mizoram in the early 1990s and news in Mizo language was broadcasted before the turn of the millennium to subscribers first within Aizawl city and later, across Mizoram in Indian borderland. Today the consumptions of Mizo news via cable and satellite televisions transcend the borders, “circumventing the constructed barriers that results from territorialisation of modern states.” (Baud & Schendel). In this paper I want to argue that news is an important part of Mizo transnationalism and show how this transnationalism has city-centric outlook. Thus, I will explore the everyday media practices of watching Mizo television news amongst Zo descents in Tahan and its surrounding Zo villages of the Sagaing Division of Myanmar and examine how news content from Aizawl are discussed or used as sites for the articulation of belonging. I will also investigate the kinds of infrastructure that support and enable transnationalism, closely connected to Aizawl by looking at the production of news in Aizawl and the distribution and consumption of news in Tahan and its surrounding Zo villages.
This paper is based on fieldworks done in Aizawl, Mizoram and Tahan and its neighbouring Zo villages of Myanmar. My analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork particularly interviews and participant observations.

**Wednesday 14 December, 11.00 – 12.30**

**Territorial Flows I**

**Life Along Nepal’s Southern Border and Beyond**

*Convenor*
Amanda Snellinger
University of Washington, United States

*Chair*
David Gellner
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

*Discussant*
Bhaskar Gautam
Martin Chautari, Nepal

In many ways, Nepal defines itself by its borders. Prithvi Narayan Shah’s description of it as a yam between two boulders has become a cliché of both academic writing and political discourse. There have been occasions when Nepal’s position in the middle and as one large borderland has been seen as an opportunity. But for the most part (and 2015 brought this home more powerfully than ever) the nationalist narrative is a defensive one that casts Nepal as vulnerable to powerful neighbors. A roughly 680-mile open border with India further undermines the Nepali state’s ability to enforce territoriality as goods and people flow along and across the porous border. Nepal has struggled with how to incorporate its south borderlands as more than a regional buffer.

Nepal’s southern plains have been integral to the national imaginary in contradictory ways. The establishment of the Tarai border to cordon Gorkha land from British East India Company territory transformed Nepal from a territory into a nation-state. Its jungle and fertile land have nourished northern Nepal particularly after malaria eradication when it became the country’s breadbasket. The region provides access to the nearest seaport from which Nepal receives the bulk of its foreign goods. And multiple waves of migration have made the region a dynamic demographic mix. Historically, this region has been simultaneously entangled with and estranged from the centers of state power. Since the Rana period it has been the staging ground for activism and rebellion that has forced the state to accommodate regime change, multi-party democracy, republicanism, and federalism. Yet, at the same time, Nepali nationalism has been oriented to Khas Arya culture in a way that does not accommodate the diversity in the south. Nepal’s ruling elite have treated native and long-settled communities’ claims for regional autonomy, citizenship, and inclusion suspiciously. These tensions have been ongoing since Frederick Gaige wrote his insightful, but too often ignored, book on regionalism and the politics of national integration four decades ago. Recently the sense of a “charging elephant from the south” has been particularly poignant with India’s unofficial blockade in response to Nepal promulgating a constitution despite heavy opposition, particularly in the south. Massive shortages nationwide have resulted. Widespread hostility to India led to a social media campaign (#backoffIndia) and made it difficult to support the Madheshi political opposition without being branded as anti-national.

This double panel focuses on belonging and citizenship along Nepal’s southern border and beyond. We seek to challenge the methodological nationalism that views the Nepal purely in terms of hill-based culture and purely in terms of relations to a single state. These papers will consider how the centrality of two states in everyday life has shaped communities, politics, livelihoods, landholding, and demographics over time.
The making of a border district in Nepal: why geography and history matters

The Tharu are a culturally diverse ethnic group whose culture shifts from being more ‘tribe’-like to being more ‘caste’-like on a west to east continuum along the Tarai. By focusing on Nepal’s Chitwan district, I show that this cultural diversity can be explained by geographical and historical facts that have differentially shaped the relation between different areas of the Tarai to the states that flanked them. Although Chitwan lies on the Indo- Nepal border, the major socio-cultural influences that have shaped it in modern times have come mainly from the Hindu societies of the hills. Prior to the 1950s malaria eradication program, the Chitwan valley was inhabited mainly by Tharus, who also inhabited the adjacent border areas in India. Despite these cultural connections however, and the political fact of an open border, the Indo-Nepal border at Chitwan has constrained cross-border exchanges and flows. Reasons both geographical and historical account for this. Since the early 19th century, Chitwan had been preserved under heavy forest to protect Kathmandu from possible British incursion; the border area remains forested to this day in a national park, and these forests extend across the border into India. The barrier that this forest posed to north-south travel was compounded by the malarial nature of the region. Contact between Tharus on either side of the border was limited, and prior even to the malaria eradication project, Chitwan Tharus had greater exposure to ideas and practices carried down from the hills during the winter (when malaria was absent) than came north from India during the entire year. The rudimentary nature of east-west links prior to the 1950s also limited the flow of cultural things into the valley. Thus the Chitwan Tharu are not just geographically midway between the Tharus of the Far West, who were also isolated by forests, and those of the east, who were fully integrated into Hindu caste society; they were also a ‘tribe’-like people who after the cultural transformations brought about by the Malaria Eradication project, could be more readily ‘Hinduized’ along Nepali lines.

Making of Multicultural Morang: An Evolution of a Border Town in Eastern Tarai of Nepal

Morang, a border district in Eastern Tarai of Nepal, has the highest ethnic-diversity index in the country, attributed to the inflow of people from within and across the border. State’s land tenure and industrial policy; infrastructural development and economic opportunities on the other side of the southern border, in particular, have contributed as impelling factors for influx of people into the region for generations to make a present day multicultural mosaic in the region.

Combining history and anthropology, this paper elucidates the unique evolutionary process that gave rise to a present-day border town, the largest after the capital city, granting special place in Nepal's polity and economy. The evidence and arguments in this paper are based on the information gathered though archival studies, oral histories and narratives, observations of cross-border transactions, and informal interviews.

Beginning with a brief historical overview of pre-unification context relating to the region, the paper focuses on the land tenure policy of the state that formed the ‘bedrock of the political and administrative set-up’ introduced by the political unification in 1774 AD, that is, after the Gorkhali taking over the territory of Morang, the then Vijayapur. The population dynamics across the ‘porous border’ and north-to-south migration in recent centuries is investigated to understand the transformation of once ‘population vacuum’ into a highly populous border town. The paper puts Morang into the spatio-temporal context; however, a substantial discussion is on the genesis and development of Biratnagar, the district headquarters of Morang. This paper concludes arguing that the development of the border town in perspective, as a multi-cultural mosaic and political and economic hub, was a result of political, economic and social processes taking place on both the sides of the border.
Amanda Snellinger  
University of Washington, United States

David Gellner  
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Supra-national, national, and sub-national sentiments: Belonging along the Parsa/Bihar border

In Parsa district there are two counter points of reference that equally texture residents’ world view: Nepal and India. These points of reference are scaled from local to national: Birganj (Parsa district headquarters and the official border crossing and customs point) and Raxaul (the Indian town across the bridge), the south-eastern Nepali districts and the contiguous to the state of Bihar, Kathmandu and Delhi, and then of course Nepal and India. The existence of these two states along an open border brings socio-economic, cultural, political, religious, and kin complexity to Parsa residents’ everyday lives. In this paper we provide ethnographic case studies of lives along the border to complicate the ways that nationalism and belonging can be articulated. Our interlocutors’ lives entail an intermingling of family, religion, culture, language, politics, commerce, and services along the Parsa/Bihar border that demonstrate an orientation that is simultaneously supra-national, national, and sub-national. We use their stories to challenge the nationalist logic that relies on familiar modernist dichotomies: formal and informal, legal and illegal, mainstream and marginal. In fact, our interlocutors’ views are much more sophisticated than this, because they recognize that what is legal and illegal, official and unofficial, is relative and context-driven. Yet nationalist logic continues to determine border-dwellers’ marginal status in Nepal because Hill Nepali nationalism apparently cannot tolerate difference or multiple belonging, especially difference that appears close to Indian culture. Questioning the form of the state opens one to accusations of being anti-national. It is surely vital for the Nepali state to find a way to accommodate our interlocutors’ nested, scalar, and multiple commitments; the alternative would seem to be possibly never-ending overt and covert discontent and disruption of the kind that Nepal has experienced since August 2015.

Krishna Hachhethu  
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University, Nepal

The Madhesh Movement and Its Limitations: Common Regional Identity versus Fragmented Multiple Cultural Identities

This paper gives a macro picture of contested identity of the Madhesh and its implication to (a) the rise of regional nationalism, (b) local electoral politics, and (c) the federalism debate in Nepal.

Of course, the Madhesh is a common identity of (1) a distinct territory, different from Hill; (2) a shared cultural, different from Parbatiya culture and language of hill people, but proximate to custom of Indian people of Ganjetic plain; and (3) common experience of deprivation from the Hill-centric Nepali state. ‘Madheshi’ – a common tag used for the people of non-Hill origin – entered widespread usage during the Madhesh uprisings of 2007, 2008 and 2015-16. To enforce it in federal design of Nepal, Madheshi activists argue that Nepal is a country of two nationalities, Madheshi and Pahadi.

But in post-movement times, politics in the Madhesh has largely been overwhelmed by fragmented multiple and to some extent conflicting identities, i.e. (1) Pahadi versus Madheshi (40% population of 20 Madhesh districts are hill origin people); (2) Madheshi Hindu castes versus Tarai Janajati (distribution of population among the non-hill origin are 59% castes and 26% Janajati); (3) Hindu versus Muslim (Muslim constitute 4.3% in national population, 13.2% among the people of non-hill origin), among the caste Madheshi; (4) backward and forward (forward group constitute only 3% among the Madheshi population); (5) Dalit and non-Dalit (Dalit has a strength of 15% population among the non-Hill origin people). Besides, there are linguistic territorial identities, i.e. Mithila belt, Bhojpuri area, Abadhi region, and Tharuhat. Each of the above-mentioned fragmented identities has been prevailing in electoral politics in the Madhesh districts. Diversity in Madhesh has its own impact on different imagination/preference of sub-identity groups of the Madhesh on name, number, and boundaries of provinces to be set up in the flatlands of Nepal. None of them are happy with the federal arrangements made by the new constitution.
of Nepal. In addition to that, the present Madhesh struggle is demanding changes in several provisions of the constitution, i.e. on citizenship, electoral constituencies, proportional and inclusive representation, etc.

**WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER, 13.30 – 15.00**

**COMMUNITIES IN THE PRECARIOUS BORDERSCAPE: LIVELIHOOD, PERCEPTION, AND NEGOTIATION WITHIN THE SHIFTING SPATIALITY AND TEMPORALITY**

*Convenor and Chair*
Busarin Lertchavalitsakul  
Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

*Discussant*
Karin Dean  
School of Humanities, Tallinn University, Estonia

In this panel, we present five dynamic and complex border communities in which diverse groups of social actors have interactive relationships, resulting in either positive, negative, or ambivalent consequences. Within the social space of communities situated along Thailand’s borders and its neighboring countries, the actors covered in the papers include Karen women affected by non-good governance in natural resource and environment management; Thai and Lao villagers crossing the border between Laos and Thailand encountering the state as inconsistently functioning and enforcing laws; state and non-state actors collaborating in solving gender violence of migrants living in a compound located remotely from Mae Sot, Tak province; Rohingyas as displaced migrants struggling to survive in Mae Sot town; and Shan villagers living side-by-side with the local Wa polities in a militarized border zones. We conceptualise precarious borderscapes through a diverse contexts of studies, such as poor governfance, illegality in cross-border movements and activities, structural and cultural violence, ethnicity and religion differentiation, and physical assaults and fighting. Attempting to understand such sophisticated study contexts, we do not see “community” as a homogenous unit; rather it represents diversity, disunion, changes, dynamics, interaction within and outside communities, and intersection with state and non-state actors, and relationships cross-cutting through different class, ethnicity, and gender. Therefore, we argue that communities in the diverse precarious borderscapes incorporate a state of ambiguity into people’s states of living, physically, structurally, mentally, and ideologically. Through an ethnographic approach combined with narratives of full, partial and fragmented life stories and life experiences; we trace how mentioned social actors live, perceive, negotiate with, and incorporate such diverse kinds of uncertainty, friction, and precarity into their everyday lives and practices, within the shifting spatiality and temporality.

*Paiboon Hengsuwan*  
Department of Women’s Studies, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

*Still not Despondency to the Shore Dreams: Border Women’s Perspectives on Poor Governance in Environmental Management on the Thai-Burmese Border*

Within the zone Thai-Burmese borderlands, there exist great political conflict and competition for natural resources. It involves a number of stakeholders interacting among each other, which includes local and ethnic people in the border villages, ethnic minority armed groups (at border zones), Thai and Burmese governments’ armies (soldiers), businessperson and transnational corporations’ employees, academicians, and NGO workers. Among all walks of life, there are a group of women (and men) from Karen ethnicity, who are asserting for their rights over the natural resources found across the river Salween. They have called for protection of the natural resources across Salween River and their cause is based on the principle and ideology of human rights. I argue that the current state at Thai-Burmese borderlands could be labelled as “frontier capitalism,” where the situation to ensure environmental good
governance has not yet emerged. Moreover, the state of frontier capitalism has created insecurities for the border community lives and poses several environmental risks. Considering the precarious situation and the risks for sustainability of natural resources, the Karen women in the border areas have raised their voice to protect their families and the community’s future. However, their association with community men for joint action is not smooth and easy and is riddled with many challenges. The women faces great difficulties and obstructions in pursuing their goals, as their perceptions and strategies employed are different from men and other groups. Therefore, they have to seek out survival strategies and create chances to negotiate with the frontier capitalism for securing better livelihood.

Kunnawut Boonreak
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Cross-border Muslim-community Networks: Newly-Arriving Rohingya Displaced Migrants Entering into the Thai border town of Mae Sot, Tak Province

After the latest wave of Rohingya migrants arriving into Thailand in 2012, it was reported that about two hundreds Rohingya have been living indiscernibly in Mae Sot town in Tak province, which is Thailand’s one of the large and economically vibrant border hubs. The Roghingya migrants in this city have been helped by the networks of local Muslim community, which has facilitated their entry and stay in the town. Once the migrants decide to stay for a long term, they need to find jobs to survive. To be employed legally, the migrants need to procure work permit, however, newly-arrived Rohingya people lack legal documents and therefore are unable to secure work documents from the Thai government. The already established Rohingya community members assist the newcomers in finding jobs in cross-border trade sector. With assistance from local Muslim networks, the newcomers could illegally work as wage laborer at a large warehouse in Rim Moei Port, where most of the warehouses’ owners are Pakistani and Arakanese Muslim. I investigate the cross-border trade communities in this dynamic border town, by focusing on how being Muslim (who share the same religious practice and languages of Bengali and Burmese) has become a social capital for the newly-arrived Rohingya migrants and has further strengthened the cross-border networks of both the new migrants and established local communities. I argue that within the borderland context, where the sovereign power of the Thai state is not absolutely dominant, the local influences could challenge the formal (nation-state) rules related to migration and work-permits. For instance, government officers and Muslim businessmen are willing to help and find jobs for the migrant Rohingya in Mae Sot. Socio-cultural capitals as shared languages and religion are crucial elements that have enabled Rohingya (displaced) migrants to survive and integrate into the dominant or local society.

Busarin Lertchavalitsakul
Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Living with the Wa Invisible Polity: Shan Communities in the Militarized Borders

“They are ‘Red Wa’, manufacturing drugs.” One Shan man pointed towards the Red Wa’s base seen from a distance among the wide range of mountains, while we were travelling to the border area connecting the Southernmost Shan State, Myanmar with Northwestern Thailand in Mae Hong Son province. This geographical location is nearly invisible in several maps which metaphorically illustrates intangible political territories, where national boundaries are blurred by the powerful local polities’ dominance. Moreover, the region portrays an uncertain space, which I define as “shadow” due to existence of the notorious drug producer of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), also informally known as “Red Wa” due to its past association with the Communist Party of Burma. Apart from this polity, the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) base are in close proximity, on the border’s edge widely called as “Loi Tai Laeng. It has been reported that the SSA-S are being used as a buffer polity between the Burmese Army and the Red Wa. This has often triggered violent clashes between the SSA-S and the Red Wa, which has caused severe casualties and collateral damage across the Shan dominated villages on the Thai border. They express fear of the Red Wa, and have hardly experienced visiting the Red Wa’s territories to witness how it looks like. Some might have sporadically interacted with the Red Wa when they come to purchase goods at the Thai
border village. Recently, the Thai local government has promoted the cooperation among the villages in Thailand and UWSA’s territories. In this paper, I focus on how the local polities’ have influenced and affected the livelihood of the Shan border villages, by investigating narratives of villagers on both sides of the border to understand their experiences living in the shadow political scape.

**WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER, 13.30 – 15.00**

**LEARNING TO LOVE THE CITY IN INDIA’S NORTH-EAST BORDERLAND**

*Convenor and Chair*
Duncan McDuie-Ra
University of New South Wales, Australia

One of the most crucial transformations in India’s north-east borderland remains relatively understudied—rapid urbanization. In just a few decades a large proportion of the population have become urban dwellers in their homelands, in other cities in the frontier, and as migrants to cities in the rest of India and abroad. Using ethnographic material we focus on everyday life in four cities in Northeast India: Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Shillong, and Imphal. These four cities are remarkable urban environments. On the one hand they are crucial spaces for state control—to mark claims to territory with symbols and institutions, to host security forces deployed to maintain control, and implement development projects that help foster a sense of nationhood, patronage, and loyalty. On the other they are sites of anti-state activity and symbols, hubs of licit and illicit cross-border flows and networks, and surprisingly plural spaces of residents, migrants and sojourners from within and across internal and external borders. We argue that as these cities expand rapidly under conditions of (nominal) peace, they are ideal sites to explore the lived experience of conflict in the Northeast and its aftermath—all of which is marked on the urban landscape and in the lives and loves of those who call it home. Furthermore, we advocate for a research agenda that explores urban areas in the Northeast of varying sizes and official classifications. Such research challenges the fixation with ethnically exclusive territories in analysis of the region and the dominance of mega-cities in research in South Asia more generally. It also offers new insights into the Northeast and new possibilities for comparative research on vernacular urbanism in borderlands elsewhere in Asia.

*Dolly Kikon*
University of Melbourne, Australia

**Dimapur**

This paper focuses on Dimapur, the largest city in Nagaland. I examine how the city has been reconfigured after the 1997 Indo-Naga ceasefire agreement signed between Naga armed groups and the Government of India. This paper locates how competing political actors including armed groups, politicians, and tribal business groups, have become key players in the development of Dimapur focussing on three dynamics. First, I examine how the establishment of two ceasefire camps, each belonging to competing Naga armed groups within the vicinity of city, have produced new political and social subjects. Second, keeping the history of militarization in the backdrop, I highlight how the ongoing transformation in Dimapur draws our attention towards issues of urbanization, governance, and organization (as spaces of inclusion and exclusion) in militarised societies around the world. Here, I am keen to locate Dimapur as a ceasefire city, by which I mean the manner in which the urban planning is increasingly based on a model of fortification, managing the breakdown of law and order, and a culture of impunity. Finally, I challenge the dominant framework that portrays tribal communities in transition from primitivism into modernity or as collectives who predominantly live in villages and rural areas. While it is true that village structures such as customary courts and tribal councils play a significant role in the cultural and social lives of the Naga people, my paper illustrates how a large section of Nagas also live in urban centres like Dimapur, and are part of a vibrant market economy and urban culture. I propose that it is important to recognize the
important developments like the emergence of tribal cities and ceasefire cities to explore urban spaces in borderlands across Asia.

**Shillong**

Shillong, present-day capital of Meghalaya, was established as a hill resort in the latter part of the 19th century. It was strategically located allowing troops from the Bengal plains easy access to the Brahmaputra valley and the unruly Northeastern frontier. The pleasant climate soon made it a favorable location for missionaries, tea planters and colonial officers, seeking some time off from the heat and dust in the plains. It was made the administrative and military headquarter for the entire Assam province and remained so until India’s independence. The colonial history is still very present in the city’s landscape as well as in the persistent idea of the city as a cosmopolitan, modern place. But Shillong also carries another legacy, that of the tribal village. In the latter sense, the city is an exclusive place, based on traditional structures of authority and belonging. Over time, various “ethnic others” have been expelled from the city and/or subject of violence in various neighbourhoods and locales. The tribal city only allows the non-indigenous residents access to certain areas, and then not as full citizens. In this paper I will explore a key governing structure of the tribal city, that is, the village durbar or the so-called Dorbar Shnong. For critics, the village dorbar is an obstacle to effective urban administration, whereas those that defend it see the dorbar as an unique feature of Khasi society that allows for grassroots participation and direct, consensus-based, democracy.

**Dibrugarh**

Capital, calamities and counter-insurgency have gone a long way in making Dibrugarh the city that it is today. In the early 20th century, European capital created plantations and oil drilling sites around the city’s hinterland, thereby connecting it to other locations of labour and capital. The earthquake of 1950 changed the topography of the river Brahmaputra that flows along the northern banks of the city. In affecting the flow of the river, the earthquake contributed to transformation of the landscape and with it, of the political economy of the city’s hinterland. These factors, combined with heightened political mobilisation, were crucial in making the city an important location in the armed insurgency against the Indian state that began in the 1980s. In tragic cycles of violence, where angry events from below (insurgents) produced incommensurate retaliatory violence from above (the state), the city became a ground for a radical transformation of social and economic relationships. This paper will look at the interplay of capital, calamities and counter-insurgency in the transformation of Dibrugarh from a colonial frontier town to a contemporary centre of neoliberal wealth.

**Imphal**

Imphal, the capital of Manipur, has a captivating urban landscape. Its buildings, neighbourhoods, memorials, stadiums, check posts, billboards, and graffiti tell stories of armed struggle, inter-ethnic relations, development (and its failings), migration, remittances, exclusion and belonging. It is a window into the region that is unlike any other. Yet like many cities in the Northeast it remains neglected as a subject of research in its own right. To clarify, there many fine studies of Manipur, its politics, governance (or lack thereof), its history, its various communities, and its various crises. Yet little attention has been paid to its cities and towns aside from forming the backdrop for other events. This paper is concerned
with the control urban space in Imphal and the ways control is contested by asking: Who has the power to control urban space in Imphal? Who can enable and deny place and belonging? How does this manifest on the urban landscape? The first part examines the armed forces, who control parts of the city by enacting security, and the civilian government, who control parts of the city through development projects and attempts to order urban chaos. Underground groups and residents fill—and create—the gaps in between. The relationship between these state, quasi-state, and non-state actors is rarely seamless and usually conflicting making it difficult to locate a singular hegemonic force in control of Imphal’s urban space. The second part uses the example of memorials around the city to demonstrate the ways in which residents contest spatial control: a challenging task in Imphal’s militarised landscape. This tentative counter-hegemony reveals the small acts residents take to mark the landscape with memories of violence, loss, and defiance.

**WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER, 13.30 – 15.00**

**TERRITORIAL FLOWS II**

**LIFE ALONG NEPAL’S SOUTHERN BORDER AND BEYOND**

**Convenor**
David Gellner
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

**Chair**
Amanda Snellinger
University of Washington, United States

**Discussant**
Krishna Hachhethu
CNAS - Tribhuvan University, Nepal

In many ways, Nepal defines itself by its borders. Prithvi Narayan Shah’s description of it as a yam between two boulders has become a cliché of both academic writing and political discourse. There have been occasions when Nepal’s position in the middle and as one large borderland has been seen as an opportunity. But for the most part (and 2015 brought this home more powerfully than ever) the nationalist narrative is a defensive one that casts Nepal as vulnerable to powerful neighbors. A roughly 680-mile open border with India further undermines the Nepali state’s ability to enforce territoriality as goods and people flow along and across the porous border. Nepal has struggled with how to incorporate its south borderlands as more than a regional buffer.

Nepal’s southern plains have been integral to the national imaginary in contradictory ways. The establishment of the Tarai border to cordon Gorkha land from British East India Company territory transformed Nepal from a territory into a nation-state. Its jungle and fertile land have nourished northern Nepal particularly after malaria eradication when it became the country’s breadbasket. The region provides access to the nearest seaport from which Nepal receives the bulk of its foreign goods. And multiple waves of migration have made the region a dynamic demographic mix. Historically, this region has been simultaneously entangled with and estranged from the centers of state power. Since the Rana period it has been the staging ground for activism and rebellion that has forced the state to accommodate regime change, multi-party democracy, republicanism, and federalism. Yet, at the same time, Nepali nationalism has been oriented to Khas Arya culture in a way that does not accommodate the diversity in the south. Nepal’s ruling elite have treated native and long-settled communities’ claims for regional autonomy, citizenship, and inclusion suspiciously. These tensions have been ongoing since Frederick Gaige wrote his insightful, but too often ignored, book on regionalism and the politics of national integration four decades ago. Recently the sense of a “charging elephant from the south” has been particularly poignant with India’s unofficial blockade in response to Nepal promulgating a constitution despite heavy opposition, particularly in the south. Massive shortages nationwide have resulted. Widespread hostility to
India led to a social media campaign (#backoffIndia) and made it difficult to support the Madheshi political opposition without being branded as anti-national.

This double panel focuses on belonging and citizenship along Nepal’s southern border and beyond. We seek to challenge the methodological nationalism that views the Nepal purely in terms of hill-based culture and purely in terms of relations to a single state. These papers will consider how the centrality of two states in everyday life has shaped communities, politics, livelihoods, landholding, and demographics over time.

Tula Narayan Shah  
Nepal Madhesh Foundation, Nepal

Migration and Livelihood in Terai/Madhesh

The Tarai/Madhesh is characterized by fragmented landholdings, widespread landlessness, poor investments and infrastructure, out-migration and inequalities based on class, caste, ethnicity and gender. Not surprisingly, multiple poverty mitigating projects operate here, some with a gender lens. Nonetheless, an enduring poverty and inequity persists. Recent studies indicate new agrarian crises, in particular a ‘feminization of agriculture’: with the outmigration of a young generation of men from these poorly performing agrarian economies leaving behind women with restricted access to services, infrastructure, institutions and markets to manage productive [as well as reproductive] responsibilities. Research in the region also indicates that agricultural interventions have neither served the purpose of agricultural development nor positively changed the lives of poor women and men. Interventions often fail to grasp the complexity of gender relations and the socio-economic and ecological changes underway in the region. The research on migration and livelihood is being conducted in Sunsari focusing Ekamba, the head end and Amaduwa, tail end of Sitagunj branch administering resource mapping, household survey (for metadata), case studies, key informant interview and observation methods of data collection. The trend of out-migration from Tarai/Madhesh seems to be in an increasing phase especially since 1990. At present, Nepal is experiencing tremendous rise in the international labor migration and the majority of it is comprised of Tarai/Madhesh population. The Migration Assessment Survey 2008 showed that more than half of the households (53.3%) have at least one migrant member. The major reasons for out-migration are related to livelihood and income from agriculture. When population size of family increases, it demands for more living expenses. Again, unemployment and low agricultural income lead to indebtedness creating a vicious circle of poverty. So, they choose labor migration as their way to escape. The returned migrants have better living standards compared to the non-migrants.

Fraser Sugden  
International Water Management Institute, Nepal

Political economic change in the Nepal-India borderlands: agrarian change and landlordism in an era of globalisation

Mithilanchal is a borderland region which spans both sides of the Nepal-India frontier and is characterized by a unique blend of cultural-linguistic and socio-economic relations. This predominantly rural region has undergone significant agrarian change over recent decades – with economic globalisation, climate change, and mass out-migration. This paper charts the trajectory of change in this region, taking insights from both the Eastern Tarai (Dhanusa, Saptari and Morang) and North Bihar (Madhubani). Of particular interest is the changing character of rural feudalism, with the decline of the traditional landlord class in some regions and the ascendancy of new elites at the apex of the agrarian structure. Added to this are changes brought about by climate change and out-migration, and new patterns of technology use in agriculture and irrigation. It is however emphasized that despite the commonalities on both sides of the border, the unique characteristics of the Nepalese and Indian states and their roles in reproducing unique sets of agrarian relations, have precipitated increasingly divergent patterns of change.

In this context, the borderland is conceptualized as a region which falls between multiple overlapping social formations, including those grounded in a shared political space (India or Nepal), as
well as those grounded in socio-cultural and economic commonalities (Mithilanchal). Given the importance of the state in the reproduction and transformation of social relations however, it is shown how these shared characteristics undergo considerable flux in the context of political change.

Krishna Adhikari
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

David Gellner
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

*From Zamindars and Dacoits to Co-ops and Democratization: Marchawar since the 1970s*

Marchawar, the southern part of Nepal’s Rupandehi district, is exactly like Nepal in that it is surrounded on three sides by India. It was once famous as ‘Nepal’s Chambal’, a dacoit-infested territory that policemen feared to enter. At that time it was also dominated by large landowners, who were both respected and feared. The proximity to India made it a base for insurgency (KI Singh) and a refuge for criminals. Today, the majority of the landlords live in India and the dacoits are either dead or have moved into respectable lines of business. The Nepali NGO Swavalamban worked for many years in the area and established numerous cooperatives, most of which are still operational and some of which have enormous turnovers. People today are better off than they once were. Compared to the past, lawlessness is much less; no doubt other, more white-collar, forms of corruption have increased. Living on the border has benefits: access to cheaper goods in India, the possibility of petty trading, access to two different state systems, and access to educational and medical facilities in India. Keeping access to these benefits is one of the incentives to continue cross-border marriages. The border, though, is gradually being tightened as the SSB increases its presence and patrols.

Mallika Shakya
South Asian University, India

*I can see India from my house*: Local and national voices representing Nepal-India border

Clearly Sarah Palin was much ridiculed during the 2008 American election for claiming to have a say in foreign policy, based on Alaska’s geographic proximity with Russia. I propose to discuss the question of locality versus diplomacy in dealing with the complexity in making of the “open border” between Nepal and India. Nepalis and Indians living on the two sides of this border cross the line almost every day or several times a day, thus giving rise to a relationship vernacularly referred to as that of “bread and bride”. This relationship has been duly acknowledged in the diplomacy reciprocated by the capitals of the two countries even if the two entwined questions – first, whether border identity is sufficiently recognized in making of the contemporary Nepali nationalism, and second, whether India’s Nepal policy is marred by imperialistic tendencies – continue to qualify public understandings of this relationship.

I propose to engage with the postcolonial literature on city politics and ethnographic literature on borderlands as well as the sociological literature on media to discuss the ongoing Madhesh movement which boldly claimed bilateral borders as spaces of political resistance. I will juxtapose the protests that sprung up on the ground and discourses circulating in the two capital cities – Kathmandu and Delhi – in response to the border blockade imposed in support of the Madhesh movement, to develop my argument that border politics may be triggered by the local bargaining of power but they should also be seen in the national contexts of social inclusion, economic justice and democratic freedom.
CONTESTED DEVELOPMENT IN THE ASIAN FRONTIERS

Convenor and Chair
Jonathan Goodhand
SOAS, United Kingdom

This panel, based upon a Special Issue submission to the Journal of Borderlands Studies, draws upon longitudinal empirical research in four contrasting Asian frontier and borderland regions. These papers focus on contested processes of primitive accumulation and development in frontier zones and analyse regions which demonstrate vast disparities in their levels of (in)stability, violence, the embeddedness of state institutions and market dynamics. Attempts to account for this unevenness have often embraced a ‘diffusionist narrative’ (Harvey 2006) whereby borderland and frontier regions that continue to experience violence, poverty and illegal practices are portrayed as residual or marginal spaces left behind by the uneven diffusion of capitalism and statebuilding, the antidote to which is the imposition of more ‘effective’ state institutions and market practices in order to ‘develop’ and integrate these regions into national political structures and national and transnational economies.

These papers provide an alternative perspective; rather than seeing frontiers as ‘lagging’ zones that export insecurity, illegal commodities and migrants, they are viewed as zones of opportunity, laboratories of rapid (and highly contested) political and economic change. The cases studied differ from one another in terms of the level and type of state presence, their legibility to the state and their connectivity to regional and global markets. However, they are all places of rapid socio-economic change, churning populations and high levels of economic ‘extroversion’. The political economies of frontier regions wax and wane according to shifts in the prices of commodities, changing labour markets, and efforts by states to assert their presence in, and regulate, frontier zones. Livelihoods are shaped by countervailing pressures of centripetal statebuilding and centrifugal markets, whilst development interventions – from development corridors, to counter-narcotics policies, to commercial agriculture programmes – become entangled in this nexus of accumulation and sovereignty.

Both states and frontier elites may have vested interests in maintaining frontiers or borderlands as illegible or liminal spaces. Illegible spaces may be, for some late developing countries, the equivalent of ‘special economic zones’ – they enable processes of rapid accumulation that cannot take place elsewhere. To pursue the analogy further, if as Ha Joon Chang argues, late developing countries have had the ladder kicked away from them, do some borderland zones constitute an alternative kind of ladder for political elites? Are they places where statebuilders can pursue the unsavoury strategies that are disallowed, or at least moderated, elsewhere by the mantras of good governance, human rights and equitable development?

Jonathan Goodhand
SOAS, United Kingdom

Straddling the line: Drugs, brokers and conflict on the Afghan-Tajik borderlands

Over the last three decades Afghanistan and Tajikistan have increasingly been incorporated into a regional conflict system. Borderlands became critical pivots in this highly volatile transnational conflict system. On the one hand they became ‘neuralgia points’, as generators of instability and exporters of illicit goods including drugs and arms, and on the other hand they have been zones of innovation and accumulation leading to new forms of authority and development on the margins of states. The Tajik-Afghan borderlands represent a particularly interesting case study of a ‘drugs intensified’ borderland. Here protracted conflict and the growth of the drug economy have transformed the borderlands; far from being ‘marginal’, the borderlands have become central sites of accumulation and contested statebuilding. Increasingly political and economic processes in the hinterlands have reshaped power and authority at the putative centre.
These dynamics are explored through a detailed ethnography of one of the border crossing points, an Ismaili settled area, called Shighnan. The role played by trading and political networks that emerged in wartime is examined, and specifically how borderlands brokers have influenced post war political settlements and relationships linking national capitals with the border regions and beyond. The life history of a borderland broker, who emerged as a key player in the cross border drugs trade generates insights into; the political and social hybridity of drugs networks; the overlapping and symbiotic relationship between the licit and illicit economies; the ambiguous and changing role of brokership over time. International policies including democracy promotion, cross-border regional development, counter narcotics and border management have unpredictable and perverse effects on (dis)order and development in the borderlands.

Bart Klem
University of Melbourne, Australia

Thiruni Kelegama
University of Zurich, Switzerland

Anxious integration: Development in Sri Lanka’s post-war frontier

A classical way of dealing with post-war frontier areas is to integrate them into the national economy and polity. It is a common policy mantra that development and stability go hand in hand,. We contend that such an approach is riven by contradictions. Economic and political logics collide, pacification strategies backfire, and increased connectivity produces unforeseen anxieties. This paper studies development efforts and associated forms of state territorialisation in northeastern Sri Lanka. Following its military victory over the Tamil insurgency in 2009, the government launched comprehensive development plans for the region. These plans are resonant with a long history of state intervention in the northeastern Dry Zone. Nostalgic registers of the paddy village rub shoulders with a modernist developmental state; material welfare is engulfed in processes of state territorialisation. Although the government’s approach seems to accomplish some of its objectives, there are clearly issues of exclusion and erasure. Typically, government officials seek to render these interventions technical, while critical ethnic minority leaders and brokers render them political. Zooming in on three salient post-war interventions – special zones, settlement schemes and increased connectivity – we show that the integration of Sri Lanka’s northeast produces contradictory results. Political moves cloaked in economic rationales no longer make sense, increased welfare goes hand in hand with disgruntlement, new forms of circulation produce contingent results, and established repertoires of antagonism are unsettled. Future outcomes are unpredictable, but it is clear that short-term pacification efforts risk sowing the seeds for longer-term structural instability. The Sri Lankan case thus sheds light on the challenges of integrating a frontier region, even for a strong state in a middle-income country.

Rachael Diprose
University of Melbourne, Australia

Najib Azca
Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Profiteers, religious warriors, and agents of socio-political change: Frontier dynamics in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia

Indonesia’s peripheral islands and border regions constitute an important lens for understanding the intersection and contestation between the forces of statebuilding, market expansion and processes of development. These dynamics are explored through the case of Central Sulawesi in Indonesia on Sulawesi, one of the two islands (with Borneo) that form the archipelagic border to the Philippines to the north. Central Sulawesi province, with many of its institutional structures and boundaries rooted in Dutch Colonialism, sits at the frontier of the largely Christian northern part of Sulawesi and the predominantly
Muslim south. The paper, drawing on comparative lessons from Poso (the site of violent conflict) and neighbouring regions in the province, shows how violent conflict was caused by shifts in the configuration of political settlements, horizontal inequalities, inter-group competition, the rent-seeking behaviour of local leaders, and problematic external interventions.

The paper explores the escalation of conflict in the early years of democratisation linked to local inequalities and power struggles to gain access to and control of the state during a period when economic instability increased the importance of cash crops and other market economies. Religious identity gained both political salience at the onset of the conflict and symbolic significance in the ‘repertoire of violence’ used during mobilisation. The entry of forces from Java and other conflict-affected areas – bringing networks of international groups espousing jihadist and other extremist ideologies – linked local issues in Poso with national, and international discourse and tensions, giving Indonesia’s conflict regions ongoing geopolitical significance. The history of local conflict dynamics and their supra-local dimensions in border and frontier regions such as Poso, have not only influenced the framing of state development interventions to focus on mitigating inter-group disparities, but have also shaped national discourse on threat and insecurity, and contemporary responses to emerging security issues.

Patrick Meehan
SOAS, United Kingdom

Spatialising the political economy of development, brokerage and violence in the Sino-Myanmar borderlands

Since the late 1980s, the Sino-Myanmar borderland region has become an extremely important site of accumulation, both for state elites and private investors from across Asia. Cross-border trade and extraction of resources located in this frontier region – including drugs, jade, teak, hydropower and land – have become deeply embedded in national economies and transnational economic networks, albeit in ways that are spatially highly uneven. Throughout this borderland, zones of ‘direct’, ‘formal’ or ‘legible’ governance, such as the special economic zones formally established by both the Chinese and Myanmar governments at the Muse-Ruili border crossing, coexist alongside liminal zones of perpetual illegibility, governed by an array of militia and ceasefire groups with varying levels of state presence and authority. Whilst the former appear as state-managed spaces and are extolled as facilitating the kinds of trade and regional integration necessary to facilitate ‘modernisation’ and ‘development’, the latter are typified as ungoverned spaces and zones of criminality and conflict and weak state presence, albeit regions that are also highly connected to regional markets and investors. This study seeks to address why similar processes of regional integration and development have led to distinct variations in the way territory is governed and the social relations that have emerged. It argues that there is a functionality to the way in which certain borderland spaces remain illegible and liminal even as they are politically and economically integrated. The diversity in border regimes in the Myanmar-China borderland cannot, therefore, only be attributed to the extent of economic integration and state authority, but in the different ways in which these phenomena have been imposed, brokered and managed by both the interests and actors at the centre, within borderland spaces, and across the border.

Wednesday 14 December, 15.30 – 17.00

Promoting gender sensitive policies for border special economic zones in the Mekong region

Convenor and Chair
Kyoko Kusakabe
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

There are a number of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) set up especially along the borders in the Mekong region – Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and partly in Myanmar. Special Economic Zones allow certain governance that is different from other parts of the country. Part of such policy is labor policy. For
example, Thai government has from time to time referred to using SEZ as a dam to stop the flow of migrant workers to come to centerlands. Our panel discusses from a gender perspective how Border SEZ can create different gender structure and practices through the analysis on the interaction of state, capital/market, families and communities. Borders are space where the roles of state and its relationship with the people is more acutely observed and perceived (Arnold 2012; Donnan and Wilson 1999), and researchers have shown how women exercise their agency to negotiate and circumvent the state and market, and border as a space provide a particular resource to do so (Staudt 2001; Sturgeon 2005; Kusakabe and Pearson 2014). The panel follows Pearse and Connell (2016)'s argument that gender norms are multiple and the seeming consensus is the operation of power, and explores the different ways that coexisting and contradicting gender norms are in operation in different circumstances at the border. Especially the entitlement and endowment of cross-border migrants in border SEZ can make the working of gender norms and practices much more complicated. At the same time, the relationship with the local people, especially when local people have been evicted out to create space for SEZ, can further create different types of relationships with migrants, employers and local communities. The panel will discuss these differences through papers that look at the same issue from different standpoints.

Carli Melo
Mekong Migration Network, Thailand

Border Special Economic Zones and their implication for female migrant worker mobility

Research carried out on Special Economic Zones (SEZs) from across the world have highlighted the negative implications such projects commonly exert on labour rights and worker welfare. For example, this model of economic development has often led to restrictions on workers’ freedom of association; and resulted in weak or non-existent enforcement of national labour laws. This has led to a situation whereby workers within SEZs frequently face the threat of arbitrary dismissal, and receive extremely low wages. A large proportion of workers hired in these zones are women. As such, the SEZ phenomenon has a disproportionate impact on female workers’ rights, especially with regards to issues such as maternity protection, reproductive rights and health, and childcare.

The Mekong Migration Network, a sub-regional network of migrant rights advocates in the Mekong subregion, has previously researched the impact of SEZs in border areas. In interviews conducted with migrant workers for the purpose of this research, many shared their concerns about their working conditions and the negative impact on their general welfare. The presentation will provide details of our interim findings of an ongoing research, with a special focus on the rights and welfare of female workers employed in labour intensive industries in these zones and the implications for female workers’ mobility.

Naomi Hatsukano
IDE-JETRO, Japan

Job opportunities and female workers in Thai-Cambodia border area

Poi Pet is the biggest border town in Cambodia, which is located along the South Economic Corridor and plays a critical role in trade between Thailand and Cambodia. Because of its strategic location, the border area development of this area has been affected by unstable bilateral political relationship between the two countries in the last 30 years. There have been series of investment plans of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Poi Pet, however, most of them remain undeveloped. Only casino hotels which opened in the early 2000s have been active and they provide job opportunities in Poi Pet. At the same time, many Cambodian workers work in Rong Kluea Market in Aranyaprathet at the Thai side of the border. In recent years, gradually labor intensive manufacturing factories started to move from Thailand to SEZs in Poi Pet and this trend is expected to accelerate in the future, because of the increasing labor cost in Thailand. In Poi Pet, there are various types of Cambodian workers such as workers who wish to work closer to their family in Cambodia, workers who wish to migrate to Thailand in the near future, and workers who came back from Thailand. In this presentation, female workers’ situation in Poi Pet area will be examined.
Gender relations, state and market at the border special economic zones: How empowering is the border?

There is a move to build special economic zones (SEZs) at the border areas in Mekong sub-region. Border SEZs are set up to take advantage of the proliferating border trade and to take advantage of either cross-border access to infrastructure or to cheaper labor, many of them women. Border as a space provides women with mixed pressures and opportunities. Border as an “exceptional space” offers a larger space of maneuver for women, whose behaviors are often restricted by gender norms in the community and by the state. Women gain employment opportunities and exercise their agency to make full use of resources available for them in both sides of the border. At the same time, lack of involvement from the state and the community to support their social reproduction and protect them from violence also means that women are left alone to fend for themselves, which makes women more vulnerable to exploitation and violence. Some women workers do choose to work at the border, even when the wages might be lower than in the centerlands, and security might be worse than centerlands. At the same time, they also organize strikes to fight against their working conditions. The paper discusses how border SEZs can be governed in order to facilitate women’s empowerment through reviewing previous studies combined with primary data.

Disquiet India-China Borderlands (1962): Oral Narratives on Flows and Border Communities

This paper addresses the impact of the India-China conflict of 1962 on border communities of high altitude borderlands who bore the brunt of cross-border flows, of the military as well as of refugees, in an otherwise peaceful snow-clad geographical landscape shared initially by India and Tibet until the then newly-formed government of the People’s Republic of China took over the latter in 1951, following which both new nations, India and China, intended to use Tibet as a bulwark. The paper intends to study the diverse impact through oral narratives, representing both experience and reality as women, border guards, security personnel or displaced persons; the impact of this political crisis on their lives and livelihoods. The paper does not engage with the political developments of that decade but aims at oral narratives or social memory as an ‘organic link’ between an event that took place five decades ago and the society that bore the impact.
The experience-centered narrative approach would initiate new research questions for historians; the perspectives from which different groups of the society over several generations saw, experienced or related to this event, or perceived its history not necessarily as common memory or widespread unanimity but nuanced with differences in emphasis or even disagreement, through participation or otherwise. An event such as this that disturbed the serenity of the eastern Himalayan mountain range through Tawang up to village of Rupa on one side and through Anjaw District up to Anini on the other, of what was the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) of India, present Arunachal Pradesh, which had offices in Tezpur and Tinsukia respectively, is still remembered by many people. Hence linked with the ethnic diversity of both the hills and the plains, there will be a range of what is remembered and who is remembering what. This would provide the historian with voices that were hidden, a deviation or a starting point to understand and interpret the significance of the event differently and establish a link between historical memory and social identity, through what Corinne Squire calls, experience-centered narrative research, thereby interlinking micro-history of the borderland to explain historical change.

Muthumanickam Matheswaran
Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, India

Security Dynamics of Borderlands in South Asia

The modern international system of nation-states has evolved from the Euro-centric, Westphalian concept of the nation-state, centered primarily on the principle of territorial sovereignty defined by clearly demarcated and secured borders and boundaries. While Europe evolved the Westphalian state system over nearly four centuries, Asian nation-states came into being in a rapid process as a result of the post-Second World War decolonization drive. While historically borders have been perceived as indispensable markers of identity and territorial sovereignty for empires, kingdoms and even chiefdoms; security was addressed in a well-balanced perspective. Effectively, as seen in China and India, security was addressed through the concepts of frontier and buffer states, which enabled free flow of trade, culture, education, migration, and development.

This paper will examine how new nation-states in Asia were inspired by European nation-states as universal models. The desire to create territorially well-defined nation-states led to rigid border concepts and thus create security paranoia that dominates the public discourse at the expense of human development. These problems emanate from the fact that there are political fault lines built into the post-colonial states even as they were born – ranging from insurgency, to civil war, revolution and secessionist movements in the new states, which are in part, the problem and in part, the outcome. Partition of the Indian subcontinent and the China-Tibet issues provide glaring examples of rigid border concepts resulting in intractable security problems.

Vidya Nadkarni
Department of Political Science and International Relations University of San Diego, United States

Border Flows: The Old Silk Road and China’s New Silk Road Initiative

The Old Silk Road linked China through northern and southern routes, which came together in Kashgar and then divided again, with one route traversing the Pamir mountain range to Samarkand and then over the Karakorum Range into India. Another route went through Tashkent. Along this route, traders plied their wares but this was also the path across which Buddhism traveled to China from India. Treated as a frontier zone with largely fluid and porous boundaries, this east-west corridor represented a vibrant region of cultural and economic exchange. The golden age of the Silk Road was in the 7th century during the Tang dynasty in China when the empire was relatively stable internally and experienced another resurgence under the Mongols in the 13th century. Thereafter, the opening up of sea routes to the Orient and the inward-looking worldview of the Ming dynasty led to the gradual decline of the Silk Road.

The arrival of the Westphalian state in the middle of the 20th century hardened political borders between the new states of India and China with heavily militarized border posts. But President Xi Jinping has sought to revive the Silk Road by land and sea and reconnect Asia with Europe. This paper will
Andrew Tirrell
University of San Diego, United States

A Tale of Two Treaties: What can we learn from outcomes of the Indus Waters Treaty and the Mekong River Commission

As water scarcity increases due to growing demand and climate change impacts, countries sharing transboundary rivers must foster cooperative relationships to ensure the sustainability of their river basin. While there are many trans-boundary water agreements in place across the world (and their number has grown significantly in recent years), the outcomes of these pacts vary significantly. Some agreements have led to an increase in cooperation and a decrease in conflict over water issues. Others have not met with consistent success, and some have even seen an increase in water conflict post-agreement.

Using a case-study approach, this paper will examine two Asian trans-boundary water agreements: the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 between India and Pakistan, and the Mekong River Commission of 1995 between Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam (with China and Myanmar joining as “dialog partners”). By comparing the outcomes of these agreements, in terms of both conflict/cooperation and sustainability, this paper hopes to identify the factors that have led to successful river basin governance. An understanding of the dynamics of such agreements may be usefully applied to improving the way that these agreements themselves, and other existing agreements, function. Additionally, collecting lessons learned from current water-sharing pacts is of critical importance to the crafting of new agreements covering trans-boundary river basins that currently lack multi-lateral governance.