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Reconfiguring Frontier Spaces: Territorialization and Resource Control

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Highlights

• Frontier spaces are transitional reconfigurations of institutional arrangements.
• Frontier spaces are related to the expansion of capitalism.
• Frontier spaces are sites of contentious encounters over authority.
• The authority to territorialize does not precede territorialization, but emerges from successful territorializations.
• When frontier moments offer new opportunities, old social contracts give way for the struggle of new ones.

Abstract

The expansion of capitalism produces contests over the definition and control of resources. On a global scale, new patterns of resource exploration, extraction, and commodification create new territories. This takes place within a dynamic of frontiers and territorialization. Frontier dynamics dissolve existing social orders – property systems, political jurisdictions, rights, and social contracts – whereas territorialization is shorthand for all the dynamics that establish them and re-order space anew. Frontier moments offer new opportunities, and old social contracts give way to struggles over new ones. As new types of resource commodification emerge, institutional orders are sometimes undermined or erased, and sometimes reinterpreted, reinvented, and recycled. New property regimes, new forms of authority, and the attendant struggles for legitimacy over the ability to define proper uses and users follow frontier moments. The drawing of borders and the creation of orders around new resources profoundly rework patterns of authority and institutional architectures. We argue that the territorialization of resource control is a set of processes that precedes legitimacy and authority, fundamentally challenging and replacing existing patterns of spatial control, authority, and institutional orders. It is dynamics of this sort that the articles in this collection explore: the outcomes produced in the frontier space, the kinds of authority that emerge through control over space and the people in it, and the battles for legitimacy that this entails. This collection explores the emergence of frontier spaces, arguing that these are transitional, liminal spaces in which existing regimes of resource control are suspended, making way for new ones.

Key words: frontier; territoriality; authority; legitimacy; institutions; resource-struggles
1. Introduction

The frontier did not vanish when the North American settlers arrived at the Pacific coast or penetrated the Rockies, or when Argentinian and Chilean settlers reached the Tierra del Fuego. Entailed in these classic frontiers of seemingly linear movements in space and time now relegated to a distant past are core issues that are today more relevant than ever: the commodification of nature, the scramble for land and resources, the imaginaries of self and others, the erasure of existing orders, and the establishment of new patterns of governance and regimes of regulation. While the Western frontier ended in the late 1890s, frontier spaces continue to mushroom across the globe. Following a key insight from the emerging scholarship on resource frontiers, we note that frontiers represent, most basically, the discovery or invention of new resources (Barney 2009, Eilenberg 2014, Kelly and Peluso 2015, Tsing 2003). They are novel configurations of the relationship between natural resources and institutional orders that happen at particular moments in particular places. This collection explores the emergence of frontier spaces, arguing that these are transitional, liminal spaces in which existing regimes of resource control are suspended. A frontier is not space itself. It is something that happens in and to space. Frontiers take place. Literally.

Frontier dynamics are intimately linked to their seeming opposite: territorialization. Frontier dynamics dissolve existing social orders – property systems, political jurisdictions, rights, and social contracts – whereas territorialization is shorthand for all the dynamics that establish them and re-order space anew. Frontiers and territorialization seem to us to be co-constitutive. We understand territorialization as a strategy of using bounded spaces for particular outcomes, a resource control strategy (Vandervegeet and Peluso 1995) that involves the classification of particular areas in order to regulate people and resources (Sack 1986). In what follows we discuss the concrete maneuvers to secure resource control by governing access, policing boundaries, and defining space. Understanding space in this perspective, we focus on the discursive, political, and physical production of frontiers as ‘vacant’, ‘ungoverned’, ‘natural’, or ‘uninhabited’ spaces that makes way for acts of territorialization. Territorialization, in turn, is the creation of systems of resource control, – rights, authorities, jurisdictions, and their spatial representations. However, when new resources are discovered or come within reach, new acts of frontier making are brought to bear to undo established territorial orders. This sequence is, in principle, cyclical: frontier–territorialization–frontier–territorialization ….

The question of spatial control in relation to the commodification of resources has generated two largely separate scholarly debates. Recent debates on the frontier center around Turner’s (1921) description of the American West as a wilderness to be colonized. In a thoughtful discussion of the Amazonian frontier, Cleary (1993) notes that the frontier is the absorption of peripheral regions by an expanding capitalism. This is a political economy perspective that depicts capitalist advancement in space, but has little to say about the territorial dynamics that shape these spaces. Moreover, such modernist understandings of progress imply directionality from undeveloped to developed spaces. More recently, Geiger’s work on the Amazon (2008) argues that rather than a distinction between civilized and mastered, on the one hand, and wild and unowned, on the other, we are dealing with a zone of destruction of property systems, political structures, social relations, and life-worlds to make
way for new ways of resource extraction. Some contributions have explored the spatial contours of the frontier, arguing against the notion of a borderline and for more subtle ideas of frontiers as contact zones and spheres of friction (Anzaldúa 1987, Tsing 2005, 2015) or relational spaces (Barney 2009). Others still focus on the unmaking by frontiersmen of different stripes: companies, militias, NGOs, and governments (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013).

In contrast, the debate on territorialization focuses on a range of actions deployed to control and consolidate space and thereby its resources and people (Sack 1986). A number of perspectives have animated the literature on territorialization. Some have focused on external territorialization and how the spatial extent of sovereignty has developed (Elden 2013, Sassen 2006). Others have focused more on how modern states turn to territorial strategies of control inside national boundaries (Elden 2009; Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). Both external and internal perspectives seem to privilege states as territorializing agents, and the very distinction between inside and outside bespeaks ‘state territory’ as one of the most successful territorializations of space and our conception of it (Walker 1993). More recently, there is growing attention to the territorializing capabilities of non-state actors and organizations (Corson 2011, Eilenberg 2012, Gayer 2014, Lund and Rachman 2016, Ng’weno 2007, Peluso 2005, 2009, Raeymaekers 2014, Suykens 2013). Here there is a productive convergence with the attempts at reformulating ideas about the frontier that we have detailed above. Although not always acknowledged explicitly, such attempts at complicating configurations of space harken back to the debates on the relationality of space (see Jessop, Brenner, and Jones 2008).

We believe that while both perspectives are very useful, each of them either over-emphasizes or underplays the destructive and constructive elements of territorial resource control. We therefore want to engage the literatures and adopt a bi-focal perspective, giving both dynamics equal attention. As Moore succinctly suggests: ‘The making of rules and social and symbolic order is a human industry matched only by the manipulation, circumvention, remaking, replacing, and unmaking of rules and symbols in which people seem almost equally engaged’ (1978: 1). We want to analyze this constant process of formation and erosion of a social order of property rights, socio-legal identity, and political institutions in a spatial perspective. It is a dynamic where governing institutions build, maintain, or lose their authority, and people become, or disappear as, enfranchised rights subjects, and where nature is transformed into resources and commodities in the process.

Collectively, this issue pursues a double argument related to the frontier spaces: first, we argue that territorialization establishes authority (rather than ‘those with authority can territorialize’); hence, we are interested in how the ability to produce borders can create state or state-like entities, and how other institutions are destroyed in the process. In other words, we investigate how those who can draw the line on the map assume jurisdiction (Lefebvre 2015); how those who can define citizenship and rights assume authority; how those who can define and enforce rights to resources effectively rule (Lund 2016). The ambition, therefore, is not to take political and territorial authorities as given, but rather to examine how they come about. Rather than settled facts, they are facts to settle. And our focus on frontier moments – when existing regimes of resource control are suspended – allows us to identify just how this happens. As competing claims to territories follow the emergence of new resources, we see how social, political, and legal orders are rearranged in these transitional spaces.
Second, we propose to look at resource frontiers as dynamics of spatial control that fundamentally challenge existing institutional arrangements in a non-linear fashion. As new types of resource commodification emerge, institutional orders are sometimes undermined or erased outright, and sometimes ‘taken apart’ and then reinterpreted, reinvented, and recycled. In resource frontiers the ideas of what constitutes the nature of resources, as well as the rules that govern their use and control, are reworked. The institutional debris of obsolete and recovered fragments of rules, institutions, forms of organization, and artifacts combine to shape and territorialize space. Like Stoler (2013: 3), we are concerned with how earlier formations ‘have left their bold-faced or subtle traces […] in which contemporary inequities work their way through’. Unlike Stoler, on the other hand, we are not concerned with ‘imperial tangibilities’, but direct our attention to the vernacular political forms that constitute emergent institutions and struggles over legitimate rule. Debris is not useless rubble, but rather elements gleaned from past orders refitted in the improvised recombinant continuity of affairs. The ‘rediscovery’ of earthpriests in northern Ghana as territorial stewards (Lund 2008), and the reconfiguration of water governance in highland Peru (Rasmussen 2015) are both examples of an imaginative scavenging and reanimation of rules and authorities. It is therefore worth looking at some of the concrete imaginative ways in which different actors attempt to assert spatial control.

This double argument relates to the ways in which the mushrooming of frontier spaces transforms the nature of resources in fundamental ways. Frontier spaces are intimately connected to commodification through processes of dispossession involving enclosures, land grabbing, and other forms of primitive accumulation. Primitive accumulation analyzed by Marx through the enclosures in eighteenth-century England is the archetypical version of the broader accumulation by dispossession at different scales around the globe through history (Harvey 2005, Marx 1978, Neeson 1993, Thompson 1963, 1975, 1993). Accumulation by dispossession has since taken many forms with variation from place to place. New technologies such as GMO related to soy production (Hecht 2005) or chemical procedures for extracting minerals (Bury 2015) ensure that particular geographical spaces can host recurrent frontier moments of capitalist extraction. Yet, despite mutating forms of dispossession, the replacement of systems of knowledge, the undoing of the commons, the valorization of nature, and its formalization into the uniform, legible commodification of resources seem to be ubiquitous features (Alden Wily 2012, Kelly 2011, Kelly and Peluso 2015, Scott 1998).

Frontiers are described as emerging in such different locations as oil-palm plantations or cattle ranches in Amazonia (Browder et al. 2008, Walker et al. 2009) and Indonesia (Peluso and Lund 2011), in the oil-rich Niger Delta (Watts 2004a, 2008), and even in zones of oil fracking in the US (Willow and Wylie 2014). Hence, rather than being simply related to the spatial expansion of civilization, the frontier and territorialization dynamics are part and parcel of resource commodification and emerging property regimes. The commodification of resources articulates these spaces with political, economic, and social institutions in constantly emerging new ways.

Commodities are probably as old as human history. However, we focus on a modern age of capitalism, technological development, and territorial expansion. Central to the uneven global
distribution of the burdens and benefits of productive enterprises are the dynamics of resource commodification. Commodification occurs as price tags are attached to different aspects of the environment. This is accompanied by enclosure and privatization. Such commodity enclosures are linked to new property regimes, institutionalizations, and integration into a market (Bakker 2005, Boelens et al. 2014, Robertson 2007, Tsing 2000). Hence, the frontier is not a purely spatial construct but a political, economic, and social one related especially to capitalist appropriation of space. This constitutes the creation of new fictitious commodities and the never-ceasing and ever-expanding marketization of the realm of nature (Polanyi 1944). It has produced a global political economy of technology, consumption, and commerce in which new inventions and new commodities have deep consequences far beyond narrow localities (Ross 2014).

In the articles that follow, we direct attention to two different processes of environmental commodification: extraction and conservation. Yet, in all their difference, they share some important traits. Both are prone to a largely absurd and unrealistic vision of a people-less and non-economic world to colonize, where past activities and people are erased as new valuations are enacted. Both are related to central governments, transnational networks, and national imaginaries. They establish alternative values of the environment, and, consequently, link local affairs to a wider national and global political economy context through the commodification of natural resources (see Colloredo-Mansfield et al., and Lund and Rachman, this issue).

Extractive industries have an inherent drive toward continuous expansion. Even in the countries of the Latin American ‘pink tide’, extractivism continues to take center stage in the framing of national development (Bebbington 2009, Bebbington and Humphreys-Bebbington 2011). In Ecuador, as elsewhere, the global demand for oil translates into local impacts on biodiversity, indigenous groups, and land tenure systems. As these pressures increase, local forms of resistance emerge and new forms of political organization are born (Orta-Martinez and Finer 2010). Extractive frontiers are often sites of new forms of regulation and resistance and the emergence of new legal and social orders (Bunker 1984, Rasmussen 2016a, Himley 2013, see also Côte and Korf, Lund, Peluso this issue). Struggles over resources therefore entail questions concerning political communities, and the relationship between citizenship, territory, and nation (Perreault and Valdivia 2010). As noted by Watts (2004b, 212) ‘the oil complex generates differing sorts of communities as governable spaces in which contrasting sorts of identities come into play’.

Whereas extraction and agro-industries both transform landscapes by way of technology and physical force, conservation hinges upon ideals about wilderness, biodiversity, and sustainability as well as the physical policing of space. These conservation enclosures entail significant institutional rearrangements (Corson 2011, Kelly 2011; see also Bluswagen and Lund, Lund, Rasmussen, all this issue). By redefining and enclosing the environment, conservation strategies turn native homelands into attractions, environmental services, and other kinds of commodities, which can be given commercial value and sold to tourists, philanthropic organizations, and governments. In particular, environmental protection schemes such as REDD+ or Payment for Environmental Services operate within a market logic that fundamentally disrupts local figurations of space by creating new enclosures, redefining the nature of resources (Arsel and Büscher 2012, Büscher and Dressler 2012,
Dressler and Büscher 2008). The commodification of spatial aesthetics is fundamental in the opening up of new tourism frontiers. For example, in highland Ecuador (Colloredo-Mansfeld et al., this issue) and Peru (Rasmussen, this issue), the creation of national parks has made such sites a priority for tourism. Protected areas, otherwise subject to highly localized resource struggles, were brought under the control of state agencies through registration in public records or notices in gazettes, and used to promote the image of the countries internationally. Protected areas may thereby prove contentious investments in building the nation-state, as new commodities that are both central to community identity and subject to competing authority.

The different empirical settings show how the configuration of the frontier space is deeply dependent on the nature of the resource in question. As we detail below, this not only entails disruption of property rights; labor regimes, equally, are broken up. The discovery of oil creates different institutional arrangements and attracts a set of actors different from those involved in the creation of a tourist landscape. Yet, in oil and tourist frontiers alike, existing institutional orders are unsettled, uprooted, and ultimately reconfigured as new kinds of resources become subject to governance. Frontier spaces are not reserved to borders, fringes, or edges, but may well emerge in the midst of a state space. They are ‘in-between places’ of the world (see Bennafla 2002, Kopytoff 1987, Roitman 2005). Frontier dynamics are not linear, but a-rhythmic and cyclical, and the corresponding territorializations are equally provisory and often arrested when new resources prompt another frontier moment of suspension of established rules and rights. Rather than a frontier moving forward in time and space, and hence reaching a definite end, frontiers can emerge and vanish. The aim of this collection is to explore the social spaces of the frontiers and their properties. We examine the dynamics of commodification, the kinds of authority that emerge through the control over space and the people in it, and the resistance and battles for legitimacy that this entails.

In the following we unpack these claims. Through regional studies from the Andes, sub-Saharan Africa, and South East Asia, the contributions to this issue examine how the territories as a particular configuration of space are produced through confrontation between different worldviews, powers, and institutional orders. In the first section, we explore the frontier dynamics as spatial orders are unmade. We look at the way new resources create new spaces, and how the violence and destruction of the old entails both an undoing and a recycling of existing institutional orders. Secondly, we turn to processes of reterritorialization of frontier spaces. We highlight four particularly relevant arenas to consider as governmental techniques for claiming space on the frontier: political authority; boundaries and cartographies; law and bureaucracy; and enforcement and violence. Finally, we conclude and present the contributions to this special issue.

2. Frontier dynamics: the unmaking and remaking of spatial orders

New Resources – New Spaces

Frontiers relate to imaginaries about civilization and progress. The classical image of the frontier is the American ‘Wild West’ first developed by Turner (1921) at the turn of the nineteenth century. He describes a tidal wave of a frontier where the civilized gradually subsumes the wild, and nature comes under the control of man. In Turner’s perspective, frontier and boundary describe the same
phenomenon; a clear-cut line separating two spaces. However, in the company of more recent researchers, we make a distinction between the two (see Barney 2009, Büscher and Arsel 2012, Eilenberg 2014, Geiger 2008, Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, Prescott 1987, Roitman 2005, Stepputat 2008, Tsing 2005, Vogel and Raeymaekers 2016). The boundary is a geo-political separation of two physical spaces by a border. The articulation of political difference manifested in lines on a map and a barrier in the landscape turn borderlands into sensitive spaces (Cons 2016, Jones 2016). The frontier, on the other hand, does not describe the physical boundary itself; it describes a particular epistemological and political distinction. The frontier is a contact zone or a social space marking the difference between civilization and the wild. In the case of the American West, often the frontier and the boundary may have coincided, inviting the confusion of the two concepts. However, frontiers need not follow boundary lines, and they separate more than mere space.

The frontier exists only in its relationship to ‘civilization’, as Cronon (1996) observes in his essay on wilderness. He argues that ideas about wilderness, whose prominence coincided with the passing away of the frontier, were essentially mirrors of notions of civilization. The ‘national myth of the frontier’ (p. 13) was a story about individualism, masculinity, and violence. Importantly for our concerns, the frontier was a place of vigor, independence, and creativity where political institutions were reinvented (see Grandin 2010). While the Western frontier still holds a central place in the American national imaginary and myth of origin, it is disappearing as a distinct physical and spatial boundary. Take, for example, recent developments in the technologies of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) that have transformed US states such as North Dakota into quintessential frontier spaces of unruly orders (Willow and Wylie 2014). Or the recurrent replays of extractive booms in the Amazon, where rubber, cattle, and most recently oil transform localities, institutional architectures, and governance structures (Larsen 2015). This way of looking at the frontier as something emerging in multiple places rather than advancing as a front resonates with Kopytoff’s contribution to the concept of frontier (1987). While Turner describes a unidirectional expansion, Kopytoff looks at the ungoverned spaces between kingdoms in pre-colonial Africa. Here, the frontier marks peripheral zones where the outreach of various states towards neighboring polities peters out. Thus, while Turner imagines a virtually open space, a ‘tidal frontier’ in Kopytoff’s terms, Kopytoff does not depict the frontier as expansion into unpopulated space, but rather as the many expansions of competing political and institutional domination. Like enclaves, this links particular places to global networks of finance, technology, and consumption. And yet, as Côte and Korf demonstrate in their piece on gold mining in Burkina Faso in this collection, such site-specific extraction translates into fundamental institutional changes beyond the particular localities.

New resource frontiers emerge in different places around the globe. They do not exist as a function of geography per se, but are brought about because new possibilities of resource extraction and use prompt new and competing claims to authority, legitimacy, and access. Frontiers are ‘sites where authorities, sovereignties, and hegemonies of the recent past have been or are currently being challenged by new enclosures, territorializations, and property regimes’ (Peluso and Lund 2011: 668). Thus, the ‘discovery’ of new resources – oil, gold, new crops like soy or oil palm, carbon storage, or ‘scenery’ – opens frontiers and challenges established rights. Frontiers are linked to processes of land control and are actively created through social and political struggles. We can
push this argument further by arguing that a frontier emerges when a new resource is identified, defined, and becomes subject to extraction and commodification. ‘Frontiers’, Barney claims, ‘are conceived as relational zones of economy, nature, and society; spaces of capitalist transition, where new forms of social property relations and systems of legality are rapidly established in response to market imperatives’ (2009: 146). A frontier therefore signals the dynamic and recursive replacement of regimes of property. For example, the world’s demand for rubber, or the ‘discovery’ of the utility of palm oil has, in Laos and Indonesia, led to a massive growth in government-issued land concessions to companies and the subsequent annihilation of the previous smallholder land use, rights, and way of life (Dwyer 2014, Eilenberg 2014, Pichler 2015). Similarly, the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta in Nigeria meant that local rights to land were expunged by government in favor of crude extraction (Watts 2004a, 2008). Order may seem to have been quite entrenched, but, with the dramatic restructuring of relative commercial values of resources, farm fields and pastures yield to monocropping, mining pits, and oil wells, and village forests give way to carbon stocks traded in the global market (see, for example, Behrends et al., 2011, Curry and Koczberski 2009, Eilenberg 2014, McCarthy and Cramb 2009).

Violence and the Destruction of the Old

As places of potential danger, as well as sites of potential abundance, frontier spaces are replete with physical and symbolic violence. Frontiers are about new resources and hence certainly have spatial features, but, above all, they are epistemological, discursive, and political operations enabling powerful actors to turn nature into economic commodities.

The frontier moment is a reconfiguration of the conditions of possibility. By unmaking previous orders of property and authority, land and resources are ‘freed up’ for new forms of appropriation. Throughout modern history, the creation of frontiers has involved extinction of rights, regulations, and restrictions. As a consequence, frontiers have been spectacularly violent, as people have resisted the takeover of what they considered to be theirs (Brown 1970, Galeano 2009, Korf and Raeymaekers 2013, Sundar 2016, Taussig 1987, Thompson 1975, Wolf 1982). Confrontations, ranging from evictions to genocide, have signposted the deployment of overwhelming political power to open up frontiers, from colonial conquests that destroyed and transformed indigenous rights systems, to the contemporary expropriation of genomes.

Often colonial and post-colonial governments have plucked out existing local forms of property and citizenship root and branch, only to reimagine a national past and destiny. The census, the map, and the museum described by Anderson (1991) not only help to construct a useful past for the future; they also organize the social ‘forgetting’ of what is edited out. Likewise, by defining space as ‘nature’ all prior claims are expunged within a Lockean framework of property where land only represents property if ‘labour … hath fixed property in [it]’ (Locke 1994: 289). Or, as Peluso puts in in her contribution on gold mining in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, labor practices, processes, and organization shape emergent territories. Here, labor constitutes claims and generates rights in resources that are produced or extracted. Conversely, a refusal to see landscapes as cultural denies the role of labor in their creation, allowing prior claims to be disregarded as null and void (see Neumann 2001, Santos and Barclay 2002, Wolf 1982). Frontier spaces can emerge in any place.
where government sometimes unwillingly – but often deliberately and selectively – refrains from intervention and thereby ‘promotes an unregulated process of violent dispossession’ (Weizman 2007: 5). In his work on the state of exception, Agamben (2005) describes how governments can assume sovereignty to suspend rights and institutional predictability, only to ‘return’ to what is now a new emerging structure of rights and authorities. This creates a frontier dynamic different from the one described by Turner: the sovereign can vacate previously ordered spaces in order to allow for extraction and commodification to occur beyond the usual regulatory frameworks. This is the suspension of control, social protection, and the ‘rule of law’ (Blok 1974, Mattei and Nader 2008, Volkov 2002). In Peru, for example, Fernando Belaúnde Terry (who later became president in 1963–1968 and 1980–1985) spoke of the Amazon as an empty green space waiting to be ‘conquered by Peruvians’ (Belaúnde 1959). Consequently, it becomes legitimate to conquer and colonize landscapes as ungoverned and free, as herrenloses Land, tierra de nadie or terre vacante et sans maître; as terra nullius.

Frontiers work by delegitimizing prior rights and claims. In his efforts to develop a post-Turnerian idea of the frontier as an ‘area remote from political centers which hold strategic significance or economic potentials for human exploitation, and . . . contested by social formations of unequal power’, Geiger (2008: 94, and 109–54) suggests a number of frontier dynamics and characteristics in the developing south. Initially, frontiers are characterized by the influx and presence of non-native private actors in pursuit of the newly discovered resources. Gold panners, oil workers, settlers, cattle ranchers, lumberjacks, traders, and people in all the accompanying service jobs populate frontiers in search of a windfall. Generally, the civil administration has sparse coverage in frontier zones. This means that the incoming actors are not very restrained by government regulation, and that public services for the population are minimal. ‘Governance is’, as Geiger puts it, ‘of an entirely different quality at the state’s margins, and so are the many aspects of the moral, social, and economic behavior of those who have come to set up shop here – temporarily or for good’ (Geiger 2008: 111). This does not mean that there is no governance, though. Often, frontiersmen – and masculinity is a close associate of the frontier – establish rules and become the formal or informal representatives (or forerunners) of central government. In describing the California gold rush of the 1840s, Anderson and Hill (2004) show how rules and rights emerged among competing resource users in a remarkably orderly fashion prior to government attention and legislation. Only later did government catch up with events and, largely, formalize the practices that had emerged. Their description of the ordering of a space is rather insouciant about the purge of prior claim(ant)s in the absence of active government. In fact, a fundamental legal and discursive operation of creating ‘free’ land had been undertaken to legitimate the rush to the frontier (see Banner 2009). The point made by Geiger is that while local governance may appear erratic, it takes place in a context where legislation and political practice have often dissolved prior rights and delegitimated prior claims, thus facilitating more arbitrary forms of governance and violent enforcement.

The frontier is a contact zone. It is the sites of encounters between knowledge practices, jurisdictions, and visions of modernity, development, and progress. This becomes particularly acute when ‘the meaning of place’ has become an important object of struggle between central states and
subaltern and first peoples (Escobar 2001). These modes of claiming space related to the frontier rest on notions of a Euro-American separation between nature and culture (see Descola and Pálsson 1996, Ingold 2000, Latour 2012). They also occur in particular places inhabited by particular peoples. Thus, by semantic legerdemain underpinned by force, original inhabitants of frontier zones have often been classified as less than legal subjects, with little capacity to have rights. They have been defined as primitive and backward, and their rules for accessing resources irrational and wasteful. People have thereby been robbed of a legal and political identity that enjoys parity with the rest of the population – especially the incoming groups.

Dispossessing and disenfranchising original inhabitants by annulling the previous social contract have not always entailed their total exclusion from society, however. Indigenous groups – or others who have been downgraded and whose rights have been clipped – have been integrated into the economy on unequal and highly disadvantageous terms as labor. The dispossessed commoners during England’s industrial revolution come to mind (Neeson 1993), but more recent examples abound. The homelands in apartheid South Africa were labor reserves deliberately made up of dispossessed and relocated Africans (Mamdani 1996). The people labeled ‘communists’ in the 1960s and 1970s in New Order Indonesia were used as forced labor in plantations on land ‘freed up’ by their own dispossession (Lucas and Warren 2013). And on the West Bank, former landowners and their descendants have become migrant labor in Israel (Weizman 2007). Peru’s President Agusto Leguía (1919-1930) began the registration of ‘Indian communities’ as a token of their existence as (limited) rights subjects. However, in 1920, the president issued a decree that conscripted all able-bodied ‘Indians’ between the age of 18 and 60 for road work. The Ley de Conscripción Vial therefore extracted labor from the highland communities with effects on local-level power relations (Drinot 2011). Such regimes of forced labor were constitutive of citizenship in a direct exchange between the central government and highland communities (Wilson 2004). Simultaneously, the rubber barons of the Amazon created abusive extractive regimes, violently stripping local populations of their rights as detailed by Casement in the Putumayo Region (see Chirif and Chaparro 2009, Taussig 1987).

Within the current political conjuncture of rural dispossession, however, the creation of so-called ‘surplus population’ (Li 2010, 2014) occurs where places and their resources are deemed useful, but the people who dwell therein are not. The dispossession of land and livelihoods therefore becomes detached from any prospect of labor absorption. This underscores how the frontier dynamics work not only by zeroing out existing orders and erasing the traces of past livelihoods, but also, sometimes, by excluding the dispossessed from the new order of things. As resources are discovered and exploited, people are rendered of no use and their lives and life-worlds of no value. As Duncan puts it,

[c]lassifying minorities as primitives helps strip them of political identity and discourages them from participation on larger state projects. Hence, governments actively use the pejorative labels to exclude and deny autonomy to indigenous minorities at the same time that they can claim to be developing these populations. As governments often see these groups as a hindrance to national progress or a threat to
national security, these programs also serve larger goals of nation-building. (Duncan 2004: 1)

In short, while concrete government administration is patchy in frontier zones, a fundamental legal and discursive operation has often been quite thoroughly undertaken. Local landscapes have been turned into unworked nature, which consequently is no one’s property. Even if land was to be owned, customary laws of tenure have been dismissed as inferior, and the local populations have been denied the right to have rights as sub-legal subjects. In his work on the Brazilian Amazon, Campbell (2015) describes how settlers in large numbers took possession of the land in the Amazonian frontier. Then, after possession was accomplished, the frontiersmen conjured up documents and other ‘proofs’ that could be read and understood by government. In the process, they consolidated their spatial control, and dismissed the previous occupants as useless. In a crass quote from a homesteader we hear an echo of Locke, as he argues: ‘I ask you: what’s better for the Republic, for the common good, productive farms or naked and starving Indians?’ (Campbell 2015: 110). The settlers’ occupation of the land preceded their legitimated and recognized property rights. And, equally, the authority of the Brazilian government was conjured up by the settlement as the settlers invoked the state in all their fake deeds and fabricated documents. The state was present as a legitimating reference point long before any government agent had set foot at the frontier.

Frontier moments are particularly intense conjunctures of crisis which suspend existing order. The governance of natural resources such as land and petroleum is linked to the governance of people and places, and new resources therefore reshape the relationship between state and citizen (Valdivia 2008). At the frontier, the economic value of current activities is zeroed out, and the possibility of recognition as citizens is withdrawn or redefined. This fundamental dynamic highlights the apparent rupture in institutional orders. The re-territorialization therefore entails a recycling of institutional orders but also a re-interpretation of institutional debris that may not be connected to this moment in a linear fashion. The core qualities of the frontier and territorialization are connected to particular institutional, legal, and economic conditions rather than to the spatial expansion of civilization. Studies from the Ecuadorian and Bolivian oil and gas frontier have shown how central governments, by framing hydrocarbons as national patrimony, have been able to disenfranchise indigenous populations of their recently gained rights by referring to a national good. Thus, the terms of inclusion in national communities – that is, citizenship – have been reshaped and narrowed down, forcing marginal populations to sacrifice their attachment to place for the greater good of a nation-state that only hesitantly has included them as citizens in the first place (Valdivia 2008, Perreault 2013, Gustafson 2009). These people often find themselves to be marginal to the state culturally, politically, and socially. These competing claims to space nurture conflict over the meaning of territory and the authority to govern it (Kent 2008).

Frontiers are transitional. Yet, the destruction of previous orders does not mean a complete erasure of rules and practices, and repertoires of legitimation. Often, institutional debris remains. Consequently, the reconfiguration of frontier spaces involves the re-contextualization and reinterpretation of institutional orders in relation to the new resources, commodities, and people. Reconfiguration of frontier spaces reorders objects and subjects of control. Rather than being
outdated and anachronistic, the debris can be transformed into potential building blocks for assembling a new institutional order of rights and authorities. This takes us to the institutional organization of access and control of the resources. More specifically, it takes us to the dynamics of territorialization of space and the emergence of new enclosures with their consequent boundaries.

3. Territorializing and re-territorializing frontiers – emerging institutions of access and control

If the frontier is a history of undoing regimes of property and authority, and how political subjects in particular spaces become disenfranchised, territorialization, in contrast, is a history of establishing control over people and resources in space. When new resources are discovered or become valuable, landscapes change and new opportunities arise; new frontiers emerge and the interest in the (re)territorialization of space becomes acute. Territoriality, according to Sack, is ‘the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area’ (Sack 1986: 19). Thus, similar to concepts like hegemony (Gramsci), or sovereignty (Agamben), or government (Foucault), or the state as a political organization that claims monopoly of legitimate violence (Weber), territorialization is an ambition, a political compulsion, and a project.

Global capitalism commodifies nature, life, and labor by incorporating resources, peoples, activities, and lands that were previously controlled by non-capitalist modes of arranging the social order and the environment (Harvey 2005). The destruction in the frontier paves the way for the development of a new landscape. The development of this new geography of resource control – territorialization – involves a series of operations. These include establishing a territorial administration, instituting a legal system and with it the creation of rights subjects and laws of property, establishing of boundaries and mapping of space, and, crucially, ensuring the capacity to enforce any and all of this by means of force, if necessary. Before we turn to each of these four dimensions of territorial control, we need to elaborate on two points. First, while territorialization always occurs in space, it also structures extra-territorial connections. And, secondly, while territorialization is a state affair, it is not an ambition reserved for accomplished states but equally is the domain of all institutions with an appetite for resource control.

Territorial regimes are established and challenged at the interface between local organizational forms and emergent authorities and new economic drivers for spatial organization such as subsoil extraction, hyper-intensive agriculture or forest governance related to the international carbon-trade market. Territorial integrity requires upholding a number of institutional arrangements and bureaucratic procedures. These different governmental techniques resonate with Scott’s (1998) ideas of statecraft and legibility. This notwithstanding, however, territorialization is very uneven internally, and it is conditioned by external – extra-territorial – relations. In a recent overview in World Development of a large research project on territorial development dynamics in Latin America, Berdegué, Bebbington and Escobal (2015) and Berdegué, Escobal and Bebbington (2015) propose to put special emphasis on the interplay between agents, institutions, and social structures at a territorial level. Even within the same national context, territories supposedly subject to the same policies and interventions have very different development outcomes. These ‘spatially differentiated
patterns of institutional reproduction’, the authors contend, can be ‘conceptualized as the result of individual and above all collective human agency and the geographically uneven ways in which territories are strategically coupled with extraterritorial economic, social, and political networks and coalitions’ (Berdegué, Escobal and Bebbington 2015, 129, emphasis added). In addition to the internal unevenness, space is territorialized, at least partly, through extra-territorial relations. As frontier spaces connect to state and market in new ways with the commodification of particular resources, and thereby become territorialized, they remain coupled to extraterritorial networks in different ways; oil, cocoa, and ‘scenery’ are very different commodities. How such processes of commodification inform or structure the institutionalization of resource control that goes along with territorialization is therefore a fundamental empirical question.

We also see territorialization as a politically charged organization of space, which is not necessarily reserved for the state. Non-statutory institutions also territorialize in the hope of resource control. All the same, territorialization involves a particular state language and a set of governmental techniques of which other forms of political organizations also avail themselves. In their analysis of the construction of the Thai nation, Vandergeest and Peluso show ways that territories are mobilized and constructed through political action and argue that ‘territorial sovereignty define[s] people’s political identities as citizens and forms the basis on which states claim authority over people and the resources within those boundaries’ (1995: 385). In other words, control over resources is deeply connected to control over people and place. Vandergeest and Peluso examine attempts to order the territory internally and enumerate a series of concrete territorializing operations. In this perspective, territoriality is a state affair and a concept useful in analyzing state power. Yet territorialization has to be seen not only as a product of national policy or global trends, but also as an effect of local competition. Different non-statutory polities of a more or less embryonic nature make territorial claims in rural and urban settings alike. Indigenous groups, self-declared nations, farmers’ unions, and chieftaincies of various kinds, as well as rural and urban militias, gangs, and insurgents, all have spatial designs for their authority (Blok 1974, Gayer 2014, Grajales 2016, Li 2007, Lund and Rachman 2016, Rasmussen 2016b, 2017, Vogel and Raeymaekers 2016, Volkov 2002). Hence, various territorialities emerge between divergent claims for control over particular spaces, and while the state is an important actor in this analysis, it is not the only political agent with the ability to territorialize – internalize and appropriate – space. All these actors – from individuals and groups to companies, governments, and other complex assemblages – legitimize territorial claims in the process. They do not await the cue of legitimacy to do so.

**Political Authority, Citizenship, and Property**

Central to our concern is the link between territoriality, as an effort to control people and resources, and the exercise of authority (Lund 2006, Sikor and Lund 2009, Ribot and Peluso 2003). The territorial administration deals with two fundamental questions: who are the rights subjects in a given space, and what rights do they enjoy? These are fundamental questions of citizenship and property. And while an authority recognizes these rights, the recognition is mutual and recursive. This means that when people lodge their claims the authorizing institution’s authority is equally recognized in the process. ‘These are the “contracts”, so to speak, that link citizenship and property to political authority in society. Struggles over citizenship and property are, therefore, as much
about the scope and constitution of authority as about access to membership and resources’ (Lund 2011: 72). Thus, the ability to territorialize does not derive from a pre-existing authority. Rather, the successful territorializations of an extractive zone, a conservation area, or a community forest are co-productive of authority. This goes for the case of small-scale miners in West Kalimantan who have devised rules and regulations that are not formal but nonetheless subject to strict enforcement from emergent informal authorities, the so-called tuan tanah (Peluso, this issue). Likewise, in highland Ecuador, the ongoing struggles to secure the access point to the Quilatoa Crater Lake – and thereby the revenues from the growing tourist industry – were not resolved by the victory of a pre-existing authority. Instead, as the Tourist Cooperative consolidated its territorial claims, its authority to decide on matters beyond tourism became manifest (Colloredo-Mansfeld et al., this issue, see also Anderson and Hill 2004).

Political organizations in control of space often try to place or relocate people. Enclosure, eviction, and resettlement are all instruments employed to secure spatial control (Grandia 2012, Thompson 1963). As we discussed previously, physical and symbolic enclosures are also in themselves strategies for creating new frontiers, redefining institutions, and narrowing the possibilities of meaningful political and social membership. Very often, such categorizations have been ordered by powerful authorities – often governments, but not exclusively so. By linking ‘principles’ of race, ethnicity, or other forms of identity to ‘inherent qualities’ such as ‘ignorance’, ‘carelessness about nature’, or simply ‘labor’, displacement of people has been justified as progress. The South African history of apartheid is probably one of the most egregious instances of territorialized and differentiated citizenship (Mamdani 1996), but the examples are legion. Transmigration programs in Indonesia to colonize ‘underpopulated’ areas, and policies of forced settlement of itinerant upland farmers in most of South East Asia, are variations on a theme (Hall, Hirsch, and Li 2011). The capacity to locate and dislocate particular groups to and from spaces on the basis of political identity is central to territorialization, and the ability to enforce it crucial for the consolidation of political authority. This is particularly evident in cases of conservation such as the establishment of the Wildlife Management Areas discussed by Bluwstein and Lund in this issue. The displacement of people and the redefinition of proper land-use strategies in the name of nature preservation are legitimized by cartographic representations. These represent different ways of perceiving the landscape: one external through GIS, one internal by reference to landmarks such as rivers and local territorial histories. Here, past boundaries inform current territorial arrangements. Yet such techniques of territorial governance can also be reworked by local communities.

In addition to defining and locating rights subjects, specifying their rights is crucial to territorialization. Governing agencies engage in defining and managing property rights and systems. Colonial powers, and later post-colonial governments, have often declared all land the ‘property of the state’. They tolerated some continuation and reworking of previous systems with the crucial caveat that those – now inferior – rights could be set aside within the law. Territorializing agencies could thereby carve out concessions to particular resources – plantations, mining, oil, nature reserves, et cetera. These practices have often met with different forms of resistance, and exclusive territorial rule is often upset by criss-crossing jurisdictions. Territorial dynamics are intimately linked to the underground ‘map’. In this issue, Côte and Korf describe what they term the
‘plurification’ of authority. In the context of a liberalization of the gold mining sector, state and non-state authorities compete over legitimate authority to govern. Gold miners navigate between these jurisdictions, which is further complicated by the ways in which the overground is governed in relation to the corresponding governance systems of forestry or farming. Similar dynamics of multiple governing institutions are at play in the Indonesian case discussed by Peluso (this issue). Here, ‘Miners occupy and transform the spaces formally comprising a panoply of government and corporate sponsored land uses and types; they are mining oil palm plantations, swamp and dryland forest, transmigration lands under industrial tree crops, and smallholdings held by title or by custom’. In each of these instances, the mining pits are embedded in particular institutional contexts and miners strive to establish and legitimate their right to extract. Territorializing political and legal subjects, and the rights to resources, takes a variety of forms, but drawing boundaries and making zones are particularly efficient strategies. We therefore turn to the strategic use of boundaries and maps.

Boundaries and Maps
Territorialization is a matter of both internal and external control. It secures external borders by marking, mapping, and enforcing them against external powers. Boundary making was an especially significant feature of European colonization from the fifteenth century. Colonialism required both external borders to protect against competing European powers, and internal ones to divide and rule (Benton 2002). Zoning of space by categories such as ‘forest’, ‘nature’, ‘wasteland’ or ‘farmland’ was key in colonial territorialization, and post-colonial states have continued to pursue ‘spatial planning’ as a central governance instrument. By defining space as ‘forest’, for example, the inhabitants are turned into illegal squatters by the stroke of a pen and the threat of a gun. That creates obvious frictions on the ground. Land-use planning and property legislation are instruments to determine what resource activities are permitted or illegal – deciding where, when, and on what terms users may access resources (Callahan 2004, Goldman 2011, Neumann 1998). Typically, rendering traditional land uses illegal did not eliminate them. However, it made people dependent on non-enforcement and created rent opportunities for government staff (Wardell and Lund 2006). Mapping and marking landscapes are central instruments of control. The authority of maps as objective representations of the real material world is crucial even if mapping is inevitably a representation where certain features are made legible while others have been edited out (see Bluwstein and Lund, this issue). Boundaries and borders are social and historical constructs that require maintenance and techniques of domination (Jones 2016, Mathur 2013). Maps of boundaries are therefore not merely representations of the ‘real’. The abstract space encloses and defines territory. Hence, maps lead a ‘double life’ as representations and claims. And local actors who through their practices and narratives shape competing border configurations are opposing and contesting existing territorialities (Mantha 2009, Perrier Bruslé 2013, Steinberg 2009). Thus, boundary making represents processes of social belonging, exclusion and authority formation. In the article by Lund and Rachman (this issue), different government agencies and the local population all engage in mapping the contested space to fit their respective designs. While they dispose over very different means of map making, it is clear that no spatial argument will fly without a cartographic representation. This is also evident in the case described by Bluwstein and Lund in this issue, where
contested representations of space are at the heart of the continuous contestations over space. Such cartographic representations are not only a matter of territorial imposition; they also animate internal contests between local jurisdictions. Some villages around the Nalika Wildlife Management Areas can therefore derive legitimacy for their particular territorial claims in relation to other villages through the power embedded in the maps produced by resourceful foreign conservation agencies. Boundaries, maps, and zones with their respective regulations and rules of inclusion and exclusion of uses and users are rarely invented from scratch in the process of reterritorialization. Instead, colonizers or resource exploiters bring along institutional arrangements, which are molded and fitted to accommodate the circumstances of new patterns of resource use. New institutions emerge in the wake of these territorial rearrangements; these are neither exact replicas of existing institutional orders nor complete reinventions. The debris of the past shapes the current configurations of space.

Law and Bureaucracy
Law and administrative bureaucracy are required to institute citizenship and property, and to manage them in space. However, governments are rarely the only bodies of authority that govern rights to membership and resources. And while statutory law often grandly claims to prevail throughout a given territory, reality is messier. Often, several legal regimes overlap and are brought to bear. Institutions compete over the control of space, people, and resources. Often institutions operate on different scales and are embedded in different territorial logics (Ospina et al. 2015). Some are local, while others – such as those related to the state apparatus – have a much broader range. In frontier spaces, they articulate with economic networks in new ways. These are institutions which seek to enhance territorial control and thereby the policing of access to resources and the sanctioning of their proper use (cf. Thorburn 2000, Spiegel 2012).

This process is a combination of law and force, of political will, bureaucracy, and muscle. We shall return to force below, but start with a few observations about law. Law, in a broad sense, is the rules, procedures, and institutions that govern the conduct of social actors (Tamanaha 2008). For our purpose, two aspects are central. First, in contrast to raw power, law is accompanied by justification and legitimation. This means that laws must resonate with ideals outside of law itself. Mores, customs, and popular understandings of what is ‘just’ are therefore mobilized to justify the law and its institutions. Second, law is process (Moore 1978). It is a permanent building site where construction and demolition are engaged in simultaneously, and not only by ‘licensed lawmakers’. For example, in highland Peru, statutory law may promote individual land ownership while farming communities impose rigorous collectivist obligations on their members – the communeros (Lorenzo 2012). Thus, when we engage the dynamics of frontiers and territorialization, we look at the many ways in which actors justify claims and have justifications widely accepted – possibly recorded systematically in writing, and enshrined in formal statutory legislation. The routine of bureaucratic execution is essential. Classification and enumeration of citizens, recording and validation of property transactions, recovery of tax in return for these rights, and the mapping and zoning of people and resources all consolidate territorialization. Correspondingly, some rules are weakened by the erosion of their institutions until they are relics of the past.
In the context of frontiers institutional debris of the past endures in various ways, and offers justification for future claims (Gordillo 2014, Moore 1986, Stoler 2013). Take the case of highland Ecuador (Colloredo-Mansfeld et al., this issue): in the context of deliberate repression from the central governments, the comunas traditionally responsible for local territorial governance were undermined. In Quilatoa, it was the shifting cooperatives related to the growing tourist industry that little by little acquired the authority to govern space as a community, reworking customs in new and innovative institutional constellations. In the present context we are especially interested in how rules, institutions, forms of organization, and techniques and artifacts of governance that shape and territorialize space become recycled and re-contextualized in the territorialization of frontiers. The concept of institutional bricolage, developed by Douglas (1986), is useful in this context (see also Cleaver 2012). Few rules and institutions are entirely new, but generally, somehow, draw on exiting elements. She argues that for rules to reduce entropy, they must, somehow, be naturalized. One particularly effective method of naturalization is by way of analogy. That is, rules seem more legitimate if they resemble already existing rules; then the work of legitimation has already been done. In Douglas’s words, ‘there needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement’ (Douglas, 1986: 48). Thus, people discursively draw on legitimizing symbols, to cognitively anchor new institutional and social arrangements. Contemporary spatial claims are thus underpinned by institutional debris from past claims, practices, and rules, often actively and selectively remembered as a passé composé to fit designs for the future (Lund 2013).

This does not mean that institutions, forms of organization, rules, or artifacts are necessarily redeployed in their original, or originally intended, function. Rather, they are used as repertoires of claims and justifications in creative new ways where particular elements harness new arguments of spatial control (Comaroff and Roberts 1981). Farmers’ movements may shape their claims according to the availability of more or less ancient documents supporting rights accorded to ancestors in somewhat opaque ways (see Colloredo-Mansfeld et al., Rasmussen, both this issue) and local political forms are shaped by different interpretations of governmental forms, techniques, and technologies (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009, Rasmussen 2015). Christian Lund once encountered farmers in Ghana who jealously kept the receipts of fines paid for illegally harvesting wood in a forest reserve. Their argument was that ‘if, one day, this is no longer a reserve, the ticket is proof of first occupancy.’ Other artifacts, such as fences, boundary markers, gravestones, and maps may very well represent one kind of claim at one moment, and something quite different at another.

Laws, which may have worked against claimants at particular times, may be used differently when times change. Thus, when farmers occupy land in Java in the name of ‘land reform’ after the oppressive Suharto regime, and fabricate deeds that look as if they were issued by the National Land Agency, they emulate state practice by the bricolage of historical policy proclamations, militant social organization, and legal symbols (see Lund, this issue). State idioms and territorialization are tightly bound and in colonial and post-colonial societies local forms of territory have often had to yield (see Dawson, Zanotti and Vaccaro 2014, and Hansen and Stepputat 2001). Yet pragmatic modification of farmers’ everyday practices may also form a legitimate basis for territorialization of
the frontier. When small-scale miners in Kalimantan construct rules of access and property where no formal rules allow them to mine, they use the institutional idioms of small-scale agriculture, and as a consequence the new territorialization is not contrived, but virtually natural. Obviously, this competes with other claims from government, equally sustained by efforts at naturalization (see Peluso, Rasmussen, Watts, all this issue).

*Enforcement*

Discourse, maps, law, and imaginative legitimation alone do not establish access and rights. Force – as threat or acted out – is always present in frontiers and is the handmaiden of territorialization. In fact, force is both part of the destruction of existing rights and the institution and protection of new ones. The open physical violence of ‘clearing’ the frontier, often transforms into normalized and subtler (but no less resolute) forms of law and order in the territory (Korf, Hagmann and Doevenspeck 2013). Sometimes, it can be hard to tell the difference. Frontier spaces under territorialization are often violent for two reasons. First, claims to territory and resources are open and property regimes not settled. Second, legitimate authority is uncertain and the state monopoly over violence is suspended. The violence can occur in various forms from physical force through policing, enslavement, and evictions, to symbolic violence though the erasure of local values, labor regimes, and landscapes.

If state qualities emerge in the interstitial space between threats and guarantees (Poole 2004), or between protection and extortion (Watts 2016), this is especially open-ended in frontiers where guarantees are rare and protection and extortion are difficult to tell apart. Emerging authorities struggle to establish legitimacy in a context where guarantees cannot be easily granted, relying instead on threats as the primary means of creating adherence in a context of pluralized enforcement schemes. Consequently, different violent entrepreneurs operate in this field, claiming authority through ‘law and order’ while blatantly flouting both. Government authorities may well engage in operations that are not legal but where the ‘ paraphernalia of recording claims, examining certificates for their authenticity, and the like [gives] the aura of a legal operation’ (Das 2007: 174). In post-civil war Aceh, for example, the military often dismissed claims from resident smallholders in favor of those from plantation companies, staged ceremonies of compensation, photographed the disbursement of money (only to take back a part of it after the snapshot had been taken), and then evicted them. The actual legality of the operation was dubitable, but the efforts at making it appear as if, were determined (Lund forthcoming). Such negative potentialities condition the territorializations and threaten not only to eliminate human bodies, but also to erase cultural ideas and values. This is what Bluwstein and Lund refer to in their account of the establishment of the Wildlife Management Areas in Tanzania. The slow territorialization of mind normalizes the spatial arrangements, but in the course of doing so redefines legitimate land use and occupancy.

In Colombia, Grajales argues, violence is constitutive of state formation (2011). The enduring conflict over land control includes tight links between state and paramilitary groups. Although illegal, paramilitaries have proved themselves essential in the protection of property regimes against armed rebels and opening local territories to further accumulation. A different kind of violence emerged in post-Soviet Kazakhstan (Nazpary 2002, see also Volkov 2002). As the Soviet state
disintegrated, violent networks emerged in alliances between former political elites and mafias in order to protect wealth and expand spheres of influence. The violent entrepreneurs, as explored by Blok (1974) in his work on the Sicilian mafia, work as mediators between state and countryside. As elsewhere, mafia violence and state formation are intimately connected. Returning once again to Colombia, Ballvé (2013, 238) finds that while ‘all the region’s social actors are implicated in producing the norms and forms of everyday governance in this frontier zone – despite evident imbalances in power relations – the violent incoherencies of this process stem from the political alignments and misalignments of the multiple, overlapping territorialities being produced’. In other words, territorialization on the Colombian frontier implies processes in which paramilitaries undid old spatialities of production and governance. In these ‘zones of irreconcilable alterity’, paramilitary violence is ‘deeply tied to initiatives aimed at producing governable spaces and subjects, expanding trade, and attracting capital’ (2012: 240). Rather than being in opposition to the rule of law, bureaucracies, and legitimate authorities, violence here provides an alternative and complementary strategy for consolidating spatial control. In few places is the violence as ubiquitous as in oil-rich Nigeria (Watts, this issue). Rather than state formation, the violence of the insurgencies of Boko Haram and MEND is conditioned by the frontier spaces and unsuccessful territorializations by the Nigerian state. In the cases of both Colombia and Nigeria we see how the state monopoly over violence is disrupted. The state’s ability to employ violence successfully in order to secure spatial control varies greatly, and resistance often takes the form of counter-territorialization.

5. Concluding remarks

Frontiers are portrayed as spaces of contact between, on the one hand, the wild and untamed, the savage and uncivilized, and, on the other, the conquered, mastered, and civilized space. Frontier spaces are where the often violent destruction of previous orders takes place, and the territorialization of new orders begins. The reconfiguration of frontier spaces through the deployment of institutional debris – rules, histories, and artifacts – defines new patterns of access and control. Humans make frontiers and territories, and the symbolic and real erasures are accompanied by representations of what is, and what is desired, in maps, histories, political projects, and, not least, commodities.

Frontier dynamics and territorialization are intimately linked as destructive and constructive efforts at spatial control. We initially described these dynamics as sequential and cyclical. Yet they often coexist as both dynamics meet with resistance: the destruction of rules and rights is confronted by efforts at their protection, and the unpicking of the territorialization of space is attempted in many ways. Whether we characterize a situation in terms of destruction, dissolution, and frontiers, or alternatively construction, consolidation, and territorialization, usually depends on the temporary predominant outcome. It is therefore useful to link them, paying equal attention to the destructive and constructive spatial projects.

Frontier and territorialization dynamics do not occur only in remote regions. The dynamics that link space and resources are not a function of mere distance, but a particular configuration of values and institutions related to the commodification of nature. The discovery of new resources to control often takes place in populated places and leads political authorities like governments to disconnect
people from place and to disenfranchise them as bearers of rights. When ‘frontiersmen’ rearticulate the connections between places and the centers of power, and reframe their relative importance, ordinary people often find themselves abandoned or violently excluded while fighting for renewed recognition of vested rights. When frontier moments offer new opportunities of wealth capture, where institutional competition is intense, and where political power is skewed and livelihood precarious, old social contracts give way to the struggles for the reconstruction of new ones.

The contributions in this collection all take an ethnographic approach to the reshuffling of citizenship and property rights, and their connection to local landscapes, histories, and governments. Empirically grounded, the contributions lay out the complex dynamics of authority formation in places that articulate in new ways with state, market, and commerce through the commodification of nature.

This collection includes empirical studies on issues of mineral and oil extraction in Indonesia (Peluso), Burkina Faso (Côte and Korf), and Nigeria (Watts), conservation in Indonesia (Lund), Tanzania (Bluwstein and Lund) and Peru (Rasmussen), and conservation-cum-tourism in Ecuador (Colloredo-Mansfeld et al.). What we analyze in this issue is therefore not one single frontier, but the dynamics through which very different frontier spaces emerge. Together, the papers highlight when new imperatives for resource use emerge. They show how the spatial and temporal reshuffling of institutional orders is often the reworking of already existing ideas. To understand this, we suggest that frontier spaces are as much about the making of institutional orders as they are about their unmaking. The studies focus on the use of documents and representations of space and history, the symbolic and concrete fencing off of territories, and the attendant definitions of legitimate and illegitimate uses and users. They investigate the associations between access to technologies and the new forms of extraction, and, ultimately, the dynamic relationship between the ability to authorize and the emergence of authority.

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