THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

School of Social and Political Sciences
Faculty of Arts

PhD position in Development Studies

Position Summary

The University of Melbourne's Development Studies Program is currently seeking a PhD student for the project *State, Frontiers and Conflict in the Asia Pacific*. This project comprises a collaborative research effort of the University of Melbourne and the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University. PhD student would be part of a larger international team working on contemporary forms or order, contestation, flows and resources in selected frontier regions and borderlands.

The PhD would involve fieldwork and is expected to focus on one of the three case study regions of the project: Sumatra (and its interconnections with Peninsular Malaysia), Kalimantan (and East Malaysia) or Myanmar (and China). The PhD is be expected to begin early 2016 and finish by early 2019.

1. What we offer

> ➢ A PhD stipend of AUD$ 28.000 per year.
> ➢ A fantastic learning opportunity, including the opportunity of doing elaborate field research.
> ➢ A world-class academic environment at one of Australia's leading universities
> ➢ An opportunity to join a dedicated international research team with leading experts in a variety of disciplinary fields.

2. Selection procedure

2.1 STEP 1: SELECTION BY RESEARCH PROJECT STAFF

- ➢ Please submit the following package as one pdf document to Dr. Bart Klem: (bklem@unimelb.edu.au) by **20 September 2015**.
  - o Cover letter
  - o A table listing your experience and expertise in relation to the essential and desirable criteria below
  - o 2500 word proposal specifying how you would propose to conduct your PhD within the context of the wider research project.
  - o CV
  - o Evidence of your prior degrees (including grades)
  - o Evidence of language tests.
- ➢ On the basis of these submissions, selected member of the research team will make a shortlist. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed via skype in the first half of October.

2.2 STEP 2: ENDORSEMENT THROUGH GENERAL APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- ➢ The preferred candidate of the research team still has to apply for the general PhD procedure of the University of Melbourne (deadline 31st October 2015). We encourage all shortlisted candidates to apply, as they may be able to secure an offer and funding from sources unrelated to this research project.
- ➢ If the preferred candidate is endorsed by the general procedure, he or she will be given the project stipend. If not, we will offer the stipend to the next person on our shortlist, who has been endorsed by the general procedure.

3. Selection Criteria

3.1 ESSENTIAL

- ➢ A relevant social science degree with grades equivalent to an Australian H1 (top 20% of the class)
- ➢ A demonstrable track record of field work
- ➢ Affinity with the research themes (borderlands and frontiers) and one or more of the regions studied in this project (Southeast Asia, more specifically Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar)
- ➢ Fluency in English in line with the Melbourne School of Government's criteria (see the table on the next page).
- ➢ A genuine drive for academic research
- ➢ Willingness to take residence in Melbourne throughout the PhD

English language criteria (for non-native speakers)

IELTS (academic English Only)	TOEFL (paper-based test)	TOEFL (internet-based test	Pearson Test of English (Academic)	Cambridge English: Advanced/ Certificate of Advanced English (CAE)
7.0 (written 7.0 with no band less than 6.0)	600 + TWE 5.0	94 + Writing 27; Speaking 18; Reading 13; Listening 13	65 + written communicative skill of 65 and no other communicative skill below 50	185 + no less than 185 in Writing and 169 in each other skill.

3.2 DESIRABLE

➢ Fluency in one of more of the spoken languages in the case study region

➢ Relevant publications

➢ Relevant work experience

State, frontiers and conflict in the Asia-Pacific
Project summary

**Melbourne School of Government (University of Melbourne)
and the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London)**

INTRODUCTION

The basic idea of this research project is that frontier regions constitute a particularly fruitful vantage point for understanding processes of statebuilding, contestation and transformation in Asia. We understand frontiers to be regions located on the geographic margins of states. They frequently have a history of incomplete incorporation into (and ongoing resistance against) the statebuilding and development projects of the putative centre. They are often sites of violent conflict, from which challengers to the state have emerged – exemplars being north eastern Sri Lanka, the borderlands of Myanmar, Aceh and East Timor in Indonesia, Mindanao in the Philippines. Although they may appear to be marginal, we believe they may be central to understanding processes of statebuilding, conflict and development, historically and in today's Asian states. Far from being just reflective of power relations at the centre, they may be constitutive of new political and economic orders at the centre. Frontiers may be central to state discourses around sovereignty, security and civilisation – they are projected as unruly, barbaric, uncivilized places, in order to justify forms of coercive surveillance and development. Some frontier regions may be resource rich such as the teak forests of north east Myanmar, and have become zones of settlement and primitive accumulation, funded through Chinese capital and laundered drugs money. Others are resource poor but with an insurrectionary tradition, such as the regions that James Scott writes about in the 'art of not being governed'.

A focus on frontiers unsettles the assumptions of 'methodological nationalism' and takes us away from a school atlas view of the world, characterized by stasis and fixed boundaries. These regions have long histories of networks and movement of ideas, people and commodities linked to trade, cultural and religious exchange, which preceded modern statebuilding. In the age of globalisation these movements and

linkages have continued and expanded, leading to complex linkages and assemblages, whether it is diaspora Tamils in London, influencing politics in northern Sri Lanka, Chinese businessmen in Myanmar funding export processing zones in Yangon, or constantly mutating drugs networks that link Afghanistan to Tajikistan and China. Therefore frontier zones can be understood less as residual, marginal places than active laboratories of political, social and economic change, in which there are emergent hybridized forms of development and political order, that are frequently quite different from those represented in the good governance handbook and whose effects are quite different from those intended by central state elites or international development agencies.

This project brings together a multidisciplinary team from the University of Melbourne and the School or Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) with the aim of developing a major comparative research programme on selected frontier regions in the Asia-Pacific region. The intellectual core of this research lies in its focus on frontiers and borderlands as an analytical lens to study processes of state formation, conflict, development and globalisation in the Asia-Pacific region. Some of the key global policy challenges converge around borderlands and frontiers. These include transnational and subnational conflict, poverty and development, environmental pressure and climate change, migration, health and contagious diseases – yet these policy fields are often fragmented and insufficiently attuned to the inter-connected and transnational dimensions of these phenomena.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, CONCEPTS AND THEMES

This research aims to address three inter-related challenges. First is the *empirical* challenge of better understanding the dynamics of change in a range of contrasting borderlands. Second, rich empirical data will provide the basis for addressing the challenge of *theorization*; it is our contention that starting from the margins, and so going beyond 'methodological nationalism', raises profound questions about, and unsettles dominant theories and narratives on globalisation, statebuilding, conflict and development. Third, there is the *policy* challenge of how fine-grained evidence and more joined-up thinking can translate into policy measures better equipped to address complex, multileveled and transnational security and development issues in the Asia-Pacific. These three challenges provide the launching pad for our overarching research questions:

- Question 1: What are the dynamics of change in different borderland regions and what explains these differences?
- Question 2: In what ways does the study of individual frontiers/borderlands, and a 'borderlands perspective', challenge dominant theories and narratives and provide new analytical insights about processes of statebuilding, conflict and development?
- Question 3: How do international and domestic policies affect the dynamics of change in borderland regions and how might policies better address the 'concentrated intractabilities' of unruly borderlands?

The value-added of this project lies firstly in its multi-disciplinary approach, which builds upon and integrates the three analytical pillars of political economy, political geography and history (Graph 1, below). The project will involve a unique mix of scholars from different academic backgrounds including development studies, political science and international relations, law, history, anthropology and political geography.

Graph 1: Conceptual basis of a borderland perspective
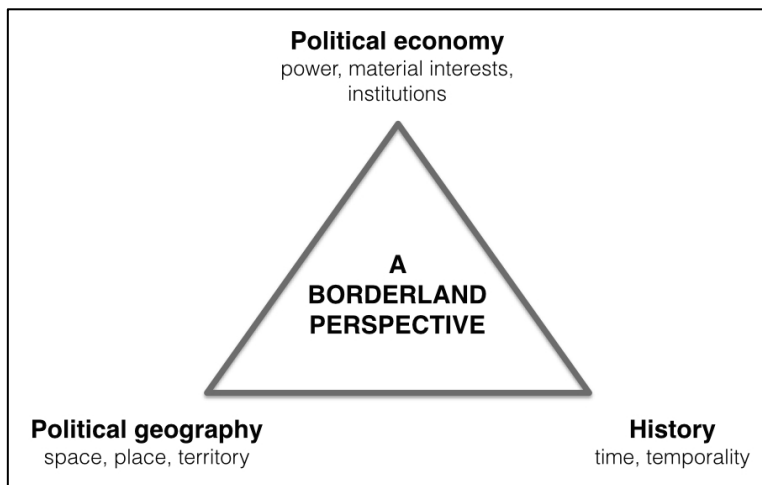
Secondly, unlike other borderlands research, which has largely been either studies of individual borderlands, or general theorization on borders and bordering, this research brings together individual borderland biographies, comparative analysis and theorization, and policy analysis/recommendations.

Thirdly the proposed project is viewed as the first stage in a larger and more ambitious research collaboration between Melbourne and SOAS. Therefore the three components of the research design discussed below (desk study; exchange across institutions and disciplines; and pilot case studies in three borderland areas) are viewed as a starting point in the process of mobilizing additional resources to conduct more long-term and in depth 'borderland biographies' in a wider number of cases in the Asia-Pacific region. Towards this aim, key outputs will be two joint research proposals; an ARC Discovery grant proposal led by Melbourne and an ESRC proposal led by SOAS. In the long term the aim is to build a joint centre, which becomes a focus for research, policy analysis and advocacy on conflict and borderlands involving staff and research students from the two institutions.

Three overarching themes have been identified which cover many of the key dimensions of frontiers and borderlands:

1. *States, sovereignty, legal pluralism and violence*

This research strand explores how statebuilding and contestation unfold through fragmented sovereignty, decentralized violence, jurisdictional complexity and multiple political allegiances, and how borderland elites and populations exploit and manipulate the borders imposed upon them. It also explores the entanglement of 'local' conflict and larger-scale contentions and the politics involved in addressing and mediating conflict.

2. *Resources, development, and agrarian change*

This strand will explore the dynamics of capitalist expansion and primitive accumulation in borderland zones and how these shape processes of development in frontier regions and at the centre. Frontiers may be troublesome to the state, but they are also resources, providing sites of opportunity for global and regional markets – far

from being disconnected, borderland economies are highly connected, characterized by nets of extraversion linking spaces of production, exchange and consumption.

3. *Migration, networks and flows*

This research strand explores the drivers, dynamics and effects of movement into, out of and within frontier zones, and the attempts by states to 'fix' populations (and commodities) in space. Frontier regions are places of movement, flux and hybridity, which contaminate notions of purity and orderliness and raises contentions over conceptions of genealogy and citizenship.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research involves three main components, which will lead to a set of project outcomes, as summarized in Graph 2 (see also Table 1 below for a detailed overview).

Graph 2: Project components and their inter-relations
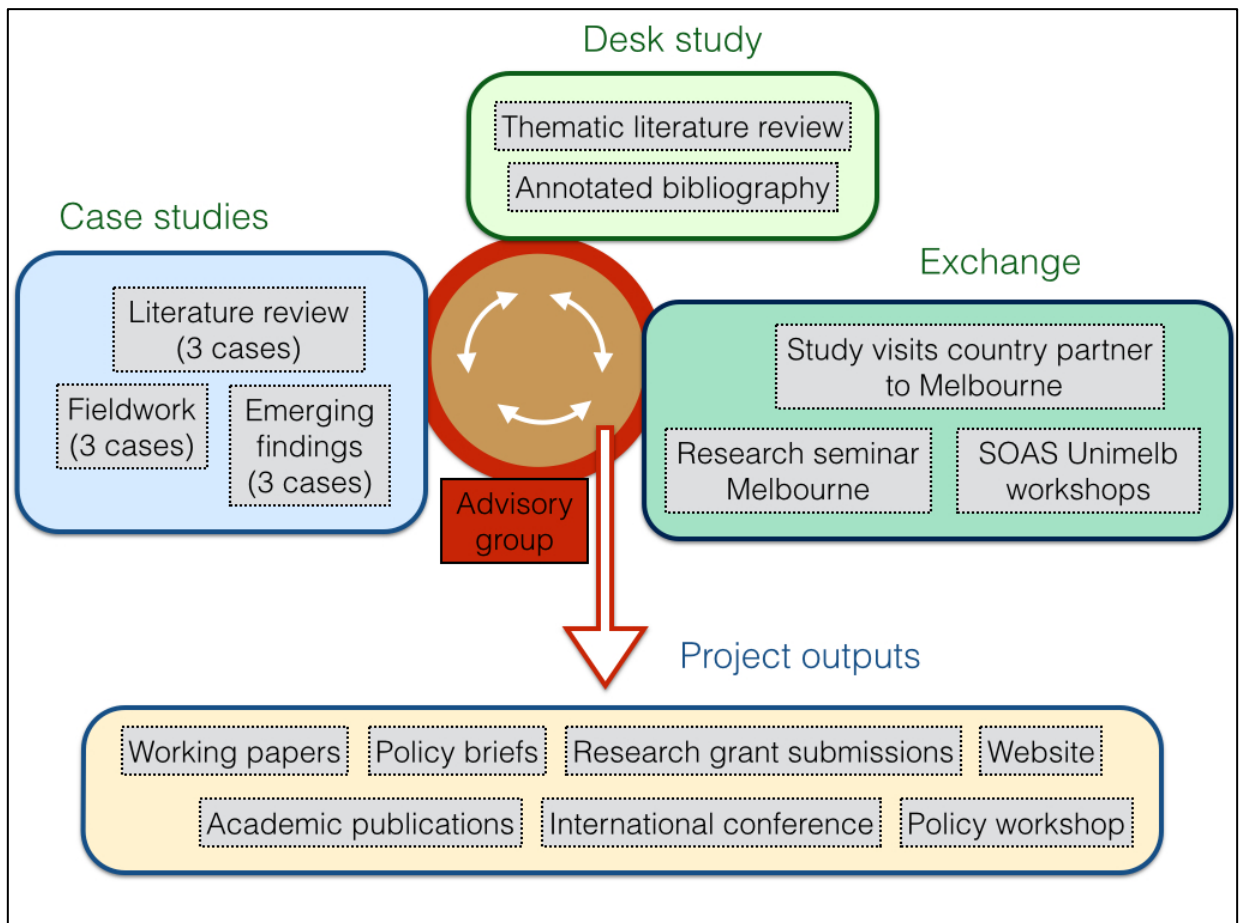
Component 1: Desk Study

As mentioned, this project aims to generate new empirical evidence through case study research, as outlined below, in addition to theory building and contributing to policy debates on frontiers and borderlands. The initial workshop (and the literature gathered in preparation) began the process of testing ideas, exploring the conceptual points of convergence and tensions between different disciplinary fields as well

mobilizing engagement and buy in for the project. The literature review and conceptual framework will be developed both in preparation for, and alongside the empirical and exchange work streams. The key outputs from the desk study will be:

- An annotated bibliography.
- A conceptual paper, which will feed into the joint SOAS-Melbourne workshops and the preparation of the fieldwork.

Component 2: Exchange across institutions and disciplines

Promoting collaboration between the two institutions and between academics and policy makers is an important part of this project. This will take the following forms:

SOAS-Melbourne workshops: This comprises a sequence of three joint events, which will take place in either London or Melbourne.

Study visits to Melbourne by country partners: In each of the borderlands case studies we will engage with one or more research partners. To strengthen this collaboration and to build the capacity and linkages of these organisations, we will host them in Melbourne so they can present their work, discuss research findings and engage with the relevant literatures.

Research seminar: We will initiate an inter-faculty research seminar at the University of Melbourne, which will take place three times per semester. This seminar will enable PhD students and staff from different parts of the university with an interest in borderlands and frontiers to come together and present their work.

Component 3 - Case study research: exploring borderland dynamics across the three streams

The project focuses on the following three borderlands:

(1) The Malacca Strait, a maritime border between Malaysia/Singapore and Indonesia
(2) The Indonesia-Malaysia borderland on Borneo island
(3) The Myanmar-China borderlands

These cases were selected for the following reasons: First, an exploration of different borderland and frontier contexts in different parts of Asia will contribute to enhanced understanding of the dynamics of change in contrasting borderlands. Second, rich empirical data will provide the basis for further theorization and help create the foundations for extending the number of cases both within the Asia-Pacific region (under a Melbourne lead) and beyond the region (under a SOAS lead). Third, fine-grained evidence and more joined-up thinking generated by a multidisciplinary approach can translate into policy measures that address the linked 'intractabilities' characteristic of many frontiers and borderlands in the Asia-Pacific.

The case studies have a number of common features including:
- At least one side of the border is rich in natural resource endowments.
- The existence of state and private sector investment and trade.
- Illegal and informal activities including trade and migration across the border.

- The borderlands are violent places with levels of violence varying along a continuum from organized armed conflict to violence related to development and forced displacement.

However the cases display several differences and these differences make for interesting comparisons across cases including:

- Most fundamentally, two are land borders and one is a maritime border.
- There are differences in the gradient of the borders and the extent to which value steps up or down in the borderlands.
- The strategic value of the border to state actors varies across the cases.
- The level of military presence and militarization at the border differs across cases.

Brief details of the three borderlands are given below:

Case 1: The Malacca Strait borderland - the maritime borderland across Sumatra and peninsular Malaysia
- Led by Rachael Diprose

Context: Field research is planned for the area near the Indonesian provinces of Jambi and Riau/Pekanbaru and the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula that houses Singapore and mainland Malaysia.

The Malacca Strait borderland provides an empirical example of an international maritime border and a steep gradient in terms of the opportunities (and risks for conflict) afforded by differences across borders. Different legal and regulatory systems, price differentials, and relative scarcity provide opportunities for arbitrage and resource exploitation on the Indonesian side of the maritime border separating the Island of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Empirical evidence collected through field research and desk reviews, and comparisons with Case 2 described below, can be used to answer the research questions on risk and insecurity in maritime borderlands in areas that have experienced ecological disasters, illicit/illegal markets and migration flows, and some incidents of violence. However, given the trade flows and the general accessibility of the borderland this is also a place where globalized economic networks are abundant.

Table 1: selection of relevant issues organized by thematic strand for case 1

Resources, development, agrarian change	• Shift in agrarian practices in Indonesia towards clearing forests for the production and trade of palm oil, pulp/paper/timber and mining activities (large Singaporean and Malaysian companies operate on the Indonesian side of the border).
	• Transborder haze generated by fires for clearing near the border and other ecological disasters
	• Global dimension in debates on deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions from fire and peat land depletion.
	• Inter-state tensions between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore from transborder haze (complex issues of the regulatory environment in Indonesia and methods used by Malaysian and Singaporean companies for clearing for timber and oil palm plantations) in their concession areas Indonesia.
State	• Complexities of the political economy of natural resource

sovereignty, legal pluralism, violence	management in the borderlands in large, decentralised states with multi-level governance and regulatory regimes. • National discourses of sovereignty, security and agrarian expansion intersect. • Economic benefits from extraction and trade, but health and other consequences from environmental depletion and haze. • Sub-national conflicts in borderlands customary communities, small-holders, companies, middle-men, security agencies and other stakeholders over resource access and land use practices, some of which encompass mobilisation processes that take on ethno-religious and other patronage dimensions • Steep gradient in the difference between regulatory systems.
Migration, groups, networks, flows	• Cross-border migration, illegal trade and movement. • Transmigration programs (to alleviate population pressures on Java) have granted land to migrants and fed tensions between transmigrants and host communities. • Ethnic diversity on the Indonesian side (but groups are smaller in numerical size compared with other groups in Indonesia such as the Javanese); large groups such as the politically dominant Malay and some smaller groups on the Malaysian side. • Inter-ethnic and other networks being established for trade and extraction, with these tensions at times exploited by/or ignored by extractive industries and logging companies with links to Malaysia and Singapore.

Case 2: The Borneo borderland - the forested zone straddling the border between East Malaysia and Kalimantan
• Led by Bart Klem

Context: On the island of Borneo, the Indonesian provinces of West Kalimantan and East Kalimantan border Malaysia (Malaysian Sarawak State borders both the aforementioned Indonesian provinces, and Sabah State borders East Kalimantan).

The Borneo borderland between Indonesia (Kalimantan) and Malaysian Borneo was once the location of the violent *Konfrontasi* (confrontation) beginning in 1963 between Indonesia and Malaysia; an undeclared war stemming from Indonesia's opposition to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. This case study provides a useful point of comparison between a land border and a maritime border (Case 1: the Malacca Strait Borderland). Both cases have a steep gradient in terms of differences across borders (legal, regulatory, etc.) and the Borneo borderlands have similar resource endowments to that of Sumatra in Case 1. However, in the Borneo borderlands extraction and forest clearing occurs on both sides of the border, and the homeland of some of the ethnic groups straddles the international border. Many parts of the border constitute difficult to access highland region, likely generating differences in the types of global networks present when compared with Case 1. There are also differences in the histories of the each borderland case; while there have been restive tensions around the degree of autonomy in some of the borderland provinces/states in each country, these were more pronounced in parts of Sumatra in Indonesia and East Malaysia on Borneo.

Table 2: selection of relevant issues organized by thematic strand for case 2

Resources,	• Indonesian side of Borneo has long attracted investment from large

development, agrarian change	Singaporean and Malaysian companies, generating tensions similar to that described in Case 1 above. • Shift in agrarian practices in Indonesia towards clearing forests for the production and trade of palm oil mono-cropping, pulp/paper/timber and mining activities. • Pilot climate change mitigation initiatives (in avoiding GHG emissions) are being trialled in West and East Kalimantan, further complicating the political economy of resource management. • Transborder haze generated by fires; and global issues of GHG emissions/other ecological disasters. • Inter-state tensions between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore from transborder haze as with Case 1.
State sovereignty, legal pluralism, violence	• Historical antecedents of inter-state border violence in Borneo (Konfrontasi). • National discourses of sovereignty, security and agrarian expansion intersect. • Recent history of ethnocommunal violence on the Indonesian side in West Kalimantan. • East Malaysian (Sarawak and Sabah) discontent over the political and cultural dominance of peninsular Malaysia (and Malay more broadly) within the federation. • Contentions over revenue transfers from extraction in East Malaysia due to that complicated relationship. • Less security apparatus presence on the Indonesian side, compared with the Malacca Straight. • Steep gradient in the differences between regulatory systems.
Migration, groups, networks, flows	• The ethnic Dayak are the largest group on both sides of the border, yet have different cultural and other practices. • History of cross-border movement, less controlled given the mountainous terrain. • Labour migration and human trafficking from Indonesia to Malaysia. • Indonesian provinces in Kalimantan a source and site of transmigration (e.g. influx of Madurese), interacting with resurgent celebration of Batak tradition and indigeneity. • Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia have the richest endowments of natural resources in the country, including timber and oil deposits, but consistently exhibit the highest poverty rates.

Case 3: The Myanmar-China borderland - the forested zone in the northeast of Myanmar and China's Yunnan province
•   Led by Jonathan Goodhand

Context: Field research is planned for northern Shan State, specifically the townships of Muse, Namkhan, Kutkai. This region borders with Yunnan Province in China. The Muse-Ruili border crossing forms the main trade route linking Myanmar and China. The recently completed oil and gas pipelines, which now deliver fuel from Myanmar's offshore reserves in the Bay of Bengal to China, also transect this region, crossing the border at Muse.

The borderlands encompassing the north-east frontier zone of Myanmar (rich in forests, minerals, hydropower and other resources) represents a second resource-rich land border area for comparison with Borneo (Case 2), but one in which protracted

conflict at times denied the Burmese state access to these areas. Indeed, for much of the country's post-colonial history parts of this region were mostly beyond state control. Ceasefire agreements with insurgent groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s opened up the borderlands to development projects funded through Chinese capital and laundered drugs money. However, the state's territorial control over the region remains partial and heavily contested and the region is governed by a complex mosaic of government administrators, Myanmar Army units, local militias, ceasefire groups and insurgent armed groups. The extension of the state's presence into the borderlands has been associated with violent processes of primitive accumulation, enclosure and settlement. This case brings out in sharp relief the violently contested processes that have led to the opening up of a remote but resource-wealthy frontier region. Compared to the other cases, the duration and scale of violent conflict has been much greater and illegal economic activities have been more central to processes of survival, development and statebuilding.

Table 3: selection of relevant issues organized by thematic strand for case 3

Resources, development, agrarian change	• Ceasefire has opened up the area to development of this resource rich area which includes the teak forests and access to oil and gas (pipelines), hydropower (through dams on the Shweli River) and minerals. • Agrarian change towards commercial agriculture and logging. • The tea industry in northern Shan State has been undermined by cheaper imports, whilst the remaining tea production has been increasingly monopolized by an alliance of the military, borderland brokers and cross border investors. • Opium is cultivated throughout upland areas of northern Shan State (especially in Namkham Township). Whilst the region has a long history of opium cultivation, many households previously uninvolved in opium production are now deriving income from the crop as a result of the collapse of the tea industry. • Newly developed roads and other infrastructure. • Licit and illicit activities are closely entwined in a relationship of co-production rather than competition. • Emergence of coercive crony capitalism in which military, political and economic power have merged.
State sovereignty, legal pluralism, violence	• History of insurgent groups and limited state control. • Region is a complex mosaic of authority, including government administrators, Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) units, ceasefire groups, People's Militia Forces (allied with the Tatmadaw), and insurgent armed groups. • More recent history of protracted violent conflict compared with Borneo. • Counter-insurgency and border militarization create new frontiers of land control. • Less steep gradient in regulatory regimes and legal systems across borders.
Migration, groups, networks, flows	• Long history of cross-border trade networks and migration. • Illegal drugs (both heroin and methamphetamines), trade and human trafficking. Increased economic integration has had perverse developmental outcomes particularly for borderland populations. • Key role for brokers in trade, large projects, securitization, violent mobilisation and containment. • Flows of cross-border economic investment from Chinese companies,

	which primarily work through the government but may also pay local armed actors for security and access to territory.

CASE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of these three case studies is *not* to produce a comprehensive account of changing political, economic and social dynamics on both sides of the border. This would require considerably more resources. Rather, they serve as exploratory probes, to test hypothesises and to compare borderland dynamics across cases. They will generate data that will enable us to identify, and focus down on key variables and to refine our research design and methods for future research. Each of the case studies will rely on a variety of data gathering methods. We will start with a case-based literature review and the collection of existing data (statistics, maps, reports etc.). During the first field visit we will engage in key informant interviews by approaching in-country experts (academics, civil society, community leaders, bureaucrats etc.). We will draw on existing networks and snowballing in this phase. At this point, we will identify and begin collaboration with local partners, who will collect further information to contribute to the initial mapping. During the main field visit, we will select one or two sites of particular interest within the respective borderlands to study in more detail on the basis of interviews and observations.

Each field case study will involve:
- Further developing the methods and key foci for investigation following the methodology workshop (see exchange across institutions and disciplines).
- Conducting a background review to map key issues in each borderland area.
- The lead researchers for each case will conduct qualitative field work in the border regions with local partners (and short visits from those Melbourne/SOAS researchers providing additional inputs into a particular case).
- Focussing the qualitative field work on investigating two or three key issues – such as a particular commodity or an international/national development program -- that helps elucidate the dynamics of contention or productive exchange, centre-periphery relations and state-building, and global networks.
- Gathering life histories of borderlands and 3-4 borderland brokers.