



# **BROKERING THE MARGINS**

## **A REVIEW OF CONCEPTS AND METHODS**

*By Dr. Patrick Meehan and Dr. Sharri Plonski*

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**Borderlands, Brokers and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka and Nepal: War to Peace Transitions viewed from the margins.**

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### **Cover images**

**Top:** This image was taken in Biratnagar, Nepal's second largest city, and shows trucks waiting to cross the southern border into India. Around 200 trucks cross each day, transporting fuel and heavy goods. The crossing is also a hotspot for human trafficking. The southern border with India is open and people cross daily for work, to buy everyday goods, or visit family and friends on the other side. There is a large customs post at Biratnagar and police check bags and vehicles in search of taxable items. Most rural border points in the Tarai, however, have little or no official presence.

*Photo Credit: Dr. Oliver Walton, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2016*

**Bottom:** This image shows a confrontation between security forces and Madhesi protesters in the border town of Birgunj, 300km west of Biratnagar, Nepal. This town is a crucial link for border trade with India and was central to the blockade imposed by Madhesi groups in late 2015 and early 2016. The protest was initiated against the new provincial boundary proposals, which formed a key plank of a new constitution. These proposals were widely seen as thwarting the aspiration for greater autonomy shared by both the Madhesi groups living in the southeast and the Tharu population in the southwest. The blockade was also facilitated by the Indian government, who halted traffic across the border in an effort to quell political unrest on the border and pressure the Nepali government into making concessions.

*Photo Credit: The Himalayan Times, Ram Saraf, 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2015*

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# **BROKERING THE MARGINS**

## **A REVIEW OF CONCEPTS AND METHODS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This literature review is designed to support the ESRC-funded project, entitled “Borderlands, Brokers and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka and Nepal: War to Peace Transitions viewed from the margins”. The project aims to generate improved understanding of processes of statebuilding and peacebuilding in contested war to peace transitions.

The project’s originality lies in two innovative approaches to analysing war to peace transitions. First, it takes state margins as the primary vantage point for interrogating the political and economic dynamics of post-war stabilization and reconstruction and in constituting or co-producing power relations and political settlements at the national level. By challenging the top down, centrist lens commonly applied to studies of (and policy responses to) post-war statebuilding and reconstruction, the project offers scope for understanding how processes of stabilization and reconstruction – and hence the sustainability of post war transitions – are contested, mediated, and re-worked in state margins.

Second, the project focuses attention on the role of brokerage in shaping war to peace transitions. The project sets out to analyse the different types of brokers and brokering relations that connect state ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ in order to understand how brokerage influences the dynamics of socio-economic and political change at the margins of states and the unevenness of war to peace transitions across space and over time.

The purpose of this literature review is to inform the project on these two key innovations by analysing the uneven and contradictory experiences of state-building and development in ‘the margins’ and by developing a conceptual framework through which to analyse the role of brokerage in shaping these processes.

### **The margins as vantage point**

Borderland and frontier regions are commonly sites of violence and contestation that embody competing visions of development, peace, security and political legitimacy, and where state authority is weakly embedded and strongly challenged; spaces to be brought under control and made legible to the centre. At the same time, spaces sitting at the periphery of state lines and control are not residual to these processes. They are often regions of intense interconnectivity and dynamic political and economic change (Goodhand 2013; Harvey 2005; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013). They are linked into national and global circuits of commodities, capital and investment, and metropolitan centres may become shaped by, or indeed dependent on, processes of resource extraction, conflict and development in the hinterlands.

This study seeks to understand how competing and often contradictory visions and actions are held in tension at the margins. Moreover, it probes how the ways in which relations between centre and periphery are mediated (by brokers), shapes processes of change, not only in the margins but also at the centre. We challenge the notion that geographically peripheral regions are passive recipients of peacebuilding, statebuilding and development initiatives formulated by, and radiating outwards from state centres. By unpacking how the state imagines and renders ‘its edges’, this study aims to show how centres and margins are mutually constitutive, and continually sculpted by conflicts, processes of interaction, and the flows of power and resources between them (Van Schendel, 2005; Scott, 2009; Goodhand, 2008, 2013; Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013).

## Brokers and brokerage

We define brokers as 'network specialists', whose ability to straddle multiple knowledge systems and life-worlds enables them to act as gatekeepers across various social 'synapses' or 'choke points' (Wolf, 1956; James, 2011) and in doing so "transmit, direct, filter, receive, code, decode, and interpret messages" across these interstitial spaces (Boissevain, 1968, p. 549). Examples of brokers, then, include a range of actors: community leaders, mid-level politicians, businessmen, administrators, and religious leaders.

Through negotiating transactions across borders and across scales (between centre and margins, across international borders), brokers shape how power is imposed, negotiated and resisted (Bierschenk et al., 2002; Lindquist, 2015; Sharma, 2016; Stovel & Shaw, 2012). They enable – and rework – deals between communities, companies and state entities, between peripheries and centres within nations and across international borders. Indeed, we see brokers not simply as 'intermediaries', merely facilitating linkages and transmitting power between uneven geographical spaces. Rather, they are 'mediators', whereby their ability to network across social divides gives them varying degrees of autonomy, agency and power, enabling them to "transform, translate, distort and modify" power and facilitate, filter and check access to resources (Bierschenk et al., 2002; Latour, 2005, p. 39; Mosse & Lewis, 2006).

Brokers are deeply implicated in processes of state and market expansion at the margins of the state because of their ability to navigate the kinds of border and boundary 'synapses' characteristic of these regions. Indeed, the opportunities for brokers are typically enhanced rather than eroded by the expansion of markets and state institutions into frontier and borderland spaces, especially in moments of rupture and transformation, such as war to peace transitions.

The informal roles played by brokers means that their actions, and the ambiguities surrounding them, often elude our analytical gaze; yet brokerage offers an important mechanism through which to explore the unevenness in how markets and states function and how dynamics of conflict, trade and capitalist accumulation at the margins impact upon the centre, and vice versa. It is thus a useful focus of this project, in its search to understand the dynamic (and violent) production of the margins in states undergoing the tectonic ruptures of war to peace transitions.

## Developing a border/broker lens

Drawing upon the arguments outlined above, this review integrates the critical geography literature that challenges state-centrism and methodological nationalism by dismantling the idea that space, state, sovereignty and national-identity are 'homogenous', with analysis of the lived experiences and practices of brokers who are instrumental in (re)constituting state practices and market forces during war to peace transitions. By challenging the fixity of borders and boundaries and the stability of the relationships that connect 'centres' and 'margins', we emphasize that these entities and relations are in perpetual flux. They are constantly being re-made and re-worked by social processes (state practices, market dynamics and struggles surrounding these) and the mobilities and immobilities of power, people and resources. This explains why an understanding of those agents which mediate flows and power relations across borders and between centre and margin – i.e. brokers – are so important in shaping processes of socio-economic and political change.

We aim to show that brokerage is not simply a response to the unevenness of market and state institutions across territory and the choke points this creates, but is an active dynamic in (re)producing and (re)negotiating this unevenness. Brokers are defined by the borders, boundaries and flows of power they mediate; yet, through their role in activating and deconstructing these lines and connections, their actions also shape how space is produced and ordered. This approach offers new ways to understand how the margins are made 'legible' to the centre, and how the centre is made 'legible' to the margins, through coercion *and* consent, violence *and* diplomacy, greater convergence *and* greater autonomy. Brokers are central to facilitating *and* resisting these mobilities of power, both literally through their own movement

across borders and between border(ed) spaces, and in the way they impact upon, shape and mediate flows of power through their actions as border gatekeepers and border transgressors.

## Structure of the literature review

In order to develop these arguments this literature review is divided into three sections.

**Section one** interrogates how geography/space is dialectically produced; unpacking how it is 'imagined' and how it materialises as mutual interlocutors in the operation, mobility and circulation of power (and thus the production of the margins, vis-à-vis the centre). It begins with a theoretical analysis of the contradictory and uneven modes through which space is ordered. The discussion then moves on to investigate the ways in which imagined geography 'travels' and becomes axiomatic, as it works to incorporate or exclude distant, different and dissonant spaces; as well as how it is challenged and reshaped, as it engages different agents in the margins.

**Section two** develops the concept of brokerage. Taking as its starting point the dissonance between how space is imagined and the contestation surrounding how space is actually structured and governed (as shown in Section one), the aim of Section two is to explore the role of those agents – or brokers – who mediate power between the centre and the margins, and vice versa. The section begins by providing a critical review of the current 'state of the art' of the literature on brokers and brokerage. It then sets out a conceptual framework for the study of brokerage, building on existing literature but also addressing what we see as the limitations of this literature. It develops a structured methodological approach for analysing the impact of brokerage on how markets and states operate, which will serve to guide the project's empirical analysis of the role of brokerage in shaping war to peace transitions.

**Section three** offers our conclusions and recommendations for how to conceptualise the spatial dynamics of brokerage. It sets out a research agenda to guide the project in exploring how brokerage dynamics vary across different types of state margins and draws particular attention to the way borders and brokers dialectically shape and produce one another.

# PART 1: DIALECTIC LANDSCAPES

## Introduction

*"There is something logical and perhaps even comforting about a narrative of European empire as generating a slow but steady rationalisation of space. Periodic advances in techniques of navigation and mapping, a persistent focus on geographic boundaries as elements of treaty making between imperial rivals and the accumulation of geographic knowledge of conquered and colonised territories by the colonisers – these trends operate in both older and more recent imperial histories as intimately bound up with the construction of imperial power."*

Benton, 2010, p.10

This quote, taken from Benton's treatise on the unevenness of empire-building, points explicitly to the different modalities used to consolidate 'unruly' peoples and territories, into a unitary 'common sense' (Harvey, 2006; Gramsci, 1999). We use it here as an entry point into how (colonial and post-colonial<sup>1</sup>) states articulate 'territory'. It introduces us to the geo-linguistic technologies – the discourses of power – that legitimise and materialise the 'centre's' proprietorship of conquered, distant or peripheral regions; and the mobile, competing and violent nodes of sovereignty that constitute and yet are obfuscated in this process. It offers a platform from which to (un)read 'geography': as the outcome of violent territorial processes, produced and maintained in interstitial corridors and enclaves of capital and power. And thus,

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<sup>1</sup> In this text, the label 'colonial' is used to describe both past and present-day territorial processes of 'state-building', in order to acknowledge the continuities of colonial relations (of domination, elimination and erasure) in the governing structures and modes of territorialisation in allegedly post-colonial states.

a method through which to unpack and challenge the idea that states, and the territories they control, are homogenous, whole and permanent (born without history, produced without contention) (Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner and Elden, 2009).

D. Cowen (2014), Harvey (2006, 2005), Yacobi (2016), Shamir (2013), Brenner and Elden (2009) and Lefebvre (1991) add another layer to Benton's debunking of the unitary movements and penetrations of sovereignty. Their focus – and ours – is to unravel the immutability of geography, spotlighting the technologies of governance that homogenise 'state-spaces' and make them seem smooth and seamless (and even agentless). This is what Lefebvre (1991) calls 'abstract space', an inherently political strategy that renders invisible the violence and struggles that shape the state vis a vis its limits, borders and boundaries (cf. Brenner and Elden, 2009). The territory of state-space is internalised and naturalised through a dialectic of social relations, constituted and made mobile in the way ordinary actors live with and participate in the ordering of space. As a 'geography of common sense'<sup>2</sup> (Harvey, 2006), in which spatial hegemony is asserted through consent (and underwritten by coercion), the power of territoriality lies in the silences and contradictions it obfuscates, the acts of 'erasure and re-inscription' it embodies, and the social constructions which it serves to reify. Made normal and obvious in the material/spatial effects of this process (Yacobi, 2016), it is difficult to locate the agents that make state, or capital, or power 'flow', and thus to produce new nodes for challenging and struggling against them.

Our research into the 'agentive capacity' of borders, margins and peripheries – where disruptions to the spatial order produce alternative regimes and relations of power (Van Schendel, 2004; Gazit and Latham, 2014) has led us to look for the 'anomalies' in state-spaces. From this vantage point, we attempt to understand how material reality is formed, imposed and contested. Moments and spaces of rupture dissolve the illusion of unending, uninterrupted 'flows' of power, as the imagined homogeneity of territorial configurations (articulated in law, language, monopoly over violence and the building of infrastructure) breaks down (Korf, Engeler and Hagmann, 2010). The clearest examples of such ruptures appear in the transitions from one regime to the next (i.e. war to peace transitions). However, overlapping zones of authority at the margins, where different forces, regulations and actors seek and battle for hegemony are also key sites in which the state's rough and raw form is exposed (Kalir, Sur and Van Schendel, 2012). These spaces will constitute the majority of our discussion in an attempt to interrogate how the state system of power conceals and reveals itself (through national, subnational and transnational movements).

In the following section, we work to unravel the tensions and contradictions of abstract, fetishized space (Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner & Elden, 2009), and thus offer new ways to understand and ultimately, to occupy geography. First (in Section 1.1), by breaking down and challenging the axiomatic, common sense nature of 'geography' and the power it holds over how space is ordered. Then (in Section 1.2), by developing a lexicon of the different terms that name and discipline the margins, we examine the discourses that help shape and are materialised by operations of power, at the edges and border zones of states. Overall, in this part of the literature review, we break down the multiple violences, incongruencies and spatial effects of bordered space and offer a set of theoretical and methodological lenses for analysing them. In so doing, we lay the groundwork for understanding how 'the border' (conceptually and physically) is transgressed as well as shaped by a plethora of actors and agents – the brokers that move and negotiate with, within and beyond the state.

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<sup>2</sup> Harvey is here building on Gramsci's theorisation of 'hegemony', as derived from and culminating in the social production of 'common sense'. However, this also has resonance in Mitchell's (1991) analysis (and break down) of the state, and the processes that contribute to producing and reifying 'the state' as a singular entity, disciplined, coherent and whole (as opposed to a mere "structural effect" of the multiple processes of spatial organisation, technical and temporal arrangements, supervision and surveillance that constitute the state).

## 1.1 INTERROGATING GEOGRAPHIC COMMON SENSE

### 1.1.1 Imaginative Geographies

*“Moral geography stands at the core of colonial projects<sup>3</sup>, drawing a line, creating a boundary, between the “bad” and the “good,” producing a moral paradigm and a sense of power which assumes an allegedly scientific neutrality that satisfies the urge to morally control the “other.” Geo-moral considerations force us to politicize a given space; to contextualize the act, the actors, as well as the explicit and implicit ideologies that are the basis for the re-shaping of geography.”*

*Haim Yacobi, Israel and Africa: A Genealogy of Moral Geography, 2016, p.125*

There is a large body of literature that attempts to unravel what we mean by ‘imagined geographies’ and how these function as a product of, as much as a producer of ‘power’. Its theoretical underpinnings can be traced to the work of Edward Said (1978), and has evolved in the writings of Lefebvre (1991), Gregory (2004), Harvey (1982, 2006), Falah (2003), I. Chatterjee (2009), Yacobi (2016) and a plethora of theorists of critical geography, urban studies, spatial theory, critical political economy, borderland studies and (post)colonial history. What is immediately apparent in the lexicon that surrounds this term is that ‘geography’ is actively produced, reproduced and reshaped through discursive, cultural and symbolic refractions of a range of (often violent) material encounters with the physical world. Said’s poetic and persuasive term, ‘imaginative geographies’, attempts to unpack how distance and difference are folded into how ‘we’ (in his view, the West/Global North) experience and express the world. Rather than simply demarcating ‘us’ from ‘them’, familiar from unfamiliar, it orders and disciplines ‘the other’ in such a way that it becomes familiar, legible and, thus, knowable (Said, 1978). We see and encounter ‘them’ through our own lens, and reproduce them accordingly. It is a fabrication, but, as Gregory (2004) argues, that doesn’t mean it’s false. Its substance is validated by “regimes of truth”, which “produces acutely real, visibly material consequences” (p.3). Moreover, with Benton (2010) complicating this further, pointing out the dialectic, interstitial and incomplete process by which space is ‘translated’ into familiar space (cf. Latour, 2005), we recognise this as an ongoing process that continues to “structure capitalist and colonial social relations in the present” (Coulthard, 2014, p.152; cf. Gregory, 2004). The constant rendering and re-rendering of space is part of a never-ending set of structural relations, embedded in the production of state territory (ibid; Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner & Elden, 2009).

The axiomatic nature of geography sits at the core of this inquiry. It has congealed into something ‘whole’, ‘natural’, ‘obvious’, and ‘eternal’ (Brenner and Elden, 2009; I. Chatterjee, 2009; Yacobi, 2016; Benton, 2010; Winichakul, 1994). While ‘geographic imagination’ is held and harnessed by particular constellations of power, it is the everyday, the cultural forms, and the habits of ordinary people that under-write how space is managed, arbitrated and territorialised (Gregory, 2004). It is the concrete ‘things’ –the immutable objects – which outline how we live, where we live, and who we live with, that then feed back into and strengthen its vision (Brenner and Elden, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991). Over time, the writing and re-writing of the physical world are made durable and natural, in light of the different technologies used to articulate this process (Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner & Elden, 2009; Yacobi, 2016). This is not a smooth process, but history attempts to make us forget that (Van Schendel, 2004). It is also not strictly imposed from above, nor does it move along a straight, even path; making the line between ‘imagined’ and ‘real’ difficult to disarticulate or challenge. For this reason, the authors we work with in this review set out to develop grounded, material histories that de-fetishize the dialectic relationship between territory, abstract space and geographic imagination, revealing disruptions and ambivalences in geography as a way to unpack its internal contradictions and incommensurate logics (Harvey, 2006).

Building from Lefebvre’s (1991) tri-partite dialectic, of ‘conceived’, ‘perceived’ and ‘lived’ space, we work with the idea that the concretisation and material production of that which is conceived and rendered, is

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<sup>3</sup> As mentioned above colonialism, imperialism and post-colonial state-building share common modes of territoriality. In all three, space is made legible and regimes legitimate and incontestable through both coercive and non-coercive practices (building consent, underscored by the capacity for violence) that are anchored in colonial and capitalist relations of domination (Coulthard, 2014).

dialectically constituted by how we experience, reproduce, use, challenge and re-articulate space as we live it. The active production of space becomes habit; internalised and sedimented in everyday practices and flows.<sup>4</sup> A geographic imagination is constituted by as well as constitutes the totality of this space. It is produced, circulated and reified through an assemblage of experiences, practices and accommodations, which incorporate and appropriate, as well as negate subaltern challenges and contestations. Moreover, as it becomes 'common sense', it cultivates a particular myopia that actively erases variations in space and people, destroying any internal or emerging differences, in order to impose "an abstract homogeneity", discussed above as abstract space (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 240; in Brenner and Elden, 2009, p.358).

The geography (or territory) of abstract space is thus imbued with moral parameters, as discussed in the quote above by Yacobi (2016). These provide legitimacy for the different modes and methods that materialise power (and through which power is materialised); and articulate how space is represented, used and experienced. This 'moral geography' is integral to the production of geographic common sense. It is "a conceptual abstraction of a supposedly objective reality" (Winichakul, 1994, p.18); a discourse that is uncritically absorbed and internalised because it is 'right' and 'good', as much as it is obvious, natural and thus incontestable (ibid). This is both actively and passively made to seem 'normal', with violence veiled in a set of technical practices seemingly devoid of politics (Rankin, 2009; Jabary Salamanca, 2016). Distortions and difference (i.e. the margins) are then easily deemed incommensurate with order, and the logic of common sense. Articulated as the enemy, they become a threat and legitimate target of this violence (D. Cowen, 2014; Peleg, 2007; Ghanem, 2010; Yiftachel and Yacobi, 2003).

For example, I. Chatterjee (2009) discusses urban space in Ahmedabad as a 'morphology of violence' that re-imagines and re-orders everyday life. In this context, roads, infrastructure, and buildings are treated as potential targets of 'the enemy' (the poor Muslim residents of the city), and thus are built to secure space against these threats. D. Cowen's (2014) descriptions of the *International Recommended Transit Corridor*, a maritime corridor that runs to and from the Suez Canal along the coast of Somalia, resonates similar themes; wherein 'disruption' to the flow of maritime transport is deemed (and represented as) threatening, criminal and morally wrong. In a region known for attacks on transport ships by 'Somali Pirates', the international community has imbued the corridor with a "profound re-working of the way law governs space" to enable the employment of Martial Law (D. Cowen, 2014, p.130)<sup>5</sup>. The paradoxical employment of international legal frameworks to enforce a constitutive non-space<sup>6</sup> enables EU military and privately contracted security convoys to protect freight ships at any cost, including killing Somali nationals, without deference to Somali national sovereignty over its own waters and peoples.

Thus, in peeling back these layers, development, national institution-building, urbanism, capitalism, even 'war to peace transitions', are exposed as violent projects that seek to "make a tabula rasa" of differences and anomalies in geography (Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner and Elden, p.6; Benton, 2010). With the appearance of homogeneity and unobstructed capitalist flows essential for territorial hegemony (Brenner and Elden, 2009; D. Cowen, 2014), violence is instrumental in bridging the dissonance between what is real and what is imagined.

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<sup>4</sup> Given the extensive spectrum of texts that unpack Lefebvre's dialectic of 'conceived, perceived and lived' space, we do not develop these ideas in full, in this paper. For more detailed discussion see instead Brenner and Elden (2009), Karplus and Meir (2014), Winichakul (1994), Massey (2004), Purcell (2002) Harvey (1989, 2001, 2006), Holston (2010), Yacobi (2009), among many others.

<sup>5</sup> That said, law is and always has been a key interlocutor of imagined geographies. Throughout history, it has been employed in ordering and shaping territoriality in colonial and post-colonial contexts, and legitimising the re-writing of indigenous/subaltern space and life. The work of Benton (2010) on legal geography and empire building in 'the New World' and Kedar (2003) on Israel's legal-land regime, offer clear examples of the relevance of law to geographic epistemologies.

<sup>6</sup> The international law in question dates back to 1898. It describes pirates as universal criminals, enemies of all states and thus subject to prosecution by all states (D. Cowen, 2014).

Let's consider for a moment past and contemporary interventions in the socio-political-ecological matrix encountered in national, subnational and transnational 'searches for sovereignty' (over nature, space and people) (Benton, 2010). In Sheikh and Weizman's (2015) explorations of de-desertification in Palestine/Israel, Klein's (2016) discussion of the nexus between oppression and ecological devastation, or D. Cowen's (2014) analysis of security corridors along global commodity chains, we are given a glimpse into how violence under-writes and is folded into geographic epistemologies. Each describes the material violence of penetrating and drawing new outlines in and onto space. Producing and then criminalising 'the other', 'conflict-borders' are constructed where there were none before, (within which law is often suspended for the sake of 'the public good'). New modes of domination and dispossession are introduced that push at both the frontiers of nature and the edges of not-yet hegemonic state-spaces (Falah, 2003; Sheikh and Weizman, 2015). The result is the violent transformation of land and life (I. Chatterjee, 2009; Harvey, 2006). Moreover, as space is rationalised to suit the extractive needs of capitalism and/or the territorial ambitions of hegemonic groups, a legal-moral lexicon is produced that asserts the moral imperatives of such processes, imbuing them with humanitarian 'goodness', 'progress' and 'development' (allegedly based on endocentric 'needs' for technological/modern advances) (Rankin, 2009; Jabary-Salamanka, 2016, forthcoming). The work of Lefebvre (1991), Brenner and Elden (2009), Ballvé (2011), Winichakul (1994) and Yacobi (2016) resonate in these narratives, in so far as the re-writing of these landscapes embeds and is embedded in the transformation of an entire system of political, social and economic relations. As Brenner and Elden (2009) explain, "it involves new ways of envisioning, conceiving, and representing the spaces within which everyday life, capital accumulation, and state action are to unfold" (p.359).

### 1.1.2 Ruptures in Geography

According to Lefebvre (1991), Brenner and Elden (2009) and Ballvé (2011), the territorialisation of 'state space' is an effect of capitalism's impulse to expand and flow, and then to cover, and remove disruptions and differences (Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner and Elden, 2009; Ballve, 2011); in other words, to territorialise their modes of production and discipline of space. However, the expansion and mobilisation of dominant (capitalist) forces is uneven and spatially selective (Harvey, 2006; Lefebvre, 1991; Brenner and Elden, 2009; D. Cowen, 2014; Benton, 2010). In unravelling the fragments and hierarchies that exist between communities and spaces, we find capitalist flows are contingent on multiple internal contradictions. These contradictions are bound up in the fact that capitalism is not an abstract ideal that encounters and shapes empty space – although this is the image spatial regimes of power attempt to project. While it is true that local arenas are bent to the will of capitalist forces, capitalism also morphs to local conditions, local actors and struggles (Harvey, 2005).

Harvey's (1982, 2001) theory of capitalism's constant impetus towards a 'spatial fix' captures the crux of these contradictions, as it examines both mobility and immobility as inherent to capitalist modes of accumulation and dispossession. As the term 'fix' alludes, there are polar forces at work in the never-ending search for new resources, spaces and markets in which to invest, and new mechanisms through which to consolidate and transform them. Capitalism's modus operandi is to 'move or die', as D. Cowen (2014) eloquently puts it. However, capitalist activity must also be 'grounded' somewhere (Harvey, 2006). Capitalism requires infrastructure, factories, ports, cities and regulatory systems – a landscape – in order to function. It must be fixed and secured in space and must remain mobile, at the same time. As Massey (1993), citing Robins (1991) explains, this is a core articulation of urban development: "the city as container and the city as flow" (Robins, p.12; in Massey, p.67). Thus, the fix is always untenable. It accumulates and then over-accumulates, re-writing the social order and then cannibalising it before it must move on to make way for a new 'spatial fix'; new pathways through which to accumulate new 'stuff' (cf. D. Cowen, 2014). This drive towards movement and expansion is only a way to avert, displace and/or stave off the inevitability of crisis within capitalist social and spatial relations (Hanieh, 2010). It is a 'fix' that is always temporary, as space and time are compressed into the service of a system that must grow in order to live, but must also parasitically live, in order to grow (Harvey, 2001).

The ruptures occur when space can no longer be overcome, when geography is no longer 'smooth', and capital is already moving on. As Harvey (2001) argues, "Not only are the contradictions of capitalism worked through and embedded in the production of the geographical landscape, but these contradictions can and manifestly have at certain historical points been the locus of political-economic earthquakes that have shaken the prospects for further capital accumulation to their very core" (p. 27). As an example, we can consider the bereft apocalyptic landscape of the U.S.'s once thriving manufacturing 'belt' in its Mid-Western states. These have been nick-named 'the rust belt' in the aftermath of factories being moved to Mexico's border-provinces, after NAFTA opened North America to neoliberal globalisation and de-regulation in the 1980s and 1990s. The re-writing of labour and gender relations in Mexico – which led to the displacement and dispossession of millions of men and women living within the new manufacturing 'borderlands' – are but a sample of the repercussions of channelling American capital into newly exceptionalised trade and tax zones. These were developed as non-constitutive spaces, where labour and land could be incorporated into the market, at a much 'cheaper' cost after borders were opened to capitalist movements and neoliberal policies (Hu-Dehart, 2003; Castaneda, 2003). An additional contradictory consequence of these movements lies in the fact that while American jobs in the rust belt were lost due to the displacement of factories to Mexico and China, there has been a mass influx of illegal labour migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries, due to the destruction of local structures, markets and industries. As this example demonstrates, the margins are produced as spaces in which the 'centre' fixes itself, whether they are margins of a particular state, or global margins of the capitalist centre/core<sup>7</sup>. In the Rust Belt, potential disruptions/stagnations to growth of capitalist accumulation in the US were allegedly contained (in its newly contoured edges and peripheries); and on the Mexico-US border, the exploitative and rapacious needs of capital, were likewise displaced to othered, distant places.

### **Case Box 1: 'Fixing' Labour Flexibility in the GCC**

In Hanieh's (2010) examination of the spatial structuring of class formations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), we are illuminated to other ways in which the 'fix' casts and then re-casts the borders to capitalist geography. In the example of the GCC, capitalism averts its 'crisis tendencies' through the "externality of labour market flexibility" (Hanieh, 2010, p.87). Rather than re-situate capital to new sites for investment, the GCC intentionally cultivates and employs a migrant and temporary labour force, which has no access to residency rights, no capacity to organise, and no roots in the country. In the ordinary functioning of its economy, this provides a disciplined, pliable and exploitable workforce. At any sign of protest or discontent, contracts are terminated and workers sent home. During periods of crisis, when major infrastructure work and capital investment projects are no longer tenable, the workforce is also easily and quickly dissolvable. As an example, during the global downturn of 2008 when oil prices plummeted, migrants were repatriated en masse, displacing the crisis' most severe social and economic reverberations (i.e. rampant unemployment) to the surrounding peripheries of the Asian and Arab world, from whence the majority of migrant workers are recruited. For example, in countries like Sri Lanka, where 20% of the population is dependent on remittance flows and 60% of these flows come from the Middle East, the impact could be devastating (ibid)<sup>8</sup>.

This inherent contradictory tension in capitalist mobility and immobility is reiterated in D. Cowen's (2014) emphasis on how 'capitalist flows' are orchestrated, and the violence produced in their wake. In her focus on logistics, she highlights the fact that capital doesn't just move in and of itself; it must be moved, pushed, coerced, driven, flown, sailed and circulated. As Harvey (2006) also contends, its agents are human actors that devise the networks along which movement occurs, as well as non-human structures (laws and regulations; roads and ports; trucks and ships; frontiers and borders) that physically outline or

<sup>7</sup> See discussion below on the relations between capitalist cores and peripheries, as part of a theorisation of the world as 'system' (Wallerstein, 1974; Frank, 1966; Amin, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> In Sri Lanka, official net remittance inflows declined around 2 percent from 2008- 2009, as compared to the 10-16 percent rate of increase for each preceding year since 2001 (Hanieh, 2010, p. 8.)

obscure its path (Benton, 2010; Weizman, 2007; Shamir, 2013; Jabary Salamanca, 2016, forthcoming). As mobility is (en)forced and yet deemed fundamental to global capitalism, its flows are inherently flawed and vulnerable. Given the 'dangerous threat' of disruption and derailment, the movements of capital must be secured, protected and surveyed at all times (D. Cowen, 2014).

Thus, fixed through yet another paradox that challenges our 'common sense' of geography, borders are rendered necessary (as opposed to obstructive) to the movement of goods. As D. Cowen (2014) argues, to make some things flow, others must be detained and contained (cf. Khalili, 2012). Thus, if we follow the actual pathways of global trade, our geographic imagination of globalisation, imperialism, even the networked capacity of global commodity chains to transcend borders, is disrupted (Elden, 2005)<sup>9</sup>. Rather than journeying across vast territorial expanses of homogenous smooth terrain (as depicted in Brenner and Elden's analysis of Lefebvre's 'state modes of production'), objects of trade are moved along restrained, limited pipelines; an archipelago of militarily secured corridors (like the maritime chains, discussed above) that both mobilises (goods) and immobilises (people). They justify, reify and entrench borders, in order to move beyond them.

### 1.1.3 The View from the Margins- Alternative Occupations

Disruption, both in the way geography is imagined and the way it is conceived and materialised, becomes a central theme in documenting the rapacious travels of capitalism (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014; Castenada, 2003; D. Cowen, 2014). From this vantage point, the 'dark zones' and 'invisible actors' – intentionally unseen and left out of hegemonic readings of space – are unveiled, and the racialised and gendered techniques of territoriality are made blatant and clear (Natanel, 2016; Castenada, 2003). As Castenada (2003) explains, "threaded within, between, underneath, around, inside and outside of sanctioned colonial, national and transnational histories, historia/story remembers and recodes the borderlands, bearing witness to the living past, the present and the future, belying officialdom's visible and invisible technologies of power to silence, deny, and obliterate" (p.xii). Seeking to unveil the gendered and patriarchal axes of 'territoriality', D. Cowen (2014) calls this work 'queering' our engagement with systems and regimes of power. Following Foucault's (1978) method of unpacking 'queerness', her approach emphasises the zones of abnormality and difference (in her case, regarding the flow of logistics)., As an analytic lens, it unravels the modes through which differences are disciplined and dislocated from the (hetero) 'normal' organisation of space, and thus life. Natanel (2016) and Castenada (2003) use a similar set of tools in their 'gendering' of geography. In labelling their investigation into frontier geographies as 'gendered', they unmask the visceral modes through which women, particularly migrant and indigenous women, are disappeared from the same discourse that makes the transformation of geography seamless, and capital, mobile. Yet, a 'queer' or 'gendered' approach to the contradictions that produce and fix uneven movements of territorial control, does more than reveal hidden people and places.

Looking through a 'queer' or 'gendered' lens at anomalies in geography, the system's instabilities and vulnerabilities are exposed, along with alternative modes through which to activate and occupy them (Benton, 2010; D. Cowen, 2014). While borders and borderlands are undoubtedly an effect of power – embodying crossroads and corridors through which power is circulated and translated - they are also zones of opportunity, spaces of dissonance and potential anchors for alternative social and political forms to take shape (Goodhand, 2015). The *Transborder Immigrant Tool* (TBT) produced by the *Electronic Disturbance Theatre*, offers an example of these 'alternative occupations'. Focused explicitly on the desert that guards the US-Mexico border, the tool utilises the same GPS networks that secure and survey the logistical journeys of (legal) goods to re-code and re-orient the dangerous journey of people moving across borders without legal protection. The TBT gives instructions for sustenance and survival – including a map of water resources – through poetic epigraphs, as it attempts to challenge the de-humanised political narrative surrounding illegal immigrants (Marino, 2013).

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<sup>9</sup> For more in-depth discussion of globalisation theorists, who 'miss the point' as they de-territorialise national and international boundaries and flows, see Elden, 2005.

We find in this shifting focus, a compliment to scholarship by Van Schendel (2004, 2002a), Baud and Van Schendel (1997), Kalir, Sur and Van Schendel (2007), Gellner (2013) and Goodhand (2013, 2015), as these authors also grapple with the myopia of the state in its dealings with its margins, and thus attempt to re-conceptualise ‘the gravitational pull’<sup>10</sup> of borders and borderlands vis a vis the centre. In counter analyses of the margins, scholars bring into view how different forces operate to write-out (and white-out) the communities that live ‘at the peripheries’ of the state, of central hubs of power, and of hegemonically defined moral goodness and rightness (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011; Yacobi, 2016). For example, in Massey’s (1993) writings about the ‘power-geometry of time space-compression’, she challenges Harvey’s presumption that ‘capitalism’ is at the heart of all spatial relationships, as she re-directs her inquiry towards the ways in which power is articulated in the mobility of different (gendered) social groups and individuals. She notes that “different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others: some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” (p.61). This is not about simply highlighting the otherwise unseen experiences of women, migrants, black labourers, or indigenous protestors at the various junctures and ruptures in imagined/common sense geographies (which they also do). It is about refining our tools for analysing the spatialisation of gendered and racialised hierarchies, as the (non)limits to development, law, protection and detention are cast and re-cast. It is, as Gregory (2004) suggests, about finding new ways to map and narrate geography, in ways that support those at the margins in shaping, occupying and producing space, in more just and inclusive terms. As our project moves forward, this remains one of its key purposes.

## Case Box 2: Re-Occupying the Seam Lines

As discussed throughout this first section, we are seeking out different methods for re-casting the disciplining power of states and colonial regimes, through the variegated vantage points and experiences of ‘the margins’. As an example of research that interrogates geographic epistemologies and cultivates counter-modes for understanding and engaging them, we present a project being developed by the ‘Decolonising Architecture Art Residency’ (DAAR) in Beit Sahur, Palestine, which they call ‘The Lawless Line’ . ‘The Line’ (or lines) they are describing emerged out of the Oslo Process (the series of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority/PLO leadership that began in Oslo 1993 and ran until the Second Intifada in 2000). As part of the negotiations, three types of territories were defined with various modes of cooperation and governing structures: those that would be under exclusive Palestinian control (known as Area A), those that were under Israeli military control and Palestinian civilian administration (known as Area B) and those that were claimed and exclusively controlled by Israel (Area C; these included 60% of contiguous territory in the West Bank, and incorporate the main settlement blocks). Eventually (and some might say inevitably ) the Oslo process broke down, and what was meant to be a temporary situation “solidified into a permanent splintered geography of multiple prohibitions” (DAAR, 2016). At this point, according to DAAR, a fourth ‘place’ was discovered: “Existing between all others – it was the width of the lines separating them. With area A, B and C already claimed by different forms of cooperating governments that rule the West Bank, the thickness of the line represents an extraterritorial territory, perhaps “all that remains” from Palestine, a thin but powerful space for potential political transformations.”

The project is a multi-media exploration of the ‘line’, and the multiple spatial effects of its articulation of a legal and political ‘void’ between Israel and Palestine. The space it inhabits, a seam line that primarily runs around the edges of Jerusalem, on the ‘wrong side’ of the Separation Wall, does not sit comfortably in either Palestinian or Israeli systems of law, governance, or securitisation. In one section of the project, DAAR’s artists explore a court case in which a lawyer brings the line to court, “claiming it as an autonomous space”, with clear reverberations for Israeli closure and restricted entry permit systems for Palestinians living outside the Jerusalem municipality. In another, they explore a ‘red castle’ built with

<sup>10</sup> This phrase (the gravitational pull) is specifically teased out of Van Schendel (2004).

edges that reach just past the line. It was built on the basis of a building permit from the Palestinian Authority, yet is being threatened with demolition by Israeli security forces for impinging on 'Israeli jurisdiction' (area C). In a way, this is the epitome of a (fast shrinking) borderland zone, a grey space where legality and illegality overlap, and where networks overrun and yet are determined by an arbitrary but still somewhat 'open' border (at least compared to other sealed, more rigidly closed areas). The line is still constantly being pushed at, freyed, extended and re-made in the direct and subversive ways that people experience and transgress this line; and in the ways in which the state attempts to secure it (i.e. revoking residency status from Jerusalem natives who have been forced to shift their centre of life to the 'West Bank' side of this line). The project's concluding words resonate with D. Cowen's (2014), Harvey's (2006), Gregory's (2004), and Massey's (1993) calls for new modes of narrating, analysing, mapping and ultimately occupying space. By starting from the particular, durable 'thing' we see in space – as with the anomaly, the line, the border, or the margin – we develop the tools to understand, to penetrate, and thus, to rupture a system:

"Investigating the clash of geopolitical lines onto the domestic space of a house, and operating on the margin between architecture, cartography and legal practice, our project brings up a case that calls for an anarchic regime of political autonomy to inhabit this line. It is in the extraterritorial dimension of these seam lines, small tears in the territorial system that lays the possibility for tearing apart the entire system of division" (DAAR, 2016).

## 1.2 INTERROGATING BORDER LEXICONS

### 1.2.1 The Power to Name

As alluded to throughout the above section, there is a vast literature that attempts to unravel the historical and material productions of border-spaces<sup>11</sup>. Much of this work challenges 'the view from the centre' that marginalises agentive processes at the edges of the state. Many go even further, working from the vantage point of the border to critically analyse the uneven processes that perform the border (as exceptional spaces) and the violent modes that are used to (dis)order that which is distant and different from the centre. Some, including Goodhand (2013, 2015), Scott (2009), Nugent (2002), Van Schendel (2004), Novak (2011), Kalir and Sur (2007) and Gellner (2013), shift their approach completely, to unpack how ordinary lives interact with, challenge, and/or reify border spaces, shifting power relations as new opportunities and modes of production are opened on the border. For example, Novak's (2011) discussion of 'flexible territoriality' and the Durand Line that divides and connects Afghanistan and Pakistan, highlights the multiple scales of "discourse and action" that produce and are produced by the boundary between states. His work implies that the same line that is imbued with colonial ordering – which labelled Afghanistan a 'buffer state' for imperial powers penetrating Asia in the 1920s – and further enforced and transgressed by state-centred strategies, are also simultaneously a product of (and 'filled' by) social relations (cf. Nugent, 2002). Here, as we investigate how geographic imagination constellates in the discourses used to name and know, and thus master and determine these processes and places (Benton, 2010; Said, 1978), we attempt to build from and complement this literature. We follow its reconfiguration of the border's material and social productions as central to state space: how it generates and is generated from its hinterlands, how it orders and is ordered by the contradictions inherent in its (mobile/flexible) territoriality, and how it informs and is informed by the operations of power.

In the following section, the ways in which 'border-labels' are produced and normalised are spotlighted as part of a set of dialectic productions. Within the lexicon that names (or refuses to name) divisions and enclosures as borders, state margins as 'borderlands' or 'frontiers', distant spaces as 'peripheries', 'enclaves', or competing 'hubs' and 'centres', the relationship between geographic epistemologies and material processes for shaping and destroying life is further clarified. This section works with but also past

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<sup>11</sup> It would be difficult to list even a small portion of these. Thus, for reference, the following is a list of those texts that incorporate in-depth reviews of this range of literature: Paasi and Newman (1998), Baud and Van Schendel (1997), Paasi (1996, 2009, 2011), Prado (2012), Goodhand (2015), Donnan (2015), Perez-Nino (2015), among many others.

the idea that different material relations, forces and flows characterise a particular region as ‘peripheral’ or ‘anomalous’ to the centres of power; that different types of borders have different spatialities and thus different impacts on the dynamics of capitalist and social relations in these places (which then resonate in the larger scales of national and transnational relations that congregate at the border). Pooling together the diverse ways of naming and narrating geography, and how these resonate in the mobility and immobility of law, violence, goods, capital and people, the axiomatic nature of geography is challenged. As we investigate (or, using D. Cowen’s terminology, ‘queer’) how ‘borders’ are conceived, concretised and lived, we recognise that it is not the space that orders power relations, but power relations that order space.

### 1.2.2 Centres and Peripheries – Geographies of Power

*“Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing.”*

*Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, 1899, p.76*

The language that names ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ is laced with normative connotations; a set of geographic tropes that do more than just resonate with colonial and imperial productions of maps and communities. We work with them, here, as a way to unravel the dynamics of power that articulate and produce uneven global, national and local development and divisions, as much as a way to understand the types of spaces they attempt to ‘explain’.

Among the earliest lash back against such terms, and the modes of territoriality they signify, we find the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) on World Systems Theory and Andre Gunder Frank (1966), on Dependency Theory. Both offered critical approaches through which to distinguish and analyse the interdependence of economic and political relations, between what they label ‘core’ countries and ‘periphery’ and ‘semi-periphery’ countries. WST emerged as a direct challenge to modernisation theory (in vogue in 1950s and 1960s development policy and practice<sup>12</sup>) and its assumption that all countries could pursue the same evolutionary path to development. Instead, in a wealth of debates –much of it grounded in Marxist analysis of capitalist spatiality; and much of it stemming from the Global South, from the vantage point of ‘the periphery countries’ – WST drew attention to the transnational structures and uneven constellations of power that constrained development in many parts of the world. Overlapping as they do with the colonial productions and imaginations of global space, advocates of WST and Dependency Theories argued that the wealth of core countries was directly dependent upon the systemic exploitation of marginalised zones (see for example Santos, 1970, Amin, 1970, Brenner, 1982). According to this argument, the way in which the world capitalist system has developed over the past five or six centuries and is now structured, thus serves to entrench development in the Global North and underdevelopment in the Global South (ibid). In more acute readings of the system, authors like Amin (1970), recalibrated the idea of global cores and peripheries, to include internal differentiations, with metropolises/urban centres acting as key nodes of exploitation within global capitalist relations. These sites of heightened capital accumulation within peripheral countries were linked to, and embedded in the production of unequal and dependent development in the global south.

In its more radical form, the language of core and periphery became a way of justifying wholesale denunciation of mainstream development economics (see Santos, 2011; Vergara-Camus, 2014 as well as the literature coming out of the Zapatista, Brazil’s Landless Workers – the MST - and La Via Campesina Movements). These range from a rejection of free trade – and the notion that countries could develop by focusing on what they had a ‘comparative advantage’ in – and support for protectionism and import-substitution industrialisation; to advocating the need for poor countries to de-link national economies

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<sup>12</sup> The use of centre and periphery has strong antecedents within modernisation theory, and holds a particular impetus for early anthropological interest in ‘othered’ spaces, and the middle-men and brokers able to move between and connect them. Investigations of these themes can be found in Wolf (1956), Geertz (1960) and Bailey (1960), but are also discussed more extensively in Section Two, on borders and brokerage, below.

from the global system and promoting sites and sources for alternative development. However, the idea of 'core-periphery' relations has also been incorporated into mainstream International Relations theory, to explore how countries are positioned in relation to global political and economic systems.

In the colonial past and present, 'centres' and 'peripheries' operate as salient descriptors of variegated "spheres of imperial sovereignty", evoking particular patterns of law and development (Benton, 2010, p.296). The 'centre' is conceived and perceived as a hub of political and economic order and superiority – infused with whiteness, European history, and capitalist/modernist logics – from which power radiates outwards (Said, 1978; Gregory, 2004; Kothari and Wilkinson, 2010; Yacobi, 2016). It is a space where the action happens and where political authority and capital is embedded and spatially fixed. It is deemed a space of modernity, framed in comparison to less developed peripheries, passively awaiting the state's "civilising mission" (Scott 2009; Cramer and Richards, 2011; Peluso and Lund, 2011).

The periphery – as an imagined and material production – does not exist separate from the centre (and vice versa) (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011). It is constructed through multiple processes that actively link the two, whereby the same processes that assert the periphery as primitive and underdeveloped, articulate the centre as 'modern', and the power it wields, legitimate. This enables agents of the centre and elite groups to determine the subalternity and thus the governability (and governmentality) of the periphery, while characterising the populations who live there as 'marginal' (cf. Li, 2007 and Foucault, 1991 for discussion of the spatial effects of governmentality). It moreover imbues the centre-elites with legitimacy and thus the authority to act upon, rather than with, these non-hegemonic others – often through the use of state-sanctioned violence – for the sake of bolstering the centre, at the expense of the periphery (i.e. extracting resources from the periphery that are then used to empower elites at the centre). However, this is not performed top-down, from centre-outwards, but incorporates multiple asymmetric processes of incorporation and circumvention, coercion and consent (cf. Gramsci, 1999).

This is clearly construed through Mamdani's (1996) theorisation of the spatiality of a two-tiered system of governance (his theory of bifurcated states), informed by colonial conquest on the African continent. Colonial power was mostly concentrated in urban 'centres' and spaces of capital accumulation; primarily port cities that linked the national economy with international trade, or those centres positioned at the edges of riverine and railway networks that linked sites of production (such as mines) and labour supply to these cities (Benton, 2010; Cooper, 2005). These became the sites of colonial authority, and the core of an uneven political and economic topography that enabled the colonial power to entrench its authority over newly captured territories (Cooper, 2005). As Mamdani (1996) asserts, it was there that they imposed direct rule, importing new tax, legal and education systems. It was there that previous structures of power were directly dismantled and replaced, and where colonial subjects were directly denied access to the state. At the same time, in the rural and distant zones of the colonial landscape – the "putative" periphery – control was articulated by whatever means would ensure stability as cheaply as possible, often incorporating and strengthening "traditional" authorities, reifying customary rule and seeking to govern through forms of Native Authority. This "decentralized despotism" empowered and reified local structures of authority and patronage networks beyond the control of the state, entrenching divisions that still to this day persist between urban centres and rural peripheries (ibid). Mamdani goes on to demonstrate how this model has since been reproduced and inverted by postcolonial states; with bifurcated systems of rule, rights and privilege continuing to shape relations between the rural periphery and urban centre, which further informs our understanding of territoriality as an ongoing and ceaseless project of colonial pacifications, in the present.

Ultimately, the different forces that produce 'centre' and 'periphery' cannot be divested from the contradictory forces that move and yet territorialise capital in uneven terms (discussed above, as the 'Spatial Fix') (Harvey, 2006; 2001). 'Capital' constellates in particular places, as it requires a 'fixed'/embedded material and social infrastructure from which to (re)produce its logics. From here, its others and margins are produced; its abandoned and "abased" peripheries (Lefebvre, 1976-1978; in Brenner and Elden, 2009). These are not pre-given, unidirectional processes, in which territory is simply

empty (or emptied), and people purely malleable; although, as colonial/capitalist geography becomes common sense, this is how both are presented (ibid). They are, instead, dialectically produced; an outcome of (violent) encounters between multiple systems of social and economic relations, colonial imaginations and material realities, and agents of the intervening system (colonial, capital, national) and those people already inhabiting these spaces. This informs the variegated (seemingly bifurcated) systems of (dis)incorporation we see across (post)colonial projects (Mamdani, 1996; Kalir, Sur and Van Schendel, 2007). At the same time, the ordering of space into 'centre' and 'periphery' is under-written and interwoven with a moral discourse that determines one as good, the other bad; and thus justifies and entrenches both the experience of marginality in the 'periphery' and the multiple modes used to colonise, govern and perform the spectrum of violence needed to secure unruly people and places (Cooper 2005; Said, 1978; Gregory, 2004; Thomas, 2002; Goodhand, 2013; Yacobi, 2016).

### *The shifting dialectics of centre and periphery*

The power to name centre/periphery resonates in how geography is materialised and normalised. It enables (and is used by) the centre to position itself at the interface between the national and the international, in relation to other centres of power, and thus to control inflows of capital, trade and aid, and inform the way capital is fixed and flows (D. Cowen, 2014; Harvey, 2006). These are articulated in and legitimised through hierarchies of law, jurisdiction, infrastructure, and capitalist relations. These material relations, in turn, produce the unevenness that cements the centre, and orders the periphery's links to and dislocation from central nodes of power.

Analysing the geographic landscape in terms of the presence (or non-existence) of roads, electricity/water grids, bus routes, police stations and other technologies of 'legibility', 'mobility', and 'stability', further reiterates and renders the periphery as somehow always incomplete, violent and unruly (Shamir, 2013; Jabary Salamanca, 2016, forthcoming; Thomas, 2002; Wilson, 2004; Mitchell, 2002; McGahern, 2016). This allows the state free reign in its methods for disciplining the margins, to bring them in service of the centre. These become spaces where violence is permitted and used to pacify 'the other' (Mbembe, 2003), and where modes of governance, organisation and lawfulness are more easily suspended and challenged. Sitting outside the centre's radar (Wacquant, 2007; Shamir, 2013), these (un)governable spaces produce multiple and complex struggles over geography (Korf et al, 2010, Yiftachel, 2009); wherein violent modes of capitalist accumulation, dispossession and exploitation can persist unseen and disconnected from spaces of civility and liberal morality (Korf et al, 2010; Mamdani, 1996; Cooper 2005).

At the same time, these relations of space are constantly being made, un-made and re-made; shifting under the conditions that mould and reproduce the periphery in the first place. Peripheries entrench their own logics and power relations, producing new opportunities through their dissonance and distance from the centre, with the potential to develop as new nodes of power and capitalist production (Van Schendel, 2004; Goodhand and Meehan, 2016). This is not to assume a subversion of power relations, wherein the periphery becomes the centre and the centre the periphery. Rather, we make the point that these may produce links to other sites and actors, producing centre-periphery relations along different axes, and additional nodes of power and subalternity (Tartir, 2016).

Moreover, given the penetration of contemporary global capitalism into the spatial logics of the state, the mobility of capital is no longer organised around fixed boundaries between centre and margins, if, in light of Benton's (2010) historical account of legal and geographic anomalies and enclaves, it ever was. Instead, as D. Cowen (2014) and Hagmann and Stepputat (2016) claim, the spatial logics of capitalism and states are founded upon corridors and networks that to a degree transcend these divisions and create more complex forms of overlapping interconnection and marginalisation. The casinos in Myanmar's borderlands offer an example: These compounds are tucked away in the country's poor and remote hills, governed by armed groups in territory beyond central government control, and yet are funded by investors from Singapore, Hong Kong and Macao. They pander to wealthy gamblers across mainland China and use the internet to circumvent the country's anti-gambling laws. These activities have financed towns with better

internet connections and electricity supply than most of the rest of Myanmar, and epitomise the kinds of networks of global communication and capital that complicate notions of centre and periphery (see Meehan, 2015, for more details).

As discussed above, 'centre-periphery' as an analytical tool offers multiple entry points into how space is conceived, rendered and produced. Yet, its key contribution is as a way to understand different fixtures of settlement, power, and sovereignty in relation to others. These are always changing and being re-written, as new pipelines of capital are mobilised to reach new spaces, actors and markets; and as new modes of violence are employed to smooth out the connections (Tartir, 2016; D. Cowen, 2014). However, the legitimacy, morality and power of one (or multiple 'ones') is always determined in dialectic relation to the illegitimacy, irreconcilability, and dissonance of the other. You can't have a centre without a periphery, and vice versa.

### 1.2.3 Anomalies and Enclaves – the View from the (Enclosed) Edges of Space

There are multiple processes engaged in the production of geographic anomalies, building from imaginative geography, colonial sensibilities, and the mediation of social relations found within them. In the uneven movements of empire, enclaves often represented outposts of imperial power and sovereign nodes within indigenous hinterlands (Benton, 2010). In the narrations of indigenous resistance, enclaves represent spaces of non-recognition, spaces of hope, spaces of dissidence and disruption (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2007; Reece, 2012). However, as D. Cowen (2014) reminds us, from the lens of global capital and the smooth movements of trade, enclaves hold more ambiguous significance and meaning: They may be zones of exception, in which labour laws and tax regulations can be suspended, as exemplified in the Chinese acquisition of the Greek Port of *Peraus*, and its importing and imposing of the Chinese labour model to Greece and onto Greek dock workers (D. Cowen, 2014). They may manifest as capitalist hubs, through and from which the uninterrupted travel and traffic of commodities can be ensured, as with the logistics city of Basra in Iraq. Basra is a military-base turned high-tech logistics hub that polices and controls all movement – human or otherwise – in and out of the contested and unstable arenas that surround it (ibid). Others are (or are represented as) potential threats and disruptions that must be contained, surveyed, controlled. This is the case with the spatial production (and strangulation) of Arab-only localities in the north of Israel, where legal and planning regimes are employed as technologies of de-development and de-politicisation, to ensure their collective vulnerability and dependency on the state (McGahern, 2016; Newman, 1984; Falah, 1985, 2003; Wesley, 2013; and Plonski, 2017, forthcoming).

Enclaves are constructed in liminal terms, separate from and yet part of our geographic rationalising of global space (Van Schendel, 2002a). As Benton (2010) argues:

*“Enclaves such as missions, trading posts, towns and garrisons were strung like beads along inter-connected corridors. These imperial outposts coexisted with other kinds of enclaves, including areas of partial or shared sovereignty within larger spheres of influence or rule. Such zones might form when peoples or polities fended off formal conquest, bargained for a measure of autonomy or courted rival imperial sponsors for protection. Colonial powers found reasons to create semiautonomous spaces that were legally and politically differentiated from more closely controlled colonial territories. Together these patterns and practices produced political geographies that were uneven, disaggregated and oddly shaped – and not at all consistent with the image produced by monochrome shading of imperial maps” (p.2).*

Imagining and then constructing the margins as enclaves imbues them with their own centres of power and their own sensibilities (Van Schendel, 2002a). However, this seems to pivot on their remaining disconnected and separate. 'Periphery', as noted above, holds within it a different, albeit, overlapping set of material experiences to 'the edge' (which is why we present them separately). Articulating a particular place as 'periphery', seems to assume that infusing this space with 'development', 'infrastructure', capital and appropriate links to the centre can reshape its trajectories; particularly in transitions from war to peace, from states of emergency to states of democracy (Rankin, 2009). Enclaves are produced with a set

of geographic determinants: cut off, enclosed, unreachable and remote (cf discussions of spatial havens in Scott, 2009)<sup>13</sup>. As Van Schendel (2002a) explains in his analysis of Indian and Bangladeshi enclaves on either side of the international border, 'true enclaves' are territories of one state, completely surrounded by another. Un-administered by either, they are produced as non-state spaces, vulnerable, 'trapped' and uncomfortably disruptive to contiguities of nationhood, and state productions of space that surround them (Rabinowitz, 2001; Van Schendel, 2002a). These are positioned at the edges of space; not always on the borders between states, but always deemed marginal to the movements and mobilities of state space (even when they aren't, as Van Schendel, 2002a, contends). As Kothari and Wilkinson (2010) explore the colonial imaginary that reconfigured Africa's tropical islands as prisons or empty (and empty-able) strategic outposts, imbued with 'exotic beauty' and 'unknown mysteries', we get a sense of this geographic rendering and the power that operates with and through it. "Recurrently represented as archetypally 'unexplored', 'isolated', 'remote', 'empty' spaces, 'oas[es] in a desert of sea', 'paradisial land-specks', and 'dots on an ordinary map', as with other 'unknown' lands, these islands have tended to invoke the allure of terra incognita" (p.1398).

Yet, despite their rendition as such, enclaves are not spaces in which social and political relations are cut-off from the circuits of power and its twin soldiers of violence and surveillance (cf. Foucault, 1997, who labels such spaces 'heterotopias' or 'non-spaces'). Rather, their contours are porous and flexible, situated in and influenced by larger scales and scapes (Harvey, 2006). While the 'enclave' mediates its own gendered and racialised hierarchies, its social space refracts from and reproduces the system in which they are embedded (Harvey, 2006; Khotari and Wilkinson, 2010). This stems from inclusion as much as exclusion from the journeys of empire, neoliberalism and logistics networks (D. Cowen, 2014). As Falah's (2003) discussion of enclaves and exclaves points out – along with the discussion of mobility and immobility in Jabary Salamanca (2016, forthcoming), D. Cowen (2014), Peteet (2016), McGahern (2016) and Shamir (2013) – zones of difference and darkness are often intentionally produced as such, and easily circumvented or integrated into the production of state territories and capitalist spaces. Space is ordered and governed through exclaving and accumulating resources (without always needing to displace people). Routes and corridors are devised for the movement of goods – which either bypass or disrupt the congruity of 'othered' spaces – whereas people are gated, imprisoned, marginalised and contained. They are policed through modes of neglect and negation as opposed to direct acts of spatial segregation (Yacobi and Yiftachel, 2003; McGahern, 2016; Wacquant, 2007; Newman, 1984). Thus, the view from the centre is that it continues to determine relations between the enclaves and the outside world, without needing to fully control what is happening within these anomalies in geography (and politics). At the same time, the view from the margins, both in how it produces agency and in how it engages the centre, is often completely different.

In reading Falah (1989, 2003), Benton (2010), D. Cowen (2014) Yiftachel (2009), Yacobi (2016), Coulthard (2014), Reece (2012), Karplus and Meir (2015) and Scott (2009, 2016), we find that enclaves hold within them (sometimes forgotten) stories of resistance, struggle and/or non-recognition; even as they are fitted into an archipelago of uneven state spatialities. They often decry direct penetrations by states and empire, with the eventual result of producing their own language and knowledge; even their own legal, economic and political systems (Scott, 2009; Yiftachel, 2009; Van Schendel, 2002a; Plonski, 2017, forthcoming). However, they are not exceptions, and we should shy away from theories and discussions of them as such (Benton, 2010). They proliferate colonial landscapes and modern nation-states, whether rendered as part of or off the radar of official cartographies (Benton, 2010; Van Schendel, 2002a). The Bedouin unrecognised villages of the Naqab desert in Israel provide an excellent case in point. These villages live off the grid of Israel's maps and official plans; claiming land according to indigenous territorial codes and producing spatiality incommensurate with the infrastructure and logics of the Jewish towns and

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<sup>13</sup> This depiction of enclaves overlaps with discursive/analytical conceptions of 'frontiers' (see Prado, 2012) and 'borderlands' (see Gellner, 2013), and is meant to be used as a lens for analysing borderland and frontier dynamics, given that they are produced and conceived as anomalies, edges and margins, delinked from the 'centre', or circumventing it altogether (Kalir, Sur and Van Schendel, 2007).

villages that surround them. They galvanise their own sources of electricity (using solar generators) and water (buying mineral water or tapping illegally into run-offs and pipelines, when legal access is deprived). They also organised their own governing structures – deprived, because they refuse to move to ‘legal’ settlements. At times they are left alone, so long as they remain within the limits of a small, triangular region of the desert, known as the *Seyag* (enclosure), which is bordered on one side by Jordan, and on the others by major highways; and so long as they make minimal demands or in-roads into state-spaces (i.e. no claims at court, no demands for services, no infrastructure development). At times, they are bombarded by state forces, seeking to reinforce the vulnerability of the villages within the state-order, through house demolitions and arrests. In 2016, for example, one of the villages will be destroyed in its entirety to make room for a Jewish-Israeli settlement; a decision officiated through the Israeli Supreme Court. However, the Unrecognised Villages, for the most part, persist at the margins, on the edges of state productions of space, and yet as central nodes of Bedouin social and political life and leadership.

These contradictory, paradoxical products and producers of spatiality have already been discussed and will continue to appear as tropes throughout these sections, as each ‘label’ produces discord between how space is imagined and rationalised, and how it is lived and experienced in ‘real life’ (Novak, 2011; Jabary Salamanca, 2016, forthcoming). These may be seen and devised as spaces of lawlessness, raw and rough capitalism and ruptured hegemony; and where violence is freed to make these spaces more or less legible to the needs and ambitions of the state or system of power, in which they are embedded. These may also be spaces of dissonance, disruption and otherness, where agentive processes reconfigure the centre’s influence.

These alternative views from the centre and from the margins cross-over and intersect, materialising the multiple relations we find in the margins. Resonating with Novak’s (2011) thesis (which brings together concepts from Foucault, Lefebvre and Harvey, discussed above) on the productive nature of boundaries, it is the fact that these ‘imaginaries’ meet, overlap, clash and accommodate one another that generates the dialectic positioning of the margins vis a vis the centre, the state, capitalist flows and the hegemonic system of power. These tensions and contradictions are what gives them their power and resonance, as they persist in contributing to how state-space is constituted (Van Schendel, 2002a). These ambiguities and complex realities, moreover, drive the need to incorporate the vantage-point of those who live in the margins (in enclaves, in borderlands, in peripheries) into how we analyse operations of power, state and capital. Not only because they change our view of state-imagined and rendered geographies, but because they hold within them their own realities and liminalities, tensions and ambitions, as well as their own life-stories to contrast the ‘view from centre’ (Gellner et al, 2013; Kalir and Sur, 2007; Baud and Van Schendel, 1997; Scott, 1999).

#### 1.2.4 Border Dynamics

*“As a political entity, a border, whatever its materiality, always marks a limit between two territorial and social entities. In this way, it is both a separation between an inside and an outside and an interface between adjacent socio-spatial systems or categories.*

*Christophe Sohn, 2016, “Navigating borders’ multiplicity: the critical potential of assemblage”, p.184*

*“I use the term boundaries here to convey more than just simple borders, lines dividing spaces as represented on maps; boundaries signify the point at which something becomes something else, at which the way things are done changes, at which ‘we’ end and ‘they’ begin, at which certain rules for behaviour no longer obtain and others take hold.”*

*Joel Migdal, 2004, “Mental Maps and Virtual Checkpoints: Struggles to Construct and Maintain State and Social Boundaries” p.5*

In this section, Migdal’s concept of boundaries (as somehow ‘more than borders’) and Sohn’s approach to borders (as both limit and point of engagement) are brought into conversation and in tension with one another, to extend our thinking around ‘borders’ in multiple ways. Not only in terms of defining what ‘borders’ are, but how they are (re)cast as part of the social space in which and by which they are

produced and the effects they have on those who interact with them. In both works, the idea that the 'border' – as a concept and as a phenomenon – is limited to a clash or convergence of (mutually agreed and articulated) territorial sovereignties is deeply questioned (Pallister-Wilkins, 2011; Benton, 2010). They further challenge the idea of a border as an axiomatic rendering of space on a map, and complicate it with the fact that bounded space/boundaries are narrated, operated and refracted in criss-crossing grids and intersections that appear everywhere, in material and social relations (see also Ehrenreich, 2016). Here, borders resonate as a way to experience and conceive of all forms of enclosures and sovereignties, within and across states and cities, as well as within our individual and personal lives (Saunders, 2016; Migdal, 2004; Massey, 1993). They include divisions between different administrative zones, the demarcations of private property from public commons, and also 'grey' or non-formal borders – such as those dividing the jurisdiction of different armed groups or those that distinguish indigenous space from those mapped out and imagined by colonial/imperial states (Karplus and Meir, 2015; Yiftachel, 2009; Coulthard, 2014). Whether formal or informal, symbolic or material, sovereign or occupied/colonised, all such lines participate in determining the differential physical and material experiences of people living on either side of them (Saunders, 2016; Sohn, 2016). They are, moreover, constantly being written and re-written, as different actors and agents engage with and transgress them (Nugent, 2002). Borders appear and disappear, the liminal marker between familiar and unfamiliar; but they are also the point at which multiple meanings, peoples, ways of thinking and ways of belonging encounter one another, clash, reiterate and reinforce or shatter (and overwhelm) that which divides them (Donnan and Wilson, 1999).

Folded within divisions of territory and people, are both arbitrary and social genealogies, which intersect lived and abstract, conceived and concrete productions of space (D. Cowen, 2014). As Nugent (in his discussion of the 'Ghana-Togo' border), Novak (analysing the Durant Line), Paasi (investigating the Finnish-Russian border), Gellner (examining Asian Borderlands) and Van Schendel (unravelling the 'Bengal' borders), argue, boundaries and borders are inscribed on the basis of multiple epistemologies. They hold in tension a spectrum of dialectics, as agents of state and agents of 'the margins', as well as those of empire and those of capital (among many others), engage with and extend the common sense as well as the material dynamics of the 'border'. However, what is also clear in these studies, and in the texts quoted above, is that these relations are not orchestrated evenly or smoothly. They are asymmetrically developed and enforced; producing and reproducing the gendered and racialised hierarchies, contradictions and inequalities that exist at multiple local, national and international scales (Migdal, 2004; Novak, 2011; Natanel, 2016; D. Cowen, 2014). They are, moreover, constantly being contested, as the divisions and privileges outlined between what is ostensibly 'ours' and 'theirs' is coercively drawn. Borders, of course, would mean nothing without law, military/state power, and violent modes of displacement and replacement to fix their meaning in life and geography.

These texts are further juxtaposed in order to help decipher the relevance of context, temporality and politics in naming space, and the relations generated from it. For example, Migdal's (2004) work references the case of Israel/Palestine in his spotlight on 'boundaries' versus 'borders'. In this context, the colonial power articulates its (internal) boundaries in light of an imagined and material border, which it has constructed to separate itself from the Arab/African landscape in which it is embedded (Yacobi, 2016; Shenhav, 2012). Migdal is attempting to highlight the social and cultural processes that stem from as well as inform the hierarchical ordering and rendering of Israeli and Palestinian 'geography'. At the same time, he is searching for a language and way of theorising the detrimental impact of the fluidity and flexibility of boundary processes in Israel. He does this in order to contrast them with the static and sovereign lines that he imagines demarcate states in other contexts; lines that would separate Israel from Palestine in legal and juridical terms. From this lens, static borders would put an end to the Israeli state's rapacious expansions and bound Israel to a territorial limit. However, when contrasted with the work of Novak (2011), Paasi (1996), Newman and Paasi (1996), and Donnan (2015), in which borders/boundaries are always socially generated, as well as territorialised and reproduced across multiple physical and cultural spaces, Migdal's distinction belies his particular experience of living in borderless space. To him, a border is (quite problematically) certain, permanent and finished; the moment when nation-hood and national space converge in formal, distinct and agreed-upon physical markers.

### *The material effects of the border/the border as material effect*

This discussion (of static versus moving ‘borders’) further advances the above analysis of the material dynamics of imaginative and moral geographies, in which state-space is emptied of struggle, and its contours are internalised and normalised. By articulating the border and cultivating a line that is deemed permanent and uncontested, the state and the system of power is also rendered as such ; thereby, binding sovereignty to territory and correlating national identity to finite boundaries (Brenner, 1999). How well this aligns with or reproduces the actual reality on the ground, speaks to how power is distilled, imposed and reproduced. At the same time, the border is always a product of negotiation and dialogue (Van Schendel, 2002a).

Yet, the multiple social forces that shape boundaries are emptied, forgotten and hidden in the folds and fabrics of abstract space, and abstract time. This is because borders are often seen and understood as technical things, strategies enforced and maintained from above, and distinguished by material and physical divisions that demarcate legal, administrative and sovereign spaces. Through this lens, they are expressed and governed by distinguishable sets of rules, which in turn structure the everyday lives of those living on either side of the border. Even when broken down in historical and critical analysis, they are often deemed a unidirectional, immovable and coerced process. As Sack argues (1986), the border is a “spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area...It simplifies issues of control and provides easily understood symbolic markers ‘on the ground’, giving relationships of power a greater tangibility and appearance” (in Anderson and O’Dowd 1999, p. 598; Novak, 2011, p. 742).

Yet, as we unravel their material effects/affects, as Novak (2011), Nugent (2002) and Van Schendel (2004) suggest, we find both the colonial intention of border-making – to make territory and people more easily legible and governable – and the reality of their being flexible spaces that manifest, in multiple engagements and proliferations. For example, even as European models of ordering and rationalising space proliferate across the (post)colonial world, with borders appearing as straight lines and mathematical curves, this is not the whole story (Van Schendel, 2002a; Elden, 2005). As Van Schendel (2002a) argues, despite the ahistorical myopia produced by border-lines (and the biased approach of European historians to non-European histories), all borders are generated by an inter-play of imaginations. According to both Yacobi (2016) and Massey (1993), the border is a porous and living thing; in real life, the lines and walls we build to keep ‘them out’ and ‘us in’ are never high enough (Massey, 1993).

### **Case Box 3: Living Borders**

The intervention and resonance of the border evolves as it re-writes the spatial and symbolic geographies of people (of natural/temporal boundaries), wherein their experiences and divisions are not coterminous with modern states and nation-building (Winichakul, 1994). This is wonderfully explored in Van Schendel’s (2004) work on the Bengal borderland. In this case, people’s imaginaries were shaped by languages, ethnicities, family ties, trade patterns and local economies that bore no resemblance to the state-ordered spaces created by partition. As Van Schendel’s work shows, “the tensions between the territorial exclusivity of the new state-sponsored nationalisms and the reality of cross-border identities and flows turned the borderland into a crucial arena of symbolic interaction, an enduring battleground of identity politics”(Van Schendel, 2004, p. 333). In such contexts borderland populations have commonly shown greater ‘loyalty’ to regional economies, trade networks and affiliations upon which their livelihoods are dependent upon, than to the nation-state they have found themselves to be (often a marginalised) part of. However, over time, the power that emanates from the inscription of borders means that even those borders that are drawn arbitrarily, in sudden ruptures of space and time, can develop powerful social/material genealogies (Nugent, 2002).

Borders become fixed, internalised and normalised as geographic common sense (Harvey, 2006), and over

time overwhelm and recast the social, political and economic alliances endemic to this space (Adelman and Aron, 1999). This does not mean that people cut ties with their kin-networks across borders, but they see them through the lens of their now different citizenship, notions of nationalism, spatial and political hierarchies, and rights and privileges (or lack thereof). The Palestinian citizens of Israel provide a second excellent case from which to illustrate this point: The 1949 borders that separated Palestinians living in the Galilee and 'Wadi Ara' region of Israel, from Palestinians in Jordan's West Bank<sup>14</sup>, were conceived as the boundary between 'Israel's Arabs' and the rest of the Arab world. The new border, on one hand, produced an arbitrary division between people, with the same history, language, culture, and even, in most cases, kinship circles. On the other, the line marked out the limits to different political systems, legislative and juridical structures, economic and national epistemologies. Moreover, it connected Palestinians on either side of the border to other people, forms of citizenship and identities, that were bound up in their evolving relationship with the new states on either side of the Armistice line. With more in depth details beyond the scope of this project, we focus instead on how these enclaves/borderland spaces held onto 'difference' – between those that inhabit them and the states that determined their limits. In Jordan, this stemmed and continues to stem from an ongoing discriminatory stance towards its citizens of Palestinian descent. In Israel, this is because, as Sayed Kashua (2006) articulates in his book *Let It Be Morning*, "They can't tell the difference between people like us, living inside Israel, and the ones living on the West Bank. An Arab's an Arab as far as they're concerned" (p.13). This difference was not only articulated inside Israel, but beyond; as Palestinian citizens were often "forgotten" and eventually "divorced" from the politics and peoples of the Middle East, and inevitably from the new Palestinian state being orchestrated on the other side of the 'line' (cf. Pappé, 2011; Bishara, 1997)<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, their experience as Israeli citizens – as the indigenous 'other' in settler-colonial space - has had a profound effect on how they see themselves, how they relate to the world and how the world relates to them. The border became real, divisive and stark (which was Israel's plan in the first place).

### 1.2.5 Frontier Dynamics

*"Against the geography of stable, static places, and the balance across linear and fixed sovereign borders, frontiers are deep, shifting, fragmented and elastic territories. Temporary lines of engagement, marked by makeshift boundaries, are not limited to edges of political space but exist throughout its depth. Distinctions between the 'inside' and 'outside' cannot be clearly marked"*

*Weizman, 2007, Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation, p.4*

A frontier can be understood as representing both a way of imagining space and as having distinct material dynamics and practices. It functions distinctly from spaces attached to 'fixed', 'static' and stable borders, as a space that moves and travels. Folded within its use is an 'intentionality', reminiscent of Sack's (1986), Said's (1978), and Gregory's (2004) analysis of colonial strategies for organising space. As Weizman (2007) argues in his forensic analysis of the occupation architecture of Palestine, frontiers are actively constructed, in multiple layers and tiers by a full range of military, civilian, bureaucratic and technical systems (cf. D. Cowen, 2014). As his approach to the Israel/Palestine case also demonstrates, the production of the frontier manifests in interstitial movements; not a wave, as Turner (1920) argues, but a set of bunkers, enclaves, non-contiguous nodes, frictions and fragments in space (Benton, 2010; Tsing, 2005; Kopytoff, 1987; Hagmann and Korf, 2009). These become concrete and permanent through their rendering in law, maps, plans and other epistemological discourses, alongside the development of security networks, infrastructure, roads, settlements and checkpoints (Weizman, 2007; Shamir, 2013; Jabary Salamanca, 2016, forthcoming; Benton, 2010). Operated and derived from the power and authority to absorb and/or erase the geography of 'the other', they also work to extend and protect or make invisible the 'thick lines' that divide people and space. Frontiers, in this sense, further the efficiency of 'state-space'

<sup>14</sup> After Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and the borders shifted beyond the Jordan river, new borderland pressures were produced on these lines; but this is not the point of this vignette. For further discussion of this 'line' and its effects on Palestinian lives, see Ghanem (2010), Pappé (2011), Jamal (2011), Zreik (2003), Bishara (1997, 2000), among others.

<sup>15</sup> That said, these lines have become less divisive in the last decade since the end of the Second Intifada.

(Brenner and Elden, 2009; Lefebvre, 1991), which entrenches protective borders around ‘the centre’, while maintaining the margins/periphery/conflict zones and even the hinterlands across the border as open-territory.

The frontier is characterised as a “morphology of contact”; spaces where what is deemed modern, lawful and safe, encounters and overwhelms alternative structures of authority and sovereignty, which are dialectically produced as unlawful and savage (Ziherl, 2016). The moral determination for what is other and, thus, excluded stems from the power to claim and name, as discussed above; which in turn proscribes a set of practices for how “the outside is produced, exploited and policed” (ibid). The frontier, like the other spaces discussed in this document, is perpetually being re-inscribed and re-written, in relation to the expanding and transformative logics of state-building, capitalist accumulation, and colonial/imperial territorialisation (Tsing, 2005).

Through this lens, the frontier is where two worlds meet, and the predicament of “how to turn a rebellious population into a value-producing labor force” plays out (Ziherl, 2016). The frontier is “envisioned as a limitless laboratory for the world spirit of capital” (ibid). It marks out – and externalises – the lines between us and them, and between ‘safe space’ and that which exists ‘beyond the pale’. It is a world still to be reined in and contained, where state violence becomes justified and “deemed to operate in the service of civilization” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 24). As the work of Peluso and Lund (2011) shows, “[f]rontiers are not sites where ‘development’ and ‘progress’ meet ‘wilderness’ or traditional lands and peoples. They are sites where authorities, sovereignties and hegemonies of the recent past have been or are currently being challenged by new enclosures, territorializations, and property regimes”(p. 668).

While frontiers, borderlands, enclaves and peripheries often overlap and share common spatial lexicons (in which violence, distance, unruly and ungovernable spaces are common descriptive tropes), frontier dynamics seem specifically divined by actions that push out and extend what is still (intentionally and often one-sidedly) imagined as a fixed yet moving border. This paradoxical constellation of mobility and fixity is perhaps best understood vis-à-vis the above explorations of Harvey’s (2001) ‘spatial fix’: Its ‘presence’ is delineated by a “fortressed and defensive architecture” (Ziherl, 2016), building concrete bunkers and barracks that hold onto transformed spaces, as frontier logics of continuing, never-ending conquest continue to move beyond them and expand (D. Cowen, 2014). As Lefebvre (1991), Brenner and Elden (2009), Massey (1993) and Harvey (2001, 2006) explain, this is the logic of capitalism, which is ceaselessly becoming and evolving, as it seeks new places, resources, and people from which to extract surplus; while at the same time producing fixtures and structures that embed and bolster capital accumulation in built, physical environments.

The frontier, which is thick with the depth of power, order, law and violence that names it as such, remains a space to be pacified, ordered, and made safe (Kimmerling, 1983). In determining a space ‘the frontier’, it is informed with ‘freedom’ – without law or determinacy; a space still open to rough and raw modes of capitalism, destruction and displacement and where benefits are accrued and thus interests vested in governing them as such. As such, the frontier, as Tsing (2005) explains, no matter what may have been there before, becomes a zone of ‘unmapping’ and ‘unplanning’ (p28-29), where violence is permitted and then veiled in the use of terminology that conceives and perceives (and attempts to gain control of) its unruliness, illegibility, and disorder.

### **1.2.6 Borderland Dynamics**

Borderlands are most often defined as spatial zones in which the presence of an international border (or borders) impacts upon the mentalities and political and economic activities of populations. Returning to Van Schendel’s (2004) analysis of the Bengal borderlands (explored above, in Case Box 3), he highlights the indeterminacy of constructing the ‘border’ between countries, and between different systems of power. The tectonic shattering of natural contours and boundaries to draw the geometric outlines of modern states have produced zones of flexible territoriality that persist long after borders are concretised in the geographic epistemologies and legal structures of states and empires (Elden, 2005; Novak, 2011).

Thus, the hinterlands on either side of the international line remain connected; shaped by flows, processes and identities bound to and distorted by the border (Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013). In Baud and Van Schendel's (1997) poetic analysis, the borderland is "an accordion that contracts and expands to the pressures of social, economic and political developments on both sides of the border" (p. 225).

If we take Van Schendel's case as a starting point, the borderlands evolve with and despite the international border's demarcations of difference, and the power of the states on either side to enforce it. They are, as Adelman and Aron (1999) and Castenada (2003) tell us, spaces 'in between', formed between different (often clashing) forces, legal epistemologies, cultural nodes and modes of action. Moreover, as Gellner (2013) argues, they seem to hold onto memories, identities, cultures and class relations that existed before the border defined their limits; often sharing the language and culture of those across the border space and reflecting the arbitrariness (as well as the power) of these lines. However, as mentioned above, these are constantly evolving and changing as the border becomes real and reified over time, through ongoing engagements with them (Nugent, 2002). The international border, even as an arbitrary production, intervenes in the flow of identity and culture, as new conceptual and material relations develop vis-à-vis new centres and new systems of governance and authority.

Thus, borderlands are often considered in light of their temporality and temporariness, with dynamics that change over time, in response to evolving social, political and physical relations with the border, and with the 'centre' (Adelman and Aron 1999; Baud and Van Schendel, 1997). Or rather, a temporary character seems to be imposed on borderlands, in order to re-write and appropriate these spaces in accordance with the needs and interest of the (new) state; while at the same time contending with and maintaining them as spaces in flux. Finding some resonance with Benton's (2010) discussion of enclaves, cited above, (2010), the 'borderland' alludes to anomalies in geography (albeit more fluid than those attributed to enclaves). They are characterised with a grey spatiality, where hegemony has not been cemented, and where multiple agents seek to (re)produce themselves. This is perhaps why some borderlands are spaces of acute violence and unruly governance (Goodhand, 2013), and where we find the limits to the different technologies that extend the state's homogeneity over territory and people. These are spaces where dissonance and difference can also find refuge; where multiple alliances and counter-hegemonic forces are perpetuated, and produce new boundaries and borders against state penetration (Scott 2009; Adelman and Aron, 1999).

'Borderlands' also have and produce specific material and political resonances. As a flexible space that pivots around and extends from a fixed (if problematic and arbitrary) international line, distinct borderland economies may emerge, shaped by 'arbitrage economies' (Altvater, 1998) and 'border-dependent' activities (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). Within them, populations capitalise upon differentials in prices of goods, exchange rates, and regulations on either side of the border, often drawing upon networks and community relations that supersede and transcend the border and provide multiple licit and illicit possibilities for cross-border exchanges (Novak, 2011). A "border gradient" (Goodhand, 2015) may emerge as different legal systems meet and as different modes and levels of enforcement (surrounding the production and trading of certain goods) clash: the result in material terms is the rise in revenue and the demand for risk-based capitalist ventures that require movement and mobility across the border. As Goodhand (2015) emphasizes, "borders are in this sense less constraints than fields of opportunity", and often create especially productive zones of accumulation, leading to heavy contestation over their control. These spaces of heightened accumulation and contestation leech into and produce the borderlands, as (necessarily) grey and malleable and fluctuating; but also contribute to their agentive qualities. Borderlands are shaped by multiple, intersecting economic interests, patronage structures and trade networks that don't necessarily fit the spatial container of the state (Appadurai, 2001). Thus, even as the centre profits from their (dis)organisation as such, their configuration as a nexus of unruly relations potentially undermines the capacity of the state to order and discipline life at the margins (Van Schendel, 2004).

As a last note, conflict in borderland regions is often portrayed as resulting from how these regions have been left behind by the uneven diffusion of capitalism and statebuilding (Korf and Raeymakers, 2013; Goodhand, 2013, 2015). Its antidote is most often deemed the imposition of more 'effective' state institutions, physical infrastructure and market practices in order to 'develop' and integrate these residual or marginal spaces into national political structures and national and transnational economies. However, understanding the dynamic social processes that take place between the borderlands and the centre, as well as within borderlands, challenges the myopia that sees them as passive recipients of state-directed policies (Van Schendel, 2004). In this light, the borderlands are understood as zones of rapid (and highly contested) political and economic change that do not simply reflect power relations at the centre but may be constitutive of new political and economic orders. It provides a way of conceptualising conflict as resulting not from the marginalisation and underdevelopment of these regions but out of the ways market forces and state practices are imposed, resisted, subverted and brokered by governments, borderland groups and cross-border actors (further discussion of this point is explored below, in Section II on 'Brokers and Brokerage').

### *Borderland myopias*

While there is a growing body of literature that examines and compares spatial and social regimes divided by international boundary-lines, there is less discussion of the 'borderlands' that are produced by the multiple social/cultural/political boundaries and alternative sovereignties that run through contested territories (discussed above, in the section on border dynamics). While beyond the scope of this research, it is our contention that the particular spatialities, border gradients and state effects produced within states could expand current limits to the borderlands lens.<sup>16</sup>

As Benton (2010) suggests, the focus of much of the borderland literature on the spatialities produced (and trapped) by international borders is often blind to other forms of 'territorial mastery' and other political spaces (p. 37). Moreover, it seems to negate the interstitial nature of sovereignty, the unevenness of capitalist accumulation and state-building, and the fact, as discussed above, that enclaves and anomalies persist and hold within them different modes of ownership, control, and governance, which also produce 'borderland dynamics'. Novak's (2011) analysis of the internal refractions of the Durand Line within Pakistani territory offers further insight into this point. In his depictions of the smuggling routes across the Line, he spotlights the boundary between Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs) and the Peshawar District, which function according to different administrative, legal and judicial regulations, governed and secured by different actors (i.e. tribal as opposed to state administrators). According to Novak, this line demarcates the 'actual fiscal border' that determines the price for smuggled commodities, informing the routes and actors that move across the line, and thus the spatial regimes that produce alternative borderlands to those performed at the international border.

In extending the scope for the study of borderlands, we gain insight into and tools for engaging what is currently a gap in the literature and yet, deeply relevant to this project: Maritime Borderlands. Maritime borders confound the more clear articulations of what constitutes 'borderlands'. There is no 'other side', nor an arbitrary disruption to kinship networks, and they miss the typically tectonic history that ruptures modes of belonging and citizenship. Thus, they are harder to analyse with the lexicon so far associated with borderland studies. Part of the ambitious goals of this project is to fill this gap, and begin to investigate the effects of international waters on the governing of national border-spaces and their production as 'borderlands'. As D. Cowen's (2014) work demonstrates, there are clear regulatory, security and infrastructure gradients that stem from being at the exit/entry-points to the maritime trade network. As implied in the above discussion of universal jurisdiction and piracy, the maritime border bumps up against multiple sovereignties. Contestations around jurisdiction, regulation, proprietorship and extraction rights reach in and out of the water, informing different spatial orders and lives throughout the state. For

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that there isn't an extensive body of literature that examines the multiple and uneven spatialities within states. This is in fact an essential focus of critical political geography, critical urban studies (particularly those that focus on 'conflict cities'), and post-colonial studies (among many others), and is evident throughout the discussions in this document.

example, the increasingly violent contestations over fishing in the 277 mile 'grey zone' that separates US and Canada (in the Bay of Fundy that divides New Brunswick from Maine), has produced different modes of policing and legislation to secure the area for one side or the other, with deep economic ramifications for the fishing industries of both countries (Abel, 2015)<sup>17</sup>.

The border that reaches into the water (known as Exclusive Economic Zones, or EEZs<sup>18</sup>) and articulates national claims to explore, exploit and secure trade beyond the shore, is liminal like any other; a gateway and a cross-roads, as much as a container. The key to our discussion of a maritime borderland, however, is not the way land-borders function to shape and order the sea. Rather, it is how these borders reach inwards, as the grid of international, private and national water-ways meet land and stake out corridors within states to secure the uninterrupted travel of goods, from one part of the world to another (D. Cowen, 2014; Khalili, 2016). This is exemplified in the way contemporary ports are being designed as high-tech, highly securitised and militarised spaces, isolated from the city-spaces and land corridors that surround them. As D. Cowen argues, "...world trade is fundamentally dependent on a system of maritime transport that has been made 'as frictionless as possible', which renders that system fundamentally vulnerable, as 'any important breakdown in the maritime transport system would fundamentally cripple the world economy'. Disruption is the Achilles Heel of global logistics systems" (p. 56).

Thus, the increasingly networked notion of global commodity chains requires, as discussed above, a set of rules that both secures and frees the mobility of goods, while deflecting and circumventing human or natural disruption and threats. In light of this, the maritime journeys of goods and commodities have produced very tight zones of travel, often agreed upon through international treaties and secured through international and private military personnel (as already mentioned). The port, as the point at which the flow of materials meets its limits and thus its interruption, is key. It is the gateway to and facilitator of a new set of (often contrasting) administrative regulations and physical infrastructure. As an indicator of this, efficiency and security have become the watch-words for the functioning of port authorities and their relationship with maritime trade industries (D. Cowen, 2014).

Ports are increasingly organised with deep contours around them, to protect against interventions by local law, customs, and people. This manifests in the production of an entrenched and removed physical infrastructure, as depicted by Shanghai's *Yangshan Deepwater Port*. The world's largest port 'city' is a man-made island, disconnected from the mainland, except by a single bridge (the world's largest sea-bridge) (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013). As part of this process, we see an increasing amount of ports using the same (military-sourced) technology to manage and organise imports and exports. This is intended to ensure the smooth transfer of items between sea and land, and is used as a selling point to transport companies seeking increasingly 'safer' corridors for their goods (cf. Haifa Port Authority website, 2016; CEPA Background Document, 2016).<sup>19</sup> We are further witnessing how these twin poles of security and efficiency extend the reach of the maritime gateway, well-beyond the sea-line. The Dubai Port, for example, is built like a maximum security prison, with routes in and out of the surrounding urban space completely surveyed, gated, bordered and militarised, to ensure the uninterrupted circulation of maritime trade (D. Cowen, 2014). The long by-pass corridors of the Asia-Pacific Gateway, which reach through

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Canadian law permits fishing at night, whereas Maine state regulations do not. This has instigated the increase of American marine patrols in the area at night, to ensure the Canadian boats do not tamper with American lines (Abel, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> EEZs are based on international legal statutes that determine the territorial reach of states, into, under and above 'international' waters.

<sup>19</sup> As an example, we consider the Haifa Port Authority Website's extensive depictions of its new 'state-of-the-art automated system' for securing and releasing goods into its new 'Haifa Port Cargo Gateway'. As another, we reflect on President Mahinda Rajapaksa's 2005 election manifesto (the *Mahinda Chinthana – Vision for the Future of Sri Lanka*), in which new ports planned for Hambantota and Colombo will be developed with modern infrastructure that adheres to international standards, so as to ensure Sri Lanka becomes "one of the mega hubs in the global maritime industry" (Rajapakse, 2010; in CEPA, 2016, p.4).

Canada from Prince Rupert in British Columbia to Chicago in the American mid-west, offer another extreme example, as it is being constructed and controlled with the same exceptional conditions as the Somali sea corridors, discussed above. It will be run primarily by US shipping and transport companies, reframing Canada as the cross-roads between trade flows from China to the US, as opposed to a sovereign space on its own terms (ibid).

Given the significance attributed to Sri Lanka's ports as hubs and development corridors for the new 'post conflict state' (CEPA, 2016), this bears further exploration than what is possible in this review. The research team's explorations into Sri Lanka's maritime hinterlands, and the brokers now shaping who and what flows beyond them, will contribute important new trajectories to how we think and understand the spatial complexities of maritime borderlands.

### 1.2.7 A Concluding Thought

In each of the above spatial categories, we interrogate the link between how space is imagined, rendered, and materialised, in order to distinguish how margins are generated, the kinds of dynamics they produce, and how they constitute the state (and vice versa). Moreover, as they spotlight how these different 'edges' of state are perpetuated and ordered, the agents that produce, challenge, benefit and/or suffer from their (in)visibility are also brought into view; an issue which will be explored extensively in the following sections on brokerage. Each contends with the politics and power relations that underpin the naming of spaces. As all of the above indicates, there is 'intent' behind the choice of sites to be opened up as new markets, sites of extraction, and sites of state-imposed violence; or those to be bypassed and left behind. At the same time, the different dynamics produced by/at the margins indicate that a multitude of dialectic engagements, performed by a plethora of actors, are involved in generating these spaces. That said, whether they are produced and perpetuated under the rubric of pacification and consolidation, as within the frontier; under the more flexible, temporal and uncertain limits and flows designated as borderlands; through the networked, colonial articulations of the peripheries (vis a vis the centre); or the allegedly exceptional spaces we might find within enclaves, the one constant is that in each case 'the border' (and how we understand it) remains key. It is and always will be "the place where things happen" (Donnan and Wilson, 1999, p. 4).

## PART 2: BROKERS AND BROKERAGE

### Introduction

As Section 1 has clearly shown, deconstructing the political and geographic imaginaries that claim to represent and order space reveals the complex, contested, rhizome struggles and structures of authority that lie beneath the order presented on maps and through the lexicon of state classification, codification, regulation, and partitioning of space.

We therefore take as our starting point the dissonance between how space is imagined/articulated and the disunity, unevenness and contestation surrounding how space is actually structured and governed. The aim of this section is to explore the different material relations, forces, flows and moments of rupture that re-work centre-periphery relations. Having interrogated and problematised the tools and technologies of disciplining space in the previous section, we now focus on the role of those agents – or brokers – who mediate the flows and corridors of power that link the centre and the margins.

This section is divided into two parts. The first part (2.1) analyses the development of the concept of brokerage and provides a critical review of the current 'state of the art' of studies on brokers. The second part (2.2) then sets out a research agenda for the study of brokerage. It conceptualises the inherent ambiguities and contradictions surrounding brokerage, in order to develop a structured analysis of its impact on the operations of markets and states.

This conceptual framework is then explored and tested further in the concluding section of the literature review. In this final section, we develop a spatial analysis of brokerage as an entry-point into the varied dynamics that shape and are shaped by different types of state margins. To conclude, we focus explicitly on the centrality of violence to how brokerage operates at the edges of state-space.

## 2.1 BROKERAGE: THE 'STATE OF THE ART'

### 2.1.1 The rise and fall of broker studies

The broker emerged as a distinct subject for academic research in political anthropology during the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Barnes, Mitchell and Gluckman, 1949; Bailey, 1957, 1960, 1963; Boissevain, 1965; Cohen, 1965, 1969; Geertz, 1960; Paine, 1971; Redfield, 1956; Turner, 1957; Swartz, 1968; Wolf, 1956). Initial focus on the role of brokers in colonial structures shifted by the 1960s to the role of 'brokerage' in post-colonial nation-states in promoting socio-cultural integration and addressing "the difficulty of communication between people still largely absorbed in those cultures and the metropolitan-based nationalist leadership" (Geertz, 1960, p. 228; Wolf, 1956; Bailey, 1963). Since the 1960s, interest in the concept of brokerage has waxed and waned amid shifting intellectual currents and changing empirical realities.

Following the concept's initial heyday, interest in brokerage within the social sciences fell away almost entirely in the final three decades of the twentieth century. The increasing power of the post-colonial state (especially in Asia) shifted focus onto state actors and institutions as key to shaping processes of development and social change (Lindquist 2015). The role of brokers, if considered at all, was viewed as a temporary dynamic deemed increasingly irrelevant in light of the totalising power of the state. The fixation in social sciences on the territorial state as the unit of political authority and analysis, and the conflation of state, national identity, territory and sovereignty (Brenner, 1999; Van Schendel, 2005) shifted scholarly focus away from the kinds of interfaces between local and national structures of authority, with which early brokerage studies had been so interested. The increasing power and territorial reach of state bureaucracies were viewed as displacing the importance of personal networks and dependencies, thus reducing the need for brokers and the capacity of such individual mediators to shape outcomes (Mitchell, 1990). The apparent hegemony of the modern state contributed to the "strange death of political anthropology" (Spencer, 2007; cf. Vincent, 1994) in the late 1970s. The perceived irrelevance of ethnographic studies of village politics for understanding political systems and processes of development led to a decline in interest in political anthropology and much of the vocabulary it had developed (Nielsen, 2011).

This contrasted with the enduring interest and development of the concept of brokerage in an array of historical studies, notably Prasenjit Duara's (1988) analysis of state consolidation in early twentieth century rural north China, Karen Barkey's study of mechanisms of rule under the Ottoman Empire (1994, 1997), Sharon Kettering's (1986) study of the role of brokers in the consolidation of monarchical power in seventeenth century France, as well as in an array of recent studies of the historical importance of brokers to the mechanisms of states, empires and global trade (Keblusek and Noldus, 2011; Barkey, 2008; Green, 2012; Rothman, 2012). The decline in interest in contemporary brokerage coupled with its renaissance in historical analysis appeared to reinforce the notion that brokerage was relevant only to pre-modern forms of governance, which were swept away by the rise of the modern state.

The parallel 'hijacking' of the concept of brokerage by transactionalism (cf. Barth, 1965) and social network analysis (SNA) during the 1970s, marked the decisive shift towards methodological individualism within brokerage studies that currently plagues this field (cf. Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992, 2004, 2005)

and evoked a sustained criticism from Marxist-influenced analysis of development and change.<sup>20</sup> As Deborah James (2011, p. 335) argues, “as anthropologists increasingly concerned themselves with the inequalities brought by colonial and capitalist forces...emphasis on the structural determinants of power, and an accompanying antipathy to methodological individualism, became the dominant tendency in Marxist frameworks of the 1970s...[leading] to the virtual disappearance in anthropology of the broker.”

Much of the innovation around brokerage within SNA has fixated on mathematical graph theory and a fixation on typologies of the different types of structural holes and different bridging roles of brokers. Reflecting the wider “economics imperialism” within the social sciences (Fine, 1991, 2001), the study of brokers has drawn increasingly upon neoclassical economic theories to develop a rational market model of social relations (for further critique see Jepperson and Meyer, 2011). Brokerage studies within SNA have proved highly susceptible to such tendencies, developing a strange combination of structuralism and individualism. On the one hand, brokerage studies embody an extreme form of methodological individualism with a narrow focus upon the rational choice and profit-maximising calculations of individual brokers. On the other hand, brokers are defined rigidly by their structural position within a network. In many ways this combination marked a complete *volte face* of the early political anthropology analysis of brokerage, which combined in-depth ethnography of brokers with sustained analysis of the broader structures of power within which they acted and were embedded. Moreover, the association of brokerage with SNA and methodological individualism created a distinct chasm between scholarly interest in how power is constructed, transmitted and contested in society, and the concept of brokerage.

### 2.1.2 The return of the broker?

The decline of political anthropology and the dwindling interest in the concept of brokerage within development studies in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s coincided with the rise of neoliberalism and dramatic shifts surrounding how states and markets function. Efforts to develop new theoretical frameworks and empirical analysis of these seismic shifts have led to a gradual resurgence of interest in brokers and brokerage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this review, we focus explicitly on the renewed interest in brokerage within the field of political economy, broadly emanating from four interlinked factors: (1) Renewed critical engagement with the ‘state’, which has evoked increased focus on informal governance structures; (2) the decentralisation of aid amid the weakening legitimacy of the state as an agent for development; (3) The rise of neoliberalism and the subsequent deregulation and liberalisation of flows of people and capital, which has generated new interest in how power is circulated and mobilised; and (4) concerns regarding the fragmentation of political authority amid the ‘new wars’ of the post-Cold War era and the apparent resurgence of non-state armed actors including mafia, warlords and transnational criminal networks. We explore how each of these engage in conceptualising brokerage in the sections that follow.

#### **Case Box 4: The return of the broker**

In recent years the figure of the ‘broker’ has re-appeared in numerous studies, some key examples include:

- Formal and informal migration networks (Lindquist, 2012; Xiang, 2012; Lindquist and Xiang, 2014; Kern and Muller-Boker, 2015);

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<sup>20</sup> Frederik Barth’s (1965) study of the Swat Pathan (in particular the role of ‘mediating saints’) in Pakistan was particularly influential in this shift, as he emphasized the contractual nature of relationships between peasantry and Pakhtun leaders and the mutual advantages of alliances forged between them. His work, a classic in transactional sociology, viewed authority structures as emanating out of a series of choices made by individuals and rejected the importance of formal ties of allegiance and subservience. His work evoked sustained critique from those who argued that the fixation on the purposive action of individual brokers obscured the importance of class, property ownership and labour structures in determining social relations (Asad, 1972; cf. Vincent, 1978).

- Political decentralisation and competing forms of state, market and clientelist political authority (James, 2011; Anwar, 2014; Wood, 2003);
- New forms of neoliberal governance (Xiang, 2012);
- cross-border trade networks (Walther, 2015);
- Electoral politics (Beck, 2008; Michelutti, 2007; Gay, 1999; Jeffrey et al., 2008);
- disputes over land and resources, especially in frontier regions (Anwar, 2014; Grajales, 2011; Archer, 1990; Lund, 1999);
- The impact of development projects (Mosse and Lewis 2006; Bierschenk et al. 2002; Sharma 2015);
- The dynamics of war and post-war political settlements (Goodhand, Walton and Klem, *forthcoming*)
- Violent brokerage, especially warlords, mafia and militia (Meehan 2015; Goodhand 2008; Raeymaekers, Menkhaus and Vlassenroot 2008; Marten 2012; Volkov 2002).

### *Renewed critical engagement with the 'state'*

Growing interest in the role of brokers, middlemen and go-betweens in influencing structures of power and authority in modern society can be traced back to the crisis of the 'state' in the 1970s, and subsequent structural adjustment and neo-liberal market reforms that undermined the ideal of the strong state (Abrams, 1988; Byres, 1998; Boege et al., 2008; Migdal, 1988). While rarely drawing upon the literature on brokerage specifically, scholarly interest in the limits of state power generated renewed focus on the interaction and interfaces between state and non-state authority and governance structures.

The termination of superpower patronage in the aftermath of the Cold War further dismantled confidence in the state as an agent for development in the Global South. As the spectre of fragile or failing states have become a grave concern for policymakers over the past two decades, state-building has become an essential component of western development strategy (cf. World Bank, 1997; Fukuyama, 2004). Although the liberal state-building paradigm developed a highly prescriptive and functionalist approach to 'fixing failed states', the renewed interest in the state also encouraged a more critical literature on the ubiquitous role of informal actors and institutions and the importance of factoring these non-formal structures of governance into overwhelmingly state-focused development programmes (Denney, 2013; Krasner, 1999; Blundo and Le Meur, 2009; Bratton, 2007; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Devas, 2005; Swift-Morgan, 2014). This was reflected in a growing body of scholarly work on the role of informal, non-state or "twilight institutions" (Lund 2001, 2006) and "hybrid political orders" (Boege et al., 2008), and attempts by development agencies, notably DFID's (2004) 'Drivers of Change' approach, to consider the role of informal institutions and actors in the design of poverty reduction strategies. There has emerged a growing body of literature focused on how the erosion of state institutions under structural adjustment and neoliberalism has reinvigorated the role informal structures of authority, power and governance. This literature explores forms of "mediated statehood" (Raeymaekers et al., 2008; Menkhaus, 2008), "negotiated statehood" (Hagmann and Peclard, 2010; Meehan, 2015) and political "hybridity" (Boege et al., 2008), in which the state is neither collapsed, nor does it wield uncontested sovereignty, a monopoly over the means of violence, or the capacity/legitimacy to uphold a social contract.

Of key relevance to this project, a number of studies within this literature have drawn attention specifically to the importance of "political brokerage" in influencing bargaining processes between state and non-state actors (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus and Vlassenroot, 2008, p. 41; Goodhand, 2008; Goodhand and Mansfield, 2010; Goodhand and Sedra, 2016; Meehan, 2015; Marten, 2012). These studies draw attention to the state's inability to impose its bureaucratic rationality evenly across state territory and attempts by governments and populations to enlist brokers "to reduce the unpredictability of the state's efforts at intervention and control" (Mosse and Lewis, 2006, p. 11).

### *Decentralisation of aid*

The crisis of confidence in the state as an agent for development since the 1970s had a dramatic impact upon development narratives and the delivery of aid. Donors no longer trusted the state to deliver

development aid and thus looked to alternative service providers. In the quest to maintain accountability many development agencies sought to sub-contract the provision of services, especially in health and education, through an array of non-state 'civil society' organisations (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus and Vlassenroot, 2008). The decentralisation of development aid into "intermediary national networks, separate and apart from the classic administrative and political apparatus" and the uneven success of such programmes, led to renewed interest in the role of 'development brokers'. In particular, those who linked international development agencies and local communities, and thus helped shaped the way development was imposed and negotiated in development contexts (Mosse and Lewis 2006; Bierschenk et al. 2002; Sharma 2016.)<sup>21</sup>

### *The impact of neoliberalism*

Renewed interest in brokerage has also emerged out of studies exploring how rapid political and economic transition under neoliberalism has resulted in a clash of different logics of power and rationality and the role that brokers have come to play in navigating the tensions and contradictions between them (James, 2011).<sup>22</sup> These studies draw attention to how efforts to re-structure and scale back the state under neoliberalism, co-exist alongside continued attempts by governments to strengthen governance over people and resources. These interventions are intended to ameliorate the deleterious impact of neoliberal reforms, especially around growing inequality, in order to preserve legitimacy and uphold a degree of state welfare (ibid). This dual process of 'rolling back and rolling out the state' (Peck and Tickell, 2002) and the resultant institutional bricolage and sedimentation of multiple and overlapping forms of authority (Bierschenk et al. 2002, p. 6) have made it increasingly unclear to populations where power lies and to whom their demands and grievances should be directed. Thus, new spaces and "new repertoires" for entrepreneurial brokers are opened, in which they are able to mediate, and actively manipulate and reconfigure this complex governance terrain (James, 2011, p. 318-321; cf. Anwar, 2014).

In this context a number of studies emphasize how demand for brokerage emanates from the struggles of individuals and groups to make their demands legible to states, donors and private companies (James, 2011; Anwar, 2014). Others explore the state's increased need for brokers, under neoliberalism (Lindquist, Xiang and Yeoh, 2012; Xiang, 2012). They show how decentralisation, liberalization and deregulation have undermined the capacity of state institutions to govern increasingly mobile flows of people, capital and resources. State authorities have instead sought to control key interfaces through which flows can be monitored and regulated. It is precisely because "disciplinary power is not evenly diffused but rather specifically concentrated in the interfaces where brokers are positioned" – between state and informal authority, between legality and illegality – that brokerage has become integral, often unintentionally, to new forms of neoliberal governmentality (Xiang and Lindquist, 2012).

### *'New Wars' and the rise of "strong-arm brokers"*

Research on violent "strong-arm brokers" (Marten, 2012) – warlords, militias, paramilitaries and mafia – has also emerged out of the literature on failing states and 'new wars' (Duffield, 1998; Leander, 2004; Kaldor, 2007; Freeman, 2015). After an era in which brokers were increasingly dismissed as irrelevant in the context of the growing power of nation-states, the apparent fracturing of the state-territorial order has led some studies to reconceptualise brokerage. Much of this literature argues that neoliberal demands for decentralisation, privatisation and the free flow of goods have weakened state capacity and

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<sup>21</sup> Bierschenk et al. (2002) provide a comprehensive and valuable review of the Francophone African literature in which the 'development broker' has been subject to more detailed scrutiny and conceptualisation than the English-language literature on this subject.

<sup>22</sup> Deborah James' (2011) study of land reform in South Africa clearly demonstrates how brokers have become increasingly important figures at the intersection of state, market and patrimonial authority, where they derive power from their ability to navigate the "divergent and apparently irreconcilable positions...[between] the hierarchy and promise of relative security offered by chiefly patronage; the egalitarianism and redistributiveness of 'rights talk' and of the new democratic order; and the 'choice' of the market underpinned by individualism" (p. 334).

allowed non-state actors to “establish relations of their own with wielders of international capital” (Leander 2004, p. 72). According to this body of work, in contexts where the state is weak, warlords and militias have become the crucial arbitrator brokering the interface between local resources and global investors. Warlord brokers derive power from their ability to control and arbitrage across certain borders and boundaries, notably international border-crossings but also the boundaries between legality and illegality and between sites of resource production and the international market (Ahram and King, 2012, p. 174).

This set of arguments is then confounded by a spectrum of critical, contemporary literature that views the actions of ‘power brokers’ as integral to processes of (deeply illiberal) stabilisation and state consolidation rather than state breakdown (Marten, 2012; Ahram and King, 2012; Jackson, 2003). Emphasizing the historical role played by irregular armed forces in processes of state consolidation (see for example Davis and Perreira, 2003), these studies argue that states have often looked to local power brokers as a means to secure order and stability on the state’s behalf. In turn, local power brokers may have a vested interest in upholding state institutions and state-defined boundaries because it is through their privileged position operating across these lines that they derive their power (Ahram and King, 2012, p. 177). These studies emphasize how strong-arm brokers may simultaneously serve both to fortify and fragment state authority, providing the means to secure order and stability but in ways that do not facilitate the centralisation of state authority. Instead, they entrench forms of fragmented sovereignty and remain highly volatile (Meehan, 2015; Marten, 2012; Ahram and King, 2012). It is at this ambiguous junction that our own work can be situated: seeing brokers in light of their contradictory positioning in moments and spaces of rupture and change; and brokerage as integral to negotiating and shaping both stabilising and de-stabilising orders at the edges of states.

## 2.2 ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BROKERAGE

As this brief overview reveals, there has been renewed interest over recent years in the concept of brokerage, as part of shifting emphasis on the continued importance of informal structures of authority and negotiation in producing ‘the state’. Although often obscured in the way that processes of state consolidation, territorialisation and development are imagined, informal actors and agents nevertheless remain integral to understanding how society works and how power is imposed, resisted and negotiated.

However, despite the growing body of work on brokerage, there remains a lack of clarity or a clear research agenda to direct brokerage studies. This may be attributable to the fact that in many cases the renewed focus on brokers has emerged out of a process of ‘discovery’ in which studies that have set out to address quite different research concerns have revealed the importance of brokers. As a result, many studies have provided brief vignettes of the roles played by brokers, middlemen/women and informal mediators, but without developing a clear conceptualisation of brokerage.

The remainder of this review seeks to address this lacuna by establishing a political economy approach for the study of brokerage. In doing so, it addresses four key weaknesses in the current literature, which are especially relevant to this project:

(i) ***Conceptualising the tensions and ambiguities surrounding brokerage***

Much of the literature struggles to capture the ambiguous and seemingly contradictory dynamics surrounding brokerage; for example the difficulty of engaging with how brokers may serve both to fortify and fragment state authority, empower and weaken marginalized groups and serve to escalate and de-escalate violence. However, we argue that it is precisely these tensions and contradictions that make the study of brokerage so important since they reveal the often irreconcilable and irresolvable tensions surrounding power relations. We therefore set out a clearer conceptual framework through which to explore these tensions.

(ii) ***The gendered dynamics of brokerage***

The literature on brokerage remains almost entirely gender blind, perhaps reflecting a broader lack of systematic engagement with gender in political economy analysis (Browne, 2014; Peterson, 2005). In contrast, following the discussion above in which we ‘gender’ spatial relations (D. Cowen, 2014; Massey, 1994; Natanel, 2016), we argue that gendered power relations and the different positions of men and women in society are likely to play an instrumental role in shaping brokerage dynamics (who acts as brokers and for what purposes). At the same time, we consider that brokerage may, in turn, serve to reproduce and entrench gender representations and hierarchies. This study thus seeks to integrate gender into the analysis of brokerage, as a way to unravel how power functions to make marginal groups and spaces disappear in academic and practitioner articulations of the ‘borderlands’.

(iii) ***The role of violence in brokerage***

Violence has been strangely absent in much of the literature on brokerage (Blok, 1974 being a notable exception), reflecting more broadly “the lack of integration between the study of order and the study of conflict and violence” (Kalyvas et al., 2008, p. 1-2). Brokerage has typically been analysed in terms of its ability to facilitate integration, quell conflict and establish order and efficiency. Thus, it has rarely garnered interest from students of violence and conflict, whose lenses are focused on “places and periods in which order has collapsed” (ibid). In contrast we argue that violence is a particularly important modality in brokerage and demonstrate how the study of brokerage offers an important entry point for understanding the different kinds of violence enacted in the margins amid war-to-peace transitions and the different functions and impacts that violence has.

(iv) ***The spatial dimensions of brokerage***

Much of the literature on brokerage is insufficiently sensitive to the spatial dynamics of brokerage; i.e. how brokerage is defined by the specific borders, boundaries and spaces they mediate and how brokers’ actions serve to shape these borders and the spatial dynamics they produce. In contrast, we conclude by exploring (in section 3) how brokerage is part of the assemblage of interactions that shape the spatial dynamics of power. Moreover, we examine brokerage as being distinctly shaped by the different kinds of borderland and frontier spaces in which they operate, at the margins of the state.

## **2.3 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BROKERAGE: CONCEPTUALISING THE ‘BROKERAGE FIX’**

### **2.3.1 The ‘brokerage fix’**

Brokerage adds a key layer to our earlier discussions (in Section 1) to how power is made mobile, how it is checked, for what purposes and in whose interests. It is integral to shaping the flow and friction of power, with brokers often embedded at the cross-roads to different jurisdictional orders, in contexts where formal institutions do not exert hegemonic control over governance structures, the means of violence or the disciplining of space. Brokerage can thus be conceived as a ‘fix’ to the challenges surrounding how power is mobilised (and contested or disrupted), particularly as part of the uneven territorialisation of war to peace transitions. Drawing upon Harvey’s (2001) exploration of the ‘spatial fix’ (discussed in the first section of this document), we attempt a reconfiguration of brokerage – the brokerage fix – as an entry-point into the ambiguities and contradictions that underscore its resilience and presence, as part of the production of state space.

First, brokerage provides a resolution – a ‘fix’ in the sense of resolving a problem – to the challenges of mobilising power in contexts where formal institutions are weak. Brokerage provides a mechanism

through which power is made mobile, enabling states and markets to 'reach down' into society, to make populations more legible and to secure access and control over labour and resources in contexts where such power is not formally institutionalised. It also offers a means through which populations are able to engage, contest and resist state practices and market dynamics in contexts where formal systems of protection, engagement and redress (such as the 'rule of law') are weak, non-existent or operate against them.

Second, brokerage can serve to fix in place certain power structures. Brokers are not simply intermediaries but derive power in their own right from their role as 'fixers'. Power may therefore become embedded and 'fixed' in brokerage mechanisms, as brokers develop vested interests around the perpetuation, rather than resolution, of interstitial spaces and conflicts, since it is through mediating such tensions that they derive their power.

Third, although brokerage may provide a 'fix', it operates like the drug addict's fix, embodying only a temporary resolution to moments/spaces of crises. The brokerage fix, then, is unstable and contested, generative of new challenges and tensions that continuously require new types of fixes, and is subject to constant re-negotiation and re-working, over time (Harvey 2001).

The inherent tensions and ambiguities surrounding the role of brokers make the study of the 'brokerage fix' difficult, for numerous reasons. Firstly, the same types of brokerage relationship can have contradictory outcomes over time and across space. Secondly, the tensions surrounding brokerage – for example the ways in which brokers may both protect and exploit those they serve, or the ways in which their actions may appear to both resist and entrench state authority – are not binary but form a fluid and ever-shifting dialectic. Thirdly, ongoing efforts to theorise and determine distinct definitional typologies of different kinds of brokerage struggle to capture the diversity, messiness and complexity surrounding brokerage practices, and how these shift through evolving social-spatial relations (cf. Walther, 2015; Gould and Fernandez, 1989). They thus become liable to constructing "analytical tidiness" and "imaginary coherence" in ways that misrepresent the inherent tensions, contradictions and even incoherence of brokerage dynamics (cf. Mitchell 1999).<sup>23</sup>

However, the value of studying brokerage is precisely because it reveals the inherent, often irreconcilable and irresolvable tensions surrounding power relations, with brokers positioned at the precise interfaces where power is concentrated or disrupted (cf. Lindquist, Xiang and Yeoh 2012, 13). The study of brokerage thus offers a key 'window', or heuristic tool, to explore the tensions and competing interests surrounding how markets and states function and in relationships between state centre and margins, especially during moments of rupture and rapid transition, such as war to peace transitions. The study of brokerage provides a way to understand how contradictory interests and demands are managed and held in tension and why social processes – such as processes of state and consolidation, market expansion or peace-building – may develop very different trajectories and outcomes in different contexts.

The framework we develop for conceptualising the 'brokerage fix' revolves around engaging with three distinct sources of tension in order to set out a clear research agenda for analysing how brokerage dynamics vary over time and across space:

1. The tensions surrounding the **demand** for brokerage and the **competing interests** that coalesce around brokerage (including the interests of the broker him/herself).
2. The **positionality** of brokers, in terms of from where brokers derive power and their position within political, spatial and economic configurations.

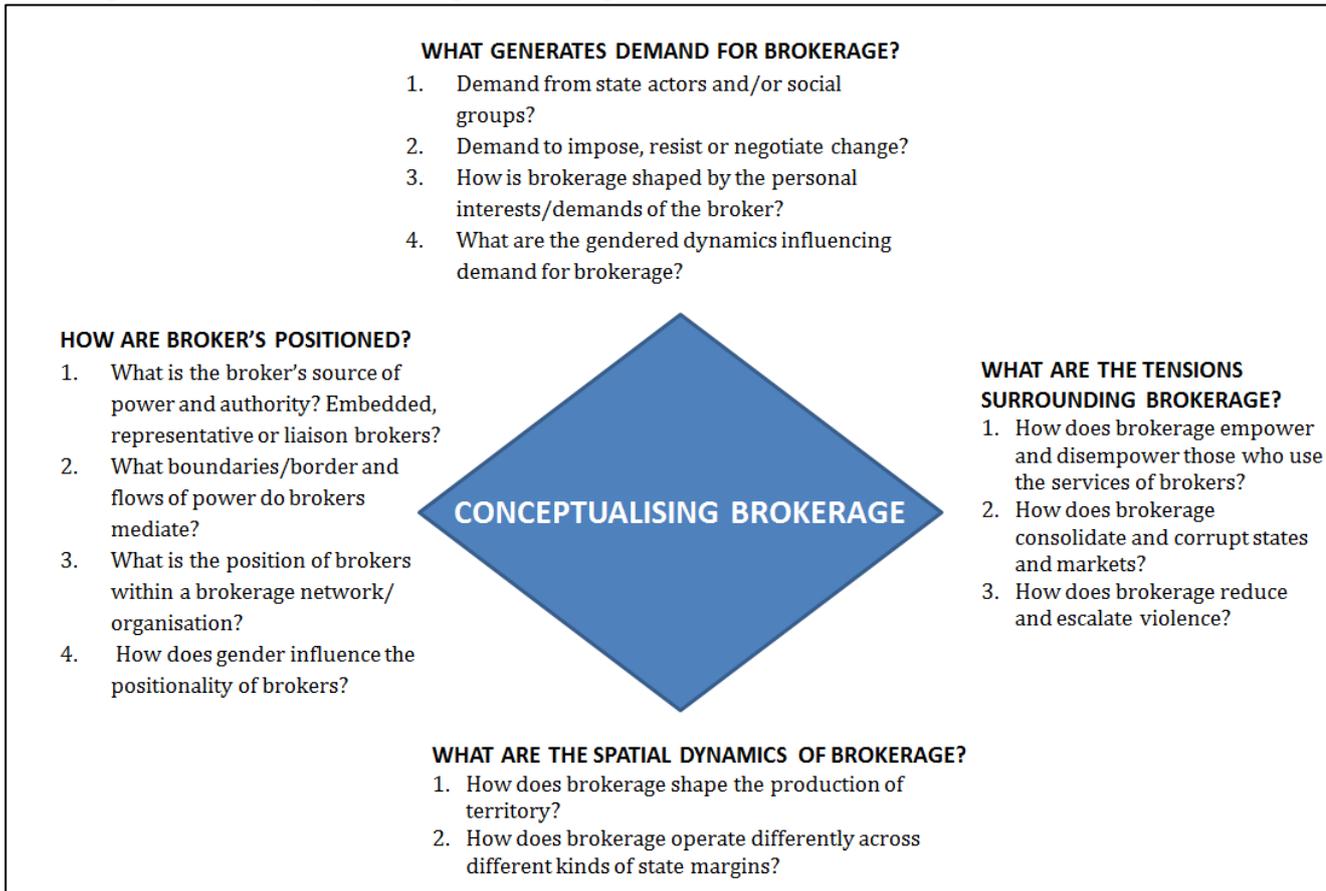
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<sup>23</sup> Timothy Mitchell (1999) makes the same point with regards to social sciences' engagement with the state, arguing that "the scholarly analysis of the state is liable to reproduce in its own analytical tidiness the imaginary coherence and misrepresent the incoherence of state practice" (p. 76).

3. The tensions surrounding the *dynamics created by brokerage*.

Each of these three pillars are analysed in detail below in order to show how they work together to create a structured approach for analysing brokerage. The spatial dynamics of brokerage are then explored in the conclusion to this study. Figure 1 (below) provides a set of research questions to show how this framework could be operationalised to guide fieldwork research on brokerage.

**Figure 1: Conceptualising brokerage**



### 2.3.2 Conceptualising brokerage (1): The demand for brokerage

#### *Competing demands for brokerage from 'within' and 'outside' of state institutions*

The impetus for deploying brokerage as a strategy to mediate flows of power may arise from 'within' the state, by governments seeking to deploy brokerage as a strategy of governance, to strengthen and secure control over resources and populations but unable (or unwilling) to centralise authority under more formal state institutions. It is also important to consider from where within the state demand for brokerage emerges. States are not monolithic entities, and brokerage may embody a centrally-mandated strategy which filters down to state representatives in the margins. Alternatively the demand for brokerage may emanate from state representatives in the margins, grappling with how to deliver the stability and order demanded by the centre.

At the same time, demands for brokerage may arise from outside and beyond state institutions, from individuals and interest groups which seek to use brokerage as a means to engage and negotiate with authority. Such competing demands often coexist; a messy reality well-developed in Prasenjit Duara's (1988) analysis of state consolidation in early twentieth century rural north China. Duara's case study demonstrates how the Chinese state's efforts to deepen its bureaucratic reach into rural society elicited

competing and contradictory demands for brokerage in response. On the one hand, the shallow reach of the state bureaucracy meant the Chinese state sought out 'entrepreneurial brokers', a clientele of revenue farmers willing to take on "onerous and low-status jobs" of tax collection in ways that served to strengthen the state's fiscal base, while at the same time offering ample scope for self-enrichment (Duara, 1988, p. 46). The revenue siphoned off by these brokers reflected the cost the state was willing to 'pay' to strengthen its revenue-generating infrastructure across rural China. However, the centre's efforts to extract revenue in this way also created demands from local populations for forms of 'protective brokerage', in which local figures emerged to manage relations between state authorities and rural communities and constrain excessive predation created by the state's use of decentralised entrepreneurial brokerage (ibid).

As Duara's study shows, competing demands for brokerage are likely to operate along a continuum. However, capturing where the accent lies and from where the dominant demand for brokerage emerges may have important implications. In contexts where the government proves willing to deploy brokerage in an attempt to consolidate authority and secure order, more stable forms of brokerage may emerge. By contrast, in contexts where the demand for brokerage emanates primarily from populations seeking ways to negotiate or push back against an over-reaching state, brokerage may be more volatile.

In the former case, governments may eventually seek to render the services of brokers unnecessary, but may prove willing to tolerate brokerage practices in the short or medium term; although, such teleological processes of 'graduation' into formalised systems of governance rarely work smoothly since entrenched interests may coalesce around the perpetuation of brokerage. For example, Karen Barkey's (2008) exploration of why the Ottoman Empire survived for so long argues that the answer can be found in its "crucially negotiated character". It was a function of the Empire's willingness and ability to use "intermediate bodies" to broker between state and periphery and so "maintain compliance, resources, tribute, and military cooperation, and to ensure political coherence and durability" (Barkey, 2008, p. 10). The rise of the Empire lay in the ability of its Turcoman founders "to communicate across groups, ideas, and cultural formations" (ibid, p. 29). Indeed, as "they brokered across cultures and social formations, they constructed a political form that combined centralism and regionalism, eclectic structures, and fixity and elasticity of boundaries, together with the incorporation and toleration of diversity, dissent, and even when necessary, a certain defiance of the societal order" (ibid). Brokerage thus offered the Ottomans a means by which to expand territorial control and extract resources, while at the same time minimising direct conflict (in contrast to European state formation).

In the latter case, however, where the demand for brokerage emerges outside of, and in response to state power, brokerage may create a far more fluctuating and unstable terrain, in which forms of brokerage constantly emerge wherever state authority proves weakly embedded, but become equally vulnerable to powerful state responses to curtail them whenever the state's authority permits.

### **Case Box 5: Competing demands for brokerage in Karachi's unplanned urban settlements**

Nausheen Anwar's (2014) study of land brokers in the unplanned settlements on the periphery of Karachi reveals the competing and contradictory demands for brokerage. Unplanned settlements, where over 60% of the city's population live, are officially illegal. Residents are reliant upon corruption and bribes to stave off the continual threat of eviction and demolition, while simultaneously seeking to find mechanisms through which to legitimise their homes. Land brokers have emerged as key interfaces for the urban poor, state authorities and politicians, albeit for different reasons.

This reliance has cultivated an environment of deep resentment among the urban poor. Land brokers are often a focal point for anger at the system; yet their "expertise" at negotiating with officials also makes their services highly sought after. Brokers provide a means for the poor to gain,

by proxy, representation within the hyper-masculinised “backroom discussions and clandestine negotiations” that form the “routinized, bureaucratic practices” governing Karachi’s urban expansion (p. 86).

These forms of brokerage, however, also serve the interests of state officials and politicians. Land brokers remain reliant upon state officials who collect land revenue and maintain land records in a system that enables officials to become active rent-seekers. Officials profit from the illicit dealings of land brokers and thus develop vested interests in the brokerage structures that have emerged throughout Karachi’s unplanned settlements.

For politicians, the growing ‘visibility’ of peripheral settlements has instigated a change in “the city’s spatial-electoral politics”, in which contested spaces at the margins of Karachi’s formal boundaries have emerged as important as areas of support for opposition political parties (p. 82). Politicians and state officials have sought to use brokers as a means to extend their jurisdiction over parts of the city that had previously escaped their control, embedding patronage politics deeper into the city’s margins.

Land brokers thus stand at the apex of competing and contradictory demands: demands from the poor to resist the more destructive dynamics of state encroachment; concurrent demands to negotiate rather than to resist authority, which in turn make populations legible to the state and thus able to access state services; and in a final sense to fulfil the demands of powerful officials intent upon extending rent-seeking into the urban periphery. These competing demands blur whose interests brokers serve and respond to.

These tensions unfold in an environment of constant uncertainty, shaped by competing interests across different scales of government. Brokers have been able to manage the tensions between local officials and the poor, but have been powerless to contest or intervene when the central government chooses to flex its muscles, often demonstrating its authority through the destruction of illegal settlements. Paradoxically, at the same time that such shows of state strength reveal the weaknesses of brokers to deliver on their claims of protection, they also serve to re-invigorate the demand for brokerage amongst the poor, against an unpredictable and powerful state. The role of brokers thus serves to underline and undermine the power of the state. The state’s ability to enact destruction emphasizes the need for the protection offered by brokers, while simultaneously harming the state’s legitimacy by revealing the kinds of corrupt and costly practices required to access state services.

### *Demand for brokerage to impose, resist or negotiate change*

A second tension that emerges around the demand for brokerage regards the extent to which it is sought as a way to resist or engage with processes of change, and the varying impact this may have on structures of governance. The demand for brokerage is often understood as an attempt to hold external forces – state institutions, capitalist dynamics, nationalist ideologies – at bay. Demand emerges from populations ‘outside’ of formalising structures of state authority and capitalist processes of accumulation, whose interests are threatened and who seek brokerage as a means to limit the penetration of these forces. In this sense, demand for brokerage emerges out of attempts to preserve certain social, political and economic structures through the activation or hardening of certain boundaries. For example, brokerage becomes a way to mediate the reach of the state and so preserve ‘illegible’ or non-formalised spaces, in order to protect customary land rights and non-state structures of authority and systems of rule.

In this context brokerage may then become a means through which local populations seek to prevent antagonism and conflict through using boundary-crossing brokers as a means to demonstrate the compatibility of alternative localised systems of rule within broader structures of authority. For example, brokerage may provide a means through which to demonstrate to state authority the possibility of

consolidation (of state power) without centralisation, and loyalty without legibility. Alternatively, the desire to hold centripetal state forces at bay may stimulate demand among populations at the margins of state authority for power brokers to harden and protect boundaries. This often involves recourse to coercion or violence, intended to weaken the centre's resolve to monopolise control and to look for ways to negotiate – through brokers – rather than impose authority.

However, the demand for brokerage may not always be about holding external forces at bay. Instead, it may emerge out of attempts by populations in the margins to use brokers as a way to make claims on the state; to make themselves visible and legible, and thus to gain access to resources, rights, representation or compensation (Jorgensen, 1997). In this sense, agents who prove able to navigate the labyrinths of state power and negotiate between local populations and external institutions of authority – to 'speak', both literally and metaphorically, local languages and the languages of the state and development (Bierschenk et al., 2002, p. 22) – may emerge out of efforts by populations to become embedded within processes of change rather than to resist them.

Finally, it is important to consider the ways in which brokerage may become a response by the centre to hold the margins at bay; a way to forestall rebellion or to placate the risk of resistance. Again, Karen Barkey's (1994, 2008) work on the Ottoman Empire is insightful in this regard. Her study shows how tensions in the countryside were defused through alliances and informal coalitions forged between state officials and bandits. The Empire's willingness to call upon bandit-brokers to maintain order blurred the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of authority, offered a mechanism of social mobility for ambitious peasants, and unnerved the peasantry and elites, deterring both from collective action against the state (Barkey, 1994, p. 185). Such bandits, Barkey argues, rather than embodying enemies of the state, became, in many cases, its "rambunctious clients", whose co-optation by the state proved an essential mechanism in alleviating the threat of peasant or elite rebellions (ibid).

### **Case Box 6: Demands for Brokerage in Papua New Guinea: The quest to be recognised by the state**

In Papua New Guinea, populations in resource-rich areas have sought to make themselves visible to the state and private companies in an attempt to become officially recognised as eligible for a share of the potential benefits that resource extraction (of gas and gold) may bring to the area (Minnegal, Lefort and Dwyer, 2014).

Through the act of 'incorporation' – a formal legal process that enables customary land groups to develop legal property status – populations have sought to form Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs) to engage in the formal economy and secure compensation and royalties (Power, 2008). Such groups have commonly sought the services of a '*savi man*' (man with knowledge) to help them negotiate the labyrinth of corporate and government programs emerging around the gas field, in order to formalise property ownership. At the same time, these brokers have often sought to use their privileged negotiating positions with private companies as a means of securing royalties for their own clans at the expense of others. Such forms of brokerage may serve to soften the boundaries between state and customary authority, providing ways in which the bureaucratic order (of transnational companies) and the 'cosmological order' (of clan systems) seek to encompass the other (Golub, 2014).

However, at the same time such processes also elicit new forms of boundary-making in which attempts to become visible to the state through the construction of ILGs serves to "reshape and fix previously operative social and political forms" (Minnegal, Lefort and Dwyer, 2014, p. 496). At the interface between transnational corporations and indigenous populations in Papua New Guinea, the ways in which these boundaries have been brokered – "in which some clans fission, and others amalgamate; as multiple identities are concretised on paper, and singular identities are imposed" (ibid, p. 511) – has played an instrumental role in shaping processes of social change in ways that forge far more complex structures of governance than the high modernist imposition of legibility.

### *The interests/demands of the broker*

The tensions and ambiguities surrounding brokerage make it an activity fraught with risk. Yet, it is a position that also confers entrepreneurial opportunities. Although brokers emerge at the nexus of broader social structures and processes, they do not simply transmit power but are also often capable of deploying varying degrees of autonomy and agency. It is therefore important to consider how the broker's own interests, motivations and demands serve to shape the dynamics of brokerage.

Brokerage is often surrounded by simplistic and normative characterisations of brokers. Some are positive, depicting brokers as “emanations of civil society” drawing upon stocks of existing religious, cultural or political authority, in order to mediate the dislocating socio-economic impact of expanding markets and state institutions. Some are negative, with brokers represented as “parasites” and self-serving figures, exploiting their privileged position for personal gain (Bierschenk et al 2002, 4). However, such portrayals, once again, embody the outer limits of a continuum in which most brokers may operate within the middle ground. That said, understanding where within this space the motivations and aspirations of brokers lie, poses significant challenges. The career of brokers may not be intentional or carefully planned, but have more to do with “discovery” (ibid, p. 19). ‘Broker’ is rarely an official term or position. It remains necessarily informal and is a position that people are unlikely to define themselves by or publically seek promotion to. Indeed, it is a term that may “mean very little, perhaps nothing to actors” we understand to be playing the role of brokers (ibid). It may also be unclear whether brokerage is perceived as a long-term career or as a stepping stone to fulfil other aspirations. Brokerage may represent efforts to secure and maintain local power indefinitely, or an attempt to ‘graduate’ towards a political career at the centre, creating different broker timeframes which can bear significantly upon the impact of brokerage.

A broker's interests and actions may also be shaped by the internal contradictions inherent within brokerage, or what Stovel and Shaw (2012) term the broker's ‘dual agency problem’, namely that the broker's ability to profit and accumulate power may serve to undermine the very trust and respect that enable them to act as brokers. This tension is revealed clearly in Clifford Geertz's (1960) study of the *Kijaji* (rural Muslim teachers) in rural Indonesia. Geertz emphasized how the *Kijaji*'s new social role as broker between the emerging nation-state and rural communities - over which the *Kijaji* had historically wielded great authority and respect - offered great opportunities for them to protect their social position and power by embedding themselves within the emerging nation-state structure. Yet, by forging links with nationalist, secular and metropolitan-based power structures, the *Kijaji* risked alienating his rural support base, among whom his authority was founded upon his “status as a truly religious other-worldly man” (Geertz, 1960, 242).

### *The gendered dynamics influencing the demand for brokerage*

In many cases the domain of informal brokerage remains a typically hyper-masculinised environment (Hart, 1991). Whereas formal government initiatives and NGO-led development programmes commonly attempt to mainstream gender equality and empowerment (for example, through increasing women's participation in and leadership of development programmes, through reserved seats in elected bodies, electoral candidate quotas and employment quotas), brokerage often serves to strengthen forms of informal power politics and patronage networks, from which women are excluded. This is partly because brokerage creates demand for and reliance upon non-formal structures of authority that are deeply patriarchal, and, although women may be acutely aware of the unequal power relations into which they are entering, access to exploitative and patriarchal intermediaries is still preferable to going without (Wood, 2003; de Wit and Berner, 2009). Importantly, the resort to informal and patriarchal brokerage institutions may not only reflect pre-existing gender hierarchies but serve to actively (*re*)produce gender identities and inequality.

These dynamics raise the question of whether there can be such a thing as gender progressive brokerage in patriarchal societies (see Case Box 7 for a problematic example of these issues). However, in certain contexts, demand for brokerage may create spaces through which gender hierarchies can be challenged

and gender identities contested rather than reified. For example, in Myanmar's borderlands, the re-introduction of the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act as part of the government's counter-insurgency strategy, served to criminalise the association of individuals with rebel armed groups in ways that predominantly targeted men. This is in light of the fact that they were viewed by the government as the most likely targets of rebel recruitment practices. Although the subject remains under-studied, it appears that the hyper-masculinised environment of war in Myanmar's borderlands and the heavy government restrictions placed upon men's movement created demand for women to act as both political and economic brokers in ways that transformed their role in cross-border trade networks and played a major part in their own capitalisation of the jade trade.<sup>24</sup> A similar point is made in Busarin Lertchavalitsakul's (2015) study of Shan women traders in cross-border trade networks between Myanmar and Thailand, which emphasizes women's roles in brokering agreements between traders and officials that man checkpoints. These cases are especially relevant to the project, in their suggestion that gendered politics around brokerage cultivated in 'war-time' are often contested during war to peace transitions, as states/systems of authority attempt to reassert and retrench pre-existing gender hierarchies and patriarchal systems.

### **Case Box 7: Gender and brokerage in Sierra Leone's policing reforms**

The gendered dynamics of brokerage are well-captured in Lisa Denney's (2011) analysis of the limitations of a DFID-led initiative designed to promote gender-empowerment through policing reform in Sierra Leone. The programme involved the creation of Family Support Units (FSUs). These were designed to replace the role of highly patriarchal 'traditional' authorities (chiefs and secret societies) in arbitrating on cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse, by supporting women to navigate the formal legal system. However, numerous factors have discouraged the use of FSUs by women to secure justice for such crimes. These include: (i) the travel costs and time required to reach an FSU; (ii) the high costs associated with lodging a case with the FSU (including the cost of obtaining a medical report, attending court and paying for legal representation); (iii) low rates of female literacy, which can make navigating the formal legal system, which is predominantly in English, extremely difficult; (iv) the fact that FSUs deliver justice through imprisonment rather than financial compensation to victims; and (v) women's fear of stigmatization for seeking justice against men, especially husbands or relatives.

The inability of FSUs to deliver the kind of service sought by victims has led many women to continue to seek redress through chiefs and secret societies, which are cheaper, operate in the vernacular, deliver financial compensation to victims and ultimately reflect a system that women are far more familiar and comfortable with, which is important to victims required to recount traumatic or sexual crimes. The continued reliance upon traditional authorities to act as brokers between victims and perpetrators is based upon the perception that such mediators offer a more likely means through which to secure redress and compensation. Yet, they serve to reinforce customary structures of authority, in which women have the legal status of minors and wives are legally regarded as 'chattel'. Such processes not only to reflect but also actively reinforce cultural bias against women and serve to internalize notions of female inferiority.

### **2.3.3. Conceptualising brokerage (2): The positionality of brokers**

Brokers are defined by their position between competing centres of power and authority. It is this very 'position' that makes them powerful but also exposed and vulnerable (Wolf, 1956). However, although much of the literature defines brokerage in terms of the broker's structural position between others, few studies have sought to disaggregate the variation that exists within this broad characterisation of positionality and to consider how a broker's 'in-between' position may take many different forms.

This section seeks to set out a clearer and more nuanced approach to thinking through what we mean by 'positionality' and how a clearer conceptualisation of positionality is revealing for understanding the

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<sup>24</sup> This comment emerges out of discussions between one of the authors of this review (Meehan) and Dr Mandy Sadan, Reader in the History of South East Asia, SOAS.

different processes and outcomes of brokerage. It develops a framework for conceptualising positionality based on assessing: (i) from where brokers derive the power and authority to act as brokers; (ii) over what kind of boundaries and borders brokers mediate; (iii) the position of brokers within constellations of brokerage, acknowledging that an individual's ability to act as broker may emanate from being part of a broader brokerage organisation or network; (iv) gendered dynamics influencing the positionality and power of brokers.

### *Sources of power and authority*

Brokers have to retain a sense of between-ness since their usefulness, and hence their power, lies in their ability to navigate between competing centres of authority. However, a broker's position vis-à-vis the various centres of power between which he/she mediates is unlikely to be evenly balanced. From where a broker's authority derives and in whose interests a broker is primarily expected to serve are likely to impact heavily upon the kind of 'brokerage fix' that emerges. In light of the project's focus on the role of brokerage in shaping centre-margin relations, we contend that a broker's power and authority operates along a spectrum ranging between three positions.

**Firstly, there are those whose authority to act as brokers derive from their embeddedness in the margins.** 'Embedded brokers' derive authority from their extensive patronage structures, coercive power (e.g. through control over armed groups), control over local governance, and the fear and/or respect they command. This makes them powerful figures in their localities and gives them a privileged position to control the interfaces between external forces – such as state authorities and businesses – and populations and resources, in territories within which they wield power. Although such brokers' power and authority may pose a challenge to state institutions, governments may also seek to utilise their embeddedness as a means to secure stability and support, or at least acquiescence, by co-opting pre-existing patronage structures and loyalties.

This kind of brokerage structure is likely to be wrought with tensions for a number of reasons. Firstly, as will be explored in greater detail in the section below on violence, attempts to co-opt embedded brokers may be designed to forge stability, order and compliance. However, competition for control over the interface between centre and margin – and the power it confers – may also create instability and violent contestation between local elites. Secondly, brokers are somehow required to fulfil the interests of both their local constituencies *and* the interests of the centre. Brokers are likely imagined by the centre as its agents in the margins, at the same time that populations in the margins view them as representatives and interlocutors of their interests to the centre. The broker needs to maintain both of these images, simultaneously. Thirdly, the use of embedded brokers may gradually weaken the boundaries and synapses between centre and margin since those managing these interfaces become increasingly co-opted by external forces. Yet, the need to maintain support locally and to retain their own usefulness may also encourage brokers to try to harden these boundaries. Van Doorn's (1983) study of the role of the Javanese nobility (the *priyayi*) in mediating between Dutch colonial authority and local populations captures this tension well. This case reveals how these embedded brokers were gradually weakened and co-opted into colonial structures and transformed from powerful mediators to reluctant colonial collaborators.

**Secondly, brokers may derive their power primarily from acting as representatives of external actors such as central governments or investors, and be implanted in the margins to broker on their behalf.** Their ability to act as brokers is likely to emanate from a degree of embeddedness – they may have ties to the locality to which they are sent, such as family roots, ethnicity or religion – but their power is primarily derived from the fact that they are backed externally. Such brokers may be able to call upon support (coercive power, resources, patronage opportunities) from the centre. However, their role is to develop support and patronage structures locally to enable the centre to assert authority through them. Their authority within the regions they operate derives from their perceived control over a direct channel to powerful decision-makers at the centre, rather than their embeddedness in local communities.

The relative power of embedded and representative forms of brokerage is likely to oscillate, as state power waxes and wanes. In contexts where central governments embark upon strategies to consolidate authority, the latter may become much stronger. Whereas, in times when state power ebbs, the former may become more powerful figures. The dynamics of war and war to peace transitions are likely to impact heavily upon such oscillations. In times of war, or in the early onset of ceasefire agreements and negotiated war to peace transitions, states may be reliant upon embedded brokers. However, the position of such brokers may come under threat as governments attempt to consolidate control over war-to-peace transitions and attempt to position their own representatives as power brokers.

**A third type of broker may also emerge, whose authority lies in the fact that they are neither clearly embedded in the margins nor closely aligned with external forces, and thus are able to serve as liaisons** (Gould and Fernandez 1989). Demand for such types of brokerage may emerge in contexts where the state is weak, but also reluctant to work through and empower local structures of authority. Mobility – the ability to travel between centre and margins – may be a particularly important aspect of such forms of brokerage, although their lack of local embeddedness or strong state-backing may make them particularly vulnerable. For example, in many colonial contexts, “middle minorities” (Oxaal, cited in MacDonald, 1986, p. 71) served as the interface between colonial authorities and indigenous populations, with Chinese traders across Southeast Asia and Eurasian populations being notable examples (Randeraad, 1998, p. 14). Van Klinken’s (2014) study of colonial and early post-colonial Indonesia similarly emphasizes the important brokerage role played by Chinese traders, teachers and church leaders, who were predominantly based in provincial towns but who travelled widely in rural areas. They were hardly ‘locals’ and could not claim that their “social capital grew out of organic embeddedness in the local community”, invariably preferring modernizing urban cultures (p. 152). Nor could they be understood as representatives of the Dutch, Japanese and Javanese states. Through their mobility they played an important connective role. They retained a language (both literally and metaphorically) that the state could never achieve and proved valuable for “metropolitan interests needing to extract resources from the town and its surrounding hinterland (such as taxes, or at least an agreement not to revolt)”, while they also provided a channel through which local populations could access patronage in the forms of jobs, investment and education scholarships, and “explain problems upwards” (ibid).

### *The boundaries and borders where brokers are positioned*

The positionality of brokers is also determined by the specific political, economic and cultural borders and boundaries that they mediate across and the flows of power they are able to influence in such positions. Political brokerage can be understood as the mediation of flows of formal and informal political power through linking and controlling access to different political institutions and individuals. Political brokerage, for example, may serve to link politicians with voters, using their authority to deliver voters in return for political and financial benefits. Economic brokers may be defined, following Norman Long (1977, p. 121), as “the groups and individuals that control the crucial sets of relationships linking the local economy with the wider regional and national structure”. Cultural brokerage refers to those who serve “as intermediaries across the frontiers of language and culture” (Randeraad 1998, 13), such as Clifford Geertz’s (1960) Indonesian ‘cultural middlemen’ who sought to integrate metropolitan cultures of the post-colonial nation-state with the plurality of “distinct regional cultures”.

Engaging with how brokers are positioned vis-à-vis these different kinds of boundaries raises several important questions. Firstly, to what extent does different types of brokerage coalesce or clash? Are the multiple political, economic and cultural interfaces between centre and margin channelled through the same interstitial spaces and mediated by the same broker? Or, do various political, economic and cultural interfaces operate along different channels in ways that create tension between different forms of brokerage? What determines the extent to which those demanding brokerage services (whether states, businesses or various civil society groups) benefit from the monopolisation or proliferation of brokerage channels?

Secondly, at what scale do such interfaces operate? Political, economic and cultural brokers may mediate across localised interfaces, such as between different religious communities within the same town. They may be positioned at, interstices between the local and national, as with the example of political brokers attempting to voice local grievances to central institutions. Finally, they may operate transnationally and globally, such as those who broker access to local resources for international companies in territories where state authority is weak. Again, this raises questions regarding the extent to which the same broker mediates across all scales or whether brokers are able to position themselves to negotiate only certain scalar interfaces.

Thirdly, how can we understand the dialectical relationship that emerges between brokers and the different types of boundaries they mediate? How do the different ways in which space is labelled (as outlined in Section 1) shape the types of brokerage that emerge?

Finally, how does the positionality of brokers and the importance of the boundaries they mediate change over time? How do broader processes of (de)democratisation, (de)centralisation of power, changing economic dynamics or changing national legal frameworks affect the relative importance of different boundaries?

### *The position of brokers within constellations of brokerage*

Much of the literature reviewed above analyses brokerage through the prism of the individual broker. However, as Bierschenk et al. (2002) argue, in many cases “we encounter brokerage rather than brokers”, where mediation is conducted by an organisation or a network – such as a militia, NGO or mafia – rather than simply by individuals. The power to act as a brokerage organisation lies in the different positions taken by its various members; positions which may allow an organisation to be embedded in both centre and margins, and broker across multiple scales simultaneously. In studies, including this project, where the methodology for studying brokerage is founded upon conducting life histories of specific brokers, it is particularly important to ‘locate’ the position of brokers. This implies not only situating them in terms of where their power derives and the borders and boundaries across which they mediate, but also in light of their positions within a wider brokerage network.

### *Gendered dynamics of broker positionality*

Men and women are differently positioned in society through their social roles, representations of masculinity and femininity, and gendered hierarchies (Hart, 1991; Petersen, 2005). Gendered power relations and the different positions of men and women in society play an instrumental role in shaping brokerage dynamics (who acts as brokers and for what purposes). At the same time, as mentioned above, brokerage may serve to reproduce and entrench gender representations and hierarchies. Thus, the role of brokerage in shaping power relations is distinctly gendered, albeit in ways that have very rarely been studied.

In many cases, brokerage empowers entrenched and easily visible power structures in ways that reinforce patriarchy and gender inequality. For example, in contexts where external forces, such as states or investors, pursue their interests (such as securing order, stability or access to resources) through forms of *embedded* brokerage they are unlikely to seek (or be able) to impose new power structures. Rather, they tend to work through existing structures of authority, negotiating a brokerage fix that positions men and women according to entrenched gendered relations. For example, as Tilitonse’s (2013) study of mining in Malawi clearly shows, efforts by international investors to communicate with local communities displaced by their mining activities to discuss compensation and fulfil their corporate social responsibility, have invariably sought out ‘Traditional Authorities’ to act as brokers. The pre-eminent position of (male) Chiefs in Malawi enables them to act as embedded brokers, in ways that have distinct gendered outcomes. One particularly relevant case cited by the Tilitonse report discussed the reluctance of mining companies’ to support women’s preference for the construction of new settlements for displaced villages, in lieu of cash compensations, over which women would have little control. This was due to the fact that the Traditional

Authorities rejected this option, on the grounds that “no woman would speak in front of men as women had no cultural standing to give an opinion on the matter” (p. 20). The mining company’s unwillingness to interfere with apparent cultural norms and laws reflects how brokerage practices served as a technology of entrenched gender hierarchies, by providing a mechanism through which women’s voices were ultimately silenced.

### **Case Box 8: Broker positionality in war to peace transitions: The case of Myanmar**

Myanmar’s borderlands are home to one of the world’s longest running insurgencies. Ever since the country’s independence in 1948, an array of ethnic armed groups have fought almost continuously against the central government (and each other) for greater autonomy. Ceasefire agreements in the late 1980s and early 1990s initiated a precarious and uneven pause to the conflict. This was then capitalised upon by the central government, which embarked upon a process of sustained militarisation of the country’s border regions. Increasing stability also enabled national and foreign investors to gain access to borderland resources.

Within this environment, government-sanctioned militias have emerged as key brokers; occupying the political space created by the encroachment of military government institutions since 1988, and the enduring difficulties the government has faced in monopolising power (Meehan, 2015). They have played a key role in extending the reach of state institutions and disciplining local populations, in order to ‘open up’ and secure territory for investment. However, the tensions surrounding militia brokers and the roles they have played within Myanmar’s borderlands have varied significantly.

Understanding the different ‘positionality’ of militia brokers provides important insights into explaining these variations. In some cases, militias represent ‘embedded’ brokers, with longstanding ties in borderland regions, in many cases as part of former insurgent groups. Becoming a government-sanctioned militia provided a way for some groups to avoid being targeted by an increasingly powerful central government, while also seeking to mediate on behalf of local populations. In other cases, militias derive their power primarily by acting as ‘representative’ brokers for the military. Their ability to act as brokers derives from their ties with the central government and the military, which has provided them with weapons and business opportunities (Meehan, 2015).

In areas where militias acted predominantly as ‘embedded’ political brokers between the Myanmar military and local populations, the growing power of military state institutions gradually rendered their services unnecessary and their power diminished. In other cases, militias have proved adept at brokering across multiple scales, retaining and aggrandizing power through their ability to negotiate between foreign investors, local populations and state institutions. Certain militias along the China border, for example, have derived extensive power from their ability to connect Myanmar government figures with cross-border investors as a result of the fact that militia leaders speak Chinese and are part of wider cross-border networks that also allow them to broker on both sides of the border.

However, in other cases the attempt by local elites to act as political brokers (by claiming to negotiate encroaching state power in the interests of local populations), cultural brokers (by pledging to protect ethnic rights and customary institutions), and economic brokers (by mediating between investors and local populations) have created significant tensions and have become the target of growing resentment. This has been the case especially where brokers have profited significantly from economic deals at the expense of local populations, and in some cases have led to reinvigorated support for insurgency groups.

### 2.3.4 Conceptualising brokerage (3): Tensions surrounding brokerage dynamics

Brokerage can generate ambiguous, unintended and at times contradictory dynamics, especially surrounding (i) how brokerage empowers and disempowers those who use the services of brokers; (ii) the extent to which brokerage serves to consolidate as well as corrupt states and markets; and (iii) the ways in which brokerage may serve to escalate or de-escalate violence. Conceptualising variations in the 'brokerage fix' thus requires careful engagement with the dynamics surrounding each of these tensions.

#### *Empowerment and disempowerment; Domination and resistance*

Brokerage can offer a means to 'speak to power' in contexts where formal institutions of empowerment, accountability, protection and redress – such as democratic systems and the rule of law – are absent, weak or serve to structurally disempower certain groups (class, religion, race, gender or ethnicity). Brokerage can provide a mechanism through which disempowered individuals or social groups can access systems of power, sustaining their agency by enabling the poor to cross (by proxy) the "imperceptible spaces" and boundaries that separate them from decision makers, and to gain representation within the informal and corrupt governance structures that shape their lives (Anwar, 2014).

However, even through acts of seeming resistance, brokerage may serve, often unintentionally, to entrench disempowerment, emphasizing the need to disaggregate the impact of brokerage on different social groups and over time. Firstly, brokerage can create heavy reliance upon informal structures of authority which may offer, or claim to offer, short-term redress but also lock-in deeply unequal and exploitative structures of domination and inequality. As Geoff Wood (2003) argues, these dynamics may create a 'Faustian bargain' in which the focus on short-term survival and security encourages a discounting of the future in ways that contribute to chronic poverty and perpetuate patriarchy (cf. Kandiyoti, 1988). This Faustian bargain may fix in place forms of 'feudal' brokerage in which "the tradeoff between autonomy and poverty is complete", whereby the worst condition for the poor and vulnerable is to *not* be a client (Wood, 2003, p. 465). As Wood argues, in relation to the role of such 'feudal brokers' in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province,

these "feudal" brokers provide employment or the links to it; they put in a good word (the institution of *safarish*); they enable the poor eventually to get to the front of the queue; they get files shifted (e.g., on a land case); they give or guarantee loans; they can procure legal services; they can get the rent-seeking police to withdraw an enquiry; they can mediate conflict, perhaps by paying off the aggrieved party; and so on. In return? Unswerving loyalty...There is not much room for resistance under such conditions. The risk of challenge is too great.

Secondly, brokerage may become a mechanism that offers a degree of redress and empowerment, but in ways that serve to hold more broad-based resistance in check. Brokerage may thus serve to weaken collective agency and mobilisation and/or contribute to the failure to address more deep-seated drivers of domination and disempowerment (De Wit and Berner, 2009). These tensions are well captured in the lively debates surrounding the role that brokers have played in re-shaping caste politics in rural north India. According to numerous studies, widespread low-caste (Dalit) political mobilisation since the early 1990s has initiated a "silent revolution" in which locally dominant upper castes have been forced to share power with various subaltern groups (Jaffrelot, 2003; cf. Varshney, 2000; Pai, 2000, 2002; Krishna, 2004). These studies argue that, integral to this transformation, has been the rise of a new generation of low-caste, well-educated political activists, who have become important "link men" between community and the state (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p. 1373). Through their role as political and cultural brokers these *naye netās* ('new politicians') have facilitated social connections outside the village and acted as "political fixers". They have enabled marginalized caste members to gain political leverage with state officials, mediated the communities' engagements with the police and eroded caste-based identities and inequalities (Jaffrelot, 2003; Krishna, 2004).

However, other studies have offered a less sanguine exploration of the impact of brokerage in facilitating low-caste resistance and empowerment (Corbridge et al., 2005; Jeffrey et al., 2008). Jeffrey et al.'s (2008) ethnographic study of *naye netās* in Uttar Pradesh emphasizes the inability of brokerage practices to address structural barriers to democratization, perpetual low-caste exclusion and the importance of upper-caste counter-resistance. Although the emergence of well-educated Dalit brokers has changed "the flavour of local politics" and has politicised caste discrimination, in many cases their role has been confined to that of "social animators" able to generate only "piecemeal symbolic gains" (ibid, p. 1373). Their emphasis upon improving education access to low-castes and their effort to disseminate new ideas challenging caste-based discrimination has provided a limited channel for political empowerment. At the same time it has done very little to improve Dalits' bargaining power against dominant caste landowners and has proved unable to address Dalits' marginalized position in local labour and land hierarchies (cf. Corbridge et al., 2005; Lerche, 1999; Jeffrey and Lerche, 2003). Furthermore, the role of Dalit brokers must be contextualised within the broader "dialectics of domination and resistance", in particular the ability of upper-caste groups to counter-resist Dalit political assertion through strengthening their own political networks by securing government positions for family members and through their continued control over land and labour; in this case through withholding pay to certain workers deemed to be troublemakers and denying certain households access to collect fodder from their fields (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p. 1382). Although the rise of *naye netās* brokers has provided a cathartic mechanism by empowering educated and politicised young Dalit men, it has ultimately "moderated rather than transformed processes of class and caste domination". This has resulted in limited tangible change in a society in which upper-caste figures remain the key mediators, in light of their structured positions as landowners, employers and state officials. As Jeffrey et al.'s study concludes, these stark realities have gradually led many brokers to struggle to maintain their credibility with many jokes caricaturing "the faintly ridiculous and overly optimistic local *netā*" (ibid, p. 1389).

Thirdly, even when brokerage enables overt acts of resistance it may do so in ways that inadvertently serve to entrench the very structures of governance and domination they aim to challenge, entrapping acts of resistance within broader structures of domination and disempowerment. For example, in response to extensive land grabs, many vulnerable households in Myanmar's borderlands have sought the services of brokers to negotiate with state authorities and to navigate the country's labyrinthine land laws in an attempt to obtain the necessary deeds to secure their land. However, such struggles to access the legal system, in many ways serve to legitimise and normalise land laws and governance structures that fail to acknowledge customary law and entrap marginalized population within a broader system of structural disempowerment.

Such tensions may create distinctly gendered dynamics of (dis)empowerment, as Piya Chatterjee's (2001; 2008) study of women's labour activism on tea plantations in North Bengal, clearly demonstrates. P. Chatterjee recounts the challenges and contradictions surrounding the mobilisation of a women's self-help group, designed to broker between plantation workers and local and regional state administration. She reflects upon how the efforts of the organisation to leverage social and political power and to secure funding remained heavily reliant upon the alliance of men. This included the power of local trade union leaders who felt most threatened by the organisation, and whose support could only be elicited through repeated claims that the organisation sought only to perform "women's social work" rather than engage in politics or form a new union. Furthermore, the need to attract funding to make the organisation viable (especially to cover the extensive travel costs associated with mobilising across disparate plantation sites) led the organisation to seek the support of external donors, which in turn required it to fulfil strict donor accountability requirements. The need to recruit staff who were literate, able to speak English, and had the ability to perform certain skills (book-keeping, proposal writing) resulted in forms of "structural marginalization" within the organization as "middle-class, upper-caste, literate, and masculinist ideologies" gained ascendancy, disempowering some of the organisation's founding members, many of whom were non-literate plantation women.

All of these cases emphasize the tensions and ambiguities that inform the relationship between brokerage and (dis)empowerment. They further encourage careful reflection upon the temporal dynamics of brokerage, in order to assess the role that brokers play over the short, medium and long term in structuring domination and resistance.

### *Disrupting and consolidating states and markets*

Brokers are deeply implicated in processes of state and market expansion. Indeed, the demands and opportunities for brokers are typically enhanced rather than eroded by the expansion of markets and state institutions into these spaces (Blok, 1974). They enable states and markets to 'reach down' into localities. However, they are also Janus-faced characters whose interests often lie in the perpetuation rather than resolution of interstitial spaces and conflicts, since, as previously mentioned, it is through mediating such tensions that they derive and retain power. Thus, they simultaneously serve to facilitate the expansion of markets and states and prevent them from operating freely.

Brokerage may consolidate state authority by providing a mechanism through which to secure authority and control over resources and populations. It can offer an effective and flexible form of governance often overlooked in studies focused on the reach of formal state institutions. This argument is developed persuasively in a number of recent studies on the role of brokers in transnational migration networks across Asia (Lindquist et al., 2012; Xiang, 2012). Within the context of economic liberalisation, increasing mobility and deregulation on the one hand and continued efforts by states to monitor migrants on the other, state officials have grappled with the contradictory challenges of simultaneously rolling back state institutions and extending their reach. In this context migrant brokers have become crucial nodes in managing and regulating mobility and, according to Lindquist et al. (2012) "should not be understood as external to state power, but rather as integral to new forms of governance and governmentality" (p. 13).

Biao Xiang's (2012) study of the persistent role of private migrant brokers in the structures governing international migration in China further develops this argument. He argues that brokers should not be interpreted as reflective of state weakness or fragmentation. They are in fact an integral part of how the centralized Chinese state is able "to render individual mobility governable" in a liberalizing economy. Xiang argues that brokers should be understood not as positioned 'between' state and society or state and migrant, but as 'within' the state, within the "general system of governance" (p. 52). They provide the Chinese state with a mechanism through which to make individual mobility more easily legible, thus enabling the state to entrench order and rule. "[H]ow agents make money", he argues, "is how the state makes order" (ibid, p. 67). The Chinese state's willingness to tolerate the role of brokers thus reflects a degree of state rationality. This is based less on efforts at overarching centralisation of control over social practices, but becomes a part of the state's quest "to govern *without* knowing all the minute details of life" (ibid). Brokerage is part of a strategy of legibility, albeit one that differs from Scott's (1998) analysis of how modern statecraft attempts to render populations legible through simplification of social practices.

However, Xiang's analysis is of the role of brokerage within a relatively powerful state. In other contexts, clearer tensions may emerge in the relationship between brokerage and state authority. The reliance upon brokers to secure order and stability may undermine the bureaucratic rationality and legitimacy of state institutions in ways that erode their capacity and power. In such cases the 'brokerage fix' may result in states tolerating or protecting corrupt, violent and/or illegal brokerage practices in ways that blunt the authority and legitimacy of formal institutions. In this sense, brokerage may also pose a 'Faustian bargain' for the state. In these cases, the short-term stability afforded through brokerage alliances – for example with warlords in Afghanistan or paramilitary and militia groups in Myanmar and Colombia – may impact heavily upon the longer-term trajectory of state-society relations. Indeed, while such 'fixes' may be envisioned as temporary – a stepping stone towards more formalised state institutions and the 'retirement' of brokers – brokers may accrue formidable power in this process, enabling them to strengthen their negotiating position vis-à-vis the state.

Brokerage dynamics may also serve both to secure and impede the state's access to and utilisation of resources. Brokerage may enable governments to secure certain resources, for example by ensuring order in territories around key sites of extraction. However, resources may also become embedded in brokerage mechanisms in ways that prevent states from exerting control over them. Economic incentives (such as taxation rights and control over trade and resources) may become an expedient way to secure the loyalty of brokers. Two studies already mentioned above – Barkey's (2008) study of the Ottoman Empire and Duara's (1988) analysis of state consolidation in early twentieth century rural north China – reveal how this works. In both cases, central governments sought to use brokers as a means of expanding tax revenues, while accepting that such tax farming initiatives were open to abuse by brokers who used their privileged position and state protection to accrue extensive wealth. Such brokerage dynamics also created structural weaknesses within the state edifice. For example, it was in times when central governments were at their weakest and in greatest need of revenue collection (such as times of war and rebellion) that tax brokers were most able to challenge state authority and withhold their services.

Similar tensions revolve around the relationship between brokerage and how markets operate. Brokerage may empower a 'frontier dynamic', enabling private companies to secure access to land and resources, mobilise labour, manage disputes and ensure local populations remain acquiescent in spaces where formal institutions are weakly embedded. However, the reliance upon brokers to deliver these services may also enable these figures to protect and defend local privileges, manipulating rather than freeing markets. Processes of uneven development, inequality and poverty may be less a consequence of a lack of political and economic integration, than a function of the way these integrative processes are imposed, resisted, and brokered by governments, private companies and local populations. The neoliberal good governance policy agenda towards managing geographically marginal spaces then become deeply problematic. Its focus on 'unlocking the potential' of border and frontier regions through greater economic integration (efforts to 'thin' borders, build infrastructure, create development corridors and so forth), and more 'effective' state institutions cannot explain the divergent ways in which the state's margins are integrated or inserted into national and transnational political and economic structures. Nor can they explain the ways that such integration may coexist alongside continuing violence, uneven development and the reproduction of hybrid spaces.

### *Escalating and de-escalating violence*

Brokerage may provide a mechanism through which to forge stability and control or mitigate the risk of violence in processes of social contestation over resources, identities and the institutionalisation of power in state and market structures. However, it may also inspire new forms of violence. Violence may become embedded within brokerage dynamics and become functional to its operation, while brokerage itself may become a target for violence and resentment. Violence is often a particularly important modality in shaping how power is brokered in state margins amid war to peace transitions. Therefore, the relationship between violence and brokerage is particularly significant for this research.

How violence is organised and 'ordered', who gets to deploy it and how, plays an integral part in how the centre is reconstituted in the margins, and how the margins resist or become legible and governable for the centre. The role of violence in these processes may be most apparent during wartime. However, violence (in its many forms) remains critical to the ways in which centre-periphery relations are imposed, resisted and mediated in the ordering of 'post'-war spaces (Kalyvas, Shapiro & Masoud 2008, 1). The "production of territory" in borderland and frontier regions becomes both a cause of violent contestation and is itself shaped by the violence these conflicts produce (Lefebvre 1991; Brenner & Elden 2009, 367). In a responding set of ambiguities, brokerage then emerges as a response to the violent geographies of the margins, as a way of negotiating the violence inherent in attempts to articulate 'governable spaces'; yet it often also inspires new tensions and conflicts, that in turn produces additional impetus for the centre to impose its will on borderland contexts.

Violence has been strangely absent in the literature on brokerage (Blok, 1974 being a notable exception), reflecting more broadly "the lack of integration between the study of order and the study of conflict and

violence” (Kalyvas et al., 2008, p. 1-2). Brokerage has typically been analysed in terms of its ability to facilitate integration and establish order and efficiency and has thus rarely garnered interest from students of violence and conflict whose lens is focused on “places and periods in which order has collapsed” (ibid).

In this project, the dissonance between the study of order and the study of conflict is challenged. Brokerage, as a modality for how centre-periphery relations are managed, offers ways of conceptualising violence in the margins; not as the antithesis of order, but as embedded within the very mechanisms through which the margins are made ‘legible’ to the centre and vice versa. It provides a way to deconstruct and better understand the varied technologies of violence inscribed in the making of governable spaces. Moreover, it moves us away from a conceptualisation of violence and order as opposing forces. Instead, it encourages us to engage and contend with the violent foundations of ‘progress’, ‘development’ and ‘order’ (Foucault, 2003; M. Cowen and Shenton, 1996; Watts, 2012).

### **Violence in the margins generates violent brokerage**

As demonstrated in Section 1, state margins often embody highly contested spaces in which different logics of power and structures of authority commonly intersect. They are sites of intense friction between efforts by state institutions to define the parameters of political, economic and social behaviour (for example through forging national identities and bureaucratic structures e.g. rule of law) and flows of commodities, capital and people, which often work through subverting, suspending or renegotiating state rules (Appadurai, 2001; Goodhand, 2015; Korf and Raeymaekers, 2013; Hagman and Korf, 2012; Newman and Paasi, 1998).

Many frontier and borderland regions are also at the forefront of contemporary processes of capitalist expansion – in terms of both resource capture and efforts to increase connectivity through trade networks and infrastructure. They are often regions particularly prone to unsustainable resource extraction, land grabbing and inequitable development, defined by boom towns and rapid accumulation for the few and dispossession and exploitation of the many (Eilenberg, 2014; Peluso and Lund, 2012).

The inherent inequality and injustice underpinning the primitive accumulation of capital, has meant that processes to “open up” spaces and “discipline” populations are often violently contested (Nevins & Peluso, 2008, p. 3). War to peace transitions often embody profound moments of rupture that enables the re-working of social relations; peace may ‘open up’ spaces for state authority and market dynamics to move into, and/or create competition over (the formalisation of) control of wartime economies. Ending violence may not in fact be the primary aim of establishing order and peace; war to peace transitions may be more about (re)asserting who has the means to wield violence, for what purposes and with what authority/legitimacy.

The challenges of establishing order and the functionality of violence to embedding and securing state institutions and markets in marginal spaces may cause state actors and investors to draw upon the services of brokers who have the capacity to deploy violence. Thus, the interests of state and private actors may not revolve around containing violence. Rather, they may necessitate attempts to utilise borderland elites’ repertoires of violence to pursue state-building processes and the entrenchment of capitalist market forces.

There are many reasons why recourse to brokerage as means of consolidating state and market institutions in state margins, may be fraught with violence. In areas where the government is confronted with its own inability to monopolise the means of coercion, it is likely to prioritise the garnering of support from those who can. From the government’s perspective, those wielding coercive power may represent the most visible form of authority in regions where linguistic and ethnic diversity and transnational flows create “geographies of ignorance” for government actors (Van Schendel 2002b). Attempting to broker

deals with wielders of violence may also be perceived as likely to create the least form of resistance, as it provides a means of co-opting those who pose the greatest threat<sup>25</sup>.

The use of violent brokers may be cheaper to maintain than regular armies, especially in protracted low-intensity conflicts common to many borderland regions. 'Embedded brokers' may have "superior knowledge of the physical and cultural terrain in their respective territories" (Ahram, 2011, p. 14). They are often also used to carry out "dirty work" (such as extrajudicial killings and brutal counterinsurgency campaigns), in ways that provide governments with a degree of plausible deniability between the formal state bureaucracy (police, army) and abuses which nevertheless serve to consolidate state power (ibid). As outlined previously (in Section 1), such actions rely upon the strategic 'illegibility' of violence, rather than its formalization. Indeed, the portrayal of marginal regions as ungovernable and unruly spaces of insecurity, criminality and violence, offers a discourse that legitimates unsavoury strategies of violent state consolidation and primitive accumulation that are disallowed, or at least moderated, elsewhere by the mantras of good governance, human rights and equitable development, which national governments are expected to uphold in state-controlled space.

These brokerage dynamics generate and intersect with different types of violence. They may create coalitions between state actors and brokers who can employ *direct* violence, such as those able to fight on the front-lines as counter-insurgency forces. They may employ those that mete out *routine* or *everyday* violence, to prevent resentment from developing into organised forms of collective resistance. They may also engage brokers who can deploy *slow* violence, with the capability to enforce the perpetuation of damaging practices, such as environmentally destructive resource extraction or the use of labour in dangerous working conditions (cf. Tripp, 2016). Violent brokerage may also have distinct spatial outcomes whereby brokers' ability to mediate the impact of state and market penetration into marginal spaces has a significant 'distributive impact', shifting the violence of these processes to particular places and/or social groups (Khan 2010); a spatial fix that displaces violence from the centre to the peripheries of states (cf. Harvey, 2001).

Thus, violence often becomes an accepted means through which brokers in contested borderland and frontier regions achieve the results required to maintain state support. As a result, violence becomes embedded in the kinds of coalition-building and bargaining processes through which state and private actors struggle to make marginal spaces governable. The 'violence rights' granted to brokers may in turn become a means through which brokers aggrandise their own power. The granting of such 'violence rights' may also be a means of co-opting those who would otherwise mount opposition. Brokerage becomes a way of reconciling potential opposition by enabling their forces to "come to terms with the structures of official power", albeit in ways in which violence continues to be exercised, albeit within state-defined parameters (Hobsbawm, 2000, p. 61).

### **Brokerage and the making of violent geographies**

The previous point reveals the complex dialectical relationship between brokerage and violence. On one hand, the violence embedded within brokerage is a reflection of the violent processes brokers are required to mediate. It is a function of the central role afforded 'violence' in the fulfilment of the interests of state and market actors in discordant margins; and one may not be able to act as a broker without the capability to deploy violence. On the other hand, brokerage may itself create new structures, logics and forms of violence, unleashing parallel and paradoxical processes which serve both to order space and produce violent geographies.

The difficulties associated with establishing state hegemony in borderland and frontier regions can lead to the inadvertent emergence of brokers, who capitalise upon weak state penetration to 'break into the

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<sup>25</sup> As an example, both Khalili (2012) and Achcar (2004) contend that the co-optation of elite brokers to manipulate their hold on violence in marginal zones, has been integral to counter-insurgency practices throughout the MENA region, in efforts to consolidate empire or nation-states, up to and including the present.

system'; using violence as a key means through which to do so. There are many examples of this, with governments attempting to consolidate and centralise state authority through breaking down patronage structures and forging more direct and bureaucratic relationships between state institutions and populations. These have enabled brokers to insert themselves into these processes and to derive power from them in ways that were not anticipated by central governments and have often been prone to violence.

Brokerage may 'produce' violence through a number of ways. Firstly, violence may have a performative function, becoming a means for brokers to secure their control over the borders and boundaries from which they derive their power. Violence may become the most powerful and visceral way for would-be brokers to demonstrate their authority and suitability, both in terms of showing their ability to deliver 'results' and to act as a warning of what may happen if their brokerage services are overlooked.

Secondly, the need for brokers to demonstrate their continued usefulness to their clients may encourage them to develop a Janus-faced approach to violence. They may seek to justify their position by delivering order, while simultaneously allowing or even initiating a degree of disorder to demonstrate the continued importance of their services. Violence often serves as a lightning rod for inflaming central government paranoia about frontiers and borderlands, and thus the use of violence may become a particularly effective way for brokers to manipulate state patrons. This may ensure that violence, especially forms of 'symbolic' violence, remain an important dynamic surrounding brokerage (Kalyvas, 2006).

Thirdly, violence may arise out of the competition between brokers to control important interstitial spaces. State actors may not know who is best placed to play the role of broker, or there may be no clear dominant power broker. This may increase competition between potential brokers with violence becoming a means, paradoxically, of securing government-backing to deliver order.

Fourthly, the state's reliance upon brokers whose local autonomy is high but whose loyalty remains questionable, may mean that violence becomes a powerful means through which central governments try to keep brokers in check. Although the state may be weak in those marginal spaces where it is reliant upon brokers, its overall coercive power is likely to be much greater. This may allow local state actors (e.g. police, local army units) to call upon reinforcements as a warning to brokers should they transgress the often ill-defined state-set parameters surrounding their activities.

Finally, the system of brokerage may itself become a target for violence. Although brokers commonly draw upon stocks of existing religious, cultural or political authority in order to mediate the dislocating socio-economic impact of expanding markets and state institutions, they may also become associated with the violence and instability these forces unleash, and/or become self-serving figures whose actions exacerbate inequality. In such contexts, brokers themselves may become the targets of violence. This may be exacerbated in contexts where 'liaison brokers' are somewhat anomic figures who are neither embedded in local communities nor are representatives of the central government (Stovel and Shaw, 2012).

### **Case Box 9: Violent brokerage: The Sicilian mafia**

The relationship between brokerage and violence is well-captured in Anton Blok's (1974) account of the role of the mafia in Sicilian society between 1860 and 1960. Blok shows how the rise of the mafia in nineteenth century Sicily arose out of the changing nature of political and economic relations between the state and rural landowning elites, and between these landowning elites and the peasantry. The Bourbon state, and the Italian state which proceeded it in 1860, sought to overcome the power of the rural aristocracy by attempting to facilitate the rise of a new smallholder class by bringing an end to feudalism and emancipating the peasantry.

Instead, these land reforms inadvertently facilitated a wave of dispossession, which concentrated land ownership in the hands of a small elite (especially after expropriation of large tracts of church lands in 1860) and the emergence of an “alliance” between feudal aristocracy and a rising landed gentry, which “broke into the system” (Blok, 1969, p. 158). Attracted to the trappings of urban civility in Palermo, Naples and beyond, many of the aristocracy became absentee landlords and leased their lands to this rising class of large leaseholders, known as *gabelotti*. In a context of land alienation and the proletarianization of the dispossessed rural masses, the *gabelotti* relied upon a class of *soprastante* (estate administrators), and *campiere* (armed ‘guardians’), whose main quality was, rather euphemistically, to “make themselves respected” among the local population and constituted “a private police-force at the service of the large estate owner” (Blok, 1969, p. 159). The mafia emerged out of these networks of privatised protection. Their role was one of mediation, brokering the changing relationship between the central state, the Sicilian elites and the peasantry. By controlling the interfaces between the local community and the outside world, the mafia served both to moderate and make possible the extension of the state and market relations into the Sicilian periphery.

Blok’s work is exceptional in placing violence and coercion at the centre of understanding brokerage, and also revealing its ambiguities. For Blok, violent brokerage served both as a means of repression *and* social mobility; as both a means of facilitating the extension of market relations and state power *and* a means with which to assuage and distort how these forces penetrated Sicilian society. Ultimately, they were a force for continuity *and* change. His work is also illuminating in its ability to chart the non-linear relationship between brokerage, violence and processes of state consolidation. The rise of an increasingly powerful Fascist state in the inter-war period marked the decline of mafia brokers. The Fascist state refused to tolerate challenges to its monopolization of coercive power and through the creation of an autonomous provincial police force was able to provide an alternative – and for the landed elites a cheaper and less burdensome – means of security (Blok, 1974). However, as Blok’s study shows, Fascism merely acted as a substitute for the mafia. In effect, replacing one form of protection with another. By leaving the pre-existing agrarian structure in place and by treating mafia as a form of “rural delinquency” rather than a function of the broader configuration of political and economic power relations, the underlying *raison d’être* for mafia remained in place.

Following the Allied landing on Sicily in 1943 and the subsequent retreat of Fascist forces, the state monopoly on violence crumbled. After which, the landed elites once again resorted to the services of the mafia, who were able to act as much-needed power brokers. They safeguarded their property “from the attacks of a starving peasantry” and the outbreak of banditry that proliferated in the years of scarcity after the war (ibid, p. 190). The mafia regained their position as violent power brokers, shaping the structures by which the central state operated in its efforts to maintain stability and penetrate Sicilian society.

## CONCLUSION: SPATIALISING BROKERAGE

In this concluding section, we attempt to bring together ‘space’ and ‘brokerage’, as part of an assemblage of relations that produce and discipline the interface between centres and margins. In so doing, we find ourselves filling a lacuna in the literature on brokerage, in particular, which has largely overlooked its spatial dynamics. There has been a tendency to view brokerage as a process that unfolds upon pre-existing structures of space and territory, rather than exploring how the actions of brokers themselves serve to *produce* space. This has reverberated in a lack of discussion of how brokerage operates differently across different kinds of state margins, as part of the dynamics that shape them (frontiers, borderlands, enclaves). Through exploring the role of brokers in war to peace transitions, across different kinds of border regions in Sri Lanka and Nepal, this research project aims to address these knowledge gaps. Below, we end with a set of suggestions for how to engage ‘brokerage’ as integral to the production of space and vice versa, and a research agenda for how to proceed.

## Brokerage and the production of space: Developing a border/broker lens

Much of the literature we have reviewed for this paper portrays brokers as relatively static figures, whose positions and power emerge from their ability to mediate across certain pre-given borders, boundaries and 'structural holes'. It rarely captures how the social synapses that brokers mediate are themselves ever-shifting and unclear, "impermanent features of social life, dependent on particular circumstances rather than being permanent fixtures of human society" (Migdal, 2001, p. 5).

Our aim is to better integrate the literature on brokerage with the critical geography literature; to bring those concepts explored in the first section of this document, in particular the interrogation into how power orders, disciplines and structures territoriality (cf. Jabareen, 2015), into conversation with the cases and practices we describe in the second. Brokers, we argue, are defined by the borders and boundaries they mediate. Moreover, they produce space through their instrumental role in activating certain borders and boundaries, and deconstructing, circumventing or violating others. Brokerage is thus a reflection of, and a dynamic force shaping the mechanisms through which power is made mobile and space is organised. In other words, to understand the brokers, we need to understand their relationship to the border-spaces they negotiate.

This demands an analysis of the different tensions and power dynamics exposed in the production of 'borders'; how borders are internalised and constructed through brokers' actions as 'border guards' and 'border transgressors'; and how brokers' ability to traverse borders and move between different spaces enables them both to connect across and perpetuate the interstices between competing centres of power and structures of authority. Engaging with this as a dialectic relationship offers a starting point for examining the dynamic interactions between brokerage and state practices, and the role that brokers play in shaping the relationship between the centre and the 'margins'. We thus emphasize the need to develop a political economy analysis of the (uneven) spatial institutionalisations of power, and an understanding that "[p]rocesses do not occur in space but define their own spatial frame" (Harvey, 2006, p. 123; cf. Paasi 1996). Brokerage is not simply a response to the unevenness of market and state institutions across space/territory and the choke points this creates, but is an active dynamic in (re)producing and (re)shaping this unevenness.

By challenging the fixity of borders and boundaries and the stability of the 'infrastructure' that connects 'centres' and 'margins', we emphasize that these relations are in perpetual flux, constantly being re-made and re-worked by social processes (state practices, market dynamics and struggles surrounding these) and flows (of power, people and resources) (cf. D. Cowen, 2014). This explains why an understanding of those who mediate flows and power relations across borders and between centre and margin – i.e. brokers – are so important in shaping processes of socio-economic and political change.

## Brokerage dynamics across different types of state margins

Thinking back to the sections above that contend with the plethora of methods and technologies through which border spaces are named and shaped (and the myriad literature that deals with the etymology of these terms), it is both surprising and problematic that so little attention has been given to the variegated operations of the 'brokerage fix', indifferent kinds of state margins. The flexible, in-between and/or de-centralised nature of borderlands, frontiers, enclaves and peripheries produce and are produced by intensive competition, heightened dissonance and/or (intentional) neglect. In this light, brokerage is clearly an important mechanism through which to regulate and pacify as well as intensify the volatility and resilience of the margins; and thus becomes a tool for analysing the particular ways that border spaces operate, as part of and counter to state-spaces.

Reiterating from the sections above, the demand, positioning and dynamic relations of brokerage within/across state margins is affected by the fact that these regions:

- **Embody highly contested relations.** These are spaces in which different logics of power and territorial organisation intersect and where the differences in logics and vantage points, between

central governments and local populations, are particularly pronounced. They are sites of intense friction between efforts by state institutions to territorialise space and to define the parameters of political, economic and social behaviour (for example through forging national identities and bureaucratic or legal structures); and flows of commodities, capital and people, which often work through subverting, suspending or renegotiating state rules (Appadurai, 2001).

- **Exhibit complex boundary politics.** These are spaces where different political and economic actors seek to activate boundaries as a means to enclose and mediate access to resources. This may involve jostling for position and power between different levels and arms of government, between formal state institutions and informal governance structures and between local, national and transnational companies. The linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity so common to many state margins, and the divisions between indigenous and migrant populations, may activate further boundary-making as identity politics becomes a way of trying to gain or prevent access to power and resources. Where frontier regions straddle international borders the intersection of different regulatory regimes makes boundary politics particularly intense.
- **Demonstrate institutional hybridity.** The waxing and waning of state authority is common at the margins of many states, and thus may create a multiplicity of institutions with overlapping functions (Lund, 2006; Bierschenk et al., 2002). Local populations commonly navigate between state bureaucracies and other forms of informal authority. Property rights may be governed by both national land laws and customary land tenure agreements, whilst systems of state justice, tax collection and policing may operate in parallel with, and compete against, longstanding localised jurisdictional, fiscal and security structures.

How and why brokerage operates in varying ways and with different outcomes across state margins has not been a focus for sustained analysis. This project will address this weakness in current understandings of brokerage, and thus how agents mediate, translate and produce space (cf. Shamir, 2013). Although there is little within the literature to guide this research agenda, we hypothesize that the varying dynamics of brokerage in state margins is linked to the different kinds of 'frontier' and 'borderland' dynamics we have already discussed as shaping these regions and their relationships to national and transnational flows of power.

As an example, we break down the different relationships brokerage has to frontier and borderland dynamics:

- **Frontier Dynamics - Opening and closing frontiers.** Frontiers tend to wax and wane through history. 'Opening frontiers' are typically characterized by rapid and destabilizing change. The inhabitants of these regions witness a sudden influx of new capitalist forces and an unprecedented rush for resources. Local forms of political order are re-configured by new forms of state governance and new benefactors cum protection rackets. For brokers this is a period of high risks paired with high potential gains. In closing frontiers, these processes have come to a head. Market penetration has occurred, unclaimed land and resources have started to become scarce, political order has reached a new equilibrium, and local populations have learned the 'rules of the game'. Brokers can no longer compete merely by reaching into new spaces. Rather, we see a process of crowding out, and actors in the informal sector needing to 'graduate' into the formal economy and polity.
- **Borderland dynamics.** Borderlands are spaces 'in-between', holding in tension pre- and post-conflict identities and alliances, as the borders that define them are constantly being made and re-made in relation to the movements of people, trade and governing structures. Variations in borderland dynamics are shaped by the political and economic importance of borders, for example, the differing significance of borders that outline the limits of the EU compared with borders within the EU; the geopolitical importance of certain borders such as the US-Mexico border or the Malacca Straits. These in turn shape different border *gradients*, which are

produced by differences between regulatory regimes and between levels of wealth, access to services and resources on either side of the border. Again, brokers help shape the limits and flexibility of borderlands, as they interact with and violate often arbitrarily drawn boundaries to their lives and livelihoods.

Variations in borderland and frontier dynamics are likely to create very different tensions surrounding the *demands* for brokerage, the *positionality* of brokers and the *dynamics created by brokerage*.

Where a frontier region is bound by an international border with strong political significance and high gradients, brokerage may be driven by demands to mediate not only flows of power between central states and frontier communities, but also power flows across the border. In frontier regions which do not fulfil this criterion – where there is no border or the gradient is low – brokerage may hinge more exclusively on the ability to mediate with(in) state institutions. These institutions are likely to play a determining role in flows of power and capital entering such regions. Moreover, in these cases, the lack of an ‘outside zone’ – an alternative political and economic space across the border – makes it more difficult to evade the state.

Variations in these dynamics are also likely to impact upon the positioning of brokers. As discussed extensively above, most studies emphasize that brokerage tends to be concentrated at key corridors or nodes of power (Lindquist et al., 2012). In frontier regions, where the key dynamic is between the centre and the margins, such nodes are often positioned at the interface between the two, for example, in provincial towns that connect the frontier with the state (Swartz, 1968; Hillman, 2008). In regions with a strong borderland dynamic, brokers may be more likely to be positioned at key nodes along the border itself, and may be required to travel frequently between the border, the centre and across borders.

In spatializing brokerage, we accord a set of dialectic relations to the forming of borderlands and frontiers that also allows for the idea that individuals and the relations they form with them, shape their flows and frictions. As our project contends with the different opportunities and constraints of borderland and frontier dynamics on brokerage relations, new modes for understanding state and society, unravel. In particular, they become our lens for reckoning with the fragility of states, the depths of violence, the (im)mobility of global infrastructures and the unevenness of development, in war to peace transitions.

As a final comment, we consider this document less a review of key literature, than a call for more critical, spatial engagements with brokerage, as well as a deeper engagement with the actors that negotiate, shape and contest the flow of power in war to peace transitions. As a research agenda, we encourage more explicit focus on the anomalies in geography, and disruptions to the seeming smoothness and efficiencies of states. In challenging the common sense of space and geographic epistemologies we find the ‘brokerage fix’ is an integral modality of power relations. Through this lens, the discord between how geography is imagined, rationalised and lived becomes acutely clear; with the potential to catalyse research, policy and practice in engaging borderland spaces and dynamics.

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