Edited by Mona Chettri and Michael Eilenberg

Development Zones in Asian Borderlands

This is the **author's version** of the book manuscript *Development Zones in Asian Borderlands* edited by Mona Chettri and Michael Eilenberg and published in the Asian Borderlands book series at Amsterdam University Press in May 2021.

The author's version is the manuscript after peer-review and accepted for publication.

Link to the published book: https://www.aup.nl/en/book/9789463726238/development-zones-in-asian-borderlands

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Acknowledgments

Enclave Development and Socio-spatial Transformations in Asian Borderlands

Mona Chettri and Michael Eilenberg

Development Zones in Asian Borderlands traces the social, spatial and economic transformation of Asian borderlands into development zones of capital accumulation, experimentation and dispossession. While the economic imperative remains central to the origins of development zones, equally important are the individuals, institutions and networks that emerge from it. In turn, these networks and relationships are entangled in cross-cutting and overlapping relationships that create and maintain a development zone. Such zones therefore encompass the various social, political and economic networks specific to spatially bound, development-related activity, including special economic zones (SEZs), export processing zones, casinos and technology enclaves. *Development Zones in Asian Borderlands* locates a set of common vocabulary to identify and analyse economic zones in borderlands as sites of productivity, development and politics in the borderlands of South and Southeast Asia.

Borderlands as Productive Spaces

As the chapters in this volume illustrate, development zones are barometers of geopolitical interest and cross-border financial investments, sometimes even despite their stagnation or eventual failure (see Rippa; Hargyono; McDuie-Ra, this volume). However, although financial incentives and political networks are important in this changing perception towards borderlands as productive spaces, equally important are local factors, like the aspirations, desires and motivations of people living in these areas. Borderlands, by virtue of their geopolitical locations, have in the past been sites of reluctant economic investment, especially by the private sector, due to uncertain geopolitical situations and security concerns (Chettri and McDuie-Ra 2018; Eilenberg 2012; van Schendel and Abraham 2005). Simultaneously, they have also been considered areas of strategic state making (Cons 2016; Jones 2012; McDuie-Ra 2016). The desire and need for 'development' in areas that have historically been considered remote, out of the way, contributes to the support for the establishment of enclave development in the borderlands as special economic zones (SEZs), including casinos, smart cities, dry ports and more. However, not all borders and borderlands are equal in their historical relevance as sites of refuge, mobility, cultural exchange and so forth, or in their contemporary utility as areas of economic productivity. Their relevance waxes and wanes in response to changing socio-political situations. Similarly, development zones of various sizes and functions now proliferate in borderlands. Every development zone is imbued with its own set of aspirations for socioeconomic development across different scales and each has its own history of success and failure. Thus, while enclave economic zones are ubiquitous, with similar mechanisms of production and extraction, or share similar financial circuits or geopolitical motivations, each

development zone is unique owing to localised differences in demography and socio-political history. This volume situates different types of socioeconomic enclaves under the analytical framework of development zones, which accounts for their spatial, social and temporal diversity. Following from and contributing to ongoing discussions on borderland transformations, this conceptual realignment enables a holistic view of the (political, social, spatial, economic) connections enabling this transformation.

The gradual change in perception of borderlands from remote, backward areas to productive spaces can be considered a natural extension of the shift in national economic and political policies towards greater liberalisation, increased integration with the global economy and 'exportism' (Billé, Delaplace, and Humphrey 2012; Nyíri 2012; van Schendel and de Maaker 2014; Zhang and Saxer 2017). In the last three decades, changes in sectoral contributions and the increased movement of goods and people have ushered in a period of volatile dynamism, characterised by widening socioeconomic disparity, environmental degradation and labour exploitation (Chettri 2020; Chettri and McDuie-Ra 2018; Cons and Eilenberg 2019a; Jones and Ferdoush 2018; Lindquist 2009; Shneiderman 2013). Shifts in economic policies have been complemented by changes in political priorities around sovereignty, territory and citizenship (Ong 2006). In large parts of Asia, state-led liberalisation has emerged as a resolution to managing demands for economic growth while still controlling (and often curbing) political and territorial sovereignty (Campbell 2018; Cons and Eilenberg 2019b; Horstmann, Saxer, and Rippa 2018). Alongside economic goals and geopolitical priorities, technological innovation and investment in infrastructure have been crucial to the transformation of borderlands from 'frontiers to gateways' of neoliberal incursions (Harris and van der Veen 2015; Murton 2017; Rippa 2020). Development zones, as key sites of spatial experimentation, therefore constitute new forms of territorialisation. Borderlands are now repositioned as central locations (ironically) within this new economic schema, primarily owing to their geopolitical position. State-led liberalisation consolidates both economic and political concerns around territory and economic growth, incentivising the movement of capital and the commodification of (human, environmental) resources and/or creating easier access to them. This is complemented by the generation of demand for new commodities and access to new markets while gradually cementing sovereign control over borderlands through (promises of) economic development (Amster and Lindquist 2005; Eilenberg 2014; Woods 2019). On the other hand, borderlands are simultaneously being converted into development zones by non-state actors, too. These informal development zones are often aided and abetted by the same infrastructural, social, economic and political changes that trigger planned development. Furthermore, formal economic zones may act as the catalyst for informal and/or illegal networks and activities (see Meehan et al; Chettri; Plachta, this volume) within the development zone. The active conversion of borderlands into productive space has led to the re-organisation of relations, space and society (Murton 2017). The chapters in this volume

illustrate how new forms of state building, international collaborations and financial investments are couched in the apolitical language of economic development and modernity through development zones.

Borderlands have long been considered sites of nested exceptionalism: the interplay of exception and rule that creates intersections for networks, markets and politics (Bach 2011). This exceptionalism is further accentuated by the increasing appearance of development zones, which with their enclave economies and emergent socio-spatial networks, add another layer of exceptionalism in an already exceptional space. However, the increasing ubiquity of development zones does not negate their exceptionalism. Instead, they represent new constellations of productivity, control and regulations which are mapped onto pre-existing socio-political, spatial and economic networks in areas of variegated sovereignty and contested belonging (Ong 2004). In her discussion of urban enclaves in the Philippines, Jana Kliebert describes these enclave economies as 'spaces of exception 2.0', as these 'zones signal an intensification of a development trajectory based on socio-spatial exclusions and are qualitatively different from earlier mono-functional enclave spaces' (Kleibert 2018). Following suit, the relationships, networks, challenges and opportunities that may emerge from enclave economies are different from other types of economic activities within the borderland. Thus, enclave economies often give rise to a more intense set of politics, imagination and affect (hope, failure, anxiety, abandonment) than is true of other spaces even within the borderland. Development zones can therefore be considered a heuristic device through which one can map (i) the dialectic relationship between different (and sometimes new) sets of actors, institutions and issues, (ii) larger international and national policies and their implementation, adaptation and/or subversion on the ground and finally (iii) everyday experiences of living in a development zone.

What Makes a Zone a Development Zone?

Over the last few decades, many countries in South and Southeast Asia have undergone gradual but sustained change that can be attributed to accelerated liberalisation, greater integration in the global economy, advancement in infrastructure and technology and heightened mobility of goods and people. In many parts of Asia, economic enclaves have received institutional stimulus as sites of economic and spatial experimentation. Petri dishes of sorts, these economic zones are sites where local and foreign capital, national/international law, politics, technology and innovation, modernist fantasies and infrastructural hope and decay coalesce within a tight space. Territorially moored economic activities (and/or the aspirations of economic productivity) lie at the core of economic zones, which are organised around layers of spatial, political and economic exceptionalism. These zones produce attractive regulatory environments and infrastructure for investment, exploitation and securitisation of resources and populations (Bach 2011). A development zone encapsulates such an economic enclave within

a wider network of relationships. Therefore, as a conceptual schema, development zones offer a useful framework through which to analyse the different actors, institutions and interactions emerging out of the logic of development through zones. The development zone framework enables us to map the flows, frictions, interests and imaginations that accumulate in specific locations at particular moments to transformative effect and to analyse their interconnections from multiple vantage points. Consequently, it facilitates the simultaneous analysis of localised manifestations of capital accumulation and their regional, national and global connections.

As the chapters in this volume illustrate, the proliferation of development zones of various sizes and functions across different borderlands in Asia heralds a marked shift in political and economic discussions around borders and borderlands. The chapters in this volume add depth and diversity to these ongoing discussions on the transformation of borderlands and offer a conceptual platform to understand and analyse them better. Development zones emphasise borderlands as productive spaces, albeit with their own set of complexities as a result of their geopolitical location. This volume, while privileging the capacity of local actors to define and shape development zones, also brings to focus the dialectic relationship between people, institutions and resources in a fluid landscape. The chapters in this volume highlight how development zones in borderlands further complicate pre-existing questions around sovereignty, individual agency, modernity, hope, decay and development itself.

Development zones come in various shapes and sizes. While some are real and tangible, others exist only on paper, in blueprints and maps. Nevertheless, underlying the rationale for enclave development (whether real or imagined) is its discursive power as a 'modernist fantasy of rationality and new beginnings' (Bach 2011, 99). Thus, despite differences in their structure (formal, informal), provenance (official, illegal) and scale of operation, powerful sentiments of hope and aspirations are often linked to the creation and maintenance of development zones, even in instances where an economic enclave no longer exists or never materialised as intended (see Rippa; Hargyono; Mikkelsen & Eilenberg, this volume). However, hope and aspirations are fleeting and changing. An examination of development zones' source therefore reveals different dynamics that have been set in motion. In borderlands, things often happen to people and places without their active collaboration. New borders are created overnight (Datta 2012; Shewly 2013), resources are extracted and exchanged (Pangsapa and Smith 2008; Singh 2014) and new infrastructure is planned (Kobi 2020; Murton and Lord 2020; Rippa 2018). Individual hope then gets tagged onto national/and or regional hope and aspirations in line with the vision of national/regional development. Thus, formal economic zones can be seen as tangible manifestations of national/regional aspirations. On the other hand, localised negotiations, hustle and surreptitious (and often illegal) bypassing of rules and regulations within the development zone highlight how people and communities respond, cope and mould their lives around these often unforeseen changes. Development zones are therefore spaces where national/regional, corporate, communal and individual aspirations coalesce around widely held

but different understandings of development itself. Development zones open new ways of analysing what development means and the ways in which it occurs across scales in Asian borderlands.

In Asia and many other parts of the developing world, hope and aspiration are often articulated in the language of infrastructure (new or more), urbanisation and modernity. In borderlands, infrastructure and technological connectivity is vital for the realisation of these aspirations of urbanity and modernity. Without infrastructure, or the promise of infrastructure, development zones would not be possible. The success of enclave economies in borderlands is often predicated on the construction of infrastructure that can be seen, shown and displayed (durable roads, bridges and highways more specifically), connecting borderlands and border communities to bigger towns, markets and new opportunities. However, infrastructural hope extends beyond just roads and highways to incorporate a constellation of other elements (concrete buildings, ports, market sheds) that are crucial for the transformation of borderlands.

As borderlands turn into (or are expected to become) productive spaces, a range of aspirations and politics are built around infrastructure (Dwyer 2020; Murton and Lord 2020; Rippa 2020). Without the tangible, whether they be roads or mobile phone towers, there would be no seamless movement of people, goods or ideas within and outside the development zone. Neither would the surveillance and disciplining of borderland landscapes and communities be possible. While infrastructure remains central to narratives of national integration and modernity in the borderlands, all the chapters in this volume illustrate different types and levels of power, prestige and influence of the tangible on ideas, hope and aspirations across scales. Thus, whether it be as a new expression of diplomatic relations (see Murton; Plachta, this volume), territorialisation (see McDuie-Ra; Harris, this volume) or economic opportunities (see Zhang; Cons; Chettri; Meehan et al., this volume), infrastructure occupies a central position in all narratives of development. Even when in a state of ruin or abandonment (see Hargyono; Rippa; Mikkelsen & Eilenberg, this volume) infrastructure links aspirations, political patronage, transgressions and fissures within and between different people, institutions and countries into its built environment.

The proliferation of development zones in Asian borderlands signals a specific form of capital accumulation, experimentation and dispossession, one which profits from the socio-spatial economic and spatial location of borders and borderlands while simultaneously introducing/imposing new changes on the borderland landscape. However, these transformations, although ubiquitous, are not uniform in their manifestations, politics or impact. This book hopes to make a significant contribution to borderland studies by offering a new analytical framework for thinking of borderlands as new spaces of capital accumulation, especially as a result of formal and informal development zones. These transformations within an already exceptional space have led to new forms of territorialisations, assemblages and socio-spatial changes, as illustrated by the empirically rich case studies presented in the book.

Identifying Development Zones

This volume emerged from a writing workshop on development zones in Asia, at Aarhus University, Denmark in June 2019.[1] Irrespective of ethnographic variation, all contributors at the workshop described similar and simultaneous processes across different parts of Asia: enclaves, socio-spatial transformations, infrastructure, sovereignty and cross-border politics, localised agency. Different regions across Asian borderlands were connected through a global circuit of extraction, production, consumption and mobility. These processes, in turn, were shaped by national/regional politics and ideas of development. The similarities running through all the papers presented at the workshop highlighted the absence of a framework encapsulating this phenomenon in all its diversity. With this volume, we aim to initiate a conversation towards creating a conceptual platform through which to understand, analyse and verbalise this phenomenon. We start this conversation by identifying three interrelated characteristics of development zones – porosity, informality and spatial-temporal unboundedness – shared by all development zones to different degrees.

Erik Harms' (2015) description of the porosity of urban enclaves provides a useful starting place for thinking about development zones. Urban enclaves, with their high walls and gated communities, may appear to be completely sealed off from the outside world. However, according to Harms, 'demarcations and distinctions of public and private that mark the idealized enclave are compromised and breached by social and spatial processes and practices of porosity' (Harms 2015, 153). Similarly, development zones can be understood as enclaves that are demarcated from surrounding areas through tangible markers, administrative regulations and/or social practices. Akin to the urban enclaves described by Harms, development zones are also characterised by the movement of humans, goods, services, technology, ideas and so forth between and within different spheres of (political, social) activities that gravitate towards economic zones. Development zones in Asian borderlands exhibit porosity on different scales, especially between global, national and situated, localised practices, often resulting in a recalibration of established spatial and socio-cultural relations. Porosity works both ways: ideas, technology, people and materials move in and out of the development zone. Such movement is directly proportional to the level of informality between different actors/institutions, regulatory bodies and so on. The development zone, which comprises many moving parts, is dynamic: it expands and contracts in response to influences from within and without. This leads to a variation in the concomitant reconfiguration of space, power and the tangible, material that determines choices and outcomes for those living within the development zone. Such inherent porosity enables the proliferation of development zones

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[1] The workshop was organised by the RISEZAsia project and funded by the Aarhus University Research Foundation (AUFF).

of different sizes, functions and component parts and allows the exploration of a diverse range of cases within the same analytical framework.

Informal/illegal development zones can also emerge either alongside or as a response to new opportunities for economic production/extraction (which themselves may be legal). Some development zones therefore constitute an offshoot or a node of a bigger development-related activity at some other location further inland and made relevant by their border location. Furthermore, as Zhang's chapter on casinos and McDuie-Ra's chapter on smart cities make explicit, despite their separate locations, all development zones can be interconnected through similarities in their social, aesthetic and financial circuits and imaginations. Motivated by aspirations of development and modernity, development zones can create their own sets of networks, one development zone connecting the other, creating their own map of global/national connections. Development zones therefore enable different types of connections at multiple scales and bring to the fore the importance of networks, both new and old. This necessitates acknowledgement of the different kinds of development zones – formal/informal, legal/illegal and across scales, both big and small— that have emerged as a result of socioeconomic interventions either in the borderlands or their vicinities. The formation of development zones, organic or otherwise, therefore facilitates focused interaction and engagement between different actors and across issues that may have very little resonance beyond. However as new economic and political opportunities, networks and interactions become available, new forms of group and individual identification (such as labourers, brokers and traders) may also emerge. This in turn can create spaces for 'bottom-up' contestations as different actors have access to different spheres of power and control.

The networks, spatial interventions and politics that emerge illustrate the temporal and spatial unboundedness of development zones. While spatial mooring is central to all development zones, its impacts, manifestations and experiences are not limited spatially or even temporally. As Harris' chapter on Kathmandu Airport shows, development zones may even extend to the sky and spread across many time zones. Thus, although it may be easy to determine what the economic zone at the heart of the development zone looks like or where its boundaries lie, it is equally difficult to predict the form or size of the development zone itself. However, unboundedness does not imply that the impacts and resultant experiences are unlimited. The more direct and intense the networks and relationships radiating out of the economic activity, the stronger the interconnections between actors and institutions within a development zone. When thought of as a collage, development zones therefore establish a holistic, causal link between different actors, motivations and manifestations in a particular time and place. The unboundedness of development zones and the resultant unpredictability of the forms they may take therefore marks a crucial conceptual distinction between economic zones with distinct spatial boundaries (e.g. SEZs, export processing units, dry ports) and development zones. Such unboundedness is also visible in the assemblage of people, networks,

finances and infrastructure that come together in the development zone. The chapters in this volume discuss aspects of porosity and spatial-temporal unboundedness across different scales, from climate change mitigation in Bangladesh where the physical landscape changes with almost every tide and the borders of Nepal where geophysical events and geopolitical imperatives collide and have transformative effects, to the borderlands of Indonesia and Laos, where time and change are slow and cumbersome.

Organisation of this Volume

This volume is divided into three themes: (i) Making the Development Zone; (ii) Disciplining the Development Zone; and (iii) Zones of Ruination and Abandonment. All three themes discuss different aspects of development zones in Asian borderlands. As indicated above, development zones in borderlands are actively created by different actors (multinational companies, private companies, international organisations, nation-states, regional governments, rebels, warlords and mafia) often working collaboratively for specific economic goals and visions of development. They may promise a combination of tax/tariff incentives, streamlined customs procedures, ownership limits, securitisation, infrastructure and deregulation in order to attract investment to these often 'underdeveloped', 'unruly' and 'sensitive' places. Borderland spaces are increasingly the locations of new development zones[2] in Asia. The authors in this volume, in various ways, study the emergence and proliferation of development zones, promoting the development of these remote and resource-rich borderlands across Asia. Through closely observed case studies, they offer explorations of development zones in the borderlands of Indonesia (Hargyono; Mikkelsen & Eilenberg), Laos (Rippa), Myanmar (Meehan, Aung Hla & Kham Phu), Bangladesh (Cons), Nepal (Harrison; Plachta; Murton), Cambodia, (Zhang) and India (McDuie-Ra; Chettri). Each one of these studies raises broader conceptual and analytical issues about zones, borderlands and the political economy of development. Although the chapters in this volume cover a wide range of geographical and political spaces, development-related issues and actors, we anticipate this volume to be the beginning of new conversations and discussions, especially around actors, issues and dynamics with which we have not been able to engage in this volume.

Making the Development Zone

One of the themes of this volume is to establish a broader understanding of the different financial, infrastructural and political networks that enable the creation of these development zones. How does such territorial planning shape and entice capital expansion and privatisation? Has it also led to the 'de facto' effect in regions officially not designated as development zones?

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[2] Ishida mention four spatial types of development zones like metropolitan areas, ports and harbors, junctions or intersections and Border areas (Ishida 2009).

Or has it additionally led to the creation of new, informal zones? These questions are all crucial to our understanding of the rise and fall of development zones.

In developing answers to these questions, development zones allow us to map the flows, frictions, interests and imaginations that accumulate in specific locations at particular moments to transformative effect. Economic enclaves have played an important role in the rapid industrialisation of many nation-states in Asia (Arnold 2012; Cross 2014; Levien 2012) and beyond (Neveling 2015, 2020). As stated by Jonathan Bach, '[s]tates have long enjoyed the ability, in principle, to lure investors seeking a higher return on their money by sectioning off and leasing their sovereign space in part or all to the highest bidder' (Bach 2011, 11). In Asia, borderland zones have become 'backyards' for the manufacturing industry (e.g. electronics, textiles),3 for agricultural expansion (oil palm, rubber, rice)4 and for resource-extraction regimes (minerals, timber). At times, all three constellations overlap and become 'export enclaves' or 'investment enclaves' that are largely separated from the overall economy and often run by cheap migrant labour.5

In his discussion of zoning and enclaving and the process of converting land and natural resources for commercial production purposes, Edward Barbier (2007, 2012) mentions the benefits of thinking of such spaces and their exploitation as both horizontal and vertical. By vertical downwards, Barbier refers to extractive activities like mining; by horizontal, he means the opening of land, such as new agricultural frontiers and plantation development. However, these two processes often overlap or are exceeded by each other and trigger an accelerated process of dispossession (Levien 2011). Nevertheless, the process of opening up new spaces of economic accumulation has triggered a new wave of border development, increasingly focused on the exploitation and transformation of land through infrastructure development rather than on manufacturing. Over time, development zones have changed their form and purpose significantly, turning from 'export-processing zones to information technology parks, to adapt to the new demands of the post-industrial economy' (Kleibert 2018, 472).

In certain instances, border economic zones become places where stronger neighbouring governments can export environmentally degrading projects (like dams for hydroelectric power) and maintain access to resources that have already been depleted at home by securing concessions. For example, several resource-rich states like Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar throughout the 2000s handed out large-scale land concessions for

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3 See for example the Batam SEZ: Indonesia-Singapore border. Mae Sot SEZ: Thailand-Myanmar border. Svay Rieng SEZ: Cambodia-Vietnam border. Golden Boten City SEZ: Laos-China border.
4 Agripolitan corridor: Indonesia-Malaysia border (Eilenberg 2014). Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate: West Papua-Papua New Guinea border (Ito, Rachman, and Savitri 2014).
5 See the Golden Triangle SEZ located in the sub-Mekong region of Bokeo province, close to Laos' borders with Myanmar, Thailand and China (Dwyer 2014). The Shan State Special Zone: Myanmar-China border (Nyíri 2012; Tan 2017; Woods 2011), the Savan-Seno Special Economic Zone: Laos-Thailand border (Brown 2019) and the Mae Sot SEZ: Thailand-Myanmar border (Campbell 2018).

plantation, timber, mining and hydropower development projects to foreign companies and governments from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, India and China. However, such resource-dependent development does not always result in sustained economic progress, as rent is not reinvested in more dynamic sectors like manufacturing. Also, larger environmental ruptures have created new opportunities for neighbouring governments to extend their sovereignty and export infrastructure into cross-border disaster zones.

This is made evident in the first chapter of this volume by Galen Murton on the geopolitics of infrastructure in the borderlands of post-disaster Nepal. Murton discusses the construction of the new Larcha import-export dry ports in the northern Nepal-China borderlands. He demonstrates how the 2015 earthquakes opened up new spaces for Chinese geopolitical interventions through post-disaster infrastructure development, which was embedded within its wider Belt and Road Initiative. The huge financial and logistical muscle of the Chinese state developed Nepalese borderland infrastructure at an immense pace and raised local hopes for landlocked Nepal to gain access to Chinese markets. Simultaneously, however, the economic expansion created social and political ambivalence in Nepal. Here Murton poses the question '*development for whom, by whom, and at what costs?*' and highlights the inherent asymmetries of power in post-disaster landscapes as well as widespread anxieties among minority populations like ethnic Tibetans over the extra-territorial control that may follow such state-led territorialisation outside the borders of China.

Tina Harris takes up a similar focus on infrastructure development as a lens to understand the making of development zones in Nepal's borderlands. However, in her chapter she shifts our focus to the sky and the ground simultaneously and presents the temporal and spatial unboundedness aspects of development zones. In landlocked Nepal, Harris portrays how increased congestion in the skies has forced planners and governments to envision new aerial development zones such as new air routes, airports and joint cross-border airline ventures. By taking a 'volumetric' approach (Billé 2020), Harris challenges the terrestrial bias in our thinking of development zones and discusses how contestation and control over space are intermeshed with issues of national sovereignty between neighbouring India and China.

While zoning in the sky creates new opportunities for economic accumulation in landlocked Nepal, Juan Zhang in her chapter discusses the new frontier of speculative investment through the case of integrated resorts (IRs) or mega-casinos in Asian borderlands. Besides being zones for economic growth, Zhang discusses how casino zoning includes both the politics of permissiveness and are social spaces of opportunity and discipline with their own exceptional regulations and thus become spaces of exclusive development. In Asia as elsewhere, these special kinds of development zones often attract strong suspicion and criticism because of their associations with illicit activities and moral decay. However, they also promise potential futures of large profits, growth and development and have proved to be an effective tool to capture travelling foreign and national investment.

In his attempt to think through the 'zone', <u>Jason Cons</u> provides a detailed exploration into another kind of experimental development zoning that involves processes of anticipation, not of large profits as in the case of casino zoning, but of a dystopian climate crisis. Cons discusses how governmental and international organisations, through anticipatory planning, attempt to prepare vulnerable populations and landscapes in the delta of southwestern Bangladesh's borderlands with India from more widespread infrastructural damage and displacement. He argues that the delta has become a test zone or site for future climate infrastructural interventions and intense management, promoting spectacles of both containment and securitisation.

Mona Chettri's chapter on the de facto SEZ in Sikkim, India discusses the emergence of land grabs from 'below', triggered by the establishment of pharmaceutical enclaves. Chettri positions Sikkim as a de facto SEZ, which despite the absence of official recognition of being an SEZ, behaves like one in terms of the various incentives, exclusions and concessions made available for private investment (especially hydropower and pharmaceutical industries). In a state with strict legal safeguards around the ownership and transfer of land, increased demand for land by private companies and migrant workers has re-calibrated state and community relationships, leading to land grabs and new rent-seeking activities from 'below'. Chettri's chapter explores the liminal (official/unofficial) spaces occupied by some development zones and the porosity of ideas and aspirations within them.

Disciplining the Development Zone

In borderlands, enclave development brings forth new questions, challenges and anxieties around changes to local environments, community life and livelihoods. The success, proliferation or decline of development zones is dependent on the alignment of local development aspirations with the regional/national and the relationships emerging from this alignment. In essence, it is only when local communities 'buy into' the idea of enclave development that development zones can be integrated and successful. However, given the geopolitical history of borderlands and borderland communities, interpersonal and institutional relationships can often be fraught with political hostility, ambiguity, suspicion, competing claims over territory and resources and multiple understandings and expectations from development. More often than not, consensus and allegiance for a particular vision of development has to be cultivated and maintained.

The second theme of the book looks at the various (legal and illegal) economic, infrastructural, political, social and regulatory mechanisms employed to control and discipline people, space and the different relationships emerging from and within development zones. What, how and who is disciplined and surveyed can illustrate the processes by which borderlands are being converted into productive spaces, the shift in power dynamics and changes in public opinion around governance, development, politics and more. However, it is

not always possible to anticipate or predict responses to technologies of surveillance and discipline. Furthermore, how are these strategies of control and discipline affected by culture, gender and ethnicity? How are they employed, by whom and what contestations, solidarities and inequalities may emerge as a result? How is this manifested spatially? Different chapters in the volume engage with many questions around technologies, actors, impacts and responses to discipline and surveillance in development zones.

In the case of the Myanmar border city of Muse, located in the northern state of Shan on the border with China, Patrick Meehan, Sai Aung Hla and Sai Kham Phu discuss the formal status of Muse as an SEZ and how a borderland afflicted by conflict and controlled by overlapping authorities (both formal national governments and various militant entrepreneurs) is being disciplined through acts and/or threats of violence. The authors show how processes of political reform, economic liberalisation and peace building with ethnic opposition are opening up resource-rich borderlands for investment (both legal and illicit) from governments and private business. Myanmar's economy is based on patron-client relationships in the allocation of natural resource concessions. The opening of the Muse SEZ is used as a negotiation tactic in ceasefire/peace talks between government and ethnic opposition groups and in the establishment of economic corridors for neighbouring China to the wider Mekong region. Investments primarily target extractive sectors instead of manufacturing (due to ongoing political and economic uncertainties). Meehan et al. here echo similar observations made throughout the region showing that in development zones, sovereignty is often vested in private corporations and farmed out to military entrepreneurs which feed pre-existing inequality, uneven development and surveillance (Nyíri 2012; Sidaway 2007; Woods 2019).

Aspects of surveillance and control are also evident in the chapter by Duncan McDuie-Ra exploring the formation of a 'smart city' project in the city of Imphal in the borderlands of Northeast India. As a part of India's digital urbanisation, such bids for 'smart enclaves' in the unruly borderlands paradoxically attempt to lure investment and promote electronic surveillance, identification and control at the same time. McDuie-Ra considers how Imphal, like other parts of Northeast India, has been managed as an enclave for exceptional rule because of separatism, violence and not least the region's conflictual relationship with the Indian armed forces, paramilitary and various other militant entrepreneurs in recent history. Unlike many zone-making projects in Asia, the extension of India's Smart Cities Mission to Imphal has been driven more by obligation than desire on the part of local governments and elites. Furthermore, smart cities are zones of a different kind: they seek to 'open up' the city rather than enclose it behind high walls or heavy security as with other forms of urban enclave. Despite this, Imphal is enrolled in the national smart city mission and regardless of the barely adequate bid produced by the municipal and state governments, it is clear that Imphal was always going to be awarded smart city status; it is far too important to India's geopolitics to leave out of the scheme.

Nadine Plachta explores another 'sensitive' and 'restricted' borderland region – Nepal's Tsum Valley – which borders the Tibet Autonomous Region in China, the former fighting ground of the Tibetan resistance force. She discusses how this emerging informal development zone in the strategic north-south economic corridor between Nepal and China is navigated by local marginal entrepreneurs in anticipation of large-scale infrastructure investments. The opening of the Nepal borderlands as an economic corridor has triggered new rules and regulations from the Nepal state security apparatus in order to govern investments and the movement of people and thereby control and discipline the margins. Plachta shows how such developments have created opportunities for well-connected and resourceful local entrepreneurs to navigate these new tools of governance while excluding many others, increasing local inequality as a result. Such 'intensified processes and patterns of uneven development are increasingly expressed in enclave spaces' (Sidaway 2007, 332). As also indicated by Galen Murton in the first chapter, increasing Chinese influence in the northern borderlands of Nepal brings colossal infrastructural might and investment but potentially also increased security influence (for example with regard to ethnic minorities) and extra-sovereign control.

Zones of Ruination and Abandonment

Development zones in Asian borderlands have increasingly become laboratories of economic and political change that go through cycles of boom and bust, spaces where national governments can experiment with futuristic state making, landscape control and economic constellations of capital accumulation that would be ethically and morally unthinkable in the national heartland. They have become spaces where representations of idealised models of planning, development and modernity can be found. They may also constitute spaces where neighbouring states or transnational companies are able to experiment with 'export' infrastructure and socioeconomic engendering like population resettlement or new forms of surveillance. They are 'other spaces', often set apart from the rest of society, in which different relations of power and hence different forms of government rationality can be imagined and implemented.

The strategy of zoning through trial and error has often resulted in failed zones. Many new zones never get going or are poorly run. With no substantial employment or export earnings, they become 'white elephants', exploited for instant riches (Farole and Akinci 2011). There are several examples of how these development zones in sparsely populated areas like borderlands collapse as soon as natural resources are depleted or when economic corridors are redirected and former hotspots of development are circumvented to fulfil changing sovereign politics. Development zones may also go through extended periods of suspensions, ruination and crisis due to unfulfilled political commitments (or larger global pandemics; see the chapter by Zhang) and suddenly blossom when new political (or environmental; see the chapters by

Murton and Cons) ruptures create new incentives for investments and development interventions (Lund and Eilenberg 2017).

A development zone is a 'spatial capital accumulation machine' (Bach 2011, 100) that waxes and wanes due to global economic trends and regional political concerns. As already discussed above, development zones are imbued with aspirations for modernity and economic and political power by a wide range of actors (including states, elites, landowners and common people) and represent opportunities for individual advancement. However, such aspirations are precarious, often failing to fulfil its vision and are consequently abandoned at least for a while (Chettri and Eilenberg 2019). Our third goal of this volume is to look at the temporal aspects of development zones: how they more often than not become harbingers of cycles of boom and bust that accelerate processes of dispossession and resource exploitation. We seek to understand why and how development zones are linked to modernity and by whom? How do social relations transform during different stages of boom and bust? What happens when these hallmarks of developmentalism do not materialise as intended, collapse and are abandoned? What are the tangible ruins of development and how do people living in former development zones reconcile themselves or cope with their changed circumstance and spatial ambiguity? As elucidated by Jonathan Bach in his eloquent treatise on the 'zone' phenomenon, development zones can be seen as 'contemporary capitalist utopia and heterotopia, as the urban interface of the geographies of management and imagination' (Bach 2011, 116).

In the chapter by Sindhunata Hargyono, uncertain waiting and 'suspended' development becomes a window to understand the circles of development zoning in the neglected and 'left behind' Indonesian-Malaysian borderlands on the island of Borneo. Hargyono discusses how a renewed governmental focus on narratives of under-governed spaces and issues of national sovereignty have accelerated development zoning in the Indonesian borderlands, at least on paper and in state rhetoric. He shows how local elites in their appropriation of government visons of development and urbanised dreams construct an image of their district and themselves as highly desirable and qualified for investment. However, the government's grand development plans and visions slowly deaccelerate and entrap villagers as development subjects in an affective-temporal state of uncertain waiting that leaves behind a variety of tangible and intangible infrastructural ruins and decay.

Alessandro Rippa brings up a similar theme of 'suspended' development in his discussion of the different periods of boom and bust of the Boten SEZ in the China-Laos borderlands. Rippa takes us through the booming Boten days when the SEZ was a vibrant hub of gambling and smuggling to its bust when Chinese authorities issued security warnings against visiting the zone due to crime and mismanagement. Boten again became an out-of-the-way place, its hotels and casinos entering a phase of ruination and infrastructural suspension. Not entirely abandoned, Rippa discusses how Boten's few remaining inhabitants try to carve out a life in the ruins while waiting for the next development boom to appear. The Boten case

is a vivid example of how political ruptures can suddenly suspend capital accumulation in development zones, at least for a while, until a larger infrastructural development like China's Belt and Road Initiative redirects investors' focus on the borderland corridors (see also Murton; Plachta; Harrison, this volume).

In the last chapter of this volume, Thomas Mikkelsen and Michael Eilenberg provide a detailed historical exploration of cycles of boom and bust in de facto development zones on the island of Tarakan in the Indonesian-Malaysian borderlands. The study interrogates the genealogies of extraction and the continual process of the reconstruction and deconstruction of development zones in the borderlands, developments that have left ruins upon which new developments have been built. The chapter investigates the formation of informal development zoning by highlighting the case of the Tarakan SEZ, which failed to materialise as a consequence of power struggles between central and regional government over access to resources and borderland autonomy. The experience of the failed Tarakan SEZ shows how such formal development zones only thrive through local support. Indeed, if they do not fulfil local aspirations of development, they are prone to fail or are drastically reshaped to reflect local political realities and economic needs.

This book and its chapters offer an approach that privileges both the specificities of place and broader linkages across sites and allows for a grounded political engagement within and across different development zones. The chapters offer critical engagement with the unique forms of capitalism and governance instigated by new development zones and contribute to theoretical framings of borderland political economy in a new era of borderland colonialisation. The studies are important because they document the processes through which Asian borderlands are currently experiencing some of the largest development initiatives in modern history that will significantly reshape borderland lives and landscapes.

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1. Post-disaster Development Zones and Dry Ports as Geopolitical Infrastructures in Nepal

Galen Murton

Abstract: Economic activity is central to development zones and represents a core dynamic from which a host of other relationships radiate outwards. While economic logics consistently motivate and produce the development of such zones, the resultant activities are always much more than economic. That is, the development of development zones also sets in motion new configurations of political power and socio-spatial domination. Following this line of thinking, this chapter examines the proliferating development of new import-export dry ports in the Nepal-China borderlands to understand how geopolitical relationships are grounded, localized, and reconfigured through infrastructures projects. Taking Nepal's post-disaster development landscape as both a point of departure and site of inquiry, I show that the making of development zones in post-disaster environments accomplishes interrelated objectives of state-led territorialization and economic expansion across a range of social and spatial scales.

Introduction

In recent years, accelerated modes of transport and flexible border regimes have led to the formation of new development zones across the Nepal-China borderlands. Particularly in Himalayan spaces of Nepal's Rasuwa and Sindhupalchok districts, massive dry ports are being constructed to consolidate and transfer the import of Chinese commodities from the People's Republic of China (PRC) into Nepal. While a torrent of Chinese goods accumulates in warehouses and cargo lorries in close proximity to the Nepal-China border, Nepali exports to China remain little more than a trickle. Resonating this stark contrast in import-export volumes, popular conversations across Nepal about trade with China articulate a distinct moment of new Sino-Nepali relations. This discourse was remarkably advanced in October 2019 with Xi Jinping's state visit to Nepal, where 20 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed between representatives of Kathmandu and Beijing. These agreements indicate a gravitational shift in bi-lateral state development projects for the Himalaya region and an unprecedented commitment that links infrastructure systems to bureaucratic institutions across Nepal's northern districts.

Economic activity is central to development zones and represents the core dynamic from which a host of other relationships radiate outwards. While economic logics consistently motivate and produce the development of such zones – and particularly so in borderland spaces, as demonstrated throughout this volume – the resultant activities are always much more than economic. That is, as new development zones are assembled, new socio-spatial relationships also take shape across a range of scales. Thus, the development of development zones also sets in motion new configurations of geopolitical power and domination. Following this line of thinking, in this chapter I examine how Chinese construction of new dry ports in northern Nepal has facilitated not only highly anticipated economic activity but also led to new practices of control. Administered by bi-lateral security alliances and Sino-Nepali border regimes, development zones in Nepal can thus be seen as physical and spatial manifestations of power and domination.

This chapter examines the proliferating development of new import-export dry ports in the Nepal-China borderlands to understand how geopolitical relationships are grounded, localized, and reconfigured through infrastructures projects. Taking Nepal's post-disaster development landscape as both a point of departure and site of inquiry, I ground infrastructure studies with physical geography to make a critical geopolitical analysis of the making of development zones in the Asian borderlands. While the 2015 Nepal earthquakes opened up new space for China to act as an international humanitarian and development actor, ongoing reconstruction efforts coordinated and underwritten by Beijing continue to reconfigure political relationships between both states and their citizens. At the same time, geopolitical power is being relocated and placed upon personal bodies in proximity to such borderland places, particularly in the case of Tibetans in Nepal. Deploying Wilson's (2016) definition of

infrastructure as the 'concrete force of abstract power', I aim to demonstrate how the making of development zones in post-disaster environments accomplishes interrelated objectives of state-led territorialisation and economic expansion across a range of social and spatial scales.

The geopolitical and geoeconomic logics of post-disaster infrastructure development in Nepal also articulate new temporalities of frontier assemblages (Cons and Eilenberg 2019) across the region. While establishing new terms and modalities for the accumulation of capital as well as consolidation of political power (Murton 2017), processes of infrastructure development in Asian borderlands also routinely reproduce suspended experiences of patience and anticipation (Rippa this volume; Cross 2014). Attuned to unprecedented processes of borderland accumulation, critical perspectives on 'disaster capitalism' (Paudel and Le Billon 2018) help frame the ways in which asymmetric trade patterns and the construction of highly anticipated dry ports reflect Nepal's earnest but also ambivalent absorption of Chinese capital investment and largesse in material form. Today, the current thrust of Chinese investment and development in Nepal and the associated one-way volume of stuff moving north to south across the trans-Himalaya raises old-age questions that remain relevant in the new era of Belt and Road Initiative interventions: *development for whom, by whom, and at what costs*? As local citizens imagine uncertain futures shaped both by possibility and hegemony, the empty warehouses and traffic jams increasingly ubiquitous at the Nepal-China borderlands reflect broader, uneven patterns of infrastructure investment, commodity circulations, and trans-border (im)mobilities between Kathmandu and Beijing.

Extending previous arguments that 'infrastructural relations' have become a basis for contemporary geopolitical transformations across High Asia's mountain landscapes (Murton 2020; Karrar and Mostowlanksy 2020), this chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I trace a 5-year history of Sisyphean road maintenance efforts and bilateral trade relations in Nepal's northern borderlands to situate current development dynamics in a longer trajectory of pre- and post-disaster infrastructural relations. Centred around an assessment of pre- and post-earthquake mobility patterns along shifting trade routes between Nepal and China, I analyse the relocation and redevelopment of the Kodari bazaar into the new Larcha dry port as a symbolic and substantive representation of the expanding reach of Chinese actors into Nepali space. Second, I then examine development zone dynamics at two sites – Larcha in Sindhupalchok and Timure in Rasuwa – according to the central and interconnected themes that inspire the studies comprising this wider volume: *making* development zones; *ruining and abandoning* development zones; and *disciplining* development zones. Drawing on the editors' conceptualization of 'porosity' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume) to analyse the flows and movement of people and things in and out of development zones, I examine how dry ports in the Nepal-China borderlands facilitate a spatial operation of power that greatly exceeds the modest boundaries of the development zone of the dry port itself.

I have previously employed the dialectic of mobility and containment (Murton 2016) as a heuristic to better see and understand the ways in which infrastructures configure (and project) relationships of power and positionality. Mobility implies a centrifugal force and refers to the ability of both goods and people to move across the Nepal-China border. Conversely, containment suggests a more centripetal operation of bordering and delimitations of exclusion that make new development zones into exceptional borderland spaces. In the following analysis, I apply this conceptual framing to reveal how dynamics of both mobility and containment are embedded within and radiate out from development zones, experienced as the processes and patterns of movement, exchange, accumulation, and exclusion that infrastructural interventions repeatedly inspire. Drawing attention to the development of dry ports and their associated infrastructural 'effects' (Painter 2006) in the Nepal-China borderlands, this chapter contributes a trans-Himalayan perspective on the 'networks, spatial interventions, and territorial politics that emerge [to] illustrate the temporal and spatial unboundedness of development zones' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume).

Methods

This chapter draws on fieldwork conducted over the course of several research trips to Nepal's Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, and Mustang districts between February 2015 and April 2019. Informants were asked about the ways in which people and things move through but also accumulate in borderland spaces; I have combined qualitative interview data and field observations with textual analysis of media reports to evaluate the centrality of development programs related to bilateral Sino-Nepali relations in Nepal's development imaginary today. Specifically, key projects at the centre of my analysis include the 'Protocol on Implementing Agreement on Transit and Transport' and the Nepal-China 'Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019).

In addition to considering both the symbolism and substance of new international development agreements articulated in recent MOUs between Kathmandu and Beijing, I also ask how these future protocols and programs intersect with a number of new Chinese actors and agencies, including 'China Aid' and the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA). Both of these entities are increasingly ubiquitous across Nepal, including in the most recent MOUs and statements of infrastructural 'instrumentation' between Nepal and China. In conversation with broader discussions about the infrastructuring (Lin and Ai 2020) and scaling of Chinese development projects in distant global spaces (Bennett, M. 2020; White 2020; Oliveira et al 2020) – as well as other studies in this volume focused on Nepal and the Himalaya region (Plachta this volume; Harris this volume) – my inquiry into development dynamics across the trans-Himalaya helps to show how and why 'different actors, institutions, infrastructures and interactions [are] emerging out of the logic of development through zones and zoning' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume).

Recently, the territorializing effects of China's international development program known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have generated a fertile ground for critical social scientists to engage infrastructure investment and development as a possible new mode of international relations (Lai et al 2020; Flint and Zhu 2018; Sidaway et al 2020). Observations made in Kathmandu in spring 2019, including sensational daily media reports during the 2nd Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, brought to light the potent allure of China's BRI related infrastructural promises for Nepali publics and politicians alike. Reflecting on the ways in which national articulations of infrastructural imaginaries in Nepal are increasingly linked to China, in the sections below I utilize a critical political geographic lens to illuminate how power moves spatially through infrastructures across multiple scales and distant places.

Frequently enacted as a broader state-building exercise, infrastructural developments engender a range of political responses. For instance, while failed infrastructures frequently threaten national and inter-state governance, successful developments also drive new geoeconomic patterns and hegemonic processes between states and citizenries. Examining the ways in which international commitments to infrastructural investment and construction are leveraged to advance specific geopolitical interests, in this study I view infrastructures as material and symbolic processes that both take shape within and simultaneously shape broader political geographies. Particularly in the case of rebuilding Nepal's post-disaster landscapes, attention to the construction of dry ports and other components of development zones in the Himalayan borderlands shows how politics articulate infrastructures and, vice versa, that infrastructures also always rearticulate new geopolitical relationships (Murton and Lord 2020).

A Brief Geophysical and Geopolitical History of Borderland Development in Nepal

The construction of new sites for import-export activity in the Nepal-China borderlands reflects a particular spatial process at the intersection of geophysical processes and geopolitical interests. As post-disaster environments of capital accumulation and dispossession, Nepal's new dry ports are import-oriented enclaves that also 'give rise to a more intense set of politics, imaginations, and affect' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume). While new development zones in Sindhupalchok, Rasuwa, and Mustang resonate with broader processes of corridor-making across other Chinese borderlands (Dwyer 2020; Rippa 2019; Karrar 2019), the intensity and density of infrastructure development across Nepal's Himalayan regions also indexes a broader complexity of Chinese-led development, frequently anticipated in the political contexts of Belt and Road Initiative interventions (Sidaway et al 2020; Oliveira et al 2020; Woodworth and Joniak-Lüthi 2020). In the case of Nepal, however, it is also essential to note that the current

geopolitical infrastructural moment of dry port development and borderland accumulation is both shaped by and a response to recent geological events.[6]

<INSERT Figure 1.1: Roads of Rasuwa and Sindhupalchok Districts in Nepal's Bagmati Zone (SRN 2015).>

In Fall 2014, the Sun Kosi landslide in the Bagmati Zone of Nepal's northern Sindhupalchok district devastated numerous villages and claimed dozens of lives (Petley 2014) along the one and only transportation corridor connecting central Nepal with the PRC. In addition to severely damaging the Bhote Kosi hydropower station, the landslide blocked the Arniko-Friendship Highway (H03) and, in so doing, brought overland trade between Nepal and China to an immediate standstill. Operating as the primary corridor of Sino-Nepali exchange since the mid-1960s, the Arniko-Friendship Highway has for more than fifty years facilitated commercial, political, social, and ideological connections between Kathmandu and Beijing (Rose 1971). The road was built primarily with Chinese labour on both sides of the border (Murton 2016) and has long served business, tourism, and geopolitical interests for each country. Damage to this route suspended Sino-Nepali trade and, more specifically, has continued to disrupt the flow of Chinese goods into the markets and homes of Nepal from 2014 until today.

At the time of the Sun Kosi landslide, a new roadway to China was under construction through one of Nepal's other northern borderland districts, Rasuwa. Envisioned as an alternate route for Sino-Nepali trade, the Rasuwa road was quickly identified as a viable and expedient corridor through which to restore the delivery of Chinese goods to the Nepali marketplace. In the wake of the Sun Kosi landslide – and to great fanfare and media attention – in November 2014 the Rasuwa-Kyriong Road F021 (now known as the Pasang Lhamu Highway) was inaugurated, several months ahead of schedule. In addition to alleviating the chokepoint of the Friendship Highway – and concomitant backlog of Chinese imports – the opening of the Rasuwa-Kyirong Road set in motion a significant shift in Sino-Nepali geoeconomic trade practices as well as geopolitical relations. In social and spatial ways, the new road was promised as a possible new path to political and economic futures across the region and viewed widely as an infrastructural 'handshake across the Himalayas' (Murton et al 2016).

Building on longstanding mutual development interests in the Nepal-China borderlands, relations between Kathmandu and Beijing had grown particularly close by the end of 2014. In November 2014, China and Nepal signed an MOU committing RMB 10 million

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[6] See also Cons (this volume) on how climate crisis and disaster instigate processes of zonal development interventions.

(US\$ 1.63 million) annually from 2014-2018 for the development of Nepal's northern districts[7]. Marking the 60th year of bilateral relations, in March 2015 Beijing committed to a five-fold increase to its annual grant assistance to Nepal. A dramatic expansion from RMB 150 million annually, the pledge boosted Beijing's annual grant assistance to Kathmandu to RMB 800 million or NRs 12.83 billion (Sharma 2014). Speaking at the signing ceremony with the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Nepali Finance Secretary Suman Prasad Sharma stated that the grant assistance would largely be directed towards the construction of mega-infrastructure. Referencing previous joint Sino-Nepali infrastructure projects such as the Arniko-Friendship Highway, the Kathmandu Ring Road, and Sunkoshi Hydropower Project, Sharma specified that the aid was to be directed toward the development of new dry ports, regional airports, hydropower facilities, and road improvement. For his part, Chinese Ambassador Wu Chuntai also stated that 'the new platform of joint cooperation will help to further strengthen the ties between the two countries' (ekantipur 2015).

When a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal in April 2015, Beijing responded with an unprecedented humanitarian effort that soon shaped new geopolitical and investment relationships across the region[8]. Just as China was establishing closer ties with Nepal than any time in recent memory, the Nepal earthquakes generated both new needs and fertile ground for greater Chinese aid to Nepal and thereby created a new kind of development space for Chinese interventions as well as new relationships of dependency for Nepal (Murton and Lord 2020). In many instances, post-disaster aid from China reinforced Nepalese-state efforts to respond to the disaster and tend to its citizens, reflecting an ongoing pattern where Nepali projects of development and concomitant processes of state making are underwritten by Chinese gifts of development (Yeh 2013). As I discuss further below, the evolution of these post-disaster development processes also suggests new instances of international dependencies and extra-territorial power dynamics, particularly in the case of a new Chinese model of South-South development and more specifically with respect to China's BRI projects in Nepal.

In addition to causing nearly 9000 deaths and damage to public infrastructures across Nepal, the earthquakes triggered dozens more landslides and blocked the two major overland routes connecting Nepal and China, including the Arniko-Friendship Highway and the Pasang Lhamu Highway. Chinese security forces were rapidly deployed to open both these routes while Chinese air assets were utilized to evacuate Chinese personnel from Chinese-led infrastructure projects under construction in the affected regions. The Sino-Nepali effort to

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[7] Signed by the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal and Nepal's Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, the MOU states that Chinese aid will be directed toward small-scale projects to 'improve livelihoods in northern mountain regions' through developments in health, education, and road construction (Xuequan 2014).

[8] Inflicting significant damage in Nepal's northern districts, the earthquake emergency led Beijing to mobilize its largest-ever humanitarian effort on foreign soil (Tiezzi 2015; Khatry 2015).

reopen the borderland roads was prioritized in order to alleviate an economic and mobility crisis that threatened to further exacerbate Nepal's humanitarian emergency. As friends and I heard in villages throughout Rasuwa when inquiring about road clearing and other emergency actions (Lord and Murton 2018), China was providing immediate and impactful earthquake assistance to areas that were largely left off the international relief map. One village leader in Shyabrubesi said, 'we needed help, and nothing came from Kathmandu. Our government never gets anything done. But China is interested in Nepal, and Beijing wanted to help. Why wouldn't we take that assistance?' But then, despite acute needs both real and perceived, in May 2015 the Government of Nepal ordered the Chinese relief forces to leave the scene in Rasuwa even before the road clearance and re-opening had been completed, citing the full capability of the Nepal Army to finish the task on its own (Cowan 2018). Later that summer at the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction in June 2015, the Chinese Foreign Minister committed RMB 4.7 billion (US$ 480 million) for infrastructure repair and development across Nepal (Giri 2015).

The unprecedented significance of Chinese humanitarian commitments during relief efforts and operations in Rasuwa in May 2015 also brought about new perceptions of and engagements with China for Nepal's citizenry as a matter of everyday experience. While ethnic Tamang communities in Rasuwa are accustomed to long-standing, institutionalized relationships of marginalization, exploitation, and neglect with the Nepalese state (Ghale 2015), feeling 'helped' (and especially so by Chinese interventions) was a relatively new phenomenon for many throughout Nepal's northern districts. Shifts in the attitudes of borderland residents, including Tamang as well as many ethically Tibetan populations, also indicates how attitudes are flexible and shift as a matter of both necessity and desire; this flexibility is especially elastic in post-disaster emergencies and environments of reconstruction (Plachta 2020). In Rasuwa and elsewhere across Nepal, post-earthquake shifts in geopolitical and social attitudes toward actors north of the border in turn paved the way for a more popular embrace (but also ambivalent articulation) of China's emergent role in Nepal; today, this ambivalent embrace is routinely enunciated in terms resonant with Belt and Road discourse (Murton and Lord 2020).

The geophysical events in spring 2015 created new geopolitical space for Beijing to act as an international actor, most prominently through humanitarian aid and post-disaster infrastructure development. While earthquake damage was severe in both Rasuwa and Sindhupalchok districts, the Government of Nepal's decision to restore the Rasuwa-Kyirong Road ultimately realigned trade via this 'new' route and largely ignored the historical legacies and everyday livelihoods that mark the Arniko-Friendship Highway's importance. Moreover, commitments to rapidly restore overland mobility through Rasuwa district were further strengthened by Beijing's designation of Kyirong as a future extension line of the Qinghai-

Tibet railway as well as the Government of Nepal's hyper attention to the prospect of a 'Sky Train' from China to Nepal via Rasuwa.

While trade and development through Rasuwa has been prioritized since mid-2015, the Friendship Highway finally reopened in May 2019. Initially, it appeared as though the old highway would re-emerge as a promised alternative to the very road which eclipsed it in importance less than a half decade ago. The lead-up to the reopening of the Friendship Highway generated enthusiastic headlines and entrepreneurial activity between Nepali and Chinese actors alike. Concurrent with repairs to the Friendship Highway, in May 2019 a public-private partnership of Chinese firms also completed construction of a long-awaited dry port at Larcha village, just ten kilometres south of the Nepal-China border-post of Tatopani-Kodari in northern Sindhupalchok.

<INSERT *Figure 1.2: Larcha Dry Port (April 2019, photo by author).*>

The Larcha dry port is the first of its size in Nepal and has been presented as a model for additional dry ports identified as infrastructural and economic priorities along Nepal's *Strategic Road Network* (Post Report 2019; DOR 2018). Similar to Larcha, several of these dry ports, including Timure in Rasuwa and Nyechung in Mustang, are also Chinese-led development projects. As the Kathmandu Post stated in May 2019, 'the dry port in Rasuwaghadi is the second of its type that the northern neighbour has been constructing in Nepal…The importance of the Rasuwaghadi customs point as an alternative gateway to China was felt mainly when the Arniko [Friendship] Highway…was cut off due to landslides and flooding of the Sun Kosi River in August 2014' (Post Report 2019). As regional centres of gravity shift along the roads and between dry ports with respect to Sino-Nepali infrastructural relations, new dynamics of disciplinary control and domination also radiate outwards from such development zones. As a consequence, local populations are being enrolled in spatial configurations of extraterritorial power previously unknown in many of these Himalayan borderland spaces (Murton 2019).

Making, Abandoning, and Disciplining Development Zones

Beginning in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes and increasingly evident today, new regimes of understanding and expectation continue to frame the geoeconomic and geopolitical terms by which international aid, infrastructure investment, and construction projects converge in the assemblage of new development zones across the Nepal-China borderlands. Across the region, one can observe transportation logics of the Government of Nepal's *Strategic Road Network* transforming into a BRI-underwritten Nepal-China *Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network*. Dry ports are central to this

transformation, as they constitute the built environments designed to receive, store, and distribute unprecedented quantities of export-import commercial goods exported from China into Nepal. Beyond these economic logics, however, concomitant security interests are also advanced via new bureaucratic apparatuses that connect to and refract from the dry ports in concert with other infrastructural interventions. Seen elsewhere in the ways that 'infrastructures beget other infrastructures' (Murton 2020), the operationalization of these dry ports also necessitates the creation of quarantine and customs houses, banks and hotels, police posts and army camps. These are the very kinds of infrastructural commitments that Joe Painter calls the territorializing bureaucratic 'effects' of state development projects (Painter 2006). As noted at the outset of this volume, critical constellations of 'different financial, infrastructural, and political networks enable the creation of these development zones' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume), and diplomacy and bureaucracy are just the first steps of such efforts.

Since the crises of 2015, there has been a rapid escalation of statements, protocols, and agreements between Kathmandu and Beijing to re-centre this geopolitical relationship around international infrastructure development. Foreign Ministers of Nepal and China officially signed a series of agreements on 29 April 2019 at the 2nd Belt and Road Forum (BRF) toward such bilateral objectives (Belt and Road Portal 2019). In order to advance development programs outlined in the 'Joint Communique' that emerged from the BRF, officials also signed the Sino-Nepali 'Protocol on Implementing Agreement on Transit and Transport.' In addition to prioritizing land highways and trans-border railroads, this 'Protocol' also establishes shipping agreements that allow the land-locked nation of Nepal access to six Chinese inland ports, all part of the so-called Nepal-China *Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network* (Giri 2019). This *Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network* further prioritizes the operationalization of six trade routes between Nepal and China with enhanced border facilities and advanced transport infrastructure[9]. The development of dry ports figures centrally into the realization of this *Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network*, and its grandiose infrastructural vision is constitutive to the making of development zones – and many such porous politics – throughout the region. Focusing on the two most important trade posts of this network – Timure in Rasuwa and Larcha in Sindhupalchok – and engaging the central themes of this volume, the following analysis is framed first by the overlapping contexts of construction and ruination that constitute landscapes of development and second by the broader disciplinary implications and geopolitical concerns of such development initiatives.

Making and Breaking

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[9] The Nepal-China *Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity*-Network is codified as Annex item #23 of "Economic corridors and other projects catalysed and supported by connectivity" in the "Joint Communique of the Leaders' Roundtable of the 2nd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation" (BRI Portal 2019).

During a visit to the new Larcha dry port as well as the devasted town of Kodari in April 2019, I witnessed a paradoxical sentiment of enthusiasm and abandon that pervades the region today. On the one hand, Larcha has been identified and embraced (at least by the local residents and business people) as the inevitable new locus of Sino-Nepali trade and transit through the district. On the other hand, however, Kodari – despite its reputation as a longstanding bazaar and bustling village in close proximity to the tourist destination of Tatopani and its fabled hot springs – has been forgotten and ignored, a place that once was but is no more. Why, I asked, are people planning an entirely new bazaar near Larcha rather than just rebuilding the market where it long stood, in Kodari? Routinely, the answer was, 'because of the dry port'. To paraphrase the terse explanation that George Mallory proffered for being drawn to climb Everest nearly a century ago, the justification seemed to have been reduced to 'because it [the dry port] is there.'

Riding back to Kathmandu on a motorcycle several days later, I pondered what logics led local residents and businesspeople of Kodari to altogether abandon their historical centre of commercial activity, and homes, despite the half-century of modern trade history that place had experienced (Murton 2016), to say nothing of its longstanding significance in terms of pre-road trade relations and borderland citizenship practices (Shniederman 2013). Was it the looming risks of future landslides and earthquake activity – a very real geological threat and widespread concern – that most alarmed people? Or was land, despite surging real estate prices, simply cheaper down river in Larcha? Did elite actors positioned at rank within the Government of Nepal have financial motives on the development of Larcha and therefore designate it as the new site of trans-regional business activity? Or did Chinese players have a vested interest in the Larcha site, and therefore make a deal for development of the dry port that Nepalis simply could not refuse? What was the attraction to Larcha, and what was the revulsion to Kodari? A polarity seemed to be at work here, a magnetism that pulled in some directions and pushed in others.

Particularly in the case of the Nepal-China border areas of Sindhupalchok, new movements and investments to expand bi-lateral (but uneven) international trade are motivated by the presence of the Larcha dry port. Meanwhile, a new bazaar zone has begun to take shape in close proximity to the dry port. While some of the constituents settling this new development zone were previously residents of Kodari, others have come from Kathmandu or other even more distant places. At the same time, the formerly bustling border bazaar of Kodari remains a literal ghost town, where memories and spectres of disaster and devastation discourage the possibility of redevelopment and the renewal of localized trade practices.

The speed at which Chinese teams constructed the Larcha dry port seemed to inspire unparalleled confidence with Chinese development in the hearts and minds of the local citizenry. Asking if and when a bridge destroyed in a 2017 flash flood was scheduled for repair, a young man in a Larcha tea house quickly responded, 'whenever the Chinese decide to take

care of it'. *But won't the Government of Nepal initiate the project?* I asked. Laughter ensued. 'Of course not!' he said. 'The Chinese will take care of it, and they will do it faster, better, and stronger than anything our government can manage'. This man had clearly observed not only the rapid pace of constructing the Larcha dry port, but also the efficiency with which the Friendship Highway between Larcha and the Nepal-China border at Kodari-Zhangmu (also known as Dram or Khasa) was also being reconstructed. Soon after the 2014 Sun Kosi landslides, construction was suspended on the Larcha dry port. For nearly five years, it sat dormant, while the road also deteriorated from a combination of political neglect and environmental erosion. But then, in late 2018, the Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency and China Aid intervened. Deploying the tremendous financial and logistical muscle of the Chinese Ministry of Railways Bureau 14 and the Chinese Railroad Corporation of China (CRCC), in less than six months the dry port was constructed (as the largest dry port yet seen in Nepal's northern borderlands), the road was repaired (to a better, reinforced condition than any other 'Strategic Road Network' route in northern Nepal), and new bridges were installed (on a scale unlike anything elsewhere in the Nepal-China borderlands). Meanwhile, repair and reconstruction of the Bhote Kosi hydropower facilities were in full swing, with units of Chinese managers supervising armies of both Nepali and Chinese labourers in collaborative mode. The capacity for Chinese infrastructure development was staggering, and all on temporal and spatial scales virtually unknown anywhere else in Nepal.

A dialectic of social opportunity and spatial control has shaped the construction of the Larcha dry port area. Reflecting both local and geopolitical dynamics of mobility and containment, the Larcha model is set to become a new kind of development zone in and for Nepal (Post Report 2019). Beyond Larcha, congruent geopolitical and geoeconomic development logics are also increasingly at work in the spatial patterns of development around Timure in Rasuwa and elsewhere too, such as Walung in Taplejung district, Nyechung in Mustang, and Hilsa in Humla. As of 2019, both Rasuwa and Mustang have been identified and prioritized as new routes of development according to the BRI-fueled *Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network*. More broadly, in Sindhupalchok and Rasuwa as well as other Himalayan valleys and watersheds of the Nepal-China borderlands, Chinese-sponsored infrastructural interventions increasingly constitute the development of new trans-Himalayan 'power corridors' of energy, commerce, and control (Murton and Lord 2020).

Discipline and Domination

In summer 2018, the PRC launched its state-run organization for international development, the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA). Around the same time, a new brand logo, 'China Aid' – created, designated, and managed by China's

Ministry of Commerce – became conspicuously emblazoned on Chinese development projects throughout Asia and Africa (Sun 2019). In Nepal, for example, stencilled stamps for 'China Aid' are painted throughout Kathmandu for Chinese-led reconstruction projects of the city's many UNESCO world heritage sites as well as in borderland regions for the construction of massive new dry ports, like Larcha, and the repair of roadways damaged in the 2015 earthquakes, such as the Friendship-Arniko Highway. Incidentally, these projects marked as 'China Aid' are not affiliated to work funded, managed, or directed by CIDCA; instead, they are led by other organizations and firms, such as Bureau 14 of the Chinese Railroad Construction Corporation (CRCC).

More formal Chinese aid and development projects related to CIDCA, however, were announced for Nepal following the 2nd Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in late May 2019; these include, specifically, the financing and construction of fifteen 'centres and headquarters' in all of Nepal's northern districts which border the Tibet Autonomous Region of the PRC (Plachta this volume). In addition to the expansion of Nepalese bureaucracies across this ethnically-Tibetan borderland region, the increasing presence of Chinese contractors and state officials in areas viewed by Beijing as highly sensitive provides a practical affirmation of Nepal's commitment to the 'One China' policy. Because this policy directly denies the possibility for free expression or political organization for Tibetans and other ethnic minorities with contested claims of autonomy or independence, Chinese aid to Nepal increasingly resembles yet another vector for Beijing's extra-territorial control over minority populations outside of PRC borders.

In the past few years, citizens across Nepal's northern borderlands have experienced Chinese practices of detention and extra-territorial discipline to an unprecedented and alarming degree. In some cases, uniformed officials of China's Public Security Bureau have arrested and jailed Nepali citizens – particularly those with distinctly Tibetan ethnic and cultural attributes – for simply traveling within close proximity to (but not actually crossing) the Nepal-China border (Murton 2019). In other instances, unmarked SUVs from the TAR have travelled into village centres across Nepal's northern districts – including Dolpo, Mustang, Gorkha, Rasuwa, and elsewhere – to conduct rapid appraisals of social and economic wellbeing. While some of these visits yield material goods in the form of food aid and humanitarian relief for Nepali communities, they also routinely reinforce social practices of self-discipline and generate high levels of anxiety for populations with close relations to Tibet. As the lama of Ghattekhola in Rasuwa district told me, 'We know what happened in Tibet. And now China is everywhere here in Nepal. Maybe the same [occupation] could happen to us. We don't know who to trust'. As Nepal's development projects in northern districts like Sindhupalchok and Rasuwa are increasingly underwritten, if not implemented, by Chinese actors, the association between 'development' (such as the construction of dry ports) and 'discipline' (as related to Chinese security patrols) becomes increasingly fuzzy. Meanwhile, China Aid and the CIDCA appear increasingly and conspicuously central to these new dynamics of domination and dependency.

More formal connections between development and discipline are codified in official Sino-Nepali statements about cross-border infrastructural projects. While at least one so-called China Aid project is listed in the recent series of MOUs signed between official government representative of Kathmandu and Beijing on 13 October 2019, numerous other line items address bilateral security concerns. Some key 'development-discipline' components of the MOUs comprising the *List of Instruments Signed and Exchanged between Nepal and China during Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019) include:

> *1. Agreement between the Governments of Nepal and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Management System;*
> *3. Treaty between Nepal and the People's Republic of China on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters;*
> *7. MoU between the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Nepal and the Ministry of Transport of the People's Republic of China on Feasibility Study of China-Nepal Cross-Border Railway Project;*
> *16. Delivery and Acceptance Certificate for the China-Aid Earthquake Monitoring Network Project in Nepal*
> *22. Exchange of Letter for Border Security Equipment and Office Equipment*

Amongst many other uncertainties, it remains unclear how security and infrastructure-related borderland development projects for Nepal are related to Chinese security concerns, and what connections exist between these initiatives and China Aid and CIDCA more specifically. Although the Chinese military has agreed to train units of Nepal's paramilitary Armed Police Force for increased borderland security, foreign support and training for Nepal's military and police is nothing new. Despite unknown future outcomes, however, what has become abundantly evident is that Chinese investment and development programs specifically tagged as 'aid' but inextricably linked to discipline in Nepal's northern districts are prominent and powerful, and especially so for places with sizable Tibetan populations. With these new dynamics of dependency and domination at play, it is critical to watch how infrastructural, bureaucratic, and political priorities converge in the assemblage of new development zones in the Nepal-China borderlands. Moreover, knowledge of the ways in which such spatial operations of power function in Nepal also supports related analyses of the territorializing effects and socio-political outcomes of Chinese investment and development in broader borderland spaces.

Conclusion

Bilateral responses to geomorphological events in the Nepal-China borderlands – beginning first in 2014, then escalating in 2015, and further accelerating in 2019 – have shaped

new geoeconomic and geopolitical engagements across the Himalaya. Initially articulated in the Nepal-China *Trade and Transit Treaty* and more recently envisioned as constituent parts of the *Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Networ*k, the construction of massive dry ports across Nepal work to consolidate and transfer the import of Chinese commodities as well as political interests into South Asian landscapes. As discussed in this chapter, the development of infrastructure enables new movements of goods along with an unprecedented accumulation of capital and concomitant trans-local geopolitical power across the Himalaya.

At the outset of this volume, Chettri and Eilenberg proposed that 'development zones are socio-spatial manifestations of shifts in global and national economic/political policies towards greater economic productivity' (Chettri and Eilenberg this volume). Following this line of thinking, my attention to Chinese-constructed dry-ports in Nepal aims to provide a grounded yet transferrable example of how geopolitical and geoeconomic priorities converge as a distinct form of infrastructural relations in the assembly of development zones; or, how the construction of dry ports can advance interconnected interests of development and discipline across geoeconomic and geopolitical space. Yet, as this chapter strives to demonstrate, such convergences also happen in response to particular geophysical processes and geological events. In the case of this study but readily apparent in other regional contexts, a dialectical heuristic of 'mobility and containment' helps reveal the ways in which international socio-spatial relationships of power and development operate and co-produce one another in dynamic trans-state spaces.

In the spirit of advancing further conversations and conceptualizations related to new development zones in Asia, I conclude by posing some broader questions central to widespread trajectories of infrastructure development in the Asian borderlands today, some of which are taken up in other chapters comprising this edited volume. *How does infrastructure development relate to the assemblage of security regimes in borderlands spaces and how do such processes also reconfigure relationships amongst local, regional, and international traders, travellers, and officials? In what ways do specific Chinese political and economic interests drive the development of these new zones in particularly 'sensitive spaces' (Cons 2016) across other Asian borderlands? And how do infrastructures continue to articulate politics and, vice versa, how do politics articulate infrastructures, not just in Nepal but across more distant Asian borderlands as well?*

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2. Onwards and Upwards: Aerial Development Zones in Nepal

Tina Harris

Abstract: This chapter explores how airports and airspace can be recognised as development zones that serve to connect the ground and the air. Through four 'aerial snapshots' (airspace restrictions, a new air route, a binational airline venture, and the building of the 'next' international airport in Nepal), this paper shows how aerial development takes on a specific significance in how Nepal positions itself vis-à-vis the borders of India and China. It argues that a volumetric approach – paying attention to the spatial production of both land and air – is vital in order to understand the future shape of aerial development zones in the Himalayas.

'We are a landlocked country. Think about Swiss airspace for instance. Hundreds of entry points! In Nepal, there is only one. […] Well, there are three entry points. China from the north and the Bhutan one. The rest [from India] is so congested!'
- A Nepali Air Traffic Controller, 2018

Introduction: The Ground and the Air

On any given day, there are hundreds of aircraft taking off from the single runway at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, currently Nepal's only international airport. As a reflection of the massive global increase in air travel – worldwide air passengers are expected to double to 7.8 billion over the next couple of decades – Nepal is undergoing severe congestion in the skies and capacity issues at its main airport. Air travel is still creeping upwards: labour migrants travel from rural villages to build infrastructures in the Gulf States, while the roads in their own towns are in disrepair. The airport at Kathmandu is nearing full capacity, while airline carriers are planning to add new flight routes, even as there is growing pressure from environmental activists to curb airport construction. Given the significant increase in air travel both to and from Nepal, aviation officials spend much of their time attempting to solve congestion problems in order to keep traffic moving smoothly.

One of the ways to make sure that aircraft can fit in the sky and on the ground is by stretching (air)space and time in various ways in order to alleviate or 'fix' air traffic congestion. Such spatiotemporal fixes have taken on many forms, including increasing Kathmandu airport's operating hours from 18 hours to 21 hours a day, building several new airports on huge swathes of land – all of which are vying for the position of Nepal's 'second international airport', or even proposing new aviation routes and entry corridors in the sky. In these ways, the spatial and temporal development of airports and airspace possess their own constellations of local and international regulations, environmental relationships, and political goals that are often different or seen as set apart from the rest of the economy. This chapter therefore proposes to explore airports and airspace as development zones that serve to link both the ground and the air. In doing so, I hope to show how fixing or 'tinkering' (Mol et al 2010) with time and space in aviation can take on specific political significance for a Himalayan nation bordered by the two 'giants' of India and China. By shifting our focus to the sky and the ground simultaneously, this chapter demonstrates how the networks and relationships that emerge from territorially-*moored* airports and airspaces can also illustrate the temporal and spatial *malleability* of these zones.

While literature on development zones has often focused on territory on the ground, such as special economic zones or road-building along economic corridors, this chapter employs a *volumetric* approach, which can be useful in understanding how development works in and through infrastructures that are not necessarily confined to the ground (Billé 2020; Billé 2018; Elden 2013). In other words, it stresses the importance of looking at the expansion of

territory and claims over space *three-dimensionally*, where the sky – or the underground – also comprises the container of space available for economic growth and state control. More specifically, I argue that territorial claims 'on the ground' profoundly affect - and become part of – developmental zones in the air, as well as vice versa. In order to show how these zones become productive spaces in and of themselves, I outline four brief examples based on ethnographic research with aviation personnel – pilots, air traffic controllers, and local officials - in Nepal between 2016-2018: 1. Pilot and air traffic controllers' experiences of airspace restrictions, 2. A proposed air route called Himalaya-2 that still has not gotten off the ground (so to speak), 3. New destinations and aircraft acquisitions by a joint Sino-Nepal airline venture, and 4. Controversies over the building of the 'next' international airport in Nepal in order to handle the congestion to and from Kathmandu.

These four cases, while likely to transform over the next few years due to the rapidly-changing infrastructural landscape in Nepal, can nevertheless provide temporary 'aerial snapshots' that help illuminate how the development zone is produced in multidimensional ways. In Carse et al's (2018, 2020) work on the anthropology of 'chokepoints' – 'sites that constrict or choke the flows of resources, information, and bodies upon which contemporary life depends' (Carse et al 2020, 2) – air traffic and the regulations that guide it are indeed subject to the 'blockage within a system or network' that are typical of chokepoints, as well as the idea that such sites can both constrain and facilitate movement. This analytic is useful here in that what may seem like obstacles to the smooth flow of air traffic can sometimes present new opportunities for different groups or states to leverage power in borderland regions. In other words, chokepoints on the ground can provide smooth access in the sky or vice versa, and this is precisely how aerial development zones proliferate; they are both driven by and dependent upon constraints due to geopolitics 'on the ground' (Williams 2013, 226).

Airports and Airspaces as Zones

In theorising the growth of airports and air routes as infrastructural development, this chapter takes its initial cue from David Harvey's (2001) work on the spatial or spatiotemporal fix. Following from the Marxian notion of fixed capital, where considerable investment is put into a fairly durable structure – such as a railroad or airport – in order to assist the expansion of capital to new markets; the spatial fix is 'capitalism's insatiable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies by geographical expansion' (Harvey 2001, 24). Here, the 'fix' has three overlapping meanings: to fix a structure in place, to fix a problem, and an insatiable fix, as in an addiction. In the case of aviation, such fixes are needed when flows of traffic are not moving smoothly, when arteries in the sky are clogged and aircraft need to be put in holding patterns, suspended above the earth and waiting for permission to land. Aviation personnel work to loosen these jams, to create smoother paths to ensure the idealistically frictionless turnover time of capital. But fixes or moorings for congestion such as new airports and new routes –

especially in dynamic borderlands in Asia - are subject to state struggles concerning control over space.

In aviation, it is important to understand that the air and the ground are not entirely separate realms; what changes on the ground changes the sky, and vice versa. For instance; a new international airport may shift international air routes in the sky, or a new route in the sky may transform political relationships between neighbouring countries. It might also be argued that landlocked, economically-growing Nepal is a particular case when it comes to the development of its infrastructural connections. In addition to numerous infrastructural projects along Nepal's northern borders (see Plachta and Murton, this volume), there is little room for a variety of other zones except for in the sky; thus one possible direction of development is up and in the air. As Michael Eilenberg and Jason Cons (2019) have noted in their work on the development of frontiers, such zones are not confined to linear space; they are moored but not fixed, expandable, temporally mutable, as well as aspirational – 'anchored in the imaginative' (Cons and Eilenberg 2019, 11).

One way to frame how aerial infrastructure is developed is by using a volumetric approach (Adey 2010; Billé 2020; Billé 2018; Bridge 2013; Elden 2013; Weizman 2007). In this approach, control over territory and sovereign struggles across borders and boundaries are seen as occurring within 'volume', or a container of space, rather than as lines on the ground. This has led to a wide array of fascinating explorations of how territorial control and expansion necessitates a framing that considers the three-dimensionality of the container of space – such as through studies of underground water maintenance, energy in the desert, and dust in the skies (Anand 2017; Günel 2019; Zee 2019). What is particular about air infrastructure is that, like maritime ports and container ships, aerial routes need *moorings* in the form of airports and mobile fixed capital like aircraft (Khalili 2020). There is thus a territorial aspect to zones in the air. So how do ground realities in Asia and control over national territories figure more broadly into this aerial scenario? One example is how local events dictate ground-air relationships. Take for example the July 2017 diplomatic controversy between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, whereby Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and Bahrain cut off their land and airspace borders with Qatar due to its support of Iran and suspected terrorist groups. What this meant was that Qatar had to reroute all of its flights to Africa and Asia through Iran, adding four or five hours of extra flight time, costs, and labour to its usual routes. Similarly, *aerial* flights from Kathmandu to Doha became entangled with *territorial* border clashes in Kashmir in February 2019. As Pakistan closed its airspace against possible Indian retaliatory attacks, flights from Nepal to the Gulf had to be re-routed, driving fuel and ticket prices up.

'Zones' and 'zoning' are part and parcel of the everyday rhetoric of national security in the sky and on the ground. Keller Easterling demonstrates that the development of infrastructure space in the form of zones is intricately intertwined with state power; in fact,

'[…]far from overwhelming state power, the zone is a new partner that *strengthens* the state by serving as its proxy or camouflage' (Easterling 2014, my emphasis). However, the role of the state in producing the boundaries of such three-dimensional zones is not a new phenomenon. Up until the early 20th century, wealthy landowners were able to claim that their land extended from the earth straight into the heavens (Pascoe 2001, 9). While this early idea of 'airspace' used to be fairly individualized, following the emergence of the nation-state, the world became completely carved up into multiple horizonal and vertical layers of airspace, divisions between military and civil zones, and most prominently, the FIR - flight information region - the technical term for the airspace controlled by a national territory. Other aerial spatial formations such as Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ) are bounded airspaces over water or land where civil aircraft are required to identify themselves to the country in charge of the zone. Such zones are often highly contested – ADIZs for instance are legally thorny because technically countries cannot shoot down aircraft in international airspace - and demonstrate the complexity of claiming *territorial* sovereignty *in the air*.

National airspace does not necessarily map directly onto state borders (it can often extend into ocean space). At the same time, airspace is also broken into vertical airspace classes (usually A, B, C, D, E, and G), each with its own specific rules and restrictions; with the Control Zone (sometimes class D) demarcating the controlled airspace around an airport. And of course airports themselves stimulate or are built as part of a development zone. This is particularly evident in the growth of the 'aerotropolis' (Kasarda and Lindsay 2011), a region where (trans)national infrastructure and economy coalesce on an airport. Such airport-centred areas are often billed as investment magnets for businesses, resource extraction, and territorial expansion both on the ground and in connection with other international hubs or regional airports. Take for instance the August 2019 agreement to connect a new cargo air route between U-Tapao Airport in Rayong Province in Thailand and the Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone in China, in order to facilitate the continued growth of the Thai Eastern Economic Corridor SEZ.

Through the lens of the zone, it is possible to think of the ground-air relationship as dependent on one another; and to rethink the 'zone' more flexibly. While aerial routes or airspaces are not 'classic' development zones, they act like them in some ways. They have territorial moorings, are dependent on capital accumulation, have strict regulatory frameworks, and are subject to manifestations of hope and futurity vis-à-vis wider global aviation discourses. According to Keller Easterling (2014, 92), the zone is '[…]the perfect spatial instrument for externalizing obstacles to profit'. As such, borders themselves – territorial and airspace – can create both obstacles and opportunities for both the accumulation of capital and for geopolitical leveraging. Given that aerial zones are both productive spaces in themselves and work to create other productive spaces on the ground, how do these processes work in Nepal?

Flying in Nepal

There is no shortage of descriptions online about the 'chaotic' or 'charming' experiences of flying in Nepal. Google 'Nepal airport,' and you will be confronted with lists of the world's 'most dangerous' or 'worst' airports. There are photos of crowded waiting halls, pilot forums about corrupt airline companies, Nepali newspaper articles about road and airport closures due to VVIP politicians arriving or leaving the country, and tourists marveling at how 'old-school' Tribhuvan International Airport is. Many of the 30-odd pilots, air traffic controllers, aviation crew members, and civil aviation officials who participated in conversations between 2016-2018 for this research agreed that the work environment is tough mainly because it is significantly compounded by structural constraints. These include – amongst other reasons – numerous transformations in national governance over several decades, the repercussions from the devastating earthquakes of 2015, the fact that Nepal has fewer economic resources compared to its larger neighbours, the challenges of flying above Himalayan mountains and increasingly volatile weather, the fact that the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal is both a service provider and a regulator, and significant safety concerns (for instance, Nepali airlines remain blacklisted by the EU due to the high accident rate of the nations' carriers).

Over the past decade, the wider political economy of Nepal has shifted slightly away from its historical reliance on labour opportunities in India. The increasing congestion at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu serves as one illustration of this transformation. Although the Kathmandu Airport is not located in a borderland city per se, its very territorial mooring is essential for maintaining and producing new border formations, connections, and routes in the sky, which in turn retains part of the airline industry in Nepal, as well as nearly 30% of the national economy itself through labour circulations. While there has been a steady increase in foreign tourism to Nepal after the 2015 earthquakes, perhaps most striking on any given day at the airport are the thousands of labour migrants – mostly young men from rural villages – heading by plane to work in Southeast Asia and the Gulf states on flights to Sharjah, Doha, and Dammam. During conversations with air traffic controllers, operations staff, cabin crew, and Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) officials in 2018, a CAAN employee pointed out that you could see that 'everyone *leaves* Nepal' via its air route map: while there are five exit points for aircraft to travel out of Nepal — Bhairahawa, Biratnagar, Kakarbhitta, Janakpur and Mahendranagar — Simara, the corridor directly south of Kathmandu, is the main entry route for all international aircraft flying *into* Nepal (besides the handful of flights north to Tibet and east to Bhutan). In addition to the fact that Tribhuvan International Airport is currently the only international airport in all of Nepal, this makes the air traffic along the Simara corridor severely congested, with many flights above Nepal subject to holding patterns and considerable delays. Given this pressure, aviation personnel continue to keep air traffic flowing

and work to alleviate it in numerous ways. How are these aerial zones manipulated in order to alleviate congestion?

Aerial Snapshot 1: Airspace Restrictions

Nepal's national airspace – its Flight Information Region (FIR) - is mapped onto the contours of the country, and then broken down further into two sectors (Nepalganj to the west and the larger Kathmandu sector to the east) so that air traffic controllers can manage flights within their own sector. With its FIR being the same cartographic shape as the nation, Nepal – 'the yam between the two boulders' of India and China – finds itself stuck in the middle, battling familiar geopolitical disputes both in the air and on the ground. As the late Tourism, Culture, and Aviation Minister Rabindra Adhikari claimed, 'we are not just a land-locked but also air-locked country'. When I asked what it was like to control air traffic along the borders of Nepal, one pilot immediately responded, 'It's a hassle. With Indian FIR, to fly above India, it's not that easy. They are our neighbour country, but you tend to hear complaints from the ATC, from the tower people. They always have complaints. They'll say, "one of your aircraft just crossed our FIR, and now we'll have two jets flying simultaneously with your aircraft; if it happens again, we'll ground you for security reasons!"' A captain of a Nepal-based airline agreed:

> When you take off from the east side [of Chandragadhi airport in eastern Nepal] or if you try to land from the east side, the Indian border is very close. And with this aircraft, we need an immediate turn, and at times the aircraft just happens to just go by the border. Immediately then we get a problem from the Indian FIR. And that's a pain. It's a pain for us. It's a fear for the pilots also. I just feel on my right on my left just see a few fighter jets tracking me. The fear is always there for the pilots. You have to be very precise. The moment it takes off, even a slight few seconds [out of the cramped region], the aircraft is in India. It's a pressure for the pilots. I have not heard any such complaints coming from Chinese FIR. They are also very strict, but we get this problem from the Indian FIR normally. It's hard being a landlocked country! And on top of that you are surrounded by two big giants. China and India.

The way in which Nepali controllers and pilots perceive the difference between Indian and Chinese control over flights in Nepal FIR is striking. It can also be seen as reflective of a particular moment in Himalayan geopolitics, one where India is seen as a meddling and pushy 'older brother,' such as in the wake of the September 2015 blockade, where India closed its borders with Nepal in retaliation against the non-inclusion of Madhesis in the new Nepali constitution, and where China is increasingly stepping in to offer infrastructural help, such as with its 1.3 million litres of fuel as a 'goodwill gesture' during the blockade or its promise to

transform Nepal 'from a landlocked to a land-linked nation' through its inclusion in the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2017. As Weiqiang Lin and Qi Ai (2020, 32) have shown, this is not necessarily part of a logical, stable, seamless strategy of the BRI; instead, airports are used in order 'to enchant and forward a new "aerial Silk Road" imperative to overcome […] landlocked constraints'. Airports are moorings that allow for imaginative new aerial connections that can overcome territorial chokepoints. In this case, Nepal may find itself using its in-betweenness to leverage surrounding state powers. As another controller remarked, 'China allows anything to us in their airspace. India is about profit and politics.'

The unevenness between Chinese and Indian airspace permissions means that although Nepal is caught between the two nations, it can also be in a position to play the two countries off of each other. This follows Murton et al (2016, 425) where '[…] Nepal indeed maintains agency in the process of accepting Chinese interventions, and it is important to see how a small state like Nepal can in fact use China to support its own state-making agenda, instead of just the other way around' (see also Murton on the 'Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network' in this volume). History, diplomacy, geo-politics, and international relations shape zones in the sky, limiting the borders in the sky and consequently, development. Here, Nepal's landlocked-ness becomes part and parcel of this contemporary, savvy bureaucracy, which can manifest in the air. For instance, another way of maneuvering around Indian airspace restrictions is to 'jump scale' (van Schendel 2002) by appealing to international regulators and placing Nepal in the center of global flight routes, such as in the case of the Himalaya-2 proposal that I will discuss below.

Aerial Snapshot 2: The Himalaya-2 Air Route

Flights originating in Europe and the Middle East on their way to eastern Asia tend to cluster in a very congested air space in the Bay of Bengal. This bottleneck is fairly well-known in international aviation circles, prompting the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to support air traffic management measures such as additional horizontal separation in 2012 in order to alleviate crowdedness. Earlier, in 2000, CAAN's then-Director General, Tri Ratna Manandhar, proposed a different kind of fix, a new air route which would divert some of the international traffic over India's Bay of Bengal to a route that flies over Nepal, northeastern Indian cities such as Imphal and Guwahati, northern Myanmar, and Kunming. Whenever CAAN or a Nepali delegation puts forward this proposal at international aviation conferences, part of the reasoning is that this is an extremely 'climate-friendly' move; saving 114 nautical miles, an annual 1660 tons of fuel, reducing carbon emissions, and shortening flight times by 15-20 minutes. What Nepal would get in return are the overflight costs, which are fees that aircraft operators pay to countries they fly over but do not land in or take off from. In this case, it could be approximately 200-500 USD per flight.

While 'commodification is the elemental process reframing urban airspace as volumetric property that can be claimed and owned' (Chen 2019), the Himalaya-2 proposal is pending, yet still proposed by Nepali delegates at international aviation meetings. Some claim that the neglect of the proposal is primarily India's fault. 'India always interferes in infrastructure!' grumbled an aviation academy trainer during a group interview. An air traffic controller chimed in: 'He is our big brother, as you know [sarcastically]. He's our big brother! So without getting permission from India, we cannot launch it. So India will not give it! [...] Someday they will request Nepal to open the Himalayan route. The day will come, but I think I will be retired.' Others say it is not India's fault but aviation regulators' concerns about the lack of adequate radar technology over Nepal for secure airspace control of international flights.

The 'chokepoint' over the Bay of Bengal presents a unique opportunity for civil aviation officials in Nepal to create a new aerial zone. The Himalaya-2 proposal connects the air-ground infrastructure by proposing a spatial shift in the traffic in the skies: partly for Nepal to benefit financially, and partly to shift the focus away from India, which it sees as monopolising control over air traffic. But this is also part of the tendency for the development zone to expand aspirationally, in imaginative ways; even while congestion is growing, Himalaya-2 may still be a dream. Thus, another way of manoeuvring around airspace restrictions is at the level of *existing* air routes and tinkering with aviation loopholes, as in the case of Himalaya Airlines below.

Aerial Snapshot 3: Himalaya Airlines

Presently H9 operates to five destinations - Abu Dhabi, Dammam, Doha, Dubai, and Kuala Lumpur. The airline proudly owns a young fleet of 3 Airbus A320 - 214 series of narrow-body aircraft with the configuration of 8 Premium Economy class & 150 Economy class seats. For year 2019, the airline plans to focus on China connectivity by adding up Beijing to its destination network and eventually extending to other cities like Nanchang, Wuhan, Changsha, Nanning etc. Airline also has plans to acquire A319 in near future for flying to high altitude destinations like Lhasa.

 – from the Himalaya Airlines website, https://www.himalaya-airlines.com/
accessed 3 June, 2019

Established in 2014, Himalaya Airlines is a joint venture between China and Nepal; the only joint Sino-Nepali joint venture in the airline industry. Tibet Airlines holds a 49% share, and the other 51% of the share is owned by Yeti World Investment Pvt. Ltd., the owner of popular Nepali domestic airlines Yeti and Tara Air. Over the past five years, its main strategy

has involved tapping into the lucrative labour migration routes from Kathmandu to the Gulf and Southeast Asia, but as in the quote above, the airline has grand expansion plans involving China, currently the largest aviation market in the world. For several Nepali aviation personnel who are sympathetic to the venture, their main frustration is that it has not been able to access the fast-growing Indian market – the most important aviation market for Nepali airlines. The reason for this is that Himalaya Airlines is seen by India as a Chinese company and has therefore not yet been given landing rights in India's restrictive market for Chinese airlines. To Nepali aviation personnel, this is a clear indication of the 'yam' at a disadvantage; stuck in the middle of Sino-Indian leveraging of geopolitical power. But looking from the ground to the sky, outlets and loopholes can appear up, above, and over our heads.

For instance, Himalaya Airlines has future plans for wet leases, such as a recent wet lease to Bamboo Air, a Vietnam-based airline. In aviation-speak, a wet lease is an agreement where an airline company leases out one of its aircraft to another airline, with the latter paying an hourly rate as well as all the fuel and taxes for the aircraft. Wet leases are often established when airlines need to increase room for passengers on seasonal flights, or when the lessee is restricted from flying into a particular country. It is conceivable that using wet leases could give Himalaya another way to bypass landing rights restrictions and fly to India or other destinations under a different national flag. But even though this Sino-Nepali venture might expand its reach and bypass Indian ground restrictions via alternative aerial zones, such a move can also have severe local repercussions. Wet leases do not bring in any employment for Nepalis, and Himalaya has been accused of profiting from the lucrative labour migration routes because it is considered a 'Chinese,' not Nepali airline (Rai 2017). This is also a fairly good indication of the growing influence of China in Nepal, and how Nepali aerial infrastructure might fit into or utilize the constellation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in order to bypass Indian border restrictions. In order to take this further, I look below at plans to build Nepal's next international airport, which are currently underway.

Aerial Snapshot 4: Nepal's Next International Airport

'During election times, politicians build airports,' said one pilot in 2018. 'In every district, there's an airport being built. Any single airport in the Terai can be made into an international airport in one month. All you need is a 1000-metre runway, and there you have an international airport. As a pilot, I know this […] any new official from a remote place will say "we will build an airport!"'

Airports are fixes that can also provide a sense of possibility. They are jumping-off points that generate new connections, new politics, and new investments, while at the same time often erasing land and lives that were there before. Austin Lord (2016) has noted that in the case of hydropower development in Nepal, although the government may have failed in helping with infrastructure development, citizens often imagine the hydropower industry – with

its connections to international investment and regulatory frameworks – as being 'above politics'. While keeping in mind that 'the relationship between the imagined […] nation and its citizens is in a constant state of flux' (Lord 2016, 157), similar forces are at work in the world of aviation. In order to help relieve the congestion at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, most aviation personnel believe that it is crucial to build additional international airports. There are currently three other airports in the running to become the second international airport in Nepal: Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) in Bhairahawa, Pokhara International Airport, and Nijgadh Second International Airport in Bara. While GBIA may very well be finished by 2021, one curious thing that nearly all aviation personnel agreed upon was that Nijgadh (Bara) was the most logical choice for the next international airport. Their reasoning is that unlike the other airports, there is no difficulty of mountainous terrain, and that it was originally proposed as Nepal's second international airport in 1995 and already had plans for development, unlike the other proposed airports. At the time of planning, Nijgadh was envisioned as a hub airport, serving as a transit point from which passengers would transfer from Europe and the US to other destinations in Asia. The dreams of future connectivity are somewhat starry-eyed: the airport is to have two runways where A380s would be able to land; it would usher forth a direct road connecting it to Kathmandu cutting travelling time down from five hours to just one; it would create thousands of jobs; the main task of development is being considered by Zürich Airport.

Nowadays however, much of the aviation world has moved from the hub model to point-to-point airports, since newer aircraft are increasingly able to handle long-distance flights. It is entirely likely that Nijgadh will not bring in all of the new international routes and carriers originally anticipated. Nijgadh is now expected to be completed no earlier than 2025, and is the focus of serious contention pitting 'economists against ecologists'. The government has given a green light to the airport's Environment Impact Assessment report – 'even though 2.4 million trees need to be axed in 7,000 hectares of hardwood forest where the airport will be' (Rai 2018). While the newly-created development zone of Nijgadh will affect the biodiversity of its immediate surroundings; it also spawns and shapes environmental concerns in the sky. In fact, with the development of all three airports, international air traffic will carve out new paths in the sky, noise may become an issue in new areas, and the subsequent emissions from aircraft will disperse over both existing and new locales. But at the time of writing, not much is known about how and to what extent such repercussions will emerge, which developer will finally win contracts, and what capacity and safety concerns the near future will bring if congestion is allowed to build up even more at Nepal's sole international airport in Kathmandu.

Conclusion: Aerial Zones

As Chettri and Eilenberg's introduction to this volume has outlined, the analytic of the development zone can help us understand how Asian borderlands and border regions

continue to be moulded into different spatial and temporal forms with new kinds of cross-border linkages. While the formation and extent of a development zone circulates capital in particular ways in different parts of Asia, by looking at the ways that aviation personnel experience and tinker with the development of airports and airspaces in Nepal, these zones become extremely productive spaces. For instance, the constraints of landlockedness and airlockedness are made use of in aviation politics and route planning in order to leverage state power vis-à-vis Nepal's bordering neighbours of India and China. Both the Himalaya-2 route and the proposed new international airports are also development zones teeming with potential, enabling the fulfilment of the aspirations of migrants to Gulf countries and bringing new waves of international tourists to Nepal. If zones are spatial forms of the ongoing 'will to improve', aerial zones arguably do so within an even wider volumetric 'container,' connecting contestations over land and borders with routes and restrictions in the skies.

The four brief aerial snapshots in this chapter materialise a rather particular moment of time in Nepal, a time where India is viewed as deterring and China as slightly more permissive. While this may yet change, it was also meant to expose how aviation personnel experience and make use of the characteristic of being a landlocked - or airlocked – nation. They vacillate between hope and despair, between what is best for the country, and how being 'stuck' can help to forge new, independent outlets out of a yam-shaped predicament. Congestion can expose airspace as a different scale for stakeholders to 'jump' to if they find themselves stuck in geopolitics on the ground, or vice versa, while aviation loopholes like wet leases and overflights help expand space in new aerial directions and in sometimes unpredictable ways. But although congestion or chokepoints can leverage strategic opportunities for wresting state power away from the hold of India, they are still used to accumulate and circulate capital through new outlets via new fixes or moorings on the ground and paths in the air.

Since aerial zones are subject to strict civil aviation regulations and standards, they may not fit the typical model of an exceptional space like the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) or other Free Trade Zones in Asia. However, perhaps a volumetric lens – connecting airspace with its territorial moorings on the ground - can show us that fixing and tinkering with loopholes like wet leases and new overflight routes create exceptional – if temporary – arcs or moments that help shape the future directionality and form of the development zone in Asian borderlands, and perhaps even of development in Asia more broadly. While Nepal-based airlines are adding eastward-facing flight destinations (for instance Himalaya Airlines with Chongqing or Nepal Airlines with Tokyo and Guangzhou), the three new international airports will likely shift the class dynamics of air travel westward, perhaps even shattering the longstanding dissatisfaction amongst Nepalis from rural areas that all roads – or air routes for that matter – have always led to the dominating urban centre of Kathmandu. New airports change routes and airspaces, but also the ideas and imaginaries of the future shape of the nation.

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3. Casinos as Special Zones: Speculative Development on Nation's Edge

Juan Zhang

Abstract: This chapter offers a reflection on the speculative ways in which global casino hotels become new zones of development in many Asian destinations. As ultra-modern integrated resorts developed to boost tourism and foreign direct investment, these casino and entertainment enclaves carve out exceptional spaces in search of profit and legitimacy. Looking at casino establishments in across Asia's special economic zones, this chapter examines the development of casino zones as a strategy for progress in places still marred by underdevelopment. New casino zones create novel forms of territorialisation and responsibilisation, enabling differentiated biopolitics of control.

Keywords: casino, development, Integrated Resorts, special zones, zoning, control

Introduction: Casino Frontiers in Asia

About a decade ago, in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, a casino building boom rolled across Asia where governments of different nation-states started to revamp their tourism and leisure industries centred around the global gaming economy. Luxurious mega-casino resorts mushroomed across diverse destinations in Asia, from Singapore to Macau, from Laos to the Philippines, including places that have long held conservative views against gambling and the vice economy associated with it. These new resorts featuring integrated business and entertainment interests become the trendiest development projects that promise to improve foreign direct investment, state tax revenue, local employment, and to deliver transformative results to the national economy. As a potent antidote to the sluggish regional market, the casino industry carries high hopes for many Asian states to stimulate economic growth as well as to promote new national images as modern, cosmopolitan, and progressive. Packaged as global integrated resorts (IRs), these latest development projects decidedly separate themselves from the older model of casinos made for the main purpose of gambling. The modern IR fashions a specific 'resort' appeal to shake off the stigma, sleaze, and crime around gambling by branding a destination venue with a world of funfair that incorporates conferencing and exhibitions, entertainment, theme parks, topped up by luxury shopping and fine dining. These new Asian casino IRs offer a broad range of entertainment options under one roof, with enough alternatives to suit every interest and desire. Mega-casinos are multi-layered social and political spaces where different networks and practices reshape power configuration. As social-spatial assemblages of gambling, entertainment, and speculation, casinos are productive sites where contesting practices produce new realities of citizenship, consumption, work, and governance. Casino establishments create a unique zone of production and consumption that connects the often out of reach locations to global circuits of technology and capital (Zhang 2017). As such they create zones of development dependent on the dynamic relationship between the state, the market, and individuals who inhabit new social spaces of opportunity and discipline.

Today, the development of Asia's casino industry has seen the Asia-Pacific gaming market surpassing North America and Europe. The gross gaming revenue in China's Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) reached US$45 billion in 2013, which lead global operators to look for Asia's next emerging market in the hope of finding 'their own golden goose' (Blaschke 2016). 1n 2018, Singapore's gaming revenue totalled US$4.3 billion, while the Philippines pulled in US$3.5 billion and South Korea US$2.2 billion (Swift 2019). Cambodia owns the highest number of casinos in the region with a total of 57 casinos, which have served as a 'rare and dependable cash cow' for years (IAG 2012). In the same year, Japan announced its plan to build three IRs to boost tourism in the cities of Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka, with major bidders competing for a much coveted operating licence in Japan's emerging gambling industry (Johnston 2019). These developments have led to 'an investment arms race in Asia's casino industry', which has fuelled plans on expansion and further development

where global investors promised to bring US$65 billion to the region in the coming years (Sugiura 2019). Genting Singapore and the Las Vegas Sands Group, for example, pledged US$6.7 billion cash investment into Singapore's tourism and leisure sectors, including three new hotels, an entertainment arena, a revamped Universal Studios Singapore, and a fourth tower to the iconic Marina Bay Sands (Lai 2019). In Incheon, South Korea, the US$1.4 billion IR Paradise City will join hands with Caesars Entertainment's casino resort as well as Inspire – an integrated entertainment resort built by the US tribal casino operator Mohegan Gaming and Entertainment – to create a 'casino cluster effect' (Cohen 2019) for the decade to come.

Global investors and operators are looking to create not only casino clusters in the region, but also to discover 'new frontiers' in emerging markets such as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (see also Rippa, this volume). Tim Shepherd, the president of the Hong-Kong based business Silver Heritage Group, described Macau, Korea and Singapore as 'mature or saturated markets' beyond reach, and smaller regional companies like his are more interested to 'look at the frontier' (Coleman 2017). These 'frontier' markets are favoured as attractive emerging opportunities for three reasons. First, many of these 'new frontiers' are seen as previously ignored markets in the gaming sector, undervalued and underdeveloped in the eyes of smaller regional operators who want to avoid steep competition in cosmopolitan hubs with the hope of extending the reach and reputation in these newly discovered profit zones. Hong Kong's Silver Heritage Group, for example, has been keen to bring 'Western-standard, high-quality, integrated land-based gaming offerings across regional Asia' by turning towards 'underserved' frontier markets that currently suffer from changing government regulations and limited infrastructure (Silver Heritage Group n.d.). With their success in the slots machine business in Laos and Cambodia, Silver Heritage has now opened an IR in Nepal that offers 'an exhilarating, heart-stopping entertainment unlike anything the Indian (including the broader South Asian) consumer has seen before' (Silver Heritage Group n.d.). The borderland casinos therefore become a playground for newcomers, who are not yet competitive on a global scale to match the well-established casino operators but are ambitious to open up new territories for immediate returns.

Second, the development of these new gaming frontiers often coincides with a national development agenda of transforming its territorial periphery by making it attractive to foreign investment. Favourable administrative, legislative and policy conditions are often incorporated in these otherwise marginal spaces, turning them into effective special zones opened up for business and investment. Cambodia's NagaCorp, for example, has extended its Asia IR ambition by investing US$350 million in the Primorsky Integrated Entertainment Zone in Vladivostok in the Russian Far East, bordering northeast China with a short flight away from Korea and Japan. NagaCorp's business advances were encouraged by the Russian government's 'turn to the East' strategy with Advanced Special Economic Zones planned in Primorsky providing further deregulations, a land giveaway programme, and large-scale tax

incentives (Troyakova 2018). These national development plans marry well with IR projects, which bring in not only direct investment but also a range of associated trading and logistics arrangements. In the joint Investment Agreement between NagaCorp and the Primorsky Zone administration, plans have been laid out that key infrastructural development on the land would be carried out by both parties (NagaCorp 2013). Such joint partnerships bode well for the future of the Zone and the business outlook of IR operators, who rely on the official status and the endorsement from the Zone to gain reputation, legitimacy, and moral recognition.

Third, IR casino zones are often strategically located close to national borders or major gateways (e.g. airports and land crossings), providing an accessible getaway to consumers who cannot enjoy gambling legally in their own home countries. The casino frontiers therefore become a liminal space of possibility where the otherwise illegal forms of entertainment could be legitimately accommodated and enjoyed. NagaCorp's Primorsky IR caters deliberately to 'critical mass feeder markets' in neighbouring Japan, South Korea and northeast China, where legal casino gambling is not available to nationals (Cohen 2019). The Silver Heritage Group built Nepal's first IR Tiger Palace at the Indo-Nepal border to capitalise on the strong demand from Indian customers. The general manager of Tiger Palace Kevin Willcocks in an interview stated that Indian casino-goers are 'looking for a form of entertainment that they just cannot get in their home towns' because 'almost all forms of vice are banned and illegal in India' (IAG 2018). Claiming that Tiger Palace is providing a service, Willcocks maintains that 'we don't drag anyone in here. There is a market.' The IR at the border offers 'legal outlets in which they [Indian customers] could have a little bit of fun and spend a little bit of surplus income' (IAG 2018). Gambling on the other side of the border offers an 'outlet', a ready escape for individuals who do not wish to be burdened by the guilt of engaging in illegal activities or indulging in vice.

The new casino frontiers therefore signal a new imagination on spatial configuration around gambling and development zones on nation's edge. This chapter examines how the peripheries, just as cosmopolitan hubs, become unique spaces of leisure and opportunity that have been 'carved out' from the political and social normalcy of the nation-state. As experimental fields of 'zoning strategies' (Ong 2006), casinos have been turned into an integrated 'special zone' of consumption and development governed through situated politics of permissiveness and exception (Zhang and Yeoh 2015). Casino zones are special because while they stimulate new desire and excitement, they also attract strong suspicion and criticism across Asian societies. As commercial establishments, casinos are often associated with problem gambling, money laundering, pawn brokerage, commercial sex trade, organized crime and other clandestine activities (Lo 2005, Lee 2015). As huge spatial enclaves, casinos dominate certain aspects of the urban landscape; and in some locations they even redefine the face of a city. Singapore's landmark casino resort Marina Bay Sands carries the nationalist

imagination of progress and cosmopolitanism as the casino resort becomes a new national icon (Lee 2015). Marina Bay Sands has proven to be instrumental in the remaking of the so-called 'Singapore model' and the 'Singapore brand' as it assumes the responsibility to 'shake its [Singapore's] image of sterility and fully realize its potential as a tourism and knowledge industry centre' (Shatkin 2014). While remaining private business entities, many of the Asian casino resorts are in effect state projects of progress and modernity (Lyttleton and Nyíri 2010, Tan 2017). The political investment and the intimate involvement of the state in mega-casino projects is one of the defining features of this new phase of casino development in Asia. This chapter offers reflections on how casino IRs are built to not only articulate the ambition for economic prosperity, but to also promote implicit (and sometimes explicit) political agenda that involves nationalising, globalising, and modernising local borderlands. Casinos are therefore productive sites of desire and discipline, as the state and market join hands to produce new pro-market institutions, urban environment, moral orders of risk mitigation and responsibilisation.

This chapter examines some of the emerging casino frontiers at different borderlands – some are located at the territorial margins of the state, and others in carved-out zones next to international airports in cosmopolitan hubs with the main purpose of catering to foreign visitors. Both spaces can be considered as borderlands with different imaginations of centre and periphery, of distance and connectivity. But the main spatial configuration remains the same that these casino frontiers are strategically located beside the border, when 'unused' land adjacent to border crossings or airports becomes productive space for capital accumulation. Emerging casino frontiers exemplify what Chettri (this volume) describes as the territorial mooring of specific economic activities aimed at investment, accumulation, and regulatory intervention. More importantly, these emerging frontiers connect individuals, institutions, infrastructure, and capital through cross-cutting and overlapping relationships that characterise the development zone. Casinos frontiers are at once fixed in place and at the same time radiate 'temporal and spatial unboundedness' (Chettri, this volume) that incorporates both the margin and the cosmopolis into a new configuration of fast-track development by profit extraction.

Casino Zoning

In places where casino developments have always been part of its local economy (such as the Macau SAR and the Philippines), new regulatory regimes are put in place and business models are revamped with the influx of investment from overseas. Local tycoons and global investors are aggressively expanding their operations throughout the region to capitalise on emerging opportunities and networks that come along with growing interests and investments on the gaming industry. For Asian destinations that have relied on tourism for economic viability but shunned casinos in the past, the incorporation of mega IRs has been a socio-political as well as planning challenge. Casinos must be tucked away in newly created zones of leisure and

consumption catering primarily to foreign tourists. Examples include Singapore's Resorts World Sentosa operating on Sentosa Island, Korea's Jeju Shinhwa World on the popular tourist destination Jeju Island, and Vietnam's Grand Ho Tram Resort in Quang Nam province that has turned the previously undeveloped small beach town into one of the most attractive destinations in the country.

This strategy of 'tucking away' and granting access to only selected individuals indicate specific zoning logics and techniques at work. Here the logics of exception apply, special concessions are given, and a more permissive politics renders life in the casino zones different from the rest of society. The making of zones proliferated in the late 20th century primarily in the developing world; but now the creation of special zones have been the new norms for development. The not too distant past of modern zones suggests that certain spaces are carved out to be strategically ambiguous so as to cater to trade rights and national interests of various kinds. Such ambiguity enables as well as maintains the fluid circulation of goods, people, and capital without too much political constraint from empires, and later on, nation-states. Nyíri (2012) has argued that the rationality behind concessional land and special zones is in line with an imperial logic that tolerates diverse forms of shared or overlapping sovereignty and fuzzy boundaries. It governs the population according to different laws. Although today, special zones seem to be a new product of neoliberalism and flexible capitalism (Ong 2006), it is necessary to see their older roots in imperialism, colonialism and how this game of sovereignty and governance is now played in the new era of free trade and developmentalism. In her ethnographic account on the Golden Triangle Economic Zone in Laos, Laungaramsri details how a Chinese-invested 'casino empire' was heralded as 'an expressway for Laos to move toward economic prosperity' (Laungaramsri 2015). Chinese businessman Zhao Wei and his Kings Romans casino complex received a warm welcome and strong support from the Lao state, for Zhao promised to 'turn the 'unused' hinterland of Ton Phueng into a new metropole that will link Thailand, Laos, and China together'. The casino development as one of the signature projects of the economic zone set itself apart from the rest of Lao borderland with Chinese shops, hotels, supermarkets and apartments (see also Rippa, this volume). People in the zone spoke Chinese and organised their lives on 'China time'. The casino zone had its own regulations regarding fees, taxes, and penalties. Zhao Wei saw his mission in northern Laos beyond business success; instead, he came to 'help the poor farmers of Laos out of poverty and drug problems' (Laungaramsri 2015). The casino special zone on nation's edge exemplifies a process of reterritorialization and the logics of variegated sovereignty (Ong 2000) when particular economic areas are separated from the rest of the society and made relatively free from state's immediate control. If Singapore and Vietnam serve as examples of the state's strong regulatory presence in IR projects, states like Laos seem to have opted for a difference approach by staying at arm's length from the day to day operation of these casino development zones. Transnational capital and transnational developers, like the ones from neighbouring

China, enjoy a greater degree of 'freedom' by incorporating their projection and vision into the zone's future. Laungaramsri argues that both the Lao state and private developers like Zhao Wei have joined efforts to make 'postcolonial extra-territorialisation' possible. The border areas of Laos are portrayed as poor and backward, remote and underdeveloped. Such a political discourse justifies not only the Chinese presence at the borderland, but a strong casino presence as fast-track development to alleviate poverty and drug problems. And Chinese in northern Laos as zone managers 'came in as economic saviours to help bring Laos out of underdevelopment, to rescue them from the condition of lagging behind, and to fulfil the dream of modernity' (Laungaramsri 2015).

Similar to what is happening in Laos, many of the region's casinos are financed by private Chinese capital and are often associated with sensational headlines such as Chinese expansionism and criminality (Sims 2017). These casino complexes in frontier zones of Southeast Asia are regarded as examples of Chinese 'neo-colonization' where some of the weaker states have 'effectively ceded sovereignty to Beijing'. Danielle Tan (2017) calls these casinos 'a regime of extra-territoriality', which mirrors China's encounter with Western colonialism in the mid-nineteenth century. But as Pál Nyíri (2009) explains, extra-territoriality established upon concessional territories can be at once 'a burning humiliation and a lesson in industrialization, urban planning, and public administration.' Today, special economic zones in Laos and Cambodia where the casinos operate are not seen entirely as a sign of the weakness of the state, but as opportunities to participate in and benefit from neoliberal globalization (Sims 2017), and to be like any other striving states with ambitions of prosperity and international recognition. When the state and global investors see territories in underdeveloped parts of Asia as 'empty', 'marginal' or 'underutilized', they are ready to develop the 'vacant land' into IRs or any other type of capital flush development projects. Borderlands as untapped gambling and leisure markets appear to be what Tsing (2003) calls 'a zone of not yet', waiting to be discovered, made profitable, and subsequently regulated with tremendous material and imaginative resolve. Such 'not yet' zones on nation's edge entail the potential of fast-tract transformation where ambiguous sites in the middle of nowhere could become destinations of opportunity (Cons and Eilenberg 2019). Lu and Schonweger (2019) call it the 'myth of empty land' with which power holders (be it the state or global investors) utilize particular developmental optics to see national territories and populations as 'untapped resources' and 'a frontier of opportunity' for investment. Countries that have been conventionally viewed as 'weak' or economically 'uncompetitive' seem to have fully utilized such a myth and adopted a more aggressive approach regarding casino construction.

Casino development in Vietnam demonstrates how zonal politics and logics of making exception are in play to turn 'empty' or 'unproductive' borderlands in underdeveloped economies into a source of tourism and gambling income across different cultural and socio-political contexts. In Vietnam, with casino revenues reaching over US$60 million by 2014 and

the casino sectors paying VND339 billion in taxes (GGRAsia 2015), both the Vietnamese state and investors came to see gambling related tourism and entertainment as the next growth industry. The Ho Tram Strip located in Ba Ria – Vung Tau province of Vietnam for example was the first development project to accept the government's terms of a US$4 billion investment to be granted a casino license (IAG 2016). The Ho Tram project was developed by an American company Asian Coast Development, Ltd (ACDL) that specialized in the development of integrated resorts with hotels, casinos, golf course, water parks and cinemas. ACDL also envisions to build a fixed-base operator airport to add infrastructural capacity to the coastal provinces of Vietnam and support 'goals of socio-economic development'. The name of 'Ho Tram Strip' itself suggests an ambition for this space to be like the Las Vegas Strip in Nevada or the Cotai Strip in Macau, both highly successful gambling and entertainment destinations in the world. Such inter-destination competitiveness is often accompanied by referentiality exemplified by practices of importing and copying from models and success stories on a global scale. As the logics of expansion and desire for accumulation continue, 'no city can afford principled non-involvement in the game' (Peck and Tickell 2002).

In the Philippines, in a bid to attract global casino operators, the state inaugurated Entertainment City as 'Asia's Las Vegas-like gaming and entertainment complex' sitting on reclaimed land in Manila Bay, an economic zone with four integrated casino resorts currently in operation (Entertainment City Manila 2020). Outside the Metro Manila area, six casino resorts are up and running in 'the rising gaming hub' of Clark Freeport Zone – a special economic area 100km north of Manila (IAG 2019). The US$341 million Emerald Bay Resort and Casino – the first Philippines IR – officially opened ground in 2017 in Cebu, which once completed in 2020 will 'rival the casinos of Manila's burgeoning Entertainment City and elsewhere in the Asian region in terms of grandeur, scale, and amenities' (TPM 2019). In South Korea, an entire area in the Yeongjong Special Economic Development Zone located next to the Incheon International Airport has been developed by the Paradise Group and Japan's largest gaming machine manufacturer Sega Sammy Group as a 'K-Style destination' and 'premium art-tainment resort' – Paradise City. It is strategically located next to one of the region's busiest airports and within '90 minutes to Beijing, Shanghai, and Tokyo' which caters primarily to international travellers and tourists as they enter or depart from Korea (Paradise City 2020).

Across these emerging Asian gambling destinations, mega casino projects emerge with striking similarities in style and architectural form. Most of the resorts adopt a modern look of clean lines and a dramatic, glistening façade. Such a style reminds one of the 'generic city' famously theorised by Rem Koolhaas, who claimed that architectural homogenization was 'an intentional process, a conscious movement away from difference toward similarity' (Koolhaas 1995). In designing Beijing's iconic skyscrapers, Koolhaas brought forward modular thinking in what he called 'cake-tin architecture', where architectural elements could be 'poured out' as if they are instant cake mix. Such architecture is capable of 'reconstituting, in the shortest time

possible, the urban experience of the first world' (Braester 2013). Casino development echoes this style and vision as it promises to deliver fast-tract modernity in locations that need an instant face lift. IR referentiality brings forth a striking semblance between destinations in terms of style and aesthetics, so much so that it can be difficult to tell whether one is gambling in Vietnam or holidaying in Macau. This is where Vietnam's newest Corona Casino and Napal's Tiger Palace Resort share comparable aesthetics and fashion a familiar resort atmosphere and a cosmopolitan look, although these two resorts are very different projects located in their distinct social and cultural contexts. These two resorts could have been built anywhere in the world and it would not make a difference to the architectural presentation and the corporate image of the casino operators. Such is the uniquely uniform characteristics of the modern IR and casino zone in the sense that local histories and characteristics do not entirely matter. The benefit of being ahistorical lies in the zone's universal recognisability. It makes sure businesses and individuals are able to understand and use the space without hesitation, and in that, it brings instant connection and reassurance.

Casinos zones are endowed with a sense of uniformity in style and function across locations and contexts; but such generic forms do not dampen a sense of competition. What characterises the casino boom in Asia is the continuous and intensified one-upmanship that rides on development's spectacle and special zone aspirations. In Aihwa Ong's analysis on inter-referencing as an urban form, she notes how 'urban actors are constantly juggling heterogeneous multiple cultural norms of what constitutes urban success and achievements in a world of circulating city symbols (Ong 2011, 18).' The same is happening across casino special zones. Techniques of citation, comparison and competition are adopted as an intrinsic part of casinos' zoning strategy, where one zone's success could become the inspiration for the next. The practice of citing accomplished casino zones and casino clusters in neighbouring states (e.g. the Cotai Strip in Macau, and Singapore's Marina Bay development) brings home 'urban aspirations and sentiments of inter-city rivalry'; at the same time, it 'justifies unpopular measures' and 'thwarts political resistance from local residents' (Ong 2011, 17).

Zones of Improvement

Casinos are often seen as an exception to the rule where political and ethical concessions are easily made in favour of market forces and capital growth (Mele 2011). As such, casino development brings with it certain questions of moral ambiguity across Asian destinations. On one hand, the state needs to keep up a rigorous regulatory regime in order to keep the gambling business under control. It is paramount that the state regulatory bodies do the cost-benefit calculations right, so that the gains from tax income, foreign investment, tourism revenue and local employment can outweigh the costs of problem gambling, fraud, and many forms of crime and vice. This is where the state plays its main role in granting permissions and overseeing licenses for casino developers and operators who are tasked with an economic mission of

transforming worthless land into zones of economic prosperity. In the Philippines and Vietnam for example, the state shows enthusiasm and willingness only when casino development projects commit to make firm and substantial investment. Under the arrangement of public-private partnerships, which is now at the forefront of state development agenda as best practice, the Philippine state stays at arm's length away from the casino operations while maintaining a constant presence on licensing conditions and processes, commanding casino operators' financial and developmental commitment (Reyes 2017). The City of Dreams Manila, for example, was granted only a provisional (temporary) casino license by the state, which could be cancelled or revoked any time, until it reached the promised US$1 billion in investment. In Vietnam, a casino development project needs to commit at least US$2 billion in investment before the state grants permission with access to local customers (Cohen 2017). Such measures are seen as a pragmatic and responsible strategy by the state to bring in capital with controlled risks. Global and regional casino operators are generally on board with such demand, with a few key players putting forward nationalistic agendas alongside a business plan. In Cambodia, the casino monopoly NagaCorp has vowed to 'keep growing with Cambodia' through 'its commitment to nation-building following Cambodia's wars and genocide in the 1970s and 1980s' (Cohen 2014). Casinos, once a morally corrupt 'pariah industry', now emerge as actors of nation-building that convey new hopes and imaginations of a different political and economic future. This kind of political vision continues to stretch the common understanding of the casino beyond just a business. This perhaps is something that casinos in Las Vegas would never be able to imagine in the US.

Beside economic gains, both the state and the casino operators are tasked with a civilising mission of making greater social improvement in the designated spaces and zones. In the case of Laos, special casino zones are carved out not just for profit; more importantly as the Lao state persuades, the creation of such zones could be 'the only solution to the problem of development' (Laungaramsri 2015). Casino projects in other Southeast Asian societies may encounter greater resistance from state regulators and conservative social groups; this has not been the case in poverty-stricken Laos. The Lao state promotes a discourse on the 'model function' of the special zones (Sims 2017), which carry utopic dreams of modern management and visions of urbanization. Nyíri (2012) showed how casino operators like Zhao Wei claimed that his goal in the special zones was 'not just investment but accumulating merit (*jide*)' by cutting off Golden Triangle's dependence on a rampant drug economy. Zhao's higher purpose was to 'save many people' in order to fulfil his 'responsibility to history'.

'Saving' people from poverty and underdevelopment presents the perfect moral justification for casino's entrance into sovereign spaces, when territories are marked as special zones made flexible to cater to different dreams and interests. Calling these zones commodified sovereign spaces, Laungaramsri critiques the dream of the Lao state to 'civilise' rural subjects and modernise the national periphery through SEZs:

Such (zoning) practices represent not only the struggle of a weak nation-state to make fast cash and become economically 'civilised' in the global economy, but also a convenient way to transform many remote hinterlands into transboundary economic gateway. However, the changes brought by special economic zone enterprises are drastic and abrupt and operate through various forms of manipulation and exploitation. While SEZs turned into a new frontier for the Chinese tycoon who has full rights and power to administer his territory, the influx of Chinese immigrants, massive deprivation of land and livelihoods, and expanded narcotics use and gambling have come to characterise the new economic border towns of Lao PDR. (Laungaramsri 2015)

In Laos and elsewhere, various institutional controls and regulatory frameworks are put in place in these economic zones to facilitate value extraction and land transfer through a process of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003, Levien 2012). Large scale land acquisition and forced resettlement paved the way for special zone development (Levien 2013). Calling Laos' casino special zones as 'predatory formations' of development, Sims (2017) calls for analytical attention on 'new logics of expulsion' associated with casino zoning, and questions the brutalities behind casino-led economic prosperity in the poorest part of Southeast Asia.

Zones of Responsibility

As the casino economy grows in size and significance across different Asian contexts, a regime of responsibilization has also taken on new forms and new meanings. Scholars have published extensively on the neoliberal project of responsibilization, highlighting notions such as self-discipline, social and self-responsibility, and market-embedded morality (Shamir 2008, Trnka and Trundle 2014). When it comes to casino gambling, issues on responsibility largely focus on state-led procedures of legalization and regulation, service provision, problem gambling intervention, and public education. As the responsibility discourse gains influence and popularity, the framing of casino gambling has witnessed a major shift from vice to disease, and now to individual and social responsibility (Reith 2008). Such a shift has gained growing political and social purchase in the legitimation and moralization of the casino economy in Asia.

With this discursive shift towards the individual, a range of differentiated treatment of casino subjects has emerged with new titles that explicitly suggest their economic and political positions in the system. From business tycoons, transnational investors, junket operators, financiers, retailers, managers, and the VIP high rollers, to middlemen, agents, dealers, trainers, consultants, analysts, entertainers, the middle or lower-end VIPs who occupy the mid-range, and to different workers in construction or services, the problem gamblers, the addict, the

indebted, the fraud, and the criminal – this 'ecology' of subjects suggests the different degrees to which individuals are valued, regulated, and embedded in the global circuits of casino capitalism.

This graduated form of governance and the regulation of different subjects has been theorized by Aihwa Ong (2006) as 'graduated citizenship'. Ong argues that a mixture of disciplinary, regulatory and pastoral technologies has been used towards the management of different subjects of the state. Low-skilled workers are often the recipients of more coercive methods of discipline and surveillance; and the more privileged citizens and foreigners are regulated 'with a lighter hand' through a pastoral mode of care (e.g. focusing on rights, satisfaction, and autonomy) (see Sallaz 2009). In different Asian casino destinations, such graduated forms of citizen governance are prevalent. In countries like Vietnam and South Korea, casinos are mainly foreigners-only venues where entrance of local citizens for gambling is prohibited in the name of citizen protection. In South Korea, out of the country's seventeen licensed casinos, only the Kangwon Land Casino – located near Pyeongchang at 90 miles away from Seoul – is open to Korean citizens. Its remote location is used as a means to 'deter salarymen from nightly excursions during the working week' (Agence France-Presse 2013) while still making a decent profit. In contrast, the newer and grander foreigner-only IRs next to the Incheon airport invite departing or arriving international guests for an effortless visit during transit. Zhang and Yeoh (2015) show how different 'mobility regimes' are fashioned around Singapore's casinos to prioritize certain passages and movements while slowing down or blocking others. VIP players, for example, are 'welcomed at the aero-bridge of the airport upon arrival, escorted through immigration, and travel in luxury in exclusively dedicated limousines to the casinos;' whereas Singapore's foreign workers are viewed as 'eyesores' in the casinos 'meant for the elite' (2015).

The making of differentiated zones of access and the graduated governance of citizen subjects in the casino economy do not take on a unitary form. The neoliberal logic behind these methods may be pervasive, but local experiences and particularities show variegated processes and strategies. The so-called VIP players as a subject category, for example, is constructed very differently in different gaming markets. In Macau and Singapore, the operation and regulation of the VIP rooms are separate from the mass floor. Singapore's VIP rooms are typically run by junket operators who lease part of the casino venue and reserve it exclusively for premium players, who need to have at least a SG$100,000 (US$70,000) account with the casino. Different operators run different VIP programs with junket agents recruiting high-stake players through their respective personal and business networks (Wang and Zabielskis 2010). In Korea's Paradise City, gamblers 'who bet at least US$50,000 at Paradise's casinos qualify for freebies usually available only to VIP players elsewhere' (Lin 2015). Paradise's incentives for Chinese gamblers who exchange CNY300,000 (US$45,000) worth of chips include recommendations to top Korean plastic surgeons, and free flights to Jeju Island in the company

of a 'third-tier' Korean actress or model (Lin 2015). The minimum requirement to become a VIP in Cambodia's NagaWorld is even lower. NagaCorp's Philip Lee made clear that 'from Malaysia to Singapore, we get the low-end VIPs, those who check in with about HK$150,000 (US$19,000). In Macau, they would probably be public floor players. …We give them the full-blown VIP treatment' (IAG 2012). The differentiated identification of the VIPs, although mostly carried out through marketing and promotional gimmicks designed by casino operators, indicates the drastic stratification of gambling subjects following the familiar geopolitical hierarchies of destination. The mass floor gambler in one destination can be welcomed as a premium player in a less cosmopolitan IR. Regulations and controls are exercised differently on these gambling bodies as they cross borders in search of less control and more privilege. The contradictory recognition of private individuals under casino capitalism implicates multiple scales of differentiation that seeks to both reward and regulate desires and behaviours.

Within casino zones, an increasingly hegemonic mandate of self-responsibility is neatly packaged into gambling regulatory programs in a move towards individual responsibilization. As the state gradually transfers its duty of care to the private industry where casino operators embrace the mantra of 'corporate social responsibility', any ill effects of legalising gambling are associated with individual failings resulted from not exercising 'responsible gambling' (Kingma 2011). One of the key measures of excising responsibility is self-exclusion when gamblers voluntarily opt out of casino play as a way to minimise adverse impact on one's 'finances and lifestyle' (Wee 2011). The casino entry levy is another regulatory approach that ensures that only individuals who could afford to pay are eligible to play. In Vietnam, for example, there are seven casinos in operation with three under construction or awaiting operating licenses – nearly all of them are foreigners only. In January 2019, the Corona Casino Phú Quốc in Kiên Giang Province became the first in the country where Vietnamese citizens could gamble as part of a three-year trial. This property was developed by the Vietnamese real estate conglomerate Vingroup and managed by Upffinity Gaming management – a Dutch company with experiences in Europe and Macau. Vietnamese visitors who wish to enter Corona Casino must pay for an entry levy of VND 1million (US$43) for 24 hours or around US$1,100 for a monthly permit. This entry levy scheme is modelled after Singapore where citizens are charged an annual casino levy of SG$3,000 (US$2,100) if they want to play. At the Corona Casino in Phú Quốc, Vietnamese nationals must be at least 21 years of age and have no criminal record. They also need to show proof of a monthly income over VND10 million (US$427) in the form of a salary slip, bank statements, or lease documents showing rental income (Nikkei Asian Review 2018, Vietnam News 2019). If the three-year pilot project proves to be successful (although on what criteria such success will be evaluated remains to be seen), it is likely that such permission will be rolled out to other operations across the country.

It therefore leaves no room for misinterpretation that the casino zones are managing its 'borders' based on guests' individual financial capacity and social standing. International

visitors and wealthy Vietnamese players are welcomed as 'responsible guests' who could freely enjoy world-class entertainment within the casino zones, whereas the rest who cannot make the cut are invariably excluded from such spaces to minimize risk. Self-exclusion, casino levies, and other similar social responsibility strategies suggest the diffusion of responsibilization into multiple and competing claims of moral authority, duty to others and duty to society. Such visions of responsibility grounds 'the very notion of moral duty within the rationality of the market', and 'encodes the 'social' as a specific instance of the 'economy'' (Shamir 2008).

Casino zones as a regime of responsibility show an interesting assemblage of bodies and interventions that are brought together to varying degrees of freedom and control. As gambling subjects move through different casino zones and explore the diverse experiences afforded by emerging frontier markets in Asia, they are integrated in the global circuit of money and entertainment. This circuit also connects them to the broader aspirations of modernity, development, and imaginations of a cosmopolitan lifestyle that is now achievable as soon as one steps in a casino IR – be it at the heart of the remote Indo-Nepal borderland or the gateway airports of Korea and Singapore. The materialities of the ultramodern IRs, the consumers and the workers from different parts of the world, the evolving responsibility discourses that are changing long-standing cultural notions of gambling, and the spatial dynamics of integrating an array of entertainment and vice within designated spaces – when assembled together they co-produce a sphere of profit extraction and exploitation masqueraded as productive sites of personal enjoyment and national development. Unlike other types of development zones, casino IRs do not produce anything tangible but an experience of being a 'VIP' for a few days or escaping control by enjoying guilt-free vice. They are embedded in locally situated territories but offer a globally circulating desire of fast returns and winning the jackpot. The speculative logic behind the casino assemblage continues to bring desires and appetites together as it facilitates experimentation with territoriality and subjectivity.

Conclusion: Speculative Zones of Development

Asia's casino boom in the past decade signals the deepening of speculative developmentalism as an economic as well as a social process. Christina Schwenkel (2013) once presented a poetic account on the reconstruction of urban Vietnam and noted that 'this vision of urban futurity demands a radical break from the past, a tabula rasa to build a new urban aesthetics of high modernity, one in which height and verticality become a signifier of progress and prosperity'. Although Schwenkel's observation is made on Vietnam's post-socialist urban reconstruction, it sheds light on the motivations and collective affect behind the construction of ultramodern IRs in more recent times. Speculative capital is embraced with open arms, and the profit motive is equated to pragmatic thinking by both the state and society. With the proclaimed 'success' of casino making across diverse geopolitical grounds (although to varying degrees and

evaluated in different ways), the technocratic embedding of neoliberal governance in social and leisure life is now routine. In *Steel to Slots*, Chloe Taft (2016) commented on the ways in which a US post-industrial city bets its future on casino gambling:

> Casinos, which have proliferated worldwide in recent decades, metaphorically encapsulate how an economic culture in which high-stakes gambles are rewarded has remade the relationship between capital and community. In place of the post-war social safety net and its culture of collective stability is an assumption that aligning with global profit structures by embracing flexibility, mobility, and short-term opportunities carries the most promise for individual advancement. Much as gambling seeks to erase past failures with dreams of future jackpots, neoliberal capitalism is fundamentally forward looking. (Taft 2016)

In many parts of Asia, emerging casino zones and IR clusters show the same forward-looking enthusiasm towards development fuelled by dreams of 'future jackpots'. While theorists like Susan Strange (1998) have long observed the emergence of 'casino capitalism' where the international financial system has transformed more like a gambling hall, today's IR zones as venture enterprises enter into different cultural and economic contexts to reward speculation and to offer the consumption of chance as a form of investment. Casinos as special zones normalize discourses such as risk and luck, and present speculative logics as a possible new language of development and progress. They also lend legitimacy to the state's retreat from providing welfare on one hand, and the state's penetration into social life as its monitor and regulator on the other.

While economic profit and social concerns continue to weigh heavily on states' governmental agenda, different versions of 'casino urbanism' (Lee 2015), and even 'casinopolitanism' (Luke 2010) become strategies of self-transformation as states participate in what Jamie Cross calls 'the economy of anticipation' (Cross 2010). Writing about South India's newly built economic zones, Cross argues that such zones are 'uniquely charged objects of conviction and anxiety about the capitalist future,' and sites where people 'borrow against the expectation of future profits by mapping and modelling growth trajectories or bracketing potential risks' (Cross 2010). Not unlike these economic zones, contemporary casinos in Asia are simultaneously filled with expectations and anxieties. These expectations are not simply economic expectations of growth and gains; they are also symbolic of national transformations, global city status, and broader imaginations of modernity and progress. The anxieties on the other hand entail multiple meanings from morality to criminality, from economic viability to long-term sustainability.

At the time of writing, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has rampaged through large parts of the world, shutting down businesses and stopping mobility all together.

Regulators and governments across the world have ordered casinos to close shop as the industry braces for a 11% drop in forecasted global gaming revenue in 2020 (European Gaming and Betting Association 2020). Gambling revenue in Macau fell by 92% in the first quarter of 2020 alongside a 90% decline of year on year visitor numbers (Wong 2020). Casinos in Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam are forced into an extended period of closure and a revenue bounce-back is nowhere near in sight. This pandemic has led to unpredicted 'dark days' (Blaschke 2020) for the industry with a lasting impact that many commentators believe to be more serious than the 2008 global financial crisis. But amidst doom and gloom, Japan's IR bids are going ahead seemingly unaffected by the pandemic or the cancellation of the 2020 Olympic Games. Vietnam's newest IR project Hoiana has recently received a US$34 million cash injection from the Hong Kong-listed Suncity Group, which continues to hold a positive outlook for the IR's future (Blaschke 2020). Vietnam's Corona Casino, with now an unfortunate namesake, remains confident that business will resume once the virus threat is behind us. Once again, these current closures and losses may be quickly replaced with dreams of future growth and development – what Taft would call 'future jackpots'. IRs and casino zones are fundamentally forward-looking and such relentless future-orientation is purposeful and functional (Bach 2011). The zones are where risk-taking is rewarded even when short-term projections fail to suggest business will be back as usual. When millions of dollars are already spent on these IRs and casinos, the stakes are too high to fail, and the dreams of future profit still remain. Those who are hopeful, just like the general manager of Corona Casino Goran Milosheski, believe that 'the only way is up' (Cohen 2020) and the future has to be positive. After all, the casino economy is used to being in a position that 'uneasily fuses the happenstance of the world market's ups-and-downs, booms-and-busts, rags-to-riches (or riches-to-rags) in the somewhat naughty diversions of attractive development' (Luke 2010). At this moment of uncertainty, in the true spirit of gambling, Asia's casino zones are waiting for an economic comeback in the near future and perhaps also for some good luck.

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4. Thinking the Zone: Development, Climate, and Heterodystopia

Jason Cons

Abstract: This chapter interrogates an emergent genre of development zone in the India-Bangladesh borderlands that seek to instill resilience in climate vulnerable populations. Unlike development zones framed in relation to development as economic growth, these zones venture a darker vision of life in a warming world—one where portable technologies become necessary for managing a future of climate chaos. I propose, following Foucault, understanding these projects as heterodystopias: spaces managed as and in anticipation of a world of dystopian climate crisis that are at once stages for future interventions and present-day spectacles of climate security. Heterodystopia provides an analytic for diagnosing the visions of time, space, and development embedded in these and other securitized framings of the future.

In spring of 2015, while working in the countryside of Munshiganj in the borderlands of southwestern Bangladesh,[10] my colleague and I came across a strange and visually striking project rising incongruously from the flat delta landscape. It was an earthen mound, or *mattir killa*, meant to be used as a storm shelter. The mound was fourteen feet in height and a half-acre in size. It had been constructed in 2011 in the aftermath of Cyclone Aila (in 2009), which caused widespread infrastructural damage and displacement throughout the region. The *killa*, built by a local NGO and financed by a large international NGO, formed part of a vast wave of new projects in the region designed to address disaster preparedness and climate change. What seemed strange about the project was not only its visual appearance, climbing abruptly from its otherwise horizontal surroundings, but its stated purpose: what kind of shelter could this raised mound provide? In contrast to the concrete cyclone shelters that dot the region, the *killa* seemed to offer limited protection. Moreover, though nominally a public good, it had been built on private land. Striking up a conversation with the farmer who owned the land and whose home stood in the *killa*'s shadow, we asked about the project and its uses. He lived some distance from the nearest cyclone shelter, so when the storms came, he claimed, his family and livestock sheltered on the *killa*. But, he also added, 'In the future, when we are surrounded by water, the children will go up there to live.'

The farmer's statements offered a troubling vision of climate change as a future of disaster in which (some) families would survive on earthen plinths as catastrophe unfolded around them. As I will argue here, this statement mirrored an emergent logic of development intervention in the region—an imagining of an atomized family surviving the ravages of climate change alone, assisted primarily by development technology. But as forcefully, the project stood as a testament to the emergence of a particular genre of development intervention (the climate resilient project) and a particular spatial imagination of Bangladesh's southwest delta region: as a development zone managed *as* and *in anticipation of* a world of dystopian climate crisis. In this chapter, I critically engage this imagination. To do so, I consider interventions such as the *killa*, their situation in the India-Bangladesh borderlands, and their relations to broader discourses, anticipations, and anxieties about climate security. These projects function as stages for future interventions and present-day spectacles of climate security. In other words, these projects advance a logic of managing and planning for future climatological disaster that both attempts to produce resilient life in a warming world and

[10] In this essay, I discuss Munshiganj and the adjacent island of Gabura. For simplicity's sake, where possible, I refer to these linked spaces simply as 'Munshiganj.'

displays strategies of containment for audiences elsewhere. We might call these spaces, following Michel Foucault (1998), hetero*dys*topias—a term I offer as a means to analytically diagnose the relationships between these spaces and imaginations of a dystopian future to come.

The *killa*, and other conceptually similar projects that I will discuss later in this essay, are not representative of all interventions afoot in the Bengal delta.[11] Yet their focus on a disaster preparedness that will allow people to remain emplaced in the climatological landscape illuminates a securitized vision of climate change. As I have argued elsewhere, as Bangladesh has increasingly been framed as a 'climate ground zero,' the southwest delta region has become a space that is viewed with anxiety by both regional and international security actors alike (Cons 2018; 2020). This is due not only to the region's marked climate vulnerability (indeed, it is often described as one of the most climate vulnerable places in the world), but also because the militarized India-Bangladesh border runs through the region.

The India-Bangladesh border has historically been a source of regional tension: a communally defined line separating a supposed Hindu territory from a supposed Muslim one.[12] In recent years this borderland has also emerged as a space of considerable global climate anxiety, aptly captured in a *New York Times* article tellingly titled "Borrowed Time on Disappearing Land" (Harris 2014). The story vividly ties the effects of fossil-fuel consumption to rising sea levels and their impending effects on low-lying coastal areas in southwestern Bangladesh. While the story itself lays out a familiar narrative—the imminent erasure of many of the islands that make up Bangladesh's delta region—what is perhaps most striking is an accompanying video, which offers a satellite-view model of what will happen to the delta in the face of a thirteen-foot sea-level rise. The video unfolds over a long minute in which viewers watch much of the delta disappear under water. The final text reads, "Scientists expect the rising waters in Bangladesh to displace eighteen million people in the next forty years." The video offers a dramatic illustration of what drives climate anxiety in and about Bangladesh: the prospect of massive displacement, a specter that manifests most readily in the figure of the climate refugee.

These future-displaces will, it is argued, inevitably spill across the India-Bangladesh (and other) borders, leading to regional destabilization and humanitarian crisis.[13] In response to such anticipated crises, a new set of development programs have emerged in the southwest delta region. These frame the delta not solely as a space of disaster, but also as a zone of development experimentation with techniques for emplacing the climate vulnerable in the

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[11] Indeed, as Paprocki (2018) suggests, much programming in the delta focuses on managing outmigration from rural areas and into urban ones.

[12] See van Schendel 2005 for the definitive history of this border.

[13] For a pure expression of this vision, what Chatervedi and Doyle (2015) have called 'climate terror', see the documentary film *Age of Consequences* (2016), which masterfully renders questions of climate change as existential, and possibly unresolvable, global security threats.

landscape. This genre of climate programming evolves portable humanitarian technologies that, in Peter Redfield's (2012, 178) words, 'anticipate state [and ecological] failure and seek to provide a small scale, self-contained alternative' (see also Cross 2013). In other words, emplacement programming mitigates against the figure of the climate refugee by offering technologies designed to keep people in (their) place.

Many of these humanitarian technologies intervene at a household scale. They frame the future of climatological borderlands not as comprising communities holding out against the ravages of climate change, but as individual families surviving in self-contained spaces characterized by isolation and fortified against the chaos unfolding around them. Yet these projects are tinged with a seeming pessimism about their own possibilities of success. While they present themselves as awaiting an immanent scaling up in climate hot spots around the globe, their designs simultaneously speak to the limits and futility of these experimental interventions. As I will show, they often serve more as representational technologies for an anxious Western world, claiming that the development industry is forging solutions to impending climate crisis. In this regard, they are spectacles for audiences *elsewhere*.

Anticipatory Development Zones and Heterodystopia

While the empirical focus of this volume is development zones in Asia, a central, broader and more ontological question undergirds these investigations: what makes a development zone a 'development zone' and, beyond that, what makes a zone a 'zone'. For many contributors, the answers to this question are rooted in a political economy: the development zone is a space from which a set of financial networks expand and within which such relationships coalesce. In the framing of the editors of the volume, development zones are temporally and spatially unbound sites where both proximate and remote social, political, and economic relationships are co-produced. Yet, at a more fundamental level, one might also think the zone as a more protean thing: a space in which various forms of often-competing imaginations coalesce in profoundly material and symbolic ways. From this standpoint, the development zone shares many relationships with other kinds of spaces in which a multitude of often competing aspirations and anxieties are projected onto space: the sensitive space, the frontier, the chokepoint, etc (see Cons 2016; Cons and Eilenberg 2019; Carse, et al 2020). From this standpoint, one might ask the question differently: what is distinctive about a development zone from these other spaces which also continue to be central to national and transnational imaginations of territory, rule, sovereignty, and economy?

One possible answer to this question might be rooted in political economy (i.e., development zones are imaginative spaces backed up by concessionary policy to facilitate accumulation). Here, however, I would like to venture a more conceptual frame. Development zones are spaces that are fundamentally engaged with particular imaginations of development futures. There are often heterotopic, in Foucault's (1998) sense of the term: spaces that stand

in stark relation to all the "undeveloped" zones beyond of them; spaces that herald future possibilities for states, for transnational companies, for aspiring workers. In other words, policy, special designation, and formal enclavement are critical to the making of many development zones, but they might not be their most fundamental dynamic. Rather it is the question of imagining the future of development writ across scales. From this standpoint, the Bangladesh delta is productive to think of as a particular kind of development zone. It is not, unlike many of the zones discussed in this volume, a space that is regulated by formal concessionary policy such as an SEZ. Nor is it a space that is characterized by firm and defined spatial boundaries and demarcations. But it is unquestionably a zone in which the future of development for Bangladesh and, as I argue below, the future of development in a warming world at large is being worked out. Like other development zones, it is profoundly spatially and temporally unbounded. It is also, fundamentally a stage upon which profoundly troubling imaginations of the future are played out, reworked, tested, and codified. It thus speaks to different and darker futures than many other development zones explored herein.

What kinds of imagination, then, are materialized in the "development zone" of Bangladesh's delta? And in what relation does this space of climate experimentation stand to the multitude of other spaces facing a future of climatic change? The answers to these questions lie not, or at least not only, in the immediacy of capital accumulation, but in securitized anticipation.

Over the past decade, much work has explored the ways in which imaginations of the future are complicit in the reshaping of the present. The broad thrust of this work is that an increasing alignment of planning with security concerns has ushered in a paradigm of anticipatory governance (Adams, Murphy, and Clarke 2009; Anderson 2010; Adey and Anderson 2011; Rippa this volume). This paradigm is marked by a transition from prevention to preparedness and pre-emption (Lakoff 2008; Anderson 2010; Massumi 2015). Such a shift signals a transformation in the logics of planning—one that focuses not on ways to forestall oncoming crises, but rather sees them as inevitable features of the future terrain and, instead, focuses on identifying and addressing vulnerabilities in response capacity. Work tracing the temporalities of disaster risk reduction, vital systems security, and biosecurity shows that anticipation constitutes a powerful logic for remaking the world (Choi 2015; Collier and Lakoff 2015; Whitington 2016; Zeiderman 2016). As Brian Massumi (2015, viii) points out, this shift toward preemption and anticipation marks a shift in the ecology of power—an emergence of 'a new power for bringing into being.' In short, anticipation effects a reordering of the social around future threats.

If anticipatory planning marks the zeitgeist of contemporary governmentality, it is also a profoundly spatial frame, imagining particular places and locals as zones in need of intense management—sites of heightened risk and threat—and as spaces of possible experimentation and innovation. I suggest that we understand what I here call heterodystopias as a specific genre

of anticipatory governance (and a specific genre of development zone): one that frames particular spaces at once as zones of experimental development for management of future crisis and as representational sites that enact spectacles of containment and securitization. Understanding these projects as heterodystopias provides ways to diagnose not only the seeming oddities of the projects themselves but also the conflicted imaginations of the future embedded in their materiality. The heterodystopias I explore speak in the name of resilience, here imagined as the capacity of people to weather future climate crisis on their own, potentially without relief from the state (Evans and Reid 2014; Watts 2014).[14] But they also speak to a broader set of anxieties about the future by taking the delta as a demonstration site for climate development.

I frame my articulation of heterodystopia in direct relation to Foucault's brief yet provocative discussions of heterotopia. In contrast to utopias (sites with no real location), Foucault offers heterotopias as counter-sites, spaces of enacted utopias. These places ground a utopian vision and reflect that vision, as in a mirror, back onto the spaces beyond their boundaries.[15] Central to heterotopia is the notion of emplacement—situating or putting in place. *Emplacement* is a fundamentally relational term: one that allows for articulation across space and place (Johnson 2006).[16] Heterotopias, for Foucault (1998, 178), are emplacements that 'have the curious property of being connected to all the other emplacements, but in such a way that they suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented [*réflechis*] by them.' Their role is either 'creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory.... Or, on the contrary, creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged, and muddled' (Foucault 1998, 184). The demonstration plot articulates and represents the idealized model of agricultural development. The EPZ heralds an aspirational future of industrial development. The penal colony enacts the containment of those who stand in the way of a perfected society.

Heterotopia is a notoriously slippery concept. Yet it provides an interesting lens for thinking the development zone. Historically, development interventions—especially projects such as model villages, demonstration plots, and pilot programs—have been heterotopic: countersites that are enacted utopias evoking other spaces of potential development (or its lack). They constitute slices of time (what Foucault awkwardly terms 'heterochronia') where the future is manifest in the present and within a specific and highly circumscribed geography. Standing, in principle, in relation to all other spaces of *potential* development, these sites both

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14 On the genealogy of the concept of resilience, see Walker and Cooper, 2011.
15 For critical readings of heterotopia, see Soja 1996; Hetherington 1997; and Dehaene and De Cauter 2008.
16 My understanding of emplacement in terms of 'keeping in place' in this essay is consistent with, but does not encompass Foucault's broader use of the term. I thank James Faubion for pointing this out.

act on those who live within them and act to represent the possibilities of utopian perfection, a developed world in which poverty has been eradicated through technocratic management.

Bangladesh has historically been an epicentre of heterotopic development. Often described as the 'Wall Street of development' and as 'the Aid Lab' (Hossain 2017), the country has been the site of numerous models and reflections of utopian futures meant for propagation in abstract elsewheres—from the Comilla model of village development in the 1960s through the 1980s, to the Grameen model of entrepreneurial self-help through microcredit in the 1980s through the 2000s. From this standpoint, the country has played host to a multitude of development zones—both of the formal (as exemplified in the explosion of garment manufacturing centres in the country from the 1980s forward) and of the more informal kind. Yet the rise of climate security as a paradigm of development has significantly shifted the frame. New development interventions like the *killa*, which emphasize security through emplacement (as opposed to, say, offering development through market integration), work in ways roughly analogous to older heterotopian projects, though toward markedly different and darker ends. They are not spaces framed in relationship to a utopian future. Rather, they are oriented toward a future in which increasing chaos characterizes the problems of management and governance. They are climate heterodystopias: windows onto life in a warming world and, as such, opportunities to manage future crises. These spaces are constituted as temporal discontinuities. In and through them, the Bangladesh borderlands emerge as a sentinel site, a space of 'vigilant watchfulness that can aid in preparation for an uncertain, but potentially catastrophic future' (Keck and Lakoff 2013). They offer a space that allows for the testing and demonstration not of solutions to climate chaos, but for the management of its presumably inevitable effects. They thus constitute spaces that facilitate a specific form of anticipatory governmentality—one organized around the deployment of technologies for maintaining life in the imagined multitude of devastated landscapes to come.

Landscapes and Architectures of Heterodystopia

The agrarian landscape of Munshiganj is variously divided between agricultural fields (largely used for growing the *aman,* or monsoon, rice harvest), and brackish-water shrimp aquaculture ponds, or *ghers*. The region is increasingly freshwater-scarce and its soil increasingly saline due to a combination of factors, including the upstream damming of rivers, subsequent saltwater intrusion, aquifer depletion, and the proliferation of brackish water aquaculture.[17] Because of a lack of available fresh water for irrigation, most of Munshiganj's

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[17] The *ghers* are outcomes of a three-decade-long boom in export-oriented shrimp aquaculture that continues to structure the politics of land use throughout the southwest (see Islam 2014). Shrimp farming has contributed dramatically to environmental change and to agrarian dispossession in the southwest (Paprocki and Cons 2014). For more on the political ecology of shrimp in the region and its links to climate adaptation, see Paprocki and Huq 2018.

farmers grow only a single rice crop, as opposed to the two to three harvests common in many parts of Bangladesh. The region was severely affected by Cyclone Aila in 2009, which washed away large sections of the protective embankments in the adjacent island of Gabura. This exposed the island's residents and agricultural land to a twice-daily tidal inundation of salt water.[18] Immediately following Aila, the island became a humanitarian relief zone. Numerous buildings still bear signs marking them as constructed under the auspices of relief efforts by organizations such as Oxfam and CARE. The devastation of Aila set the stage for the region's transformation to a site for climate programming. Indeed, since 2009, the region has been reconceived as a place where climate change has, effectively, already happened. Consequently, Munshiganj is awash in projects that claim to instil resilience in the lives of residents.

Beyond Munshiganj town, ubiquitous signboards mark a dense scattering of climate-related development interventions. These signs simultaneously call out the limited nature of many of these projects: demonstration plots in people's backyards, short-term training programs that seek to educate farmers on new ways of growing vegetables, single-family rainwater collection wells, and the like. One day, while passing through a hamlet to the east of Munshiganj town, my colleague and I stopped to ask a group of farmers about development programs in their village. One retrieved a sign marking a USAID vegetable test plot from a disused corner of his yard, and sardonically held it out for display. As his gesture suggested, signboards are often cast away not when projects have run their course, but simply when their beneficiaries lose interest in the interventions.

Residents of Munshiganj are often alternatively bemused and frustrated by these interventions. For example, many of those who lived near the *killa* discussed at the outset of this essay found the project more an exasperating waste than a portent of the future. Many wondered why the mound had been constructed instead of a concrete cyclone shelter that could provide robust protection from the periodic storms that blow in off the Bay of Bengal. Others complained that, because the *killa* was constructed on private property (owned by a farmer who was a politically powerful member of local government), it was, essentially, single-use in nature. One person angrily told me: 'As much as I can see, there is not one inch of profit in it. Unnecessary place, unnecessary project!' A group of laborers we spoke with in a nearby tea stall had a wryer take on the project's uses. As one told us, chuckling into his tea, 'well, when the winds come, we will just huddle close together. That way we won't get blown off.' If these comments reflected a darkly humorous take on climate-change interventions, they also highlighted a clear understanding of what is at stake in such projects. Residents of the region are intimately aware of the impending impact of climate change and the ways it stands to affect livelihoods and lives.

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[18] Following Aila, many were forced to move onto the remaining embankments while the damaged areas were repaired with makeshift earthen mounds. Here, see Roy 2014.

In the concluding paragraph of his discussion of heterotopia, Foucault (1998, p. 184–85) notes that a ship is the heterotopia par excellence: 'The ship is a piece of floating space, a placeless place, that lives by its own devices, that is self-enclosed and, at the same time, delivered over the boundless expanse of the ocean.' In contrast, an island might figure as a hetero*dys*topia par excellence—a landscape beset by seas, but firmly fixed in place.[19] As the *killa* suggests, the vision of the future in resilient development projects in Munshiganj is an imagination of family units isolated from, yet fortified against, unfolding catastrophe around them.

Yet what does this vision of the future do, and to what end? To answer these questions, it is instructive to explore one of the most recognizable projects in the Munshiganj region—a 'climate-smart integrated house,' constructed in Gabura and meant to help residents survive the chaos of climate change in place. We had heard about this house from a WorldFish project manager in Dhaka who breathlessly described its architecture and its many adaptive technologies. WorldFish is an international research organization and member of the United Nations Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research. The organization has a large presence in Bangladesh, especially in the southwest.[20] The house itself was a one-off demonstration project constructed at a material cost of $6,000.[21] The project was famous, or perhaps infamous, in Munshiganj, and known locally simply as either the *Pani* (water) House or as *dui tolla* (two-story), a reference to the fact that it was the only home on the island with two stories.

<INSERT *Figure 4.1: Climate Smart Integrated House, Gabura, Bangladesh. Photo by Jason Cons.*>

The house sat in a village primarily inhabited by smallholder farmers and landless laborers. It housed a single family chosen through their industrious participation in NGO support groups following Aila. The house contained a showcase of development technology: a covered well for irrigation, storage tanks for drinking water, an indoor fish pond, complex drip-irrigation systems, and much more. When we first visited, these technologies were demonstrated, one by one, as other residents of the village gathered around to watch. WorldFish claims the Pani House as a model of resilience.[22] As the organization's project report on the house states:

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[19] As such, climate heterodystopian projects articulate with Peter Sloterdijk's (2009) discussion of the absolute island, a space 'which is placed as a completely implanted lifeworld into a milieu inimical to life.' See also Günel 2011.

[20] WorldFish is primarily oriented toward fisheries and aquaculture. It plays a key role in discussions of development in Bangladesh today, in part because of the centrality of aquaculture to the country's vision of sustainable development. Yet, as the Pani House demonstrates, it is also involved in a broader range of climate-focused development

[21] Though that house was the only example of this particular design, the genre of the climate-proof house is one favored by multiple development agencies within Bangladesh and beyond.

[22] For a discussion of the ways that the Climate Smart House fits into what Paprocki terms Bangladesh's broader 'adaptation regime' see Paprocki 2018.

'Changes in climate will affect local weather patterns and impact many people's livelihoods. The climate-smart house provides protection against cyclones and flooding and supports efficient use of water and energy. Many features of the house are aimed at increasing food production and helping families become more self-sufficient and better able to cope with extreme weather events' (Hossain, Nurun Nabi, and Kaminski 2015, 3). In other words, the Pani House was conceived as a comprehensive humanitarian technology of emplacement, allowing residents to survive and thrive in a coming ecology that will be both disaster-prone and resource-scarce. It was a project that addressed broad concerns about climate security and migration by providing tools to help residents not migrate. Equally important, the project was a pilot. The report suggests that 'communities should work with government representatives to encourage the building of climate-smart housing in vulnerable areas' (Hossain, Nurun Nabi, and Kaminski 2015, 7). The communities in question seem unlikely to be those in the delta, where it is difficult to imagine an intervention that costs $6,000 per household adopted at scale because such a project would quickly run to billions of dollars in cost. Rather, the Pani House was conceived as an abstract and portable technology, ready, though perhaps unlikely, to be deployed in other areas of climate disaster.

In practice, the Pani House's various technologies were fraying at the edges. For example, the complicated drip-irrigation systems that were supposed to allow residents to grow household plants in window boxes isolated from saline soil and raised above flood levels relied on plastic drip spigots. Most of these spigots had broken and were not repairable with materials available in local markets. The stairs to the second story of the house were constructed out of iron, making them rapidly rust in the saline environment. Indeed, as Mehru and Habibur, the residents of the house, told me, a number of problems had emerged with the house's design since its construction. The pair had a series of grounded suggestions for future iterations of the project, such as extending the roof overhang for the house, so that rain was less likely to blow in during the monsoon season. I asked them if WorldFish had collected any of this feedback from them. They told me that they had not had any contact with the designers since the house was built. As Mehru put it: 'They have given it to us, but we cannot tell them that we are facing these problems.'

The design, architecture, and construction of the house were, I suggest, heterodystopian. They evinced planning not designed specifically for the region, but rather for an abstractly conceived space of climate crisis—one that may be in Bangladesh but could just as well be anywhere. This yielded a range of minor failures of design and planning, such as irreplaceable plastic spigots and iron stairs. Yet more revealing of the heterodystopian vision articulated by this and similar projects were the social implications of the house itself. Foucault (1998, 183) describes a heterotopia in which 'everybody can enter . . . [but] by the very fact of entering, one is excluded.' The Pani House proved similar. Anyone, including other residents of the village in which it was situated, could enter to marvel at the technologies of resilient

development on display there. Yet none of these technologies were things that the village at large was meant to benefit from. The house was built and designed explicitly for a single family situated within, but removed from, the rest of the community.

I asked one of the house's designers about this and was told that there were initial plans to make it a community resource. But there were two challenges. First, World Fish wanted the house to serve as a proof of concept, something they could test and collect feedback on (something which, apparently, they have not done). 'The second challenge was that we were worried that something that belongs to everyone belongs to no one when it comes to work to provide, and that it creates conflicts when it comes to harvesting benefits.' This tragedy of the commons vision of development brushes against the many histories of collective organizing by landless and smallholder groups throughout Bengal (e.g., Hashmi 1992). But, like the *killa* discussed at this essay's outset, it also articulates an imagination of a climate-affected future necessarily composed of individual families surviving on figurative, and perhaps literal, islands, isolated and protected from the unfolding chaos around them. An island unto itself, the heterodystopia of the Pani House enacted the dystopia to come.

The Politics and Poetics of Heterodystopia

That the Pani House was constructed as a general solution, as opposed to one that addresses the specific condition on the ground, is not in and of itself, surprising. The notion of piloting and modeling has long been a central dynamic of development (Cullather 2010). Yet the Pani House raised questions about whether the model was, in fact, meant to be (materially) replicated. Like many other interventions in the Munshiganj region, the Pani House appeared to be a project that privileged the act of modelling over the process of learning from and scaling up new development technologies. This permanent provisional condition hints at other possible meanings and purposes of climate heterodystopias. To understand these, it is necessary to attend to the representational dynamics of these interventions as much as to their impact on beneficiaries.

<INSERT *Figure 4.2: Backyard of the Climate Smart Integrated House, Gabura, Bangladesh. Photo by Jason Cons.*>

Development is a profoundly visual language. The point of pilot and model projects is that they demonstrate an efficacy of interventions in a particular location that stands in for a multiplicity of other potential locations. These projects—model villages, demonstration plots, and so on—dramatize the distinction between the space of the project and the undeveloped space outside of it. As Nick Cullather (2004, 228) writes of Green Revolution technology, 'where the dark green rice stopped, that was the edge of the modern.' In Munshiganj, the

clustering of projects in a single space further heightened these visual distinctions. In a pattern replicated in many projects throughout the region, the Pani House accumulated other development projects within its perimeter. The Pani House's backyard, for example, housed an International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) test patch for climate-smart watermelon production, as well as a USAID irrigated-rice plot. These fields were neatly cordoned off by a blue fish-netting fence that defined the property boundary. The fence marked a stark contrast between the Pani House and the unirrigated, dry, and dusty *aman* rice fields beyond—the agricultural fields farmed by the other residents of the villages. The message in this contrast proved hard to miss. Unlike older visualizations of development, which dramatized distinctions between modernity and tradition, the boundary here marked a division between impending chaos and its potential management. Inside the project boundaries, resilient development flourished. Outside and surrounding it lurked the non-resilient future.

The accumulation of projects within the Pani House served a dual purpose. The first, and most obvious, was that the presence of one project increased the likelihood of success of the others. The USAID rice plot, for example, was being irrigated by the Pani House's private water supply. But more important, this accumulation of projects made the Pani House photogenic. Indeed, the house and its residents appeared in press material for other development organizations working in the region. For example, IUCN designed a poster displaying their test plots in the Pani House's back yard and Habibur, one of its residents, to promote saline-tolerant watermelon production. The contrast between the climate-smart household and other households in the village was dramatic. But it was also at once beside and precisely the point. The community and the house's residents were not the primary audience for the intervention. Indeed, as my colleague and I were told by a WorldFish project manager in Dhaka, the Pani House was meant more 'for the website' than 'for the people.'

But whether meant as a real project or as a kind of climate set piece, the Pani House also revealed the logics of heterodystopia. The Pani House articulated climate futures in which single families would have to go it alone. The notion of a community—however defined as a potential actor in this climate-affected future—was not part of this vision. Moreover, the question posed by projects such as the Pani House was not whether such a vision of the future—climate wasteland with individual resilient families hanging on by their development-enhanced teeth—was a just vision or an acceptable one. Rather, it was simply whether this articulation of resilience proved workable, scalable, and capable of capturing donor imaginations. These interventions emerge as articulations between not just, or even primarily, development practitioners and their beneficiaries, but between development organizations and a global population increasingly concerned about the impending security crisis of global warming. The message in the spectacular image was clear: technological solutions to instil resilience in the face of ecological change are possible and feasible. Moreover, they are already in the works, emplacing life on the front lines of a warming world.

If climate heterodystopias like the Pani House only questionably achieve their stated goals, they are, nevertheless, quite successful at producing aesthetic messages. They are spectacular: spaces of juxtaposition that rely on appearances and images as techniques of power (Debord 1995; Foucault 1998). They constitute not only ways to acclimatize populations to particular logics of life in the Anthropocene but also forms of communication between powerful development organizations and their audiences (Yeh 2013). Seen through this frame, residents of Munshiganj are not just the targets of intervention but also the means of production of spectacles of climate resilience—the vehicles through which a set of technical interventions are demonstrated as efficacious in producing a set of resilient-like effects (Dunn 2012). In other words: while projects in Munshiganj framed the area as a space of climate crisis, they simultaneously offered a techno-optimistic claim to donors and concerned individuals elsewhere that development interventions *can* manage anthropogenic crisis at the margins of global empire (even if they are never actually deployed to do so).

Within and Beyond the Zone

The Pani House provided a particularly vivid articulation of the logic of heterodystopia. Yet many others like it dotted Munshiganj's landscape. These ranged from vertical agriculture technologies (projects of replacing household agricultural production in fields with vertical tubes for isolating household vegetable growth from saline soil) to other test houses that, like the Pani House, had received multiple development interventions from multiple development agencies to promote resilient living in the face of climate change. Many homes that had accumulated donor interventions also were situated on the most productive and least saline soil. In other words, they were homes with the least immediate need of such technology but the most likelihood of visibly demonstrating its value. It is crucial to note that such development interventions do not constitute the totality of possible futures, real and imagined, in the delta (Cons 2020). Indeed, those who live in and amongst heterodystopian development projects themselves often enact quite different and more grounded forms of resilient planning (Cons 2018; Tanner, et al 2015). Such interventions, however, rarely register in the visual economies and anticipatory planning regimes of contemporary climate-oriented development programming.

Development zones are, by definition, spaces marked off from those around them—whether through formal processes of enclavement or the more semiotic technologies of framing projects for consumption through the internet. As with many of the projects discussed in this volume, such marking is often carried out through legal, policy, and material inscriptive technologies—concessions, state zoning regulations, fences, etc (Li 2014). But the increasing location of development zones in often sensitive borderlands—spaces of anxiety, intense intervention, and discursive overrepresentation (Cons 2016; Billé 2014)—suggests that such zones are also imaginative spaces, defining areas that matter not only in and of themselves, but

also for what they do and can represent to others. To that end, such zones are more than just legal/territorial entities. Like 'The Zone' in Andre Tarkovsky's science fiction classic *Stalker* (1979)*,* they are spaces of intense focus for the outside world that frame both existential threat and potential promise. The heterodystopian projects discussed in this chapter epitomize this imaginative framing. They at once dramatize the impending threat of a climate-dystopian future and hold out the promise not that such a threat can be forestalled but that, through application of development technology, it can be contained.

Insofar as these heterodystopian interventions reflect a grim vision of a climate-affected future, they not only foreclose a range of possible ways of conceiving development within the region but also contribute to producing the southwest delta as a climatological borderland with an eminently translocal future of disaster. Reading these projects as heterodystopias provides a way to diagnose the specific securitized imaginations of the future that are currently being grafted onto places of uncertain ecological change. Peter Johnson (2006, 87) writes: 'With different degrees of relational intensity, heterotopias glitter and clash in their incongruous variety, illuminating passages for our imagination.' So too heterodystopias.

The Bangladesh borderlands are thus spaces within which we can begin to see the confused projections of climate futures (particularly those involving borders and migration) embodied in present-day development interventions. The emplacing technologies in Munshiganj imagine a world in which populations survive as atomized families, deploying various humanitarian technologies to help them remain fixed in a climate-ravaged landscape. Yet the recursive constitution of these interventions as spectacles suggests that we should understand them not only as pilot projects of resilience. They also speak in an idiom framed by a broader failure to address climate change at a planetary scale, a set of anxieties about climate induced migration, and a need to project technological mastery of emerging security concerns in climatological borderlands. Exploring these projects as heterodystopias reveals ways in which security and development are jointly remaking the climate-affected world in the present. It also reveals ways that development zones are bound up not just in realizing the material promise of economic growth, but the management of securitized anxiety about dystopian future.

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5. From Shangri-La to De-facto SEZ: Land Grabs from 'Below' in Sikkim, India[23]

Mona Chettri

Abstract: Sikkim in north-eastern India is a small border state strategically located between China, Nepal and Bhutan. Two decades of state-led investment in infrastructural development and private investment in hydropower and pharmaceutical industries has transformed Sikkim from a remote border state to a de-facto Special Economic Zone (SEZ) where incursions by private capital are masked under state-led development policies. The paper focuses on Setipool slum, east Sikkim located near two pharmaceutical factories to demonstrate the ways enclave development and corporate land grabs have altered the relationships between people, land and the state in expected and unexpected ways. Ambiguous land rights and the establishment of pharmaceutical factories have led to spatially contained land booms in Setipool which replicate nexuses of illegality, claim-making and exclusions that are characteristic of corporate land grabs. Focussing on Setipool slum, the paper illustrates (i) the liminal origins of development zones, (ii) the networks and sometimes, unforeseen socio-spatial impacts within and outside development zones and (iii) different forms of intimate exclusionsthat challenge prior assumptions around local responses to corporate incursions.

Key words: Land-grabs, slums, Special Economic Zones, Himalaya, pharmaceutical factories

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Introduction

The former Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim is strategically located between China, Bhutan and Nepal. Sikkim's political history has been dictated by its geographical location as the portal for trans-Himalayan trade in the 18th century, the border between Tibet and colonial India and finally as the border between India and China. Since the merger in 1975, Indian political interest and intervention in Sikkim has been predicated on India's border relations with China. Thus, heavy militarization of the border is complemented by financial incentives (disproportionate to its size and population) and benevolent industrialisation targeted at ensuring the loyalty of border citizens.

According to the Tibetan *Gter Ma* (hidden treasures) teaching, Sikkim was considered to be a *sbas yul*, a hidden land blessed by Guru Padmasambhava and set apart from the mundane world as a paradise for the practice of Buddhism (see Mullard 2011). Sikkim was the land of medicinal herbs and curative waters, a golden valley where anything sown would grow and where wisdom, kindness and compassion grew spontaneously within oneself (Balikci 2008, 87). This imagery of the *sbas yul*, the land of peace, prosperity and abundance now extends beyond its reference in religious texts and has been purposefully curated by different state governments to position Sikkim as an ideal location for safe and profitable domestic capital investment in north-eastern India. Sikkim is now not only a strategic border state but also a lucrative backyard for private finance, a de-facto Special Economic Zone (SEZ); its growth driven by national policies targeted at industrialisation and resource extraction from India's north-eastern states. The establishment of pharmaceutical enclaves in peri-urban and rural areas has suddenly changed the value and use of land in these areas. Consequent upon this, land grabs from 'above' and 'below' have emerged unleashing new forms of access and exclusion to land for a wide range of people - from negotiating bureaucrats, politicians, absentee landlords and individuals living on the appropriated land to those forces forced to migrate to urban spaces.

Based on ethnographic research conducted in Setipool slum, east Sikkim, the paper analyses land-grabs from 'below' to make three inter-related points. **Firstly**, the establishment of pharmaceutical factories in a de-facto SEZ illustrate the liminal origins of development zones. **Secondly**, spatially-contained land grabs have emerged in the vicinity of pharmaceutical factories which replicate nexuses of illegality, claim-making and exclusions that characterise corporate land-grabs. These land-grabs illustrate the different, and sometimes unforeseen, socio-spatial impacts emerging out of enclave development. **Thirdly**, new economic opportunities have resulted in 'intimate exclusions' (Hall et al. 2011) wherein social intimates, neighbours, kin exclude each other from access to land when opportunities for economic advantage appear. These 'variegated political reactions' (Hall et al 2015, 468) to corporate land grabs (also see Fontana 2014; Afroz et al., 2017; Bonas and Franco 2013; Moreda 2015) shows how state-society and community relations are being recalibrated in a development zone.

Primary fieldwork was conducted in Setipool slum over three months (December 2017 to February, 2018). The author approached Setipool through a hybrid methodology based on 'deep hanging out', walking ethnography, semi-structured interviews and visual documentation. The paper has four sections. Section one sets out the institutional landscape that enables corporate land-grabs in north-eastern India. Section two illustrates new forms of state-led territorialisation that have made Sikkim a back-yard for industrial development; section three focuses on Setipool slum and ambivalent land rights that have facilitated spatially contained land booms in response to corporate land grabs; and section four focusses on variegated responses of the local community members and new forms of intimate exclusions.

Land-grabs from above

In north-east India, the re-organisation, production and reproduction of space and space relations, so vital for capital accumulation (Banerjee-Guha 1997) is complicated by the different constitutional provisions viz. Sixth Schedule, Article 371f, 371a etc. (see Stuligross 1999; Baruah 2003) that safeguard and simultaneously determine access and/or control over land, resources, employment and other concession like income tax exemption, government subsidies etc. These provisions have been crafted in accordance to specific political histories and exigencies and differ from state to state. Anxieties around nationalism, integration and loyalty of these areas is further compounded by the history of insurgency, cultural and historical distinction of the region from mainland India, external threats, especially from China (Baruah 2003; Sur 2013).

While decades of political and military interventions have failed at integrating these border states with mainstream India, private finance and multi-national investment have been successful in incorporating border territories into new fields of power --preventing separatism and nurturing good citizens, making borders the public face of progress, development and modernity. Implicit yet central to the development of these borderlands is the discourse on civilizing marginal, supposedly uninhabited wastelands into productive spaces (Karlsson 2011, Borras and Franco 2013, 1723). Imageries attached to the idea of a borderland- barren, backward, remote- are crucial in legitimising the incursion of capitalistic development and commodification of natural resources. Sikkim and the entire north-eastern region of India is deeply embedded within this problematic and essentialized imagery of the 'exotic', mysterious, resource-rich borderland inhabited by backward tribals who cannot or will not utilize their valuable resources for their benefit. Tribals therefore have to be guided towards unlocking their true potential through the paternalism of the government and private capital (McDuie-Ra 2016, 124).

Regional development policies designed to make border states 'modern', technologically advanced and 'catch up' with other Indian states is now delivered by a hybrid enterprise of specialised private and public providers; development, modernity and progress

are also predicated on the success of the industrial sector in a region where there are few natural attractions for industry. Thus, the desire for development and modernity have facilitated the proliferation of private capital across north-eastern India. Rapid industrialization in north-east India has been catalysed by the North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2007 (NEIIPP) funded by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.[24] The NEIIPP is aimed at encouraging new and ongoing investment in NE India by providing various incentives and subsidies to different types of industries (small, medium and large) for a ten-year period. Incentives include 100% excise duty exemption on finished products manufactured there, 100% exemption on income tax, capital investment subsidy of 30% on the investment in plant and machinery, and reimbursement of 100% insurance premium. In addition, individual state governments can provide industry-specific subsidies. The NEIIPP bears resemblance to the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2006 which is also aimed at expediting industrialisation through the establishment of industrial enclaves in designated areas with special incentives to attract local, national and international investment (Aggarwal 2006, 4533). As of 2017, 423 SEZ have been approved in twenty-two states in India (MoCI, GoI).[25]

However, SEZs in India have been critiqued for their land-grabbing practices and dispossession of rural peasants to the benefit of private capital (Sarkar and Chowdhury 2009; Anwar and Carmody 2016; D'Costa and Chakraborty 2017). Acquisitions and transfer of local control over property and resources to more powerful outsiders have produced asymmetric power relation between those gaining control over land use and land value (Steele et.al 2017; Holmes 2014, da Silva 2014; Sampat 2018; Levien 2012). Unhindered by a legacy of resistance, dispossession and displacement, the NEIIPP may be deemed as enabling the formation of de-facto SEZs. The NEIIPP bypasses smaller, local differences in land use, rights etc in the different north-eastern states thereby creating a uniform investment environment. This policy uniformity is especially pertinent in north-eastern India, a region of fragmented sovereignty and multiple (legal, illegal, customary) claims on land. Thus, on the one hand both SEZ Act and NEIIPP are geared towards creating inroads for capital accumulation and extraction of natural resource (especially in the context of north-east India). On the other, NEIIPP expedites capital accumulation by promoting large-scale private investments and small-scale entrepreneurial activities as the solution to all problems-- political, cultural and economic. However, as Vijayabaskar and Menon (2015, 584) point out, the entry of non-local actors and non-agricultural demand for land has resulted in the value of land being determined more by location than its productivity in the agricultural sector. Thus, whether it be SEZ or NEIIPP,

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[24] NEIIPP has now been replaced with North East Industrial Development Scheme which offers similar exemptions and incentives as NEIIPP.

[25] http://sezindia.nic.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/StatewiseDistribution-SEZ.pdf

such development policy instruments create the necessary conditions for accumulation by dispossession (also see Hall 2013).

The implementation of these policies has also compelled a partial shift in the role of the state government from the provider of social welfare to the champion for private investment and market penetration, albeit with extreme variation at the federal and local levels and in different sectors of the economy and society (see Ferguson and Gupta 2002). However, as Levien (2018, 3) notes, land dispossession by the state is not an entirely new phenomenon in India, the process and mechanism usually moulded to fit local conditions. There exists an extensive history of land dispossession and green grabbing especially under the guise of development through large public sector industrial and infrastructural projects (Nilsen 2013; Oskarsson 2013; Levien 2015, Drew 2014). However, in neo-liberal India, there is intense pressure to transform land into a commodity that can be bought and sold for non-agricultural purposes. This transformation is dependent on the free market but more importantly on institutional interventions, especially by the state which act as the intermediary, negotiating this commodification of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. As a result, 'the Indian state plays a dual but a contradictory role that gives, as a part of its liberal-democratic responsibilities, and takes, as part of its aggressive pursuit of capitalist development on behalf of dominant classes' (D'Costa and Chakraborty 2017, 18). Simultaneously it has also led to newer assemblages, more intricate networks between the state, market and the society (Searle 2014) and changes in ownership, access, use of and benefits from land. Thus, the introduction of new forms of wealth and economic activities in inegalitarian rural contexts also creates complex forms of 'intimate exclusions'-- claims to access land made at the expense of kin, neighbours-- and dispossession from land arising out of 'anomalies in the status of landed property resulting from co-existent contending claims of de jure and/or de facto rights on the same area' (Adnan 2013, 100). The 'framework of exclusion' put forth by Hall, Hirsch and Li (2011) situates exclusion as an inevitable feature of all property claims and helps illustrate the local dynamics that might emerge when new economic opportunities suddenly appear (see Astuti and McGregor 2016; Howson 2017, Beban et al 2017). However, exclusion is not a zero sum' game; land exclusions can be partial and constantly negotiated, such as when people lose land ownership but retain some land access rights (Ribot and Peluso 2003).

Becoming a De-facto SEZ

Sikkim's merger with India in 1975, though seismic in its political repercussions, did not alter the pre-existing laws around land, property and citizenship which are collectively known as the Old Laws and protected under Article 371F of the Indian Constitution. Of the Old Laws, the Sikkim Subject Regulations Act, 1961 and Revenue Order no. 1 (1897/1907) are most important as they set legal parameters around Sikkimese identity and property ownership. Sikkimese citizenship is formulated along the Sikkim Subjects Regulation Act, 1961 and the

Sikkim Subject Certificates that establishes the identity of the holder as a bonafide citizen of Sikkim.26 Only Sikkim Subject Certificate holders are legally eligible to own property in non-Municipality areas, work in the government sector, claim exemption from income tax and access other state benefits. Post the merger with India, Certificates of Identification were introduced based on Sikkim Citizenship Order, 1975 which determines official belonging and access to other privileges in Sikkim (see Eden 2015).

Revenue Order no.1 pertains to the sale and transfer of land belonging to indigenous Bhutia and Lepcha communities. According to Revenue Order no. 1 (1897/1907), land belonging to Bhutia and Lepcha communities cannot be sold to anyone outside of these communities, even to Sikkimese-Nepalis who are eligible to buy land only in areas demarcated as Municipalities and non-tribal (i.e. non Bhutia-Lepcha). In 2014 the Government of Sikkim introduced Residential Certificates which bestow some form of legal identity and a set of rights to those citizens who have been living in Sikkim in or prior to 1975 making it possible for the 'alienation' of non-tribal and Municipality land, its sale, purchase and transfer to Residential Certificate holders. Thus, although a part of India, there is no legal recourse for non-Sikkimese or non-Residential Certificate holders to buy or sell land in Sikkim.

Land and property rights are intrinsically linked to the notion of Sikkimese identity and conversely ownership or access to land sets the parameters around who can claim Sikkimese identity legitimately. And yet, in a state where issues around land, identity, culture, outsiders, protection and preservation always find political resonance, private companies, owned by non-Sikkimese conglomerates have been able to acquire private as well as government land and assets in the state. This has led to the imposition of new forms of land control -practices by the state that fix or consolidate forms of access, claim-making and exclusion (Peluso and Lund 2011, 668).

Territorialisation as a mechanism for state control of people and resources is enacted through the control of land, which under neo-liberal economic policies involves a wide variety of legal instrument and institutional alliances between the state (regional and national), private entities and non-state actors (ibid, 673). The state wields influence and power through its roles as the prime negotiator, facilitator and enforcer of rules and continues to set the framework within which businesses and private capital must compete for its attention. This highlights the changing paradigm of the relationship and interactions between state and society and the emergence of new forms of political control in geographical regions with limited natural resources or agro-based export industries and continued financial dependency on the central government (McDuie-Ra and Chettri 2018). These relationships are embedded within a new

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26 Sikkimese citizens are ethnically divided into three broad categories-Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali. The Bhutia and Nepali ethnic groups are comprised of numerous tribes and ethnic groups (see Gurung 2011).

form of environmental governance which is invested in 'socialising losses and privatising gains' (Barney 2009, 155) built on a cycle of kick-backs and patronage which extends from the government sector to people in positions of political power.

In Sikkim, new forms of territorialisation are being imposed by the state for the explicit purpose of establishing hydropower project and pharmaceutical factories, many which are located in tribal or private land. They therefore have to be acquired specifically through the use of the Sikkim Land Requisition and Acquisition Act, 1978 which empowers the state government to acquire any land as may be required for 'public purposes,' usually on a hundred-year lease (a tactic often employed to circumvent rules preventing the transfer of land to non-Sikkimese individuals or corporations). Included in this definition of public purposes is 'the provision of land for a company, corporation or co-operative society for some work which, in the opinion of the state government, is to be substantially useful for and beneficial for the public' (GoS 1978). From the perspective of the government, hydropower plants and pharmaceutical factories are beneficial for the public, although these benefits for the state or the local population are yet to materialise.[27] The government therefore functions as 'land-broker for capital' (Levien 2014, 384)- connecting the private and the public sectors, facilitating (mostly extractive, unequal relationships) between the private companies and the locals.

Sikkim is a resource-poor state- there are no minerals that can be mined and the mountainous topography makes the establishment of large industries highly cost-inefficient. Yet, Sikkim has been very successful in attracting and retaining private investment under the NEIIPP, especially the pharmaceutical industry (Das 2019). This success can be attributed to Sikkim's reputation within the region and across India as a peaceful, law-abiding model development state with a pliant government keen to resolve bureaucratic and administrative bottlenecks for private investors. This relative peace and security can also be attributed to Sikkim's history and subservient political positions first as a satellite kingdom of Tibet in the 16th century, then as a Protectorate state under the British (1861-1947) and independent India (1950-1974), which paved the way for a relatively peaceful merger in 1975. This seamless and peaceful transition (for most parts) from an independent kingdom to a federal unit of India has also been helped by an uninterrupted and seemingly unlimited financial support from the central government (McDuie-Ra and Chettri 2018).

In Sikkim, there are no designated industrial districts or zones. Private companies are free to choose any area most suitable for them and land deals are negotiated by the government

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27 The 2017-18 to 2019-20 Medium Fiscal Policy report states that 'The State taxes of Sikkim have remained less buoyant due to the pattern of growth where the sectors growing rapidly and contributing to growth process have not contributed to tax revenues…Although, the manufacturing, power and construction sectors emerged as major driving force for the Sikkimese economy, its impact on State finances, particularly on revenue generation has not been very productive… The generation of hydroelectricity, though adds to the GSDP numbers, remain outside the State tax system. Similarly, the pharmaceutical industries send their products out of the State through consignment transfer, which is not captured in the VAT' (GoS 2018, 5).

on their behalf (Oberoi 2018, 8). Thus, under the auspices of the NEIIPP the entire state is a *de-facto* SEZ, a backyard for private finance, a zone of export-oriented resource extraction and production which links Sikkim to national supply chains. The official label of an SEZ or the lack of it has not hindered the movement of private capital. Rather, not using the label has facilitated the establishment of private industries under opaque rules, immune from strict state and national laws—many of which are applicable only to border and ethnic minority regions.

Backyard for Private Investment

In Sikkim, private hydropower and pharmaceutical companies exist and function as independent, spatially-bound economic enclaves of production and extraction, connected together only by a skeletal framework of perfunctory governmental regulations and benefitting (logistically and financially) from Sikkim's strategic location. Forty-nine pharmaceutical factories[28] currently operate out of Sikkim; majority of these factories are located in the eastern district along National Highway 10, near the river Teesta and its tributaries. The gradual proliferation of these factories, especially on former agricultural or forest land indicates the changing economic profile of the state, from agriculture to the services and industrial sector. With this economic transition comes the transformation of the landscape too--- imposing, concrete buildings in the middle of farmlands, along roads and highways, cordoned off by tall gates. Physical barriers (walls, barbed wires, gates), private security guards and surveillance cameras control and monitor access to and within these enclaves. Entry for non-employees requires many official letters of recommendation vouching for the visitor's identity and purpose. Although located in or close to rural and peri-urban areas, these factories are islands of economic activity that exist and function in isolation, disconnected from the local economy and community. Pharmaceutical factories in Sikkim are enclaves that enforce their own rules of employment, waste management, construction etc, many of which are in violation of state and national laws. For instance, in 2018, the High Court of Sikkim found all existing pharmaceutical factories in Sikkim in contravention of the Environmental Protection Act, 1986 and Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules 2016. The High Court judgement stated that not a single factory was fully complaint with the national environmental protection norms and yet had been issued clearances by the Sikkim State Pollution Control Board (Summit Times 2018). Despite such violations, factories continue their production and emboldened by the assurances given by the state, continue to act with limited responsibility or accountability. While private companies continue to act with

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[28] Different respondents claimed that there were more than forty pharmaceutical factories in Sikkim. However, this was difficult to verify as the official list maintained by the Government of Sikkim Labour Department listed only thirty-one factories.

impunity, spatially contained land booms have emerged in the vicinity of the factories and in Setipool residents are involved in their own, localised versions of land grabs that replicate corporate land grabs and their networks of illegality.

Land-grabs From Below

Except for its strategic location near two pharmaceutical factories, there is nothing significant about Setipool. It is a small slum flanked by the river Seti on one side and a state highway on the other, almost invisible to those passing by on the road. Sun Pharmaceuticals unit (I) overlooks the ever-expanding cluster of buildings and cottages in Setipool; small wooden cottages have given way to new multi-storeyed buildings, some complete and many more under construction highlighting the urbanisation boom underway in the eastern Himalaya (see Chettri and McDuie-Ra 2018). The road, the river and the buildings formed the outer parameters of Setipool slum which had expanded from its beginnings as a *khasmal* area- land on the periphery of reserved forests with limited access for fodder and firewood - to a 'tight space' inhabited by people of diverse ethnic and occupational backgrounds, where most houses were joined together by flimsy, porous walls that filtered conversations and television noise from one wall to another. Haphazard rows of houses of all sizes, shapes and construction material stacked one upon the other in contrast to the neatly organised, white and blue buildings and the sterile compound wall of Sun Pharmaceuticals across the river. A network of alleyways originating from the main road led into the slum where crumbling wooden houses stood next to brightly-coloured concrete buildings revealing the economic disparity amongst its residents. There were very few open spaces in the neighbourhood and most residents gathered in the shared courtyards, near the river-bank or near water taps scattered across the slum. A temple in the middle of the slum doubled up as a communal space for meetings, religious functions and charity health checks. This landscape was confusing to navigate, some alleyways led to dead ends, some to someone's kitchen or living room, while some suddenly gave way to the river bank.

<INSERT *Figure 5.1: Concrete aspirations: Sun Pharmaceuticals factory and new constructions along the Seti river (photo by author)*>

Officially, Setipool is still a *khasmal* area but has been utilised for different purposes and inhabited by different groups of people over the years. In the early 1950s Setipool was used as a Tibetan refugee camp till a landslide in 1968 led to the relocation of the refugees to other parts of Sikkim. The area was then handed over to the Central Water Commission (CWC) during the construction of Lagyap Hydropower station in 1974, who used it as a labour camp for their construction workers. After the completion of the project, CWC workers left the area and the land remained unoccupied except for families of stone quarry workers who had settled

near the river bank. In the early 1980s, Government of Sikkim Forest Department started allocating housing sites to its staff working in the area who had been re-located from another government property nearby. During the same period, Government of Sikkim Power Department also started using the existing labour huts built by CWC as temporary accommodation for their staff.

Thirty years on, families in Setipool still live without any clarity over their legal rights or how to buy/register the land in their names. Changes to land use and ownership in Setipool is regulated by the National Forest Conservation Act (NFCA) and have to be approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India through its headquarters in Shillong, Meghalaya. While most residents have been unable to register their land officially, small parts of the slum were officially registered in the early 1990s by families who had the requisite bureaucratic and political connections in the government prior to the strict implementation of the NFCA regulations in Sikkim (Personal Communication).[29]

While land acquisition in other parts of Sikkim is guided by strict rules around citizenship and ethnicity, occupying land in Setipool slum, at least in the early 1980s and 90s, required people to just 'turn up'. Unofficial sale and transfer of land continued despite very little documentation and was usually based on a measure of trust and hope of being able to register land eventually. Over the years, Setipool came to be inhabited by people of different ethnic backgrounds, legal statuses and occupations. Informal work opportunities quarrying sand and stones brought more workers and their extended families, while low rents and unoccupied land enabled extended families to settle and expand their occupation. Political parties and State Ministers too started allocating land in Setipool to their vote-banks while non-Sikkimese landless labourers moved to Setipool drawn by the low rents and a degree of anonymity that the growing slum afforded them.

Presently, there are four categories of residents in Setipool- (i) those who were able to register their land prior to the strict implementation of FCA guidelines in 1997, they are owners of registered land, hold *parchas* (legal ownership documents) and hence own buildings within the slum, (ii) those relocated by the Government of Sikkim but do not hold land ownership documents, (iii) migrants and illegal occupants with no documents and (iv) migrant workers who live in the slum as tenants. The slum is inhabited by different caste and ethnic groups with a majority of occupants belonging to different Scheduled Caste groups. However, most land

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[29] Forest Conservation Act, 1980 restricts and regulates the de-reservation of forests or use of forest-land for non-forest purposes without the prior approval of the Central Government. According to a retired Government official, it was implemented in Sikkim in 1980 but was strictly enforced only post the 1996 Supreme Court of India judgement on the Godvarman vs Union of India case that reformed forest governance and management (Personal communication with Government official, Gangtok, Sikkim, 17/01/2018; also see Rosencranz and Lele 2008).

and buildings along the road are owned by upper caste Bahun and Chettri30 families who often also own land within the slum.

The lack of *parcha* contributed to a sense of impermanence and anxiety amongst those who had been officially re-located to Setipool, evinced by their reluctance to invest in their housing and/or construct buildings like the *parcha* holders. None of the *parcha*-less residents that I spoke to during the course of the fieldwork knew exactly which governmental agency was responsible for land registration; some were not clear whether they had to go to Assam or Meghalaya, others did not understand why they had to go to another state to register Sikkimese land. In this general confusion, their only resort had been to approach their local political representative which had not led to any concrete outcome. Rumours in the slum often oscillated between the government's imminent recognition of their claims to eviction from the area to make way for another developmental project or by the CWC. This uncertainty even prevented some *parcha* holders and building owners from investing heavily in their properties. Others took advantage of this ambiguous situation to either occupy more land or add to their existing structures, silently confident that the government would not be able raze the slum which was interspersed with legal, registered properties.

According to older residents, in the early 1980s and 90s, there had existed a nascent sense of community amongst this disparate group of settlers. With fewer families and limited, almost non-existential state government interest or control on land occupation, '*zamin michnu*' (occupying land) had been easy and common. There had been enough room for the residents to expand their living quarters'—adding a kitchen, a cowshed or an extra room for the expanding family. For the residents of Setipool, while the landscape represented multiple bureaucratic claims by different Government of Sikkim (GoS) departments and the CWC, no governmental agency seemed especially concerned about who actually inhabited the land or what it was being used for. Except for a rusting CWC signboard covered in foliage near the riverbank there were no other permanent markers of any institutional claim over the land. This made Setipool an ambiguous zone of legal and illegal occupations and in the absence of any form of legal enforcement of land rules, land occupation in Setipool was self-regulated and dependent upon the strength of individual claims on the land.

<Insert 5.2 *Ambiguous claims: dilapidated CWC signboard (photo by the author)*>

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30 Sikkimese Nepalis are stratified on the basis of caste and ethnic groups. Within the caste system, Bahun and Chettri groups are placed at the top while the former untouchable caste groups (Kami, Damai, Sarki) are at the bottom and are officially designated as Scheduled Castes.

Despite living in a state of suspended anxiety over land rights, the residents did not view the establishment of pharmaceutical factories in the vicinity of the slum as a threat to their belonging, claims (legal or illegal) on the land or local livelihoods. This could be attributed to the emergence of small-scale local economy catering to migrant worker and most importantly, a surge in demand for housing and the concomitant 'concretisation' of towns and villages near these factories. Every year large number of migrants from other districts of Sikkim, neighbouring Darjeeling hills and other parts of India arrive in Sikkim to work in different pharmaceutical factories. This change in the local economy and spatially contained land-booms is evident across towns and villages located in the vicinity of pharmaceutical factories. In Setipool, Sun Pharmaceuticals operates two large plants on either side of Seti river. Sun Pharma (1) has been built on the site of a former government carbide factory and Sun Pharma (2) stands on private, agricultural land which was acquired and leased by the state government to Sun Pharma on a hundred-year lease. Both plants employ hundreds of local and non-local staff who work in different shifts through the day and late into the night.

The whirring of giant machines and the release of black plumes of smoke from the factory marked the beginning of the work day and streams of company buses started plying from six in the morning, bringing staff from different parts of Gangtok and Ranipool. A row of small canteens and grocery shops lined the main road near the entrance of Sun Pharma Plant (I) and catered to different shifts of company bus drivers and workers who would start arriving at the factory site from early hours of the morning. Buoyed by the increasing number of customers after the construction of the factory, all buildings lining the main-road had converted their ground floor space into grocery shops and canteens while the upper floors were partly inhabited by the resident family and partly by tenants. Building owners usually rented out their property in the slum whilst living in the buildings on the main road.

Accommodation near the factories attracted migrant workers working in both Sun and Macleods Pharmaceuticals, located a few kilometres away from Setipool. Rental properties with private bathroom, running water etc. were in high demand, leading to an inflation in rental prices in the locality--usually three times higher than the standard local rate.[31] This made it very difficult for people to find landlords willing to rent it out to non-factory employees who paid higher rents. While new buildings on the main road were being built specifically to be rented out, slum residents too aspired to partake in this rental boom. Land owners were quick to mention that the value of the land had doubled in the last decade as a result of the ever-increasing housing demand for factory workers.

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[31] Average monthly rent in a building ranges between INR 8000 (USD 117) to INR 10,000 (USD 147), whereas in the slum the maximum monthly rent is INR 3000 (USD 44).

Accommodation near the factories was difficult to find and rents were prohibitive for low-end workers, which pushed them to seek out accommodation in the slum where families rented out rooms or had built extra room for lodgers at relatively reasonable rates. However, with the river on one side and the state highway on the other, the slum has permanent boundaries leaving very little space for outward expansion. The inability to expand outwards had led to vertical expansion with more floors being added on buildings and the occupation of every available piece of land within the slum. While building owners within the slum were able to capitalise by adding more floors and renting out every available room, other slum-dwellers with adequate capital and space for expansion too participated in this rental boom by adding smaller structures wherever possible. Thus, the establishment of the pharmaceutical factory had triggered a set of variegated responses from the residents of Setipool which was driven by the desire to partake in the rental boom. While some have successfully managed to occupy more land, others had expanded their existing property, those without resources and/or land watched the slum shrink and compress around them.

Variegated Responses to Land-grabs

In Setipool, encroachment and land-grabs from below had been facilitated by multiple layers of administrative claims over the land creating a grey-zone of conflicting claims and opportunities for illegal occupation. Cement walls, mesh-wire fencing, ply-board etc. aimed at cordoning others often became tangible manifestations of the nebulous land rights and claims on a specific piece of land. Those who had arrived first were able to claim larger areas and the sudden increase in the commercial value of the land has led to stronger claim-making and intimate exclusion in the neighbourhood. Following Ribot and Peluso (2003), 'access' in this context is understood as the ability to benefit from things' and 'exclusion' is the ways in which people are prevented from benefitting from things; access for one therefore inevitably involves dispossessing another (Hall et al 2011, 7). In Setipool, exclusion here takes the form of 'intimate exclusion' – practices that enable some people to accumulate land and capital at the expense of their neighbours and kin (ibid, 145). For instance, an affluent, local businessman who owned a building on the main road had also claimed the land behind his building. He marked his territory by constructing a small shop and planting plants and vegetables, controlling access and effectively excluding others from land which was probably legally not even his own. No one could contest his ownership in a slum where lines between legal and illegal, occupation and ownership were highly blurred. While residents were quick to point out which houses were registered or not, there was a general reluctance to discuss encroachment and occupation of land probably because everybody was implicated in it, in some form or the other. Probably, acutely aware of their own illegal status over 'their' land, the residents perhaps understood that approaching the state as an arbitrator to resolve encroachment issues was to jeopardise their own situation and either tried to resolve these problems amongst themselves

or begrudgingly accepted the claims made by others. It also illustrated that although no one was directly dispossessed of their land, penetration of corporate capital into rural economies had nonetheless had profound impacts on class formation and commodity relations in different ways (Hall et al 2015, 474). Nonetheless, bordering on the edges of the licit and illicit, Setipool has continued to grow and as one resident described, over the years all open spaces have transformed into buildings.

<INSERT *Figure 5.3: 'Tight spaces': bordering on the edges of licit and illicit (photo by author)* >

While some residents tried to demarcate their land, others participated actively in the rental boom by adding more floors on pre-existing buildings or constructing new rooms within their compounds leading to the creation of a new class of 'land-grabbing entrepreneurs' (Borras and Franco 2013, 1727) within the slum. Prior to the establishment of the pharmaceutical factories, land grabbing and encroachment was usually intended to accommodate expanding families. However, the scramble for land is now guided by the explicit purpose of renting extra space to migrant factory workers. During fieldwork I watched the construction of a new concrete residential block on what was said to be registered land. The new structure was compartmentalised into three separate apartments of two small rooms and an even smaller kitchen and a common bathroom for all tenants. The size of the rooms or the shared facilities was not a hindrance for the stream of prospective tenants. This new accommodation was being built exclusively to be rented out to factory workers who were willing to pay a higher rate than other local tenants. Thus, new forms of intimate exclusions were emerging- not only was there a paucity of free spaces, there were now even fewer opportunities for local residents with growing families to rent rooms in new buildings which were being rented out only to migrant factory workers. Those who did not have spare rooms or extra land/money to construct houses could not participate in the rental boom but used available space for different retail purposes. A small grocery shop in the middle of the slum sold vegetables and snacks, its business hours completely dependent on who was available to run the shop. It was an extension of a house built on unregistered land, fenced around with rickety wooden planks, catering to the needs of the increasing slum population. Another small shop was wedged in a narrow space between the buildings and the slum, freshly painted and fitted with metallic shutters, ready for business while another small liquor shop stood near a vegetable patch. These shops had been constructed on land that had been occupied prior to the establishment of the pharmaceutical factories. However, their commercial value had increased only since the construction of the pharmaceutical factories.

Most residents claimed that with every passing year new faces were starting to outnumber the older residents leading to the dissipation of both the sense of community and security. This generated new kinds of anxieties for the residents which ranged from increased incidents of theft of household items and clothes (apparently mostly by drug addicts) to the supposed erosion of the moral fabric of the area with increasing number of unmarried, co-habiting factory workers in the area. The increase in slum inhabitants also created problems around waste management and the condition of the open drain pipes. Most disagreements were centred around the management or rather, the mismanagement of drains which originated from the buildings and flowed all the way to the river, distributing blame and responsibility for its maintenance along the way. In an area with pre-existing problems around waste management, especially during monsoons, the new residents and their lack of responsibility towards their waste was emerging as a cause of much consternation amongst the permanent residents. New tenants were perceived to be less mindful of their neighbours and apathetic about the general cleanliness of the slum. Anger was also directed at the absentee landlords who lived along the main road and did not share any responsibility for their tenants' behaviour and often reacted to complaints within contempt and anger which was read by the slum residents as a display of their higher caste, political and economic status.

Conclusion

In Setipool, despite the shrinking living space, the clogged drains and the increased insecurity and anxiety over environmental degradation, the residents responded to new socio-spatial anxieties by participating in their own localised versions of rent-seeking behaviour. Intimate land-grabs replicate nexuses of illegality and legality, claim-making and exclusions that is often associated with corporate land-grabs. Akin to corporate land-grabs, localised land grabs too are driven by the desire to profit from land through the careful manoeuvring of ambiguous laws, abetted by corrupt officials and political elites. Development zones can, therefore, have liminal origins, which creates opportunities for various forms of rent-seeking behaviour across different scales. New forms of claim-making and localised changes in land-use patterns in Setipool can be attributed to national policies like the NEIIPP that help establish new markets and create inroads for capital accumulation in areas of complex histories and fragmented sovereignties. The establishment of economic enclaves have transformed Sikkim from a remote, hidden land, *sbas-yul*, to a de-facto SEZ, accelerating the transition already underway as a result of infrastructural development, better technological connectivity and (in/out) migration. The socio-spatial transformation of Setipool challenges normative understandings of localised responses to enclave development and illustrates the emergence of different opportunities, networks and recalibration of relationships in a development zone.

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6. Development Zones in Conflict-affected Borderlands: The case of Muse, Northern Shan State, Myanmar

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Abstract: How are development zones 'made' in conflict-affected borderlands? Addressing this question, this chapter explores the transformation of the Myanmar-China border town of Muse since 1988. Despite ongoing armed conflict in northern Myanmar, Muse has become the country's most important border development zone and today handles more than 80% of licit overland Myanmar-China trade. It is also a key border hub in China's Belt and Road Initiative. Policy narratives typically claim that borderland development and regional economic integration offer an antidote to violence, criminality, and illegal practices. This chapter challenges these narratives. It demonstrates how longstanding forms of informal public authority and illegality have become deeply embedded in the technologies of governance that have underpinned Muse's rise.

Keywords: Illicit economies; borderland development; informal governance; militias; illegal drugs; Belt and Road Initiative.

Informal Governance and Illegality in the making of Borderland Development Zones

Since the late 1980s, borderland regions across Southeast Asia have increasingly been re-imagined as zones of economic opportunity that have the potential to stimulate national and regional development. Development discourses have promoted the 'opening up' of 'marginal' spaces to markets and capital alongside political projects aimed at consolidating state control over territories where the reach of the state has historically been weak and contested. Borderlands have become the subject of concerted efforts by national governments to expand cross-border flows of trade and investment and convert borderland spaces into sites of resource extraction and production (Barney 2009; Eilenberg 2012; Eilenberg 2014; Nyíri 2012; Taylor 2016; Woods 2011; van Schendel & de Maaker 2014). However, in many parts of Southeast Asia the rise of borderland development zones is being mapped onto longstanding histories of unresolved armed conflict, fragmented sovereignty and illegal cross-border flows. How are development zones 'made' in conflict-affected borderlands? What forms of territorialisation underpin the making of development zones in these contested spaces? What forms of public authority emerge to govern borderland development zones and whose interests do they serve? And how do longstanding histories of illicit border trade, fragmented sovereignty, and unresolved armed conflicts shape governance structures and everyday life in these development zones?

This chapter sets out to address these questions by analysing the rise of the Myanmar-China border town of Muse in northern Shan State in the period since the late 1980s and current plans to establish the Myanmar's first official border special economic zones (SEZ) in the city. We emphasize the centrality of long-established systems of informal governance and illicit practices in the making of border development zones in conflict-affected spaces in the Myanmar-China borderlands. In doing so, this paper challenges the acts of erasure and simplistic narratives of transformation that often underpin development discourses surrounding the rise of border cities and SEZs. The legacies of past histories of violent armed conflict, non-state systems of public authority, and unresolved tensions in centre-periphery relations are often erased entirely from borderland development narratives, or are consigned to pre-modern periods of poverty, backwardness and marginality (Nyíri, 2012, 53). The re-imagination of borderland development zones in conflict-affected spaces has often been framed through narratives of transformation which proclaim that 'development and peace come together'. Modernist fantasies of borderland development present the 'pathologies of the margins' – violence, criminality, illegal trade, and forms of informal governance that depart from established state norms – as residual to processes of economic development and political integration. The state presents borderland development as part of its 'civilising mission' (Scott 2009). This "civilizing frontier rhetoric presents" the penetration of state bureaucracy and the extension of markets in border regions as the antidote to violence, conflict, illegality and underdevelopment in border regions (Cramer & Richards 2011, 289).

However, these discourses of modernity and development rarely reflect the contested and complex empirical reality surrounding the making of borderland development zones in places like Muse, which have a history of weak state authority and where illegal trade has long been an important foundation for local power structures. Addressing this blind spot, this chapter argues that the growth of border cities and efforts to produce new spatial orders over land, borders and populations in highly contested borderland spaces do not displace pre-existing systems of informal governance and illegal practices. Rather these emerging development zones 'exist in a nexus of formality and informality' (Ghiabi 2020) that builds on histories of layered governance and authority shaped by a wide array of actors, including military commanders, civilian government departments, armed groups, militias, private companies, and local populations (Eilenberg 2012; Eilenberg 2014; Goodhand 2009; Korf & Raeymaekers 2013; Lund 2011; van Schendel 2004; Woods 2019). Efforts by political and business elites to ensure the security and stability required to attract capital and magnify trade flows often selectively draw upon long-established systems of rule and sources of informal public authority rather than attempt to construct entirely new formal institutions to secure space (Rasmussen & Lund 2018). The reconfiguration of certain 'institutional debris' of pre-existing systems of rule often become the 'building blocks' for new technologies of rule governing resources and people (Rasmussen & Lund 2018, 389, 393).

In order to understand the how illegality and informal governance intersect with the transformation of Muse into one of Myanmar's most important economic hubs, we also deploy a spatial lens that extends beyond the city itself. This approach emphasizes the importance of engaging with the sociospatial processes and configurations of power that enable Muse to be connected into wider flows of capital, commodities and people. We show how the transformation of Muse from sleepy border town to key development hub has been reliant upon informal governance structures and forms of territorialisation[32] that enable the city to establish durable connections with key sites of resource extraction (such as the jade mines in Kachin State), critical infrastructure (such as the deep-sea ports on Myanmar's western coast and oil and gas pipelines) and major cities (especially Mandalay and Yangon) across conflict-affected landscapes. As we aim to show in this chapter, the strategies used to maintain these connections and flows have had a strong influence on how the Muse economy functions and how the city is governed. Most importantly, the distribution of economic opportunities (both legal and illegal) within the city has become central to the informal political settlements that provide the stability required to maintain the flows of capital and resources upon which the city's prosperity

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[32] Territorialisation is defined here as the construction of spatial orders aimed at exerting control over people's activities, determining access to resources, and establishing and enforcing forms of social, political and economic inclusion and exclusion (Peluso & Vandergeest 1995, 388-89; Rasmussen & Lund 2018, 388; Sack 1986, 19).

is reliant. How Muse functions as a development zone is thus intimately shaped by wider processes of counter-insurgency and state consolidation far beyond the city itself.

The research presented in this paper is based on fieldwork interviews conducted by the second and third authors in Muse in 2019 with politicians, youth leaders, local government officials from the General Administration Department (GAD), militia leaders and recruits, people who use drugs, businesspeople – including senior figures in some of Muse's largest trade companies – and people working in factories and haulage companies in Muse.[33] The paper also draws upon research conducted by the first author between 2013 and 2018 across northern Shan State.[34]

Muse-Ruili: The Rise of the Myanmar-China Gateway
Setting the Foundations: Changing Borderland Dynamics in the late 1980s and early 1990s
The Muse-Ruili border crossing today acts as the main overland gateway between Myanmar and China. Muse is located in northern Shan State on the main road that connects Mandalay in central Myanmar to the China border. Across the border, Ruili is a county-level city in Dehong Prefecture in Yunnan Province, 700 kilometres east of the provincial capital Kunming. For much of the period since Myanmar's independence in 1948 until the late 1980s the Myanmar-China border was officially closed. On the China side, Yunnan's border with Myanmar was sealed by Chairman Mao as part of a centralisation strategy aimed at directing the proving inwards (Hameiri, Jones & Zou 2019, 483). In Myanmar, the country's China borderlands were also increasingly neglected and marginalised. Under the dictatorship of General Ne Win (1962-1988) the country pursued an autarkic, quasi-socialist economic model that rejected private enterprise, integration into global markets and foreign investment in favour of wholsesale nationalisation, closed borders and self-sufficiency. Ne Win's rejection of federalism, his efforts to secure firmer unitary control over the country's border and his willingness to deploy military force to achieve this ambition, fuelled longstanding grievances against Burman-dominated central authority throughout the country's ethnically-diverse borderlands. By the early 1960s, most of the Myanmar-China borderlands were engulfed in violent armed conflict. An array of armed groups controlled large swathes of territory along the China border and government control throughout Shan State and Kachin State was confined to major towns and cities (Smith, 1999; Lintner, 1999). The Communist Party of Burma (CPB) was the largest and most powerful of these armed groups through the 1970s and 1980s and received extensive

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support from the Chinese government. China's support for the CPB and widespread anti-Chinese riots in Burma in 1967 created significant tensions between Beijing and Rangoon.

<INSERT Figure 6.1: Map: Muse-Ruili.>

However, through the 1980s three key factors began to change the dynamics along the Myanmar-China border. These shifting political and economic dynamics paved the way for Muse to become one of Myanmar's most important development zones and a key hub in wider processes of economic integration between China and South and Southeast Asia. First, the conflict dynamics across northern Shan State underwent a significant shift between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. After 1980, China scaled back its support for the CPB. Amidst the political turmoil within the Chinese Communist Party following Mao's death in September 1976, the CPB had supported the hardliners and denounced Liu Shaoqi and 'Rightist chieftain Deng Xiaoping'. This backfired badly following Deng's eventual rise to de facto leader of the Party in 1978. In 1980 a CPB delegation visiting Beijing was informed that the Party was expected to become self-reliant by 1985 (Maung Aung Myoe 2011, 87-89). The Myanmar Army scored a number of military victories over the CPB in Muse Township through the mid-1980s, which gradually enabled the army to strengthen its control over this highly strategic region of the border. Conflict dynamics along the China border were further transformed in April 1989 when the CPB collapsed and fractured into a series of splinter groups (Smith 1999, 358; Lintner 1990, 39). The CPB had long provided support to an array of other armed groups, and its collapse sent shockwaves through the country's complicated insurgency politics (Lintner 1990). The Myanmar military government also changed its approach towards the country's restive borderlands. After years of fighting, the government reached ceasefire deals with an array of armed groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s, beginning with the four CPB splinter groups in Shan State, and followed by the Shan State Army (in 1989), the Palaung State Liberation Army (in 1991) and the Kachin Independence Organization (in 1994), all of which controlled territory in northern Shan State (Meehan 2011, 388-89; Oo & Min 2007). These changing conflict dynamics brought a fragile stability to northern Shan State border. Muse became the one border crossing with China that was under direct government control. Other key border towns remained under the de facto control of ceasefire groups.

The second key factor that facilitated the emergence of Muse as key development zone in post-1988 Myanmar was the central government's changing economic strategy. Following nationwide pro-democracy protests in 1988, General Ne Win stood down and was replaced by a new military junta, called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The SLORC government continued to embrace authoritarianism, which it claimed was a necessary bulwark against the country's internal fragmentation, and refused to acknowledge the 1990 General Election result that deliver Aung San Suu Kyi a landslide victory. The new military government did, however, initiate a significant shift away from its predecessor's isolationist

economic policy. In 1988 the government legalised cross-border trade through government-controlled trade gates, the most important being Muse in northern Shan State on the China border, and Tachilek and Myawaddy on the Thai border. In the same year, Lo Hsing Han's Asia World Company was granted a government contract to improve the road between Mandalay and the China border at Muse, which reduced travel time from two days (as many as seven during the rainy season) to 12-16 hours (Fujita et al. 2009, 114). Also in 1988, the government passed a new Foreign Investment Law to promote private investment in the country (Fujita et al. 2009, 4-6). In 1991, the government also passed the 'Wastelands Law', which provided a legal framework for the government to allocate large scale concessions of 'fallow' and 'waste land', which effectively included all customary and communal land, regardless of whether it was being farmed (TNI 2012). This paved the way for large-scale resource extraction and infrastructure projects, notably logging, mining, dam-building, the construction of oil and gas pipelines, and commercial agriculture (Lambrecht 2008).

Third, Muse's transformation through the 1990s and 2000s into a key development hub was linked to a wider set of initiatives by the Chinese government to utilise cross-border trade and investment as a means of stimulating economic development in the land-locked interior provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan. Myanmar's rich natural resources, many of which are concentrated in Kachin State and Shan State, were also viewed by China as valuable commodities that could continue to fuel the country's economic development. In the early 1990s, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping announced that certain interior provinces would be granted the same policies of economic openness that various regions of coastal China had benefited from in the 1980s. In 1993 China's State Council granted Yunnan powers to implement its own border trade policies and to designate 'border open cities' and 'border economic zones'. This status was granted to Wanding and Ruili on the Myanmar border as well as Hekou on the Vietnam border, paving the way for sustained expansion of cross-border trade (Summers 2013, 60-1). Amidst these broad national initiatives, Yunnanese business and political elites sought to re-brand their province as a 'bridgehead' rather than a frontier, and at the centre of the China-Southeast Asia region rather than the periphery of coastal-dominated China (Summers 2013, 59-69). (For similar processes along the Indonesian-Malaysian border see Hargyono, this volume). The subsequent expansion of formal cross-border trade symbolised improved relations between Myanmar and China and the importance of regional economic integration to the development strategies of both countries.

The Rise of a Border Development Zone: Understanding Muse's Importance to the National Economy in Myanmar

These changing dynamics on both sides of the border continued to gather momentum through the 1990s. China's 'Going Out' policy, initiated in 1999, encouraged Chinese companies to invest overseas. This was followed in 2000 by the Chinese government's 'Go West' strategy

that sought to improve levels of economic development in twelve western provinces, which are home to more than 400 million people, through major investments in infrastructure and services and efforts to increase trade and foreign investment. This strategy has remained a consistent part of the country's five-year plans ever since. As the major gateway to Myanmar, the Ruili-Muse crossing has played a highly strategic role in both of these initiatives.

Through the 1990s and 2000s, Ruili was transformed from a small border town of 10,000 people to a sizeable city with a population of more than 150,000. Between 2001 and 2011, the total volume of cross-border China-Myanmar trade rose by $6.5 billion; in comparison border trade with Laos rose by $1.2 billion (Chen & Stone 2013, 8). In 2010 Ruili became a key city in the Chinese government's strategic plans to stimulate development in western China and in 2012 the 'Master Plan of Ruili Experimental Zone' was launched, which included 238 projects aimed at further strengthening the city's role in connecting interior China and Southeast Asia (Chen 2015, 39). Muse-Ruili is also a key hub for a number of major cross-border infrastructure projects. These include the new oil and gas pipelines that traverse Myanmar linking the deep-sea ports at Kyuakpyu on the Bay of Bengal. These have the capacity to deliver 22million tonnes of crude oil and 12billion cubic metres of gas per year to Kunming (Chen & Stone 2013, 10-11) and cut across conflict-affected regions of northern Shan State. China also plans to construct a $20billion railroad linking Muse-Ruili to Kyuakpyu on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) agreement. Both of these major infrastructure developments are designed to reduce China's reliance on the Malacca Straits and they form part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (see also Murton and Rippa, this volume).

In terms of its economic significance to the national economy, the Muse-Ruili border zone is much more important to Myanmar than it is to China. China is now Myanmar's largest trading partner and China accounts for 87% of the Myanmar's overland border trade (Chen 2015). Muse is by far the largest of Myanmar's fifteen official border trading sites: in 2015 official border trade through Muse stood at more than $3.36billion. In comparison, the second largest trading border site – Myawaddy on the Thai border – recorded a volume of $411million (Chen 2015, 491-2).

Muse has long been overshadowed by its wealthier and larger neighbouring city across the border. Most major trade markets – notably the region's major jade emporium – and packaging and distribution industries are located on the China side of the border. There has been relatively little investment in Muse other than in sectors that are officially outlawed in China, notably casinos, or dirty industries that have fallen foul of Chinese regulations. For example, a number of paper factories, the effluent from which damages local water supplies, have been relocated

across the border after the Chinese government shut them down.₃₅ However, in 2016 the Myanmar government announced ambitious plans to develop Muse's CBD as part of efforts to convert the city into the first of three new border 'economic cooperation zones', which will form key nodes on the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor program under the BRI. The current plans are designed to transform a 294 acre (1.2 km² site) in downtown Muse into a trading and commercial hub. Developed by New Star Light Company, the site includes the first purpose-built trading emporium in Muse (which opened in 2016) and five further zones encompassing commercial services, shops, tourism amenities and luxury residential development. New Star Light Company's promotional materials describe the project as 'a beautiful untouched land becoming an important business window for Myanmar and China business'. This epitomises the historical amnesia and acts of erasure that serve to write-out the legacy of decades of armed conflict and illegal trade that have shaped Muse's political economy. Amidst sweeping, computer-generated aerial footage of an imagined landscape of leafy, luxury detached mansions, swimming pools, clubs, high-end hotels and parkland landscapes played to uplifting instrumental music, Muse is portrayed as a 'a bright and shiny icon represent the future of Myanmar [sic]…A bridge connecting the present and the future…beneath the radiance of the rising sun…a new gate, new life, new city.'

Development Zones, Armed Conflict and Illicit Flows

However, this glossy imaginary overlooks the fact that Muse Township, and northern Shan State as a whole, remains a highly fragile and conflict-affected space. State authority throughout this borderland region continues to be heavily contested and stability is predicated on a series of informal arrangements between the Myanmar army and various ceasefire armed groups and local militias. Violent armed conflict between the government and a number of armed groups has worsened over the past decade, and highly lucrative illegal flows continue to be central to the cross-border economy and borderland power structures. Indeed, the city remains a major conduit for the flourishing black-market trade in jade, timber, drugs, people and various other commodities, as well as being home to a flourishing casino sector.

Amidst this highly fragile, complex and fragmented political environment, Muse city and its environs continue to be affected by outbreaks of violence, instability and subsequent disruptions to cross-border trade. In 2009, the twenty-year ceasefire arrangements between the Myanmar Army and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) – an ex-CPB faction based in the Kokang region that borders Muse Township – broke down and caused more than 10,000 people to flee across the border into China. Further fighting in this region in 2015 lasted for four months and caused a further 40,000-50,000 refugees to seek shelter in

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₃₅ Interview conducted by the second and third authors with senior official in the General Administration Department (GAD) in Muse, 9 June 2019.

China (DVB 2015). In 2011, the 17-year ceasefire between the Myanmar government and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) broke down leading to significant fighting throughout northern Shan State and southern parts of Kachin state. The conflict in northern Shan State has been further complicated by new outbreaks of insurgency since 2010 and the Myanmar Army's longstanding deployment of local counter-insurgency militias to police conflict-affected borderland regions. In November 2016, an alliance of ethnic armed organisations launched a coordinated attack on Muse and a number of neighbouring towns in response to what it claimed to be the Myanmar Army's manipulation of the country's peace process and the pressure that they had faced to sign a nationwide ceasefire agreement that did not address their grievances. The attack resulted in the closure of Muse's main border trade zone and led to more than 3,000 people fleeing across the border into China to escape the fighting and the airstrikes that were subsequently launched by the Myanmar Army in order to re-assert control over Muse Township. In May 2018, an attack by another ethnic armed group on a militia-run casino complex one mile outside of Muse city centre left nineteen people dead, including three Chinese nationals, and resulted in the border being shut down once again. Seven months later, in December 2018, the abrupt closure by the Myanmar army of one of the city's three principle border gates in response to an outbreak of violence involving one of the many army-backed local militias in Muse resulted in further significant disruption to border trade.

For Muse to operate as a functioning border development hub within this context of ongoing armed conflict and fragmented sovereignty, it is vital that stability is maintained to ensure that commodities and capital can continue to flow. This brings into play a much more complex set of actors, interests, processes and trade-offs than is typically explored in policy documents, which tend to focus only on formal actors – primarily governments and private companies – and official development initiatives, such as border trade liberalisation and the inauguration of SEZs. The final section of this paper develops this argument by exploring the role of informal actors and illicit commodities in shaping Muse's development.

Modernist Fantasies and Violent Realities in the Making of a Borderland Development Zone

The modernist fantasies and violent realities surrounding Muse city offer contrasting perspectives on the dynamics and possibilities of development zones in contested and conflict-affected spaces along the Myanmar-China border. Development narratives espoused by political and business elites on both sides of the border make claims that the economic growth and increased trade and investment facilitated by regional economic integration will provide an antidote to the violent instability, illegal practices and informal systems of non-state governance that have long defined the border region. However, following the re-opening of the Myanmar-China border in the late 1980s, the speed of economic liberalisation and the rapid growth of border trade and investment outpaced the ability of the Myanmar state to secure

firmer, centralised control over Muse and the corridor of territory through northern Shan linking Muse to Mandalay and central Myanmar. The desire amongst political and business elites on both sides of the border to capitalise upon newly emerging opportunities amidst an environment of ongoing insecurity and weak state control has inspired certain 'governance fixes', which have been defined by the enduring importance of informal public authority and illegal practices, rather than the extension of formal institutions. The remainder of this chapter explores how informal public authority and illegality have become deeply embedded in Muse's transformation into a key development zone. It first analyses the role that army-backed militias have played in the 'governance fixes' that have been deployed by political and business elites to stabilise and 'open up' the Myanmar-China border area to trade and investment. It then explores how the illegal drug trade has become deeply connected to – rather than displaced by – borderland development in Muse. Finally, it demonstrates how deeply embedded systems of informal governance and illegal practices have become in the foundations of Muse by showing how they shape the everyday lives of those who live and work in the city.

Militia Governance: The Role of Army-backed Militias in Governing a Volatile Frontier
Despite Muse's position as the key overland gateway to China, and its importance to the national economy in Myanmar, it is striking that the city continues to be governed through a complex and fragmented nexus of formal and informal actors, rather than a system of more consolidated and centralised state control. The exercise of public authority in Muse encompasses the activities of civilian government departments, such as the General Administration Department (GAD) and the police, the Myanmar army, ceasefire armed groups, and a significant number of army-backed militia organisations. Indeed, one of the defining features of Muse is the proliferation of militias – known in Burmese as *pyithusit* ('people's militias') – that operate within the city (see Figure 6.2).[36] These militias report directly to the Myanmar Army's North Eastern Regional Command in Lashio, and thus have greater de facto authority than the police or GAD in Muse. These militias are well-armed – often with weapons they have purchased on the black market – and are key economic actors in Muse, operating an array of legal and illegal businesses. These groups epitomise what Christian Lund (2006) has termed 'twilight institutions': they are not the state but they exercise public authority, and are thus central to the political economy of Muse city. Many of these groups are longstanding anti-insurgency militias whose links with the Myanmar army date back for many decades, while others were formed under the auspices of the Myanmar army during the 1990s and 2000s. Some of these militias were formerly part of insurgency groups but have subsequently chosen – or been pressured by the army – to convert into militias (see Figure 2). Today, these militias draw their authority from somewhat paradoxical foundations: their close links to the Myanmar

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[36] Figure 6.2 does not provide an exhaustive list of militias that are active in Muse but does cover the larger militias. It draws upon interviews conducted by all three authors as well as SHAN's large media archive.

army enables them to hold arms, operate with impunity, and access state resources; yet the fact that they are drawn from the region and have ties with local populations – primarily in terms of language, ethnicity and patronage – has also enabled them to claim to represent local interests in the face of encroaching military authority.

<INSERT Figure 6.2: Militias operating in Muse.>

Army-backed militias play a number of important roles in governing space, flows (of capital and trade), and populations in Muse. Militias operate checkpoints – alongside or on behalf of the army – to police and tax goods and people entering and leaving the city. They have also provided the coercive muscle for various forms of dispossession within the city on behalf of both the army and private companies. These militias have also acted as important 'business brokers' connecting investors and companies across the China border. Many militia leaders – such as Kyaw Myint (Pansay militia), and U Myint Lwin (Tarmoenye militia) – are from Chinese-speaking ethnic minority groups and have been able to broker across language and cultural barriers in a way that Burmese investors or military figures cannot.

Militias also play a prominent role in the Muse economy (see Figure 6.2). Their business interests including gas stations, cement factories, bottled water factories, bus companies, haulage companies, import-export businesses (primarily livestock and agricultural produce), casinos and illegal drug trafficking. Militias operate within a privileged economic space in Muse that in many ways represents the workings of a de facto special economic zone: they are able to operate with minimal state interference (for example passing through checkpoints freely), obtain official licenses – or indeed operate without needing to get licenses – and rarely pay tax. These economic activities have enabled militias to be self-financing, reducing pressures on military budgets. Economic concessions have also provided a way for the Myanmar army to try to secure and maintain the loyalty of these groups, and so prevent them from returning to insurgency. Militias themselves have also sought to maintain relationships with the army – often through a system of informal payments – so as to retain business opportunities, protection and impunity. This system has enabled the Myanmar military to generate revenue – for both private gain and military budgets – from illicit or grey-area activities, primarily casinos and the drug trade, while maintaining a degree of official separation from these activities and a layer of plausible deniability.

The role that militias have played in shaping Muse's development also extends far beyond the city's boundaries. They have secured territory (alongside the army) around key trade routes and sites of resource extraction. These activities have played an important part in helping to ensure the continued flow of goods through Muse. Militias have led recruitment drives for the army and have at times also directly supported the army in counter-insurgency offensives. They

have also been deployed to clear populations from land slated for development, provide security on main roads and police development sites operated by the government and/or private companies (Buchanan 2016, 31; Meehan 2015). In return, militias that support the army's efforts to secure territory in more remote areas have been rewarded with economic opportunities in Muse. Muse has thus become an important entrepôt or hub for key 'rents' that have been used in the coalition-building and deal-making that has underpinned the Myanmar military-state's efforts to stabilise and secure control across a much wider borderland region. These military-militia networks across Shan State have thus had a significant role in shaping the political economy of Muse. Most importantly, it has enabled certain forms of informal militia governance and illegality to become deeply entrenched in the political and economic foundations upon which Muse's development has been constructed.

These dynamics are captured clearly in the case of the Pansay militia. Led by 'Pansay' Kyaw Myint (aka Li Yong Qiang; U Win Maung), the Pansay militia is a longstanding anti-insurgency group that has had close links to the Myanmar Army since at least the 1980s. Kyaw Myint is one of the army's most trusted strongmen in northern Shan State and controls a contested and strategic region of Namkham Township in northern Shan State. The militia has been involved in counter-insurgency campaigns against various armed groups and has also been deployed to secure development projects, including dam sites along the Shweli River and the oil and gas pipelines that traverse northern Shan State. Kyaw Myint is Lisu-Chinese and has become an important business broker connecting Yunnanese and Burmese businessmen. In return, Kyaw Myint has used connections with the military to develop a wide-ranging business empire. This includes involvement in the illegal drug economy – the hill ranges in Namkham under his control are major sites of opium cultivation – and various businesses in Namkham, as well as Muse, Mandalay and Yangon. The militia polices and taxes various border crossings on the Mao-Shweli river and operates numerous businesses in within muse city, including the Yongyang Casino, KTV bars, gas stations and a meat distribution company.

Militias thus represent a 'governance fix' to the challenges of territorialising contested frontier spaces. The Myanmar army's willingness to draw upon – and empower – local militias represents a form of 'mediated' statebuilding, which has been founded upon bargaining processes and coalition-building between formal and informal sources of public authority, rather than the extension of formal state institutions. Over time, these governance fixes have developed a momentum of their own, not least because businesses operating in Muse have sought to establish relationships with militias as a way to ensure their enterprises can operate smoothly and benefit from the opportunities and protection such alliances can provide. The role of militias in Muse, then, cannot simply be framed as a symptom of state fragility or marginalisation, but reveals the enduring importance of informal authority to systems of borderland governance and the role that 'twilight institutions' play in providing the security

and stability required to 'open up' spaces for capital. In short, militias have become important handmaidens in supporting Muse's transformation into a key development zone over the past three decades.

Embedded illegality: Drugs and development in Muse

The role that the illicit drug economy has played in the story of Muse's development also provides important insights to how development zones are assembled in conflict-affected borderland spaces where illegality has long been a part of the cross-border economy. Since the 1950s, Shan State has been the epicentre of Southeast Asia's illegal opium production, much of which is converted into morphine base or heroin within the country's borders. Since the mid-1990s Shan State has also become a major producer of methamphetamines. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s much of the region's opium was destined to serve heroin users in the west via trade routes south through Thailand, a growing market in neighbouring China shifted the predominant drug-trafficking routes north. Drugs have since become a key commodity within the trade networks that pass through Muse.

The priority for business and political elites in Myanmar and Yunnan since the 1990s has been to stabilise the northern Shan economic corridor linking central Myanmar to China in order to capitalise on the emerging economic opportunities created by expanding trade and investment flows. The Myanmar military-state has sought to co-opt the drug trade into its wider efforts to stabilise this key borderland corridor (Meehan 2015, 267). Informal negotiations regarding levels of protection and impunity surrounding the illegal drug economy, and opportunities to invest in the legal economy have become one important foundation of the deals forged between the Myanmar military-state and local militias. These informal deals around the drug trade have provided the military with a way of attempting to strengthen their control over these organisations since the protection and impunity the military offers remains informal and the terms of loyalty are always subject for negotiation. At the same time, militias have also viewed the illegal drug economy as a way to generate the revenue needed to expand and secure their position in borderland power structures. This has included purchasing weapons independently from the army, diversifying into legal businesses, and developing their own patronage networks.

The drug economy has thus become embedded in the making of Muse over the past three decades in multiple ways. Negotiations around the drug economy have underpinned the tangled world of informal coalitions and brokerage agreements between the military and local militias. As already discussed above, these arrangements have become fundamental to shaping how space is made governable in this volatile and conflict-affected region. Furthermore, significant informal revenue has flowed from militias – and the illegal businesses linked to them – to the army, police and local government departments. Thus, much of the budget for the formal

authorities that do operate in Muse is ultimately derived from the illegal and 'grey' businesses that operate in and through the city. Drugs are also an important foundation in the literal 'making' of Muse. Militias – and businesses linked to them – have used revenues derived from the drug trade to establish construction companies and small factories, operate casino complexes, and invest in real estate. Although much of the revenue from drugs does not remain in Myanmar and enters the global financial system, the relative ease of laundering money within Myanmar – especially through real estate – has meant that illicit money has nonetheless played an important role in Muse's development.

Navigating illegality and informality: Everyday life in Muse
The importance of informal governance structures and illegality in shaping Muse's rise as a key border development zone can be seen particularly clearly through the impact that militias and drugs continue to have on everyday life in Muse. Local populations are constantly requited to navigate and negotiate illegality and informal systems of public authority in ways that have hardly changed despite the political and economic reforms that have occurred at the heart of government in Myanmar since 2010. Indeed, although people in Muse now have increasing opportunities to appeal to formal state authorities, such as the police, civilian government departments, or local MPs, real power continues to lie in informal and opaque governance structures. This has often perpetuated local people's vulnerability to violence and intimidation at the hands of local militias. These groups have leveraged the impunity and power derived from their links with the military to deploy violence to pursue business interests and settle disputes. This is reflected in the following testimony of one young man who recounted his experiences of militia authority.

> The Pan Say militia really abused the local people. A member of my football team was shot by a militia member at night time. We could not do anything. At the time we had a local MP, but he could do nothing. The militia are really close to the Tatmadaw. So, although we had an MP, we really could not do anything.[37]

The informal governance structures that have emerged in Muse have also created a highly permissive environment around drugs, where the rule of law is consistently superseded by the privileges and protection provided by informal political ties. Many drug-selling networks within the city and surrounding region are linked to local militias or the army and thus avoid reprimand. Drugs have thus become relatively cheap and easy to access.

In this context, drug use – alongside alcohol – has become a common coping mechanism for people faced with the stresses and hardships of armed conflict, displacement, and disrupted

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[37] Interview conducted by second and third authors, 13 June 2019, Muse.

family life, and who struggle to make a living from insecure and exhausting jobs – or are un(der)employed. As one local MP in Muse reflected, many people 'fall into the trap of Pha Pho Phey (prostitutes, heroin and cards).'[38] Levels of drug use and drug-related mortality are high in Muse (although official figures are not publically available). Across the border, Ruili has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in all of China (Chen 2015).

However, although many people that we interviewed in Muse spoke bitterly about the role of militias, the position that they hold in the city's political economy has meant that they also offer opportunities. People spoke of joining militias in order to conduct business or for protection. As one young Shan man, who worked as a driver in Muse, recounted:

> My uncle was involved in a drug business. He got arrested and was jailed for over
> 10 years. He was released last year [2018]. At the time, he was not part of a militia.
> But after he was released from jail, he had a land dispute with an armed
> organisation. So, he joined a militia to build his strength. Some of my friends also
> join militia groups. After they join militia, they can hold a gun. When they hold a
> gun, they are afraid of no one. Most of the people I know joined the Hseng Keaw
> militia because this group does cow and buffalo trading.[39]

Joining a militia has also been a way for young men to protect themselves from being recruited by armed groups. This is captured in the following testimony of a young man living in Muse.

> Some of my friends from outside of Muse had also fled from recruitment, so they
> joined militia for their safety. They have the choice whether to be recruited by SSPP
> or RCSS [the two main Shan armed groups]. If they don't want to be recruited, they
> join a militia. Then they can live close their parents, and they can do business.[40]

The sense of empowerment – however illusory – from joining a militia and carrying a weapon can be particularly appealing to young men living in an environment of violence, personal insecurity, limited opportunities, and regular abuse at the hands of authorities. Some young militia recruits we interviewed had visions of acting as bodyguards or snipers, although in reality most provide less glamorous and more mundane work in the form of round-the-clock security for casinos, KTV, and factories. The following testimony by a youth leader in Muse reflects how young people's experiences of living and working in the border area can motivate some to join militias:

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[38] Interview conducted by second and third authors, 6 June 2019, Lashio.
[39] Interview conducted by second and third authors, 13 June 2019, Muse.
[40] Interview conducted by second and third authors, 13 June 2019, Muse.

I used to work at a water melon factory in Wanding [on the China side of the border]. We were oppressed, the authorities always told the workers to take urine tests. They arrest our workers almost every day…most were truck drivers. Most of them just use it [methamphetamine pills]. They didn't sell it. But they [the authorities] had a mission, they had to arrest a certain number of drug users. I had a bitter experience with the border authorities. Once, when I scanned my finger at the gate, the Chinese authority said I looked like a murderer. I said I've never committed a crime. If I looked like someone, could they show me the picture of the murderer? They told me to 'shut up and stand still'. Then, they asked for my Burmese ID. I had to make a phone call to my home and then my brother contacted a Chinese high-ranking officer to free me. Authorities can really oppress people...What I see now is that they [young people] join militia because they can hold a gun and no one can then abuse them. Most of the youth that join them are aged between 18 and 22.[41]

These brief insights into everyday life in Muse reveal the nexus of formality and informality, and layers of public authority that underpin the city. They emphasize clearly the way in which processes of development in contested and fragmented borderland spaces draw upon – and can serve to reinvigorate – an array of 'governance fixes' that blur the boundaries between state and non-state actors, legality and illegality, and violence and order. These everyday realities are often missing from development narratives that claim the integration of borderlands into markets and national political structures will provide an antidote to violence, criminality and illegal trade and deliver formal state institutions.

Conclusion

Efforts to stimulate economic development through regional economic integration and the creation of border development zones have been underpinned by two dominant narratives. First, strategies to 'harness special economic zones for border development' (ADB 2018) are framed in terms of creating formal and 'legally bounded' institutional environments under firm state control that can then provide transparent and business-friendly regulatory regimes (ADB 2018, 1; ADB 2015, 69; Farole 2011, 27). Second, by stimulating investment and development in marginalised and conflict-affected spaces, border development zones are presented as offering solutions to conflict, marginality, illegality, and poverty.

However, as this chapter has shown, the case of Muse problematizes both of these narratives. Muse's growth since the late 1980s demonstrates how the making of border development zones in contested spaces is invariably underpinned by processes of 'institutional bricolage' which

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[41] Interviews conducted by second and third authors, 13 June 2019, Muse.

draw upon longstanding sources of informal public authority, rather than the clear extension of formal state institutions (Douglas 1986; Rasmussen & Lund 2018). Efforts by political and business elites to capitalise on emerging economic opportunities offered by liberalising cross-border trade and investment flows have often 'worked with the grain' of society, in ways that have served to reinvigorate rather than dismantle longstanding systems of informal governance and illicit flows. Although formal civilian government institutions have expanded in Muse over the past decade, these are layered upon – and have remained largely subservient to – de facto systems of rule.

Exploring how development zones are assembled in conflict-affected spaces like Muse reveals clearly the highly uneven distribution of the costs and benefits of border development. In the Myanmar-China borderlands the intersection of counter-insurgency, state consolidation and border development strategies has made Muse a privileged space for army-backed militias and businesses allied with them. However, the permissive environment surrounding violence and illegality has impacted heavily on local populations, exposing them to ongoing forms of insecurity, including the spread of cheap and easily accessible drugs, and every day forms of intimidation and violence. The benefits of development in Muse have been concentrated in the hands of a small nexus of military-militia-private sector power, and the costs have been socialised, creating new forms of enrichment – and vulnerability.

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7. Smart Enclaves in the Borderland: Digital Obligations in Northeast India

Duncan McDuie-Ra

Abstract

Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, was one of 100 cities awarded bids in India's Smart Cities Mission (SCM). The extension of the SCM to the borderland is an extension of 'zone-logic', enrolling the recalcitrant into economic networks that cross India. Through a reading of Imphal's smart city bid and implementation strategy, this chapter makes three main arguments. First, unlike zone-making projects in other parts of Asia where local elites, brokers, and/or local governments doggedly pursue the granting of zones, the extension of the SCM to Imphal has been driven more by obligation than desire. Second, the idea of an 'open city' is counter to the lived reality of surveillance, check-points, and limits on mobility and assembly that characterise life in the city. Third, Imphal's meagre bid and lack of preparedness is barely relevant to the smart city award, as the geopolitical imperatives outweigh all other factors.

Keywords: smart cities, digital development zones, surveillance, Northeast India, Imphal.

Smart city provides the citizens high quality cost effective service seamlessly and with a minimum use of resources. Smart cities will use technology, gather and collate information and data using smart solution [sic] with the aim of improving the services and infrastructures.

The information gathered will be in real time thereby providing quicker solutions to problems on hands [sic]. Digital technology offers most services at the click of the mouse which otherwise involved a physical presence of the resident to receive many of the services such as banking, shopping, government services (payment of taxes, bills, accessing information's etc.).

Smart cities are high on the social indices, good and transparent governance. As a result the quality of life improves creating feel-good factors in the individual. This would also lead to higher productivity, employment opportunities and income generation and consequently inclusive growth….Unless we change our mind set (including common people, public leaders, and bureaucrat officers) toward a progressive orientation with a commitment, the dream of Imphal Smart city may find hard to translate into reality. So, we all need to cooperate to the government for a progressive Manipur [sic].
-Sanjenbam Jugeshwor Singh, *Imphal Times* [op-ed], 25th April, 2019.

The Manipur government has imposed a prohibitory order on Imphal West district for two months in view of the continued protests against the new citizenship law, an official said on Sunday. The prohibitory order under Section 144 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) was clamped on Imphal West on Saturday from 5.30 pm, said a statement issued by the office of District Magistrate Naorem Praveen. "Assembly of five or more persons which is likely to turn unlawful is prohibited," it said. The order also stated that "carrying of sticks, stones, firearms without a valid licence, weapons or objects of any description" which can be used for offensive activities is not allowed.
-*The Hindu*, 22nd December, 2019.

Two newspaper clippings from the same city in the same year illustrate the perplexing extension of digital urbanisation to cities in the borderlands of Northeast India, in this case Imphal in the state of Manipur. The first clipping taken from an op-ed in the *Imphal Times*, is packed full of language common in India's Smart Cities Mission (SCM). It ends with an appeal to the people of Imphal, and Manipur more generally, to change their ways and cooperate with

the government (which tier of government is unclear) if they want this productive and progressive future to arrive.

Imphal—the capital city of Manipur, a former kingdom presently located on India's far eastern frontier—has been occupied continuously since 1891 by British and Indian armed forces. Through the last seven decades Manipur has been an arena for separatist struggles by groups seeking the restoration of the formerly independent kingdom, by left-wing groups seeking independence and radical social restructuring, and by ethno-nationalist groups challenging the boundaries of contemporary Manipur. The latter struggles have brought members of different ethnic groups living in Manipur into conflict with one another, with India acting as provocateur and referee. From 1980-2004 the city was declared 'disturbed' by the Indian Government and subject to Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 (AFSPA). With just over half a million people, Imphal is the largest city in Manipur and the second largest in the Northeast region.

The second clipping is a nationally syndicated report about the imposition of Section 144 in Imphal; a law preventing the assembly of more than five people and the unlicensed carrying of firearms, and, naturally, stones. Imposing Section 144 in December 2019 was a response to protests over the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), criticised across India and around the world for threatening ethnic and religious minority rights and encouraging further migration of Hindus into India from surrounding states. This issue is extremely sensitive in Manipur, where calls to re-impose restricted entry to the state for all non-Manipuris (known as the Inner-Line Permit) has been a constant political issue for decades. In January 2020 the Inner-Line Permit was re-imposed in Manipur, effectively hardening its internal border with other states in India. However, Section 144 is used in mundane circumstances too. For example, in the years 2018-19 alone, Section 144 was used to stop protests against land acquisition for a food park, to stop protests against the CAA (when still a Bill), and in September 2019 following a fracas at the Paite Tribal Office outside the city, during which local media reported 'at least three of the people involved in the power struggle are Church elders' (*Sangai Express*, 30/09/18). It has also been imposed as a precaution, as in the two months prior to the 2019 national elections (Mar-May, 2019), and as a general policing strategy, such as for two months from September 2018 'following reports that certain antisocial elements are indulging in unlawful activities' (*Sangai Express*, 20/09/18).

Section 144 is imposed after any protest, any gathering, any anxiety about 'antisocial elements', especially since the lifting of the far more draconian AFSPA from the Imphal valley (Imphal East and Imphal West districts) in 2004. AFSPA is still in place in other districts in Manipur outside Imphal and the Indian armed forces and paramilitary still occupy Imphal city, along with members of Manipur state police and various volunteer militias. Keeping track of the imposition and lifting of Section 144 is dizzying. This is also true for Imphal's residents. During fieldwork in Imphal for an earlier project (2011-14), respondents organising a march

against sexual violence confessed that they simply assume 144 is in place all the time. They request permission to hold public events and find that sometimes the provision has been lifted and they didn't even know. Though before too long it is back in effect somewhere in the city.

With this in mind, Imphal seems like a very peculiar place for smart city projects and their attendant 'fell-good factors', to quote the op-ed above. The extension of India's SCM to the borderland is an extension of 'zone-logic' to small urban enclaves in improbable territories. The SCM eschews notions of fundamental difference between mainland and borderland by treating urban space as a blank slate, open and amendable to digital uplift and attendant investment. Instead of bringing entire borderland polities into the national economy, as with several past schemes, the SCM focuses on urban enclaves. Certainly, as chapters in this volume demonstrate, development zones have proven to be useful instruments in creating enclaves adjacent to the turbulence of local conditions.

This leads to the question, what are we to make of Imphal's smart city bid and plans to digitally uplift the city? In this chapter I pose a three-part argument in response. First, unlike many zone-making projects in India—and indeed in much of Asia—where local elites, brokers, and/or governments doggedly pursue the granting of zones (see Eilenberg 2009; Levien 2011; Woods 2019), the extension of the SCM to Northeast India, and Imphal in particular, has been driven more by obligation than desire on the part of local governments agencies and influential elites. Schemes to develop Northeast India have historically been conceived as exceptional (McDuie-Ra 2009). The extension of the SCM to the borderland seeks to flatten exceptionalism, enrolling the Northeast into national flows of expertise, data, and future visions; if only the 'common people', to return to the op-ed above, would cooperate. A part of this too is ensuring that the 'common people' of Imphal take the opportunity to be smart urban citizens, and start on a path to being more developed and less 'backward'.

Second, smart cities are zones of a different kind. They depend upon *opening* the city, not closing it off. They are zones for targeted economic activity seeking a new kind of relationship between citizen and state, a 'smarter' one. The zones created through the SCM will not be behind high walls, they are intended as spaces of interaction, space that gather together humans, data and infrastructure. This dream runs counter to the lived reality of surveillance, check-points, and limits on mobility and assembly that characterise life in the city. Third, Imphal was always going to get a smart city in the scheme, no matter how shambolic their bid, as the geopolitical imperatives outweigh all other factors, including the lack of preparedness and inapplicability of digital urbanisation to the analogue realities on the ground.

This chapter contains five main sections. The following section outlines the limitations of private investment in Northeast India. The second section introduces the SCM and makes a claim for considering the SCM as a mechanism for creating zones within cities across the country, enrolling the borderland in a national network of digital enclaves. The third section discusses Imphal's successful SCM bid. Imphal's bid is meagre. It asks for very little and the

digital or networked ICT components are an even smaller part of the bid. Zone-logic overrides the lack of a coherent local plan. The fourth section analyses the scant information on the implementation of the SCM in Imphal, particularly since the formation of the Imphal Smart City limited company in late 2018. I contrast the idea of the 'open-city' that undergirds the smart city idea with the analogue reality of the borderland city. The final section concludes the chapter by considering Imphal's smart city experience alongside Frederico Cugurullo's critique of smart city projects as 'Frankenstein Urbanism' (2018), especially when retrofitting existing urban areas. Using examples from technology-rich cities Hong Kong and Masdar, Curugullo's critique focuses on the juxtapositions of 'incompatible elements' in smart city projects, exacerbating urban fragmentation, a critique that aligns with considering these elements as zones within larger urban wholes. The extension of the SCM into the borderlands stretches Curugullo's critique about as far as it can go, and as the language of smart cities travels further and further, Frankenstein urbanism is set to become the norm in divergent urban environments.

Borderland Investments

Northeast India has long been a challenging region for both public and private investment aside from extractive industries such as coal, timber and oil; themselves implicated in the tumultuous history of parts of the region (Lahiri-Dutt 2016; Kikon 2019; Misra 1980; McDuie-Ra & Kikon 2016; Saikia 2011). Investment has been limited by three factors. First, the Northeast is a landlocked borderland produced through the partitions of colonial and postcolonial South Asia from 1935 to 1971 (van Schendel 2005, 27). Attempts to subsidize industrial development in recent decades, such as the North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy 2007 (NEIIP) (Bhattacharjee & Bhattacharya 2018), North East Vision 2020 (Baruah 2003; McDuie-Ra 2009), the perpetual Look East/ Act East Policy (Chatterjee 2019; Jaffrelot 2003; Haokip 2011), and gestures to recalibrate the frontier as a gateway to/for goods and capital from East and Southeast Asia have had minimal impact in most (but not all) of the borderland. Connection with the rest of India by rail and road is tenuous, especially in the furthest east states of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, and internal infrastructure within the region is also poor (Ziipao 2018). With no access to all-year port facilities, airport infrastructure has become a favoured infrastructural fix in the region (Harris & van der Veen 2015) bypassing roads, railways and rural communities, and prolonging their derelict condition. Poor ground connectivity limits the appeal of development zones in non-extractive sectors such as manufacturing, business process outsourcing, and agribusiness. Private investment needs heavy subsidies, and despite such subsidies under schemes like the NEIIP, development zones have been slow to grow, especially when compared to zones in other parts of India (Chettri 2020).

Second, the region's history has been shaped by separatist conflict and counter-insurgency (Baruah 1999; Bhaumik 2009; Hazarika 1995). From the late 1950s parts of the

region (including entire states) have been declared 'disturbed' by the Indian Government and subject to the notorious AFSPA affording legal protection to the Indian military and paramilitary for any acts committed against the civilian population. Territorial politics and anxieties have characterized the way the region is governed, leaking into economic and development politics at various scales, and in turn constituting the rest of India as 'normal space' (Abraham 2014, 140). In recent decades, armed groups in the region have mostly turned away from opposing the Indian state and are now engaged in struggles with one another for territorial control (Lacina 2009). There are other patches of the region where conflicts have been localized, between tribal and non-tribal communities and/or between local communities and settlers—as well as patches where there has been no wholesale armed conflict, 'model' frontier states.

Third, the political units in the borderland, states and autonomous councils, are heavily dependent on the Indian Government for operating budgets, project finance, and grants for development projects (Baruah 2003; Hausing 2014). Dependency is widely recognised and lamented, but attempts to encourage private investment disrupt existing patronage networks (Kikon & McDuie-Ra 2018; McDuie-Ra & Kikon 2016). In contrast to the productive promises of zones, lucrative development in the Northeast has taken place through networks of capitalists, entangling state (national and local government), quasi-state (military and paramilitary) and non-state actors (customary authorities, underground groups). There has been little incentive to pursue private investment through zones as they disrupt these networks and aggravate the region's delicate politics.

If we take development zones as defined in the Introduction to this volume: enclaves for targeted economic activity driven by regulation (or its lack), speculative investment, and securitization of resources and populations, then Sikkim is the only state in Northeast India to create spaces resembling zones of this kind. As Mona Chettri argues in her analysis of the pharmaceutical industry in the state, it is Sikkim's borderland political and economic geography that drives the creation of a 'defacto' special economic zone (SEZ) across the entire state. Investors have few limits establishing zones, in contrast to many of the other states in Northeast India where complex land and constitutional regimes make similar investments difficult. In fact, in Sikkim the lack of a deliberate policy on zones has enabled the expansion of pharmaceutical investments. She writes:

> [T]he entire state is a *de-facto* SEZ, a backyard for private finance, a zone of export-oriented resource extraction and production which links Sikkim to national supply chains. The official label of an SEZ or the lack of it has not hindered the movement of private capital. Rather, not using the label has facilitated the establishment of private industries under opaque rules, immune from strict state and national laws—many of which are applicable only to border and ethnic minority regions (2020, 61).

Outside Sikkim there is little that resembles the SEZs created in other parts of India, what Jamie Cross calls 'dream zones' made in an 'economy of anticipation, as diverse ways of knowing about, imagining and living towards the future' (2014, 188). That is, until the Smart Cities Mission was launched in 2015.

India's SCM

The term 'smart city' first emerged in the early 1990s capturing the relationships between the digital and the urban. Willis and Aurigi provide a useful general definition: 'smart is used to describe and label cities that use networked technologies to increase a city's efficiency and therefore enable social, cultural and urban development' (2018, 9). In this way, smart cities resonate with development zones as discussed in this volume—off-the-shelf agglomerations transposed onto dramatically varied landscapes and polities.

Smart cities are championed for easing the pressures on infrastructure, resources, and public services, manifest in the integration of networked technologies into urban infrastructure. Data-driven sensors, digital devices and telecommunications networks correlate to material domains, such as energy grids, water and waste management, mobility, buildings and transport (Neirotti et al. 2014, 27). Digital urbanisation offers the potential to overcome distance, remoteness, and territorial limitations, bringing more urban spaces into national and global flows of data, the so-called 'real time city' (Kitchin 2014). They are also intended to counter urban risks through efficient service delivery, though they also produce new vulnerabilities, especially to cyber-attacks and other hacks (Kitchin and Dodge 2019).

In 2015 the newly-elected Modi Government launched the SCM to re-position India in the global technology revolution and the ruling Bharat Janata Party (BJP) as a conduit for technology to the population *en masse* (Chatterji 2018; Smith et al, 2019; Taraporevala 2018). India's SCM aims 'to promote cities across India that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of "Smart" Solutions' (MUD 2016, 2). Successful cities receive 32 million dollars (USD) in the first year and then 16 million dollars every year for the next three from the Indian Government. This amount is to be matched by state and municipal authorities, encouraging authorities to find new ways to raise revenue and attract investment, especially through 'Public-Private Initiatives'. Funds are available for a five-year period, initially to 2020 but now effective from when the bid was awarded (the final round was awarded in late 2017). There are two kinds of smart zones on offer in the SCM bids; termed 'Area Based Development' or ABD (widespread) and pan-city projects (limited). ABDs function as small zones for intensive investment. The SCM describes the rationale behind this:

> [D]epending on the existing level of infrastructure services in the identified area and the vision of the residents, the cities will prepare a strategy to become smart. Since existing structures are largely to remain intact in this model, it is expected that more

intensive infrastructure service levels and a large number of smart applications will be packed into the retrofitted Smart City. (MHUA 2015, Para 5.1)

The scheme also allows for 'redevelopment', which involves replacing an existing 'built-up' area, and 'greenfields' development, in a 'previously vacant area', extending the city into peri-urban and rural areas (MHUA 2015, Para 5.1.2-3).

During the 2014 election campaign, Modi announced that the 100 new cities would be built, it was only after gaining office that the agenda changed to upgrading areas within existing cities through a bidding system (Praharaj et al. 2018, 37). Bids were to include some combination of redevelopment of established urban areas, retrofitting of areas with specific technology and/or new greenfield development. This is the key to thinking articulated in the SCM as a series of development zones or enclaves created through technology. Andrew Barry argues that technological zones are: 'space within which differences between technical practices, procedures and forms have been reduced, or common standards have been established' (2006, 239). The SCM asks a disparate set of urban polities across India to find space for a set of technical forms intended to accelerate the reduction of differences in the technological capacity between cities in India and other parts of the world, and crucially for this chapter, between cities *within* India.

The SCM asks city authorities to identify areas to be retrofitted, or created, within urban boundaries (or on their outskirts—this is not clear in the rules), and these areas are then recipients of public and private funds to complete the projects. Bringing the borderland 'in', enrolling it into a national scheme to uplift urban areas, reform urban governance, and connect remote urban centres to national flows of data and information eschews past mechanisms aimed at bringing entire border polities into the national economy regardless of the past. Rohan D'Souza (2018, 451) has argued that this is a process of 'geography sidestepping history', in favour of connected zones—patches of technology scattered through the region—created through investment in digital infrastructure. At least that is the theory.

Despite the history of separatism and violence in parts of the region, and heavy economic dependency on Delhi, 10 of the 100 smart cities in India's SCM were awarded to states in the Northeast. The Northeast contains 3.75% of the national population and only 2.22% of the national urban population (Census of India 2013). Imphal was awarded smart city status in the 'fast-track' round (between rounds 1 and 2), suggesting that including Imphal in the scheme was a top priority for the Indian Government. Funds for covering the costs of consulting firms employed to prepare smart city bids in the Northeast were covered by the Indian Government up to two crore rupees (approx. 274, 000 USD) and through the World Bank's Capacity Building for Urban Development Project for India (2012-18). In the Northeast states SCM funding is split 90:10 between the central and state government (50:50 in the rest of India). Furthermore, the SCM guidelines state that in the Northeast states 'the area proposed to be developed will be one-half of what is prescribed for any of the alternative models', 250

hectares instead of 500 (MHUA 2015, Para 5.3). Thus cities in the borderland and potential private partners are incentivised, and obligated, to bid for digital enclaves, even if the benefits are not apparent.

Digital Zoning in Imphal

Imphal's smart city bid is one of the few existing documents with detail about its imminent facelift. At 92 pages long the bid is a fascinating document for archiving the ways local authorities translate the SCM into local fixes. The bid includes implementation plans, costing of plans (including requests for funds from schemes other than the SCM) and local cost recovery plans. The annexure includes details on each ABD and pan-city proposal along with other letters of support and memoranda of understanding. There is little in the bid that suggests Imphal has a comprehensive plan to harness digital urbanisation nor to raise the revenue required for their share of the plan.

Bids for the SCM follow a standard template. Cities are first asked to detail measures undertaken to 'improve liveability, sustainability and economic development' over the preceding three years. Answers are split into six boxes of 50 words each to detail these changes (transportation, water, solid waste management, safety/security, energy availability and housing provisions). Imphal details improvements in roads, the lack of 'landless or homeless people', the lack of 'notified' slums, and a reduction in crime (owing to CCTV monitoring and patrols by the Meira Paibis, groups of women made famous for monitoring of human rights abuses by the armed forces). The following section documents administrative improvements in five more 50-word boxes (attendance of functionaries, communication with citizens, e-governance, data visualization dashboards, data availability to citizens). Imphal's bid talks about improved attendance by city officials since CCTV was introduced into offices and the monitoring of cleaning staff using photos circulated through WhatsApp (p. 8).

This is followed by a SWOT analysis of each city and a strategic plan. Imphal's SWOT analysis is heavy on the value of the city's cultural and topographical attributes, its connection to the border with Myanmar, and its reputation as a 'sporting powerhouse'. The weaknesses are the '[m]isplaced perception of the state by others about safety and security', along with poor infrastructure and public transport. The bid identifies tourism, SEZs and sporting academies as opportunities, and unplanned development and flooding problems as threats. Despite the Government of Manipur requesting the extension of AFSPA every six-months since a 1997 amendment requiring such requests, there is no mention of insurgency, counterinsurgency, or the frequent enaction of Section 144. In other words, for over 20 years the Manipur Government has requested (bi-annually) that extraordinary laws remain intact, yet there is no mention of the circumstances that warrant this action in the bid, only lament that the state has a reputation for violence and insecurity. Peace, or at least ignoring conflict, is an essential condition in zone-making.

Each city must also complete a lengthy 'city vision and goals' section, many of which read similarly across the ten Northeast bids. Imphal's vision includes (pp. 16-18): (i) revitalisation of central business district; (ii) creating heritage and tourism precincts, (iii) smart mobility (with a heavy focus on roads, parking infrastructure, and traffic monitoring systems), (iv) smart infrastructure (predominantly physical infrastructure with some single phrase additions like 'smart card', 'solar city' 'city integration system'), (v) smart governance (e-governance as 'an indispensable part in making of Smart [sic] and efficient city by providing all the government services and ensuring efficiency, transparency & reliability' (p. 18) along with reference to 'GIS Based Management System' for taxation and revenue collection). Project bids are detailed one by one, along with proposed measurement, 'success factors', impact and risks. These steps are repeated for small-scale ABD and pan-city projects.

When compared to the 10 smart city bids in Northeast India, Imphal's bid is modest in the number of projects. The majority of projects in Imphal's bid are for conventional infrastructure: 13 out of 18 projects based around the aforementioned central business district and tourism precinct redevelopments (see Table 1). Table 1 divides the projects in each bid into conventional (no networked ICT) and 'smart' infrastructure (networked ICT).

City	Number of conventional infrastructure projects in bid	Number of 'smart' projects in bid	Indeterminate projects
Pasighat	54	21	3
Itanagar	31	22	2
Guwahati*	-	-	-
Imphal	**13**	**4**	**1**
Aizawl	31	14	-
Shillong	54	5	-
Kohima	39	26	-
Namchi	43	15	1
Gangtok	44	15	1
Agartala	47	19	2
*No publicly available annexure of Guwahati's bid was included with their bid.			

Table 1: Source: McDuie-Ra and Lai, 2019

'Smart' projects in Imphal focus on security (CCTV, command centres), vehicle and traffic monitoring, cloud-based e-governance (the Imphal City Unified Communication, Collaboration and Information Sharing Cloud Platform' referred to as ICUCCISP), and various apps for tourism and health information (private hospitals are a feature of the city's economy).

There is a section entitled 'Frugal Innovation' which asks bidding cities to identify a model or best practice from another city evident in their plan. Imphal makes reference to the mobility monitoring systems of New York, London and Rio as best practice models for its own proposed cloud based data sharing platform, the ICUCCISP, as a 'single point of access for citizens as well as city officials for collecting, sharing and disseminating information apart from automating transactions there by making more out of less' (p. 55). Imphal's bid cites Houston's 'Integrated Asset Management System' and New York's 'Incident Management System' as models for its own retrofit. These are simply named, there is no information about what these systems do or which elements can be modelled.

The modest request suggests either a lack of clarity about the scheme and/or limited time to prepare their bid considering Imphal's inclusion in the 'fast-track' round. The aim here is not to demean the bureaucrats who put together this bid (with the help of consultants paid out of World Bank funds), but to argue that the bid itself really didn't matter. Manipur was always going to get a smart city, and Imphal is the only realistic candidate. The state is just too strategic to be left out of a flagship national scheme. The only problem now is that city authorities actually have to implement what has been promised—they have to create these zones—and they have to do this in tandem with outside actors from the private sector.

Open Cities, Borderland Spaces

The SCM will usher in new modes of governance for successful cities under the Special Project Vehicle or SPV. The SPV is a limited company tasked to 'plan, appraise, approve, release funds, implement, manage, operate, monitor and evaluate the Smart City development projects' (MHUD 2015, 12). The SPV is to be formed as a limited company headed by a CEO with members from central, state and city on its board in partnership with private sector investors. Funds for the SCM are then transmitted through the SPV with equity to be distributed equally between state and city. It is unclear whether members of customary authorities can hold equity in the SPVs.

SPVs face unique limitations in Imphal (and at least 7 other smart cities in the borderland)1. First are the limitations on municipal governance. Not all areas designated as Imphal are under the authority of the municipality. Manipur's 1994 Municipalities Act was amended in 2016 to converge with the SCM. The Municipal Act has provoked controversy and contention around issues like property tax—both the need to pay it in parts of the city and who has the right to levy it, elections, and whether land under municipal authority is subject to existing constitutional protections for tribal and indigenous communities, which feature in patches of Imphal city and in the rapidly growing peri-urban areas in the city's south and north-west.

Second, the SPV disrupts the ways development has functioned through patronage networks and with astounding levels of corruption, particularly in civic projects (Jilangamba, 2018). It brings external actors into the operations of municipal governance, for decades

couched comfortably in the political economy of counter-insurgency and massive transfers of funds to this 'unstable' border state. In November 2018 the Manipur Government signed a memorandum of understanding with IL&FS Township and Urban Assets Limited and Pricewaterhouse Coopers Private Limited (PWC) to form its SPV. This is a staggering shift in the investment landscape in Imphal and the Northeast more broadly. Even if everything else about the SCM fails, at the very least it has created new pathways for private capital to take on the tasks of urban planning and development, enrolling Imphal into flows of finance, consulting and expertise that previously bypassed the region. Yet this is very much a forced union. Imphal is obligated to form such a partnership, and IL&FS, who are involved in several smart cities across India, and PWC are well placed for the easy pickings.

In the midst of the bidding rounds, PWC released a report in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, *Reforms to Accelerate the Development of India's Smart Cities* (PWC/WEF, 2016). The report identified challenges acquiring land, low institutional capacity in ULBs, the high costs of involvement in 'sectors with major demand and supply gaps (water, waste and sanitation)' mainly due to the deficits in tracking use and unwillingness of users to pay, along with various risks to businesses investing in the SCM (2016, 4-5). The answers are, unsurprisingly, reform to institutions, regulations and behaviours. The report features divergent case studies from cities like Burlington (USA), Seoul, Singapore, and Vantaa (Finland) to illustrate the kinds of reform possible. It also includes cases from within India too, mostly in the model development states like Dholera in Gujarat (the prime minister's home state and testing ground for the smart cities idea in India, see Datta 2015), and Pune in Maharashtra (a rapidly growing IT and biotech hub, see Sami, 2013). While the report does not mention Imphal specifically, my reaction was an internal counter-commentary along the lines of, 'if you thought doing business in Pune was hard, wait until you try this stuff in Imphal'!

And trying this in Imphal is evidently taking some time and information is scarce, the third limitation. Progress on the partnership is slow, making it difficult to analyse what the SCM looks like on the ground. Details on the implementation of these schemes post-award are difficult to find in both official sources and the media. Both IL&FS and PWC have scant publicly available information on their partnership with Imphal Smart City, and the city itself has a meagre, if telling, website made with free Wordpress software. The mandated limited company, Imphal Smart City Limited website has a slick logo featuring the famous Kangla Fort; symbol of lost sovereignty, occupation, and future liberation. A landing page offers a summary of Imphal for 'the discerning tourist', noting that 'Imphal is one of the few places in India where nothing seems to have changed' (ISCL, n.d.). An odd prelude for a techno-utopian retrofit.

Projects under the SCM are listed in six categories: revitalization of central business district, tourism and heritage precincts, smart mobility, smart governance, smart infrastructure, health and medicine. Beneath each are lists of projects, some of which are specific, such as 'GIS based property management system' and some of which are very vague, such as 'Fiscal

Sustainability'. This grouping is a step beyond the bid. However, clicking on the project-link returns to the landing page in an endless loop. An option to 'read more' leads to a text-only page detailing the aspirations and outcomes of the SCM, though there is almost no reference to any specific projects. Other links lead to empty pages (see Image 1).

<INSERT *Figure 7.1: Screenshot of the Imphal Smart City Webpage, April 2020.*>

This is a terrible website. Terrible websites are not uncommon in local government departments. Following Imphal Smart City on Twitter reveals more activity, though the information tends to be general updates from the municipality on unrelated events and re-tweets from the national SCM account. While the website is an easy target, it is also indicative of the analogue environment onto which the SCM is transposed. Most government business remains on paper, and few civil servants appear willing to give up control over human subordinates in favour of learning to use computers and other technology. Indeed, it is common in government offices to see senior civil servants instructing a coterie of subordinates to type on a computer, print, and send emails, or even to see a stash of unopened computer boxes piled in one corner. Imphal's mechanisms for spreading awareness about the SCM among the population reflect this analogue environment: articles in vernacular newspapers, a radio program on All-India Radio, an essay writing competition, hard copy feedback forms, along with tracking likes on Facebook (Government of Manipur 2015, 19). These same mechanisms are also listed as the primary data gathering method for feedback on proposed smart city projects (2015, 49). The multi-lingual public sphere in Manipur remains steadfastly analogue, with print newspapers playing a vital role. Recent activity on the Imphal Smart City Twitter feed shows a truck driving around the city soliciting participants in a 'citizens perception survey' (see Image 2).

Engagement on civic issues in Manipur is generally very difficult, in part due to the dissolve of almost all strands of social fabric through decades of insurgency and counter-insurgency. In state where laws like Section 144 are invoked frequently to ban the assembly of more than five people, assembling to participate in civic forums over priority projects for the SCM is a big leap. The authors of Imphal's bid even seem to wave the white flag in the section reporting on public consultation: 'citizens opted for Retrofitting [sic] of the contiguous area of CBD, Kangla and DM College area *after threadbare discussions* of the three area-based options available for development' (2015, 21—italics mine). Fourth, networked ICT has material challenges in Imphal. Electricity supply is unreliable, internet connectivity is sporadic and often shut down by the government, data to power networked ICT is scarce in a cash-based, patronage-fuelled urban society. So even if the networked ICT is built, the data that fuels it will be difficult to generate and utilise. As crores of rupees (a crore of rupees is approx. 140,000 USD) are allocated to creating digital enclaves, the digital capacity of the responsible

authority is basic. Yet the bid was awarded, 'fast-tracked', consultants commissioned, and a limited company created.

For all the hyperbole about city-wide expansion of smart solutions, mobility and liveability, large swathes of Imphal are run by the armed forces who control mobility through checkpoints and patrols of public and private space—and from time-to-time by shutting down electronic communications making data-driven networks extremely vulnerable. The Municipal Act does not apply to so-called 'cantonment areas' which are numerous across the city including the downtown core slated for retrofitting. And while the infamous Assam Rifles paramilitary base in the centre of Imphal occupying the old Kangla Fort was relocated to the north of the city following protests in 2004, there are still large bases throughout the city (McDuie-Ra 2016, 76-8); creating the juxtaposition of a different kind between civilian and army enclaves.

Finally, the legacies of conflicts, occupation and demographic anxieties give a sinister tone to electronic surveillance, identification and control. Imphal's bid reports on a new electronic surveillance regime currently underway featuring: 'continuous monitoring and barricading the core area, [and] installation of CCTV in more than 100 locations' (2015: 8). One of the key smart city projects is an integrated command centre to monitor CCTV across the city. Monitoring, barricading and CCTV have a sinister meaning in Manipur where government is experienced through constant surveillance to begin with. The built environment of the city features watch towers, walled compounds, bunkers in the front of public buildings, and check points everywhere (see McDuie-Ra 2016, 67-73). Each is staffed by a member of the Indian armed forces or paramilitary, guns ready, with state forces such as the infamous (for their brutality) Manipur Commandoes roaming the city on foot, alongside other lower order battalions and the Volunteer Defence Force, a semi-legal militia paid stipends by the state government to keep law and order in residential neighbourhoods. There are other forces too, plainclothes members of insurgent groups, undercover police, and murky operators imitating one group or another. Mobility through the city means encountering human surveillance in this way, and necessitates proving one's identity, purpose and harmlessness; living with an enduring precarity (Kshetrimayum 2015). The legacies of AFSPA, and the confusion of Section 144, make acquiescence to surveillance, checking, and questioning mandatory. Adding CCTV and perhaps at some point, facial recognition, and tracking data to this scenario is a frightening prospect for those deemed to be the beneficiaries of 'safety and security' measures, empowering and emboldening a brutal system of occupation; if they can get the bandwidth.

Conclusion: The House of Frankenstein

Smart city projects in borderland cities like Imphal task state and city authorities with bidding for showpiece digital infrastructure as 'smart enclaves'. Smart enclaves function as development zones, enrolling the frontier in national networks of information and capital and offering a solution to remoteness and 'backwardness'. Federico Cugurullo's (2018) concept of

'Frankenstein urbanism' deserves attention here in connecting smart cities to the idea of zones as conceptualised in this collection. Using examples from Hong Kong and Masdar City, Cugurullo draws out the juxtapositions of 'incompatible elements' in smart cities: (i) urban experiments take place at different scales and have different degrees of experimentation, (ii) there is evidence of experimentation at the micro scale (a building, a piece of infrastructure, a particular technology) there is much less evidence at the macro scale (the city as a whole), and (iii) single components of smart city development are not in-sync with one another or the rest of the built and natural environment (2018, 86). Cugurullo identifies these incompatible elements in smart city projects in Hong Kong and Masdar, and his argument is convincing, yet a city like Imphal stretches Cugurullo's concept even further, possibly to breaking point.

The basic extension of the SCM to the Northeast is an ambitious experiment to begin with, not just in urbanisation but also in state-building and territorial integration. It eschews past attempts at integration of entire polities and territories in favour of integration through smaller zones, outposts of digital infrastructure as vanguard nodes in a national space of flows. For local authorities, the task was to put together a bid, in tandem with consultants, and articulate projects that would digitally uplift the city. Imphal's bid is both meagre in the total number of projects requested and in the number of 'smart' elements. It is, more or less, a request for infrastructure projects at the municipal level; a layer of government long bypassed in mechanisms for funding the region. The fact that Imphal's bid was awarded early in the SCM, in the 'fast-track round' between rounds 1 and 2, suggests that Imphal's bid itself is immaterial to the award. In other words, Imphal was always going to get a smart city because of the larger geopolitical imperatives at play. Now the authorities find themselves having to implement the schemes requested in the bid in tandem with corporate partners. And it is in the implementation that the asynchrony between smart city experiments and the rest of the urban fabric is further exposed, especially in Imphal where the very experience of cohesive urban whole is ethereal.

Cugurullo's metaphor of the smart city as Frankenstein refers to Mary Shelley's novel. In citing a passage wherein Dr Victor Frankenstein gazes at his creation by candlelight and notes the perfect parts assembled to create his monster, and the dreadful appearance of the monster as a whole, Cugurullo notes, '[i]t is the lack of connection among the heterogeneous elements that the Doctor has forced together into a single artefact, which causes the experiment to fail' (2018, 85), and so goes the overall experiment with smart cities in Hong Kong and Masdar. While 'all the pieces, individually, function well, their juxtaposition creates a tension which destabilises the experiment' (2018, 86). In Imphal, one would be hard pressed to find well-functioning individual pieces, though implementation is in a (perpetual) early stage. Even still, the juxtapositions are extreme, making the ABD projects zones of dramatic contrast to other parts of the city; if they are ever built.

If technology-rich cities like Hong Kong and Masdar produce monsters when the parts are assembled, as in the original Frankenstein novel and, roughly, in the Universal Studio's

1931 film version of the novel, *Frankenstein* (Whale 1931), then the SCM in Imphal resembles the film franchises' fifth sequel, *The House of Frankenstein* (Kenton, 1944). The SCM is Frankenstein's monster, thawed from a deep freeze by Dr Niemann in the flooded remnants of the Frankenstein mansion, a neat metaphor for the flood-prone Imphal valley. There are hostile forces throughout the film, and Frankenstein's monster has to fight off The Wolf Man, the Hunchback and Dracula, only to drown in quicksand surrounded by angry villagers at film's end. Whether the SCM will provoke this level of anger, or sinking, in Imphal is unclear at this stage. It seems apathy is a more likely response than mob violence. Though if the proverbial angry villagers do decide to take to the streets, they will likely have to do so in groups of less than five, leaving their unlicensed stones at home, as Section 144 will surely be imposed.

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8. Post-Disaster Economies at the Margins: Development, Profit, and Insecurities Across Nepal's Northern Borderlands

Nadine Plachta

Abstract: This chapter is concerned with the making of development zones in Nepal's northern borderlands. Focusing on the shifting economic geographies of traders and businessmen, I demonstrate that the current revival of border markets and informal economies is inseparable from the combined processes of state restructuring and infrastructural reconstruction that ensued after the 2015 earthquakes devastated large parts of the country. I seek to develop the category of 'informal development zones' to attend to the ways in which state power is enacted to control and discipline the margins in the post-disaster moment, while also foregrounding how rural inhabitants engage with, resist, or support the formalities of state laws and regulations. Looking closely at local narratives of social differences and insecurities, I show how people navigate the complex space between competition and choice, opportunities and constraints, to carve out investment strategies and entrepreneurial opportunities. Informal development zones are transforming life in borderlands and offer an urgent reminder of the uncertain and uneven outcomes of market economies following moments of rupture.

Introduction

Appey owns a tented shop at Bachu, a wide, open grassland at roughly 4,100 metres below the Ngula Dachen Pass (5,090m), which leads into China, connecting rural inhabitants of northern Nepal's Tsum Valley with cities and market towns in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Situated more than half a day's walk beyond Tsum's last village, Appey's shop is the final serviced stopover before the steep approach to the pass – somewhere people can pause for a meal along the way or stay for the night.

The place is simple. Appey has pitched two large communal tents next to one another. He has then tied plastic tarps on poles to the main tent in order to create a kitchen, where he prepares food on an open fire. Sacks of rice, lentils, and flour, along with canned pork, instant noodles, tea, and whisky, are stacked high on metal shelves further inside. The seating area, an arrangement of handwoven rugs, blankets, and insulated mats, is usually occupied by groups of men from the lower hill regions. They pass the time playing dice, listening to pop music from a massive loudspeaker. In the neighbouring tent is a pool table, and several mattresses that can be rolled out to sleep on. Without electricity or transmission lines at this altitude, the equipment is powered by two large solar panels and batteries. There are also several places where travellers can set up tents within the confines of the low stone walls of previous shepherd shelters on the grassland. A tap draws water from a nearby stream, and bushes and fallen branches provide firewood. Desolate mountains rise up to more than 6,000 metres on all sides. Appey is now running the shop for a second year, having loaded his belongings onto large yaks to set up the site in April with the beginning of the warm season. He will dismantle it again when the first harsh winds sweep across the land in October.

For Appey, a successful young entrepreneur originally from Tsum, investment in a tented shop at Bachu makes for a lucrative opportunity. The nearest roadhead to the south is a four day's walk away along the Budhi Gandaki River. In the other direction, the Chinese government has extended a gravel road branching off from National Highway G216 to Dingma, a stretch of rangeland an hour's walk below the pass within the TAR. This road brings the Tsumpas to Shag, the first Tibetan village, where they can charter a Chinese truck to reach the bustling towns of Dzongka and Kyirong. Such geographical proximity makes it easier for the Tsumpas to access Chinese markets than those back home in Nepal. Moderate policies on border crossing, which were introduced after the 2015 earthquakes, allow traders and businessmen to drive caravans over the mountain pass with their own yaks and mules hired in the lower hill regions. Essential goods used in homes and stocked in village shops, such as food products, fashionable clothes, and kitchen appliances, as well as agricultural tools and machines, mainly come from China. 'Roughly ten to twelve caravans pass through here every day', Appey said when I visited him at his shop in September 2019. 'But there are also smaller groups of three to four people, who take their own horses or walk'. He nodded his head towards two men repacking a load on their pack animals. Building upon previous forms of trans-Himalayan connectivity along pathways that for centuries have linked people to other places,

things, and currencies (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975; Spengen 2000), the grassland below the Ngula Dachen Pass has once more become a sprawling seasonal trading camp. But the opening up of new spaces for trade and capital expansion in Tsum does not represent an isolated case. All across northern Nepal, expanding scales of connectivity with China, fuelled by changing economic policies and targeted development activities are transforming local borderland livelihoods (Murton 2017; Saxer 2017; Yeh 2019).

<INSERT Figure 8.1: Tsum in a regional context *(Timo Plachta).>*

In this chapter, I am concerned with the making of development zones and informal spaces of production in borderlands following various moments of rupture, such as civil conflicts and natural disasters. I attempt to show that the dynamics of development zones in Nepal are inseparable from the combined processes of state restructuring and infrastructural reconstruction that transpired after the earthquakes devasted large parts of the country in 2015. I draw on Christian Lund, who describes ruptures as 'open moments, when opportunities and risks multiply, when the scope of outcomes widens, and when new structural scaffolding is erected' (2016, 1202). Ruptures are particularly propitious moments 'for observing and analysing how state authority is as much at stake and as much under construction as the very rights produced through its exercise' (2016, 1202). Understanding the earthquakes as ruptures is especially relevant in northern Nepal, where China's growing profile in the aftermath of the natural disaster placed the common borderlands in a strategic position. Large-scale development programmes in the field of infrastructure and road building stimulated the making of development zones along national boundaries, and incorporating these regions into broader market economies has become central for the state-making projects of both Nepal and China.

Development zones, as Michael Eilenberg and Mona Chettri write in the introduction to this edited volume, are centred on entrepreneurial activities and economic growth. They are spatial enclaves that facilitate regional cooperation, technical advancement, financial investment, and capital accumulation. If located in and across borderlands, they have the implicit function to secure state space and make it integral. Development zones entail processes of securitization, surveillance, and control that serve to exploit resources and govern rural inhabitants at different scales. Tax laws and regulations shape and transform societies and environments, connecting borderlands to regional and global economies. But development zones can also manifest through socioeconomic practices from the bottom up. I develop the category of "informal development zones" to foreground how productive spaces at the margins can arise from negotiations over sovereignty and economic productivity without formal state designation as a development zone.

<INSERT Figure 8.2: Habitual cross-border geographies in Tsum (Timo Plachta).*>*

As recent scholarship has demonstrated, the process of spatializing the state is neither even nor uncontested. In my analysis, I draw on the anthropology of borders and borderlands (Billé 2014; Green 2005; Jones 2012; Megoran 2006), with a special focus on the literature on state-formation and burgeoning markets in Asia (Alff 2016; Eilenberg 2012; Karrar 2019; Reeves 2014). Building upon these studies, I examine the situated practices through which the state is invoked or ignored in emerging development zones. In Tsum, focusing attention on the material and discursive processes of growing rural economies shows how and when state authority is actually established and realized or, in some cases, abandoned. State laws monitor practices at border crossings, enable market access, and define customs taxes while at the same time coexisting alongside sets of local rules and practices that regulate the management of shared natural resources on a communal basis. *How do people engage with, resist, or support these overlapping bodies of law and authority?* While some rules are enforced, others are questioned and subverted, revealing the multiple forms of adaptation and resistance in borderlands that, taken together, are constitutive of the forging of informal and regional spaces of production.

I also seek to foreground the subjective experience of development zones by focusing on local narratives of everyday sovereign practices in the region. The increased commitment to infrastructure development after the earthquakes, in particular, affects people like Appey in Tsum, for whom China is visible on different scales in everyday life. While some traders and businessmen have been making considerable profit from the building up of regional connectivity over the past decade, others are suffering from the competition over opportunities for investment, and face marginalization and exclusion. I therefore address the inherent asymmetries of wealth and power and the consequent inequalities that these new configurations bring about. *What are the stories of success and failure within these emerging rural markets? How do shifting entrepreneurial opportunities affect future investment and planning?* In answering these questions, I attend to the ways in which rural inhabitants use their individual and collective agency to navigate the complex space between competition and choice, opportunities and constraints across the borderland.

In the ethnography that follows, I explore the making of informal development zones in three interrelated aspects. I focus on state power and control (and how people skirt the boundaries of laws and social norms), the proliferation of rural labour markets, and consequent insecurities and inequalities, to reveal the porous character of these spatial enclaves. I demonstrate how Nepal and China have created their own specific regime of overlapping sovereignties to manage borderland economies, and while there are attempts to control and discipline the margins, many rules and regulations also remain outside of formal government control. I interrogate the emergence of a new type of regional connectivity and complement this analysis with local narratives of power, profit, and inequalities that reflect changing political economies of development. Mapping the flows, interests, and imaginations that come together in border regions, I consider how Nepal's northern borderlands have become informal

spaces of production at the geographical margins, but are also imbued with frictions and conflicting interests that necessitate and legitimate a range of actions of the state and rural inhabitants, thus making the region particularly 'sensitive' (Cons 2016).

The Making of Informal Development Zones

Within the past twenty years, a series of developments has collectively created the conditions for altering rural economies and aspirations in Nepal. The decade-long Maoist conflict ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006, resulting in a period of protracted political instability that limited the scope of economic development. The post-conflict constitutional process was marked by changing interim governments that struggled to find consensus on the federal structure of the new state. The adoption of a long overdue constitution in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes, which had damaged rural settlements and some of the most densely populated parts of Kathmandu, eventually spurred the democratic transitioning of Nepal from a centralized state to a federation of provinces. The constitution, even if contentious, provided the administrative and bureaucratic framework for reconstruction activities through foreign investment, grants, and loans. It also provoked the formulation of statements, protocols, and agreements with China that helped to reshuffle the geopolitical landscape of Nepal, which had long depended on the Indian market and on the port of Calcutta for its access to the sea, to find alternative trade and transit routes (Chand 2017; Murton and Lord 2020; Paudel and Le Billon 2018).

Building upon unprecedented financial support for reconstruction and infrastructure development from foreign donor agencies, the newly formed Nepali government has introduced staggering plans for regional cooperation, national progress, and economic development. It has given infrastructure development a central role in what Laura Bear (2015, 409) calls 'capitalist technologies of imagination' – that is, the collective practices of anticipation used to encourage and coordinate speculative investment (see also Adams et al. 2009; Cross 2015; Lord 2018). This living and working towards an imagined infrastructural future inflects the ways in which political upheaval and natural disasters are experienced as combined forces accelerating the making of development zones in Nepal.

The National Planning Commission has mapped out several 'national pride projects' that anticipate the expansion of bilateral trade and investment along strategic north–south economic corridors running through Nepal from its northern borderlands with China (Murton and Lord 2020).[42] Some of these planned highways and railway lines are part of the Belt and Road Initiative, while others require different frameworks of Chinese financial assistance and technical expertise. Situated along these important corridors are land ports and special economic zones (SEZ) to channel and facilitate commercial entrepreneurial activities (see also

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[42] The National Planning Commission is the government's main body for formulating infrastructure development policies and publishing periodic plans.

Murton this volume). Out of fifteen SEZs, which are currently at different stages of planning and completion across Nepal, four are going to be built in the lower hill regions and one is proposed to span across the border, linking the land port at Rasuwagadhi with the sprawling Chinese market town of Kyirong.43

This increased infrastructural development is gradually transforming Nepal's northern borderlands into 'marginal hubs'. Magnus Marsden and Madeleine Reeves define marginal hubs as sites that 'appear geographically or politically marginal, but which emerge as areas of intense and often volatile sociability' (2019, 755). Such spatial enclaves, which can include border posts, container markets, industrial workshops, and, as I describe, informal development zones, often emerge spontaneously and come into being suddenly. They are marked by social heterogeneity and practices of conviviality among people from contrasting backgrounds, who come together from different regions and across large geographies. Everyday dynamics of social interactions and coexistence in marginal hubs coalesce remote from urban centres, and governing such sites has become central for the state-building projects of China and Nepal.

As state policies seek to tie borderlands closer to urban centres, the Nepal state security apparatus has been strengthened, border posts have been established, and a number of laws for governing investment, economic production, resource extraction, and the movement of people and goods have been introduced. First issued in 2002, the 'Entry-Exit Pass Card for Nepal China Border's Citizen' is one such striking example of how Nepal, in cooperation with China, attempts to render complex forms of sociability in its borderlands more manageable and secure. Also referred to as a 'border citizen card', this document allows rural inhabitants, who live near the border, to cross it without a passport or visa and travel up to 30 kilometres on the other side, depending on where the nearest market town is located. The border citizen card sanctions the crossing of the border for trade and commerce, purchasing goods, and seasonal labour. By creating a borderland that comprises portions of both countries' territory, China and Nepal mutually assert sovereignty in the region. But the category of 'border citizenship' also represents a form of formal recognition that, in practice, the two states forego absolute power

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43 The groundwork for setting up national-level development zones began with the establishment of the Special Economic Zone Authority (SEZA, previously the Special Economic Zone Development Committee) in Kathmandu in 2004. It plans, monitors, and evaluates SEZs across Nepal. Ten of these spatial enclaves are situated in the Terai region, on the border with India. Among these, Bhairawa SEZ is the first completed development zone, connecting to Pokhara and further on to the Kali Gandaki corridor, which leads across the Kora La Pass in Mustang district to China. Feasibility studies are ongoing for SEZs in Dhangadi, Nepalgunj, Kapilavastu, Rautahat, Dhanusa, Siraha, and Jhapa. Land was acquisitioned in Biratnagar, and construction on an export processing zone has recently started in Simara. In the lower hill regions, approach roads are under construction for SEZs in Jumla, Gorkha, Nuwakot, and Panchkhal. Another SEZ is currently under consideration in Rasuwa district that, after construction, will span across the borderland with China. See also https://www.seznepal.gov.np.

in order to take into consideration citizens who challenge and constrain state authority through their everyday mobile practices. It institutionalizes a space of multiple, overlapping sovereignties in which people have different allegiances and identities that go beyond the range and limits of state boundaries (Plachta 2020; Shneiderman 2013; see also Donnan and Haller 2000; Wilson and Donnan 1998).

Located at the peripheries, informal development zones in borderlands emerge as marginal hubs, where citizen–state relationships are articulated anew. Considered as regionally distinct 'frontier moments' (Rasmussen and Lund 2018), they are shaped by the making and negotiating of relations with neighbouring China. They create their own regulatory environments and property regimes, and they are sites of complex forms of social interaction, where people, goods, and services appear and disappear again. Informal spaces of production reveal the tension between spatial control and institutional orders on the one hand and opportunities and practices of hope and anticipation on the other. How they are narrated and perceived on the ground is key to understanding the complexities and contingencies of lived experiences in borderlands.

Disciplining the Margins Through Development

Corresponding to Nepal's intensive promotion of an infrastructural future, an excavator was airlifted to upper Tsum in 2013 to clear ground for a dirt road. Construction on the road started from scratch instead of extending an already existing roadhead from Arughat, a sizeable Nepali market town to the south. The dirt road in Tsum is expected first to connect rural inhabitants across the mountain pass to markets in China, before providing them with motorable transport to the lower hill regions in Nepal. Road construction in Tsum, even if contentious and slow to advance, has captivated the interest of rural inhabitants. It has sparked ideas of progress and change, and it fosters speculative practices of local investment in guesthouses and businesses that are constitutive of informal development zones.

In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes, however, infrastructural anticipation, hope, and failure coalesced in unexpected and disconcerting ways, signalling the tentative achievement of roads that 'are always already on the way to becoming ruins' (Gupta 2018, 62). From one moment to the next, Tsum was cut off from the lower hill regions. Landslides and mud slurries continued to break loose during the ensuing monsoon season, damaging bridges and causing tributaries along the Budhi Gandaki to flood the footpath leading to Arughat. At a time when rural inhabitants had not been able to access urban centres for food supplies and reconstruction material except by helicopter, in an unprecedented relief effort Chinese state authorities delivered aid, including solar panels, tea, and rice for each household to a

pastureland in Tsum.44 This active intervention was as much a strategic and political move as it was a generous humanitarian provision. Emily Yeh, in her critical study of Chinese modernization programmes in the TAR, observes and analyses the complex rationale of 'the gift of development' (2013, 5). She argues that the distribution of material goods and provision of state subsidies for housing and infrastructure programmes is never selfless, free, and disinterested, but that it actually constrains, entrapping recipients into feelings of gratitude towards the state. The giving of gifts is, she writes, an especially effective practice of everyday symbolic domination that obscures hierarchies and dependencies between the Chinese state and its citizens. Development, in this context, is a form of 'indebtedness engineering' that seeks to cultivate and constitute an unequal social order (2013, 233). Yeh describes how the resulting transformation of the material and moral landscape through Chinese development programmes has principally served to consolidate state space and power in the TAR. As I examine, the ongoing and increasing provision of Chinese humanitarian and development support also contributes to making space integral in places like Tsum, where the broader flows and ruptures of the earthquakes and the proximity to the northern neighbour have accelerated the socioeconomic transformation of the borderland.

The distribution of Chinese aid in Tsum spurred Nima Lama, the president of the Tsum Welfare Committee, to come up with a plan in order to help alleviate severe post-disaster conditions for rural inhabitants.45 He gathered a group of Tsumpas who had migrated to Kathmandu to discuss a possible appeal at the Chinese Embassy to reduce formalities for crossing into the TAR. Border openings and closures had so far been following unpredictable and sudden, but very much consequential, decisions from Chinese state authorities, sometimes limiting supplies and causing shortages of essential goods in the region. The appeal was successful, and bureaucratic procedures for crossing the border and purchasing consumer products and merchandise were eased. As one friend of mine from Tsum told me:

> We can now register with a Tibetan called Kunsang in Shag village. This is the checkpoint. We go to his home and show him our border pass, and he writes our names down in a list. Before, we had to take our citizenship card (Nep. *nagarita*) and border pass to the police in Dzongka. This was difficult sometimes. We were asked questions about who we are, where we are from, and what we want to do. It is much more comfortable now.

Kunsang is respected because he is a Tibetan man who has extensive local knowledge and contacts. People in Shag and Tsum have been connected through social, religious, and

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44 Following the earthquake, Chinese emergency relief and food aid was reported to have been delivered to many high mountain regions in Nepal using existing roads and border crossings.

45 The Tsum Welfare Committee is a social and cultural organization based in Kathmandu. It connects members of the Tsum community living in the northern Gorkha district with those who have migrated to the capital.

economic relations over several generations. Kunsang, correspondingly, is familiar with the habitual border geographies of the Tsumpas, while also personifying the Chinese state. In this dual role of a fellow border inhabitant and border guard, he provides information and support on issues of trade and mediates the formalities of rules and laws in conflict situations.

News of moderate policies on crossing the border spread fast in Tsum, and rural inhabitants, anticipating the opening up of opportunities, combined the earthquake compensation from the Nepali government with their individual savings from the collection and sale of *yartsagunbu*, the profitable caterpillar fungus, to invest in the construction of large guesthouses, private homes, and shops, as well as in the scaling up of trade, thus making the earthquakes a truly 'lucrative disaster' (Paudel et al. 2020; see also Bennike 2019).[46] The intense accumulation of capital in Tsum reflects the creative potential of border communities to navigate the opportunities and constraints across the borderland, revealing how everyday life in rural economies is understood on the ground.

Relations with neighbouring China intensified once local government elections in Nepal were held in 2017, and the transition to rural municipalities was completed a year later, in 2018. Local government representatives had last been elected in 1997, leaving the local administration to centrally appointed civil servants and compounding the political uncertainties for rural inhabitants. Many hope that the new federal structure of the state will finally bring stability, decentralized economic growth, and development. In the northern borderlands, constitutional changes have facilitated direct communication with Chinese state authorities. The elected government representatives, along with police officers from local police stations, have been invited to participate in formal meetings in China, where they can discuss and ask for a demand-based provision of development support, ranging from food, education, and healthcare to blasting material for road construction.[47]

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[46] *Yartsagunbu* (lit. summer grass, winter worm) is among the most valuable medicinal fungi in the world. It grows in high altitude meadows above 4,000m across the Himalaya and provides 65-90% of the annual income of local populations in northern Nepal. It fetches a high price for many, but also comes with a considerable impact on fragile alpine ecosystems (Byers et al. 2020; Childs and Choedup 2014).

[47] The cross-border meetings build upon a previous memorandum of understanding signed between the Nepali and Chinese governments in 2014, according to which China pledged to contribute 10 million RMB (US$ 1.42 million) annually for a period of five years to foster economic development in all northern border districts. This document states that Chinese aid will be directed towards small-scale programmes for 'improving local living standards' through investment in healthcare, education, and road construction (MoFAGA 2014). Among the completed projects are the construction of a 100kW solar power station in Mustang district and a community library in Rasuwa. In practice, the amount given has far exceeded the amount pledged, and 200 million RMB were spent in those five years on the provision of development support for border regions (Giri 2019).

Cross-border meetings targeting rural inhabitants in Tsum take place up to twice a year. They are usually held in Dzongka, and sometimes participants convene on one of the pasturelands near the border. It was by chance that I met Pasang Lama, the local government representative of the upper Tsum region, when I stayed at Appey's shop in Bachu. This slender man in his forties had been managing the construction of a large monastic complex, including a school and a health post in his village, and needed building materials from China. During our conversation, he indicated several rules concerning taxes, trade, and traffic that were agreed on at the most recent meeting, even though some of these regulations had been in practice before. Pasang stated that upon crossing the border, Tsum residents have to register with their border citizen card at the checkpoint in Shag village. When returning, they have to check back out before it closes at 4 pm Chinese time and 6 pm Nepali time and recross the border.[48] The Tsumpas are allowed to stay up to four days in China, where they must seek accommodation in a hotel that can accept tourists. Pasang explained that as foreign visitors to the TAR, they are sometimes routinely turned away at hotels or subjected to extensive background checks. He stressed that no interactions with Chinese citizens are permitted except for purposes of selling and buying consumer products and other merchandise.

<INSERT Figure 8.3: Appey's tented shop at Bachu (Nadine Plachta, September 2019).*>*

'What are the reasons and motivations for these cross-border meetings?' I probed. After a moment's pause, Pasang responded: 'I suppose to remind people that restrictions and the punishment imposed for trading banned items are severe.' It was not long before this that someone from Tsum had been caught with the underfur of a Tibetan antelope. Other items frequently smuggled across the border include musk, wild animal skins, and medicinal herbs. The Tsumpas usually act as carriers, taking such high-priced items from one middleman to the next. The trade in illicit products rose continuously from the time the border was more regulated in the 1960s, when private trade in China was prohibited, until the opening up and launching of economic reform policies in the late 1970s. Despite the infliction of penalties for breaking the law and social consequences of the local community, trafficking in animal parts has again captivated some Tsumpas, who regard it as a profitable and convenient form of business.

In Tsum, a region where national boundaries and informal development zones overlap, the state demonstrates its presence through formal rules of law. Regulations shape and constrain the movement of rural inhabitants and material properties. They affect where and

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[48] This schedule does not reflect Nepal's specific time zone, which adds 15 minutes to Indian Standard Time.

when people choose and are permitted to cross the border, purchase and sell products, and communicate with other traders and businessmen. Marked as 'legal' and 'normal', the passage of some goods is facilitated, if not encouraged and with few formalities to foster rural economies, while the handling of others is considered 'illegal' and 'transgressive' and entails serious repercussions from state authorities. Taxes, laws, and regulations, and consequent patterns of compliance and avoidance, produce region-specific markets, where people, materialities, and criminal actions circulate across the borderland (see also McElwee 2004, Tagliacozzo 2009).

Habitual Trading Geographies and New Labour Markets

From conversations with Tsum residents I learnt that people cross the border on an average of seven or eight times a year. They leave their horses and yaks to graze in Shag, where they can charter a Chinese truck to various towns and settlements in the TAR. Regular consumer products, such as rice, noodles, oil, salt, tea, milk powder, cigarettes, beer, and batteries, are readily available in Shag itself, while certain other household goods, such as electric butter tea churners, metal boxes, and mattresses, as well as construction materials, like cement and glass for window panes, can be purchased in Dzongka. Rural inhabitants also buy diesel-powered agricultural machines for grinding barley, pressing oil, and cutting wood – equipment that, being large and unwieldy, has to be dismantled and carried on foot over the mountain pass. Rented out to other villagers at a daily rate of approximately NPR 2,400 (US$ 20), these machines secure their owners a reliable profit.

Apart from those who go to the TAR in order to purchase personal consumer products, the relative permissive border regime also benefits entrepreneurs like Sangey Tenzin. For this short man from a well-known Tsumpa trader family, material pathways have spread out across large geographies in recent years. In Kathmandu, he preorders golden finger- and earrings, some of which have coral, pearl, or turquoise insets, as well as wooden and silver cups. He then picks up this merchandise and brings it to Tsum, from where he takes his horse to Dzongka. Upon visiting a bank when back in Kathmandu, he gets a considerable return from exchanging the Chinese money earned in Dzongka into his own currency. Sangey Tenzin has gradually acquired, expanded, and validated several business contacts that have helped him shape a low-volume but extremely profitable trade. As he explained: 'We have so many options for investing in different businesses that it is not necessary to keep the old contacts of our parents and grandparents.' He has finished constructions on a new residential home and is currently building a guesthouse for foreign tourists to the region. Sangey Tenzin's entrepreneurship echoes the success stories of many young traders that I encountered in Tsum, who are capable to adapt to changing economic situations and tariff regimes, and to explore opportunities for market niches. They conduct business both in Chinese towns and urban centres in Nepal, where they forge contacts with a range of suppliers, buyers, and distributors

that enable them to sell appealing products to fellow rural inhabitants and expand their capital for new investments (see also Harris 2013).

The accumulation and flow of capital in Tsum is reflected in the massive construction activities currently taking place in the region. The Tsumpas previously built their houses themselves, adhering to community-level labour exchange, but the rise in demand of work, accelerated through the rebuilding and retrofitting of damaged properties following the earthquakes, has facilitated the emergence of a new labour regime in the region. As Shyam Kunwar, Elsie Lewison, and Katharine Rankin write, the concept of 'reconstruction labour' has come to constitute a differentiated sector of work in the post-disaster context. Comprising its own wage rates, bureaucratic processes, and social relations, it distinguishes ongoing public infrastructure construction, and especially roads, from earthquake reconstruction (forthcoming). In Tsum, it has become an attribute of local status and wealth to recruit low-wage construction workers from mountain and hill regions of Nepal.

Sitting near the construction site of a footpath leading to a pilgrimage site, I spoke with Jagat, who was in charge of a team of about twenty workers. This rugged man had been coming to Tsum for five years. Sometimes, members of the local community would hire his team again for the next season, and on other occasions, Jagat would walk to Tsum by himself in search of work. People hear of him as a fair and dependable contractor, and seek him out. Jagat's workers earn NPR 1,200–1,800 (US$ 10–15) per day, depending on their skills and expertise. This sum covers their accommodation, mostly in tents, but does not include their consumables. Spending a considerable percentage of their wages on alcohol, food, and popular dice games, many do not take much profit back home with them at the end of a season, which can last up to ten months. I was told that in the years after the earthquakes, 700 to 800 seasonal workers were stationed in Tsum – a number that accounted for half of the valley's population. This figure has decreased to around 200 people at present. Even if these are rough estimates based on people's best guesses, the influx of workers reflects the extent of construction occurring in Tsum and it also explains the rising demand for food and other products in a region that has limited agricultural resources.

<INSERT Figure 8.4: A woman pauses during construction on a walking trail in Tsum (Nadine Plachta, September 2019).*>*

To meet the growing demand for merchandise and construction materials in Tsum, successful businessmen began to hire mule caravans and their drivers from the lower hill regions along the Budhi Gandaki in order to purchase cement, shoes, canned pork, batteries, soap, and other goods for them at tented shops at Dingma, the pastureland below the Ngula Dachen Pass in the TAR. Behind this movement of cargo on mules is a question that begs to be asked. *How do the*

Chinese authorities react to the 'illegal intrusion' of Nepali mule drivers who are, in fact, not eligible for the border citizen card that would allow them to travel into the neighbouring state? Upon inquiring with a friend about the matter, he reasoned that state authorities must be aware of the mule caravans going across the borderland, but have been consistently turning a blind eye in order to facilitate the burgeoning of rural markets in Tsum: 'I think this is a very small issue, one that the Chinese do not care about. The regional administrative centre is located in Dzongka. Why should they trouble to look after such small things happening here? Maybe they want us doing business'. However, the mule caravans did not stop in Dingma. The Tsumpas tested the scope and limitations of state regulations, pleading with the Tibetan inhabitants of Shag to let the mule caravans come to their village in order to facilitate the effortless selling and buying of consumer products at local stores, which have a larger variety of items than the tented shops of Dingma. But these informal cross-border economies abruptly came to a halt when unattended mules broke loose and rampaged over agricultural fields. Talks were held on compensating the losses of the farmers, partnerships were consolidated, and the dispute was resolved. No one wanted to risk forfeiting economic opportunities. The growing number of mule caravans in Tsum reflects that borderland populations go about their everyday business in ways that both skirt regulations and exploit state schemes.

Thinking about the aspirations of people who consciously and creatively 'opt out' of state rule (Scott 2009), I sought out several mule drivers in Tsum. One of them, Kumar, had come from Machhakhola, a village along the Budhi Gandaki. He was unloading the cargo of his caravan at Bachu and, with soap and a dirty cloth, was washing away the diesel that had leaked from a container off one mule. Kumar was a small man and, I guessed, not more than twenty years old. He explained: 'I could not find a job in my village in spring but then I got word that there was money to be made in Tsum. I took my mules, came here, and stayed. It's hard work going back and forth across the mountain pass. But in the end, it pays off'. This statement reflects the hopes and ambitions for a secure future that bring young men to Tsum. The region's moderate policies around crossing the border, as well as its conducive environment and infrastructure for capital investment, attract people from distant places, who come in search of an entrepreneurial fortune. This entanglement of the material and affective gestures towards the popular imaginations of success that are characteristic for emerging and informal development zones.

Narratives of Social Differences and Insecurities

Tsum's rural markets create new opportunities. They are full of anticipation and speculation, and transform bordering practices. As some spaces for investment open up, others close, and not all local residents benefit equally from the capital accumulation. While the new constellations make some people richer, they also reinforce existing inequalities for others, and asymmetries of wealth abound between places close to the border and those further away from it.

All rural inhabitants in Tsum are eligible for the border citizen card that grants them passage to market towns in the TAR. Lower Tsum, however, remains largely bypassed by commodity flows from China. Situated at a lower altitude than the upper part of the region, people there do not own the necessary livestock to cross the border. Domestic yaks, the robust bovines adapted to high altitude, cannot survive in lower Tsum. People could take their own horses, if they had some, or resort to hiring mules from the lowlands, but many of them lack the financial resources for larger investments. As one farmer lamented: 'We are only at a short distance from the border with China, but we do not benefit from it.' It took a moment for me to register the long-standing bitterness and frustration that he expressed. With strands of loose brown hair poking out from under his baseball cap, the man recounted a communal meeting that took place a decade ago. Upper Tsum residents had passed a local rule that prevents people from the lower part from collecting *yartsagunbu* on rangelands situated farther up. 'Maybe they had foreseen the expanding business opportunities with China', he shrugged. This restriction effectively deprived people in lower Tsum of a major source of income. It caused impoverishment in one part of the region, while leading to capital accumulation and new forms of investment in the other.

The feeling of exclusion resulted in anger, and retribution was not long in coming. Accusing upper Tsum residents of being the reason for the uneven development, people in lower Tsum, which itself is a densely forested area, mobilized to announce a ban on selling timber to the upper region, which faces an acute and ongoing shortage of wood. The conflict escalated and the ban soon also included the handwoven bamboo baskets that are favoured products for transportation and storage in upper Tsum. This local dispute ultimately transformed how people from lower Tsum think about bordering. The peripheralization of the area resulted in a reorientation of its residents towards the Budhi Gandaki river valley to the south, where recent plans from the Nepali government for economic corridor development manifested in the construction of a road from Arughat. They anticipate that this road, once completed, will accelerate integration with countrywide markets and facilitate the export of local food staples, such as buckwheat, potatoes, apples, and walnuts, to the lower hill regions of Nepal. Even in desperate conditions, rural inhabitants attempt to find economic niches and opportunities. They invest hope in the future in order to navigate complex and sometimes confusing transformations in informal development zones across the borderland.

Conclusion

The increased Chinese commitment to infrastructure development after the earthquakes struck Nepal has gradually been turning previous pathways of exchange into strategic economic corridors that are punctuated with development zones. Some of these are branded as special economic zones and others, such as Tsum, manifest as productive spaces at the margins, where state-led processes coalesce with agentive and habitual practices of borderland communities.

The category of informal development zones that I have sought to develop in this chapter demonstrates the complexities of rural market formation in Tsum in the post-disaster moment. Local residents have diversified their traditional subsistence practices to include cash-based economies. They conduct business across a range of distant locations, recruit and contract seasonal workers, and open up guesthouses and shops. The stories of entrepreneurs like Appey and Sangey Tenzin show that the capital investment of traders and businessmen is, while speculative, full of hope and anticipation. But their stories also shift critical attention to those individuals who cannot carve out a place for themselves. Amidst the new configurations, some people are marginalized and suffer exclusion. Social and economic practices in rural markets engender their own hierarchies, inequalities, and dependencies.

A focus on Tsum reveals that the regulation of informal development zones is an attempt to secure state space and make it integral. Such spatial enclaves are defined by tax laws and rules, or that which is considered the work of the state. Many Tsum residents I conversed with have appreciated the moderate border crossing policies for purchasing personal products and merchandise. Others, however, were doubtful of China's financial commitment to local development. The most debated issue was the completion of construction on a large shopping complex and hotel at Dingma. The containers of the complex had not yet been stocked with products, but rumours were already spreading widely. 'You know', one of my friends said, 'the Chinese offer us the chance to do easy business, saying that we can trade there free of any cost. But what happens if we are not allowed to go to Dzongka afterwards?' He looked at me, sternly, his dark eyebrows pursed. My friend thus pointed out the overall concern that rural inhabitants in Tsum expressed. At present, the border checkpoint does not oversee what moves across the national boundary. They fear that the policing of the border and associated infrastructures of surveillance will lead to a greater control over local businesses. The uncertainty and confusion about Chinese policies, well known from the past, is not over.

What I attempted to have shown in this chapter is that borderlands are salient places to explore informal development zones as temporal manifestations of shifting connectivities. They can appear suddenly, have the capacity to change in shape, porosity, and intensity, and might disappear again just as quickly. They are experienced as sites of creative production and opportunities, where different actors and social relations come together as ideas of hope, progress, and change manifest. The vicissitudes of regional connectivities lead to vibrant contours of wealth, power, and materialities, and it is in the conditions under which struggles manifest over these changes that the meaning of self and community are negotiated anew. Considered as distinct 'frontier assemblages' (Cons and Eilenberg 2019), informal development zones are actively transforming life in borderlands and provide an urgent reminder of the uncertain and uneven outcomes of market economies.

Acknowledgements

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9. Development from the margins: Failing zones and suspended development in an Indonesian Border Village

Sindhunata Hargyono

Abstract: I argue that the moulding of the promise of development zones with existing local futural aspirations generates a powerful affective force that potentially incite social transformation. I demonstrate this argument by examining suspended development in an Indonesian border village, Long Nawang, which is designated by the state as a prospective border economic centre. I highlight how the promise of accelerated development intensifies existing aspirations for urbanity among border elites and villagers. The aspiration persists among the elites even when development zones do not materialize as intended due to delays in key development milestones in Long Nawang. I illustrate this persistence by looking at how the elites use their authority to fashion the villagers into tame development subjects in a vague bid to keep the potential urbanized future alive.

Keywords: suspension, development, hope, potentiality, future-making, Borneo, Indonesia

In recent years, Asian borderlands, often gazed from the position of power as space pregnant with extractive and productive potential, have become prime targets for intensified and accelerated development (Cons and Eilenberg 2019). Thus, the contemporary proliferation of development zones across Asian borderlands is relevantly linked to this edited volume. In this chapter, I refer to development zones mainly as a mobile state technology imbued with promises of optimization, productivity, and accelerated development in economically underutilized spatial milieu such as marginal borderlands. As these development zones proliferate to delineated borderland locations, their promises become appropriable. That is, the development zones interact with existing, or catalyse new, futural aspirations in the populations living within them. In this chapter, I seek to foreground the impact of the promises that emerge within a development zone that may potentially incite social transformation.

The ubiquity of development zone proliferation to Asian borderlands subjects these areas to a high potential for drastic social transformation. In contemporary Asia, the famous Belt Road Initiative is perhaps the prime example of such transformation (BRI). The Chinese state's project embodies an ambitious dream of transcontinental economic integration while simultaneously modernizing its underdeveloped western border area (Rippa 2017, 3). BRI, however, is not the only high-modern fantasy of increased economic productivity that is changing the face of Asian borderlands. Largely unaffected by BRI, development zones also proliferate to terrestrial borderlands in Southeast Asia as a consequence of the Indonesian state's recent pro-border development policy.

The proliferation of development zones to Indonesian border areas stems from the change in national leadership under Joko Widodo who was elected president in 2014. He rose to power with a pledge 'to develop Indonesia from the margin' (i.e. 'margin' being primarily interpreted as the border areas). Continuing the government tradition of concern about poor and underdeveloped border areas (Eilenberg 2012, 237–52), Widodo took a bold step in addressing this concern through rolling out infrastructural projects in the hope of developing new economic centres in selected border villages and towns.

In this chapter, I zoom into Long Nawang, an Indonesian border village designated as a future economic centre. The village is an administrative centre of Kayan Hulu sub-district, a part of the Malinau district government in North Kalimantan province. Resting on Apo Kayan plateau, the cross-border indigenous minority who inhabits it, the Kenyah, considers the village as the cultural capital of its ethnic group. During most of the Indonesian state's existence, the village has been politically and economically neglected by the state (Eghenter 2007). Today, the village is among the beneficiaries of the state's accelerated border development. In the process, the state's project reinvigorates and amplifies the aspiration of Kenyah elites to urbanize Long Nawang into a capital of a new border district.

The early years of Widodo's regime marked promising development in the village as it underwent infrastructural development and received the central state's support for an

administrative upgrade. However, after the first two years, the development zone started not to materialize as intended. New infrastructures have been delayed or are decaying, while the decision-making for the administrative upgrade has been suspended by President Widodo for the unforeseen future. Increasingly, the aspiration of urbanity is threatened with the suspension in the materialization of the development zone. These delays position Long Nawang inhabitants in a state of uncertain waiting because the accelerated border development is supposedly still on-going.

In critical development studies, scholars have laboured to explain the pervasive failure of development by investigating its power-blind nature (i.e. sociocultural detachment and depoliticization, see Li 2007; Scott 1998; Ferguson 1990). This chapter, however, seeks to take a step back and delve into the moment when development projects have not failed (at least not just yet), but are suspended without certainty. By zooming in to the Long Nawang experience, I will illustrate the persistence of promises that a development zone brings even in its suspended state. In so doing, I will focus on the temporal agency of the Kenyah elites during suspended development and how they push their aspiration further by attempting to fashion the villagers as tame development subjects. The elites believe that by exhibiting such a subject position, the village will be in good standing with the central state, thereby securing the threatened urbanized future. This attempt revolves around the elites' discursive encouragement for the villagers to pay respect to the central state by granting customary land access for development while simultaneously taking care of the state's decaying infrastructures.1

Michael Eilenberg's (Eilenberg 2012, 5) formulation of border elites could aptly illustrate what I mean by the Kenyah elites. They are people with influential authority who hold some form of highly regarded leadership positions. These positions may derive from customary, state, and private business institutions. In the Kenyah context, more often than not, an elite holds simultaneous leadership positions across different social, political and economic contexts. For example, the current Grand King of Apo Kayan (i.e. customary leader of the Apo Kayan Kenyah), is also a member of the Regional House of Representatives in Malinau and is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the Apo Kayan area.

In the next section, I will begin to provide the foundation of the contemporary proliferation of development zones in Indonesia, arguing that the current primacy of border areas in national development is a product of a longer historical process. I will illustrate how the gradual institutionalization of economically oriented border development intensified only after the Indonesian state lost a territorial dispute to Malaysia on the ground of administrative presence. I will then describe how this gradual institutionalization has reached a peak in Widodo's attempt to develop new economic centres in selected border locations, including Long Nawang village.

In the second section, I will illustrate how the arrival of a development zone in Long Nawang has not only awakened the Kenyah elites' dream to urbanize the village but also converted this dream into a community goal. The arrival of a development zone in the village

was initially characterized by symbolical and material intensification of the state's presence. This intensification, I suggest, was a critical factor in rendering the dream of urbanity an appealing and achievable goal. Here, I rely on Rebecca Bryant and Daniel Knight's distinction between 'possibility' and 'potentiality' (Bryant and Knight 2019, 107–11, 125). While both temporal categories refer to the likelihood of a future to materialize, Bryant and Knight argue that potentiality is a degree stronger than merely a possibility (110-111). The key difference is that a potentiality requires an almost tangible suggestion that an aspired future is close to realization, while possibility may exist without such a suggestion. In other words, a future is potential when it becomes palpable in the present. The intensification of state presence, I suggest, marked the palpability of a future in which Long Nawang becomes an administrative centre of a new border district. Consequently, the Kenyah elites organized themselves and the villagers to pursue such an administrative upgrade at the national level. It was during this initial optimism that the villagers were able to partake in the urbanization dream by orienting their life-decision in anticipation of such a potentiality. However, as the materialization of the development zone started to encounter delay and suspension, the villagers experienced uncertain waiting and have become increasingly doubtful of the prospect of urbanization.

In the third section, I will illustrate how, in spite of the suspended development, the promise of urbanization remains powerful among the Kenyah elites. I suggest that the moulding of the promise of development zone and the local aspiration to urbanity instigate persistent hopefulness among the elites. Hope, defined as 'a way of pressing into the future that attempts to pull certain potentialities into actuality' (Bryant and Knight 2019, 134), powers the elites to engage in a future-oriented politics that Felix Ringel (2016, 2018) names 'time-tricking'. 'Time-tricking' is an action occurring in the present that is oriented toward changing the contents of the future (Ringel 2016, 25–27). Thus, in an attempt to maintain urbanity as a content of their future, the elites engage in time-tricking by refashioning the villagers as tame development subject. Here, the elites turn to an imagined central state as the provision of discursive resources (Jakimow 2015, 124–27) in their refashioning project. I will show this process by describing two ethnographic encounters where the elites encouraged the voluntary dispossession of customary land access for development and the exhibition of good citizenship in relation to the state's decaying infrastructure. Through cementing a tame collective identity deemed to be supportive to the state development, the elites hope to remain in good standing with the central state, thereby securing urbanization as a potential future when the suspended development ends.

The Proliferation of Development Border Areas

The Kenyah elites' attempt to produce a tame development subject amid suspended development is contingent upon the promises of their homelands being a development zone. Therefore, it is essential to describe how the contemporary Indonesian government formulates its border development plan as a context. In this section, I will illustrate how the primacy that

border areas take in today's national development cannot be separated from the longer trajectory of the government's largely neglecting economic development in border areas. In the past, this neglect was deemed to result in costly territorial loss which then catalysed the gradual institutionalization of a more economic-oriented border management. This gradual institutionalization peaked when Widodo rose to power and rendered border towns and villages, such as Long Nawang, into future border economic centres.

For most of the republic's existence, the state's presence on the border has been minimal. Although Indonesia gained internationally recognized independence in 1949, it was only during the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation in the 1960s that state formation affected the Kalimantan borderlands (Eilenberg 2012, 114–15). As the national leadership at the time denied the proposal of a federal Malaysian state, the Indonesian army recruited the indigenous population on the Kalimantan borderland—including the Apo Kayan Kenyah—to invade North Borneo territories (Eilenberg 2012, 118; Lumenta 2011, 135–39; Eghenter 2007, p49). Eventually, the war ended after the infamous authoritarian New Order regime emerged out of a violent process in Indonesia. The new leadership supported the creation of Malaysia.

After the war, the border stopped occupying the spotlight within the national imaginary. By the 1970s, logging companies started to creep into the West Kalimantan-Sarawak borderland (Eilenberg 2012, 151–59) while in the interior Apo Kayan returned to the pre-war state of 'political and administrative neglect' (Eghenter 2007, 50–52). In the 1970s-1980s, Cristina Eghenter notes, there were two contradictory proposals for border development policies at the national level. One favoured the relocation of border populations away from the borders, while the other preferred undergoing in-situ infrastructural development and sending more people to the borders. These contradicting proposals did not significantly affect the border areas, as the border populations were discouraged from moving and remained where they were, while the in-situ infrastructural development never materialized (p52).

While the state of political neglect of the border continued in the 1990s, the decade marked an important precedent for the gradual institutionalization of border management oriented toward economic development. The change started in 1991 when Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas made a public statement in which he appealed to the Malaysian government to stop its development activities on two disputed islands located to the east of Borneo Island, Sipadan and Ligitan (*Kompas* 1991). While the dispute had first emerged in 1969 (Butcher 2013, 238–39), it was only in the 1990s that the case intensified and led to the dispute resolution in the early 2000s. In 1996, both governments agreed to refer to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to resolve the dispute . After a lengthy legal battle, the ICJ, in 2002, issued its ruling that granted the Malaysian government territorial rights over both islands on the basis of its long administrative presence. That is, British North Borneo which colonized Sabah region, had regulated turtle preservation in 1917 and built a lighthouse on each island after World War II. Meanwhile, there was no evidence that either the Dutch colonial or the Indonesian government had been administratively present on the islands.

The loss of Sipadan and Ligitan to Malaysia gave the Indonesian government a lesson on the negative consequences of under-governing the border areas. This bitter experience culminated in the increasing inclusion of the border within national development planning. In 2005, the National Planning Development Agency (NPDA) published the long-term development guidelines that will be in effect until 2025 (Kantor Menteri 2005). In this planning document, NPDA officials appeal for a change of paradigm in developing the border area: from an 'inward looking' to an 'outward looking' paradigm. NPDA officials characterize an 'inward looking' paradigm as the state's treatment of the border area as the 'backyard of state development', meaning that the border had been largely overlooked and neglected by the government. The document does not formulate the meaning of an 'outward looking' paradigm, but logically it would be one that treats the border area as the front yard of state development, thus becoming the site of a prioritized development intervention. Ultimately, NPDA argues that the shift to an 'outward-looking' paradigm would enable the ideal utilization of border areas as the 'gateway of economic activities and trade with neighbouring countries' (Kantor Menteri 2005, 66).

It took six years for a more robust conceptualization of this shift in paradigm. In 2010, the institutionalization of border management became more consolidated at the structural level with the establishment of National Border Management Authority (NBMA). This agency is the first national institution to manage the affairs of territorial borders and border areas. The agency's first achievement was to produce the grand design for the management of territorial borders and border areas that started to take effect in 2011. It was through this document that NPDA's cry for a shift in the border development paradigm became more conceptualized. The grand design embraces an outward-looking paradigm as the key in 'reorienting the direction of border management policy' (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan 2011, 27). Echoing NPDA's analogy, NBMA suggests a repositioning of the border from merely a 'national back porch' to a 'national front porch' (28). Only through this repositioning, NBMA officials argue, could state officials realize the 'strategic role' that the border area holds in 'regional and national economic development', which makes it a worthy site for costly developmentalist interventions (28).

In translating the idea of national front porch into more technical guidelines, NBMA selected several border locations as the prospective 'growth motors for border areas' that are expected to be 'the centres of regional and national economic growth' (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan 2011, 22–23). In selecting these locations, NBMA relied on a spatial planning technology called *Pusat Kajian Strategis Nasional* (National Strategic Activities Centre; PKSN). It is a zoning term produced through Government Ordinance No. 26 Year 2008 on National Spatial Planning (Government of Indonesia 2008). PKSNs are selected border cities, towns, and villages where spatial planning is to be both prioritized and geared toward their development into urban areas. PKSN is meant to 'push the development of the state's border areas' (14). Thus, consistent with this government ordinance, NBMA's grand design identifies

PKSNs as the 'growth motors for border areas' wherein they are expected to be the 'centres of regional and national economic growth' (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan 2011, 22–23).

In conceptualizing the strategy to render PKSN a growth motor, NBMA prefers that 'PKSNs will be located in a border gate area or within primary road networks heading towards the border gates' (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan 2011, 23). NBMA officials imagine that by 2025 all the 26 PKSNs 'will grow […] where the gate of the border between countries will be crowded with international economic activities and trade which benefit Indonesia' (47). As a part of developing into economic centres, PKSNs will also be equipped with 'basic' and 'complementary' infrastructures that 'fulfil the needs of border areas as the front porch of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia' (47).

The grand design devised by the NBMA would prove to be influential in Widodo's hallmark border development projects. An NPDA official that I interviewed in 2020 suggested that their pre-election briefing to presidential candidates about the nation's developement orientation might play a role to this influence. Widodo's administration has translated its political promise by prioritizing the construction and reconstruction of border-crossings in PKSNs that would be interconnected through a national border highway system. The border highway would be parallel to all three Indonesian terrestrial borders, with the longest, 2016 km, in Kalimantan. This infrastructure-oriented development is hoped to increase the connectivity and accessibility of border areas, thus allowing economic investment to pour into the border area (Ministry of Village 2016).

In this way, the NPDA's 2005 conception of an outward-looking development paradigm finally crested in contemporary Indonesia with the administration's accelerated border development in PKSNs. The priority of developing a border road network and border crossings with customs, immigration, quarantine, and security functions hints at the fulfilment of NPDA's mandate to render border areas into an integrated gateway for economic activities and international trade. As development zones have proliferated to border locations with PKSNs status, so has the promise of unprecedented economic development in these locations, which include Long Nawang village.

A Faltering Urbanized Future in Long Nawang

In this section, I will illustrate how the proliferation of a development zone to Long Nawang enables the Kenyah elites to amplify their half-decade dream to urbanize the village. I argue that the intensified state presence that has accompanied the coming of the development zone is a key factor in converting the urbanization dream to a community goal. The state presence becomes a key factor because it transports the elites' dream, to use Bryant and Knight (2019) temporal categories, from merely a possibility to the realm of potentiality. The dream becomes amplified when the Kenyah elites organize themselves and the villagers to pursue an administrative upgrade of the village to a capital of a prospective border district. It is during this moment that the dream achieves its collective status as villagers can partake in an urbanized

future through a reorientation of their collective life decisions. However, as the materialization of the development zone starts to encounter delay and suspension, the villagers experience uncertain waiting and become increasingly doubtful of the prospect of urbanization.

Similar to much of the Indonesian border area, post-independence Long Nawang has been characterized by both administrative and political neglect (Eghenter 2007). Decades of marginality materializes in unreliable, if not absent, essential public services. When talking about development, an average villager quickly highlights the unavailability of state-sanctioned electricity, telecommunication service, medical facilities, and reliable terrestrial transportation infrastructure. While both the district and provincial governments have attempted to develop needed public infrastructure in the past, their efforts often failed, leaving the village with decaying infrastructures and, at best, unreliable public services.

At specific moments when the development zone proliferated to the village, however, villagers experienced both symbolical and material intensification of the central state's presence in Apo Kayan plateau. In 2015 and 2017, two different ministries visited Apo Kayan. The 2015 visit of the Minister of Internal Affairs still sticks in the minds of the Kenyah, as he declared Long Nawang suitable to become the capital of a new border district that would contain existing sub-districts in Apo Kayan plateau. The Minister also ordered the construction of a diesel power plant that theoretically would be more than able to electrify the Kayan Hulu sub-district. Meanwhile, in 2016, as part of the construction of the border highway, a central state contractor started to work on upgrading the existing road connecting Long Nawang to a neighbouring sub-district centre, Long Ampung, where a better pioneer airport and newly built small hospital are located.

Such intensification of the state's presence through accelerated development transports the half-decade dream of the Kenyah elite to urbanize the village from merely a possibility to the realm of potentiality. Here, potentiality is a useful category to understand the way an aspiration about a future is able to orient actions and behaviours of subjectivated people in the present. As a temporal category, potentiality contrasts with mere possibility by virtue of the former's intensity of imminence (Bryant and Knight 2019, 107–9). While possibility does not require a palpable realization in the present, potentiality can almost be felt as a tangible reality in the present. In Long Nawang context, in 2009, the elite circles thought about organizing a request to render Apo Kayan plateau a border district. The national political environment at the time, however, was not supportive and this talk was quickly shut down by an influential Kenyah with a high position in the district government. With the intensification of state presence, however, the dream is no longer just a wild possibility, but rather a potentiality because tangible evidence suggested an urbanized future was within arm's reach.

Therefore, unlike in 2009, more recently the elite circles have actually pursued the political agenda of transforming the village into a prospective border district. The elites planned to name the prospective border district after the plateau, Apo Kayan. In June 2016, the elites established the Presidium for Apo Kayan New Autonomy Region to function as the

representative of Apo Kayan inhabitants in requesting the upgrade of Long Nawang's administrative status. The declaration was made at Long Nawang's football field and was symbolically embraced by the villagers who donated a modest amount of money which they put in a clay pot. Two months later, the Presidium members marched to the national capital to submit their official request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This effort occurred while the national moratorium on district-splitting, carried on from the previous regime, was still in place. In an interview, however, the Head of the Presidium expressed his optimism that Widodo would be committed to either lifting the moratorium or making an exception for a border area that he clearly wanted to develop.

While the villagers are used to past regional governments' infrastructural development, the current border development is different because it is planned at the national level. When it became official that the Presidium would request an administrative upgrade, villagers started to reorient their lives in anticipation of the palpable coming of urbanity. For instance, parents began to send their children to study disciplines in the university related to physical development, such as civil engineering, in the hope that the latter would be able to take part in the boom of development in the near future. Meanwhile, the villagers, who are mostly farmers, rethought their planting regime so as to ensure that they would be familiar with cultivating commodities that might sell well in soon-to-be accessible markets in cities, such as pineapple and black pepper.

<INSERT *Figure 9.1: As a way to brace for an urbanized future, sub-district and village offices worked together to expand the village's settlement area (Long Nawang, 2018, photo by author)*

As time progressed, however, the materialization of the development zone started to be delayed. By 2017, the president remained tight-lipped about lifting the district-splitting moratorium or making an exception related to upgrading the administrative status of any border locations. Meanwhile, physical development in the village started to encounter delay due to both the incapacity of the state-hired contractor and the existing unreliable road networks. These suspensions occurred despite the continuous reassurance from the president that his administration continues to prioritize border development. Suddenly, the coming of the development zone felt more like a repetition of past development failure in which infrastructural development projects often decayed before they were able to translate to reliable public services. As the urbanized dream started to falter, so did the air of hopeful optimism among the villagers. The doubt is aptly captured by a young man who, when talking about development at a church dinner, asked me out of a thin air, 'Is it even possible to develop from the margin?' I say, 'I do not know'.

Producing Tame Development Subjects and an Urbanized Future

While suspended development provides villagers a reason to become doubtful of the urbanized future, the elites remain hopeful and labour on to ensuring the actualization of such a future. Perhaps the elites simply have too much at stake to quit, as it is often they who have to fund the expensive endeavour of requesting an administrative upgrade (i.e. hiring a feasibility research team, sending a delegation to the national capital for lobbying). They may also have an eye toward strategic leadership positions in a prospective district government or construction projects that come with urbanization. All of these possible motivations are just hypothetical predictions that the elites deny in interviews. However, the purpose of this section is not to find the hidden motivation behind the elites' actions, but to illustrate how development zones instigate a persistent hopefulness among the elites that the urbanized future remains a potentiality.

Hope, Bryant and Knight (2019, 133-134) argue, lies between potentiality and actuality (i.e. when a future becomes materialized). It is 'a way of pressing into the future that attempts to pull certain potentialities into actuality' (134). Here, I find Ringel's (2016, 2018) concept of 'time-tricking' useful to situate such hopefulness in the realm of present action and perception. Despite the future often being thought of as at the limit of human agency, Ringel (2016, 26-29) dares to argue otherwise. He suggests that human beings can put the future in the reach of their agency by tricking the contents of the future. By tricking the future's contents, he refers to the present perceptions and actions that people can adopt in an attempt to change or stabilize the actualization of a future. Hope, then, is an affective force that compels hoping subjects to alter or stabilize the contents of the future by adopting certain perceptions or actions in the present.

Like the villagers, the elites can also feel the faltering of an urbanized future. However, the potential of an urbanized future, already attached to the existence of the development zone, instigates persistent hopefulness among the elites. In an attempt to maintain urbanized Long Nawang as a content of the potential future, the elites use their influential authority to subject the villagers to following a selfhood refashioning project. In so doing, the elites encourage the villagers to exhibit the quality of tame development subject as to ensure that the village remains in good standing with the central state. The state is indeed a rich repertoire of discourses for reimagining 'self or self-other relations' (Jakimow 2015, 124) as the elites rely on their construction of an imaginary central state to determine the kind of values and behaviours the villagers should adopt. I will illustrate this process by attending to two discursive encouragements that the elites circulate among the villagers. First, the elites repeatedly appeal to the villagers to voluntarily give up their access to customary land when necessitated by development. Adopting the position of an imaginary central state, the elites contend that any land compensation scheme would increase the cost of development and would further estrange the state from the village. Second, in response to what the elites deem a threat of destruction to state infrastructure, the elites instil the value of good and law-abiding citizen through finding a legal way to make the decaying infrastructure work.

The discourse of voluntary land dispossession comes mainly from the Grand King of Apo Kayan. As he is also the leader of the Presidium, he has become the main reference of the border development process among the villagers. Holding multiple leadership positions that pertain to Apo Kayan, he often flies from his main residence in Malinau city to Apo Kayan to make public appearances. It is during such visits that he delivers development-related updates and moral discourse that his subordinates often echo when he is not present in the village. I never had the opportunity to witness his public appearance in the village, but I learned from the villagers whom I interviewed that the Grand King circulates the discourse of voluntary land dispossession during such public appearances. In these appearances, the Grand King would assume the point of view of the state and tell villagers that developing a border village like Long Nawang is an expensive endeavour, especially considering that the village is not yet connected to a reliable road network. He would then contend that appeals for land access compensation would make development even more costly. Consequently, he is afraid that such an added cost to development would further estrange the state and eliminate Long Nawang as one of the locations for prioritized border development. Furthermore, he would frame the inability to adopt voluntariness as betraying the collective goal of achieving urbanization of the village.

The responses from below vary between the spectrum of agreement and disagreement. I have not yet seen solidified disagreement on the part of villagers, only reluctant private complaints that I am not supposed to disclose to other villagers or, worse, to the elites. Generally, villagers who disagree lament about potential laborious processes to prepare new plot of land if their existing land is sacrificed for development. Not to mention that a minority of villagers had actually become victims of elite-led land grab in the name of local development. Those making these personal comments contrast with the supporters of the discourse who prefer to creatively rationalize or actively promote the importance of voluntary land dispossession.

I encountered a moment of such creativity in an interview with another villager. In rationalizing the Grand King's discourse, he pointed at an old church in front of his house. Then, he gave me a brief history of what that land could have been had the Kenyah of Long Nawang adopted voluntariness to grant their land for development earlier. In the 1980s, in a rare moment of state's attention, a proposal to build a pioneer flight airport in Long Nawang arrived—it was unclear from the story which branch of the state initiated this project. The land that is now occupied by the church was considered to be the optimal place for this development. However, several families have claimed the land for agricultural activities. These families, he told me, insisted that they did not want to give up their land access if the state would not compensate them. They even came up with the price for each tree that they had planted on the land. Ultimately, their position proved to be costly as the development project was shifted to a neighbouring sub-district centre, Long Ampung. Today, the airport is the largest in the Apo Kayan area, serving more flight routes than the non-asphalted airfield in Long Nawang. He

lamented that if only prior generations had not persisted about receiving compensation, Long Nawang villagers would not need to spend almost an hour to travel to Long Ampung airport before flying to the cities. It is through reflecting on this history of the land across from his house that he becomes compelled to follow the Grand King's appeal on the importance of facilitating development through voluntary dispossession.

While this creative rationalization operates at a personal level, I witnessed a more significant consequence of the Grand King's message at a micro-social level. In summer 2018, I observed a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) held by a team of state-hired consultants. This team worked for the Ministry of Agrarian and Spatial Planning. Consisting of urban/regional planners, architects, and cartographers, its main objective was to develop detailed spatial planning of Long Nawang and two neighbouring villages. They told the villagers that the outcome of their activity would become the central state's main reference for development planning and implementation in the area. In the spirit of participatory development, the team exhibited a draft of its detailed spatial planning map to 30 men who had been selected to represent each of their villages. At first, the team imagined holding a lively FGD. To its surprise, however, during a three-hour FGD, only six people were willing to speak up. They were all local leaders: the sub-district head, the three village heads, and the chiefs of the local police and military offices. These six people did not address the map at all, instead talking about failed infrastructural development in the past, as if not taking the team's cartographic effort seriously.

During the break, I learned that the silence of most participants and the present leaders' reluctance to address the map derived from a shock of cartographic vulgarity. As I was joining ten of the silent participants' smoke-break outside the meeting room, I learned that they see the map, proudly stuck on the wall by the consultant, as having a dangerous social consequence. Appropriating the message from the Grand King, they told me that they were worried that if there were 'irresponsible people' among the participants, strategic development locations would leak to the wider community. As a consequence, many villagers might start staking claim to these strategic lands in the hope of future land compensation from physical development projects. For a context, land access for unclaimed customary land in Long Nawang goes by a first-claimant basis, making such an attempt very possible. The sub-district head dominated the rest of the FGD, and the information I received during the break proved to be on point, as the sub-district head encouraged the consultants to fly to Malinau and collaborate with the Presidium leader.

The second discursive encouragement in the elites' refashioning project is contingent upon what they deem a threat to the state's infrastructure. In Long Nawang, infrastructure is the most salient site of both promise and disappointment. In 2007-2013, infrastructures developed by provincial and district governments initially brought hope for better public services in the village. Nevertheless, most development projects failed to materialize in reliable improvement. This history is well carved in the village's landscape as one can see a telecommunication tower and a variety of power plants that do not translate into full access to

a telecommunication signal or electricity. Responding to such a superfluity of grand structures, villagers often engage with the infrastructure's materiality to express anger and disappointment. The most high-profile case, for instance, was a man who threw rocks at the telecommunication tower's solar panel as he could not make an important call to access medical care in the city.

In the past, destruction of the state's infrastructure would be ignored if the culprit were unidentified. As for an identified culprit, they would be processed with the customary law. The man who threw rocks at the telecommunication tower, for instance, paid a five million rupiah customary fine. However, the elites' have responded differently to the latest threat to infrastructural destruction in Long Nawang. In an attempt to instil the value of good and law-abiding citizen among potential culprits, the elites now resort to the threat of formal law (i.e. imprisonment) while eventually seeking a legal way to make decaying infrastructure work.

This novel attempt revolved around the latest infrastructure built in Long Nawang, the diesel power plant ordered by the Minister of Domestic Affairs in 2015. The power plant was completed in 2016, but it has never translated into full electrification of the village. The diesel power plant cannot electrify the village, because despite its completion the concrete poles and electrical cables crucial to distributing the power to houses have never arrived. In 2017, a group of demoralized villagers started to raise support among their neighbours to engage in a direct-action plan. The group sought to maximize the existing wooden utility poles from a past district-government failed hydropower plant project to distribute electricity generated from the diesel power plant. The group believed that the Kenyah are more than capable of crafting their electrical distribution mechanism to finally light up the area.

<INSERT *Figure 9.2:* On the corner of the non-functioning diesel power plant, the facility's in-situ technician/guard uses one of the transformers to dry his kitchen towels (*Long Nawang, 2018, photo by author).*>

What the group of villagers saw as creative solution for infrastructural decay was a totally different kind of act in eyes of the Kenyah elites. One of them, who permanently inhabits the village and holds an important sub-district level position, saw the plan as potential destruction of state property. Similar to the Grand King, he justified his perspective by assuming the central state's point of view. He told me in an interview that if the central state officials ever found out that its latest infrastructural development product were destructed, they would brand the village as being inhabited by a population who is counter-productive to development. As a consequence, they might cross out Long Nawang from the list of prioritized border development locations.

Unlike in the past, this time the elite decided to pursue the matter further. He engaged with the group and threatened them that if they were to continue their plan, he would speak to the local police chief and ensure that the group would be processed according to the formal law in Malinau. Thus, he hinted that the possible repercussion of the group's plan would be more than the usual customary fine; it would be imprisonment in the city. The threat was effective, as the group shied away from ever putting the plan in place.

Soon after, the elites attempted to institutionalize a new way to maximize decaying infrastructures while at the same time exhibiting good citizenship at the margin. In 2018, after several visits to different state offices, he learned that it would be possible to request for modification of the decaying state infrastructure if he went to the right office. As for the diesel power plant, he eventually managed to attain a permit from the regional office of the State Electricity Enterprise to connect the diesel power plant to limited settlements in Long Nawang and received technical help from it. Although the project succeeded, electrification has still proved to be a tough matter to tackle as limited gas supply continues to be a problem in the village. What matters for the elites, however, is that the power plant could be modified through a state-sanctioned mechanism rather than through unsanctioned direct action. In so doing, the elites also attempt to instil the value of and exhibit the behaviour of law-abiding citizens.

Ultimately, the two discursive encouragements that I have described are tied to the futural aspiration that the development zone, once catalysed and intensified in the village, will bring the urbanized future. As both the proliferation of and the suspension in the development zone were started by the state, the elites believe that the state could also be a deus ex machina bringing development zone back to its supposedly accelerated speed. In spite of not knowing when or if the development zone will arise from suspension, the elites' persistent hopefulness about the urbanized potential orients their attempt to be in good standing with the state by refashioning the villagers into tame development subjects. They believe that such a projection of collective identity is an apt way to press on to the future that the development zone promises, that will be when the village finally become a bustling urbanized border centre.

Conclusion

Development zones are inherently a future-making project because they embody the promise of accelerated development in the locations where they proliferate. In the proliferation, such a promise is able to mould with existing futural aspirations at the local level. As I have shown through this chapter, this moulding can be powerful for some actors. It may be so powerful that even when development zones do not materialize as intended—or in the context of this chapter, are suspended—the futural aspirations that development zones initially intensify remain a compelling affective force that incites potential social transformation. In this chapter, I hope to have provided a hint of such a potential through highlighting the Kenyah elites' attempt to refashion the villagers into adopting a new kind of selfhood. This selfhood, as I have illustrated, is tame and supportive to state development in spite of uncertainty if it will ever continue.

As I write this chapter, the suspension of development continues in Long Nawang. It has now been six years since the central state promised the village better connectivity through the development of border-crossings and border highways. It has been five years since the former Minister of Internal Affairs announced his public support for the village's administrative upgrade. None of these promises have yet materialized, and no one among the Kenyah know when the development will accelerate to bring them to the urbanized future. The hope that the elites put on the development zones, however, seems to persist. In early 2020, I met the sub-district head in Malinau city for an interview. He brought with him a letter for the district government to forward to the central state. Apparently, the letter was the fruit of the Grand King's voluntary dispossession discourse. It was a letter of grant signed by families who own access to some six hectares of land where the Long Nawang border-crossing will be built. If it ever gets built.

Acknowledgements

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10. From Boom to Bust – to Boom Again? Infrastructural Suspension and the Making of a Development Zone at the China-Laos Borderlands

Alessandro Rippa

Abstract: The Boten SEZ, at the China-Laos border, is undergoing major development as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Its story goes back to 2007 when Boten opened as a land concession for a Chinese hotel-casino complex. Yet crime and mismanagement led to its abrupt closure in 2011, when most people left. This chapter is based on research in Boten in 2015-2017, between the zone's first failure and its current booming. After introducing the history of Boten I show how "waiting" for development became an embodied trope for those living in the SEZ throughout this period. Secondly, I engage with the notion of "suspension" as an analytical device to address development zones in the context of China's global ambitions.

> "For five years, this remote town on the China-Laos
> border has lived in the shadow of more prosperous times.
> […] But Boten's luck may be about to turn once again."
> (New York Times, July 6, 2016)

The two tropes of "boom" and "bust" are recurrent in analyses of frontier capitalism across Asia's borderlands. Liminal spaces *par excellence*, borderlands seem to experience periods of frenetic (and often illicit) activities, when people move in, fortunes are made, and promises of further development amplified. Often, however, such "boom" phases are followed by a period of government crackdown, or overall decline due to fluctuations in the market. As the "bust" settles in, formerly (and briefly) prosperous outposts turn, once again, into semi-deserted out-of-the-way places, where stories about the "good old days" are subjects of daily conversations. The social sciences literature on Asian borderlands has, indeed, captured a significant variety of such stories of boom-to-bust (cf. Tsing 2005; Horstmann, Saxer and Rippa 2018). In this chapter I contribute to this body of scholarly research by addressing the case of the Boten Special Economic Zone (SEZ), at the Laos-China border. Boten is currently undergoing major development as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Starting in 2017 China Railway, a state-owned enterprise (SOE), set up offices in Boten to manage the construction of the northern Laos section of the China-Laos high-speed railway project. Since then Boten has doubled its size and now features two large office towers, a railway and a bus station, and a new shopping mall. Yet the story of Boten pre-dates the construction of the China-Laos railway and the BRI. Initially opened in 2007 as a land concession for a Chinese hotel-casino complex, Boten soon became a prime example of Chinese development gone wrong. Crime and mismanagement led to the closure of the last casino in 2011, and most people left the area in the following few years. This chapter is based on several visits to Boten made between 2015 and 2017, that is, between the zone's first failure and its current booming. Moving from interviews with local employees of the company now in charge of Boten's development, as well as with residents and business-owners, this chapter engages, ethnographically, with the trope of *waiting* for development after a boom went busted.

More broadly, this chapter aims to contribute to growing and multi-disciplinary scholarship focusing on infrastructural "suspension" (Gupta 2018). It does so by focusing on the years between 2011-2017 in the Boten SEZ. In this period, following the closure of most gambling halls in 2010-11, Boten was largely abandoned, most people left and most shops closed. Unfinished projects, such as a large hotel complex, were left rotting in the rain and heat of northern Laos. The SEZ was not, however, *completely* abandoned. A Yunnanese company (Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group) took over the management of the area, with the plan of

turning it into a major transportation and trade hub. Such promises materialised in late 2016, when following the beginning of the construction of the China-Laos railway project, Boten was once again sparkling with activities and constructions.

What I am interested in this chapter is this particular time of suspension, between the first bust, and the subsequent (and ongoing) boom. In this phase, a small group of committed individuals remained in and moved to Boten in order to develop a project of trans-national connectivity that was then met with overall scepticism – and of which they had little to show for. Through a few anecdotes, observations, and interviews, I address the persistence of particular infrastructural ambitions, and the active work that went into reversing the boom-to-bust circle in which the SEZ was seemingly trapped. In doing so, I reflect on key notions of "waiting," "suspension" and "patience" as elaborated by social scientists in the context of infrastructure development.

The chapter is structured as follow. First, I engage with the literature on suspension, focusing in particular on how "waiting" has been declined – and defined – in this context. I then introduce the history of Boten, before exploring, ethnographically, the phase between 2011-2017 that I am particularly interested in. Furthermore, in conversation with the broader aim of this volume to provide a better understanding of the "development zone," I show how the promises embedded in the Boten SEZ entangle subjectivities and spaces in particular ways. This, in turn, complicates our understanding of borderlands as spaces of contested sovereignty and nested exceptionalism. Rather, I argue, development zones like Boten should be understood as *nodes*: the by-product of economic development originating somewhere else that nevertheless affects localities and mobile subjects in significant ways. In the conclusion, lastly, I offer a few remarks on how the case of Boten contributes to the aforementioned literature on infrastructural suspension.

The everyday politics of infrastructural suspension

In a recent intervention on social sciences' growing interest in the subject, Timothy Mitchell (2020) noticed that "infrastructure" is usually understood, primarily, in *spatial* terms. Infrastructure is, in other words, said to perform its infrastructure-ness via *connecting* particular nodes and *facilitating* exchanges. As Brian Larkin famously defined it (2013, 329), infrastructure is, first and foremost, noticeable as "matter that enable the movement of other matter." In an attempt to counter and complement this broad understanding of the *what* and *why* of infrastructure, Mitchell stresses the importance of time to infrastructure crucial function in today's society. In particular, Mitchell is interested in infrastructure as a particular financial instrument that is valuable in so far as it *extends* time – of planning, construction, and usage – rather than simply *reducing* the time of travel and exchange. He asks, in particular:

> "But what if large infrastructure projects have another relationship to time? What if they are built not to speed things up, but to introduce a delay? What if the virtue of infrastructure is not the acceleration of time, but the ability to place the future further away?" (Mitchell 2020)

Infrastructure, to put it in different words, is something that is worth waiting for. Not only because of the *promises* of development that it carries (cf. Harvey and Knox 2012; Campbell 2010; Rippa, Murton and Rest 2020), but also because this "waiting" can be in and of itself productive.

Leaving for a moment aside the financial considerations that Mitchell had in mind, this chapter engages with a different kind of temporality: the "suspension" of particular infrastructure projects, and how this suspension is actively engaged with by local actors. Building upon a spate of recent scholarship, this chapter thus contributes to challenging the seemingly linear timeline of infrastructure imaginaries: from planning to construction, to usage (cf. Carse and Kneas 2019; Chettri and Eilenberg 2019). To the contrary, the case of Boten recasts the aspirational qualities of infrastructure by conjuring up an active landscape of "waiting" for development. In this context, what is of particular interest to me is in observing how the state's "anticipatory geographies" (Szadziewski 2020) of prosperity and trans-national connectivity are experienced, mediated, contested and reproduced "on the ground" (Oliveira et al. 2020).

The literature on the "unbuilt" and "unfinished" has clearly shown that processes of waiting are far from passive. Take, for instance, the work of Jamie Cross on the Andhra Pradesh Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) in Southern India (2014, 2015). Tracing the history of the SEZ over a 10-year period, Cross shows how speculative financial calculations alone do not address the different future-oriented practices that are at play in such areas. In this process, SEZs become "deeply affective spaces in which the future is felt, encountered, and inhabited, in which the lived sensation of future prospects can seize bodies, persons, and selves, gripping them with hope and desire, anxiety and fear" (2015, 425). In what he then terms an "economy of anticipation," such future-oriented practices have to constantly engage with the mundane delays, suspensions, and breakdowns of everyday infrastructure politics. These forms of what Carse and Kneas (2019) call "suspended presents" are thus in a constant engagement with compelling imaginaries of development, prosperity, and connectivity. Suspension itself, then, becomes "its own condition of being" (Gupta 2015) – a total social fact defining a multitude of timescapes: presents, pasts and futures (Rest 2019; Gupta 2018; Carse and Kneas 2019).

But how is it to *live* in a state of suspension, then? How does suspension shape the everyday of those whose lives are caught in a project that remains un-built, and that might never see completion? If, as Gisa Weszkalnys put it, to "anticipate is not simply to expect; it is to realize that something is about to happen and, importantly, to act on that premonition" (2014, 212) –

what about circumstances in which something is just as likely to *not* happen? What if the bust is, in the minds of those living around an un-realised project, just as likely as the boom? In order to address such questions, beside anticipation this chapter engages with two additional key elements of practices of "waiting:" *patience* and *boredom*. In so doing, I not only focus on infrastructure itself as a future oriented project – infrastructure is, by definition, meant to endure, and as Mitchell argued an extendable temporality is a key aspect of its profitability. Rather, I am interested in addressing the mundane practices that bring this future into being. In Boten, I show, a combination of anticipation, patience and boredom is what characterised a particular phase of suspension between 2011 and 2017. Subsequently, I interrogate how such attitudes informed a particular anticipatory political economy in the aftermath of a bust, and how this impacted particular subjectivities in Boten and beyond.

Addressing a similar set of questions to those at the centre of this essay, anthropologist Valerie Hänsch (2019) recently put forward an exploration of patience as an attitude towards imposed waiting, in the context of a large-scale infrastructure project in Northern Sudan. In particular, she shows how amongst communities displaced by a dam reservoir, patience represents a commitment both to future (divine) rewards as well as to living within the present situation. This commitment, in turn, offers hope and enables people to persevere and should as such be framed as a political practice – an attitude that *mobilises*, rather than passively subjugates. Patience, in Hänsch's work, is a key analytical lens "for exploring the relationship between the politics of displacement – which inflict the time of infrastructural projects on people – and the temporal ordering among local actors who experience displacement" (81). It represents, in other words, a site of ethnographic encounter between two different temporalities, the infrastructural aspirations of a large-scale project, and the everyday.

As Elizabeth Goodstein famously argued, while boredom might appear to be a perennial part of what it is to be human, it is also connected to ways of experiencing time that are recognizably modern (2005). Bruce O'Neill, in his study of Bucharest's homeless communities, recasts this argument by showing how boredom captures and encompasses particular forms of *exclusions* – in particular for "an urban life that increasingly unfolds through practices of consumption" (2004, 9). In the context of Boten, the inability to consume is not at the centre of the sense of boredom that most of its residents perceived in 2011-2017. To the contrary: consumption – of food and drinks, in particular – was one of the few activities that people constantly engaged with in order to *counter* boredom. However, their experience of boredom was rather tied to another aspect of what O'Neill terms as being "cast aside." That is: "of being downwardly mobile in a neoliberal era of supposed ascent" (2014, 11). In this case, Boten's trajectory, from boom to bust, carried with it the dreams and promises that a new developmental order had projected onto China's peripheries. Yet as Boten "waited" for development, such promises were constantly rekindled.

In this chapter, following a brief introduction to the history of the Boten SEZ as a particular kind of margin, I will show how "waiting" has been declined in this particular context, and

recast into both future- and present-oriented practices. In particular, I will do so through an analysis of the lives of a few employees of Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group – their boredom, patience, and persistent optimism, shed light on how waiting is formative and productive. Patience here, like in Hänsch's analysis, is a useful tool for addressing the particular tension inherent to living-while-waiting – for the development to come, that is.

Boten: A marginal place

It was six in the morning when the relentless sound of firecrackers woke me up. It was Chinese New Year in the small border town of Mohan, and there was no point in trying to sleep any longer. The firecrackers would have not stopped anytime soon. Furthermore, the sky was clear and the temperature ideal for a short walk before the border would open, at 8 am. I put on the same pair of trousers I wore the day before, a white t-shirt, and I headed down for breakfast. After several days of rice noodles, I decided to opt for a small *dongbei* restaurant offering boiled dumplings. Beside me, two truck drivers from Hebei were smoking and idly lighting up firecrackers that they threw on the empty sidewalk beside the small eatery. "Are you not going home for *chunjie*," I asked. The shook their heads. One cheerfully replied: "here, home – it's all the same. We have to make money, that's what matters." They were heading for Chinese-owned plantations in Laos later that week, perhaps even the day after – they were not sure what their boss had planned for them. They did not seem to care too much.

Shortly before 9am I arrived at the border gate, carrying my small luggage, eager to walk into Laos. Like me, groups of Chinese tourists were snapping pictures of the border gate. Many were only there to see the border gate and would soon return to Jinghong or visit other parts of Xishuangbanna, while others were waiting to cross into Laos with their private vehicle. A few organised tours were also around, and the scene was quite lively. A few women sitting on the stairs leading to the immigration office were offering money exchange services, while also trying to sell collections of Lao banknotes to tourists. Once inside the Chinese immigration facility, operations went fairly smoothly. I filled up and signed an exit form, and after a short cue and brief conversation with a border official ("when did you enter China?", "purpose of your visit?", "where did you learn Chinese?") I walked out of the building on the opposite side, in the no-man-land before the Laos border – a few hundred metres down the road. Here, beside a border marker and a line of trucks waiting to clear customs to enter China, there was nothing particularly remarkable. I made my way to the Laos immigration office – a cramped building beside a golden, pagoda-like gate – walking beside a large poster welcoming visitors to the "Laos Boten SEZ". Once inside I paid for my visa, and in less than half hour I exited from the opposite side, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. It was 11am and Boten, at less than a km distance, was just another short walk away.

Unlike the Chinese side, however, here there were no tourists, but only a few trucks lining up to exit the country. As I made my way into the small cluster of tall buildings that is Boten, what struck me was how empty and quiet it was. The large roads and seemingly empty

buildings projected a sense of abandonment and hopelessness. On my way to the only open hotel in town I saw few signs of activity: a handful of restaurants and karaoke bars, a convenience store. All, however, were shut – they would open only in the afternoon, catering to the few workers based in Boten and the Lao border officials. Upon reaching the hotel I found myself waiting in the large lobby. Nobody was behind the check-in counter, and I took a sit on a large leather sofa. The place seemed empty. Finally, a young clerk arrived, seemingly surprised to see a guest. She asked me if I was sure I wanted to spend the night. When I said that I intend to stay for at least two nights, she could hardly hide her disbelief. I asked if there was any other guest. "A few," she replied, unconvincingly.

"Borders," as Anna Tsing once put it, "are a particular kind of margin; they have an imagined other side" (1993, 21). Boten, as a place largely defined by its proximity to a national border, inhabits its marginality through its closeness to – yet difference from – the border's *two* sides. Being largely the product of Chinese investments, Boten appears to its Lao residents as strikingly "Chinese" – a hallmark of modernity in these parts. For Chinese workers and travellers, however, Boten's lack of development and poor management marked its difference from nearby Yunnan, and signifies Laos's "backwardness (*luohou*)".

The history of the SEZ, to be sure, *is* a story of transnational connections – financial, managerial, even cultural – and rather typical frontier politics. The logics of boom and bust, in particular, have defined Boten for the past fifteen years – turning both its marginality and closeness to national borders into key assets for various forms of aspirational connectivity. For the Boten SEZ, then, to be a "porous enclave" (Harms 2015) is not just self-evident: it is its very reason to exist.

The Golden Boten City Special Economic Zone was first opened in 2007, as the area was leased for 30 years by a Hong Kong registered company to develop a hotel-casino complex. As Nyiri (2012; 2016) describes in details, within three years of activity the SEZ was home to some 4,800 people, mostly Chinese, three large hotels, a nightclub and several gambling halls attracting a constant stream of costumers from Yunnan, Laos and Thailand. In all this, not unlike other special areas (*tequ*) in Laos and nearby Myanmar (Rippa 2019a; Rippa and Saxer 2016; Nyiri 2012), Boten run on Beijing time, and fully adopted not only the currency and phone network of nearby China, but also reproduced the "regalia" of Chinese state power: from security guard uniforms to red banners and street signs.

Few of the people who moved to Boten during those early years could still be found in the border town when I visited it between 2015 and 2017. One of them was Wang Shengkun[49], who moved to Boten in 2007 to open a small store in which he sold a little bit of everything, from toothbrushes and rice, to condoms and tiger bones (which he insisted were not fake). Like others who have lived in Boten through its early, successful years, he had very fond memories of this time. "There were always many people, it was very lively (*renao*)" – he told me once.

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[49] To protect the safety of informants, all names have been altered in this chapter.

Most of it, he admitted, revolved around gambling – but there was also a remarkable trade in wildlife going on, now largely absent. "You could find everything here back then, people would come from all over China to Boten."

The success of the Golden Boten City was, however, not destined to last. In early 2010 reports that gamblers had been kidnapped in Boten emerged in the Chinese news, and a statement was issued by the Foreign Ministry advising people against travelling to Laos to gamble. Eventually, the number of costumers dwindled to the extent that gambling halls closed down, and the company running the area was dismissed in 2011. Due to its ultimate reliance on Chinese costumers, Boten turned from being a lively gambling hub to a ghost town in a matter of months[50].

That Boten was abruptly abandoned is something reflected in its un-finished infrastructural landscape. To a large extend, this landscape did not change between the time of closure, in 2011, and 2015 – and not much happened even after, until mid-2016 and early 2017 when the construction boom that is currently enveloping the area began. During my stays in Boten, for instance, I was often one of only a handful of guests in the large, and largely empty, hotel complex that I mentioned earlier. The building that used to house the largest gambling hall remained closed during this period, until it was reconverted into a venue for selling gemstones to tourists in 2017. What was formerly a small entertaining district, with bars and KTVs, remained also largely shut. Only a handful of small karaoke bars, featuring Lao, Vietnamese and Thai hostesses, were opened – but costumers were few and irregular. Ruins abounded. In proximity to two apartment buildings, which hosted some of the employees of Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group, a large swimming pool laid in disrepair. A games room for kids suffered the same faith. The construction of a large hotel complex was also suspended, and walking through its unfinished large halls reinforced a striking sense of abandonment. The past, and the future, seemed for a moment suspended. It seemed impossible to predict what was to come for Boten.

<INSERT *Figure 10.1: Abandoned swimming pool near an apartment complex in Boten (photo by the author, 2016).*>

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[50] Verena La Mela, an anthropologist who at the time was conducting research for her MA thesis, visited Boten in October 2011. Her fieldnotes, pictures, and memories, which she generously shared with me, describe the aftermath of a bust. Boten was, in her words, a "ghost town" – in which, for instance, she ended up being the only guest in a 200-bedroom hotel. The few people still around, a shop owner, a cook, an employee of the SEZ, spoke to her of the previous years when Boten was "full of people and casinos." One, in particular, proudly described how the Chinese developed this part of Laos: when once there were only mountains and grass, now is a city. At the time, however, most were considering to leave – some after the end of their contracts, some after waiting a few more months to see if things were to turn around again.

Ruins, in Boten, were also mirrors of particular ambitions that might, one day, be rekindled. The closure of the company in 2011 shortly followed, somewhat ironically, the formalization of the rights of special zone for Boten, which the Laos government granted in October 2010. In the plans of some investors, Boten's state of suspension was not supposed to last. As Pal Nyiri noted in 2012:

> "Despite the demise of the company, the special zone lives on, and a company based in Yunnan Province acquired GBC from its original owners. Golden Boten, deserted though it is, remains a monument to the Chinese version of urban modernity matched by no other place in Laos" (539).

As I have argued elsewhere (Rippa 2019b), ruins are not pure negativity. To the contrary, they can be understood as an "immanent site of desire" – a pre-condition for new infrastructure, a constellation of future development. In this sense, the ruins of un-finished buildings in Boten can be understood as part of what Szadziewski (2020) calls anticipatory geographies: "state-driven initiatives promoting economic hope through the language of rejuvenation, prosperity and connectivity." In Boten, the formalisation of the SEZ in 2010, China's ongoing commitment to agricultural investments in Laos, and the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013, all contributed to the unleashing of such anticipatory geographies despite the fresh memories – and material aftermath – of a bust.

Waiting for development

In early 2016, at the time of my arrival in Boten described above, the forces unfolded by such anticipatory geographies were certainly at play. While the hotel, former gambling halls, and entertainment district, remained predominantly abandoned, construction had recently begun on a new complex that was supposed to host offices as well as Boten's new bus station. Beside it, a "tax free" shopping mall represented the only significant activity that Boten had to offer – and a mandatory stop for Chinese tourist groups travelling to and from Laos. The construction site was, at the time, surrounded by a fence made of light blue tin panels – covered in posters showing Xi Jinping and Choummaly Sayasone, President of Laos between 2006-2016, shaking hands; as well as slogans about the prosperity that the Laos SEZ will bring to the area.

Nearby, a "Marketing Center" displayed several renderings of what the future of Boten would look like, alongside a plastic model of the SEZ. A brochure I was given described, in some details, how the SEZ will include a logistics and processing industrial park, a leisure district with a lake and nature park, as well as an "old town" to showcase local culture. Promises of development and connectivity, however, were at odds with the quietness of the surroundings – something I would become accustomed to over the following months. While construction was ongoing, Boten was for the most part deserted – with only the occasional car or truck stopping for a meal, or a chat, in one of the few restaurants and shops that remained opened.

After spending some time at the construction site and the Marketing Center, I headed for the building hosting the "Service Center (*fuwu zhongxin*)" of the Boten SEZ, managed by Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group. The office was located in a large, but mostly empty, building on the main road towards the border gate, beside a "tax free" shopping centre that was seldom open. Upon entering the building I met two men that I had seen at the border gate earlier that morning, at the time waiting to shuttle some company guests crossing from China. I asked if I could talk with someone about the development plans for the SEZ, and they told me to wait. Some ten minutes later I was chatting with Hu Chunlan, a young woman from Jinghong working for the company's marketing department. She told me that she would gladly answer all my questions, and even take me on a small tour of Boten. "Not that there is much to see" – she promptly added – "it's very small."

As we walked through the few, empty, and large streets of Boten, Hu Chunlan told me that the duty-free building opened only a year before, shortly before *chunjie*. This was the first investment that her company – Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group – made in Boten, but plans were much more ambitious particularly as Boten was by then officially enlisted as a major node along one of the BRI's main corridors (see also Murton, this volume). Boten, conveniently located at China's only national-level border crossing with Laos, in the larger scheme of its most ambitious initiative was set to develop into one of Yunnan's main gateways to Southeast Asia. Once the railway to Vientiane would be completed Boten was expected to take up its role as a major logistics and tourism centre, catering to Chinese investors in northern Laos and to the increasingly numerous Chinese visitors to Southeast Asia. Promised investments, as I repeatedly heard in Boten, ranged in the upwards of 10 billion US$.

As we walked in front of it, Hu Chunlan pointed towards the building under construction, surrounded by pictures of Xi Jinping. "For now construction has started on two buildings, but there will be a third one as well. There will be banks, stores, office spaces, and apartments." Another thing was clear for Hu Chunlan: in the new Boten there will be no room for gambling. "The [Chinese] government will not allow it anymore," she pointed out. Xi Jinping, smiling at us from the weathered down posters, seemed to embody promises of both development and stricter disciplinary measures. Hu Chunlan then went on to tell me that her company currently employed around 150 people, most of whom were originally from Jinghong. They were all living in a large dormitory, beside the empty swimming pool I had seen that very morning. Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group, she told me, was actively trying to encourage entrepreneurs from Laos to open shops and businesses here. Some had come over the previous year, since the duty-free building was opened – setting up small food stalls and retail shops. Some had already left, but other were still around – rents, she explained, were still cheap, and here at least they could count of some Chinese tourists stopping by.

Tourism, she explained, was in fact a major part of the company's vision for the development of the area. She cited a slogan that I would afterward see on several brochures and posters around town: "*Laowo Moding jingji tequ, dongnanya lvyou di yi zhan* (Laos Boten

SEZ, the first stop for travels to Southeast Asia).” The plan, she told me, was to build a natural park where tourists could ride elephants, and an “old town” with "traditional Lao architecture" where they could buy souvenirs and stay in “traditional” hotels.

We decided to meet again in the evening, for dinner, with a few of her colleagues. "There is not much to do here, apart from drinking and playing mah-jong – but my colleagues are fun." With these words, we parted ways. While she walked back to her office, I went on snapping some pictures of Boten.

Over the next two years I made frequent, if brief, visits to Boten. In the course of these visits I spent most of my time with Hu Chunlan and her colleagues, a couple of whom I became particularly close with. I met with them not only in Boten, but also in Jinhong and in Luang Prabang – where they used to travel regularly. In the course of those conversations, while talking about Boten, what emerged were three key aspects defining their current lives: boredom, patience, and ambitions.

Take, for instance, the case of Li Xi. Originally from Kunming, Li Xi graduated from one of Yunnan’s best universities majoring in English and Thai. After graduation, he was looking for opportunities to work in Southeast Asia, and came across a job ad on Zhaopin – China’s largest online recruitment platform. The ad promised excellent working conditions and a chance to work in Thailand – nowhere in it, he told me, it was said that he would be expected to live in Laos. Things, however, turned out differently, and upon accepting the job he was relocated to Boten – a place he described as “empty of people,” “boring,” and “difficult to live in.” His job was mostly related to the duty-free shop, as he was in charge of coordinating imports with the company’s Thai partners. Fortunately, he told me several times, as part of the job he was able to travel to Thailand, as well as to Jinghong, quite regularly – and he was thus not bound to spend all of his time in Boten. On numerous occasions I had the impression that Li Xi felt trapped in Boten: unhappy but somewhat unable to leave. Other times, he stuck me as fairly content with his position: he was saving some money and, betting on the success of the SEZ, had a chance at making a decent career within an expanding company.

Another example is Zhao Kun. Hailing from Jinghong, Zhao Kun was fluent in Lao and worked as an interpreter and key mediator between Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group, its Lao partners, and local officials. Like Li Xi, he was often on the move: travelling between Boten, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Jinghong on a regular basis. Alas, he was also often remarking how these trips made his job worth it – he resented Boten as a boring and provincial place, with “nothing to do.” Zhao Kun was also in charge of negotiating the opening of a new SEZ in Laos, in which his company would play a major role. While at the time of my fieldwork it was still unclear whether the negotiations would be successful, he once jokingly told me the following: “maybe I’ll leave Boten only to go to this other place, which will be even worse!”

Both Zhao Kun and Li Xi, as well as Hu Chunlan and several of their colleagues, were trying to make the best out of their time in Boten. They frequently went out, in the evening – eating at a small BBQ place they liked and playing drinking games among themselves.

Commensality, according to my experience in Boten, played a key role in overcoming a permanent sense of boredom, and generated strong companionship between colleagues. Similarly to narratives of "eating bitterness" (*chi ku*) analysed by Lee (2017) and Driessen (2019) in the case of Chinese workers in Zambia and Ethiopia, the perceived marginality of Boten generated a sense of sacrifice, particularly as working in Boten required separation from families, friends, and places of enjoyment. It also engendered a strong feeling of comradeship, expressed by frequent attempts at helping each other out and supporting one another. This often occurred by treating someone to dinner when going through a difficult period at work, or in their private life. Colleagues like Zhao Kun, Li Xi, and Hu Chunlan thus became very close friends. Yet unlike the cases analysed by Lee (2017) and Driessen (2019), what was largely missing in Boten was a sense of "collective asceticism" as well as any nationalistic undertone. Rather, similarly to the two truck drivers I talked to in Mohan over breakfast, workers in Boten unequivocally stressed their own economic interests as the only reason to be there.

Furthermore, the focus on consumption marks a significant difference from the case of Bucharest's homeless population analysed by O'Neill that I discussed earlier. Both Li Xi and Zhao Kun, as well as Hu Chunlan and most of their colleagues, were ambitious, well-educated professionals looking for career opportunities. Yet similarly to O'Neill's case, they were also "cast aside" by a particular kind of globalist promise embedded into China's growth. While none of the young men and women working for Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group had wealthy families to support them, they all moved to Laos following particular ambitions: to kick-start a successful career, save money, and play a role in their country's development. Once in Boten, however, they found themselves trapped in an unshakable sense of boredom. While I do not intend to downplay the crucial differences with Bucharest's homeless population analysed by O'Neill, Boten aspiring middle-class resident were experiencing another facet of how he conceptualised boredom: as an enduring effect of globalisation.

To be sure, both Li Xi and Zhao Kun were waiting for something to happen. For Boten to turn into what it was promised to them. Or to, perhaps, find a job elsewhere and finally move out of there. This particular interplay of everyday boredom and careerist aspirations resonates with another notion introduced earlier: Valerie Hänsch's conceptualisation of "patience." As in her case, the likes of Li Xi, Zhao Kun and Hu Chunlan seemed trapped between two distinct temporalities. If the present manifested the failure of the promises of globalised development, the imagined future reinforced those very promises against all the odds. In this sense, Boten's suspension had encroached on their very lives: transforming them into particular "suspended" subjects – as I will elaborate upon in the next section after examining some of the most recent developments that have once again changed the face of Boten.

After Suspension: The Making of a Development Zone

Between 2016 and 2017 much changed in Boten. Power China (Zhongguo Dianjian), a large state-owned enterprise and the owner of the better-known Sinohydro, entered in collaboration with Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group in April 2016, *de facto* taking over most of the construction. Shortly after that, China Railway set up office in Boten, in conjunction with the ramping up of the construction of the Boten-Vientiane section of the China-Laos railway project.

The developments brought by such "official" investments soon became difficult to miss. The building that used to host the main casino was turned, around July 2016, in the "Laos Boten duty-free Jewellery Trading Center." It consisted of a large room with several counters selling jade (for the most part), amber, and other gemstones from Southeast Asia. About 40 women worked behind the counters, and the Center opened twice a day, for a few hours in the morning and evenings, in combination with the planned visits of tour operations carrying busloads of Chinese tourists.

In mid-2016 a Thai entrepreneur opened a small restaurant in front of the dance theatre, which he managed together with Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group. The entrepreneur, together with his son, was also responsible for the imports of most Thai goods to the tax-free centres, and by late-2016 used to spend half of his time in Laos. By then a show featuring a dozen cross-dressing dancers from Thailand on 4-month contracts was playing every evening at the dance theatre. As the father once put it to me while having dinner at his restaurant, he was confident that the new Boten would succeed: "in the future this place will develop very well, you'll see".

By early 2017, to be sure, bulldozers were working 24/7 on a number of projects in town: the three main towers, a horse race field, and a new apartment complex near the dance theatre were all moving on at full speed. On the side, a few new small businesses had also opened: two hair salons, an internet cafè, a number of restaurants and a couple of small supermarkets. While still not at the level of 2007-2010, people were back on the streets of Boten, which looked as lively as it had not been in a long time.

What does this recent turn of events, spinning once again around the boom-to-bust circle, add to our understanding of "development zones" as conceptualised in this volume? What do the different stages through which Boten went in a relatively short period of time tell us about development across Asian borderlands? And how do such changes affect places and subjectivities?

<INSERT *Figure 10.2: Bulldozers working 24/7 to clear ground for a new housing project in the Boten SEZ (2017, photo by author).*>

Early Boten, as inaugurated in 2007, seemed akin to a zone of exception in which a largely un-regulated economy centred around gambling and illicit trades was attractive for (Chinese) capital and individuals. It was also, as Nyiri (2012) argued, a zone of "improvement" –

replicating the paraphernalia of the Chinese state as well as its infrastructural grandeur in a seemingly rural, marginal, and "backward" place. The Boten that is currently emerging from the ruins of the early casino-centred project maintains elements of both, yet "exception" and "improvement" are re-cast in significantly different ways. In particular, borrowing heavily from Belt and Road lingo, the new Boten is branded as a key transit point along a major land corridor which will speed up connections between China and Southeast Asia. Its exceptionality, then, lies in its unique position: at the border between China and Laos, and on one of the main envisioned BRI routes. It also results from favourable tax policies, as well as the generous investments brought by Chinese SOEs. Improvement, in this sense, is deployed by heavy investment in infrastructure such as railways, logistics centre, and leisure parks.

Even more than "exception" and "improvement," then, the "development zone" heuristic conceptualised in this volume seems apt to capture some of the characteristics at the core of today's Boten. What is particularly interesting in this case is that the (seemingly successful) *making* of a development zone in Boten is tightly connected to previous ruination and abandonment. Ruins, in Boten, were central to drawing ambitious investors, as well as to driving broader aspirations rooted in China's growing role and influence across the region. The years of "suspension" that I have analysed in this chapter, then, rather than representing a mere failure, contributed to re-casting particular promises. What emerged from it, is a radically different combination of actors and activities: from casinos and private entrepreneurs, to connectivity infrastructure and state players. With Boten's incorporation into the BRI, ultimately, Boten has been "disciplined": from an unruly periphery to a central engine of trans-national development.

One of the key themes emerging from this analysis is the extent to which "porosity" (Harms 2015) is central to Boten's current development. In fact, it might even be characterised as its defining condition. Similarly, to the case of import-export dry ports at the Nepal-China borderlands analysed by Murton in this volume, Boten is envisioned as a site of "mobility" (see also Murton 2016). A transit point; a key node within a much broader aspirational geography of connectivity. As such, this particular development zone relies on enclosure, only is so far as it encourages connections. Without such connections, Boten would have no reason to exist – let alone prosper.

Infrastructural suspension was then *mobilising* (Hänsch 2019) in at least two particular ways. From a material perspective, suspension re-assembled capital and actors to re-kindle particular aspirational geographies, leading to today's SEZ. On the other hand, it produced new kind of subjectivities. Li Xi, Zhao Kun, and Hu Chunlan developed, among themselves and their colleagues, a deep sense of affinity and belonging, rooted in the "difficult" situation they found themselves living in. At the same time, the years of suspension in Boten reinforced their sense of precarity. None of them saw themselves living in the new SEZ for much longer. A year, maybe two. As of 2019, while Boten continues to grow at a stunning pace, only Zhao Kun is still involved with Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group. Li Xi moved back to Kunming,

where he teaches English. Hu Chunlan married a former colleague and moved together with him to Jinghong, where she works for a real estate company. Hence Boten, for them, was a passage in yet a different sense. Not only a node of connectivity along China's Belt and Road Initiative, but a moment of transit in their very lives. Something immanently transient.

Conclusion

In newspaper articles and reports Boten is still frequently referred to as "infamous", due to its past reputation as a gambling and smuggling hub. To be sure, a fair amount of illicit activity still takes place Boten, but it has become only a minor part of the economy of the area. For instance, in a small shack in the jungle, only a short walk from the dance theatre, a dozen black bears were kept in agonising conditions. Side trade in animal parts used in Traditional Chinese Medicine was still occurring at the time of my fieldwork, though it was difficult to gauge its content and size. Traders, in Boten, kept telling me that Laos border guards were easy to pay off, and that there were too many trails (*xiao lu*) in the jungle for Chinese border patrol to cover. All kinds of things still went through Boten – yet none of these activities defined what Boten had, in the meantime, become.

The years of suspension that I have addressed in this chapter served, rather, for state capital to come in. Large SOEs partnered up with Yunnan Hai Cheng Industrial Group, until then largely in charge of Boten's development, and took the lead on several projects. During my last visit, in 2017, I was told that because of Power China and China Railway moving it, rents went up very quickly. This, it turned out, led to a situation in which without connections, it had become difficult to set up business in Boten. Small- and mid-size companies, I was told, preferred to stay in Mohan. Furthermore, the presence of large SOEs all but ensured that openly illicit activities could not continue to exist. As Hu Chunlan told me, gambling too was a thing of the past.

The case of Boten, then, seems to exist at the nexus of two particular heuristic for understanding unfinished infrastructure that Carse and Kneas (2019) identify: *present absences* and *suspended presents*. As they argue, "the present absences heuristic draws attention to what unbuilt and unfinished projects leave behind, including: institutional forms, knowledges, altered landscapes, social movements, and new subjectivities" (17). There is no doubt that in Boten, the original, and unfinished, plan to build the Golden Boten City reshaped both social life and the landscape in a radical fashion. In doing so, it also created the condition of possibility for particular "aspirational geographies" to take hold, and for the current, largely state-led development of Boten.

The suspended presents heuristic, on the other hand, "is concerned with the varied social experiences and affective states associated with infrastructural delay, from hope to anxiety to waiting and disillusionment" (Carse and Kneas 2019: 19). In Boten, the lives of Chinese workers that I briefly outlined above, point to how infrastructural suspension became an

integral part of their daily lives. Not only through the trope of boredom and a dose of healthy disillusionment about future developments of the area, but also in the ways they perceived their own careers, and personal and professional futures. When taken together, then, these two heuristic shed lights on how abandonment and material ruination, paired with state-led visions of development and individual ambitions, conjure up a world in which suspension becomes a feature of the human condition – one that is inextricably linked to processes of development and neoliberalisation at the margins.

During my last visit to Boten, as construction workers were putting the finishing touches on two large towers in front of his shop, and the railway was well under construction, I once again talked with Wang Shengkun about the early days of Boten. Unlike most people, he never left – "I have nowhere to go," he told me once. While chatting outside of his shop, eating a bowl of rice noodles, he told me that, for him, the good days were gone and that they would not come back. "It won't work (*bu hui*)" – he said. "Not in this place, it won't work in this place (*zhege difang bu hui*)".

As in the case of prospective mining analysed by David Kneas (2018), in which Ecuadorians were caught between the departure of one mining company and the arrival of another, for Wang Shengkun it seems that, despite recent developments, the most salient temporal orientation was not *anticipation* – but *aftermath*. Suspension, in his words, lingered on.

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11. Genealogies of Extraction: De Facto Development Zones in the Indonesian Borderlands

Thomas Mikkelsen and Michael Eilenberg

Abstract: Taking departure from the failure of a planned but never realised special economic zone (SEZ) in the Indonesian borderland city of Tarakan, we argue that this planned SEZ would paradoxically not have been the island of sovereign exception often associated with SEZs, but rather a zone where central government would have had comparably more control than they have in the surrounding borderlands. This leads us to argue that the entire borderland surrounding Tarakan can be considered a de facto development zone in itself. Additionally, the de facto development zone is multi-generational, having been through a number of booms and busts, triggering both migrations and environmental ruination, while central state authority and interest have waxed and waned accordingly.

Introduction

In late 2015, the task force that for the past eight years had been working in the regional development office towards establishing a special economic zone (SEZ, or KEK[51] in Indonesian) in Tarakan, a borderland city in Indonesia, closed down. It was a rather unremarkable event, not even reported by the local newspapers. The hope had been to develop KEK Tarakan as part of a national government programme to establish centres of economic growth in less developed parts of Indonesia, such as the borderlands on the island of Borneo. The initially ambitious project stranded on disagreements between national and regional governments as well as a lack of serious interest from the industries it was supposed to support.[52]

Why did this particular development zone never materialise at a time when SEZs are proliferating across Indonesia as well as in borderlands around Southeast Asia? Our argument in this chapter is twofold. We argue that the borderland surrounding Tarakan can be analysed as a *de facto* development zone. It turned out that there simply was no widespread local need for a SEZ to be established, because most of the formal benefits of such a zone were already there in practice. On the contrary, the local government and businesses were wary of the increased scrutiny and control from the national government in Jakarta that a formal SEZ might bring. The second part of our argument is that this de facto development zone is multi-generational and has been undergoing a continual process of reconstruction and deconstruction for a long time. The borderlands surrounding Tarakan have been experiencing a genealogy of developments going through a cycle of booms and busts, which have been related and enabled by each other.

In this chapter, we will first summarise the history of development zones in Indonesia as well as introduce the academic debates according to which we will subsequently analyse the genealogy of developments in the second part of this chapter.

Development Zones in Indonesia

Indonesia has pursued a strategy of constructing development zones in various forms since the late 1980s, when the SIJORI[53] Growth Triangle was established as a cooperation between Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. It later became the Batam Free Trade Zone (Batam FTZ),

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[51] The Indonesian name for a special economic zone is *kawasan ekonomi khusus*, abbreviated as KEK. It is also the name of the current Indonesian programme for establishing SEZs (see https://kek.go.id/).

[52] Data for this study were collected by Thomas Mikkelsen during two fieldwork periods between late 2016 and early 2018, totalling eleven months. The work was done under the auspices of the RISEZAsia project (https://projects.au.dk/risezasia/) with funding from the Aarhus University Research Foundation (AUFF).

[53] SIJORI is an acronym for Singapore, Johor, Republik Indonesia. Johor is the southernmost of the Peninsular Malaysia states.

catering especially for the low-skill and labour-intensive garment and electronics assembly industries (Wulandari 2012, 18). Then, in the late 1990s, some forty new integrated economic development zones54 (KAPET) were established across eastern Indonesia. These zones were intended to be 'growth centres' for the regions in which they were placed, by offering an array of tax incentives to any foreign companies establishing production in them (World Bank 2019a, 20). It was a centrally managed project, with little involvement of the affected districts (Temenggung 2013). The project was continued through and after the fall of President Suharto's New Order regime in 1998 and the subsequent process of administrative decentralisation in Indonesia.

One study (Rothenberg et al. 2017) has found that although the programme reduced tax burdens on firms in the KAPET districts, there were few or no spillover effects when compared with non-KAPET districts. There was no added economic growth; only negligible in-migration and no substantial changes in economic activity across sectors in the KAPET districts. While the programme was beset by both the Asian financial crisis and the wave of decentralisation following the end of the New Order regime, Rothenberg et al. deem it probable that firms taking advantage of the KAPET programme in marginal areas would have or were already settled there anyway, as insufficient market access and infrastructure prohibited new companies from taking advantage of the possibilities offered by KAPET, despite the tax incentives available (Rothenberg et al. 2017, 3).

In the mid-2000s, the national government worked on formulating a new initiative in order to rejuvenate the development of SEZs across the country. The idea that development zones would lead to increased prosperity in the outer regions in particular was still prominent in government discourse and local imaginaries of new beginnings, despite the poor results of earlier programmes. In 2009 a programme called KEK was launched. Contrary to the ill-fated KAPET, the KEK programme required regional governments themselves to submit proposals to establish KEKs, in order to 'avoid lack of ownership […] on the part of regional governments' (World Bank 2019a, 23). The zones were to be jointly managed by the regions and the newly formed National SEZ Council,55 although the national council would still have the final say in disputes in the organisational structure of SEZ management (KEK 2020).

Broadly speaking, the Indonesian KEK programme is in most ways straight out of the SEZ playbook. The most important benefits for foreign companies establishing production and investing in a KEK are: 1) corporate income tax reductions of up to one hundred percent for up to twenty-five years depending on the size of the investment; 2) value-added tax exemptions on luxury goods imported and exported to and from other KEKs; 3) custom exceptions on most goods entering the KEK and leaving it to other countries; 4) exemption from excise duties and

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54 In Indonesian, *Kawasan Pengembangan Ekonomi Terpadu* or KAPET.
55 *Dewan Nasional Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus.*

import duties on goods imported into the SEZ; and 5) streamlined visa requirements for foreign workers (KEK, 2020).

The KEK programme was incorporated into the long-term development plan of the Yudhoyono administration in 2011 and has been continued by the current Jokowi administration (2014–present).

<INSERT *Figure 11.1: Locations of proposed KEKs I and II (Map by the Thomas Mikkelsen).*>

The Zone that Never was

The preparation for establishing KEK Tarakan began as early as 2007, two years before the programme officially launched. At that time, the local economy was buoyant due to a local boom in farmed shrimp and Tarakan was still part of the province of East Kalimantan, at the time one of the richest provinces in Indonesia due to its immense reservoir of natural resources, including oil, coal, timber and palm oil. KEK Tarakan was planned alongside another KEK in East Kutai, under one application.[56] The mayor of Tarakan at the time, Jusuf Kerang Asim, had branded Tarakan as 'Little Singapore' and sought to emulate the development that Singapore had gone through 'from village to city […] using our strategic geography, strong economy […] and deep sea port'.[57] After a visit from then president of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the city changed its motto to 'New Singapore'. The lure of the 'Zone', argues Jonathan Bach (2011), 'draws from its discursive power as a modernist fantasy of rationality and new beginnings' (Back 2011, 99). Indeed, a KEK fitted very well into the 'New Singapore' policy of the Tarakan administration and not least the visons of modernity imagined by the central government.

Then in 2012, the city of Tarakan together with the four northernmost provinces of East Kalimantan split and formed North Kalimantan, the newest province in Indonesia (Hill 2014, 3). The work towards KEK Tarakan continued under the next mayor Udin Hianggio, with numerous studies and proposals being made. Although studies prepared by the Tarakan KEK task force showed promises of great economic possibilities in the zone, the team did not manage to attract any outside investments. Even though KEK Tarakan was planned to cater to the main industry of Tarakan, shrimp aquaculture, the industry was not interested in sponsoring such a grand development project at this early stage.[58]

There were several disagreements between the Tarakan KEK task force and the KEK board in Jakarta, officially on the size and placement of the zone in Tarakan, but at least as

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[56] Personal communication December 22, 2016 (former KEK task force).
[57] Personal communication March 3, 2017 (Jusuf SK, former mayor).
[58] Personal communication December 22, 2016 (former KEK task force).

important on who would be in charge of managing the income from the zone once it was established. As we discuss below, past resource extraction regimes under the firm control of the central government in Jakarta reminded the local government in Tarakan of the importance of upholding firm regional autonomy in matters of resource extraction and the associated flow of revenue.

The local government wanted to use two smaller (295 ha in total) areas for the KEK, both the sites of older developments in this borderland: one to the north of the city, located in an area of abandoned shrimp ponds (KEK I), the other south of the city, taking advantage of an abandoned cold storage facility (KEK II); see map of proposed KEKs. This option was much less expensive for the city and the plan was to increase the size of the two zones if necessary in the future. The national KEK board advised strongly against splitting a KEK in two, and were also critical of the small size of the initial proposed zones, preferring an initial size of at least 500 ha. This however, were deemed too expensive and dismissed by the Tarakan KEK-task force.[59]

The rents to be collected from the companies that would eventually be established in the KEK were also a point of contention. The national KEK board insisted that income from any KEK should be managed by them in Jakarta and then redistributed back to the region or city in question, a very similar arrangement to past resource extraction regimes under President Suharto. The KEK task force in Tarakan were very suspicious of this, as they suspected that Jakarta would withhold income or only transfer it back partially.[60] These issues were never solved and were brought up again and again over the course of the preparation process. Local government wanted full control over the zone if they were to buy and develop the amount of land required, something that the national KEK board would not accept.[61] Internally in the local administration, disagreements increased over time and a group calling for the idea of KEK Tarakan to be abandoned grew in size. Indeed, they argued that the city government should support local businesses instead of large foreign ones.[62]

During the campaign for mayor of Tarakan in 2015, the two factions for and against the KEK supported different candidates. Once the votes had been counted, it was clear that the group in favour of KEK Tarakan had lost their benefactor. Funding was quickly cut and after a few months the project was shelved and the leading members of KEK Tarakan were 'promoted' to other less prestigious offices, or left the local administration completely.[63] Instead, work started on applying for a 'center for small and medium-sized enterprises'

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[59] Personal communication December 27, 2016, A (BAPPEDA)
[60] Personal communication December 22, 2016 (former KEK task force)
[61] Personal communication December 27, 2016, A (BAPPEDA)
[62] Personal communication December 27, 2016, B (DIPERINDAKOP)
[63] personal communication December 23, 2016 (former KEK task force)

(SIKIM),[64] still a joint national and regional government-funded project, but smaller (4.5 ha), much less ambitious and fundamentally different in its goals. Whereas the KEK had aimed at attracting foreign investment, the SIKIM aimed at supporting struggling small local industries. The planned Tarakan SIKIM will provide two years' rent-free workshop space and access to tools for up to twenty-six artisanal shipwrights and carpenters (Fokus-Borneo, 2020).

The shipbuilders in particular face considerable competition from Malaysia, where boats are cheaper and according to many fishermen also better. As one of the officers in charge of the SIKIM explained, supporting the local boat builders was a deliberate choice: 'With the SIKIM focusing on shipbuilding, our fishermen can get better boats and get better results [than their Malaysian counterparts]'.[65] At the time of finishing this chapter (August 2020), the Tarakan SIKIM was still under construction.

Borderlands and Development Zones

The city of Tarakan is located on an island off the northeastern coast of Borneo, less than ninety kilometres from Malaysia and much farther away from any other major Indonesian city. In its many markets, one can pay in Indonesian rupiah as well as in Malaysian ringgit, which are in some places even preferred. In 2016, the situation was so grave, according to the head of customs in East Kalimantan,[66] that he felt the need to write an opinion piece in the largest English-language newspaper in Indonesia, complaining that people in North Kalimantan not only attain their luxury items from Malaysia, but even 'staple foods [...], such as rice, sugar, fruit, vegetables, meat, chicken, milk and eggs, as well as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)' (Annafari 2016).[67]

The concerns expressed by the head of customs in Tarakan reflect a much broader and widespread government anxiety with regard to the Indonesian borderlands as especially 'sensitive' and 'unruly' places beyond central state control. Here border citizens are often depicted as less loyal towards the nation-state given their long-standing social and economic cross-border ties and thus in dire need of strong control and socioeconomic inclusion (Eilenberg 2012, 2016). As discussed by Hargyono (this volume), the Indonesian borderlands on the island of Borneo have recently attracted increased attention from Jakarta in attempts to recolonise the margins through accelerated development planning. However, such grand plans have a tendency to decelerate and fall into ruin when plans do not materialise, fail or are suspended indefinitely (see also Rippa, this volume).

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[64] Sentra Industri Kecil dan Menengaa

[65] Personal communication December 27, 2016, A (BAPPEDA)

[66] In 2016, the head of customs in Tarakan was still based in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, along with a number of other institutions, as North Kalimantan was not yet deemed to have sufficient administrative capacity (and because East Kalimantan was reluctant to let go of these privileges).

[67] For other examples, see Borneo-Today (2017) or Star (2017).

State-led and tightly regulated development zones, such as the eventually failed KEK Tarakan, have been proliferating in number since their advent in the 1950s and 1960s, from seventy-nine in 1975, to 3,500 in 2006 (Boyenge 2007, 1) and 5400 in 2019 (World Bank 2019b). However, despite their increasing number, their tangible economic effects on the wider regions where they have been established are debatable and difficult to assess (World Bank 2017). Development zones promises 'a frictionless space in which the economy can perform optimally with minimal government interference' (Bach 2011, 107). Ong (2000, 57) has described the SIJORI development zone mentioned above and has analysed how in development zones 'some aspects of state power and authority are taken up by foreign corporations', through what she terms graduating sovereignty, creating 'neoliberal spaces' where state power can be withdrawn temporarily, granting investors a wide-reaching economic autonomy that is hoped to bring development to the surrounding regions. We find that such spatial variability in state power may be the case in the proposed KEK Tarakan to some extent as well, but in a somewhat inversed form. Certainly, the Indonesian national government would have been relatively well-entrenched in the KEK Tarakan through its national KEK board compared with how relatively weak it is in the rest of the surrounding borderland. In other words, KEK Tarakan would have been an island of state control within a de facto development zone.

Dennis Arnold (2012, 748) regards border SEZs in Mekong countries not as 'neoliberal spaces' but as local manifestations of broader national borderland state practices that are simultaneously enabling in some aspects and restricting in others. Thus, argues Arnold, we should not neglect how these specific borderland SEZs expand and reinforce state power in areas hitherto outside of their reach. In our case, whether or not KEK Tarakan would have been a conduit for projecting state power into the borderlands surrounding Tarakan will remain unanswered, as it never came to be. Instead, the planned but never implemented KEK have added yet another chapter to a genealogy of developments that have taken place or failed in this de facto, multi-generational development zone over the centuries.

A Genealogy of Developments

In the de facto development zone, different generations of extraction succeed each other, creating commodity flows that connect far-off places. These developments create certain landscapes, which linger even after extractive regimes have ceased or moved elsewhere (Tsing 2015, 6). In places where large-scale successive resource extraction has taken place, a corresponding succession of large-scale altered landscapes become layered upon each other, each depositing a testament to the actions of the past: the large-scale development of resources creates large-scale ruins. These testaments, or ruins, are not inactive legacies. Instead, they tie the choices of the past together with the possibilities of tomorrow (Paprocki 2019), directing possible ways forward while also 'creat[ing] a sense of irretrievability or of futures lost' (Stoler 2013, 21). In Tarakan, reefs have been dynamited, oil wells have been drilled, mangroves have

been cut, seafloors torn up, waterways diverted. Each cycle of development takes something away, while the rest is either left or repurposed and reconfigured in new ways. The proposed KEK Tarakan was planned on partly abandoned shrimp ponds and it would have incorporated the still usable infrastructure of a derelict cold storage, both ruins of past developments.

What ties these separate generations of developments together into a genealogy is a fabric of interlacing social relations of exchange, debt and mutual obligations. Where physical infrastructure represents one leg of the developments that allowed for the extraction and movement of resources over space (Larkin 2013, 327), patronage networks[68] in varying forms constitute the other. Patronage in broad terms has been used to describe Indonesian politics from a broad national level (Aspinall 2013; Nordholt 2015; Van Klinken 2009) to more specific analyses of regional politics, conflict and resource extraction (Pelras 2000; Wilson 2013). In the borderland de facto development zone, the durability and flexibility of long-standing reciprocal patron-client relations spanning across borders have outlived both regime changes and war and have played significant roles in booms and busts in resource extraction (Eilenberg 2012).

In the next part of this chapter, we will trace the genealogy of developments that have taken place in this de facto development zone, to put the failed development of KEK Tarakan into a historical perspective. Within a waxing and waning field of tension between centre and periphery, past and present developments in the borderlands connected through patron-client networks have created ruins that have enabled certain futures while restricting others.

Early Developments

Historical sources of economic activity in the area around Tarakan, which we term a de facto development zone, are sparse until the early 1800s, when the Sulu Sultanate assumed hegemony over much of the Sulu and Sulawesi seas, Tarakan included. As a thalassocracy, the Sulu found themselves to be in the centre of an extremely profitable trade route going north to China and beyond, east to the Philippines and south to the rest of the archipelago. The Sulu maintained complicated hierachical structures of patronage across their territotry, where vassals, clients and slaves, were tasked with collecting and paying tribute to their Sulu masters, which were later traded with China (Tagliacozzo 2004; Warren 2007).

The Sulu exerted their power through controlling trade, which allowed them for a long time defy Spanish, Dutch and British colonial powers. This area, which James Francis Warren (2007) terms 'the Sulu Zone', was characterised by a number of petty sultanates and strongmen, situated along the coasts, all owing their positions to the protection they bought from the Sulu with the commodities they could collect from their own clients and allies upstream.

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[68] The literature on patronage or patron-client relationships is large and broad. For a thorough introduction, see Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984)

Tarakan was one such port, a hub for the trade of upriver forest products, especially bird nests, wax and gold dust. The port was ruled by dynasties of strongmen alternating their allegiance through intermarriage and tribute with whichever patron was the strongest. South and north of Tarakan were similar sultanates and ports, embroiled in constant conflict over access to the upriver produce, which translated into protection and status. The Sulu often intervened in local politics to change or maintain a favourite ruler (Sellato 2001, 21; Warren 2007, 86). Territorial control was not the goal for these downriver strongmen and often their direct power of influence ceased at the very boundaries of their towns, which were built in easily defensible areas, such as on islands or hills in estuaries. Communities in the vicinity of these kingdoms were subordinate to them, but further upstream the kingdoms relied on networks of patron-client relations to funnel valuable goods to their ports and further on to Sulu or Bugis trading ships (Warren 2007, 84–90).

The extraction of commodities created resource frontiers and ruined environments as early as the eighteenth century and very possible earlier than that, although at a much smaller scale than the frontiers of today. Competition for the most productive swallow caves led to wars and the overexploitation of productive caves along the coast (Okushima 2002), the systematic collection of sea cucumbers led to local extinctions in popular reefs (Máñez and Ferse 2010, 5) and intensive pearling denuded once abundant pearl oyster beds in the Sulu Sea (Butcher 2004, 130–32). These early developments spanned large areas of Tarakan and led to localised ruination and depletion through an infrastructure of extraction and trade based on pyramidal patronage networks.

The former client sultanates on the east coast of Borneo subsisted as independent entities until the Dutch arrived. Over a period of ten years, the Dutch forced the sultans to sign a series of agreements which by 1910 transformed the local aristocracies into more or less paid administrators in the Dutch colonial state, with their lands incorporated, at least in effect, into the Dutch East Indies (Black 1985). Even though the Dutch placed administrators in the courts and reinforced trading posts, they initially controlled only tiny enclaves.

The Oil Frontier

But Tarakan was special. Here, oil was found by Dutch geologists as early as 1897 – it was said that one could smell the reservoirs without even digging (Lindblad 1985, 88) – and soon this de facto development zone attracted the full attention of the Dutch colonial state. Production started in 1906 (Wight, Hare, and Reynolds 1992, 266) and the output proceeded to exceed one million tons a year by 1924. Meanwhile, the population of the island skyrocketed. Dutch engineers brought thousands of Javanese and Chinese workers to the island and also started drilling on neighbouring islands and in the shallow waters of the estuaries. In 1924, some twelve thousand people worked in the oil industry on Tarakan, which produced a third of all oil in the Dutch East Indies (Lindblad 1989). The oil companies built roads, a harbour and an airstrip as well as simple housing for the thousands of labourers who were brought there.

Large swathes of land were cleared and a landscape dominated by the oil infrastructure of pipelines, oil derricks and storage tanks arose. Extravagant villas for the Dutch administrators and engineers were constructed on the hills overlooking the oil fields and the harbour was considerably expanded.

<INSERT *Figure 11.2: What is today a grazing field for livestock was once the site of some of the most productive oil wells in Indonesia, attracting capital and manpower from all over the world (Photo by Thomas Mikkelsen).>*

The oil industry changed the physical as well as the demographic landscape of Tarakan. The indigenous Tidung, who before the oil rush had been the majority, became outnumbered by Javanese and Chinese coolies and very few of them ever worked in the oil fields. Instead, they continued to farm, fish and collect the same commodities they had for centuries. Some profited by selling land to the Dutch whenever a new oil or gas find was made, but many moved across the sound and up the rivers, away from Tarakan.[69] Chinese trading houses established before the advent of oil prospered, while new ones were established by immigrants attracted by the oil boom. The Chinese opened shops, trading houses and brothels and in many cases acted as foremen and translators between the Dutch engineers and the Javanese coolies.[70] Tarakan was in effect run as an autonomous 'development zone' by Bataafsche Petroleum Maaatchappij (BPM), a corporate joint venture consisting of two of the largest oil companies in the world at that time, the Royal Dutch and Shell, who built all infrastructure on the island. In this way, Tarakan was a 'self-contained conclave of pioneers' (Lindblad 1989, 57).

The Japanese declared war on the Dutch East Indies on January 10, 1942 and landed troops on Tarakan the following day. The oil production facilities on the island were seen as vital, especially considering the fact that Tarakan crude oil could be used directly as fuel for the Japanese navy should the need arise. Tarakan was the first landing point of Japanese soldiers in the Dutch East Indies and locals today somewhat proudly refer to the attack as 'Indonesia's Pearl Harbour' (Santosa 2004). Nevertheless, the invasion had been anticipated and much of the oil infrastructure was destroyed by the Dutch before the Japanese attack. However, Japanese managed to quickly increase production numbers once again and until late in the war, when most Japanese shipping had been destroyed, oil from Tarakan and Balikpapan to the south was the primary source of diesel fuel for the entire Japanese army (Grimes 1946, 8–11). After the war, Dutch assets were nationalised and extraction continued under a series of Indonesian state-owned companies. Despite a lot of prospecting and drilling, no new major

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[69] Personal communication February 13, 2017.
[70] Personal communication March 20, 2017.

reservoirs were found and production gradually decreased (Wight et al. 1992). In the following years, Tarakan fell out of the national limelight and returned to being regarded as a provincial backwater from the perspective of Jakarta.

Maritime Frontiers

In the 1970s, Japanese and Chinese businessmen financed factories called cold storages along the east coast of Kalimantan in order to process and export frozen shrimp from capture fisheries to the Japanese market (Butcher 2004, 210–14). A cluster of these were located in Tarakan, the only developed port in the area. In these factories, the catch was cleaned, sorted, packaged, frozen and stored for export. Compared with the domestic market, where shrimp were often consumed in dried or fermented form, the Japanese consumers craved fresh shrimp in large amounts. The cold storages were thus produced exclusively for export, while the local markets were supplied by artisanal fishermen.

The old infrastructure from the oil boom rendered the construction of cold storages on Tarakan easy. The port and the airstrip secured the ready availability of the material and manpower needed to build and run the factories and many of the workers who had been working in the oil and gas industry became factory workers.[71]

Initially, the cold storages had their own fleets of company trawlers. In 1979, eighty such trawlers fished in the waters off Tarakan. Even though these wooden trawlers were relatively small when compared to international standards at the time, they were huge in comparison with the typical artisanal, non-motorised, small-scale fishing boat[72] and several orders of magnitude more effective. Data from the northern coast of Java show that while such trawlers constituted two percent of the fishing fleet, they accounted for forty percent of the catches made between 1975 and 1979 (Bailey 1997,228) and it can reasonably be assumed that the ratio was similar in the waters surrounding Tarakan.

Conflicts between artisanal fishermen and the larger trawlers quickly became frequent. When the protests turned violent, the New Order government of President Suharto first legislated against the presence of trawlers in coastal waters (Bailey 1997, 229). However, as this soon turned out to be impossible for the authorities to implement, a general ban on trawl fishing was passed into legislation in 1980 and entered into effect in 1981. The pressure on fish stocks lessened only for a while, though, as an ever-increasing number of small-scale fishing boats led to an eclipse of the size of pre-ban landings in 1984 (Bailey 1997, 231). Reacting to the trawl ban, the cold storages changed their mode of operation, from relying on the catches of their own fleets, to organising small-scale fishermen as suppliers. The fleet of trawling vessels were sold off or converted for the use of other forms of equipment. This state

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[71] Personal communication, March 7, 2017.

[72] Even in 1982, 82 percent of the Indonesian fising fleet was comprised of sail-powered boats (Bailey, Dwiponggo, and Marahudin 1987, 76).

territorialisation of the hitherto open fisheries frontier occurred as (and maybe because) catches were already dwindling.

The industry quickly adapted to this new situation. Inspired by the contract farming schemes that had been promoted by the World Bank in the Indonesian plantation sector since the 1960s (Cramb and McCarthy 2016), the government started subsidising so-called nucleus estate schemes (NES) in the fishery sector. In this adapted NES model, the cold storages acted as nuclei and the surrounding communities of small-scale fishermen the plasma. The cold storages offered subsidised loans to fishermen so that they could procure boats, equipment and supplies, repayable through the sale of their harvests, which they were then contractually obliged to sell to the factory as a form of contract fishing. The NES schemes were initially introduced in the state-owned companies, but soon some private ones followed suit (Nikijuluw and Naamin 1994, 406–07). The NES schemes became popular in the fishery of tuna and other high-value species, but never really took hold in the shrimp fisheries, which were already collapsing due to the massive overfishing that had taken place.

Instead, the cold storages combined the NES system with the local patron-client systems, through which artisanal fishermen had been organised (Fabinyi 2013; Ferse et al. 2012). Entrepreneur middlemen, financed partly through loans from the cold storages, set up trading posts and started buying shrimp from independent fishermen. These middlemen were almost exclusively immigrant Bugis, who mobilised extended kin networks as client fishermen and assisted them with loans to buy and equip boats. For the cold storages, this meant a higher level of outsourcing of risk and responsibility than the pure NES schemes. For the fishermen, this meant lower margins, but opportunities for much needed capital and the safety of credit during periods of bad catches. Soon villages grew up around the cold storages, wives and daughters operated the production lines and company stores owned by Chinese traders sold everything a fishermen needed, on credit.

However, it quickly became clear that large-scale fishing for wild shrimp had become economically unfeasible due to the widespread ruination of the over-trawled seafloors. Therefore, the cold storages started lending money to businessmen, who experimented with growing them in ponds along the rivers that flow into the sound of Tarakan and on the islets that dot the estuaries. Thus, the physical infrastructure and the social organisation of cold storage-financed patronage networks and outsourced production rendered the caught-shrimp frontier the springboard for the next boom in the de facto development zone.

<INSERT *Figure 11.3: Thousands of tambaks – freshwater ponds for farming tiger shrimp – steadily proliferate up the rivers and waterways of North Kalimantan (Photo by Thomas Mikkelsen).*>

The Arrival and Decline of Farmed Shrimp

Using the same model of debt-based patronage and rejecting the company ownership of ponds completely, the number of ponds and middlemen increased steadily as produced shrimp overtook caught shrimp in weight and value. The shrimp were fed into global supply chains, terminating in Japan, the United States and Europe.

Once meandering freely through mangrove forests, streams now became part of the pond infrastructure, with sluice gates, dykes and embankments all built to manage water flow in and out of the ponds during ebb and flood tides. This lunar heartbeat drove the farming of shrimp, allowing caretakers to empty and fill ponds and making it possible to harvest an entire filled pond through a sluice gate with a single net. The landscape was painstakingly developed into large-scale shrimp aquaculture through piling, pushing and digging the muddy mangrove soil into embankments no more than a couple of metres across, forming the walls of each pond. Ponds slowly spread across the island of Tarakan, creating a landscape that was much more densely inhabited than the mangrove swamp it replaced, each pond connected through the waterways feeding them, the embankments containing them and ultimately through the shrimp commodity chain to consumers across the border in Malaysia and from there all over the world.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997, which in Indonesia contributed to the eventual fall of the New Order regime, paradoxically meant windfall profits for export-oriented extractive industries trading in dollars. The plummeting rupiah decreased expenditures dramatically (Gunawan 2012, 72), and the farm gate price of shrimp doubled or tripled almost overnight. 'Unused' land suddenly became something with potential, a 'space of desire'. A space that, once seen, had to be explored and exploited (Tsing 2003, 5102). It was the ready 'availability' of land that was considered to be one of the strengths of the grown shrimp industry in North Kalimantan. Nevertheless, the land was not readily 'available' in the eyes of everyone. Rather, it is and was used by people who had lived there for generations, people who did not benefit from the pond development. Old rights and claims to the mangroves came under pressure as estuaries were developed. Gradually the people who had been living and fishing along the estuaries for generations were excluded and the mangroves themselves were transformed. With the Tidung left clinging to the riverbanks as 'surplus populations' (Li 2010, 68), struggles about ownership continued among the initial claimants.

Pond entrepreneurs had to go through precious little paperwork in order to start developing. Indonesian land law is a complicated and contentious affair and we will not go into the details here.[73] Suffice to say, current forestry laws are contradictory and there is no complete map[74] of Indonesia depicting all concessions, plots and land-use zones. Often,

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[73] For a good introduction to Indonesian land law, see McCarthy and Robinson (2016) or Indrarto et al. (2012) . For a more thorough review, see Slaats et al. (2009).

[74] One such database has been in the process of construction since 2011, but is still not complete (World Bank 2018).

different government agencies will grant overlapping concessions, leading to situations where two competing claims to a single plot of land both can be legal (Indrarto et al. 2012, 22–27). Recently, as the first step in this process, the Department of Fisheries have begun requiring so-called land clarification letters for newly established ponds. Although these do not clarify ownership in any way, these letters state that there are no conflicting claims over the plot of land in question. During fieldwork in 2018, only a few demonstration ponds run by cold storages had such letters. In the words of one officer tasked with issuing such certificates, 'We are only two officers tasked with this. We do what we can, but there is no way we can check all of those ponds'. [75] Thus, the authority to define who has claim and usage rights to ponds primarily lies among the collection of owners and bosses themselves. The cold storages are indifferent as long as they can process and export shrimp. Ponds are bought and sold without much involvement of local or national government and the majority of ponds exist with no formalised legal basis, despite it being prioritised by national government.

Christian Lund (2016) describes the dynamics of local authorities, entities not directly affiliated with the state, but making decisions of a public nature and exercising political power (Lund 2006, 686–87). He terms them twilight institutions and describes how they bolster their power of and authority through references to the state, in this case the practice of buying tillage letters from village leaders and using them as proof of ownership[76]. This, Lund argues, has the paradoxical effect of simultaneously circumventing and strengthening the authority of the state (here, local government) through using its paraphernalia. If we consider the supply chains as having some characteristics of Lund's twilight institutions, despite being a loose conglomerate of relations tied together through cold storages and patronage links, the foot-dragging and tacit acceptance of the status quo by the local government makes sense: it highlights the primacy of the supply chain as the source of public authority when it comes to matters of pond ownership. The fact that pond owners do not pay taxes invariably leads to lower operating costs for the cold storages and thus a greater margin of profit. Even though few pond owners pay taxes (Indonesia 2018), the whole industry surrounding the shrimp supply chain constitutes the second-largest source of city income in Tarakan today, after the service sector (Badan Pusat Statistik-Tarakan 2018, 11). However, it is not only from such a vantage point that private actors and local government are connected and reinforce each other in the de facto development zone. It is very common that government employees, especially those in related departments, are pond entrepreneurs themselves.[77]

The confusion between (or one could say the combination of) the legal and the illegal is one of the characteristics of the de facto development zone, as is the fluidity between public

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[75] Personal communication, March 20, 2018 (Dinas Kelautan dan Perikanan).
[76] For a similar case from the Mahakam delta in East Kalimantan, see Timmer (2010, 709-710).
[77] Field notes, March 17, 2018.

and private (Tsing 2003, 5104). The de facto development zone is a fertile space for capital, deals and plans (Tsing 2003, 5104): it is ever-enticing and full of promises and there are great gains to be had if one has the means and the courage. Today, the ponds extend from the tidal limit of the major rivers, along the numerous tributary streams and rivulets, all the way to the estuaries, including the numerous islets situated in the river mouths, in all totalling some 21,000 ha.

However, over time, the older ponds have slowly become unproductive, disease-ridden and clogged with the waste of millions upon millions of shrimp. Pond aquaculture is infamous for being susceptible to dramatic collapses due to virus epidemics (Flegel 1997; Hall, Hirsch, and Li 2011; Walker and Mohan 2009). Occasionally, sweeping epidemics wipe out shrimp in entire regions. The frequency of failed harvests is increasing all the time and whole areas of unproductive ponds are being abandoned and left to fall into ruin; some of the cold storages here were abandoned, too. It was on such ruins that part of KEK Tarakan would have been built, had it ever materialised.

What the next development will bring, no one knows. This genealogy might at first glance give the impression that a new boom is always around the corner and that the current bust is only temporary: that it is just a question of finding the next boom crop, preferable before anyone else. What we see is the opposite: Each cycle of boom and bust leaves the world a poorer place, narrowing the possibilies of future generations. The caves where swallows made their nests are gone. The pearl oyster beds are gone. The tropical hardwood is gone. The oil is gone. The fantastic abundance of fish is gone, and so are he mangroves once teeming with life.

Concluding Remarks

KEK Tarakan, the planned SEZ in the border city of Tarakan, never materialised. Despite seven years of preparation, the grand development project that should have heralded a new future for the city never found any traction among the industry it was supposed to cater, as it drowned in disagreements both internal and between the regional and the national government. The plan's abandonment was in itself fairly unspectacular and in its place an even more unspectacular government programme for a few somewhat reluctant artisanal woodworkers was established.

We argue that in this borderland area, the planned KEK Tarakan would paradoxically have been not the island of sovereign exception commonly associated with SEZs, but rather a zone where the central government would have had comparably more control than the surrounding borderlands. This leads us to argue that the entire borderland surrounding Tarakan is a de facto development zone in itself. In the de facto development zone today, companies extract and export commodities with minimal state interference, mirroring past generations of developments. Central state authority and interest have waxed and waned in these borderlands but have always been contested throughout the genealogy of development. The de facto development zone has for centuries been a place of boom and bust in resource extraction,

causing ruined landscapes and leaving behind ruined infrastructure, both of which have in turn been both restricting and enabling in subsequent developments.

Local and transborder patronage networks have fused with supply chains spanning continents to funnel products to consumers all over the world. In doing so, development has kept living standards for a legion of caretakers, fishermen and indebted pond owners low, while a tiny minority have accumulated capital at an unbelievable rate as clients of a handful of international lead companies. In the de facto development zone, flows foster and strengthen heterogeneity and preserve and accentuate difference rather than dissolving it (Tsing 2016, 330), reinforcing and relying on non-capitalist forms of organisation such as debt-based patronage. Some people are able to turn this friction to their advantage, while others experience it as pure erosive destruction.

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