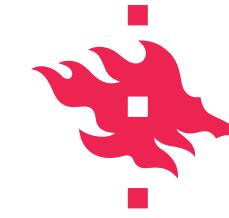


Some argue that the territorial boundaries of African countries, having largely survived the transition to independence, are now like a poorly tailored suit: It does not fit in many places, but African leaders have by and large accepted that they and their societies must somehow try to wear it. But has history stood still since independence? What is the everyday reality of those who live with these inherited colonial boundaries today?

This dissertation investigates how competing claims of territory, authority and citizenship are negotiated between state representatives and residents in the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan borderlands. It asks: "What kinds of governance regimes result from these negotiations?"

From considering these questions emerges the argument that borders do not only exist as an abstract construct, separate from or 'above' the people and territories they are supposed to separate. Borderland actors in the study regions instead actively engage, challenge and thereby reshape the state, over time and repeatedly. They contribute to fine-tuning the state in ways that do not necessarily undermine or hollow it out. However, there are clear differences in how this happens between the more peaceful setting of the Namibia-Zambia borderland, with its annual rhythm of life patterned according to the seasonal rise and fall of the Zambezi River, and the Uganda-South Sudan borderland, where the memory of recent and fear of future large-scale organised violence strongly affect daily life.

This dissertation consists of two articles published in peer-reviewed journals and two chapters published in peer-reviewed edited volumes in 2007-2013, and a synopsis that discusses these works comparatively and introduces their wider conceptual framework.



Wolfgang Zeller

WHAT MAKES BORDERS REAL -

In the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan Borderlands



Development Studies, Department of Political and Economic Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki

**What Makes Borders Real -
In the Namibia-Zambia
and Uganda-South Sudan Borderlands**

Wolfgang Zeller

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Cover photo 1: Two borderland traders are setting off at first light in June 2004 from the town of Mwandi, Zambia to cross the Zambezi and enter Namibia.

Cover photo 2: President of Zambia Levy Mwanawasa cutting the ribbon to open the Zambezi bridge at the Wenela border post on 13th May 2004. President of Namibia Sam Nujoma is seen in the left foreground (partially covered, with grey beard and scissors). German Ambassador to Zambia Erich Kristof is holding the red ribbon.

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Abstract

This publication based dissertation offers a comparative examination of the making and contestation of the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan borders in everyday relations between state and non-state actors. While events in the former borderland were strongly determined by the annual floods of the Zambezi, the movements of massive numbers of people fleeing from past and fearing future conflict characterized the latter. Past and present events in both borderlands, despite their peripheral location, are shown to be an integrate and crucial part of state formation in both countries.

The key question guiding the analysis is: How are competing claims of territory, authority and citizenship negotiated between state representatives and residents in these borderlands, and what kinds of governance regimes emerge as a result of these negotiations? This is the synthesis of two lines of investigation pursued by the author. The first seeks to clarify how pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial governments' power is broadcast from the centre to the territorial and social margins in African borderlands. The second seeks to clarify in what ways those who inhabit these borderlands exercise their own power. With the answers to these questions the author contributes to the ethnographic and historiographic study of borderlands worldwide and in Africa, as well as the literature that examines state formation as a continuous processes constituted in everyday-encounters between representatives of the state and its citizens.

The author conceptualizes borderlands as dynamic sites where the actual meanings and practices of state-society relations are contested and forged on a daily and continuous basis in the relationships between borderland inhabitants with each other across the border, and with those who represent central state authority.

The central argument of this dissertation is that this lived quality is what makes the border 'real': The border does not only exist as an abstract construct separate from or 'above' the people and territories it is supposed to separate. Borderland actors actively engage, challenge and thereby reshape the state, over time and repeatedly. They contribute to fine-tuning the state in ways that do not necessarily undermine or hollow it out. This working practice of the border is what brings it to life in the sense in which a relationship between people is only alive - and therefore real - if it is filled by meaningful and ongoing exchange and interaction.

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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following publications:

- I) Zeller, Wolfgang. 2010. "Neither Arbitrary nor Artificial: Lozi Chiefs and the Making of the Namibia-Zambia Borderland." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 25(2):6-21.
- II) Zeller, Wolfgang. 2009. "Danger and Opportunity in Katima Mulilo: A Namibian Border Boomtown at Transnational Crossroads." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35(1):133-154.
- III) Zeller, Wolfgang. 2007. "Chiefs, Policing and Vigilantes: 'Cleaning Up' the Caprivi Borderland of Namibia." In *State Recognition and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Dawn for Traditional Authorities?*, edited by Lars Buur and Helene Maria Kyed, 79-104. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- IV) Zeller, Wolfgang. 2013. "Get It While You Can – Governance Between Wars in the Uganda-South Sudan Borderland." In *Violence on the Margins. States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, edited by Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymakers, 193-217. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.



Mwaka Malomo's energetic performance. Photo by the author.

1. Situating the Study

On 13th May 2004 a new road bridge across the Zambezi River was opened with an official ceremony held in the no-man's land of the Namibia-Zambia border checkpoint Wenela. The colourful programme featured an appearance by a twelve-year-old student girl from Sesheke Secondary School. Here is what she had to say:

"My name is Mwaka Malomo. I am here to present you a poem, and my poem is entitled: 'We never knew a road.'

Welcome, indeed welcome to Sesheke District.

We honour you, dear Excellencies.

We honour you, great men of Africa.

Thank you for considering us.

And we, as the children of this district, we never knew to walk on a tarred road.

We never knew to cross a bridge at this place where we live.

We never knew the telephone system.

Our land was suffering.

You deserted us Mother Africa, Brother African Union, and Sister SADC

But we are the true souls of this district.

We shall guard our bridge with jealousy.

We shall fight until the last of our bones have broken.

Governments have come and gone,

Excellencies have come and gone,

But you, His Excellencies Mwanawasa and Nujoma, have made a difference.

We shall support you ever to be the presidents of our countries.

We appreciate your wisdom to guide the rest of the nation in uplifting our developmental efforts.

Viva Mwanawasa, Viva Nujoma!

Viva Mwanawasa, Viva Nujoma!

Thank you.”

Sustained cheers and ululation drowned the end of Mwaka Malomo's energetic performance out. Her audience included: the Namibian and Zambian heads of state and numerous bureaucrats from the ministerial level down to local field officers; the Ambassador of Germany to Zambia; engineers and representatives of the German builders and financiers of the new infrastructure. Also attending the bridge opening ceremony were delegations of Lozi elders and other ‘traditional’ leaders from the region, a sizeable press corps, and - outside the heavily guarded VIP zone - several thousand Namibian and Zambian residents of the surrounding areas.

Their excitement was not only momentary. In May 2004 the winds of change were blowing through the Namibia-Zambia borderland as its urban centres were experiencing a boom of private investment. New shopping centres and open markets, warehouses, tourist lodges and petrol stations were under construction in the Namibian border town Katima Mulilo and its Zambian neighbour Sesheke. From dawn to dusk big-rig trucks

were thundering across the Zambezi. The new bridge had closed the last gap in a transport route of global commerce now stretching for 2524 kilometres from the copper mining areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia to the state-of-the-art container handling facilities of Namibia's deep-sea port at Walvis Bay. Yet, the big words that had been put into the mouth of a small girl hailed the arrival of more than new infrastructure: They voiced the idea that the state had arrived as well. The significance of this claim is inextricably linked to where it was stated: In the borderland of two sovereign African states, both of which had seen separatist movements challenging their respective central governments in these peripheral provinces.

In April and May 2009, I spent several weeks in two other booming African border towns: Bibia and Oraba, and their respective neighbouring towns of Nimule and Kaya on the other side of Uganda's border with South Sudan.¹ These places were only some years earlier still caught in the crossfire of the conflicts between the Lords Resistance Army fighting the Ugandan government forces, and the Sudanese civil war. Precarious peace processes were under way to end both conflicts. Both border checkpoints were situated along major roads connecting the Kenyan port of Mombasa and the Ugandan capital Kampala with the fast-growing future South Sudanese capital Juba. As the Ugandan sections of these roads were resurfaced with international donor funding, the Ugandan government was actively reclaiming the previous war zone politically and militarily. Enterprising individuals of various trades were positioning themselves in the vicinities of the border checkpoints - thriving settings in the post-conflict environment. As I had observed at the Zambezi Bridge, here, too, the frontline representatives of the state were arriving in the borderland to find that their official parameters of governance were not the only game in town.

The relationship between the formation of African states and their territorial boundaries is the topic of this dissertation. From a juridical point of view, states exist as sovereign entities that extend up until a clearly defined border line, outside of which lies another unambiguously defined territorial jurisdiction: either another sovereign entity or international waters. One decisive element in the process, through which states succeed in

¹ At the time, this was technically still the border with Sudan. South Sudan only became an independent state on 9 July 2011 but following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement an Autonomous Government of South Sudan was formed. By the time of my field work in 2009 South Sudan was clearly and irreversibly moving towards independence.

their claim to sovereign existence, is *external recognition* by the community of sovereign nations. In the case of Zambia and Namibia, this became a fact on the countries' independence days, the 24th of October 1964 and the 21st of March 1990 respectively. Uganda gained independence on 9th of October 1962 while South Sudan became a sovereign state on 9th July 2011. But as Hansen and Stepputat (2005: 2) emphasize, the understanding of sovereignty as a *de jure* property is not self-evident and deeply problematic. They instead stress that territorial states and sovereignty are social constructs, which result from processes of contestation within societies. States are not merely territorial containers of sovereignty that are recognized *externally* by other states. They have to be brought into, and kept in existence *internally* as well. This process of state formation involves governments' use of a broad range of techniques of power that collect and disperse resources and attempt to order the regimes of everyday life (Foucault 1984, 1991; Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 123). What all these techniques have in common is that they define lines of inclusion and exclusion in three closely related categories: authority, citizenship and territory. These definitions are subject to contestation in state-society relations. Boundaries have to be made 'real' continuously and repeatedly, a process that is never once and for all completed. The lines of jurisdiction do not exist independent from the practices, which make them real (Ford 1999).

In this dissertation, I examine the making and contestation of the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan borders in everyday relations between state and social actors, both historically and in the present. The principal sites of my empirical investigation are the areas where these borders are relevant in daily life: the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan borderlands, which are located on the territorial margins of their respective countries. I argue that, despite their peripheral location, past and present events in these borderlands are not merely symptomatic of, and certainly not irrelevant in shaping the formation of these countries. Borderlands and their inhabitants tell their own side of the story of state formation and have their own agency in it. The exploration of borderlands provides opportunities to understand central aspects of the formation of the colonial and postcolonial states they are part of. While earlier literature on African boundaries was more preoccupied with their historical genesis and much of contemporary literature examines how actors in borderlands fill and exploit perceived gaps in official governance regimes, my emphasis is on how borderland actors actively

engage, challenge and thereby reshape the state, over time and repeatedly rather than once and for all. I show how borderland actors contribute to fine-tuning the state in ways that do not necessarily undermine or hollow it out.

The key question, which guides my analysis throughout the publications included in this dissertation is the following: **How are competing claims of territory, authority and citizenship negotiated between state representatives and borderland residents, and what kinds of governance regimes emerge as a result of these negotiations?** This question is the synthesis of two lines of investigation, which I consider as equally important. The first seeks to clarify **how pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial government power is broadcast from the centre to the territorial and social margins in African borderlands**. The second seeks to clarify **in what ways those who inhabit these borderlands exercise their own power**.

With my answers to these questions I want to contribute to, and bring into a productive dialogue two bodies of empirical investigation and theoretical debate: On the one hand, this is the ethnographic and historiographic study of state boundaries and their borderlands worldwide (Strassoldo 1973; Martinez 1994; Alvarez 1995; Baud and van Schendel 1997; Donnan and Wilson 1994, 1998, 1999; Samaddar 1999) and in Africa in particular (Asiwaju and Adeniyi 1989; Nugent and Asiwaju 1996; Miles 1994; Chalfin 2001; Nugent 2004; McGregor 2009; Feyissa and Hoehne 2010). On the other hand, it is the literature that examines state formation as a continuous process constituted in everyday-encounters between representatives of the state and its citizens (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 2005; Das and Poole 2004; Corbridge 2005; Lund 2006).

Borders are not static structures but the result of ongoing everyday contestation between state and society about the limits of national territory, the reach and nature of authority, the rights and obligations of citizenship, and the overall implications of all these issues for governance in the borderlands. I do not regard borderlands as passive recipients of, nor as hinterlands disconnected from the centres of state power. To me, borderlands are instead dynamic sites where the actual meanings and practices of state-society relations are contested and forged on a daily and continuous basis. They are contested and forged in the relationships between borderland inhabitants with each other across the border, and with those who represent central state authority. The **central argument** of my dissertation is that this lived quality is what makes the border ‘real’. The border does not

only exist as an abstract construct separate from or ‘above’ the people and territories it is supposed to separate. The border is embedded in the relations between people and the institutions these people build. In my view, the working practice of the border is what brings it to life in the sense in which a relationship between people is only alive – and therefore real – if it is filled by meaningful and ongoing exchange and interaction.

“The real is relational” argues Bourdieu (1998: 3). The abstract concept of borders as static lines of jurisdiction drawn on 19th century maps in Europe, which were inherited by African states at independence remains relevant to my understanding of the working practice of borders, but not exclusively. I am NOT proposing to replace the assumed centrality and exclusivity of central state power in defining boundaries with a supposedly more authentic centrality and exclusivity of some kind of borderland power. I am, in other words, not proposing to merely invert a more conventional conception of the relations between centre and margins, where the latter takes the position of the former. What the border really is emerges from the continuous and daily negotiations between the margins and the centre, a process in which both are transformed by, and transforming each other. This is no linear process and there is no end to it. The empirical reality of borderlands directly challenges the idea of once-and-for-all and unambiguously defined lines of territorial demarcation. It also challenges the idea that somewhat the peripheral nature of borderlands, far removed from the centres of state power, renders them as irrelevant. This is the red thread that runs through the four publications included in this dissertation, and most of my other published work to date (Zeller 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Zeller and Kangumu 2007).

Territory, authority, citizenship and governance are meta-themes that all four publications included in this dissertation explore with varying emphasis and in various combinations. Publication I investigates the interplay between pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial concepts and practices of territoriality and demarcation, and how these have shaped and been shaped by practices and institutions of African indigenous and European colonial authority in the Namibia-Zambia borderland. It also describes how pre-colonial, strongly defined and stratified concepts of ethnic belonging were replaced (partially and with differences on either side of the border) by postcolonial notions of citizenship. In publication II, two processes of governance in the Namibia-Zambia borderland are examined which simultaneously re-configure territoriality *from above* and *from below*. The

genesis of a long-distance transport link is traced, from its ambitious but unfeasible colonial origins to the recent completion of large-scale infrastructure bridging the two borderlands and national territories for the purpose of ‘frictionless’ commerce. *Transnational governance from above* is described as a result of cooperation between governmental and private actors establishing the new transnationally managed and linked space. This creates new opportunities for the smuggling of people and goods and other illegal practices that reconfigure *transnational governance* in the borderland *from below*. Publication III details another case of *transnational governance from above* versus *from below* in the Namibia-Zambia borderland. Institutions of both ‘traditional’ and governmental authority compete to re-assert themselves in their ability to define the reality of citizenship in the borderland through practices of in-/exclusion and boundary control. Publication IV describes how Ugandan central state authority aims to re-assert territorial control in the borderland with South Sudan in the precarious aftermath of protracted violent conflict which has left previous practices and institutions of authority and citizenship severely damaged. Governance in this last case takes on a special quality that has similarities but also clear differences with what I have observed in the less violent Namibia-Zambia setting.

The dynamic, negotiated and open-ended nature of territory, authority, citizenship and governance in African borderlands makes for settings with an often-heightened sense of urgency, of both danger and opportunity. This sense of urgency is perhaps most palpable in the bustling settings of fast growing border towns. Here the paths and regulatory regimes of large-scale actors with often transnational and even global reach and ambitions intersect on a daily and continuous basis with more locally concentrated forms of borderland-based governance. The themes of danger and opportunity, as part of *transnational governance* from both *above* and *below*, are most explicitly addressed in publication II. I then develop these further in the concept of *borderland governance*, which I introduce in publication IV. The heightened sense of urgency I observe in publications I, II and III in the Namibia-Zambia borderland is partially related to lingering separatist demands on both sides of the border. It is, however, largely driven by opportunities associated with new cross-border transport infrastructure. Similar infrastructure also arrived in the Uganda-South Sudan borderland during my fieldwork. But this took place in a setting where large-scale violence had only recently subsided and expectations of future

instability were both palpable and not unrealistic. Processes of *transnational governance* and the associated state and non-state institutions in the borderland were overall far more tranquil and firmly established in the Namibia-Zambia case than in the Uganda-South Sudan setting. While events in the former borderland were strongly determined by the annual floods of the Zambezi, the movements of massive numbers of people fleeing from past and fearing future conflict characterized the latter. My conceptualization of *borderland governance* emerges from my observations of this far more volatile situation of regulatory pluralism in the proximity of the border between Uganda and South Sudan where multiple actors scrambled to compete – not always successfully – for quick political and/or economic advantages. Publications I and II describe in more detail how this ‘scrambling’ for opportunities has been a key element of the actions taken by the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial states in what is now the Namibia-Zambia borderland. Publications I and III examine how ‘traditional’ authority representatives associated with the Lozi kingdom have dealt with attempts to impose new forms of governance in the borderland historically and in the present day.

The everyday reality of the borders I have studied is very different from the official concept of an unambiguous line separating two national jurisdictions. But it is also not adequate to describe such a border as merely ‘blurred’ or ‘porous’. These terms – frequently used to characterize borders in Africa and other settings with a supposed lack of firm governmental control - do in my view not adequately account for, but instead obscure a fundamentally important feature: the negotiable permeability of borders in terms of **where** and **when** they can be crossed, and **who** or **what** can cross them. This permeability is not merely a passive structural feature but, according to my observations, an element that is actively created, maintained, and exploited by both state and non-state actors in African borderlands. While the impetus of those participating in transnational governance from above and below and in *borderland governance* may be typically short-termed and short-sighted in approach, it can over time become the established, though often hard-to-predict conduct of governmental and non-governmental actors in borderlands. To me, understanding *transnational governance* as well as *borderland governance* at work is crucial to understanding how African borderlands are not at all peripheral to and exceptional from a wider global order, but in fact intimately linked with and tied into it, both historically and in the present day. *Transnational governance* and *borderland governance* are

not exclusively African phenomena, but distinctly global. I do, however, not argue that the short-termed ‘get it while you can’ attitude, which is a central element in my conceptualisation of *borderland governance*, is necessarily always a defining feature of life in all African border areas. While I have observed this in the volatile post-conflict setting of the Uganda-South Sudan borderland where expectations of instability are a key underlying factor, a more sedimented way of doing things pervaded the areas where Zambia and Namibia are both connected and separated by the Zambezi River and where (to some extent disappointed) expectations of what it means to be a citizen of Namibia or Zambia are clearly articulated.

Before I return to elaborate further on my idea of *real borders*, and how it emerges from my empirical material from the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan borderlands, I will situate my own approach in more detail in relation to the existing literature on state formation, boundary making and borderlands in Africa.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations: State Formation, Boundary Making and Borderlands in Africa

Scholars of Africa’s postcolonial predicament have identified a broad range of underlying causes for the apparent weaknesses and failure of states in Africa to successfully claim a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in their territory. The genesis of the continent’s political geography has been consistently regarded as one of them. Europeans, so the widely held view, partitioned Africa in a hasty manner and without knowledge or concern for existing realities on the ground, resulting in arbitrarily drawn borders that artificially divided indigenous populations and their existing polities. Having largely survived the transition to independence, the territorial outlines of the African postcolony are now like a poorly tailored suit, which does not fit in many places, but which African leaders have by and large accepted they and their societies must somehow try to wear (compare Lefebvre 2011).² There are several, in my view problematic points in this characterisation of African boundaries, and my agenda in the following sections is to

² In Article III, paragraph 3 of the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity member states pledged “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state” (OAU 1963).

unpack and critically discuss these. I shall start with an idea that underlies the image of the poorly tailored suit and which is, in my view, actually quite accurate: Space isn't. Space is (man-)made. It is tailored to suit particular interests.

2.1 Space and Agency

Space is a product of social practices, the outcome of past contestation and present negotiations that are never settled once-and-for-all. You may have arguments with that view of the world, but you would have to start by arguing with Henri Lefebvre. In his 1974 book titled "The Production of Space", the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist describes space as a product of social construction, based on values and the production of meanings, which affects spatial practices and perceptions. Edward Soja has combined Lefebvre's concept of the *trialectics* of spatiality, historicality, and sociality with Michel Foucault's concept of *heterotopia* as places and spaces of otherness that function in non-hegemonic conditions to develop his concept of *thirdspace*: spaces that are both real and imagined (Soja 1971, 1996, 1999; Foucault 1984). This recognition of the powerful agency of man-made imaginations and the linked manipulations of space ties in with a broader recognition and debate of the importance of human territoriality among political geographers (Sack 1986; Massey 1993; Agnew 1994; Raffestin 2012; Elden 2010a, 2010b) and social scientists more generally (Brenner 1999; Jessop, Brenner and Jones 2008). For Africanist scholars like Engel and Nugent (2010), this *spatial turn* has strengthened the intellectual ground based on which they argue against the uncritical essentialisation and spatial fetishism of the nation-state as the dominant regime of territoriality and element of analysis, which remains largely the norm in political science, geography and other scientific disciplines. Robert Sack, in his work on human territoriality (1986), has elaborated on territories as social constructs embedded in social relations and designed to serve specific ends, a process that Shields (1991) has called *social spatialization*³. Paasi (1996, 1999, 2003; see also Newman and Paasi 1998) has expanded on this concept by arguing that *spatial*

³ "The ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of a social imagery that comprises collective mythologies and presuppositions together with interventions in the landscape, e.g. the built environment" (Paasi 2009: 226).

*socialization*⁴ also occurs: Territories are not frozen frameworks but made, given meanings, destroyed, and remade as part of social life and individual action.

Obvious places where scholars seek to explore territoriality are the boundaries of territory. If territory is the spatial expression of power, then a crucial tool to communicate control over a prescribed space is to claim, establish and maintain boundaries (Storey 2001; Painter 2010). A claim to power without limits is rarely convincing and easily contested. Defining the limits is therefore a crucial element of any aspect of human territoriality, and fundamental to the process of state formation, which I will now explore in more detail.

2.2 State Formation, Centres and Margins

The Weberian formulation of a monopoly of force considered as legitimate by a stable population residing within a clearly defined territory still stands as the single most comprehensive definition of modern statehood (Weber 1988). Turner (1990: 195) observes that Weber, while interested in the generalisation of patterns on the path to achieving this, was also aware of substantial variation in these processes between societies in different historical periods and geographical areas. The *cultural turn* movement, which emerged in the early 1970s, revisited earlier questions about the role of state institutions in the development of societies with a deep historical and theoretical understanding of their emergence. Scholars like Hayden White (1973), Clifford Geertz (1973), Michel Foucault (1977) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) regarded stateness as a historical and contingent process and the creation of states was understood not as a one-time event and mythical birth-moment of the nation-state. Rather, it came to be seen as an ongoing process. Any policies that affect the structure of the state are accordingly part of a continuous state-formation process (Steinmetz 1999: 9; Bonnell and Hunt 1999; Jameson 1998). Bourdieu's way of subjecting the thought of the state to a "hyperbolic" or "radical doubt" (Bourdieu 1998: 36ff.) has become a key conceptual tool across the social sciences to understand and

⁴ "The process through which individual actors and collectivities are socialized as members of specific territorially bounded spatial entities, participate in their reproduction and 'learn' collective territorial identities, narratives of shared traditions and inherent spatial images (e.g. visions regarding boundaries, regional divisions, regional identities, etc.), which may be, and often are, contested" (Paasi 2009: 226).

analyse this process, and it has strongly informed my own work. Bourdieu sees the state as the result of a concentration of different species of ‘capital’: physical force, economic, cultural/informational, and symbolic capital. He sees the state itself as the holder of a ‘meta-capital’ granting power over other species of capital and their holders (Bourdieu 1998: 41f.). State formation thus “proceeds apace with the construction of a field of power”, in which various players struggle over the metacapital (*ibid*: 42). Steinmetz has pointed out that, although the state has the ambition to become the holder of this meta-capital, this is not necessarily successful, esp. in the colonial and post-colonial state. Instead, “peripheral governments sometimes become fields (in the Bourdieuan sense) in their own right” and “resist the centralizing effect of the state, sometimes breaking away altogether” (Steinmetz 1999: 607f.).

While many of the more prominent scholarly texts of the 1980s and 90s continued to emphasize the role of centralized power in the processes of especially European state formation (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, Tilly 1990), the imagined dichotomy of ‘state versus society’ which dominated much of earlier social science came under intense scrutiny both theoretically and empirically in various disciplines, political anthropology in particular. Citing Abrams (1988), Sayer pointed out that the state does not exist as such *a priori* but is only “a claim” and later praised the study of “the trivial, the mundane, the everyday” as the right approach to investigate that claim (Sayer 1994: 371). In Hansen’s and Stepputat’s view, the “attribution of stateness to various forms of authority (...) emerges from intense and often localized political struggles” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 5f). They therefore advise to engage in disaggregated and less abstract studies of the state and to reveal how it appears in everyday and localized forms. They argue this would be an important element in overcoming the Eurocentric notion that state formation in the postcolony is merely a flawed imitation of a more ‘mature’ Western process, supposedly already accomplished and complete (*ibid*: 9; see also Hydén 1999). Gupta has emphasized the need to study the engagements between people representing the state on a low level of administration and those to whom they represent it (Gupta 1995). When analysed on this level, state institutions become less abstract, and existing multiple agendas, individuals and their roles emerge more clearly.

My own work combines a processual understanding of state-society relations and social order with a disaggregated view of the state as comprised of a multiplicity of

hierarchies, practices and claims involving actors that do not necessarily subscribe to one unified logic or agenda (Moore 1978; Lund 2001; Isin and Turner 2002; Sharma and Gupta 2006). In postcolonial societies, governance is typically a highly fragmented affair, often involving competing ideas and registers of power and authority. By developing concepts like *non-policy mechanisms* (Ribot 1998), *hybrid governance* (Helmke and Levitsky 2004), *twilight institutions* (Lund 2006), *practical norms* (Olivier de Sardan 2009) scholars have tried to account for the idea that these processes may only appear chaotic and unpredictable to outside observers while they are, in fact, highly structured, specific and to some extent predictable in nature.

Local vernaculars of the concepts, practices and “languages of stateness” are considered as equally relevant to those emanating from the halls of power of central state authority by Hansen and Stepputat (2001: 5). The exploration of the state through ethnographies has undermined the uncritical presupposition of clear limits of state and government and raised the question where the state begins and ends (Mitchell 1991; see also Asad 2004), and “what is the specificity of the state as opposed to other forms of authority and governance that exist alongside it?” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 8). In developing these points, many writers assert their own position along, in opposition, or between two major gridlines of thought about power, government and authority laid out by Gramsci and Foucault. Mitchell, for example, employs a Foucauldian interpretation of the modern state, describing it not as the source of power but the ‘effect’ of a wider range of dispersed forms of disciplinary power that allow the state to appear as a structure standing apart from, and above society (Mitchell 1991, 2006; see also Chatterjee 1993). William Roseberry employs Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and stresses his understanding of the complex unity of coercion and consent in situations of domination. Gramsci himself also pointed to the fragility of hegemony and thus the concept allows for the relations between dominant and popular, or state-formation and everyday forms of action to be understood as both complex and dynamic (Roseberry 1994). Similar to Migdal (2001), who positions himself between ideas of hegemony and dispersed power, Hansen and Stepputat choose to keep the two perspectives in a “productive tension to get a broader perspective on the ambiguities of the state: both illusory as well as a set of concrete institutions; both distant and impersonal ideas as well as localized and personified institutions; both violent and destructive as well as benevolent and

productive” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 4). More recently, Korf and Raeymaekers (2013: 13-14) have chosen to follow this template as well.

With their concept of the *margins* of the state, Veena Das and Deborah Poole examine various peripheries into which the state has yet to penetrate. *Margins* are sites where law-making and other state performances are not just evaded, but actively transformed and “colonized” by other, more or less organized actors and their practices, thus generating political and economic outcomes with a potentially decisive impact on state formation (Das and Poole 2004: 9). In other words, the idea of power emanating from a centre to gradually take over the periphery is turned inside out to show the relation and possible dialogue between the two. Like the exception which defines the rule and vice versa, margins and centre are mutually constitutive of each other. An important implication of this definition of margins is that the acts and representatives of formal state authority can become marginal from the point of view of those who dwell in the margins. Margins are sites and situations where people and the frontline representatives of the state engage each other in everyday life. In these engagements the former are not simply passive recipients of central state power. While this is not the explicit main focus of Das and Poole’s concept of the *margins* of the state, it lends itself to the exploration of the relationship between central state power and its territorial periphery. This is the topic of the following paragraph, and I will return to the concept of the *margins* in chapter 2.3.3 when I introduce the *borderlands* concept.

Igor Kopytoff’s work on the African Frontier constituted a major step in thinking about precolonial African territoriality (Kopytoff 1987). Kopytoff re-considered Turner’s conception of the American frontier as settlement expansion into a supposedly free land where wilderness was transformed into a civilized space and thus became a formative but short-lived element in the emergence of a metropolitan society (Turner 1893). Kopytoff referred to Tuner’s *tidal frontier* as very different from the *internal frontiers* that, he argued, characterized precolonial Africa where indigenous kingdoms were typically scattered across vast areas. Owing to low population density, the areas between these waxing, waning, and often mobile spheres of influence were typically under no single centralized form of control. Groups and individuals found it easy to dissociate from those who sought to gain unwanted control over them simply by wandering off into the distance. This, in turn, allowed for the emergence of new social and political formations in these

frontier zones. If successful, these would themselves gain strength but also risk losing part of their population in a continuously ongoing process of ethnogenesis in marginal frontier zones.

In an inversion of Kopytoff's view of frontiers as an opportunity to avoid pre-colonial domination, Herbst describes African's post-colonial boundaries as a "tremendous asset" to the political elites on the continent who inherited them, and as the "critical foundation upon which leaders have built their states", however dysfunctional they may be (Herbst 2000: 25, see also Englebert 2009). Herbst aligns himself with Iliffe (1995: 70) and Bates (1983: 35), arguing that low population density across large parts of Africa was a chief obstacle to the formation of strong, centralized and durable states in pre-colonial Africa. This problem, he argues, continues to plague the formation of viable states in which a strong centre would be able to project its power across the entire state territory. While acknowledging important spatial and administrative transformations under colonial rule, Herbst believes that relative under-population, along with unfavourable environmental conditions, continue to pose fundamental problems, as they did before colonialism, for some African leaders to 'capture' peripheral territories and achieve stable sovereign statehood. He argues that the European-made boundaries are not in all cases an impediment to African state consolidation. African leaders, as part of their quest to capture the institutions and mechanisms of state power, have found the colonial boundaries to be a resource they could exploit because they are an integral part of the international system of sovereign territorial nation-states. Lacking internal legitimacy, many African states today are, according to Herbst, only states because the international community has deemed them so. Herbst thus makes the case for a particular kind of African agency to be recognized as an important factor in the maintenance of the continent's colonial-era political geography beyond the time of independence: the agency of African elites in cahoots with the former colonizers.

In Catherine Boone's analysis of centre-periphery relationships in Ghana, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire (Boone 2003) macro-sociological features rather than geographical and demographical constraints account for the preferences and problems of central state rulers in their attempts to project power into the periphery. She considers in detail the interaction of central rulers and local elites in peripheral areas - relational dynamics that Herbst only addresses in a highly generalized manner and not based on detailed empirical

evidence. However, both Boone and Herbst fail to critically consider territory beyond the form in which it is already given and the implicit one-dimensional conception of territoriality as a regime for state control. This leaves little room to consider the agency of peripheral areas and their inhabitants, which appear as largely passive recipients of or, at best, reactive to the whims of central state power. Key to my own approach to state formation is to regard it as a process that is neither exclusively top-down and centre-driven, nor only from below and margin-driven. In my view, both sides in negotiation with each other shape state formation and it is this negotiation, which I investigate (compare Kyed 2007: 28).

2.3 From a Borderless World to Borderlands

Two separate scholarly debates have in recent years helped to enable an empirically and theoretically productive re-consideration of territoriality in Africa, thus allowing for a more thorough consideration of both centres and margins and their relations. These are, firstly, the critical re-examination of the ‘borderless world’ thesis of the 1990s by boundary scholars, and secondly a deeper investigation of the past and present agency and relationships of Africans with their continent’s state boundaries. In this section, I will highlight key points from these debates before showing how they helped to prepare the ground for the study of borderlands to become a flourishing field of academic research and policy activity in Africa and elsewhere in recent years.

2.3.1 Borders are Everywhere

The above cited works by Herbst (2000) and Boone (2003) and others like Laremont (2005) were conceived at a time when the aftermath of the Cold War had set the stage for a widely accepted mainstream view: Vaguely defined processes of globalization would before too long relegate nation-state borders to the dustbin of history by dissolving or transcending them. As the nation-state was in retreat a ‘borderless world’ world characterized by flows and networks was the widely expected outcome (Ohmae 1995; Appadurai 1996; Strange 1996; Newman 2006; Paasi 2009). Scholars across a variety of academic fields took the view that the authority of territorial states was on the way out as global and transnational phenomena were undermining and overpowering the jurisdiction of states (Kearney 1995). These arguments were framed in debates over deterritorialisation

and time-space compression (Appadurai 1990, 1996; Basch et al. 1994; Barry 2006), cultural creolisation (Hannertz 1996, 1997), transnational migration (Schiller et al. 1992), or rhizomatic networks (Deleuze and Guatteri 1987).

There was, however, little evidence on the ground in Africa and elsewhere indicating that state boundaries were going to simply vanish. A heightened paranoia of radical Islam and increasingly restrictive policies against the movement of people from the less affluent parts of the world to the richer ones has led governmental and private actors to channel very significant resources into fortifying spatial control regimes in the last decade of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st. Measures to impose new territorial control are also reproduced on the local and personal scale, with the increasing securitization of private and personal space in many societies, including in Africa. At the same time, technological developments enable ever-more selective and intrusive methods to monitor and control the spatial movement of goods, people and information. As part of these reconfigurations, a new version of the well-established nexus of previous development and security paradigms has emerged: Societies in ‘failed’ and ‘rogue states’ of the South are regarded as dangerous breeding grounds of emigration, contraband trade (e.g. arms, narcotics, pirate merchandise), religious fundamentalism, and terrorist networks (Duffield 2001, 2007; Buur et al. 2007; Stern and Öjendal 2010). ‘Porous’ borders and administrative loopholes, left unattended or deliberately created by ‘shadow states’, allow those trafficking in dangerous ideas, people, goods and associated finances to side-step strong state regulation, or instrumentalise weak state regulation by moving inside a transnational underground (Reno 1997, 2000; Nordstrom 2004, 2007). Policy makers in recent years have consequently seen the need for clear borders with strong control regimes to stop the tide. Boundary scholars argue that their field of expertise is anything but fading into irrelevance. Borders are everywhere, proposed Etienne Balibar, arguing that we increasingly encounter a plethora of borders at a multiplicity of sites, and not merely at the territorial edges of a polity (Balibar 2002, 2004a, 2004b; see also Lyon 2005; Amoore et al. 2008). David Newman and Anssi Paasi have announced that the ‘borderless world’ discourse has been debunked and observe that the study of borders has instead undergone a major renaissance, producing no single unified border theory but instead a great diversity of explanatory frameworks taking into account a wide variety of actors (Newman 2006: 145; Paasi 2009; see also Brunet-Jailly 2010; Raeymaekers 2010). Paasi has

pointed out that the state is still a crucial organizer of territorial spaces and creator of meaning for them, but borders are important institutions and ideological symbols that are used by various bodies and institutions in the perpetual process of reproducing territorial power (Paasi 2009: 213). Also Rumford (2013) observes that borders are resources that can be drawn upon by a range of actors who seek to either selectively regulate mobility or use the border as a staging post that connects to the wider world. This point has been especially relevant for the field of African boundary studies.

2.3.2 African Boundaries: Arbitrary and Artificial?

The headline for this section makes reference to two views that are very widely held by scholars, policy-makers and in non-specialist public discourse to describe the past origins and present nature of African boundaries: Firstly, the continent's boundaries were drawn *arbitrarily* in the late 19th century by Europeans to serve their strategic interests in Africa, without in-depth knowledge of geography and population, and thus at the expense of the continent's indigenous people (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 1985: 46; Laremont 2005: 2). Secondly, with very few exceptions these boundaries were not renegotiated at or after independence. As a result, in many parts of Africa they continue to *artificially* separate people who belong together while forcing entirely unrelated population groups to coexist inside externally imposed and dysfunctional territorial containers (Davidson 1992: 163; Laremont 2005: 24). Englebert (2002) uses the terms “dismemberment” and “suffocation” to describe both aspects of African boundary making. To sum up these two ideas, African boundaries are widely considered to be a problematic legacy of European colonialism that continues to hamper the continent's social, economic and political development to this day.

As a starting point to critically engage with this view, the following quote by Anthony Allott is useful: “Many authors have commented on the artificiality of African boundaries. One must remember that all boundaries are artificial (...) in so far as they represent a transcendental and invisible expression of power” (Allott 1969: 12). Anthony Asiwaju has also argued “the boundaries of national states in Africa are not substantially different from the European ones” and that “Africa was not the only or even the first continent to be partitioned” (Asiwaju 1996: 255). Asiwaju does, however, caution not to overstate the case when arguing “while Africa was not the first or the last part of the

world to experience European (...) partition, the scale of the operations made the African case the most dramatic” (Asiwaju 1990: 26). These ‘mitigating’ factors do not deny the external imposition of boundaries in Africa but put it into a wider perspective both historically and geographically. Going beyond that, a number of important factual arguments emerge from a closer historiographic inspection of the case-by-case realities of precolonial, colonial and post-colonial territoriality and boundary making in Africa. These all point towards a far greater degree of indigenous African agency than the learned wisdom of the arbitrary and artificial boundaries would accommodate for. Allott has pointed out the historically inaccurate nature of the idea that at any point in time a “clean slate” ever existed, which would have allowed for a more appropriate (re-) drawing of African boundaries (Allott 1969: 21). To start with, human territoriality in precolonial Africa included imaginations of territorial limits, and in various cases also concrete practices of demarcation. While these were certainly to some extent noticed by the advancing European explorers, and later colonial administrators who sought the signatures of African leaders on land contracts, this knowledge was also actively edited out of the colonial record as part of the dominant narrative of the culturally superior white race and its civilizing mission (Allott 1969).

The historical juncture, which probably came closest to offering a potential ‘clean slate’ situation was the inaugural meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and the OAU’s July 1964 resolution on border disputes. At the 1963 conference, Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah proposed the delegates should render the continent’s colonial boundaries obsolete and embark on a vaguely defined path of Pan-African integration. By July 1964, various quarrels from personal to state level, military coups and fear of assassination were dominating the agenda of Africa’s emerging leadership. The OAU decided to follow the UN General Assembly’s 1960 and ‘61 resolutions in favour of maintaining colonial boundaries and adopted the principle of *uti possidetis juris* at the 1964 meeting. The resolution text stated: “(...) all Member States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence” (cited in Chime 1969: 67). The resolution did not account for the fact that the European colonisers had left significant sections of African boundaries poorly or incompletely demarcated, and no provisions were made to define universally accepted principles for their future demarcation (Anderson 1996: 87). While the realpolitics both in

Africa and globally at the height of the Cold War in the mid-1960s arguably did not leave much room for an alternative outcome, one thing is clear in hindsight: A significant opportunity to at least make provisions for future and mutually agreeable boundary realignments in postcolonial Africa at the top level of leadership was lost at the time.

The argument on African agency is also relevant beyond the (in-)action of the continent's political leadership. Historiographic evidence from across Africa requires us to question the assumption that Africans inhabiting the areas through which colonial boundaries were drawn were only at the receiving end of an externally imposed act. This theme is at the centre of my own investigation in publications I and III, as well as some of my other work (Zeller 2007a, 2007b, 2010a, 2012) into the agency of 'traditional' authorities in the past and present making of the Namibia-Zambia boundary. As Katzenellenbogen (1996) points out, a deep ignorance of African geography by the colonizers meant that borders agreed and preliminarily drawn at 19th century negotiations in Europe were often based on extremely scant knowledge of the continent's physical and human geography, and therefore far too inaccurate to be workable in practice. The tedious and costly process of demarcation and establishing a working administration in typically inaccessible areas often took the colonizers decades, if it was achieved at all by the time of decolonization. The administrations of neighbouring territories colonized by the same European motherland also often saw no need to iron out imprecisions or boundaries that would turn out to be problematic to live with after independence. Limited means of coercive power meant the cooperation of the indigenous population as well as the European counterparts on the other side of the border often had to be achieved through negotiation. Faced with the emerging, more detailed knowledge of facts on the ground, boundary commissions often realised they had to take the ethno-demographic distribution of populations more seriously into consideration (Gallais 1982; Sautter 1982; Nugent and Asiwaju 1996). This left the door wide open for local agency to contest and influence the exact location and day-to-day realities of the colonial border. Kreike (2004: 10) describes how inhabitants of what is now the Namibia-Angola borderland were able to take advantage of the border and even helped to create it. Nugent (1996) traces back how the making of the Togo-Ghana border gave rise to, and became deeply embedded, in new vested interests of those residing in the borderland as soon as the colonizers attempted to establish it as a fact in the landscape. Border communities actively helped in making

borders into barriers. As I describe in publication I, former vassals saw opportunities to dissociate from their old overlords, some established their own chieftaincies or social niches. These were sanctioned by the colonizing power and protected by a line of demarcation that could only be challenged much higher up in the hierarchy of power (Nugent 2000: 230; Schmidt 1996: 184). William Miles, based on his investigation on both the Nigerian and Nigerien sides of Hausaland, shows how Africa's supposedly artificial boundaries thus became "an internalized, commonplace reality for millions of borderline villagers throughout Africa", albeit "in ways which often deviated from the colonizer's original intent" (Miles 1994: 19, 57).

One such unintended outcome of boundary making in Africa and everywhere else is smuggling. The coexistence of different regulatory regimes on either side of a border generates this and other opportunities for informal economic activities. Considering the very significant scale of these phenomena across the continent, it can be argued that many Africans have taken ownership of their borders 'from below'. By definition an illegal act, smuggling would not happen if the boundary did not constitute an opportunity to make a profit. It thus de facto affirms the existence and relevance of the boundary – through the 'back door', as it were (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996; Nugent 2002; Feyissa and Hoehne 2010). Meagher (2014), however points out that portraying smuggling as a grassroots appropriation of African boundaries is highly problematic. While she sees some merit in describing West Africa's often historically deep trade complexes' smuggling largely legal goods as contributing to processes of state-building, she contrasts these against East African smuggling networks that are driven by war economies and are fragmenting the regulatory authority of states in the region (Meagher 2014: 515f.).

Given the past and present vibrancy and diversity of actions taken by Africans to make do with, and make the best of their inherited boundaries, it is unsurprising that these have attracted considerable interest from both policy-makers and scholars. Particular attention has in recent years been devoted to the study of boundaries in the areas where they are a feature of significant relevance in daily life – the borderlands.

2.3.3 African Borderlands: The Centrality of the Margins

Nils Hansen (1981) defines borderlands as sub-national areas whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by their proximity to an international boundary.

This definition is deliberately ambiguous. What exactly constitutes “significantly affected” and “proximity” is not spelled out. It is important to note that, depending on a variety of factors including everyday and seasonal life patterns, topography and transport infrastructure, borderlands can extend from a very short up to a very considerable distance into the hinterland of the border. The last gas-food-lodging option along the highway to the border can be dozens of kilometres away from it, but still the border matters there very much on a daily basis, thus making it part of the borderland. The same goes for the smuggler’s nest upstream along a tributary to the big river along which the boundary was drawn. The size and nature of borderlands also typically changes over time, e.g. along with changes in the landscape, political and military considerations, and administrative practices.

Perhaps the most general, but also precise definition of the formal geography of a borderland, is that it constitutes an *inversion* of the nation-state: In borderlands, the state boundary is located at the centre. Instead of demarcating the margins of the unit of analysis, the boundary is the fixed element at the heart of the borderland, which always extends across more than one sovereign territory. The borderland has no clearly defined size and shape and these parameters are highly fluid over time.

The centrality of the border is not merely a structural feature of borderland geography, though. Cohen, writing on Arab villagers living near the Israeli-Palestinian border, stressed that the border “creates the very conditions of everyday life” (Cohen 1965: 17). Although the border itself in official state authority discourse appears to be a structure of the state that is particularly static, the day-to-day reality of living in its vicinity often has quite the opposite characteristics: “The negotiations of political and economic actions and values (...) among the agents and organs of the state, wayfarers, and those who live at the border are continuous and dynamic” (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 9). The lived day-to-day reality of borderlands typically is intimately related to the presence of the boundary and can be very distinct from the inland parts of a country. In areas where the line of demarcation has separated previously existing population groups from each other, their sense of connection and socioeconomic links often continue to matter on both sides of the border (Asiwaju 1985). Once created, the presence of the border itself results in new social, political and economic phenomena, which often establish or consolidate the borderland as an area unto itself. Borderlands can generate their own distinct actions and

outcomes as a direct result of their specific conditions, and not merely in relation to the actions taken by forces located elsewhere. This does not mean that borderlands are by definition cut off from a sense of belonging to the nation-state or far-away shifts in economic conditions. Distinction and belonging can co-exist, shift, and get flagged up as different registers in arguments by different people and at different times in the borderland (Flynn 1997; Nugent 2002). Borderlands therefore are ideal sites to apply the concept of *margins* proposed by Das and Poole (2004) and to explore the centrality of these margins in state-society and centre-periphery relations. Borderlands can provide a firm empirical foundation to ‘scale up’ and integrate levels of analysis beyond the local.

Before I return to the utility of the borderlands concept in ‘scaling up’ the level of analysis it is important to give a brief overview over the fast-growing field of borderland studies with respect to the social sciences, area studies in general, and African Studies in particular. Given the sheer volume of work on boundaries and borderlands that has been published in the past decades, to do this comprehensively is clearly beyond the scope of this dissertation introduction. Also, Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson have published several edited volumes and monographs with often cross-disciplinary overviews of scholarly works on borders in all parts of the world (Donnan and Wilson 1994; 1999; Wilson and Donnan 1998; 2012). The borderlands concept is given increasing attention by these authors from their 1998 volume onwards, mirroring what appears to be its proliferation from around the mid-1990s across the social sciences. In their 1999 review of border theory in the social sciences, Donnan and Wilson note that border studies have turned to regard “borders and their regions as systems worthy of study in their own right and not just the peripheries of states and their institutions” (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 44). All disciplines considered by Donnan and Wilson “advocate a reorientation away from centrist and statist perspectives in order to view borders as international economic, political, social and cultural systems, and a focus on border people” (*ibid*: 44). Current research, they argue, has not abandoned the interest in the study of borders as an aspect of statehood. But the focus has shifted in terms of where the agency is situated: Borders, their adjacent borderlands, and the populations in them are no more seen simply as symptoms or recipients of state power, but they are also actively participating in important transformations of state policy, such as definitions of citizenship, territorial sovereignty and national identity (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 4; see also Brunet-Jailly 2011). Such a

perspective does not reject the significance of state institutions' actions. Rather, the emphasis is now on shared agency and the dialectical relations between border areas and their nations and states.

Historian Oscar Martinez who had by that time worked on the US-Mexico border for already close to two decades (e.g. Martinez 1978) first makes explicit use of the borderlands concept in the mid-1990s (Martinez 1994, 1996). At the time and still today, North America and Europe were dominating the scholarly output, with Peter Sahlins' work on the French-Spanish borderland an early example on the latter (Sahlins 1989). Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel in 1997 produced a major milestone advocating for a new field of borderland historiography to transcend the nation-state framework as still-dominant analytical point of reference. Sociologist Raimundo Strassoldo has written about the ambivalence of borderland life where people may demonstrate ambiguous identities because economic, cultural and linguistic factors pull them in two directions: across the border where part of their neighbourhood is located, and towards their states where citizenship and entitlements offer opportunities (Strassoldo 1982). Political geographer John Prescott first described borderlands as a "transition zone within which the boundary lies" (Prescott 1987: 13-14) while Dennis Rumley and Julian Minghi (1991) have theorised on the geography of border landscapes. David Newman, Anssi Paasi and others have produced several pieces on border theory in the field of political geography in recent years (Paasi (1996; 1999; 2003; Newman and Paasi 1998; van Houtum 2005; Johnson et al. 2011; Brunet-Jailly 2011). Robert Alvarez has made an important contribution in his article on the US-Mexican border and the emerging anthropology of borderlands, warning against an overly essentialised notion of a "border culture" that may gloss over the variations of human behaviour in borderlands (Alvarez 1995: 450).

Going beyond the still-dominant North American and European borderlands literature, Fabricio Prado (2012) has produced a recent overview of scholarship on colonial borderlands in Latin America. This field of area studies, however, appears to be characterised, due to translation issues, by works placing the frontier concept at the centre of the investigation.

A growing literature of Asian borderland studies includes works by Akhil Gupta (1995), Michael Eilenberg (2012), Jonathan Goodhand (2008, 2012, 2013) and several other contributors to a recent volume on conflict in borderlands (Brown 2013; Bichsel

2013; Suykens 2013). This book, the first world conference of the Association of Borderland Studies in June 2014, and various other scientific meetings and special issue publications under preparation at the time of writing, are signs of a growing momentum towards borderlands studies becoming a scientific field that not only transcends the boundaries of states empirically and conceptually, but also the separation of its scholarly communities according working on different world regions.

An early major step towards studying cultural and social aspect of African borders through a borderland framework was made by Anthony Asiwaju in his attempt to comprehensively map the ethnic relations across Africa's international boundaries at the centenary of the Berlin conference (Asiwaju 1985). Asiwaju (1989, 1990), Miles (1994), Nugent and Asiwaju (1996), Flynn (1997), and Nugent (2002) authored and edited numerous books and articles investigating African boundaries from a borderland perspective. This rising interest led in 2007 to the founding of the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE). From its 20 initial members the network has since grown to include close to 300 individual scholars, practitioners and institutions in- 2015. To detail the collective output of this vast and diverse scholarly community here would make exhausting reading. It is also unnecessary, since the extensive and ever-expanding bibliography section on the ABORNE website is searchable by region, keywords and author names.⁵ It should nevertheless be worthwhile to briefly highlight some of the thematic clusters that have emerged through the collaborative efforts of ABORNE members in organising scientific meetings and publications over the past few years.

The history of boundary- and state-making and the closely related issues of identity formation and postcolonial secessionism in Africa continue to be among the key areas of recent scholarship by authors like Mathys (2013), deVries (2012), Dobler (2008, 2010) Donaldson (2009), Lefebvre (2011) Englebert (2002, 2005, 2009), Gewald (2012), Vaughan et al. (2013), Zeller (publications I and II in this dissertation, 2010a, 2012), and a book on secessionism in Africa edited by Zeller and Tomas (forthcoming 2014). From a

⁵ The bibliography is at <http://www.aborne.org/bibliography.html>. Based on an initial reading list compiled by Kate Meagher, it has since been systematically expanded by Hugh Lamarque and myself. I am also responsible for the overall content and architecture of the current website. All registered ABORNE members can edit the bibliography and many have contributed to its expansion through individual contributions over the past years.

policy perspective, the legal foundations and issue of boundary demarcation are of major interest and the African Union Border Programme has recently produced several publications on these topics.⁶ Migration through African borderlands, as well as the concept of an Africa-Europe borderland that includes the Mediterranean and the Sahara has been examined in various works by e.g. Raeymaekers (2014), Rodrigues and Tomas (2012), and Coplan (2001). Conflict and (in-)security have been the topic of several recent works (e.g. Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012) as well as an edited collection by Korf and Raeymaekers (2013). The closely related issue of borderland policing has attracted some attention as well (Zeller publication III in this dissertation; Asiwaju et al. 2006; Titeca 2009) but this and the topic of cordon sanitaire for human and animal disease control (explored e.g. by Lyons, Scott and Gerard in the 1996 volume edited by Nugent and Asiwaju) may well be fruitful for the African borderlands research community to explore further in the future. Several scholars have written on issues of governance, regulation and local politics with a particular focus on border towns (Titeca 2009; Dobler 2009; Zeller 2007a, publications II and IV in this dissertation; Büscher and Vlassenroot 2010; Nugent 2012; Doevenspeck 2011). Considering boundaries as resources and opportunities to either exploit or by-pass state regulation legally and illegally is a theme in many works on African borderlands (Feyissa and Hoehne 2010; Roitman 2001, 2004) and a large body of work has been produced on trade and smuggling in and through borderlands (Meagher 2003, 2010; Nugent 2002; Walther 2009, 2012; Dobler 2008, 2009; Zeller publications III and IV in this dissertation; Titeca 2006, 2012; Raeymaekers 2009; Miles 1994; Flynn 1997; Nugent 2002; Englund 2002; Chalfin 2001; Kreike 2004; Niger-Thomas 2001; Bennafa 2002). The exploitation and cross-border management of natural resources located in African borderlands, including mineral resources, has also received some attention (Okumu 2010) and in 2013 an ABORNE workshop was held on transboundary safari game reserves. Finally, cross-border cooperation of governments for the improvement of services in borderlands has been of interest to scholars like Miles (1994) and in particular to policy makers in the African Union Border Programme (AUBP), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and more recently the European Commission's Integrated Border Management (IBM) programme.

⁶ These are available here: <http://aubis.peaceau.org/guide-books-and-documents-african-borders>

2.4 Borderlands and Transnational Spaces

While recent years' dynamic growth in the study of borderlands has resulted in a fascinating wealth of new empirical material, this development also highlights the need for theoretical abstraction and comparative analysis. In my view, a particularly crucial avenue of exploration is to attempt a productive integration of scales of analysis between the smallest and the largest. Borderlands are fascinating places to study, but what about the 'bigger picture'? How are borderlands tied into and linked to larger issues of governance and statehood and what are their long-distance political and commercial relations with far-away places? I have highlighted the relationship of mutual transformation between centres and margins, but how exactly is that relationship to be conceptualized?

One field of recent investigation, the New Regionalism (e.g. Söderbaum and Shaw 2003; Grant and Söderbaum; Bach 2003), appears to provide a fruitful starting point. Söderbaum and Taylor (2008) place an intermediate level of analysis at the centre and theorise in both directions up and down the scale from there, while also promising to consider both the formal and informal aspects of actions and actors on these scales. The concept of *micro-regions* developed by Söderbaum and Taylor combines a meta-view of cross-border integration in Africa with recognition of the phenomenon's impact on the micro-level, and they propose to consider both the official and unofficial/unintended outcomes in these processes (*ibid*: 15, 21). Upon closer inspection, however, two aspects of these *micro-regions* lead me to the conclusion that the concept does not quite deliver on its promises. Söderbaum and Taylor never clearly come out on what defines the extent of these regions. To employ a distinctly spatial, even territorial concept like *micro-region* and then not to define it clearly is not entirely satisfying. While emphasising the importance of regionalisation from below, their key intellectual tool to account for informal processes and actors is the top-heavy concept of neo-patrimonialism linked to neo-liberalism. Söderbaum and Taylor concentrate on "Big Men" acting as part of, and with African state authorities (*ibid*: 16, 26): "If analysts want to observe the 'real' regionalism on the continent, then micro-regions are the best place to observe such empirical realities", they argue (*ibid*: 31). However, it is not clear what exactly defines a *micro-region*, how those 'real' actors who reside in them do what they do (beyond anecdotal evidence), and how they relate to the state apart from being 'neglected' and 'left out' of the neopatrimonial

networks.

In my work (publications II and IV in this dissertation) I have made my own attempt to examine the combined simultaneous effects of regional integration from above and below in the specific settings of border twin towns with historically deep and close links that become connected in a new way: through road upgrades to the outside world and, in one case, a new bridge crossing the river and border between them. The new infrastructure represents the arrival of large-scale interests resulting from an alliance of the countries' political leaderships with development aid donors and business investors. However, established and new borderland traders and other enterprising members of the borderland population find opportunities to make use of the new infrastructure as well, and their actions straddle the boundaries of legality and illegality. To account for these combined simultaneous effects, I have proposed the idea of *transnational governance* as happening simultaneously from *above* and *below* in publication II in this dissertation. This relies on ideas developed by Mbembe (2000), Reno (2001), Ferguson and Gupta (2002) and Ferguson (2006) regarding the transnational nature of neoliberal governance in contemporary Africa. Ferguson (2006) and Mbembe (2000) in particular point out that this form of governance also reconfigures territoriality. 'Valuable' places like transport corridors and enclaves of high-value resources (e.g. for mineral extraction or tourism) are increasingly linked and managed across sovereign state boundaries, but at the same time disconnected and often even physically demarcated against their 'less valuable' hinterlands. In my view, this is a useful but only partial explanation of transnational governance. It accounts for powerful top-down developments but at the expense of the bottom-up creativity others and I have seen in borderlands, which has a transnational dimension as well. *Transnational governance*, in my view, takes place *simultaneously* both *from above* and *from below*, in what I conceptualize as two transnational spaces, described in publication II as the "transport corridor" and the "borderland". These two spaces intersect at the border checkpoints described in publications II and IV. Both spaces exist in the physical landscape, and goods and people are moving through them across the Namibia-Zambia and Uganda-South Sudan state borders.

On the one hand, *transnational governance from above* is manifest in the arrival of new infrastructure and investment opportunities. These developments are 'seen' by state governments (Scott 1998) as successful attempts to broadcast power into the periphery.

They fit neatly into the official narratives of government-led development and nation-building in the countries involved, as expressed e.g. through the words which were put in the mouth of a schoolgirl at the Zambezi bridge opening in 2004, cited in the opening paragraph of this chapter.

On the other hand, *transnational governance from below* is manifest in vibrant attempts by the borderland population to regulate and partake in the opportunities offered by the presence of the border to engage in cross-border commerce and avoid its exclusive regulation by state authorities. Such attempts are documented in all four publications included in this dissertation. The longevity and wider socio-economic impact of these activities beyond the borderland suggest they cannot be ignored or treated as mere side effects. Actors representing ‘traditional’ authority, villagers patrolling the border as ‘vigilantes’ and smugglers are ‘seeing the state’ (Corbridge 2005) from their own perspective rooted in daily life in the borderland. Both kinds of governance intersect spatially at places like the Zambezi Bridge and its vicinity or the bustling Ugandan boomtown of Bibia. Like two sides of a coin, they are not the same, but also non-separate. They clearly have more in common than the geographical location where they play themselves out. Both need to be examined together and in relation to each other in order to overcome analytically problematic dichotomies of state/non state actors and inside/outside state territory.

Equipped with a more differentiated and nuanced understanding of state formation, boundary making and borderlands in Africa I will now return to my own conceptualization of *real borders*.

2.5 What Makes Borders Real

A border is a clearly defined line of separation of two sovereign states’ territorial claims, but not only that. It is also embedded and entangled in vines of everyday relations in multiple, overlapping, and historically deep spheres of kinship, politics, and commerce that are all part of borderland life. These everyday relations transgress and ‘mess with’ the boundary as an efficient clear-cut element of formal state regulation, but they also feed on it constitute and sustain the boundary as a fact of everyday life. The actual reality of the border is not exclusively defined by either the players at the centre of state power or in its margins, but emerges from the relations between them on both sides of, and across the

border. As I now return to my argument regarding what makes borders ‘real’, it is time to unpack in a bit more detail the concept of relation I am applying. I rely on Marilyn Strathern’s two-fold definition of relation (Strathern 1995), which points out a fundamental difference in ontologies based on a different order of connections:

1. Relations *organize* things: Relations exist between separate and autonomous entities.
2. Relations *are* things that are in turn created by relations: Entities exist through the relations they involve and not autonomously on their own. They are neither fully distinct nor one and the same. One could say they are non-separate.

Let me illustrate this with an example: A marriage is a relationship between two people, which is formally established on a contractual basis. But a marriage must also be a lived and ongoing experience for those who are married. If the marriage contract is all there is to it, one can hardly call it ‘real’. The increasingly intrusive actions of immigration authorities in e.g. Western Europe are currently very concerned with establishing exactly this point in order to assess whether marriage is a back door to immigration. A ‘real’ marriage is both contractually organized and a lived relationship between two people.

I now adapt Strathern’s distinction for my conceptualization of the border:

1. A border organizes the relations between sovereign states: As a fixed structure on maps and through demarcation in the landscape, a border represents the edges of the territories of two separate sovereign states.
2. A border is constituted by the relations it establishes: The border exists in all the real-life actions that take place because of it. These are both the official actions of governmental as well as commercial and other private bodies, and the not officially regulated actions of borderland inhabitants that would not happen without the border.

My point is that both conceptualizations of (relation, marriage, and) border are valid but incomplete without the other. **Borders are made both at the centre and in the margins, and they are maintained in the negotiations between the two.** Central state power can define the location and official function of the border, but not monopolize the reality of the border. A borders is not only the limit of territorial sovereignty, but also a living space and membrane of everyday interaction between borderland inhabitants and frontline agents of state authority on both sides of, and across it. What makes borders

'real' is not only defined in lofty claims of territorial sovereignty, but also in how these claims are negotiated in multiple domains of daily reality in the borderland. No particular individual or institution can be identified to have exclusive and permanent power to define and dominate the reality of the border. The character of the border is changing over time.

This has two important consequences: Firstly, although its origins and original qualities may have been appropriately characterized as 'arbitrary' and 'artificial' in the past, a border can evolve from this initial state and become 'part of the landscape' over time. Secondly, to describe any given border as 'blurred' or 'porous' is inaccurate and potentially misleading. The exact conditions under which the movement of people and goods across a border is or is not restricted are not merely unclear or fuzzy – as the term 'blurred' suggests, or merely allowing for unregulated movement in a structurally static way – as the term 'porous' suggests. Who controls the movement of whom and what, exactly where along the border, and the daily, seasonal and long-term changes in these regimes are all highly dynamic, place- and time-specific.

3. The Four Publications – Questions, Main Arguments and Comparative Discussion

3.1 Questions and Main Arguments

The idea that central states and borderlands are in a relationship of mutual constitution and continuous transformation provides the backbone of my analytical framework in all four publications. My task is to show how actors in both try to reign in and colonize each other historically and in the present, and how notions and everyday practices of state-society relations are transformed in the process. Each of the four publications included in this dissertation makes a contribution to this task.

Publication I appeared in the Journal of Borderland Studies in 2010 and is titled: "Neither Arbitrary nor Artificial: Lozi Chiefs and the Making of the Namibia-Zambia Borderland." The article argues that the European colonial creation of both the territorial and administrative foundations of the colonial state were inextricably linked and that both remain relevant today. I show that, over the twelve decades since its creation, the Namibia-Zambia boundary has become an integral part of the socioeconomic and political

landscape of the borderland, and that some of the political opportunities and vested interests associated with the border in the borderland today were part and parcel of its creation from the start. I argue my case through a comparative analysis of the historical and present-day political relations between two chieftaincies on either side of the Namibia-Zambia borderland with each other and with successive pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial central state powers.

Publication II appeared in the Journal of Southern African Studies in 2009 and is titled: “Danger and Opportunity in Katima Mulilo: A Namibian Border Boomtown at Transnational Crossroads.” It takes the case of the opening of a new bridge and asphalt road link for international commerce at the border town of Katima Mulilo to illustrate the historical evolution of relations between the central colonial and postcolonial state of Namibia and its borderland with Zambia, through mutual perceptions of ‘dangerousness’ and ‘opportunity’. The new infrastructure link is described as part of a broader reconfiguration of the nature of state sovereignty. Two distinct but interrelated processes are changing the nature of state sovereignty simultaneously from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ in two transnational spaces - the transport corridor and the borderland, which both intersect spatially at the new bridge across the Zambezi River.

Publication III is one of two chapters I have contributed in 2007 to an edited volume titled “State Recognition and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Dawn for Traditional Authorities?” The title of the selected chapter is “Chiefs, Policing and Vigilantes: ‘Cleaning Up’ the Caprivi Borderland of Namibia”. It examines two related reforms to the practice of policing along the Namibia-Zambia border that were introduced by the Namibian central government. Politically well-connected borderland inhabitants are shown to appropriate and renegotiate official policy to serve their own vested interests. Returning to the theme of ‘traditional’ authority representatives raised in publication I, this chapter expands the ethnographic scope to include other ‘twilight’ actors like vigilantes, smugglers and border policemen acting outside the law and with strong affiliations to the populations on both sides of the borderland. Publications I-III are based on altogether ten months of fieldwork I have carried out in Namibia and Zambia between 2002 and 2004.

Publication IV is a chapter I have contributed in 2013 to an edited volume titled “Violence on the Margins. States, Conflict, and Borderlands”. The title of the chapter is

“Get It While You Can – Governance Between Wars in the Uganda-South Sudan Borderland”. The chapter is set in the borderland of northern Uganda and not-yet independent South Sudan in the aftermath of protracted conflicts involving the Ugandan and Sudanese governments and armies, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the Lord’s Resistance Army/Movement (LRA/M). I describe how strong attempts by the Ugandan government to extend its political and economic control into the peripheral borderland are clashing with the still raw memories and harsh living realities of the borderland population. While some appear to take advantage of the new opportunities, I observe how both governmental actors and private entrepreneurs act on a general premise of short-term gains, raising questions of the long-term implications of this kind of *borderland governance*. Publication IV is based on two months of fieldwork I have carried out in Uganda in 2009.

3.2 Comparative Discussion

Comparative discussion of results from the two borderlands in which I have carried out research is not a straightforward task, since the length and kind of field work I was able to conduct, and consequently the material I collected in the two settings was rather different in nature (see chapter 4). There are nevertheless some themes which allow for fruitful comparative reflection. One of these is the basis of popular power in the two borderlands and how this differs in two settings with very different histories of violent conflict. Another element that calls for comparison is the presence of powerful transnational actors from private business and the development industry in both borderlands. Their effects, in particular the construction of new road and border infrastructure, connect the borderlands across the line of division, with their respective national centres of administrative power, and with a globalizing economy.

My research from the Namibia-Zambia borderland shows that both during and since the end of colonial rule the ‘traditional’ authorities of the Lozi kingdom and their successors on both sides of the border have been wielding considerable power to influence the actual meaning of the boundary and day-to-day administration of the borderland. One could argue that chiefs in the Namibia-Zambia borderland seek not to bypass the state but insert themselves as influential middlemen and ‘see for the state.’ In actual fact, chiefs on the Zambian side of the borderland, and to a lesser but considerable

extent the Namibia side, argue rather openly that it is the state which is trying to insert itself as middleman in their established domain of power, and that this will only be convincing if the ‘new kid on the block’ can deliver concrete benefits. Arguing that they have seen by now over “fifty years of development going nowhere” (publication 1: 16), the Zambian Lozis are highly sceptical if this will indeed happen.

There are clear differences in ‘traditional’ and central state authority relations on the Namibian and, respectively, Zambian side of the borderland. The Namibian chiefs and their subjects in the particular area of the borderland where I conducted field work are largely voters or even members of Namibia’s ruling SWAPO party, and have been so since Namibian independence in 1990. The relations between the Zambian chiefs (and their subjects) and the various administrations in Lusaka have been more varied and generally much more strained since Zambian independence in 1964. There is an important commonality, though: On both sides of the borderland, the basis of ‘traditional’ authority’s power rests in the ability of chiefs to act as interlocutors: On the one hand between state authority which has a weak administrative presence on the ground, but wishes to project its power into the borderland in order to achieve desired policy outcomes. On the other hand between the wider borderland population who have limited options to exert political pressure on central government to deliver on developmental promises, but can rely on their chiefs as unelected but politically potent representatives to make their voices heard in the halls of state power. In both Namibia and Zambia, there are constitutional provisions for the role of ‘traditional’ authority that provide some insulation against short-term changes in the rights and duties associated with ‘traditional’ leaders in both countries, but these do not insulate entirely against the problem of politically motivated state recognition of chiefs and self-interested elite politics.

A setup where ‘traditional’ and unelected authority wields considerable power raises the question of decentralized despotism. Originally posed by Mamdani (1996), this has since then been discussed by various authors including Buur and Kyed (2007) in their edited volume to which I have contributed. In my observation, the setting I describe where chiefs are interlocutors between central government and rural populations in the borderland provides a considerable degree of checks and balances. These prevent chiefs from becoming merely illegitimate self-interested local elite actors, a point I argue in more detail in my other book chapter included in the Buur and Kyed volume (Zeller 2007).

With some variation, this applies to chiefs on all levels of ‘traditional’ authority hierarchy in the borderland but nevertheless leaves some population groups at a clear disadvantage: Although constitutionally equal, women across the Namibia-Zambia borderland have far less opportunities to exert influence than men who clearly dominate, though not exclusively occupy, the positions of ‘traditional’ authority. As described in publication III, another prominent group that was clearly at a disadvantage were the herdsboys with Zambian citizenship who work for Namibian cattle owners and are technically illegal immigrants. A crucial domain occupied and effectively wielded by borderland chiefs to influence the course of action by state authority representatives was that of personal identification, and thus a fundamental basis for claims of citizenship. In the (very common) absence of official documents, chiefs were trusted by state authority to identify their ‘subjects’ for purposes of administrative action, including permits to cross the international boundary.

Taking influence on state policies in the borderland in order to achieve more desirable outcomes was not only a domain of ‘traditional’ leaders but other individual, and to some extent collectively organized actors like seasonal associations of fishermen, traders and e.g. the vigilantes I describe in publication III. Importantly, this cast of actors also includes state representatives like the Namibian border guard-turned-smuggler. These observations lead me to argue that there exist not just clandestine and sporadic wider practices of *transnational governance ‘from below’* in the borderland, and that the boundary is not merely ‘blurred’ and ‘porous’ but that its permeability is negotiable in terms of where and when people and goods can cross it. Although this situation may not appear predictable to the outsider unfamiliar with the borderland, it is a domain where certain practical norms apply, and attempts to change these like the Namibian Minister’s policing and immigration reform can meet with carefully calibrated, organized resistance.

In Uganda’s borderland with South Sudan I was unable to observe a system of ‘traditional’ or other non-state authority in action at any length. Although I was informed that such systems were to some extent still in existence, it was also clear that these and all aspects of non-state authority, social fabric, kinship, land tenure, and all other foundations of daily existence had been severely disrupted by the long-term violence in the region and successive postcolonial central governments’ unwillingness to integrate ‘traditional’ authority structures which had been integral to (and to some extent invented by) British

colonial-era state authority. A significant share of the borderland population had only recently been allowed to return to their ancestral rural dwelling places, after they had been moved (often by force) to camps for Internally Displaced People. UNHCR operations to repatriate (South) Sudanese refugees were in full swing as I was conducting field work. This left the field to non-state actors with less collective and more self-interested, less long-term and more short-term interests to become more prominent during the research process. It may well be (and my conclusion in publication IV makes direct reference to this), that I have witnessed emerging forms of social structure and regulation with a distinct local flavour in the booming border town of Bibia in 2009. But I remain sceptical whether such structures, emerging in a situation where *borderland governance* is built on a general premise of short-termed and individualised survival or gain, can evolve and become established without reproducing conditions that, to me, appear to be part of an institutional DNA that has undergone significant mutation in a context of prolonged large-scale societal violence.

I am prepared to considering the situation in northern Uganda as one with more openness to the emergence of new forms of popular power than in the Namibia-Zambia borderland where the more established and entrenched ‘traditional’ authorities can be viewed as not only preserving existing social fabric but as potentially stifling societal innovation. But this is a rather speculative and normative line of argumentation, and not one I regard as fruitful to pursue further at this point.

It is, however, important to still consider in comparative fashion the influence on governance in both borderlands I have studied by powerful transnational actors from private business and the development industry. Both borderlands were being connected, as I was conducting field work, to long-distance asphalt roads linking these areas directly to urban centres, major sea ports on the African continent (Walvis Bay and Mombasa) and therefore global routes of commerce. National governments were willing collaborators in these infrastructure project and eager to portray them as part of their tireless efforts to deliver development to their rural populations and part of wider logics of regional integration promoted by SADC and the East African Community. But in both cases, western donor agencies like the German KdF and the World Bank and western engineering companies were the key drivers, financiers and executors of these projects. The difference in large-scale societal violence between the two borderlands again

manifests in an important dissimilarity, though: The Walvis Bay Corridor Group convincingly claims to have established a functioning cross-border transport corridor linking two peaceful neighbouring countries, which I cite as an example of a integrated space of *transnational governance 'from above'*. The new road leading up to the Uganda-South Sudan border, however, is still far from being the desired efficient and reliable cross-border route of commerce. The road may now be reliable up to Uganda's northern border, but the infrastructural improvements on the Ugandan and South Sudanese side are of limited value as long as armed factions that may or may not be affiliated with the SPLM government are using the transport route to extract private profit along sections of the road they manage to control.

In the following chapter, I explain the practical and methodological considerations, choices and limitations underlying my fieldwork.

4. Fieldwork Sites and Methods, Choices and Limitations

The empirical material used in the publications included in this dissertation was mostly collected in 2002 (Namibia and Zambia), 2004 (Zambia and Namibia), and 2009 (Uganda). The research in Namibia and Zambia was funded by a 3-year grant from the Academy of Finland, with additional fieldwork funding from the Nordic Africa Institute. The research in Uganda was carried out as part of a 9-month research project funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and titled “Exploring the Security-Development Nexus. Perspectives from Nepal, Northern Uganda and ‘Sugango’.” My general agenda throughout these projects was to explore state-society relations in the territorial margins of African borderlands, through examining their everyday manifestations in the present day as well as their historical roots. To expand the time frame of my understanding, I researched historical records from colonial-era scientific studies, administrative documents, media reports and historiographies, in particular concerning the Namibia-Zambia borderland, in addition to the ethnographic fieldwork I carried out in the borderlands.

Throughout, between, and following field work in 2002 and 2004 I collected a substantial amount of media articles from paper and online sources, largely but not exclusively published by The Namibian newspaper, New Era (also published in Namibia),

the Caprivi Vision and The Post of Zambia. From January to September 2009 I kept a similar archive of news items published by The Monitor newspaper of Uganda and the Acholi Times (also Uganda). I categorized all news media sources according to the topics emerging from fieldwork events I was following up on.

State control of territory and people in the settings of my fieldwork has been and is incomplete and contested, and therefore practices of regulation and ordering were and are frequently the domain not only of state representatives but also of non-state actors and ‘twilight institutions’ (Lund 2006; see also Das and Poole 2004; Worby 1998; Tsing 1993). It was my basic premise that all actors involved in practices of ordering and regulation in the borderlands I visited are relevant for my research. I therefore, on the one hand, collected government ‘grey literature’ and conducted semi-structured interviews with government officials at the national centres of power in Windhoek, Lusaka and Kampala, as well as provincial centres of administration in the towns of Katima Mulilo (Namibia), Sesheke (Zambia) and Gulu (Uganda). On the other hand, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork involving up to several months of non-participant and participant observation and interviews, usually combining structured and semi-structured lines of enquiry. I used these to study the views and actions of frontline state representatives like customs officials and border guards, twilight and non-state actors like ‘traditional authority representatives and church leaders, as well as a wide range of other borderland inhabitants of both sexes who were not in positions of leadership. Most of the interviews were audio recorded and a selection of these later transcribed. I also took notes during all interviews and, whenever possible, edited and expanded these within maximum 12 hours of the actual interview. I kept detailed written daily field notes throughout all phases of fieldwork.

I obtained official research permits from the Namibian, Zambian and Ugandan authorities during all phases of fieldwork, facilitated by formal affiliations with the University of Namibia in Windhoek, the University of Zambia in Lusaka, and the University of Gulu. Although these permits were technically sufficient to meet the legal requirements, I followed what central government representatives and common sense suggested would be good etiquette (and useful interview material) and also had appointments with the governor and head of police of the Caprivi Region in Namibia, the heads of administration and police in Sesheke District in Zambia, and the heads of Gulu,

Adjumani and Moyo Districts in Uganda. In addition to official government ‘blessings’ I also obtained written permits to conduct research in the Namibia-Zambia borderland by the ‘traditional’ authorities of the Basubiya in Bukalo (Namibia) and the Barotse Royal Establishment in Mwandi (Zambia) respectively. Although the permits issued by these ‘twilight institutions’ were not a formal requirement, they were de facto quite necessary to conduct research in these areas. This was itself an important result of my fieldwork.

My application for a research permit in Uganda required an ethical assessment procedure run through the University of Helsinki, while no such formal requirements were made by the governments or universities of Namibia and Zambia (nor, in fact, the University of Helsinki for fieldwork in those countries). I always explained the topic and purpose of my research and sought verbal permission from all interviewees to quote them by name in my published work. In 89 out of a total of 93 interviews this permission was granted. In the remaining 4 cases, and in cases where I felt that revealing the correct identity could have put interviewees or other borderland residents at risk (e.g. concerning alleged acts of smuggling, theft, illegal border crossing or adultery) I quoted interviewees as anonymous and/or omitted or changed their names and/or locations and/or dates of events. All my electronic fieldwork notes were kept under password protection. Recording devices, cameras, computers and hand written notes were at all times either kept on my person or inside a locked steel box that was chained either to my bed or my vehicle. I always sought permission before taking portrait photographs of persons.

4.1 Namibia-Zambia

My 2002 and 2004 field work built on contacts and experiences in Namibia and its Caprivi Region (since August 2013 officially named “Zambezi Region”), which I had made during two previous field work visits: Based on two months of field work in 1996 I had written a Master’s Thesis on the politics of ‘traditional’ authority through changing land and resource management in a rural village of Caprivi. During a six-month stay as research internee with the Embassy of Finland in Namibia from November 1999 to April 2000 I had produced a report on the historical and socioeconomic roots of secessionism in the Caprivi. The same visit also included research at the National Archives and National Library of Namibia, as well as the Sam Cohen Library in Swakopmund, which holds an extensive collection of scientific studies, news media articles and ‘grey’ literature from the

German colonial period in Namibia. In May 2001 I spent a week at the Federal Military archives in Freiburg, Germany for material on the early colonial period administration of German South West Africa.

From July to December 2002 I conducted altogether 48 interviews in Windhoek and, for just under five months, in the Namibia-Zambia borderland. During the latter period I made my camp in two locations, moving back and forth between them on a bi-weekly basis. These were the provincial capital of the Caprivi Region, Katima Mulilo, and the former headquarters of the German colonial administration, the rural village Schuckmannsburg (since August 2011 officially, and locally always known by its precolonial name “Luhonono”). Both Katima Mulilo and Schuckmannsburg are located on or near the shore of the Zambezi River, and both have official border posts. Katima Mulilo is a fast-growing urban area and the regional administrative and commercial centre of the Caprivi Region. The town is well-connected to the outside world via transport (road, regular air traffic), communications and other infrastructure links. Schuckmannsburg is merely a rural village, albeit with some weight for surrounding areas due to its primary and secondary schools, a health clinic and small store selling basic goods. Schuckmannsburg is regularly surrounded by water during the annual flood season of the Zambezi, requiring residents to travel by boat to higher ground in Namibia or across the border to Zambia. In Katima and at the nearby Wenela border post I conducted interviews with regional- and local-level government administrators, locally based business people, small-scale cross-border traders and borderland inhabitants. Construction of the Zambezi Bridge, which was to be opened in 2004, was in full swing by 2002 and I visited the construction site in the no man’s land at the Wenela border post several times, to observe and conduct interviews with engineers and other personnel involved in the project. I also crossed the Zambezi from Katima Mulilo to its Zambian neighbour town Sesheke on two occasions by pontoon ferry, to establish a local network of contacts. In Schuckmannsburg, I received permission from the village headman to stay in a vacant building adjacent to his extended family homestead. From there I interviewed village headmen, school and church leaders, veterinaries, nurses, fishermen, small-scale traders and other borderland inhabitants in Schuckmannsburg and nearby villages. I also conducted several interviews with the Namibian border guards at Schuckmannsburg border post.

My 2004 revisit to the Namibia-Zambia borderland was designed to follow up on the events and people I had encountered in 2002, and to expand on that material in two specific ways: Unlike the previous visit, it took place during the flood season when the Zambezi regularly breaks its banks, dramatically changing the physical landscape and fundamentally affecting the daily life routines in the borderland. I also reversed the fieldwork location: Mwandi in Zambia was my main base from which I regularly visited Sesheke, occasionally crossing the Zambezi to Schuckmannsburg and Katima Mulilo from there. I also visited Lusaka for a week for interviews and library research. The total number of interviews I conducted in 2004 was 24.

Crossing the border for various purposes like shopping, cultural festivals, funerals and other family occasions is a routine and important aspect of daily life in the Namibia-Zambia borderland. As I experienced in 2004, large parts of the Namibian side of the borderland become seasonally flooded by the Zambezi, forcing residents and at times even the Namibian authorities to access places like Schuckmannsburg by boat or helicopter, or by road via Zambian territory. I understood it would be problematic for me to limit my concept of the place of ethnographic inquiry along the lines of state demarcation. I therefore made a conscious effort to participate in crossing the border with borderland residents (compare Englund 2002: 29; Marcus 1998: 94). On several occasions in 2002 I accompanied borderland residents on day-trips across the Zambezi to the Zambian town of Mwandi, and I made several journeys in the reverse direction in 2004. To do this, I had to obtain day border passes issued to borderland inhabitants by the Schuckmannsburg and Mwandi border posts. Not technically a 'borderland inhabitant', I was nevertheless deemed eligible to use these documents after the village headman of Schuckmannsburg informed the border guards that I was to be considered as part of his extended family for the duration of my stay. This was just one of several episodes demonstrating the considerable power wielded by 'traditional' authority representatives in regulating the movement of people in that borderland. Crossing the Zambezi in a canoe with borderland residents was always an excellent occasion to directly observe how such movement is regulated by both state and non-state authority (and occasionally hippopotami!), and to ask questions from those who were in the same boat with me.

The extended periods of field work allowed me to make and maintain contacts with borderland residents in Katima Mulilo, Schuckmannsburg and Mwandi. These went

well beyond local notables and people in positions of decision-making power and included cross-border traders, market sellers, fishermen, farmers, secondary school learners and Zambian-born herdsboys working in Namibia. My interviews with higher-level officials were by necessity less about personal life circumstances than aspects of their professional work and government policy. However, an important element in all my interviews, especially with lower-ranking officials and other residents of the Namibia/Zambia borderland, was to establish if and how their own life history and personal horizon extended across the border. One way in which I facilitated this was through medium-scale maps of the borderland. Respondents were asked to show me their own and close family members' current and former places of residence, education and employment. It turned out that virtually all interviewees not only had close ties but also actually had been or still were de facto living on both sides of the border. The maps and more detailed aerial photographs I had obtained in Windhoek were also useful to facilitate interviews about e.g. cattle theft, transport conditions and the seasonal changes of the landscape. To facilitate discussions about local history in the borderland I brought books with photographs of places and borderland residents from the colonial period to interviews and asked respondents to comment on these. These materials also served as important icebreakers, along with stories and pictures from my personal life (e.g. contrasting seasonal changes in Finland between summer and winter) and songs I contributed to family, community or church gatherings (I taught the Seven Day Adventist congregation of Schuckmannsburg a couple of American 'negro spirituals'). I did not pay interviewees but made contributions in the form of groceries and small household items to my host family in Schuckmannsburg. I also built a tree swing at my own expense for the children of Schuckmannsburg (although it turned out that, after sunset, the adult population, and especially the village chief became enthusiastic users as well). For my accommodation at the Mwandi Mission and a tourist lodge near Katima Mulilo I paid a fixed price.

Beyond my more general enquiries into borderland life, the research topics which emerged during field work to a great extent suggested themselves through events that I witnessed first-hand, and then chose to follow up on through interviews with participants and other observers among the borderland population and the authorities concerned. These were: several cases of cross-border cattle theft and the investigations and prosecutions that followed them in 2002; the celebrations of the 25th anniversary in office

of the Chief of Mwandi; the 2002 introduction and aftermath of an attempted policy reform on border policing and immigration by the Namibian Ministry of Home Affairs; the construction process in 2002 and the 2004 opening ceremony of the Zambezi Bridge and Livingston-Sesheke highway; the construction of a feeder road linking that highway with the town of Mwandi in 2004; the 2004 seasonal floods of the Zambezi and the flood relief operations by the Namibian government and Red Cross. Of my efforts to employ the extended case method perhaps the most consistent one was my research on the occasion of the 2004 Zambezi Bridge opening – a deliberate attempt to follow the footsteps of Max Gluckman, who pioneered both this method and, later in his career, research on the Lozi (Gluckman 1958). Some of this material is included in publication II.

My working language during fieldwork was English. This is the official language of school instruction and government in both Namibia and Zambia, and very widely spoken in the borderland. I had a limited vocabulary in Silozi, the regional *lingua franca* in the area of the former Lozi kingdom. This was sufficient for the most basic daily social exchanges. I did not use a translator or research assistant during any phase of my fieldwork. In the rural settings of Schuckmannsburg and Mwandi - although I did attach myself through my choice of residence to some extent to the homestead of the village chief and mission station respectively - I did make a conscious effort to establish a personal network that transcended existing social circles defined by kinship and religious congregation. My borderland resident interviewees were both male and female and aged between their late teens and early 80s.

For transport from my point of overseas entry (Windhoek) to the field, and during fieldwork I used a Suzuki 350DR offroad motorcycle. This was an affordable and versatile vehicle allowing me to travel both longer distances by asphalt road, as well as on the sand, gravel and mud paths and in partially flooded sections of the borderland. Although I did quite a bit of walking, I was actively discouraged from doing so alone during the day and especially at night by borderland residents. They frequently reminded me that homo sapiens does not alone occupy the top of the food chain in my fieldwork area. I hitched rides in canoes owned by various borderland inhabitants and, on one occasion during the 2004 flood season, in a privately owned helicopter used by the Namibian government to access villages surrounded by the flood waters.

4.2 Uganda-South Sudan

My 2009 field work was rather different from previous research in Namibia and Zambia in at least four fundamental ways: I had never visited Uganda before; with 2 months I had a comparatively short duration of stay overall and I did not stay in any one location for more than 2 weeks; the project budget allowed me to use a rented Land Rover Defender for transport; I did not cross the Ugandan border into South Sudan, for several reasons: lack of time, security concerns and the car rental company did not give permission for their vehicle to cross the border. My wife, who conducted her own work to write a number of freelance news journal articles, also accompanied me. Within these parameters, there were some similarities: I conducted interviews with higher-level officials and some archival work in the capital Kampala on the one hand, and on the other interviews with mid-level to frontline officials, development agency field staff, business people and other residents in the provincial capitals Gulu and Arua, and in the Uganda-DRC and Uganda-South Sudan borderlands. The latter took place at three major border-crossing points between Uganda and South Sudan: Bibia-Nimule, Moyo and Oraba-Kaya. My time in the field was too short to build data sets on extended cases but I was able to collect material, through interviews and observation, on ongoing developments like a post-conflict investment boom in the provincial capital Gulu, the construction of new road and border checkpoint infrastructure in all three border towns, the memorial of an attack by the Lords Resistance Army on a rural village, and the ongoing repatriation of South Sudanese refugees from UNHCR camps throughout northern Uganda. Of a total of 21 interviews I obtained permission to record 18. These were transcribed for further analysis.

Before, during and after field work I was in discussion and exchanged materials with a number of scholars working on northern Uganda and South Sudan: Sverker Finnström, Fabius Okumu-Alya, Ronald Atkinson, Mareike Schomerus, Kristof Titeca, Henni Alava (an assistant on the Finnish Foreign Ministry project which financed the work, she also helped me compile grey literature and news media reports), and Cecilie Lanken-Verma (who was conducting her own doctoral dissertation field work on political re-education camps in northern Uganda at the time and kindly allowed me to use some of the empirical material we gathered during several days of joint field work, as acknowledged in publication IV). My working language in Uganda was English. I did not have a translator or fieldwork assistant but was accompanied for 4 days by Ronald Iya, a

Ugandan scholar, during my work in Moyo.

4.3 Two field work settings in comparison

In this brief comparative section I will reflect on the innovative aspects and challenges of my choice to conduct borderlands research in two very different settings, and discuss what issues of positionality arose during field work in these settings.

My field work in the Namibia-Zambia borderland was very deliberately designed to collect similar and comparable amounts of material from both sides of the border, during both the dry and flood seasons, and in urban as well as rural settings in the borderland. I made successful attempts to follow persons and the issues they were pursuing as part of their daily life across the international boundary. This allowed me to gain a comparative perspective on how the same persons and issues were seen or handled similarly or differently, depending on the setting in relation to the border. A key benefit of the opportunity to take a more long durée view of events and people was that I could observe how state authority and ‘traditional’ authority in the borderland relate to each other and reach negotiated settlements. Development agencies and private entrepreneurs, in order to be successful in their efforts, clearly also had to take a long durée approach to their negotiations with state representatives, and especially with the firmly established ‘traditional’ authorities. Revisits and cross-examining information from the perspectives of people living on either side of the border allowed me to question and reflect critically on my own observations.

My much shorter field work in Uganda was limited to one side of the borderland and of a snapshot nature. However, it represents an important variation on my material from Namibia-Zambia: Northern Uganda in 2009 was a setting where the facts of recent and the expectations of future conflict gave a much greater urgency to attempts by state security and other government agencies to assert their control of territory against a backdrop of very poor relations with the borderland population. What I encountered was a much stronger central state with far less local legitimacy and a business environment where quick profits and the patronage of powerful men with government/state security links were sought.

In terms of positionality, the longer and repeated visits to the Namibia-Zambia borderland allowed (and required) me to explain in some detail my intentions and the

nature of my work to the population and representatives of state authority in the borderland. I made it very clear that I had rather limited resources and no access to higher authorities deciding e.g. on the distribution of development project funds. There consequently were only very few open attempts to request my material or other "assistance". I was able to be relatively generous with my time and used this to satisfy the curiosity of some of my respondents for details about myself, life in Europe etc. There was one potential attempt by the parents of a young female on the Namibian side of the border to arrange for the possibility of a romantic encounter. There definitely was one attempt by some local youths on the Zambian side of the border to interest me in buying what they said were "rough diamonds from (nearby) Angola". One senior regional Zambian police official also invited me to invest in a supposedly lucrative local construction venture associated with the boom brought on by the new Zambezi bridge. In all cases I politely but publicly turned down the offers and there were no follow-up attempts or repercussions in any of these cases. Since I had obtained and always carried with me all the required official permits from all relevant authorities I was never shy to explain the nature and purpose of my research to anyone who took an official or private interest.

Northern Uganda, during my visit, experienced a virtual boom of development and private industry funded investment in the construction of housing, business and infrastructure. A white person with a Land Rover was therefore a rather common sight and instantly considered to be associated with the dominant paradigm of post-conflict reconstruction, development assistance or private entrepreneurship. I consistently explained that my work was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and could thus indeed be seen in the context of the ongoing development boom, but that it was of a generally exploratory nature and not linked to any specific ongoing or future aid industry or private enterprise projects. Strong opinions were expressed by some informants I encountered on e.g. the role of the Ugandan government and security forces as self-interested perpetrators in organised violence in the region. I consistently took note of such opinions without expressing my own, but it is fair to say that I did cultivate a cautiously critical view of all actors in the region, including the international development aid industry and the Ugandan government.

In producing this publication-based dissertation I have taken the decision to

abandon the original idea of a monograph dissertation solely based on my fieldwork in the Namibia-Zambia borderland. Choosing a publication-based format enabled me to include some of the material and theoretical insights gained from my fieldwork in Uganda. This allows me to consider how the generally more violent recent history of Uganda-South Sudan borderland and its resulting short-term style of *borderland governance* compares with the more peaceful, settled and integrated nature of governance in the Namibia-Zambia borderland, in particular with respect to the role played by ‘traditional’ authority actors liaising and competing with state authority actors on their own terms. Although relevant beyond the Uganda-South Sudan case, *borderland governance* as I conceptualize it has, in my view, limited explanatory power regarding my observations from the Namibia-Zambia borderland. Conversely, the comparative element has helped me to remain cautious in extracting universal explanations based on the kind of negotiated settlements I have witnessed in the Namibia-Zambia setting and the strong ability by borderland actors to influence the terms on which they are included in a bottom-up process of state formation as part of wider processes of *transnational governance* from both *above* and *below*.



Ugandan immigration office at Vurra border post on the Uganda-DRC border.
Photo by the author

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