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**INFORMAL ORDERING,
AUTHORITY and CONTROL:
BORDERLAND DYNAMICS and
POSTWAR STATEBUILDING in
LIBERIA**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2017

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Abstract

Critical statebuilding as a subfield of International Relations explicitly engages in mutually constitutive dialogical interaction with the practice of international statebuilding and peacebuilding. Beyond challenging formal institutionalist approaches to international statebuilding, critical statebuilding highlights ‘local’, ‘interactive’, ‘process’, ‘power’, ‘ownership’ and ‘territorialized’ dimensions of quotidian statebuilding and peacebuilding in practice. The networked and fluid positionality of critical scholars, multifaceted statebuilders and pluralized subjects of international statebuilding interventions necessitate the constant renegotiation of operational and positional boundaries in knowledge production about statebuilding processes and their outcomes. However, by emphasizing a blend of neo-modern and postmodern analyses critical statebuilding research in IR has largely overshadowed grounded and reverse engineered approaches that reflexively reconstitute predominantly informal everyday socio-political processes. Quotidian informality provides the empirical basis for understanding competing and negotiated claims to pluralized territoriality and sovereignty within contexts of flux and uncertainty.

This thesis deploys a grounded experiential ethnography to discern territorialized understandings of the implications of quotidian human processes on postwar statebuilding. By reverse engineering quotidian processes of informal ordering, authority and control within borderlands under international statebuilding intervention in Liberia, it provides a counter narrative to dominant state-centric and formal statebuilding theory in IR. Prior knowledge of Liberia’s civil wars (1989-1996 and 1999-2004); successively negotiated peace accords; and international investment in postwar reconstruction provided the backdrop for the research project. This thesis thus centralizes borderland manifestations of pluralized informal ordering, networks and quotidian experiences in understanding postwar statebuilding in Liberia.

Quotidian organization of social livelihoods within Liberia’s borderland cities evidences fluidly negotiated symbolic and spatial positionality by organized non-state borderland actors over time. This multifaceted tapestry of borderland dynamics of informal ordering, embedded authority and social control expose the empirical content of negotiated territoriality and pluralized sovereignty in everyday practice. The historical, contextual and social embeddedness of these borderland processes contrast, yet unavoidably interact with internationally imagined and sequentially deployed statebuilding. Interaction between “the embedded” and “the imagined” evidence syncretic dissonance with the appropriation, objectification and incorporation of the latter by the former endangering statebuilding restructuring long-term processes of state formation.

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Selected Abbreviations

ACS:	American Colonization Society
ACF:	Action Contre la Faim
AFL:	Armed Forces of Liberia
ATU:	Anti-Terrorism Unit
CBO:	Community-Based Organization
CC:	Community Chairperson
COBOL:	Commercial Motorbikers of Liberia
CMR:	Commercial Motorbike Rider
CPA:	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CWF:	Community Watch Forum
ECOMOG:	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EDP:	Externally Displaced Person
EVD:	Ebola Virus Disease
GEMAP:	Government and Economic Management Assistance Program
GOL:	Government of Liberia
IDP:	Internally Displaced Person
IGNU:	Interim Government of National Unity
IGO:	Inter-Governmental Organization
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organization
LAMCO:	Liberian American Swedish Mining Corporation
LAP:	Liberia Action Party
LCDA:	Lofa County Development Agenda
LFF:	Liberian Frontier Force
LIMCA:	Liberian Motorcyclist and Tri-Cyclists' Union
LMTU:	Liberian Motorcycle Transport Union
LURD:	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MEND:	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

MODEL: Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MTG: Micro-Territorial Governor
NGO: Nongovernmental Organization
NPFL: National Patriotic Front for Liberia
NPP: National Patriotic Party
NPRAG: National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government
NTGL: National Transitional Government of Liberia
NUP: National Unification Policy
ODP: Open Door Policy
PAL: Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PBC: Peacebuilding Commission
PIC: Peacebuilding Industrial Complex
PRC: Peoples Redemption Council
QC: Quarter Chief
QIP: Quick Impact Project
UP: Unity Party
ULIMO: United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia
UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNO: United Nations Organization
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG: United Nations Secretary General

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Chapter 1 Introduction

States, Borderlands and the Spaces In-Between

The cartographic representation of international borders as a solid black line demarcating states belies the complex interplay of the political topographies of social actors and related human livelihood processes within borderlands, and the states they straddle. Bordering provides the *de jure* international justification and national administrative rationale for the institutionalization of statehood. Neo-Westphalian impulses have consistently imposed formalized bordering and ordering imperatives to tame international anarchy and insecurity. These inure into macro-level and interrelated top-down institutionalized approaches to global and state ordering that often ignore complexly organized borderland informalities. These socially organized informalities constitute the empirical content of territoriality and sovereignty within the liminal spaces of states. Hence, the quotidian reality of intra-national and international bordering, are shaped by both the *de facto* empirical content of territoriality and the micro-manifestations of sovereignty historically embedded within state borderlands. These processes of informal ordering within borderlands form an unavoidable set of bottom up processes with implications for explaining and understanding geopolitical economies of war (Pugh et al. 2004: 3) and by extension, postwar statebuilding outcomes.

Critical engagement across social science disciplines has generated conceptual, empirically and theoretical output questioning the territorial fixity and sovereign monolithism prevalent within IR (See Kahler, 2002:18; Newman 2006: 86; Sassen 2013: 23; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013: 6). While territoriality captures the use of territory for political, social and economic ends, effective sovereignty

is often not necessarily predicated on and defined by the strict and fixed territorial boundaries of individual states (Agnew, 2005: 437-38). Acknowledgement of the political determinism of pluralized micro-territoriality and disaggregated sovereignty emerging from critical political geography coincided with the rise of conceptualization around the “autonomy fallacy” in Comparative Politics (See Migdal, 1988: 6; and Migdal et al. 1994). Without endorsing the notion of the post-polar retreat of the sovereign and territorial state, the autonomy fallacy challenges the ideal-type notion of the monolithic, uniform and bureaucratized state through a “states-in-society” approach to understanding political phenomena. It offered the dual proposition that states are seldom the unique central actors in societies; and that states are almost never autonomous from social forces (Migdal et al 1994: 2). They rejoin the Foucauldian proposition that the effective, real, daily operations of the actual exercise of sovereignty point to a certain multiplicity, but one that is treated as the multiplicity of subjects (Foucault 2004: 11). The move to explore the empirical content of micro-territoriality and pluralized sovereignty benefits from the conceptual premise of these critical approaches.

The states-in-society approach importantly contributes to a disaggregated and multidisciplinary micro-exploration of territoriality and sovereignty with intra-disciplinary implications (across political science subfields). Coalescing perspectives from critical political geography, critical statebuilding and comparative politics provide important foundations from which to problematize micro-territoriality and micro-sovereignty viewed through the quotidian practices of non-state organized social actors as inherently political processes that impact upon statebuilding outcomes. Constitutive of political processes, these social actors and their actions understood as part of a historical continuum have implications for the configurative *dispositif* of power within

postwar statebuilding. Thus, critical conceptualizations of micro-territoriality and micro-sovereignty are foundational to the exploration of quotidian pluralized informal ordering within Liberia's postwar borderlands in engagement with international statebuilding.

Statebuilding processes are generally deliberate, intrusive, definitively programmed and multifaceted. International statebuilding intervention is premised on the reification of state territories as fixed units of sovereign space, which has tended to de-historicize and decontextualize processes of state formation and disintegration (Agnew 1994: 59). In everyday practice, statebuilding as a conscious attempt at establishing an order often coexists with state formation as the contingent social processes that accompany and deform the politics of statebuilding (Bliesemann de Guevara 2010: 113) simultaneously, interactively and heuristically occurring across overlapping and networked local, national and international spheres. Coexistence between statebuilding and state formation does not imply synchrony as Bliesemann de Guevara (2012: 16) argues that statebuilding interventions clash with social structures and long-term state formation processes. It ought to also be noted that the nature, form and justification for statebuilding differ across multiple spheres of interveners.

Within classical IR, International statebuilding has often been justified on the grounds that state fragility and failure, by creating an enabling environment for vectors such as war, disease and climate change, pose clear and present threats to international order and security (Rotberg, 2003; Fukuyama, 2004; Bates, 2005; Ghani and Lockhart, 2008). Taking the perceived "dysfunction" of non-western states as the point of departure in their inquiry, formal institutionalist scholars of state failure make leaps of logic between three phenomena disequilibria in the demand and supply of stateness, the permanence of state

fragility and failure; and outcomes of international insecurity and disorder (Fukuyama 2004: ix). Stateness is analyzed in terms of the functions, capabilities and legitimacy of governments (Fukuyama 2004: xi). The capitalist analogy is omnipresent within the instrumental and programmed approach that assumes a Manichean separation between the demand and supply of statebuilding especially within postwar contexts. This devolves into assumptions about the nature, power and outcome expectations for demanders and suppliers of statebuilding.

International statebuilding interventions largely aim to institutionally re-order the state in order to enhance and restore its functionality within the international system. Thus, it forms the core of measures aimed at countering state fragility and restoring failed states. The institutionalist focus assumes deviation from the ideal-type institutionalized, hegemonic and monolithic state as a dysfunction that ought to and be corrected (Sisk 2012: 42). It also takes for granted the normative preponderance of the crosscutting and often entrenched socio-political topographies of power that underpin the state in quotidian practice. This focus on state institutional form rather than relational substance has necessitated international statebuilding interventionary repertoires that have tended to emphasize governance (as neo-modern capacity valorization) over processes of government (as state-society relations) (Chandler 2010: 14; Kaplan, 2010: 88); privileged programmed security sector reform over organic processes of livelihood securitization; and promoted the restoration of a version of the rule of law that is often disconnected from and at odds with social norms and practice.

By focusing on the actions, policies and programs of the statebuilding “suppliers” that inevitably end up in failed statebuilding outcomes (Richmond

2004: 65-70), the critical international statebuilding literature has itself generated critiques of eurocentrism from which it has often sought to escape, given its methodological bypassing of the target subjects in research (Sabaratnam 2013: 261). Centralizing target subjects in critical statebuilding research is an enduring challenge that can be approached by seeking to understand the empirical and quotidian manifestations of socially organized processes within contexts of international statebuilding intervention. This scientific endeavor benefits from a states-in-society approach that does not only recognize, but focuses on social actor disaggregation, agency and interaction. Thinking in more disaggregated terms allows for imagining the engagement of state and society where patterns of domination are determined by key struggles through society's multiple arenas of domination and opposition (Migdal 1994: 9). While "multiple arenas of domination and opposition" importantly emphasize the spatial dimension of engagement within statebuilding, this approach remains predominantly centrifugal from the center towards the margins. It centralizes the state in order to understand its relations to society, meanwhile actions of subordinate social groups remain largely gauged through the prism of dominant political paradigms (Bayart 2008:33). Nevertheless, it contributes to a relational understanding of state-society relations as central to critiquing top-down interventionary statebuilding.

Critically exploring micro-territoriality and sovereign multiplicity as emergent from organized social processes, allows for a more nuanced understanding of engagement between the disaggregated state in practice and pluralized quotidian societal livelihood processes built within informal social organization. By focusing on the political implications of non-state socially organized informal ordering, this thesis critically engages the foundational premise and argument underlying the "state fragility as justification for international

statebuilding interventions” prevalent within Institutional IR. It acknowledges the premise that the softening of state sovereignty in the early 21st century has generated a number of non-state actors, benign and malign, who sometimes compete and sometimes collaborate with the state in providing governance and security through bottom-up and horizontal forms of organization (Clunan, 2010: 6). The ensuing enquiry focuses on the interactive nature, content and implications of agency-laden micro-territorial social actors on the state and international interventionary postwar statebuilding architects. This critical engagement provides the empirical basis for evidencing the syncretic dissonance between international statebuilding interventions and political sociologies of ordered informalities from which alternative interpretations of territoriality and sovereignty emerge within postwar polities. Finally, it also raises the specter of mutually transforming circular and networked interaction between the non-monolithic state and pluralized informal social actors. In that sense, a circular link is produced between effects and causes where an effect from one point of view will ostensibly be a cause from another (Foucault 2004: 21).

By employing a centripetal ontological approach, this thesis inversely puts borderlands understood as a complex spatial, social and symbolically grounded construct at the center of the interrogation of postwar international statebuilding. Power is a central factor in borderlands, as these spaces are deeply marked by borders which constitute institutions that enable legitimation, signification and domination, creating a system of order through which control can be exercised (Newman 2006: 148). Hence, this thesis does not only to implicitly critique state-centered approaches that picture borders as uncontested, unchanging and unproblematic (Baud and Van Schendel 1997: 216) but evidences the appropriation and *subjectification* of statebuilding by

socially organized informal borderland actors in explicit power based political interaction. It problematizes social organization in quotidian practice outside metropolitan centers where peace processes are brokered and negotiated and where statebuilding thought and practice are conceptually and artificially designed, programmed, benchmarked and deployed.

The spatial prism of borderlands centralizes that which is often the liminal object of postwar statebuilding interventions. In order to understand the nature of the interplay of power dynamics underlying the quest for control during statebuilding processes, it is necessary to take on a deliberate “politics from below perspective,” focusing of the political behavior of social actors; and reintroducing in this way the historical dynamics of African societies (Braathen et al. 2000: 10). This coincides with interest in understanding the macro-political consequences of local level configuration of power and politics since control over persons, resources and access to markets are political assets (Boone 2003: 20-21). Thus, a process of ontological inversion benefits from historicizing borderlands through the life histories of its mobile and networked social actors as power-based encounters, which contribute to a slow and heuristic process of state formation. It uses borderland to introduce and highlight the interplay of complexly ordered informality with formal processes.

Borderlands in Civil War: Between National Dynamics and Regional Connections

Like much of the developing world, Africa in the early 1990s witnessed a proliferation of civil wars. Most of these evolved into intractable, interrelated cross-border conflict systems with “conflict systems” (Mwangiru, 1997 and Sawyer, 2004) and “conflict complexes” (Pugh and Cooper, 2003) used

interchangeably to capture the regional spillover of civil wars. Cross-border conflict systems have brought borderlands into sharp focus in the understanding of conflict dynamics, while not necessarily translating into a greater interrogation of the borderland dynamic in wartime and postwar statebuilding. Sudan's civil wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005) saw involvement of state, non-state and borderland actors from Chad, Kenya and Uganda embedded within the Horn of Africa conflict system (Mwagiru, 1997:9). Meanwhile, the Great Lakes conflict system that evolved around the Rwandan Civil War (1990-1994) involved actors from Uganda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Mwagiru, 1997: 12). Meanwhile the Mano River conflict system included actors from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea (Sawyer, 2004: 439 - 440). In all of these cases, the analytical emphasis on states' roles in the creation and sustenance of conflict systems occludes borderland spaces, which often become territorialized epicenters of conflict complexes. Regional conflict systems with their informal and socially embedded borderland actor, structure and process linkages often operate outside of metropolitan mediated settlements arguably sustaining local violence amid national "peace" (Auteserre, 2006). However, it is important to understand borderland dynamics after mediated settlement usher in a context of postwar peace building.

The African state is problematically often characterized as lacking foundations of empirical statehood because of the vulnerability of the state to the particularistic norms of surrounding multi-ethnic society (Jackson et al 1986: 22). The difficulty the state faces as it seeks to administer effective territorial control is attributed to the normative differentiation of multi-ethnic society. This view unfortunately does not account for the embeddedness of state formation within societally based processes. If it did, empirical statehood would

centralize the negotiation of interdependent social contracts between state and society. However, the notion of “empirical statehood” provides a conceptual premise from which to problematize notions of micro-territoriality and sovereign multiplicity in postwar statebuilding. This is would contribute to understanding how borderlands grow from liminal to restive spaces from whence organized armed factions seek to wrestle for control of the centralized state. It provides an analytical prism to elaborate micro-dimensions of borderlands spaces under capture, occupation and sieged by splinter rebel factions, which then use these territorial trophies in exchange for inclusion and leverage in peace negotiations as part of the long-term process of state formation. As the state has successively lost its monopoly over the uses of violence, a context of oligopolies of violence forces vulnerable populations to escape expanding violence by seeking refuge both internally and externally. In the case of Liberia, Sawyer (2005: 38) shows patterns of internal displacement from the periphery towards Monrovia in some cases, and retreat of civilian populations into the rainforest. Externally displaced populations have also often sought refuge with kin communities across national borders. Macenta, Nzerekore and Gueckedou in Guinea; as well as Toulepleu and Douekoue in Cote d’Ivoire have served as composite hubs for victims and perpetrators of violence zones for refugees and for the recruitment of fighters. These categories are not that clearly bifurcated as roles evolve over time, as Externally Displaced Persons (EDPs) seek to negotiate livelihoods within borderlands and beyond. Hence the need to understand the actor, structure and process dynamics in borderlands as a prelude to explaining their interaction with postwar statebuilding processes.

After Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL) began its onslaught to oust Samuel Doe’s military-turned-civilian regime in December

1989, Liberia quickly became the epicenter of the Mano River conflict system. Although the NPFL's operational training and indoctrination space was in Libya, its staging, personnel and materiel support came from Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Burkina Faso (Sawyer, 2005: 24; Adebajo, 2002: 42-43; Ellis, 2006: 73-74). In order to stage its final assault on Monrovia, the NPFL capitalized on the disaffection between Nimba County residents and the Doe regime. Hence the border hamlet of Butuo in Nimba's border with Cote d'Ivoire was the entry point for its 168-member NPFL assault force. While neighboring states provided materiel and logistical support to the NPFL, entrepreneurs inhabiting the Guinea-Sierra Leone-Cote d'Ivoire borderlands with Liberia provided different kinds of support to the war effort as warring factions multiplied. Liberian exile elements in Ghana and as far as the United States of America provided support to Liberia's many belligerent factions (Ellis, 2006: 94). Liberia's civil wars have been directly interlinked with the subsequent civil war in Sierra Leone, and somewhat tangentially to the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire and state fragility in Guinea creating a Mano River conflict system (Sawyer 2004: 445).

This narrative, situated at the macro-level of the regional networks that underpinned Liberia's civil wars, largely omits the interaction between warring factions and socially organized actors under siege and occupation. While borderlands may geographically be sites of overlapping interstate and intrastate security dilemmas, the social actors and processes embedded therein have agency. As uncertainty feeds into states' assessments of and reaction to their (in)security based on perceived threats from both borderland actors and their neighbors (Jervis, 1976: 173; Roe, 1999: 184) generating overlapping security dilemmas, borderland social actors develop innovative ways to enhance their resilience and livelihood options amid these uncertain conditions. These

micro-analytical blind spots highlight the need for further elaboration on how quotidian borderland dynamics transform and are transformed by changing of wartime and postwar statebuilding contexts.

The geo-strategic importance of borderlands – the territorial margins of the state – is historically evident both during war and war to peace transitions. The use of maps at peace tables to cartographically represent the status of belligerent forces reflects the enduring leveraging of territoriality for political gain. In Liberia, for example, as peace deals were being negotiated from Yamoussoukro in 1991 to Cotonou in 1993, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces used their superior military capabilities to prop up Amos Sawyer's Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) in Monrovia (Adebajo, 2002: 73-75). Simultaneously, Charles Taylor's proxy National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) controlled vast mineral-rich hinterland spaces from its headquarters in Gbarnga, Bong County, while struggling to ward off territorial challenges from the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) (Ellis 2006: 91-93). It can be argued that failed peace accords spawned belligerent factions that used territorial control to gain access to the peace table. However, the geo-strategic wrangling between warring factions often occludes continuities and change as organized non-belligerent social actors morph in the *longue durée* to deal with the wartime and postwar permanence of uncertainty and flux. The importance of borderlands in regional conflict dynamics, necessitates an interrogation of conflict systems beyond the limited analysis of interstate relations based on deliberate mutual destabilization as characterized by Gebrewold (2009: 179).

Continuities and change in wartime and postwar bordering and ordering

dynamics allows for situating borderlands at the relational epicenters of intrastate wars, while simultaneously capturing their regional connection. Beyond the political topography of loosely networked intrastate warring factions, temporal implications point to social processes of resilience and survival developed by organized social groups during wartime, spilling over into postwar contexts as they engage with postwar statebuilding. Therefore, understanding the temporal, spatial and operational interconnections of borderland economies goes deeper than exploring the theatrics around formal and informal border checkpoints. A deeper investigation looks to the alternative ordering, authority and social control dynamics produced by what Korf and Raeymaekers (2013: 5) describe as the co-presence of state practices with other systems of rule circulating in the borderland spaces.

Wars create economic winners and losers within borderlands as well as within the global economy. Given the highly contested and besieged nature of “centers” in times of war, borderland spaces grow in importance as channels for economic exchange. These borderland flows and exchanges, which are executed by differing configurations of borderland actors, contribute to the creation and sustenance of war economies. War economies built within regional conflict complexes are often penetrated by flows of external goods and services supplied by a complex network of diasporas, private security firms, aid workers, and commodity markets, and are thus deeply interconnected with both regulated and unregulated global trade and financial flows (Pugh et al. 2004: 18). Historically, these dynamics adapt and evolve through different stages of protracted war as well as in postwar contexts. Given that borderland cities often sit at the geographical center of regional conflict complexes there is a need to understand how borderland actors engage with postwar statebuilding processes. Especially as these statebuilding processes are often state-centric

and often only loosely connected to regional conflict dynamics.

Borderlands represent a complex temporal and spatial reality. Borderland dynamics are often characterized by degrees of transience and permanence in relationships between seeming polarities (the licit and illicit, entrepreneurial and menial, trafficker and trader and the industrial and subsistent agriculturalist). It is in these borderlands and society at large that the attributes of “stateness” – monopoly over the principal means of coercion; autonomy from domestic and outside forces; differentiation of state components in governing the details of peoples’ lives and coordination of governance (Migdal 1988: 18-19) – are tested and constantly renegotiated.

Borderland actors develop and subscribe to processes, which enable them to negotiate individual and collective livelihoods. These processes develop and sustain networked connections, which extend beyond borderland spaces into the home state and sub-regional spheres. They place borderlands at the center of conflict complexes which Wallensteen and Sollenberg (1998: 623) describe as situations where neighboring countries experience internal or interstate conflicts, with significant links between the conflicts. Changes in conflict dynamics or resolution of one conflict often affect the interlinked neighboring conflict. This thesis elaborates everyday practices informal social ordering, authority and control within borderlands in engagement with hegemonic externally driven approaches of postwar statebuilding.

Problematizing Borderlands and Postwar Statebuilding in Liberia

Whether as the result of a peace treaty or victory by one belligerent party over another the guns never completely and simultaneously fall silent to usher in the

postwar moment. Like a toddler learning to walk, peace returns with unsteady steps in environments scarred by years of war. Meanwhile, the physical and psychological traumas of war linger on for generations. Systematically, post conflict spaces are complex figurations of networks and authorities and shifting local-global relationships (Heathershaw et al. 2008: 272). However, Jones (2010: 15–16) metaphorically alludes to the scars of human suffering (with fortitude born of resilience and survival) often marking the contour lines upon which postwar peace building mechanics are mapped. Peace building processes are predicated upon eradicating the root causes of conflict but the perennial challenge remains about how peace is built. In spaces affected by protracted intrastate war, temporal and contextual realities evidence the emergence of dialectical dynamics, which provide the socially organized framework for engagement with postwar statebuilding. Within complex postwar contexts, borderlands represent liminal spaces centralized and made even more salient through the evolution of war. For some, borderlands become central spaces for the negotiation of survival, positionality and symbolic power. Meanwhile, for others war transforms borderlands into sites of occupation, expropriation, and military victory. Both sides shared the same space, the same history, with different roles and differing outcomes. Although social actors within borderlands are not so bifurcated, the processes within which they engage in the long term reflect continuities akin to processes of state formation. Hence borderland dynamics, given their social embeddedness constitute an important part of bottom-up state formation that sets the stage for engagement with top-down statebuilding.

As the hegemonic imperatives of externally driven statebuilding take hold, borderland entrepreneurs of violence position themselves within postwar political and economic arrangements (leveraging options on either side of an

international border). They seek to adapt and/or adapt wartime modes of economic production to a postwar environment where international statebuilding architects provide new resources (through contracts) while leveraging their services (food provision, hotels and entertainment). Postwar challenges bring together myriad local, national and international actors and structures to design processes, which seek to consolidate peace through statebuilding practice. There are territorial control imperatives both implicit and explicit to international statebuilding outcome expectation. The mechanics of ordering that underpin micro-territorial dimensions of international statebuilding necessitate a problematization of they how they relate to and engage with the pluralized informality of borderland social configurations.

The centrality of state-society relations as integral to postwar reconstruction, takes seriously interactive dynamics as determinants of statebuilding and peacebuilding outcomes. Governance as an essential aspect of international statebuilding provides a prim through which to problematize its engagement with socially organized borderland dynamics and their alternative configurations of order, authority and control within postwar context. Hyden's (1999: 185) broadly characterizes governance institutionally as the stewardship of formal and informal political rules of the game. Governance refers to those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and settling conflicts over such rules. This process of rule-making frames formality and the formal and seeks to incorporate or marginalize the informal through processes of formalization. The formal "rules of the game" inure into ideal-type attributes of "stateness" – monopoly over the principal means of coercion; autonomy from domestic and outside forces; differentiation of state components in governing the details of peoples' lives and coordination of governance (Migdal 1988: 18-19). Meanwhile informality is evident in implicit practices, rules, understandings

and socially sanctioned norms of behavior that (while widely accepted as legitimate) often rely on expectations of reciprocity, which are neither officially established nor codified (de Soysa and Jütting 2007). It is in the spatially dispersed and simultaneous process of rulemaking that arenas of opposition and domination emerge between the state and society. The aspirational attributes of stateness are at the center of international postwar statebuilding and so are the arenas of opposition and domination where state and organized social actors engage. It is in the process of interaction that both state and non-state social actors emerge and are transformed.

The dominant focus on a purely institutionalist approach to postwar statebuilding reduces law to an administrative code, politics to technocratic decision-making, democratic and civil rights to those of the supplicant rather than the citizen and replaces citizenry with civil society and the promise of capitalist modernity with pro-poor poverty reduction (Chandler 2010: 40). This internationally driven approach to postwar statebuilding explicitly connects the political dimension of governance to the more technocratic elements of macro-economic management and public administration operational capacity (Brinkerhoff 2005: 5–6). Hence the emphasis on advancing the reconstitution of legitimacy, the reestablishment of security and rebuilding of effectiveness as the hallmarks of governance reform in postwar states. The aforementioned approach to postwar statebuilding, while seeking to cater to the root causes of the conflict, tends to widen the chasm between government and the governed, creating justification for renewed contestation. Hence the interest of this study to understand how borderland dynamics engage with these postwar statebuilding approaches in quotidian practice.

Borderlands both lexically and cartographically, are areas at a territory's edge or a point where things overlap. However, sociologically, borders denote a spatial dimension of social relationships that are continually being configured and, in the process, the meaning of borders is produced, reconstructed, strengthened or weakened (Banerjee and Chaudhury 2011). Border fluidity thus challenges assumed notions of border stasis emanating from treaty and conventionally agreed *de jure* understandings of sovereignty. In Liberia, for example, despite declaring independence in 1847 in order to stave off land grabs from colonial powers – the Great Britain in Sierra Leone and France in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire – and official borders treaty recognition circa 1916 (Gershoni 1985: 46), successive Liberian governments failed to exercise effective territorial control. Despite the disposition of the Liberian state, communities on both sides of the border that is sometimes more imagined than real have continued to give everyday meaning to micro-territorial manifestations of sovereignty. Sociologically constructed historical narratives of bordering and ordering processes highlight the human element in the social construction of borders and non-state orders. It also points towards engagement in a heuristically endless reconfiguration of social relations with implications for both borderland social actors and the postwar state. However, tensions persist between the rather inflexible geo-political structuring of borders as delimiting markers of political control with specific functions; and the more flexible human appropriation of borderlands in the process of negotiating livelihood through different forms of exchange. Therein concretizes the problematique of socially organized borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding.

Borders serve different functions to different actors from inside and outside borderlands. Border functions include – ownership delimitation, authority delimitation, the establishment of defensive lines and as markers of difference

between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Goodhand 2008: 226). These functions transform borders into mental constructs that become social and physical realities, making boundaries paradoxical zones of simultaneous uncertainty and security. Socially organized borderland actors often appropriate the existence, position and functions of borders in their engagement with state. It is in this process of appropriation taking place in the co-presence of a version of the disaggregated state that the micro-territorial and informal economic manifestations of non-state actors provide insights into their implications for postwar statebuilding.

Since borderlands straddle borders, configurative element and empirical functioning of differentiated borderland actors contribute to shaping the fluidity that characterizes these straddling margins of states. Borderlands contribute to operationalizing territoriality and sovereignty albeit in alternative forms evident in daily practice. The borderlands between Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire, for example, provide a spatial and temporal lens through which to historicize the movement of the NPFL into Nimba County in 1989. The NPFL moved from bases in Cote d’Ivoire through Nimba County to launch a full-scale assault on the Doe regime (See Sawyer 2004 and Ellis 2006). Meanwhile the borderlands between Liberia and Guinea provide insights for the analysis of the 1999 incursion by the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group and its implication for inter-war governance and conflict recurrence. So does the 2003 MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) onslaught on Monrovia from the Liberia-Cote d’Ivoire borderlands (Bøås 2005: 83; Bøås and Hatloy 2008: 34). These specific instances in the origin and evolution of the Liberian Civil War place borderlands at the center of Liberia’s conflict dynamics without necessarily capturing the interaction between socially organized borderland actors and different warring factions. As geopolitical broad strokes, they do not engage with how the intrastate war shaped the

quotidian elements of micro-territoriality and disaggregated sovereignty, which inevitably contribute to a deeper understanding of the background to postwar statebuilding.

Borderlands provide an interpretive dimension for interrogating the complex micro-politics of alternative ordering, authority and social control from the multiple margins of states over time. However, borderland discourses have been remained fairly silent in critical statebuilding literature. As Liberia grapples with the challenges of postwar international statebuilding under the watchful mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), engagement between socially organized informal, yet networked, dimension of borderland actors, structures and processes and the re-emergent state ought to be taken seriously.

Some Key Assumptions

This thesis elaborates an understanding of borderland dynamics as central to understanding postwar statebuilding outcomes. It assumes that while borders and bordering are structured political processes, their socio-political meanings and implications emerge when individual and social actors interact with them whether as state agents or society-level actors. Social actors whose life histories are inscribed within borderlands in the *longue durée* interpret and engage with the emergence, make-up and enforcement of international borders. From this position, they interact with multiple social actors who also exhibit varying permanent, transient and traversing characteristics. By focusing on the capturing the negotiated interaction of formality and informality within borderlands, this study shows how these liminal social actors alternatively strengthen or weaken postwar statebuilding.

The explanation is based on fundamental assumptions underlying the creation of alternative and informal forms of order, authority and control by organized social actors based within borderlands and the implications for all these on broader international statebuilding processes within Liberia. Assuming the structural absence of a monolithic state, micro-territorial configurations of authority have implications for the empirical nature and content of statehood. Quotidian participatory practices of accountability, representation and social control undergird legitimate micro-territorial governance and bottom-up economic production within postwar borderlands. These complementary economic and socio-political processes set up informal social actors to engage with the postwar state, which often does not possess the same legitimacy in the governance of social processes within borderland spaces. Even the perception of “informality” depends where one stands. The borderland social configurations that operationalize informal micro-territorial governance and support economic informality are internally rules-based. Operating in quotidian practice within borderlands, they are recognized and engaged with by state representatives and their international statebuilding partners. However, they are not explicitly recognized by the centralized state and are largely absent in a literature that prefers to explore the encounters of state and traditional society.

The disconnect between embedded borderland social processes and the emergent postwar state is based on the assumption of differing historical trajectories. Additionally, the contested nature of statebuilding and state formation of which intrastate wars often constitute an integral part inures into the coexistence and interaction between embedded informalities and constructed formalities. In practical terms, borderland dynamics exhibit greater

degrees of permanence than the state and its institutionalist statebuilding practices. Thus, while borderland dynamics (analyzed as part of long term state transformation processes) exist in a mutually constitutive and interdependent relationship with postwar statebuilding, they invariably represent a more permanent and reliable social formation than that of the classical state form. This encounter of the impermanence of statebuilding and the resilient durability of bottom-up state formation interpreted from the borderlands reflects the empirical reality of postwar micro-territoriality.

Given the assumption that borderland social actors have agency, the social actor is a negotiated, mediated and configured collective based on social and economic norms defined within territorial communities and social communities such as sodalities (Cubitt, 2013). The social configurations and the processes they generate, evolve through and adapt to different forms of incipient and manifest conflict – whether between proximate ethnic groups or larger scale conflicts such as civil wars. Given their resilience they constitute unavoidable actors in the political topographies of postwar states as they enter arenas of opposition and domination opting for bridge or breach engagement with the postwar state under construction, of which they are also a part. From their positions within borderlands, their political, social and economic networks run deep into the centers of their home state and neighboring countries. The maintenance of these micro-social relationships coexists with the official diplomatic maneuvers of postwar statebuilding architects at the sub-regional level. Quotidian practice shaped by informal ordering, authority and control, have implications for postwar statebuilding and the state ability to capture the elusive ideal-type attributes of “Stateness.”

Important Research Questions

The ordering imperatives of international bordering assumed within the IR discipline often focuses on the juridical functions of borders, rather than the empirical content of borderland spaces – those spaces that are simultaneously on the margins of the state (Eilenberg 2012: 4) and that abut the international. These spaces that often straddle states are interesting points of study in themselves, and they also provide a productive entry point for asking broader questions about the nature of the state, violent conflict and peace-building (Goodhand 2013: 245). This study raises important questions about the implications of borderland social actors, configurations and process dynamics on postwar statebuilding in Liberia. The principal research question and sub-questions derive from the problematization of borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding in Liberia as well as the socio-historical and political assumptions that devolve thereof.

The main research question that this thesis explores is – how do borderland social actors re-configure themselves at war’s end? Understanding this aspect of reconfiguration focuses on the quotidian negotiation of positionality, space and place within communities as they resettle their homelands after war. Important in this endeavor was ethnographically capturing historical continuities and change in the social configuration. A focus on borderlands also deliberately takes a non-elite focused approach to understanding postwar statebuilding. That is not to imply that in practice, elites are completely absent from the political topographies within borderlands spaces. It only implies that in the inquiry, the objective was to understand how subaltern social actors constituted and positioned themselves to engage with hegemonic statebuilding in practice.

A set of sub-questions associated with this main question related to understanding authority, participation, access and representation at the micro-political level.

Related to the main research question around social configuration was one that related to the coalescence and deployment of social power (which is inherently political) – what are the repertoires of social control deployed by borderland social configurations? This question sought to understand how pluralized social configurations within borderlands negotiated and achieved social control over human and material processes. The deployment of social control actually goes to the empirical content of informal social actor engagement within arenas of opposition and domination with postwar statebuilding architects.

Finally, an overarching question that runs through the entire thesis is – what are the implications of borderland dynamics for postwar statebuilding in Liberia. This crosscutting question sought to situate the spatial, social and symbolic implications for borderland dynamics for the achievement of the statebuilding imperatives of state authority, autonomy and monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.

Methodological Note

The research questions informed the development of a multi-instrumental qualitative framework deployed to understand configurative and interactive process dynamics. Grasping elusive borderland dynamics within postwar statebuilding necessitated focusing on the way borderland actors articulated their social processes and also remembered multiple interactive processes over time. Furthermore, the configurative results of social processes were also

evidenced through interviews and participant observation. Turning the ontological lens on daily practices within two Liberian borderland spaces Foya and Ganta further evidenced multiple modes of pluralized informal ordering. Of these modes of pluralized informal ordering two form the core illustrative operationalization within this study informal ordering through Micro-Territorial Governors and ordering informal economic activity through Commercial Motorbike Rider (CMR) Unions. A political ethnographic approach evidenced the historical and configurative aspects of pluralized informal ordering in Liberia's borderlands. This approach, while acknowledging the importance of structural dynamics such as sub-national administrative and international borders, focused on daily practice or "*habitus*" of borderland individual and social actors. Social actors as negotiated configurations represented an extension of the represented and participating individual. Therefore, the nexus between the individual and the informal social order represented an analytical space through which to understand the construction of alternative authority and control in daily practice. Meanwhile, the interaction between the social group through its "democratically" designated leader and state representatives provides a nexus through which to understand the interaction between borderland social configurations and postwar statebuilding. The specific actions of these social actors as they deal with the quotidian ordering of social livelihoods within borderlands carries implications for the postwar state and statebuilding.

This study leans heavily on antecedent political ethnographies in contexts of crisis by E. J. Wood in El Salvador and S. Autesserre in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, rather than evolving a monistic understanding of subaltern social ordering, its development of an understanding of social

processes of informal ordering and ordered informality evidences the pluralized complexity of postwar spaces.

Contributions of this Study

Borders are central to the understanding and explanation of the modern state given the salience of norms of autonomy, territoriality and sovereignty in ordering the inherently anarchic international system. However, within contexts where civil wars have developed cross-border regional linkages (which sustain them), while borders stay in place, borderland dynamics are given new meaning through the interaction of state and non-state actors, structures and processes. The negotiation of the peaceful settlement of conflicts remains a largely modernist, formal and metropolitan process. Meanwhile the quotidian reality of informal borderland social actor, configurative and process dynamics, far from being steeped trapped in a traditional time capsule, reflect complex engagement with both the national and the international. By focusing on the implications of this informal ordering on postwar statebuilding, this thesis contributes to the burgeoning subfield of critical statebuilding in International Relations.

The objective of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, it seeks to bring the historicity of borderland social actor, configurative and interactive process dynamics into sharp focus within the broader context of the postwar “peace-building as statebuilding” project in Liberia. While wartime socio-political and economic studies of borderlands have contributed an understanding of the interaction between rebel factions and local communities in daily practice, the focus has tended to be on the flows and trade in small arms and light weapons (SALWs) and extractive natural resources (Keen, 2005; Pugh and Cooper, 2004; Reno,

1999; and Richards; 1996). These provide an understanding of war economies and social practices under siege without paying much attention to the continuities and change of social configurations during these moments of crisis. Situating borderland social configurations within a general disposition of informality makes them both malleable and resilient to the temporal ebbs and flows of crisis. Furthermore, locating these pluralized informal ordering dynamics in daily practice also points to their embeddedness and justifies their ability to appropriate contextual disparities from rebel violence to postwar development assistance. Thus, this thesis contributes to understanding the social configurative continuities and change inherent in borderland dynamics as important for understanding postwar statebuilding.

Secondly, it understands and places the territoriality and sovereignty implications of borderland social actors within two inter-related but often separate sets of literature – critical political geography and critical postwar statebuilding in International Relations. Both sets of literature variably engage with spatial, positional, interactive and power constitutions and their implications for the theory and practice of statehood. However, the implications of these same concepts on the empirical content of territoriality overlaps both subfields without the subfields ever being in heuristic engagement with each other. The heuristic engagement occurring throughout this thesis provides an empirical basis for the multidisciplinary understanding of linkages and disconnects between micro-territorially based quotidian practices and internationally driven postwar statebuilding processes.

The specificity of borderland dynamics challenges the generalizability that is the cornerstone of theory formation, given that borderland dynamics differ from one area to the next. This thesis does not aspire to develop a grand theory

about borderland dynamics and postwar statebuilding. However, by providing an ethnographic understanding of pluralized informal ordering within borderlands and its implications for postwar statebuilding, it serves a heuristic purpose. It elucidates a set of practices from Liberia's postwar borderlands that illustrate how alternative social orders emerge and are maintained on the cartographic margins of the state. It adds to the already existing literature that provides a deeper and comparative understanding of borderland social process in state formation and statebuilding. Here the project seeks to highlight borderland individual and collective agency in negotiating complex positioning with multiple others through the narratives from borderland actors themselves.

Thesis Chapter Outline

Chapter one problematizes borders, borderlands and society as interrelated constructs essential to understanding states and statebuilding processes in critical political geography and international studies. It centralizes symbolic, social and physical *positionality* in the exploration of the relational interaction between borderland actors and postwar statebuilding architects. By exploring statebuilding through the observation and interpretation of daily practices of informal ordering, authority and control within borderlands, this thesis builds upon Migdal's states-in-society approach. This introductory chapter also historically situates the relationship between borderlands and statebuilding in Liberia. This historical exploration is divided into four periods

- i) 1821/22 – 1964 looks at the 'founding' and institutionalization of "two Liberias";
- ii) 1964 – 1980 highlights Tubman's National Unification Policy and the failed reinvention of state-society relations in Liberia;

- iii) 1980–1990 explores state collapse and borderlands as battlefields in Liberia; and;
- iv) 1990–1999 looks at balkanization and territorial control as war strategy in Liberia.

These different illustrative and symbolically delineated phases in Liberia's history show the centrality of Liberia's borderlands in a multidisciplinary understanding of the political economies and sociologies of statebuilding. It also gives synoptic historical context to the troubled backdrop of the contested and problematic relationship between borderland social groups and statebuilding in Liberia. While showing the multidisciplinary, methodological and interpretive significance of this study, this chapter provides a brief roadmap for the three main themes—informal order, authority and control—which course through the thesis.

Chapter two connects the literature on critical statebuilding and peacebuilding with interdisciplinary perspectives on borderlands and borderland dynamics as empirical manifestations of territoriality and sovereignty in historical perspective. It analytically integrates perspectives from critical statebuilding and peacebuilding to theoretical positions from critical political geography. This multidisciplinary approach evidences the analytical overlaps that arise when social science disciplines speak past each other while failing to engage one another. For example, the emergence of the “local turn” as a concept of interest in critical statebuilding research (Mac Ginty et al 2013: 275; Schierenbeck 2015: 1024) antedates its emergence in the disciplines of development studies and anthropology (Paffenholz 2015). By putting critical statebuilding in engagement with critical political geography, this chapter highlights the importance of social, spatial and symbolic dimensions in explaining postwar statebuilding outcomes.

Chapter three reconfigures the methodological repertoire that undergirds this study. It traces the experiential process of participant observation, borderland spatial navigation, focus group discussions and individual interviewing which provides the interpretive basis for this study. It justifies the empirical focus on community leaders, commercial motorbike riders (and CMR Unions) in interaction with the postwar state and its international statebuilding partners. Brief descriptions of the specific research sites situate them historically in relation to the top-down, yet contested process of center-driven statebuilding in Liberia. Thus, the historical relevance of borderland dynamics to Liberia's tenuous war to peace transition is accounted for. Finally, it explains how the nature of the research question and the research subjects determined the research method, thereby providing *a posteriori* justification for a reverse engineered understanding of the postwar statebuilding implications of informal ordering, authority and control in Liberia.

Chapter four identifies and presents actors and social processes that shape the informal ordering of territorial space within Liberia's postwar borderlands. Its premise is that an ontology of sites and forms of order can either precede or antecede "an ontology of relationships and the performativity of authority" (Albrecht et al 2014: 15). Implicitly, the identification of social actors can drive enquiry about the form, nature and content of social action as much as social action itself—observed in quotidian practice—can generate curiosity about the social actor. Consistent with its critique of statebuilding—that constitutes a distinct set of ordering processes to re-monopolize the legitimate use of violence within an autonomous and centralized rational-legal authority while enhancing its relations to society—this chapter begins to highlight alternative processes of ordering and the informal social actors who make it possible. This

informal ordering illustrated through the activities of Micro-Territorial Governors (MTGs) situated within borderlands, takes place outside the state, yet in relation with the state and international statebuilding actors. Processes of informal ordering processes inscribed within the quotidian practice at the state's margins its borderlands are embedded, socially organized, structurally amorphous and mainly informal.

Chapter five expands the range of understanding informal ordering by illustrating the configurative ordering of labor and productivity in economic informality. Simultaneous to the community leaders who are central to the daily ordering of human and material processes within borderlands, there are Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs). These are youth borderland navigators whose livelihoods are based on mastering the socio-political and physical topographies of their borderlands and the international. To interact with permanent and transient dimensions of their borderland spaces, this highly unregulated informal mode of economic production has grown exponentially within borderlands in the postwar years. This growth has driven process of unionization that serve several purposes including to order informality, agenda setting, agenda building and advocacy. Unionization, the cornerstone of ordering informality, has also contributed to shaping the internal performativity of CMR unions thereby generating in-house credit schemes known as the “*susu*” within these unions. This credit function fills an economic gap within borderlands and has made these unions sites of both economic and political power, while attracting investment from older commercial motorbike owners (CMOs). CMR Unions also evolve informal labor management and conflict resolutions mechanisms between CMRs, the state and the society. Overall, this chapter elaborates how the CMR sector interacts with the postwar state through

the daily navigation of internal and international borders; and it engages with the international through training, safety and public health programs.

Chapter six deepens the understanding of processes of informal ordering and ordering informality taken together by moving from its configurative form to comparatively evidence patterns of authority-based legitimation and accountability. These pluralized and simultaneously occurring processes of informal ordering and ordering informality endow borderland social actors with grounded authority and control of territoriality, social and economic processes. It also points to the dispersal of sovereignty as non-state actors become central to some modes of service provision for their communities. Legitimacy within pluralized informal orders is derived from socially grounded interpretations and the routinization of accountability and participation in developing a system of direct representation embedded within borderland communities. Meanwhile, presidentially appointed mayors interact with pluralized informal orders differently often discouraging the use of election to designate Micro-Territorial Governors while largely steering clear of the governance of CMR Unions. Socially grounded authority derives from a specificity of spatial (physical), social and symbolic ordering. Socially grounded authority is embedded, decentralized, legitimate, representative and empowered to act on behalf of borderland communities. Socially grounded authority derived from pluralized informal ordering differs markedly from Weberian rational-legal authority and its neo-patrimonial derivatives. However, the limited presence of the postwar state facilitates the interpenetration of socially grounded informal authority and state authority thereby confirming the pluralization of sovereignty. This chapter evidences the evolving constitution and deployment of socially grounded authority in daily practice within borderland spaces and its implications for postwar statebuilding.

Chapter seven explores the deployment of socially grounded authority derived from informal ordering and ordering informality in postwar borderlands. These result in the development and political maintenance of multiple and differing forms of social controls. Informal borderland social actors and the state vary along a spectrum from contestation to collusion in the development and maintenance of social controls especially when spaces, places and symbols overlap. The itinerant nature and licensing of CMRing, the overlap of *marketscapes* and household spaces and gatekeeping community access provide illustrative spheres for explaining how social grounded authority deploys social control within postwar borderlands. Thus, the social control outcomes of informal ordering processes in Liberia's postwar borderlands alternate from conflict to cooperation with the postwar state. Meanwhile in daily practice the prevalence of incipient violence challenges both the state and informal social actors. The challenge of imposing social controls on the informally non-state orders is also evidenced in the proliferation of a culture of violence among CMRs. Social controls, while centralized and hierarchically structured, remain very ineffective in imposing behavioral shifts on the intended subjects of control.

Chapter eight develops an understanding of politicized social controls emanating from borderland social orders. The issue of politicized social controls goes to the heart of how locality in terms of positioning and everyday social action contribute to testing top-down postwar statebuilding. The intersection of everyday social control dynamics with centralized state-enforced social control processes produces the empirical social control reality of borderland spaces.

The concluding chapter highlights the contributions that an ethnographic exploration of informality contributes to the needling problem of statebuilding in International Relations. It also relates this thesis to interpretations of local, hybrid and negotiated forms of authority – recurrent themes in the critical statebuilding and peacebuilding literature. This study concludes that informal ordering illustrated through borderland dynamics is central to understanding postwar statebuilding outcomes. Informal ordering processes simultaneously occurring alongside international statebuilding and peacebuilding processes are mutually constitutive. As illustrated through MTGs, CMRs and CMR Unions within Liberia’s borderlands pluralized informal ordering leverages opportunities provided by international statebuilding to entrench and institutionalize their control over human and material processes.

Thus, social controls resulting from pluralized informal ordering are important in explaining both the performance and consolidation of informal orders; and the positional and spatial marginality of the postwar state within borderlands. Far from creating synchronically hybrid governance, pluralized informal orders challenge the autonomy of the postwar state. Furthermore, they prevent effective centralization of authority and re-establishment of a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence by the state. Hence effective postwar statebuilding cannot be achieved without addressing the emergence and resilience of pluralized informal orders that are relatively more visible, accountable, representative and legitimate than the emergent postwar state – given their longevity and social embeddedness – within borderlands. However, it generates further questions for research that cut across theoretical and arenas pertaining to – how to enhance the social embeddedness of postwar states the territories over which they seek to exercise effective control and total sovereignty?

Chapter 2

Liberia: Borderlands in Historical Statebuilding Perspective

This chapter synoptically historicizes the relationship between borderland dynamics and the state in Liberia with a focus on bygone ‘critical junctures’ and more proximate relation to Liberia’s Civil Wars (1989-1997 and 1999-2003). The causal, constitutive and evolutionary elements of Liberia’s civil war history have been variously chronicled and debated across disciplinary lines (Ellis 2006, Sawyer 2005, Levitt 2006, and Waugh 2012). However, presentation of this history relative to processes of statebuilding and state transformation in Liberia has tended to gloss over the infrastructural, social and political specificities of borderlands social dynamics while sticking to an elite meta-narrative. The enshrinement of differentiation between Liberia’s coastal settlements and its hinterlands in the Republic’s 1847 constitution set the precedent for a uneasy relationship between mutually transforming settlers and ‘indigenes’. Re-reading Liberia’s history with from a borderlands perspective emphasizes the importance of borderland agency in the negotiation of territoriality and sovereignty. Contemporaneous patterns of international statebuilding in Liberia are therefore represent continuity of externally-driven and socially un-embedded process being grafted upon on antecedent pre- and post-independence statebuilding challenges that resulted in a bloody coup and two civil wars.

Borders, borderlands and society are interrelated constructs historically essential to understanding both short-term statebuilding and long-term state formation processes in politics and international studies. Exploring these process dynamics from borderlands necessitates centralizing quotidian

symbolic, social and physical constitution and manifestations of non-state borderland social processes. These social actors that are largely informal develop out of the necessity to provide, manage, regulate and control human and material processes within borderlands. The configuration of non-state social actors provides the basis for collective engagement within arenas of opposition and domination with processes of postwar statebuilding. Meanwhile the engagement transforms both social actors and states, and also shapes the nature of successive encounters. Hence there is a need to understand anterior historical dispositions of borderland social actor engagement with different iterations of the pre-independence, post-independence, post-coup and postwar state.

Interrogating postwar statebuilding through the observation and interpretation of daily practices of informal ordering, authority and control within borderlands, this study benefits from Migdal's (2001) states-in-society approach. A states-in-society approach assumes that the non-monolithic state deploys both coercive and non-coercive methods to impose effective territoriality and exact submission to sovereignty. However, rather than looking at what the state does, it becomes necessary to find and understand the agency of non-state social configurations in engagement with the state in historical perspective. In the case of Liberia, Moran's (2006:12) exploration of how local people interpret, resist and accommodate local events and institutions builds on ethnographic research conducted in the 1980s and subsequent communications through Liberian diaspora networks. More so, it importantly sets the stage for escaping state centric interpretations of political phenomena and challenges culturally deterministic interpretations of wartime behaviors and attitudes. This approach veers towards a societies-in-states approach that highlights the importance of understanding state transformation and statebuilding outcomes as products of

simultaneously occurring and interactive processes of societal reconfiguration and state reconstruction. In this thesis, it is done by focusing the interpretive lens on borderland social actors in engagement with postwar statebuilding.

This chapter provides a background understanding of the historical relationship between borderlands dynamics and statebuilding in Liberia. Liberia's history starts from a rather bifurcated premise with the American settlers on one side and indigenous Liberian groups on the other. Historically, Liberia's statebuilding process has been constituted by various challenges and responses to the emergence of central authority (Dunn et al. 1988: 194) borne out of its bifurcated origins. Thus, the historical exploration of this chapter is divided into four periods i) 1821/22 – 1964 the 'founding' and institutionalization of the independent Republic of Liberia; ii) 1964 – 1980 Failure of national unification and the reinvention of state hegemony in Liberia; iii) 1980 – 1990 Liberia's post-coup state and borderlands as battlefields; and iv) 1990 – 1999 Balkanization and Territorial Control as War Strategy in Liberia's Civil Wars. These different phases in Liberia's history provide a frame understanding the struggle to establish effective territoriality and sovereignty in Liberia. The bifurcated origins of the Liberian state set a precedence of Americo-Liberian (Dunn et al. 1988: 2) hegemony and the construction of central authority based on that group's conceptualization and operationalization of statehood. Given that the settlers mainly inhabited coastal settlement and the evolution of groups, relationships and contexts, a historical contextualization of statebuilding contributes to situating contemporaneous borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding. Differentiated social configuration of communities have evolved over time as borderland villages have grown into towns and cities within which traditional authority has been as marginalized as the authority of the modern state. This evolution has also seen

the emergence of non-traditional and non-state social actors stepping in to shape informal order, authority and control – the themes that course through this study.

The different phases of Liberia's history, while arbitrarily divided to represent critical junctures, also represent important signposts in individual life histories and the evolution of the political topographies of collective social actors. However, Liberia's borderlands were neither *terra nullis* nor *terra incognita* prior to resettlement by freed slaves from the United States of America and those liberated from slave ships on the high seas. These borderlands were populated in multiple waves of migration, conquest and alliance formation that contributed to the constitution of highly developed political organization and strong military organization to the forest belt region extending from Sierra Leone through Liberian to Cote d'Ivoire (Gershoni 1985: 2). These migratory waves benefited from and were supported by the establishment of sahelian trade routes and coastal commerce.

The American Colonization Society and the Institutionalization of Two Liberias (1821 – 1964)

The American Society for Colonizing Free People of Color in the United States, that later evolved into the American Colonization Society (ACS) arrived on the coast of West Africa in 1820-21 and bid to set up settlements for freed slaves from the Americas. Between 1822 and 1867 the ACS that was part of the movement for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, brought 18,858 immigrants to the coast of West Africa (Gershoni 1985:8). The history of the encounter between repatriated settlers and local communities, points to the coercive use of conquest to gain and maintain a foothold on Cape Mesurado

initially. Settler rebellions against ACS agents in 1822 and 1824 led to the negotiation of a stable administrative framework through which Cape Mesurado settlement was defined as a colony named Liberia with its capital in Monrovia (Gershoni 1986: 10). Meanwhile this new colony was to be governed by an ACS agent with the help of a local council. Disagreements within the ACS in the United States of America saw similar settlements emerge along Liberia's coastal stretch from Cape Mount to Maryland. These settlers have collectively been referred to either as "Americo-Liberians" (Ellis, 2006; Levitt 2005) or as "repatriates" (Dunn et al. 1988: 1). With help from the United States, and despite facing initial environmental, political and geo-strategic challenges the Americo-Liberian configured and maintained a privileged hegemony that would govern Liberia for more than a century (Liebenow 1987: 48).

These settlers had arrived with a benevolence that was inseparable from their firm conviction that theirs was a superior civilization, however, once in Liberia they endeavored to recreate the only social and political order they knew – the antebellum south – with themselves as the master class (Ciment 2013: xviii). The constitution of this master class that was neither firmly American nor distinctly African was perpetuated through a uniquely Liberian blend of assimilation, acculturation and indirect rule. The institutional and administrative dimensions of territoriality and sovereignty, which devolved from this history provides a backdrop for understanding subsequent and successive statebuilding illogic over the *longue durée* in Liberia. Central to this understanding of statebuilding is the complex interplay of dynamic identity as well as identity dynamics, expropriation, and revenue generation and appropriation. These socio-political facets through which governance was operationalized in Liberia showcase how the privileged minority consolidated and maintained hegemonic colonial governance in Liberia the Republic's founding in 1847 to the coup d'état of

April 1980. It also evidences the continuity of an uneasy interaction between Liberia's borderland dynamics and temporally differentiated processes of statebuilding.

The declaration of independence by the Republic of Liberia in 1847 was a project undertaken by settlers seeking to rid themselves of ACS governance; and fighting to maintain territorial gains in the face of colonial expansionism by France and Great Britain, amid waning financial backing from the United States Congress. In the establishment of the Republic, its motto "the love of freedom brought us here"; its flag the lone star and stripes; and its constitution tacitly evoked the sense of Liberia as an American overseas territory. While Monrovia sought to maintain close ties to the United States of America, it also struggled to assert control over its relatively new territory with fiscal, infrastructural, security and healthcare challenges. The evolution of statebuilding regimes in Liberia was historically a relational process between settlers and indigenous populations (Dunn et al. 1988: 26; Gershoni 1986: 42; Waugh 2011: 25). The identity politics embedded in this dynamic inured into the social construction of an identity hierarchy, which placed the Americo-Liberian above indigenous identities.

The necessity for effective territorial control led to the establishment of systems of indirect and direct rule constituted and shaped interaction between the administrative center and the administered distant hinterlands. These occurred simultaneously with the deployment of assimilation and enculturation of indigenous communities geographically proximate to settler colonies. Both internal and regional challenges to territoriality and sovereignty contributed to this three-pronged approach to governance. Indirect rule promoted the cooptation of traditional rulers into the governance apparatus for the collection

of hut taxes and to exercise other forms of population control (Akpan, 1980:59). The hut tax was higher in the countryside, which was bereft of economic activity beyond subsistence modes of agricultural production, than it was in Monrovia and the other settler colonies (Levitt 2005: 139). Subsequently, education provided an avenue for indigenous Liberians to develop credentials, which made for their insertion into the growing Liberian public service system. This new cadre of “Native African Commissioners” (Akpan, 1980: 61) constituted the main means through which the Liberian government exercised political and economic control over the indigenous African of Liberia. However, Gershoni (1986: 35) notes the situational complexity in Liberia with life being conducted on two parallel levels “the level of everyday life was one of constant economic, social and personal contact with Africans both on the coast and in the hinterlands. On the other level of official contacts, however, there was an almost total division between the Africans and the Americo-Liberians.”

With independence came the institutionalization of the system of political parties in Liberia with the True Whig Party (which was actually an ever changing “ad hoc coalition of oligarchs” Gershoni 1986: 19) dominating political activity. Despite constituting the demographic minority, power was safely imbued within and coercively deployed by the Americo-Liberian elite. Successive Americo-Liberians acceded to the presidency through the domineering presence of the True Whig Party in Liberia’s political space (Ellis 2006: 62). Liberia’s founding constitution of 1847 had largely ignored the natives, except as objects of paternalist protection – much like the slaves the Americo-Liberians had once been, at least in the minds of the planters who owned them (Ciment 2013: 67). To become Liberian indigenous people had to prove that they were “civilized”. Civilization could be acquired through

apprenticeship, ownership and cultivation of one's own land; relinquishing paganism for at least three years and accepting Christian religion (Gershoni 1986: 22).

The centralization of power in Monrovia, with rule by proxy on the hinterlands was determined policies of extraction and taxation, which solidified horizontal inequalities between settler communities on the coast and indigenous communities in the hinterlands (Waugh: 2011). President Arthur Barclay (1904-1912) the first Liberian leader to present a comprehensive plan for imposing Liberian control over the hinterland proposed the integration the native population into the state of Liberia to create a united nation. However, this plan reinforced differentiation in the administration of coastal counties governed by Superintendents and the hinterland provinces ruled by commissioners from 1914 – 1964 when they also became counties. Until the 1960s the hinterland provinces were governed through a patronage system that incorporated government-selected town, clan and paramount chiefs into a Monrovia-based system represented within the hinterlands by provincial commissioners.

Two important aspects of Liberia's administrative governance trace their origins from the Barclay Plan – the creation of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1908 (Nevin 2011: 276) and the hierarchical administration subdivision of hinterland spaces (even in previously acephalous spaces). During the making of the Liberian state, these local chiefs were incorporated into the structure of the state by a combination of brute force and indirect rule through district commissioners (Boås et al 2014: 49). Through the LFF, the state sought to monopolize the use of violence, however illegitimate it was in coercive pacification exercises. Much attention has been given to the wars that were

fought between coastal communities and settlers between 1822 and 1847 and between coastal communities and the Liberian state between 1847 and 1915. Between 1822 and 1947, Levitt (2005: 42-85) documented wars between the Dei (1822), Bassa (1835), Kru (1838) and Vai (1839-40) and the Americo-Liberian Settlers. These were followed by subsequent wars between the newly independent Liberian government and the Bassa (1851-52), Kru (1855, 1909, 1912 and 1915); and Grebo (1856-57, 1893, 1910) (Levitt 2005 94-110; Gershoni 1986: 104-107). These wars contributed to the changing composition of the LFF to incorporate indigenous Liberians who brought with them traditional techniques of warfare (Nevin 2011: 282) and the consolidation of the Liberian state on the coast. However, this narrative largely omits the complex hinterland proxy war dynamics in Northwestern Liberia (today's Lofa County) involving Kissi associates of Mende chief Kai Lundu and Gbandi associates of Malinke warrior, Samori Touré approximately dating between 1889 and 1904 (see Dunn et al. 2001: 185 on Kai Lundu expedition of 1889; Massing 1981). According to Dunn et al (2001: 185) the Kai Lundu expedition was symbolic for its implications on the growth of central authority in Mendeland towards the end of the 19th century. These processes of social and political configuration were supplanted by the administrative instrumentalization of territory by the Barclay Plan and an LFF frontier pacification mission led by Lieutenant William Lomax. However, these twin instruments of ordering for effective territorial control were both destabilizing and repressive. They ended up creating enough unrest within Liberia's northwestern borderlands that the British colonial authorities in Sierra Leone and French colonial authorities in Guinea were compelled to intervene. Subsequently, the frontier commission established official boundaries so that Liberia could deal with its territorial concerns relating to its ongoing statebuilding effort.

In practical terms, Barclay's administrative ordering created townships headed by a town chief; clans composed of several townships under a clan chief (hardly understood in the anthropological sense); and several clans brought together under a centrally-appointed paramount chief. In the process, the traditional regal functions of chieftaincy were eroded, thereby altering chief-community dynamics in ways that undermined cohesive indigenous allegiance to Liberia's sovereignty and territoriality integrity. In some cases, it even fostered inter-communal rivalry. Reactions to this new administrative organogram ranged from collaboration to contestation on the part of hinterland communities. Another dimension to this interaction between the government and indigenous communities was to privilege some communities at the expense of others, which then made them beholden to the ruling class.

The eventual arrival of Firestone with the establishment of the Harbel rubber plantations in Margibi County was an economic boon for the Government of Liberia (GOL), which received an injection of foreign direct investment, menial employment for indigenous Liberians and set off the construction and modernization of the Freeport of Monrovia (Van Der Kraij, 1980: 199; Ellis, 2006: 72). The implications of the entry of Firestone into the Liberian economy weaned the GOL of dependence on foreign debt and tax revenue for fiscal solvency. It also introduced revenue streams that would eventually exacerbate income inequalities between the Americo-Liberians and their ruling cohort and the rest of the country. This period has also been described as one of segmental, intermittent, societal segregation characterized by colonists remaining relatively segregated from the indigenous population, who entered occasionally into functional relations with them as for trade and defense (Wrubel 1971: 190).

Failed National Unification and the Reinvention of State Hegemony in Liberia (1964–1980)

After the Barclay Plan of the early 1900s, the next significant attempt to strengthen state sovereignty and territorial control in Liberia came with Tubman's twin Open Door (ODP) and National Unification (NUP) Policies of the mid-1940s. The economic liberalization advocated by the ODP was based on using Liberia's newly discovered natural resource endowments to attract foreign direct investment as well as a crop of expatriate personnel to manage this economic expansion. Meanwhile the NUP ostensibly sought to dispense with the bifurcated administration of Liberia—crystallized through the differentiated governance of coastal counties and provincial hinterland—that had prevailed since independence. These interconnected and potentially transformative projects, however, entrenched elite privilege and further marginalized non-elite social groups culminating in a “state-led creation of inequality” (Sæther 2000:117). Vestiges, symbols and enduring legacies of both policies endure alongside more contemporaneous relics of war across Liberia's landscape and within social and political discourse and practice in Liberia.

Take the example of Nimba County as an illustration. Sanniquellie is the capital city of Liberia's northernmost Nimba County (bordering both Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire). Its landscape symbolically attests to the complex historical relationship between and betwixt hinterlands and different state administrative projects in Liberia. Approaching the city from Monrovia stands a rugged and timeworn statue of President William V.S. Tubman, the man who in 1959 hosted within this hinterland city a meeting that birthed the Organization of African Unity. It was also within the framework of Tubman's National Unification Policy that the Central Province became Nimba County in 1964.

With the discovery of natural resource endowments, marginal and marginalized Nimba County provided the core empirical basis of Tubman's Open-Door Policy. It also importantly provided the material basis for the construction and consolidation of a hegemonic Liberian state. The discovery of iron ore reserves in Mount Nimba in the 1950s operationally led to the establishment of the LAMCO (Liberian American Swedish Mining Company) mines in Yekepa. By 1972 iron ore production in Liberia had reached an output of 22.6 million long tons worth US\$182.1 million accounting for 75 per cent of the total earning export (Mehmet 1975: 510). This spawned the construction of a 250km railway line linking Yekepa to the port in Buchanan and the nascence of unionized labor within the mines. These political and industrial dynamics provide the basis for understanding the empirical continuities and cosmetic changes that characterized the relationship between coastal elites and hinterland bases of economic production.

The National Unification Policy emerged out of a complex set of historical processes of which the Second World War and the rise of African independence movements were the most impactful for Liberia. WVS Tubman's election to the presidency in 1944 coincided with the abating of WWII and the birth of independence movements, which crystallized into African political parties such as the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) and the *Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (RDA) in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. These independence movements given the filial linkages between Liberia's hinterland populations with ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire represented immanent challenges where colonial powers had once threatened Liberia's territoriality and sovereignty. Pre-empting the appropriation of these emancipatory discourses by Liberia's borderland and other ethnic groups,

Tubman deftly developed a sluggish NUP. While the origins of the policy can be traced to 1947 (Fahnbulleh 1964), the first National Unification Conference did not take place until 1954 in Maryland County. This conference set out a program for an administrative survey of Liberia, leading up to the second NUC in 1959 in Sanniquellie. It was not until the third NUC in Voinjama in 1963 that plans were made to nominally transform the hinterland provinces to counties with the appointment of superintendents and judges from Monrovia to ensure the administrative functioning of these new counties. This process of territorial ordering, however, failed to either account for historically antecedent forms of social organization or the administrative political sociology that that resulted from the Barclay Plan. Hence another administrative layer was being added atop the arbitrary creation of town, clan and paramount chieftaincies.

In terms of establishing effective territorial control and entrenching state sovereignty, the NUP coincided with the mutation of the LFF into the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in 1944. This military modernization sought to transfer the LFF's border control, tax collection and hinterland pacification missions to a reformed and more territorially expansive National Police Force of Liberia. A number of legislative acts in the 1940s expanded the role of the National Police Force of Liberia to perform some of those law and order functions that had hitherto been performed by the LFF (Kromah 2007: 20). Meanwhile Monrovia retained highly centralized command and control of the police operations. Occurring during the Second World War, the transformation from the LFF to the AFL sought to create an outward looking army capable of protecting Liberia from foreign invasion and capable of fighting alongside allied forces. Despite these changes in the Liberian security sector *dispositif* within the general framework of Tubman's NUP, the security establishment continued to reflect the hierarchical differentiation with Americo-Liberians and "civilized"

hinterlanders occupying command and control posts, while indigenous Liberians filled the rank and file. This constitutes an important aspect in the antecedent episodes of problematic statebuilding in Liberia.

Windfalls from foreign direct investments recouped from natural resource extraction, fiscally supported the alterations in Liberia's administrative configuration within the framework of the NUP. Substantial economic growth in the 1950s and 60s gave Tubman the material base for establishing a system of reciprocal assimilation of elites by providing a base for his use of public resources to build a personal political following (Sæther 2000: 116). Meanwhile, the Open-Door Policy, which was originally seen as a potential threat by conservative members of the dominant minority, earned government monetary benefits that were in turn redistributed to members of this elite, thus giving them added economic advantage (Wrubel 1971: 196). However, over a century of assimilation, the 'dominant minority' had become socially hybrid, incorporating an acculturated, intermarried and educated group of Liberians from the hinterlands. Meanwhile the transfer of labor from the subsistence sector to the concessions tended to undermine the traditional social mechanisms of rural areas, where male elders exercised authority through their monopoly control of land, trade and women (Ellis 2006: 49). This transfer of labor, whether it was to operations run by Firestone in Margibi County or LAMCO in Nimba County also created an environment for the nascence of unionized labor. The economic boon amid deepening horizontal inequalities provided the basis for enduring contestation between the hybridizing coastal elite and indigenous hinterland social groups.

When the maiden OAU summit was hosted in Saniquellie in 1959, it was the capital of Liberia's Northern Province and hardly benefited from the same

privileges administrative status as Counties like Montserrado, Grand Bassa or Maryland. Hosting the pre-OAU talks away from Monrovia was significant step in the subsequent crystallization of Tubman's landmark National Unification policy (Carter 1970, Sawyer 1994, Ellis 2006, Dunn et al. 1988). Under Tubman's administration that lasted from 1944 to his death in a London hospital in 1971, Liberia witnessed a number of largely symbolic administrative shifts. Tubman's National Unification Policy resulted from a complex set of international, regional, national and sub-national factors. It granted county status to hinterland provinces, while simultaneously assuring the governing True Whig elite that its position would not be challenged as a result thereof. Meanwhile the economic boon resulting from the discovery of natural resources in Liberia provided the material basis for allaying the fears of the dominant minority, establishing a patronage system and exacerbating horizontal identity-based inequalities between the dominant minority and the dominated majority.

Tolbert built upon Tubman's legacy and went a step further. It was under his administration that the modernization of borderland spaces occurred. This modernization principally took the form of the incorporation of border boomtowns into cities. The productive economic basis of these border boomtowns was commercial – this was the case of the two border cities (Foya, Lofa County and Ganta, Nimba County) at the center of this study. Their status as trade nodes and hubs of commercial activity antedated their statutes of incorporation. However, incorporation sought to put the state at the center of processes of order making within these commercial spaces through the appointment of City Mayors and the provision of National Police Forces of Liberia posts. In the process, however, alternative modes of ordering emerged within these spaces that escaped the control of arbitrary paramount, clan and town chiefs imposed by the Barclay Plan and constantly sought a voice for

engagement in arenas of opposition and domination with representatives of state authority.

The 1980 Coup, Liberia's Post-Coup State and Borderland as Battlefields

The 1980 military coup in Liberia was cumulatively a symptom and manifestation of broader failures in Liberia's statebuilding project and signaled a new turn in the long-term process of state formation. It was the culmination of a political season that had been ushered in by the formation of opposition parties including the Movement for Justice in Africa in 1973 and then Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) in 1975. Both political parties challenged the century-old True Whig Party domination of what had become a party-state. This grouping of leftist activists and intellectuals also demanded opening the political space for participation and inclusion, accountability and representation. These activities kicked off internal debate that can be simplistically described as opposing pro-democracy reformists and hardliners within the True Whig Party. Meanwhile, the Tolbert regime simultaneously responded to demands for openness by relaxing Tubman's repressive mechanisms within the "security ministry" (Ciment 2013: 234-236) and expanding its patronage networks within Liberia's rural communities in an attempt to weaken opposition fervor (Ellis 2006). The formations of organized political parties by a collection of social and student activists and public intellectuals contributed to the emergence of alternative voices across Liberia's political landscape. It also forced introspection within the True Whig Party and the state.

While these political movements remained fairly centrally based in Monrovia, they provided a platform for organized civil engagement with the Liberian state

within arenas of opposition and domination. The rice riots of April 1979 became a proving ground for this nascent confrontation with the state. Riots erupted when the government, through its Minister of Agriculture raised the price of a 100-pound bag of rice from \$22 per bag to \$26 ostensibly to incentivize rice production within Liberia. However, Liberia's opposition saw in this move an attempt by rice importers to benefit from price gouging a food staple and further impoverish Liberians. The price of the bag of rice, like that of the loaf of bread preceding the French revolution, affected almost every Liberian. PAL seized the moment calling for peaceful protests, which were met with public enthusiasm on the one hand and by government repression on the other. Tolbert even requested that warplanes from Guinea be deployed to buzz over Monrovia's protesters (Cooper 140-141). Liberia's growth without development (Clower et al 1966) was heralding a post-True Whig party stage in state formation. Tubman's focus on using public revenue generated through the Open-Door Policy to strengthen self-serving political patronage had forgone the alternative of strengthening and diversifying Liberia's economy to create and expand opportunity across social strata.

A combination of political restiveness and volatility characterized by the 1979 Rice Riots set the stage for the 1980 military coup which brought Samuel K. Doe and the Peoples Redemption Council (PRC) to power. Four incidents—the 1980 coup, the 1985 presidential election, the 1989 onset of the Liberian Civil War, and the 1999 LURD-led conflict relapse, provide analytical markers for the changing social configuration and role of borderlands in statebuilding. While the implications of these occurrences on the state and statebuilding have scantily been previously explored, Goodhand (2013: 256) suggests that sudden changes in the rules of the game and shifts in the power balance between center and periphery are clearly crucial in shifting borderlands from being

marginal and neglected (or powerful and advanced) to becoming unruly and militarized. A historical interrogation of Liberia's borderlands – considering Scott's (1998: 21) homogenizing cartographic rendering of social legibility by the state – is thus operationalized through the most basic administrative unit abutting the borders on the Liberian side i.e. district level. The prism of these landmark historical phases and events provides insights on how complex and immanent borderland dynamics contribute to altering power shifts within the state and vice versa in a process of transformative interaction. It provides historical insights on the role and implications of engagement between the state and its borderland spaces in the negotiation of territoriality (as a political construct) and the emergence of empirical manifestations of sovereignty. Implicitly therefore, Liberia's borderlands evidence historically cumulative transformation ordered interaction with the state. These borderlands also exhibit characteristics of restiveness, exile and escape from repression by central authority. These historical processes provide an important starting point for understanding the evolutionary dynamics upon which cotemporary statebuilding is being added.

Historically, the development of instruments and mechanisms of 'ordering' and control informs an understanding of the state's pursuit of effective territorial control and absolute sovereignty over borderlands. Conversely, these instruments of control have implications on the nature and form of violence within borderlands. However, where the state and dominant non-state actors compete for and share the use of force within liminal spaces, oligopolies of violence that blur the line between public and private use of force emerge. The Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) served as the Leviathan enforcer in the borderlands from 1908. Its successor Armed Forces of Liberia continued the pursuit of the state's securitization, while sharing the responsibility for ordering

and control with the National Police Force of Liberia. This process of state securitization in Liberia was shaped by the inherent political and social nature of successive regimes and their social relationships with society. Given the one-sided exploitation of borderlands for taxes, import duties, mineral and agricultural resources with the meager development of infrastructure, livelihood in these refuges warranted the evolution of competing ordering and control mechanisms for circumventing and countering state control and the state's quest to bring borderlands under its control.

The government's political and economic self-securitization through the establishment of authoritarian control of borderlands invariably centralized anti-government contestation in Monrovia. The 1980 coup brought the first group of indigenous Liberians into the presidency was fomented and executed from Monrovia. A 25-member National Constitution Committee was created in 1981 under the Chairmanship of Amos Sawyer to review Liberia's 1847 constitution, thereby adapting it to Liberia's new reality. The revised constitution was approved by referendum in 1984 after being tweaked by the Doe regime to increase the presidential term limits from four to six years among other propositions that favored military participation in politics. However, it did not come into effect until after the General Elections of 1985. The significance of this constitution was its extension of full rights to all Liberians to education, while prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender, religion or ethnicity.

Despite the strides made by this new constitution to lay the foundation for a much fairer nation, the Doe regime's politicization of identity and the continuation of personality cult leadership set a series of events in motion that culminated in the First Liberian Civil War in 1989. First were the October 1985

elections in which Samuel Doe defeated Jackson F. Doe, previously a Senior Senator for Nimba County (Liberia Action Party). These elections were marred by irregularities, with Jackson F. Doe thought to have won. A month later, in November 1985 there was an attempted coup by Doe's former brother-in-arms Gen. Thomas Quiwompka (of Nimba descent). These events resulted in the Mano and the Gio of Nimba County becoming pariahs of the Samuel Doe regime. The AFL was purged of Mano and Gio element from Nimba County, and flooded with Krahn from Doe's ethnic group. Subsequently, Nimba County was subjected to coercive "pacification" missions orchestrated by the Armed Forces of Liberia (Ellis 2006). Meanwhile, the Liberian state continued its system of patronage, only this time around it did so by building privileged ties and extending economic advantage to the Mandingo communities within Nimba region (Ellis, 2006: 142). The twin coercive pacification of Nimba County by the AFL and extension of commercial privileges to the Mandingoes amounted to the pervasive instrumentalization of ethnicity for political gain and breeding inter-group tensions.

As a result of Doe's repression, many military-aged males in Nimba crossed the border into kindred Gio communities in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. Meanwhile Mandingos capitalized on their privileged position with Doe to control artisanal diamond mining operations across much of Nimba County. Many Nimbaians would return as freedom fighters "against a government that had forsaken its responsibility to protect its citizens and was persecuting them"¹ noted a community leader in Ganta. Unsurprisingly, the NPFL incursion from Cote d'Ivoire came in through Nimba County where the support they got from local communities that had grown hostile to the Doe regime provided a rear base within Liberia from which they could launch sustained assaults. Obviously,

¹ Interview with CC3 in Ganta, Nimba County on August 12, 2015.

there was a differentiated treatment of borderland communities by the Doe regime. However, by their telling, there was a lot of grievance against the Doe regime underlying the decision of different communities within Nimba County to support what initially was Taylor's rebellion. This historical dimension of borderlands dynamics points to their importance in the onset of the conflict in Liberia.

Balkanization and Territorial Control as War Strategy during Liberia's Civil Wars

Charles Taylor acceded to the Liberian presidency after the 1997 elections in which his National Patriotic Party (75% of votes) defeated Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson's Unity Party (10% of votes) in what was a rather bizarre election opposing two individuals who had shared a common goal of ridding Liberia of Doe's oppressive regime. These elections were preceded by a number of peace agreements signed between the warring factions in Cotonou, Akosombo and Abuja between 1991 and 1995. These peace agreements evidence the importance of territorial control as war strategy in Liberia. The fracturing belligerent factions was a fact of the Liberian civil war. Hardly had the war began when Prince Y. Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front for Liberia splintered from Taylor's NPFL. The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy that had also been formed in 1991 split up into a ULIMO-K component with Alhadji G.V. Kromah at its helm and ULIMO-J led by General Roosevelt Johnson. The splintering of these rebel groups fosters oligopolies of violence, strategy and military objectives with human and territorial implications.

Between 1991 and 1995 Liberia was effectively a country balkanized territoriality under different and differing forms of rebel and government control with

borderlands trapped in the strategic positioning of belligerent forces. Borderlands are not only notionally complex, but their horizontal and vertical expressions make them means by which factional warring interest achieve postwar ends. Both war fighting and peace building are in essence collective action problems involving processes of ‘de-bordering’ and ‘re-bordering’ (Goodhand 2008:225). In essence, the sets of “re-bordering” processes in which the state engages (in a bid for state securitization) are mimicked by belligerent factions seeking different ends through the means of civil war. However, Liberia’s borderlands social actors have characteristically respond with their own sets of processes, which take advantage of their position on the edges of states. Liberia’s borderland elites, cognizant of their dual role within the state (often as gatekeepers into the borderlands) as well as at the edges of the state (as representatives of borderlands in elite spheres) skillfully navigate both spheres to their advantage.

Liberia’s IGNU that had been formed after negotiations in Gambia and which was led by President Amos Sawyer benefited from the de jure legitimacy of state office. However, under conditions of civil war, the IGNU’s controlled Monrovia and a few coastal pockets with the help of the remnants of the AFL and the support of ECOMOG forces (Adebajo 2002). Given ECOMOG deployment to Monrovia and the inability of the NPFL to secure outright military victory, they settled for the re-bordering of Liberia by creating a de facto shadow government in Bong County.

From 1991 to 1994, Taylor was instrumental in setting the pace for wartime internal re-bordering and alternative ordering in Liberia. He did this by establishing the NPRAG (the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government) with capital in Gbarnga (Bong County). Bong County, borders

southern Guinea. Its capital, Gbarnga (122 miles from Monrovia) sits at the strategic crossroads of the northward highway leading to Nzerekore in Guinea and the eastward highway leading to the Liberian border boomtown of Ganta (40 miles from Gbarnga) in Nimba County. The establishment of the NPRAG in Gbarnga led to indiscriminate and at times targeted retribution against Mandingo elements (who were seen as mercantilist accomplices to the Doe regime) and ethnic Krahn, Doe's ethnic brethren (Ellis, 2006). The NPRAG might not have legally been a recognized state, but in fact it exhibited all the attributes of statehood including border controls, a monopoly over the use of violence, a currency, an assembly, a justice system, tax collection and the attribution of contracts for the exploitation of mines within its space much to Taylor's benefit.

The NPRAG manifested tropes of state performance through its construction of internal borders, albeit with murderous consequences for some potential travellers suspected of belonging to rival ethnic groups. The politicization of ethnicity within NPLF controlled enclaves, led to the internal and external displacement of communities with implications for the social configuration and character of borderlands and the formation of new rebel groups constructed along ethnic lines. Given the continued presence of ECOMOG in Monrovia, most of these dynamics were crystallized in Liberia's borderlands. However, the control that the NPFL had exercised over large swaths of Liberia after its initial invasion in 1989 was challenged on multiple fronts by nascent rebel factions, which themselves were born out of the ongoing civil war dynamics. ULIMO-K, marching from Guinea wrested almost entire control of Lofa County. Foya residents, for example, describe the 1991 ULIMO-K incursion commanded by a Guinean fighter nicknamed "Saah Tchui" (the first-born axe).

The brutality of the ULIMO-K invasion towards the Kissi people compared to the NPFL's recruitment of territorial managers from within the occupied ethnic group is etched in the memories and on the city's landscape with a memorial hut. "ULIMO them set up their big guns on the hill and asked all the town people to gather in the airfield. Then they gathered us the Quarter Chiefs and told us that we had to supply them with slave laborers to carry everything that they could take from here over to the other wide [ndlr Guinea]. We had to give them women to cook for them too," noted a community elder in Foya². Thus ULIMO-K capitalized on the land, labor, agricultural and materiel resources at its disposal to also exercise a state-like governance of territories under its control. These local dynamics of territorial control and occupation were meant to be sustained by local populations and their resources for long enough to allow the factional leaders access to and leverage at the peace table. However, they also provide insights to differing degrees of ordering that successive iterations of the Liberian state had failed to negotiate with its borderlands.

Warlords and their "mid-level commanders" (MILCs) (Themner 2012: 206) definitely had a grasp of indigenous knowledge and understood the configuration and character of borderland dynamics better than previous iterations of the Liberian state. They did not only capitalize on the empirical elements of differentiated territoriality to use these spaces as operational bases, but fostered hitherto neglected cross-border economic linkages that were personally beneficial to them and their war effort. These linkages extended as far as international supply chains. Evidence abounds of Charles Taylor building a personal fortune through diamond, iron ore and forestry resource exploitation in Liberia and Sierra Leone for patronage as well as to finance his wars in both countries (Reno, 1999: 99; Keen, 2005: 49-50; Global Witness,

² Interview with a wartime QC on 23 March 2014.

2003:22; Waugh, 2013: 62). Borderlands and its multiple interactive complex levels of entrepreneurs are often the conduits of natural resources into global supply chains. Often perceived as constituting shadow economies (Pugh and Cooper, 2004), they often negotiate their existence and survival within and as parts of formal economies (Duffield, 2001: 72 and 2007: 35). As wars end, these economic linkages do not fade away but rather mutate to fade into the changing socio-political landscape. In the process of postwar operational transformation however, individuals appropriate social organizational continuities to legitimate non-state patterns of ordering that protect themselves with communities also benefitting from collateral protection. This is seen in the confluence of life histories with social and spatial histories. There is a recurrence of individual actors who have been marginalized from the postwar processes by international normative prescriptions. These individuals become social actors by negotiating a place as community leaders and union leaders, thereby wielding power over human and material processes within borderlands and also setting themselves up as principal interlocutors with the state and statebuilding architects. Thus, wars transform borderlands and borderlands shape wars making borderlands an unavoidable space from which to interrogate postwar statebuilding and understand state formation.

Conflict Relapse and Fighting for Liberia's Borderlands

Charles Taylor finally fulfilled the goal he has set out to accomplish by unleashing the civil war on Liberia when he became president following the 1997 elections. While Taylor remains a popular figure in Liberian politics the charismatic authoritarianism he displayed in interwar governance proved incapable of rebuilding Liberia's wrecked state. The complex blend of fear and adulation which drove voter preferences during the 1997 elections were

captured in the pro-Taylor slogan *“he killed ma pa, he killed ma, be killed ma pa, but I will vote for him”* (Harris 1999: 433). Taylor’s years as a ruthless regional warlord had alienated him from potential regional partners where he was perceived as a fomenter of destabilization and earned him many factional enemies at home. This complex blend of factors made it extremely challenging for Taylor to either capitalize on state formation processes or to build a viable Liberian state.

Scant public revenue exacerbated the challenge of imposing effective territorial control and centralized sovereignty in Liberia. While he might have enriched himself through war, Taylor acceded to the helm of a shell state he had contributed to gut. Liberia’s public finance system was devastated, infrastructure was in disrepair, with the human toll of the war through deaths and internal and external displacement alarming. To deal with these challenges, having alienated potential national, regional and international partners, Taylor employed his favored charismatic authoritarianism. Fear and adulation had brought him to the presidency and he was going to rule the same way he had gotten there. Given the state of the Liberian state, life histories collected from borderlands evidence apprehension towards Taylor’s government. Fathers returned to “see”³ and “recover” their homes, leaving families behind in internal and external displacement.

While Taylor struggled to gain effective control of Monrovia, within borderlands antecedent forms of social ordering, authority and control were re-emerging albeit tinted by patterns of resiliency and survivability developed through war. The emergence of these antecedent forms of social ordering

³ “See” was a term used by a Youth Leader in Foya to describe the phased return of refugees home. Interview conducted in Foya, Liberia on March 28, 2014.

blended with the implantation of Taylor loyalists, who carried out entrepreneurial functions as part of a vast informal network of operatives (UN Group of Experts Report 2001). Taylor also moved to secure himself and his revenue streams. He did the former by weakening the AFL and constituting the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) in 1997 – a paramilitary group trained by ex-South African Defence Forces operatives. The ATU presented a means by which Taylor could maintain a loyal fighting force that could be mobilized and deployed for combat operations in the event that he ever lost power. While the ATU operated mainly in Monrovia, Taylor’s intelligence gathering operations spanned all of Liberia. To secure his revenue streams, Taylor appointed trusted allies to key revenue generation agencies such as the National Port Authority and the General Accounting Office, which he had once led himself.

Meanwhile during Taylor’s presidency Liberia’s borderlands became a complex hub for the transaction of small arms and light weapons, mercenary services, intelligence and military training and mineral contracts. This hodgepodge of illegal activity took place alongside the quotidian livelihood processes of borderland inhabitants. However, given their connections to different centers of power, operators within these nodes of illegality contributed to shaping the informal rules by which human and material processes were governed within these spaces. Furthermore, these borderlands became hubs for the destabilization of the Mano River Region. Vestiges of these activities are captured in the occasional UN Group of Experts report on Liberia.

It is not surprising therefore that given – Taylor’s repressive leadership; the lack of infrastructural development; economic stagnation and Taylor’s personalization of political power – Liberia relapsed into civil war in 1999, this time with the Lofa County side of the border with Guinea providing the entry

point for the Guinea-backed LURD – Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development under Sekou D. Conneh (a reincarnation of ULIMO-K from the 1989 Civil War). They were joined in the fighting by the MODEL who had organized on the Ivorian side of the Liberian side of the border. Leadership by fear, led to the outbreak of the second Liberian civil war in 1999. Taylor’s inability to deliver on a postwar polity for Liberia and his subsequent ouster following the Accra 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, points to the relevance for a deeper exploration of the role of the president in postwar statebuilding.

Accra and Postwar Statebuilding in Liberia: Bringing the State Back into Postwar Borderlands

The August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra, Ghana brought together the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Political Parties and Liberia’s civil society. This peace agreement ended the Second Liberian Civil war and set out a framework for a two-year transitional government at the end of which elections were going to lead to the first postwar government. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1509 established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with mandate to support the implementation of the peace process and ceasefire agreement, humanitarian and human rights assistance and security reform (UNSCR 1509, 2003). Meanwhile in the governance side, Liberia’s “international partners” negotiated the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) with the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) (Bøås, 2009). Despite the drawdown of UN troops in Liberia from their initial 16,000 contingent in 2003 to 7000 in August

2014, within a country with a population of approximately 3 million inhabitants, UNMIL's political and security presence looms larger than those of the AFL and Liberian National Police (LNP). Meanwhile GEMAP continue to be refracted across Liberia's macroeconomic infrastructure. Liberia's international partners sought to rebuild the Liberian state going from understanding of the causes of the Liberian Civil Wars while largely misreading Liberia's socially networked micro political topographies. These micro political topographies evident within reincarnated social configurations forged through resilient survival during two civil wars provides the empirical basis of active territoriality and sovereignty evident in quotidian practice. Thus, at its end, the civil war had created new sets of political and economic dynamics variably dissonant from and continuous from pre-war and wartime pasts.

The state's re-entry into Liberia's postwar borderlands has been manifested through the securitization, management and enforcement of border trade, and immigration controls. These statist practices have encountered the active agency of informally ordered borderland social actor dynamics. The transition from war fighting to tenuous statebuilding has involved complex conflict and cooperation between the state and non-state social actors over the physical form, social content and symbolic character of borders. From the state's position, Liberia's international borders are guaranteed by international conventions. However, at the end of Liberia's civil war, international re-bordering through the institutionalization of official border controls has proven more attainable than meeting the socio-economic necessities of a complex admixture of socially organized borderland actors through postwar statebuilding. Taming the wartime strategic imperative of grabbing borderlands for access and leverage at the peace table coupled with a wartime political economy of abusive labor practices and illicit natural resource extraction

represents an enduring challenge for the postwar state in Liberia. This is exacerbated by the fact that informally social groups within these borderlands spaces are organized in ways that they seek to maintain control over and optimize gains from prevailing and future management of human and material processes. The historically and socially entrenched practices of informal ordering constitute part of ongoing state formation that remains elusive to the homogenizing blinders of internationally designed and driven statebuilding.

Going from the premise that there could be no durable peace without the security of the state, the securitization of the postwar Liberian state has set itself the triadic purposes of maintaining *de jure* state sovereignty internationally; establishing effective territorial control over Monrovia; and negotiating quasi-territorial control over the hinterlands as a way of managing potential regional war dynamics. From the onset of postwar statebuilding, UNMIL guaranteed Liberia's sovereignty while working with a diverse group of governmental and nongovernmental partners to rebuild Liberia's national security apparatus (Armed Forces of Liberia, Liberian National Police and the Liberian Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization). The task of reconstituting both the AFL and Liberia's Ministry of Defense was wholly contracted out to the private sector with only DynCorp and PA&E allowed to submit bids (McFate 2008: 646). The Demilitarization, Demobilization Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation (DDRR) process for ex-combatants was a key component of Liberia's SSR programming. DynCorp was responsible for demobilization and then recruiting, vetting and training the AFL and MoD while PA&E was responsible for fielding the AFL and providing mentorship once the units were in place (McFate 2008: 646). This instrumental two-prong approach to the securitization of the postwar state in Liberia had implications for the inclusion and exclusion of trained Liberian military personnel (who considered

themselves legitimate stakeholders in postwar reconstruction) based on criteria established by private sector US entities rather than Liberians themselves.

However, for immediate state securitization purposes, UNMIL physically positioned battalions in each county from Montserrado fanning out to the border counties with specific attention to those borderland counties (Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties) which had become the epicenters of war onset and relapse. In 2015 UNMIL bases remained in Lofa County and Nimba County. Lofa County residents affectionately recall the way UNMIL swept across the battle-scarred terrain to occupy the Foya airbase at the northern tip of Liberia in close proximity to the borders with Guinea and Sierra Leone in 2003. What was an emergency response to the occupation of Lofa County by LURD rebels, failed to materialize into transformative peacebuilding. Over the years, UNMIL has gone through force level attrition and a recalibration of its mission necessitated by changing security dynamics and the re-election of Liberia first postwar president in November 2011. Meanwhile, the Government of Liberia has been both unwilling and unable to exhibit a similar force presence to UNMIL. Despite huge investments made in rebuilding Liberia's security sector, the report of the representative of the UNSG to Liberia noted that "the police [Liberian], with limited presence and mobility, were on some occasions overwhelmed by large crowd and required intervention by UNMIL to restore order and protect civilians" (UNSC S/2014/123). These deficiencies in crowd management and civilian protection capacity reflects a police presence that is more cosmetic and predatory than focused on fostering law an order. Especially in borderlands, this tendency vacuum has been filled by alternative modes of ordering that breed non-state forms of social control.

Meanwhile former wartime mid-level commanders (MILCs) marginalized from formal statebuilding processes have created a space for themselves within their borderland communities thereby transferring territorial logics of war to the postwar context. These territorial logics tend towards spatial occupation and reconstituting networks of former combatants into informal economic schemes ranging from agriculture and motorbike riding to private security service provision. Successive UN Panel of experts' reports have hinted at connections between individuals and groups in Grand Gedeh County borderlands, for example, with factions implicated in the cross-border destabilization efforts in Cote d'Ivoire (UNSC S/2012/901; UNSC S/2013/683; Africa Confidential, 2013). *Africa Confidential* reported in 2013 that Thomas Yaya Nimely, Liberia's ex-Foreign Minister (2003–05) and leader of the defunct MODEL may have been behind the guerrillas who carried out the cross-border attacks into Cote d'Ivoire on 12 June 2013. This former warlord owns a farm and employs hundreds of ex-MODEL fighters in Grand Gedeh County. The logics by which these individuals operate differ across the borderlands. However, where they have found resistance in usurping existing informal social orders, they have segued into economic informality where they remain relevant in controlling human (labor) and material (commodity) processes.

Operationally, the state's re-entry into the borderlands has been refracted through its partnership with international statebuilders. Despite the waning visibility of the military aspects of this partnership within borderlands, the international statebuilder's presence dominates the infrastructural landscape. Internal border infrastructures, which delineate district and county boundaries bear markers of the contribution of the international community to Liberia's formal administrative reconstruction. In both Foya and Ganta, most official state building such as those that house the LNP and the Bureau of Immigration

and Naturalization (BIN) were built as part of “Quick Impact [Statebuilding] Projects”. The same is starkly branded on their facades. The United Nations or European Union funding that enabled their construction is frontally acknowledged as if to perpetually justify statebuilding intervention. These markers do not only point to the State reasserting its presence in the borderlands through the benevolence of the international community. They also diminish the expectations borderland social actors have of the state with implications for its ability to permanently exercise its authority in daily practice. Meanwhile it simultaneously amplifies expectations of international governmental and non-governmental statebuilders who provide the postwar resource base for appropriative contestation.

Simplistically, borderland social actors expect more of Liberia’s international partners than the Liberian government itself. Too often have they heard the refrain of the postwar state’s inability and incapacity to contribute to meeting their basic security, access and emancipatory needs. This catalyzes into borderland communities negotiating an extractive relationship with the state in which they strive to score infrastructural gains from the state – such as schools, roads and hospitals. Although Liberia’s borderlands evidence the poor track record of state provision of these infrastructures – and where these needs are being met, the state has often benefited from both missionary and INGO assistance to make it possible. Meanwhile borderland social actors look to the configuration of informal orders to meet their basic human and collective needs. Hence, it is the state’s process of tepid re-bordering and reordering – seen through its re-entry into the postwar borderlands – rather than the international borderline *per se*, that has significance for quotidian manifestations of informal ordering, authority and social control mechanisms within borderlands. The state’s autonomy and authority within borderlands is

imperiled by its unwillingness to integrate immanent social processes into postwar statebuilding.

A Postwar Development Partnership Viewed from the Borderlands

Border posts inscribe power politics onto geography and territory, symbolizing the extent of the state's remit (Jackson 2008:268-269) while borderlines are empowering, regulatory, identity carving markers of difference that often cut across peoples (Zartman 2013: 12). However, states, international non-governmental organizations and historically embedded borderland social actors interact and interpret the ordering imperatives of international bordering differently. Encounters around these symbols of the state in borderlands in postwar contexts are perverted by the continuities emanating from the enduring influence of pre-war and wartime logics within borderlands. Nowhere is the state's actual "decentralization", "reach" or "resilience" better operationally interrogated and interpreted than within its borderlands. These borderlands go beyond the physical geography of spatial delineation to the networked political topographies that seek to optimize the relevance of borderland social actors during processes of statebuilding.

Given the interwoven formalities and informalities that characterize the networked political topographies of borderland social actors their influences on postwar statebuilding are evidenced in everyday practice. The realities of the immediate post war contexts cast borderlands as epicenters for emergency humanitarian response. Thus, borderlands from Goma in the eastern DRC to Foya in Liberia symbolize the typical objects of humanitarian intervention zones of bedraggled destitution. These humanitarian responses predominantly undertaken within the immediate postwar context by IGO and INGO actors are

ostensibly tailored to meet the needs of the most vulnerable segments of society. However, these humanitarian groups become another set of social actors in the quotidian political topography of borderlands—a presence that is salient in its interaction with borderland social actors within arenas of opposition and domination.

As the guns fell silent in Liberia's borderlands, an alphabet soup of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and governmental aid agencies flooded borderlands with varying graduations of often overlapping agendas. Working from a predominantly “development” agenda, INGOs pushed a mono-agenda “transformation” of human livelihoods within borderlands. Plan International for example supported vocational training programs for women and young girls, Concern Worldwide catered to water provision and the Carter Center worked on postwar rule of law and justice reform. Meanwhile governmental aid agencies with far greater resources engaged in cross-sector development engagement. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) engaged in sectors ranging from education to animal husbandry. Eleven years later, billboards posted at strategic entry and exit points of borderland districts continue to showcase the presence of international NGOs, most of which have since withdrawn from these borderlands and others which have survived their emergency missions by attempting to contribute to the changing phases of postwar consolidation.

These largely externally driven development processes have created winners and losers within borderlands thereby contributing to the reconfiguration of political topographies. As aid agencies enter borderlands with either mono-agenda or cross-sector agendas they encounter both official and non-official gatekeepers. There are multiple outcomes for this engagement that has been

central to the romanticization of “local ownership” of postwar peace and development processes. While in fact there is little ownership of the INGO and IGO postwar peacebuilding agendas, there most certainly is evidence of external aid appropriation by borderland social actors. The appropriation however, often works to the detriment of the postwar state as it strengthens alternative forms of informal orders, while deepening their authority and providing further justification for their forms of social control. Far from being a moralistic argument, these aid agencies could in the process of postwar statebuilding invariably be contributing to strengthening long term and parallel processes of state formation. The *2008 – 2012 Lofa County Development Agenda (LCDA)* prepared as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process evidences the official dependence of borderland communities on INGOs given what is noted as “the lack of economic prospects in Liberia’s border regions” with Sierra Leone and Guinea. The official document states that the situation is compounded by the decreasing presence of humanitarian and development organizations. However, the story it does not and cannot tell is that of government unwillingness to invest in human and material resources to facilitate the quotidian livelihoods of borderland communities. Neither does it capture the coping mechanisms that borderland social actors develop as alternative forms of social configurations to build resiliency amid historical state-constructed vulnerability.

The state benefits by outsourcing borderland development to International NGOs who work within these communities, largely with the tacit consent of the national government. Their work within borderlands is also both facilitated and hamstrung by local representatives of the state depending on the borderland site under study. The emergent postwar Liberian state, has tacitly been outsourced its developmental function to INGOs. Despite their best intentions,

the interventions of these organizations remain limited to very narrow sectors of specialization at the expense of much larger scaled, wider developmental programming. This narrow programmatic focus makes for individualized success stories that shape life history narratives within borderlands. For example, narratives abound about skills learnt in refugee camps that have been transposed to livelihood processes within the postwar context – especially by women. Therefore, it remains an analytical challenge to situate the role of INGOs in postwar statebuilding within the limits of geographical borderlands thereby necessitating a more interpretive understanding of social implications of subjective appropriation of these resource-laden interventions.

The state's ceding of the developmental role to INGOs has also spawned the exponential growth of Community Based Organizations as INGOS seek "local" implementing partners. Although CBOs tout their indigenous knowledge, operational agility and maneuverability – the over 650 registered with Liberia's Ministry of Internal Affairs as of July 2015 – are largely shell entities seeking to capitalize on the flow of foreign aid into specific thematic sectors ranging from Action Aid's program to rehabilitate refugees in Nimba County to Plan International's program to increase women's earning capacity through skills training. Given their limited resources and thematic foci, functional CBOs are cost-efficient partners in operationalizing INGOs skill development programs for sustainable/subsistent livelihoods and "social transformation". However, these formal CBOs are an invention of the postwar development aid topography and they starkly differ from borderland pluralized informal social actors. Their rootedness in Monrovia-based development politics reflect a neo-indirect rule mechanism through which INGOs seek to achieve their goals by using "local" middlemen and women. However, even when refracted on the borderland by their local implementing CBO partners, INGOs remain integral social actors in

altering political topographies, which have a bearing on state, society and market relations.

Massive population returns with borderlands and a lack of economic prospects, coupled with low levels of respect for state authority and rule of law, have led to a surge of local and cross-border crime that challenge law enforcement agencies and local authorities (LCDA Report 2012). Borderland communities in both Lofa and Nimba Counties have combined traditions and informal conflict resolution, arbitration and adjudication mechanisms to deal with ad hoc communal problems outside the purview of state legal apparatus. QCI, a quarter head in Lofa County noted that recidivist Guinean and Sierra Leonean criminals from neighboring borderlands were subjected to informal extradition procedures towards their communities of origin. However, these informal systems were powerless in enforcing the permanent expulsion of repeat offenders from their communities⁴. However, he insisted on the fairness of informal process of arbitration that took place to ascertain guilt of the accused party as well as the resulting penalty – expulsion from Foya. In the case of repeat offenders, intricate consultations were engaged with traditional (as official leaders) and community leaders from the “offender’s” community of origin, to ensure his return. These processes take place alongside activities by INGOs such as the Carter Center, who are also working in the borderlands to strengthen the rule of law, given what they perceive to be prevailing patriarchal tendencies in the communitarian enforcement of informal justice.

The postwar developmental template, which is refracted to borderlands by the state and its development partners is one which places INGOs at the center of the pursuit of an opaque quest for sustainable development. The objective,

⁴ Interview with QCI in Foya, Liberia on March 28, 2014.

being to mitigate or even eliminate conflict relapse vulnerability. Hence, there is a preference among borderland actors not only to negotiate their livelihoods with the INGOs, but also to shape their needs according to what the perceived sector interest of the INGO seems to be. Being very well informed of what sectors are thematic foci of specific INGOs, borderland actors reflect the necessity for aid during needs assessment exercises. If an INGO focuses on public health, the community (through its leaders) echoes the community's public health needs which might not necessarily coincide with the developmental priorities/necessities of the given borderland community since any resource is better than nothing at all. The reason being, in the absence of adequate state investment in borderland livelihoods, any investment by the donor community is welcome.

Conclusion

The postwar state in Liberia, given the nature of its re-entry into the borderlands, has struggled to effectively order borderland spaces. State infrastructure is evident in physical buildings, large-scale infrastructure development projects and Quick Impact Projects. Some of the QIPs have retained their starkness from the days they were implanted as part of the immediate postwar emergency rehabilitation of state infrastructure. Buildings lacking the requisite amount of staffing and materiel to effectively perform the state's ordering function in the borderlands.

This limited presence of the state has created a vacuum within which local actors have implanted and entrenched themselves. Borderland entrepreneurs have shown dexterity in using their place on the edges of states to impact livelihood within borderlands, while developing network of influence on both

sides of the border. Their positioning as money brokers or transport gurus, fill a void left by the limited reach of the state's monetary infrastructure, while boosting an informal transport economy outside of the state's regulation.

The crystallization of the roles of these borderland actors over time, makes them insurmountable partners with whom the state would have to negotiate to enhance its autonomy, develop effective control over its entire territory, recapture its monopoly over the use of force and connect the informal economies into the formal economy. As part of the statebuilding process, all these are necessary to develop an effective postwar state with the ability to prevent future relapse to civil war and a bulwark against contagion from regional conflagrations.

Chapter 3

Borderlands, Peacebuilding and Statebuilding The Need for an Integrative Analytical Framework

This chapter develops an integrative analytical approach to interrogating and understanding the centrality of formal bordering – internal and international – and informal ordering dynamics from postwar borderlands. Both constantly evolving sets of processes are intricately interactive and mutually constitutive providing the empirical basis for understanding the nature, function and content of states, in general and postwar states and statebuilding outcomes in particular. Over the past decade, multidisciplinary interest has grown in grounded understandings of how the liminal spaces of late developing states have become epicenters of alternative and embedded forms of contestation of state order, authority and control. Enduring instances and examples of intra-state contestation have persisted through manifest and latent phases – such as the northern-based Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda or the southern-based Casamance Democratic Forces Movement in Senegal. Meanwhile more contemporaneous forms of liminally-based violent intra-state contestation have emerged epitomized by the southeastern-based Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and northeastern-based Boko Haram insurgency emerged in a democratizing Nigeria and the northeastern-based Ansar Dine in Mali. These organized violent groups have used their positions within liminal spaces of states to – rationalize their existence; transact international borders; construct formal and informal alliances; ensure their resilience and sustainability; and to leverage engagements with states which straddle international borders. Therefore, they challenge the classical state and its sovereign and territorialized manifestations.

However violent manifestations of borderland based organized violent groups often occlude the implications of routinized borderland daily practices on statebuilding processes. Furthermore, the coexisting of the relative transience of borderland traders and the permanence of borderland agriculturalists often eludes ontological curiosity of micro economists and pastoral anthropologists within their respective disciplinary silos. Nevertheless, violent and postwar borderlands attract different forms of local, regional and international securitizing interests. These interests are often geared towards amplifying controlling forms of subjection and penetration from the state. Given their historical origins and the disparate rationales for their emergence, differing manifestations of liminally based intra-state contestation highlight mutually interactive engagements between informally organized borderland social actors, states and international actors. These engagements also evidence emerging forms of pluralized patterns of informal ordering, raising important questions about the assumed dominance of formalized state-centered monistic interpretations of sovereignty and territoriality. They also place the inter-subjective phenomena of ordering and re-ordering, squarely at the multidisciplinary intersection of political sociology and international relations.

Despite the regional and international ramifications of post-polar intra-state wars, contestation of international borders has diminished considerably. However, contestation over intra-state political arrangements that have evolved into protracted violent conflicts. This has coincided with a turn towards deeper understanding and explanation of local and global interconnectedness of phenomena within politics and international studies. Lapid (2001: 2) highlights the new recognition that mobility and flux (rather than fixity and stasis) will increasingly determine the mercurial horizon against which the contemporary International Relations theory project needs to be reworked. This theoretical

shift necessitates the deployment of multidisciplinary sensitivity in the exploration of inter-related phenomena that simultaneously cut across geographical space (simultaneously occupying multiple spaces), are embedded in historical dynamics and include changing social processes.

A multidisciplinary exercise warrants a pivot from the cartographic certainties of settled international borders towards an empirical understanding the unsettled spaces that abut them. Where the state's reach is limited either by choice or by design borderland spaces exhibit complex forms of social organization, structuring and process dynamics. Hence these dynamics have social and symbolic power implications on broader statebuilding processes. The complex interactions between borderland social actors and states gain even greater salience during moments of crisis – whether arising out of the outbreak of violent conflict, organized crime, terrorism or health pandemics. At these margins of states, sovereignty is often actualized through the pluralization of order and territoriality transcends classic binary interpretations of internal and external geopolitical violability. The spatial, symbolic and social complexity of borderland dynamics is evidenced in routine daily negotiation of pluralized informal ordering that generates alternative yet fairly classical patterns of authority and social control. These processes are often networked with social actors outside borderlands, necessitating a de-centered and interaction-based exploration of borderland implications on postwar statebuilding.

It is in the interaction of disaggregated social actors (state and non-state) through daily practice within multiple spaces of domination and opposition that pluralized empirical sovereignty and effective or pervasive territoriality are operationalized. Binary top-down and bottom-up understandings of statebuilding occlude the processes by which organized social actors negotiate

belonging and positionality within both sets of processes that are often occurring simultaneously. This interaction takes place within a framework that conceptualizes borderland dynamics and statebuilding as complex process-oriented phenomena with differing, yet interconnected, levels of negotiated social embeddedness. Organized social actors as collective entities deliberately engage in and with both sets of processes from differing positions of a power intending to maintain and optimize their interactive and spatial maneuverability. In daily practice, disaggregated social actors, engage the process of statebuilding from differing spatial, social and symbolic positioning, with evolving outcome expectations. However, contested and accommodating interactions within arenas of opposition and domination shape the renegotiation of these expectations. In the process, there is mutual transformation of social actor teleology with implications on both formal and informal ordering, authority negotiation and deployment and social control during postwar statebuilding. The paradoxical outcomes that often emerge from this complexity, evidences processual heterodoxy in confrontation with the supplanted orthodoxies of postwar statebuilding interventions.

This chapter engages with the flawed neo-modern premise of contemporary statebuilding policy and research that does inadequately accounts for the intersubjectivity of disaggregated social actors involved in the processes in daily practice. This critique of neo-modern statebuilding acknowledges emergent heuristic interdependences between peacebuilding and statebuilding research and policy that occludes in-depth reflexively organized social actor problematization of the interrelated constructs. It goes on to advance a society-in-statebuilding approach that focuses on patterns of interaction between disaggregated, networked social actors within contexts of postwar statebuilding. This disaggregation turns the ontological focus of statebuilding away from its

institutionalist rules-based tropes, towards an understanding of the state as a product of socially based inter-subjective engagement. It is within the multiple spaces of domination and opposition that empirical orders, authority and control are thus negotiated, appropriated and contested.

Getting to the Postwar State in Liberia

On 18 August 2003, the Liberia Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana. At the negotiation table for the talks (which began on June 4, 2003) were representatives of the Taylor-led Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), political parties, a cross-section of Liberia's civil society, representatives of regional and international organizations and partner states (such as Ghana and Nigeria). Despite this seemingly broad representative base of international and social actors, it predominantly remained a warlord's deal given that its foundational document was the ceasefire signed by the belligerent parties. The deployment of United Nations and United States forces added pressure for the mainly belligerent parties to get to agreement.

Varying actors at the Accra peace talks came in with different sources of legitimacy. The *legitimare bellum* exercised by warlords clearly contrasted the "democratic" institutional legitimacy of political parties. Meanwhile religious and civil society actors deployed their grounded legitimacy ostensibly to vocalize the "peoples" expectations of the peace accord. They also sought to pressure the belligerents into agreement by pushing a truth and reconciliation agenda. Meanwhile the regional and international partners came to the table with economic and political carrots and sticks. In Accra, the negotiation of the

CPA saw the expansion of the participatory parties from the belligerents who signed the June ceasefire agreement to incorporate more political actors by the time the CPA was signed in September. Nevertheless, the postwar statebuilding processes that ensued led to shrinking of the political space through a technocratic and institutional focus on the state. The marginalization of mainly informal actors and processes through postwar statebuilding in practice has proven inimical to its objectives of postwar peacebuilding.

According to Adebajo (2002: 89-91) 14 previous peace agreements between 1990 and 1997 had failed to lay the framework for the sustainable postwar reconstruction of Liberia. He identifies three main obstacles to getting to the postwar moment – the strategic positioning and proliferation of belligerents, regional incoherence of ECOWAS and Africa’s international strategic marginality. However, the 2003 Accra CPA ended the Second Liberian Civil (1999 – 2003). It also outlined a framework for a two-year transitional government. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) was expected to organize elections, which in turn were supposed to usher in the first postwar government. In many ways, therefore Liberia represents a classic case of postwar statebuilding programming as captured from the International Relations literature on international statebuilding (Chandler, Sick, Paris and Sisk, Richmond, Mac Ginty). In order to implement Liberia’s postwar statebuilding and peacebuilding roadmap sequenced, benchmarked and programmed sets of interrelated frameworks were developed largely by the international community.

Firstly, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1509 established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). UNMIL’s mandate supported the implementation of the peace process and ceasefire agreement,

humanitarian and human rights assistance and security reform (UNSC Res 1509, 2003). These focal points decidedly lacked human development components and reflected the international drive to build a centralized internationally compliant semblance of a state. However, UNMIL deployment across Liberia ensured that for the first time in two decades, a single actor assured Liberia's territorial integrity.

Secondly, to supplement the international effort already underway through UNMIL, the NTGL Chairman, Gyude Bryant, launched the Results Focused Transitional Framework Implementation and Monitoring Committee (RIMCO) on March 25, 2004. Its purpose was to administer and monitor postwar international aid as a condition set out at an international donor conference for Liberia that took place in February 2004. While Gyude Bryant served as RIMCO Chairman, country representatives of the United Nations and the World Bank were Vice Chairs. This infringement of Liberia's sovereignty was justified on grounds of excessive corruption and the lack of capacity within the postwar country.

To complete what Bøås (2009) describes as a trusteeship approach to good governance, the establishment of the Economic Governance Steering Committee (EGSC) further compounded the international bureaucratization of postwar Liberia. The EGSC was set up to implement the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). The GEMAP was imposed on the NTGL by its international partners working through the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL)⁵ ostensibly out of "shared

⁵ The ICGL was made up of representatives from the United Nations, the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), African Union, the European Union (United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Sweden), World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United States.

concerns regarding Liberia's economic governance" (Boås, 2009). The signatory document expressed concerns of "a danger that the targets of the Results-Focused Transition Framework will not be met, which threatens to undermine donor support for an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP)." Expressing the conditionality embedded within the GEMAP, the signatory text noted that, "sound economic governance is seen by the international community as a prerequisite to increased financing of the RFTF." Hence the program's interlocking components that imposed international "experts" with "binding co-signature authority" included financial management and accountability; improving budgeting and expenditure management; improving procurement practices and granting of concessions; establishing effective processes to control corruption; supporting key institutions; and capacity building.

This programmed, benchmarked and multipronged international approach to statebuilding in Liberia was based on the premise that Liberia in 2003 was effectively a failed state. Therefore being 'present at the creation' means international actors through the IGCL as was the case in Liberia could play a formative role in setting the parameters of state action, such as the orientation of the state in relation to markets, civil society and social provisions (Mac Ginty, 2013: 19). The trouble with approach to social engineering (Krause and Jutersonke 2005: 448) is that it often ignores social actors, practices and processes that inure from historically antecedent processes of state formation.

Postwar Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Evolving Interventionary Concepts

Since the early 1990s, there has been a heuristic evolution in international peacekeeping and peacebuilding coalescing around ever-narrowing institutionalization of statebuilding practices. Within the context of the post-polar global transformations of the late 1980s, *An Agenda for Peace* (1992) normatively inscribed peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (including preventive diplomacy) into the mission and purpose of the United Nations Organization (UNO). The codification of these concepts gave them working definitions, however their operationalization across different contexts proved more problematic. Despite the corrosive implications of statebuilding interventions on state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the operationalization of peace missions evolved over time to normatively rationalize statebuilding interventions ostensibly as part of peacebuilding imperatives. So did the diverse number of state and non-state security and development aid agencies and non-governmental organizations who took upon themselves the statebuilding and peacebuilding mantras from differing ideological and operational perspectives (Paris and Sisk 2009: 6-8). All this took place within an international context where spurious linkages between the fallacious conceptualization of “failed”, “fragile” and “weak states” and international terrorism and violence (Call, 2008: 1493) were advanced to strengthen the case for neo-modern interventionary statebuilding.

Despite recent attempts to conceptually refine “peacebuilding” and “statebuilding”, there remain horizontal and vertical overlaps between both concepts. The *Agenda for Peace* (1992) defined peacebuilding as “...an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict...with particular reference to

rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war.” Chapter 59 of The Agenda for Peace clearly articulates a new requirement for technical assistance within the UN with an obligation to develop and provide when requested “support for the transformation of deficient national structures and capabilities, and for the strengthening of new democratic institutions.” Hence statebuilding was an essential corollary to peacebuilding from the drafting of The Agenda for Peace.

However, peacebuilding has undergone conceptual refinement over the years under the aegis of the UNO. It was refined upon review by the UNSG’s policy committee in May 2007 agreeing that “Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities” aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and preventing its recurrence (Chetail 2009: 4). Despite multiple conceptual refining, the focus of peacebuilding has largely remained structural, linearly sequential and intervener outcome-oriented.

Changing civil war patterns, peace treaty arrangements and the relative success and failure of multifunctional international peacekeeping-cum-peacebuilding missions in shepherding war to peace transitions, have broadly contributed to the heuristic evolution of peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions. Lessons learnt from narrow and short-term first generation peacekeeping missions have shaped the content and orientation of subsequent broader and longer-term second and third generation peacekeeping initiatives (Paris and Sisk, 2009: 12). Despite the broadening of peacebuilding missions and mandates and the institutionalization of a United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

(PBC) in December 2005 international peacebuilding remains fraught with ideological challenges.

International peacebuilding has largely evolved into a set of interventions expected to address the root causes of war and prevent conflict relapse. However, the problem remains that peacebuilding as defined by the UN, has remained highly dependent upon the political motivation of its promoters, from continental bodies to state agencies involved in disparate civilian, developmental or security dimensions of peacebuilding (Chetail 2009: 6). Meanwhile, the very language of peacebuilding can disclose manifest implicit ideologies that systematically work to naturalize it as a given or natural referent, thereby justifying a broad range of interventions and reinforcing the hierarchy between the intervener and the intervened (Richmond et al 2015: 35). This also reinforces the enduring analytical dichotomization between the intervening peacebuilding “agent” and the silent local “object” of peacebuilding interventions. Dichotomized analyses largely miss the heuristic evolution in peacebuilding and statebuilding practices as resulting from “lessons-learned”. These lessons that often come from the after-action evaluation of specific country experiences hardly ever result in paradigmatic shifts and reconceptualization of the ideological fundamentals of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

The Westphalian variant of modern state formation provides the basis for a specific understanding of social contracting, the accumulation and centralization of coercion and capital that can be traced back to 1648. Viewing history analogically therefore, would favor a return to an engineered form of state formation through “statebuilding” to build both national and international peace. Tilly (1990: 20-24) evidences the historically rooted and geopolitically

negotiated interconnections between the violent accumulation of capital by coercion and the origins, configuration and purpose of the modern state formation nationally, as well as its implications for international order. Therefore, there is a subtle distinction between statebuilding defined as a “conscious attempt at establishing an order, and ‘state-formation’ as the contingent social processes that accompany and deform this politics” (Bliesemann de Guevara 2010: 113). This definitional distinction opens up the inevitable analytical overlaps between state formation and statebuilding especially within complex postwar contexts. Statebuilding inevitably affects state formation in the sense that “any purposeful attempt at statebuilding influences local power constellations through consciously or unconsciously providing power resources to certain groups in society, while closing social and political opportunities for others” (Bliesemann de Guevara 2010: 16). However, clearly, where state formation highlights the historical understanding of contingent social processes, statebuilding largely inures into conscious, deliberate institutional construction for purposes of political ordering.

Hence contemporaneous postwar statebuilding remains largely been based on a Weberian understanding of the modern bureaucratic state represented in a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, autonomy from domestic and outside forces, differentiation of state components in governing the details of peoples’ lives and coordination of governance (Migdal 1988: 18–19). In attempting to build these Weberian attributes of stateness into late developing postwar spaces, international statebuilding interventions tend to privilege governance over “government”, based on the “assumption that the political process is a product of state policies rather than constitutive of them” (Chandler 2007: 71). This inevitably sets statebuilding up in arenas of opposition

and domination with historically embedded and antecedent social processes of state formation that are acted out in quotidian practice.

The transposition of knowledge derived from the historical emergence of the modern state into contemporary neo-modern international statebuilding practices has failed to reincarnate the strong state in areas around the globe where states have been deemed “weak”, “failed”, “fragile” or “postwar”. A major justification for the failure of neo-modern statebuilding lies in its diagnostic generalizations and monistic process fallacies. Postwar statebuilding interventions especially, have often underestimated local actors’ appropriation of unfolding possibilities created by external interventions to further their own state-related agendas – be it within or outside of formal state institutions (Bliesemann de Guevara 2010: 115). Thus, there is a wholesale theoretical questioning the passive and static local object as opposed to the determining international during contexts of postwar statebuilding (Kappler 2015: 876) with a quest to understanding the outcomes of bottom-up and top-down interactions and the implications for peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2010: 396).

Meanwhile, statebuilding imperatives are not only premised on the Weberian structuring and functioning of the modern state, but on the neo-realist notion that states are the central actors in international relations. The functional symbiosis between the state and the international sphere, feeds the assumption that alterations in hegemonic state hierarchy within a specific territory pose threats to international security. Hence the need to re-engineer rule-based institutionalized state hegemony in order to ostensibly restore effective territorial integrity, thereby fostering international security. Call (2008:5) defines statebuilding as actions undertaken by international or national actors to establish, reform, or strengthen the institutions of the state and their relation

to society (which may or may not contribute to peacebuilding). This definition does three things – it captures the top-down dimension of statebuilding; it highlights its rational-legal institutional focus; and peripherally acknowledges the necessity to consider state-society relations in statebuilding.

Despite the acknowledgement of a caveat that statebuilding may or may not contribute to peacebuilding, there are conceptual and operational overlaps between both concepts and more contingent social processes of state formation. This conceptual confluence is evident when statebuilding is described as a particular approach to peacebuilding, premised on the recognition that achieving security and development in societies emerging from civil war partly depends on the existence of capable, autonomous and legitimate governmental institutions (Paris and Sisk 2009: 2). However, its focus the formal dimensions of these processes marginalizes informal social processes that lie at the heart of everyday peace and the operationalization of the postwar state in practice.

Between International Means and Local Ends: Interpretively Grounding Postwar Statebuilding

Statebuilding constitutes a complex set of political re-ordering processes. Shifting the empirical lens from the international to the local, it is important to magnify the definitional premise that distinguishes statebuilding from postwar statebuilding. Barnett and Zurcher (2009: 28) distinguish postwar statebuilding from “normal” statebuilding by focusing on spatial and temporal context specifics. Thus, postwar statebuilding is characterized by a lingering dual crisis of security and legitimacy within spaces that have prior existence of conflict. The context of fear and mistrust thus leads individuals to continue to seek

security from alternative security organizations and militias. Hence individuals' willingness to comply with the government's decision depends on whether they believe it is legitimate. Lack of legitimacy could contribute to a resumption of violence (Barnet and Zurcher 2009: 29). Within postwar contexts, these ordering processes involve an admixture of international, national and local actors with differing political agendas.

Recent research has contributed to shifting the ontological focus on process dynamics that engender the emergence of social organizations. Such dynamics have been framed through the understanding interconnections of the 'local' (Lemay-Hubert 2011: 1830; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013: 769; and Mac Ginty 2015: 845) 'ownership' (Chesterman 2007: 6 and Donais 2012: 13), 'legitimation' and 'participation' (Call 2012: 45); and hybridity (Meagher et al. 2014: 6 and Luckham et al 2013: 7). These modes of theoretical and empirical framing centralize 'local' dimensions of peacebuilding without essentializing the local by emphasizing dynamic and interactive processes in the interpretation of evolving temporal, spatial and social positionality within peacebuilding and statebuilding. By framing the problem of ownership of peacebuilding programs as one of legitimizing it in the eyes of local actors Donais (2012: 3) questions the current emphasis on the outside-in transmission of international norms and institutions with a greater recognition of local values, traditions and practices. The asymmetric interaction between intervener and object of intervention does not foreclose possibilities of disaggregated social actor engagement with postwar statebuilding processes. It is within the broad range of engagement patterns that processes of organic social organization contribute to determining statebuilding outcomes. However, Sisk (2009: 8) advances the notion that "dedication to the principle of local ownership, however well-intentioned, is fraught with problems. Local ownership, a concept with its origins in

approaches to community-level development, is difficult in practice when outsiders meet the realities of post-war environments, where the scope of the challenge of humanitarian catastrophe and recovery is immense, where local ruling elites may act in a predatory way, and where there is deep social distrust of the state to begin with.” This provides a justification for the vertical power hierarchies built into statebuilding, which then struggle to tame and domesticate local practice.

The differentiated groups of statebuilding actors employ varying approaches to the process, with international statebuilders seeking to achieve three main objectives. Firstly, they seek to rebuild state institutions in order to re-monopolize the legitimate use of violence within an autonomous and centralized rational-legal authority. The statebuilders’ preoccupation is not whether violence and dispossession exist, but whether these take the right form and are exercised in a legitimate manner (de Heredia (2012: 76). Secondly (and simultaneously) international statebuilding seeks to strengthen the relationship between institutions of state and society, often after re-establishing a semblance of state hegemony. The expectation is that that devolving from these dual objectives, postwar statebuilding would, thirdly, prevent conflict relapse vulnerability. However, ideological contradictions and social actor dilemmas within international statebuilding and the postwar environments within which statebuilding programs are implemented often compromise its outcomes and often leads to building weak states (Paris and Sisk, 2006; Barnett and Zurcher 2009). This reflects international statebuilding’s emphasis on monolithic reengineering of state autonomy, authority and monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, at the expense a transformative state reformation based upon its national and local realities.

While statebuilders' intents are reflected in policy and program documents quotidian approaches to and processes of postwar reconstruction developed by national and local actors and the outcomes they expect of statebuilding are often mired in experiential complexity that is not readily documented. The dominant state-centered theorization of postwar statebuilding has therefore attracted welcome critical epistemological engagement. This engagement with the empirics of statebuilding in practice has contributed to two important ontological shifts.

Firstly, it has centralized complex "local", "locality" and its networked dimensions in statebuilding research. The theoretical focus on the role of local and national actors in international statebuilding (Auteserre 2007, MacGinty 2010, Richmond 2010, 2015, Paffenholz 2015) has not only valorized the 'agency', but it has also evidenced the multifarious power implications of the complex local in postwar statebuilding. Although national and local actors' engagement with postwar statebuilding has been described as involving paradiplomatic, transnational practices to obtain political and material support from outside parties (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008:269) a focus on the interaction of different statebuilding social actors within arenas of opposition and domination delves into the emic social mechanics that underpin the complex social configuration of the local.

Secondly, critical statebuilding research has provided a strong evidentiary base for the imperialistic origins and manifestations of international statebuilding's within the global borderlands that contributes to creating "subjects" out of passive objects of international intervention (Duffield 2001; Chandler 2013). Therefore, beyond the broad teleological and material content of local engagement with international statebuilding, it is necessary to also understand

the internal mechanics of local actor organization and to the effect of these alternative modes of organization on territorial and sovereign aspects of postwar statebuilding.

This thesis steers clear of the oppositional bend in the road to the “local turn” in statebuilding research. Paffenholz’s (2015: 861) critique of the conceptualization of the local within the current “local turn” in peacebuilding as one of everyday resistance against the hegemonic international liberal actor and his/her dominance warrants empirical engagements with the actual resistance to statebuilding. However, the local cannot be conceived as a monolithic blob based on its cartography, social positionality and societal functionality as has often been evidenced where the local is defined in opposition to international, and local agency is viewed as resistance to the liberal peacebuilding project. This simplistically binary presentation of statebuilding is captured in the interpretation of the “bifurcation of two worlds – the local and the international” which uses the cases of UN intervention in East Timor and Kosovo to evidence local forms of resistance (Hebert-Lemay’s 2011:1829). It is supplemented by the observation of statebuilding interventions as inherently clashing with social structures and long-term state formation processes (Bleisemann de Guevara 2013). The trouble with these interpretations of the oppositional interaction between two monolithic entities – the local and the international – is that they evolve singularized narratives of the local as if local agency only produces resistance. A predominantly oppositional focus occludes the complex processes of conflict and cooperation that reshape all the groups of social actors engaged with postwar statebuilding processes in practice.

There is more to local agency than the constructions of modes of resistance to international interventions. It is important to also understand ways in which differentiated and apparently marginal and marginalized objects of state and statebuilding interventions go beyond resistance to appropriate and subjectify these interventions in a process of leveraging. Through these processes of appropriation and subjectification, non-state social actors effectively determine the empirical content of territoriality obliging the state to accommodate alternative configurations of sovereignty.

Statebuilding Interventions: From Problematic Assumptions to Uncertain Outcomes

Peace and war are interrelated social and political phenomena. Meanwhile treaties and peace accords provide a negotiated frame for transitioning from war to variations of positive or negative peace and possibly back to war. War, peace and the treaties that usher security-based developmental transitions between them continue to preoccupy politics and international relations scholars. Contemporaneously classical geopolitical framing of the problem of global insecurity have shifted from inter-state wars to the malady of ineffectual states (Fukuyama 2004: x-xi; Ghani and Lockhart 2008: 10 Call 2008b: 1493 and Chandler 2010:6). Hence the assumption that fixing “fragile” states would not only enhance state capacity for territorial control and foster state stability but it would also attenuate global insecurity.

Unsurprisingly therefore, statebuilding in its varying forms different forms continues to dominate the agenda of diplomatic, military and development communities, while attracting multidisciplinary social research inquiry. Indicators of “stateness” though the products of excessive aggregation (Call

2008b: 1494) being more readily quantifiable than indicators of “peacefulness” makes intervention in that which is visible and doable more obvious than engaging with the more subjective and amorphous concept of “peace”. Despite heuristic evolutions in international statebuilding and peacebuilding interventions, the assumptions and rationales undergirding these interventions remain trapped in objectivist fallacies, which then justify cookie-cutter approaches to statebuilding that pay lip service to local ownership, yet barely acknowledging indigenous and embedded ways of doing even when these contribute to statebuilding. Interventionary objectivism is premised in three sets of inter-related diagnostic fallacies, assumptive misconceptions and process contradictions that mitigate postwar statebuilding outcomes within.

The diagnostic fallacy emerges from perception and articulation of state “fragility” and/or “collapse” as a set of naturalistic and pathological dysfunctions afflicting non-western states. This approach to explaining and understanding the state in Africa is described as a largely ideological developmental approach, which simplistically assumes that what is happening in Africa is a ‘pathological’ deviation from the real world (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 40). Meanwhile, the social research community exhibits important epistemological differences regarding the identification of nature, causes and manifestations of pathological “stateness”. These differences reflect and are refracted upon the policy community that consistently grapples with the problematic definitions and characteristics of state “weakness”, “fragility” and “failure” upon which myriad doses of intervention or non-intervention are justified. The concepts of “fragile” and “failed” states are western-centric political labels and portmanteau concepts based on analytical reductionism and lacking in empirical evidence (Nay 2013: 3-4). Based on the problem identification, solutions are centered on the non-western state as the object of

intervention with trickle down monistic ordering expectations across its entire territory. This value based labeling of non-western states does not account for causality in interconnections with western states. They also aggregate social actors within states to broad “objects” of intervention expecting that by calibrating the doses of intervention over time, the expected neo-modern reincarnation of the state would materialize. Despite the proclaimed objectivity of “fragile” and “failed” state diagnoses, international statebuilding and peacebuilding interventions remain subjectively based on asymmetric power negotiation between national, regional and international social actors. Hence, they remain based on normative, resource and diplomatic dynamics (not stasis).

The contradiction in process is built upon a neo-modern construction of postwar statebuilding that seeks an end state – often epitomized in Weberian tropes – while simultaneously undermining sovereignty and territorial integrity of the “object” of intervention. The reification of dichotomies such as formality and informality; top-down and bottom – up approaches, insiders and outsiders, intervening agent and object of intervention – often characterize statebuilding practice. This dichotomization often views the objects of intervention as fairly static and unchanging. Hence its coerced subjection to the state would inevitably occur after the administration of internationally calibrated doses of securitizing and developmental aid panaceas. Hence there is a linear conceptualization to most statebuilding interventions. However, in fact, the process is not so linear. Statebuilding processes often take place alongside other social processes whose complexity often has unexpected consequences on statebuilding itself necessitating a degree of reflexivity which often eludes intervening statebuilding agents.

While statebuilding acknowledges the need to strengthen ties between state and society, the process often overhangs and stays largely disconnected from society. Hence international statebuilding interventions continue to “adopt a single sovereign perspective which assumes the individuality of the state and fails to capture how international strategies re subverted appropriated and resisted on the ground” (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008: 276). Even where local statebuilding agency is acknowledged through powerful, yet informal social groups seeking to institutionalize their power as a legitimate form within the state, these recursive and mutually transformative process are largely ignored within broader statebuilding processes. This marginalization lies within the assumption of peacebuilding missions that indigenous civil society lacks the quality of ‘relationality’ required for democratization (Cubitt 2012: 91) as well as the inflexibility of peacebuilding mission to accommodate informality.

Despite the evolution in peacebuilding missions from short to long-term engagements and from mainly humanitarian post-war to statebuilding and remedial justifications, they have largely ignored the interpenetrative process of non-state and informal social actor involvement that occurs through quotidian practice. Non-state groups are often broadly labeled as an aggregate representation of “society” or “civil society,” with the statebuilders arbitrarily choosing to work with these groups that align with their understandings of civil society. Where these are few, they invest in statebuilding programs that engineer civil society into existence. Hence those socially embedded communitarian groups that culturally and by guild as everyday configurations for coping with vulnerability and building resilience often fall outside classical understandings of civil society. This despite their embedded authority, practical accountability and legitimacy. Hence, the evolution of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes as micro-political sociology evident in daily practice

remains largely disconnected from global purveyors of statebuilding interventions as these everyday informality is consistently overlooked.

Given the involvement of formal and informal social actors in the force field of postwar statebuilding, there is unavoidably a shared stake in the outcomes with varying stakes for the interdependent international social actors, regional, national and local actors. The emergence of third generation peacebuilding missions have sought to leverage longer timeframes, and greater investment in personnel and equipment without altering the objective of the emergence of neo-modern states out of the rubble of war ravaged or “fragile” countries. However, this has itself created tensions between the imperatives of the ‘intervener’ in engagement with the object of statebuilding intervention. According to Paris (2004) immediate postwar contexts require political stability and the establishment of effective administration over the territory, rather than democratic ferment and economic upheaval. This expected outcome rests on a problematic assumption that a sophisticated, yet still utopian, ‘social engineering’ approach could replace, or accelerate, a process of state formation that occurs rather more organically (Krause and Jütersonke, 2005: 448). Neither does it acknowledge the conscious and unconscious redistributive power and resource consequences of statebuilding interventions. It barely acknowledges the fact that alongside this process of ‘social engineering’ orchestrated by international interveners and their national clients, simultaneous processes of reconstructive social organization are also taking place. The outcome therefore is often a more complex set of interactive and simultaneously transformative processes with power implications for both state and non-state actors with implications for the empirical content of pluralized territoriality and sovereignty.

It is based on these problematic diagnostic fallacies and process assumptions that justify a more empirically based disaggregated interrogation of postwar statebuilding that focuses on arenas of opposition and domination. These arenas determine patterns of ordering which derive from plural sources of authority and control. This study therefore builds upon the body of literature that problematizes spatial, symbolic and social complexity within internationally driven postwar statebuilding.

Statebuilding as Bordering and Ordering

The logics of securitization and territorial administrative ordering embedded in statebuilding interventions inure towards the *de jure* crystallization of monolithic state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Acts of bordering invariably carry major ramifications for political ordering at all levels of analysis (Lapid 2001: 7). However, the very imperatives of international statebuilding transform postwar states into *de facto* trusteeship territories where official decision-making is often subject to decentralized and decentered processes of international and national networking and consultation. This situation creates multiple overlapping spheres of engagement across sectoral spaces (such as the control of security or fiscal and monetary policy), physical spaces (towns, cities and villages), human spaces (through controlled movement and labor rules) and symbolic spaces (multinational flags fluttering together with national flags above buildings). These spheres of engagement are made up of different configurations of local, national and international social actors.

Poly-spatiality is therefore an intrinsic characteristic of postwar statebuilding polities. Hence understanding arenas of opposition and domination within these contexts necessitates disaggregation of social actors ranging from the

state-level to the community level organization. Political engagements between social actors are thus brokered through the negotiation of everyday practices that produce and reproduced precarious interdependences. The precariousness is premised on the impermanence of some international actors and the differentiations of stakes, options and choices for pluralized social actors. These precarious interdependences come together in turn to determine peacebuilding and statebuilding outcomes. These processes could be explained and understood through the prism of spatial and temporal dimensions of quotidian borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding.

Interrogating international statebuilding through the prism of borderland dynamics implies an enquiry into statebuilding-in-practice. Borderland dynamics highlight decentered informal ordering, authority negotiation and social control dynamics. This perspective also acknowledges that the institutionalized is not always formal, meanwhile the informal does not always lack institutionalization. In order to understand post-conflict spaces of intervention and statebuilding it is necessary to grasp the spatial imaginaries of intervener and intervened (Heathershaw and Lambach (2008: 208). This perspective, while providing a prism for analytical clarity, runs the risk of crystallizing polarity between intervener and intervened, while occluding multiple levels of intervention and patterns of engagement in arenas of domination and opposition that are generated through intervention. Hence the importance to disaggregate not only the social actors but to engage their social actions in quotidian practice as this is where the implications for statebuilding are most evident. In this case the social actions of bordering and ordering that are central to postwar statebuilding are brought into social enquiry within two Liberian borderland cities.

Continuities in bordering and ordering processes from wartime to postwar contexts often coexist with postwar forces seeking to alter these dynamics. The management of international border posts might change from rebel factions to postwar states without fundamentally altering the legitimacy and social embeddedness of internal and international borders. Depending on the degree of civil war contagion, borderlands on both sides of international borders became wartime economic epicenters leading to the “empowerment of borderlands as sanctuaries for combatants and nurseries for recruits and also as centers for shadow economic activity” (Pugh et al. 2004: 2). These economic hubs strengthen the interdependence between borderlands as well as their connections to power centers, contributing to strengthening pre-existing modes of informal ordering, authority and social control in daily practice. These modes of social ordering, authority and control incorporate local, state and international social actors. They also exhibit differing degrees of continuity and change from wartime borderland dynamics. The conceptual distinction between individual and social actors seeks avoid deterministic binaries between public and private, and public or state and non-state. It also eschews the romanticized interpretation of borderlands as teeming with shadow economies instead of seeing their informalized structuring.

Quotidian Borderland Dynamics: Informalities in Statebuilding

To explore the configurative centrality of borderlands in postwar statebuilding is to engage in a threefold exercise – firstly, it is necessary to conceptually grasp borderlands; secondly one needs to interrogate the emic mechanics of borderland internal physical, social and symbolic constitution; and thirdly, explore its physical and symbolic constitution in relation to the state (across historical periods). Statebuilding is essentially a largely formalized ordering

process. Evidently order is necessary for managing violence especially within postwar contexts, as much as the threat of violence is crucial in cementing order (Kalyvas et al. 2008: 1). The inherence of violence to statebuilding points to the emergence of complex arenas of engagement between borderland social actors and the state. Especially given that borderland actors, by virtue of their spatial, social and symbolic positionality on the margins of the state and the international, have often challenged a key element in the image of the state “its claim to be an avatar of the people bounded by that territory and its assumption of the connection of the people encompassed by state borders as a primary social bond” (Migdal 2001: 26). Borderlands are intrinsically therefore, spaces of national contestation.

Asiwaju et al (1989: 28-30) define a borderland as a territory or zone close to the boundary of a political unit which may sometimes be identified on the basis of the formation of the frontier which pre-dated boundary delimitation and demarcation. This definition, while importantly drawing on the cultural history underlying political processes of ordering, does not cover the critical political sociological dimensions of borderlands important to this study. Thus, borderland dynamics are defined within this thesis as interactive and discursive processes of informal quotidian ordering developed by social actors (with differing degrees and sources of authority) within the liminal spaces of states. Given their degrees and sources of authority they legitimately interact with interventionary postwar statebuilding architects and processes. States make borderlands through international bordering and internal administrative ordering. Meanwhile, borderlands give meaning to effective statehood through the intra-state negotiation of order, authority and control. The centrality of borderland dynamics to postwar statebuilding is therefore based on configurative (constitutive), process and outcome assumptions. These provide

the empirical content for understanding actual as opposed to theoretical sovereignty and territoriality.

Postwar statebuilding imperatives necessitate the re-establishment of an administrative order through a structured functional relationship between the sovereign state and the territory over which it is expected to exercise effective control. Central to the peacebuilding problematic, especially within postwar contexts, is the re-forging of the relationship between the central state and its margins (Goodhand 2008: 239). In this process, the consequence of borderland marginalization is the imperiling of statebuilding through the emergence of alternative stakeholders to territorial control and micro-sovereignty. This process is shaped through competition and/or accommodation in the negotiation of access to revenue streams derived from international aid as well as the establishment of control over human and material modes of production and surplus accumulation. The material base underlying the complex negotiation between central state and borderland elites is only one dimension of a complex negotiation in which the state is complicit in continuities of pluralized informal ordering, authority and control.

Given that borderlands represent a distinct physical, social and symbolic space on the margins of states in close proximity to the state's international border both state agents and borderland based social actors establish parameters for existence and interaction. These interactive dynamics necessitate an interrogation of statebuilding that departs from state-centered interpretations of borderlands as uncontested, unchanging and unproblematic (Baud and Van Schendel, 1997: 216) towards a multidisciplinary exploration of borderland dynamics. A critical political sociology of borderlands incorporates first off, an ethnographic approach that attempts to understand notions of 'state' from the

margins, in political administrative and social senses, and from the limits of the state back to its center (Donnan and Wilson 1994: 11).

Thus, an interactive exploration pursues an interpretive understanding of organized social action even when it is informal and with an ethnographically constituted explanation of its course and outcomes. The deployment of ethnographic sociological lenses in the interrogation of borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding presents the most viable means to capturing the emic interactive mechanics occurring within arenas of domination and opposition that determine postwar statebuilding outcomes. It also gives interpretive priority to borderland voices in the articulation of their encounters with the evolving state and informal dimensions of the international.

A critical geo-political sociology of borderlands assumes that positionality has implications for the constitution and manifestation of locality and (broader) state negotiation of order, authority and control. Borderlands represent a complex temporal and spatial reality. Borderland dynamics are often characterized by degrees of transience and permanence in relationships between seeming polarities (the licit and illicit, entrepreneurial and menial, trafficker and trader and the industrial and subsistent agriculturalist). Border and borderland research has largely challenged state-centered geopolitical interpretations by advancing more multidisciplinary understandings of borderlands as spaces of social interaction and economic exchange that have implications for both state formation and statebuilding. Literature on the interaction of borderlands and nation or statebuilding has contributed to a deeper understanding of borderlands and peacebuilding (Goodhand 2008: 263); border transactions with authority, livelihood and trade implications

(Raeymaekers, 2012: 336–337); borderlands as the epicenters of regional conflict systems (Pugh et al. 2004: 11 and Scorgie 2013: 37) and interwar borderland governance (Zeller 2012: 200–202). Borderlands are sites where the state's presence has somehow been limited in its monopoly of violence and political authority is finite, unraveling, or subject to severe contestation (Korf and Raeymaekers 2013: 8). This multidisciplinary evolution, however, has not adequately engaged the pluralizing implications of decentered and informal modes of ordering, authority and social control on the state's autonomy or its monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.

International and internal borders are central to situating international and internal borderlands, despite their functional and administrative differentiation. Unsecured borderland are spaces where state authority is suspended or violently challenged by alternative claims to power and providers of security, including non-state armed groups (Luckham and Kirk, 2013: 11). However far from being ungoverned, such border spaces tend to have their own hybrid forms of political regulation, often involving complex interactions among various armed group (Luckham and Kirk, 2013:11). Clearly, “unsecured borderlands” are not necessarily vacuous borderlands. Secondly, the absence of the state or limited state presence does not necessarily devolve into these spaces being occupied by violent forces. This is a transplant of a frontier logic to borderlands that labels them a priori as violent spaces.

However, this study focuses on international borderlands and looking inwards, seeks to understand their internal social ordering dynamics. Borders denote a spatial dimension of social relationships that are continually being configured. In the process, the meaning of borders is produced, reconstructed, strengthened or weakened (Banerjee and Chaudhury 2011). Border fluidity

challenges received notions of border stasis emanating from treaty and conventionally negotiated de jure sovereignty. It does not only highlight the human dimension in the social construction of borders, but provides an important take off point for problematizing borderlands in postwar statebuilding. Thus, is justified the exploration of borderlands as a researchable complexly ordered space in discursive engagement to the state and the international, particularly within postwar contexts.

Statebuilding processes represent sudden inflections in the alternation of content and relationship between borderland social actors, their states, neighboring states and international statebuilders. The period of stabilization following peace treaties introduces more than just new rules. It introduces new actors and sets of resources as attempts are made to bring wartime resources under the control of the new state. Sudden changes in the rules of the game and shifts in the power balance between center and periphery are clearly crucial in shifting borderlands from being marginal and neglected (or powerful and advanced) to becoming unruly and militarized (Goodhand 2013: 256). Hence postwar borderland spaces ought to be viewed more than simply as a finite geographical space but one that situates itself at the intersection of the national and the international with connections to both.

Borderland actors develop and subscribe to processes, which enable them to negotiate individual and collective livelihoods. These processes develop and sustain networked connections, which extend beyond borderland spaces into the home state and sub-regional spheres. Fitted within the organizational configuration of states, borderlands are the most proximate administrative sub-units (departments, provinces, cantons, counties, districts, townships etc.) to the international border. Hence, the critical geopolitical conceptualization of

borderlands provides a definitional premise upon which to explore the question of borderland dynamics in peacetime and in postwar statebuilding. However, the limitations of classic geopolitical conceptualizations necessitate opening the analytical prism to multidisciplinary interrogations of social dynamics underlying borderland engagements with states.

Borderlands and Statebuilding A Process-Oriented Approach

Beyond the configurative mapping of territorial subunits within states, differing sets of processes shape the emergence and relational evolution of borderland administrative units to the centralized states. Based on the conceptual understanding of borderlands, it is clear that they are territorially part of the state. However, the concept of empirical sovereignty delves into the effectiveness of full territorial control by the state, which itself is important in understanding borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding. Having conceptualized borderlands, it is relevant to look at the processes that constitute an effective modern state.

The Weberian state is conceived as a centralized bureaucratic unit that seeks to develop administrative models to entrench its sovereignty, ensure its autonomy, and exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence across its entire territory. The hierarchical and hegemonic process assumptions embedded in this conceptualization of the state, imply that states develop administrative micro-mapping in order to better manage territorial sub-units extending from the sovereign to the community. The expected outcome is not only effective territorial control, but also effective control over the social livelihoods present within these territories. Therefore, the intrinsic purpose underlying the process of statebuilding would be to ensure the most effective

administrative configuration that would optimize the state's functionality in relation to society. This process leads to the assumption that the borderland may be territorially part of the state in juridical term, however the state's capacity to exercise control over the borderland determines the de facto effectiveness of the statebuilding effort. Hence this study assumes two sets of processes at work with a multiplicity of actors engaged in these processes. However, the study maintains an emphatic focus on the observation of both borderland dynamics and statebuilding within borderland spaces.

Borderland dynamics are part of a complex set of social and political processes. Goodhand (2008: 239) notes that, "the bargaining processes between state and borderlands, which are central to war-to-peace transitions can be conceptualized as a 'double diamond' model with four sets of actors-international/transnational players, central elites, and borderland elites and borderland populations." These multiple social configurations, being hierarchical in nature, generate internal rules and modes of operation, which determine internal ordering, authority and control. These are largely shaped by a process of interaction at what Goodhand (2008: 239) further characterizes as occurring within the country and with players across the border. However, as war-to-peace transitions evolve, the formalizing dynamics of process bureaucratization tends to marginalize and even criminalize the informal further setting up arenas of opposition and domination.

Borderland dynamics inscribed within the *longue durée*, assume the co-existing permanence and transience of livelihood processes. While borderlands could be spaces to be traversed in the quest of centralized greener pastures there is a great degree of permanence to borderlands. While border-crossers are an important dimension to understanding borderland processes more important

are the permanent social processes inscribed within borderlands. These permanent social processes derive their legitimacy from social embeddedness and authority. They then seek to mediate and regulate all forms of interaction with and between the borderlands and “others”. These relatively long-term borderlands processes provide insights into social organization from whence emerge alternative forms of ordering, authority and control. They also provide a socially organized basis from which to engage with state forms of ordering, authority and control. For the purpose of this study, borderlands are assumed to be spaces where life histories exhibit generations of permanence. These depict the constitutive elements of organized social ordering, authority negotiation and hierarchical social control, albeit devoid of the sovereignty embedded in the state. Effectively, from the borderland perspectives these social organizations despite their informality are for from working in the shadows of the postwar state.

Far from being static, borderland dynamics exhibit an evolution in patterns of informal ordering, authority negotiation and social control, which emerge out of their internal spatial positionality, symbolic and social configuration. However, within these dynamics there are also a multiplicity of social configurations either networked to or seeking to be networked to the center or the international in order to negotiate social positionality and socio-economic options within borderlands. These multiple social configurations, being hierarchical in nature, generate internal rules and modes of operation, which determine micro-political balances of power in internal ordering, authority and control. The socially organized representations of borderland permanence characterized by complex political and relational dynamics are unavoidable spaces in the negotiation of postwar statehood.

These interactions occurring across multiple spaces of opposition and domination occlude clear distinctions between borderland “formality” and “informality”. Both its structuring and characterization of formality and informality, shape the negotiation of positionality and power relations within the borderlands and the state. Hence, borderland insider engagement with outsiders entering borderlands comes with the legitimization of their multifarious social structures. These groups are inherently political exhibiting internal political dynamics; they are rules-based; they evidence internal and external patterns of alliance formation. Therefore, they have social backing, which they deploy in engagement with statebuilding architects.

The second set of processes is that developed by the postwar state in engagement with its borderlands. These processes are borne out of the nature and capacity of the postwar state and the statebuilding project. Here, it is assumed that the postwar state exercises limited sovereignty, given its dependence on a broad array of international partners in the execution of its functions. The limited postwar sovereign often outsources the important pursuit of the monopoly over the legitimate use of force to international institutions, while subcontracting many technocratic and social development roles to international non-governmental actors. In many cases of security and development intervention, international actors may be the gravitational center of politics (Blieseman de Guevara 2010: 115) however, this perspective underestimates local actors’ ability to use the possibilities unfolding in the course of external interventions to further their own state-related agendas. However, by looking to borderland cities to understand statebuilding, local actors provided the interpretation for interconnected sets of statebuilding processes. They articulate their quotidian engagement with the state as well as international organizations, international governmental organizations,

multinational corporations and international non-governmental organizations. International statebuilding processes essentially enter borderland spaces expecting to strengthen statebuilding outcomes. However, upon encountering the first set of processes, both are mutually altered

Given the lack of vertical and horizontal programmatic harmonization across this spectrum of international statebuilding actors, negotiated statebuilding processes are subjected to differing borderland patterns of ordering, authority negotiation and social control. The outcome therefore is a pattern of sophisticated appropriation of postwar statebuilding processes by subaltern borderland patterns of informal order, authority and control. These interactive processes are best captured through an ethnographic understanding of statebuilding in everyday practice. Fairly ad hoc hybrid governance arrangements that develop out of borderland social actor engagement with international statebuilding remain inherently unstable, unsustainable and untenable. The unpredictability of hybrid arrangements within postwar contexts neither sustainably secures the state nor the borderland social livelihoods.

The sophisticated appropriation of postwar statebuilding processes within borderlands challenges the notion that hybrid order (which greatly derives from research on what works in failed, weak and failing states) is a long-term sustainable and stable arrangement for state-society relations in postwar contexts. Postwar statebuilding brings institutions, actors, resources and norms into borderlands, which are far from pristine. However, the appropriation of these by-products of postwar statebuilding is the prerogative of borderland social organizations.

This thesis therefore, questions the extent to which the glorification of hybrid governance synergies between the international, the state and the non-state reflects empirical reality. It then proposes interrogating the emergence of alternative modes of social control and how these rather than reflecting hybridity evidence modes of competitive co-existence. Alternative modes of social control, in their interdependence, simultaneously exhibit elements of competition, collusion and extraversion. Taken holistically, empirical evidence would appear to show that the very nature of postwar statebuilding undermines the monolithic understanding of the centralized modern state. The emergence of alternative forms of ordering, authority and control within sub-state territorial units (facilitated by current patterns of internationally-supported postwar statebuilding) create fracture and dissonant autonomy, competing authority and limits the state's capacity to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. This amounts to the building of a pseudo-state, not one based on harmonious, symbiotic hybrid governance.

Focusing on borderland dynamics, this study shows that hybrid governance is informally polycentric with a multiplicity of interdependent social organizational actors simultaneously involved in patterns of collusion, competition and extraversion. These modes of interaction are determined by the borderland (local, sub-state) social construction of order, authority and control. Therefore, capturing local construction and deployment of order, authority and control elucidates the operationalization of statebuilding its potential for building sustainable peace in postwar societies.

Borderlands in Postwar Statebuilding: A Question of Pluralized Authority

Situating borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding within the states-in-society approach necessitates a disaggregation of social actors and a move away from monistic interpretations of ordering, authority and control. Focus on the implications of informal orders and ordering on the constitution of authority and the emergence of social controls outside the state and in relation with the state. Explored through interaction within arenas of domination and opposition which have implications for power distribution within the emergent postwar state, recursive implications on both borderland dynamics and the state and are hardly integrated.

Processes of informal ordering and ordering informality endow borderland social actors with grounded authority and control over territorial administration and social processes. Socially grounded informal authority differs markedly from Weberian rational-legal authority and its neo-patrimonial derivatives. However, due to the limited nature of the postwar state there is interpenetration between socially grounded authority and state authority. Socially grounded authority derives from a specificity of spatial (physical), social and symbolic ordering. The evolving constitution and deployment of socially grounded authority in daily practice within borderland spaces has implications for postwar statebuilding.

The legitimate authority wielded by borderland social actors in postwar contexts is the kind of authority that most states seek. It is a socially negotiated authority organically emerging from the recognition of mutual coexistence and tacit consent to informal governance arrangements in exchange for a place in the specific non-state order. According to Call (2012: 45), the main sources of

state legitimacy are i) internal embedded legitimacy which is derived from prior “state formation” or other historical dynamics; ii) performance legitimacy which reflects the effective and equitable delivery of expected services; and iii) process legitimacy which reflects how accepted and proper the rules, procedures, and institutions of policymaking and governance are perceived to be. He uses this conceptual understanding of legitimacy to provide a framework for understanding the role of international actors in inhibiting or fostering exclusionary behavior in postwar states. However, borderlands provide alternative and plural authority structures in coexistence with authority sought through statebuilding.

Socially grounded authority is embedded, decentralized, legitimate, representative and empowered to act on behalf of borderland communities. These are unquantifiable qualities the postwar state cannot purport to possess. The evolution of socially grounded authority within informal ordering and in the process of ordering informality is subject to proximate demands for effective representation and accountability. Both processes differ in their engagement with the state and in the demands that the state representatives make of actors who wield socially grounded authority. Especially noting that socially grounded authority derives from a degree of social cohesion, which eludes the overhanging postwar state.

There are constitutive parallels between the state’s quest for legitimate authority and that of non-state actors. Call (2012: 45) defines legitimacy as a generalized perception of a political community that the claim to authority by a collection of institutions over its territory is proper or appropriate. Meanwhile vertical legitimacy refers to the broad sense of appropriateness of the state and its functioning, including the rules by which leaders are selected. Horizontal

legitimacy refers to the extent to which various social groups and communities within a territory “accept and tolerate each other.”

Informal ordering in territorial governance generates borderland leaders whose functions often fill gaps in state governance, hence the prevalence of overlaps and the tendency towards both conflict and confluence. Meanwhile, the process of ordering informality necessitates the construction of authority into private sector modes of production. This chapter highlights the embedded nature of socially grounded authority in community leaders as captured through interviews and focus group discussions. Socially grounded authority provides a platform for engagement with the state and provides the state with an entry point to the communities. Both practices are evidenced in the management of crises such as the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease and violence resulting from social strife.

The legitimacy derived from socially grounded interpretations of accountability and direct representation contributes to the emergence and sustenance of social controls within borderlands. However, socially grounded authority remains subject to the internal politics of communities, which are swift to change leadership in the event of perceived incompetence or lack of accountability. In this setting, presidentially appointed mayors constantly seek to de-legitimize socially grounded authority by discouraging the use of elections to bring community leaders to the helm of their communities.

Conclusion

Borderland dynamics evidence micro-sociological understandings of territoriality and sovereignty in quotidian practice. Social actors in engagement

with both state representative and the communities from whence they garner legitimacy and authority, inscribe quotidian meaning and interpretation to state designed territorial administration. This interaction of disaggregated social actors — whether formal or informal — within arenas of opposition and domination provides insights into social actions and the outcomes they produce. Within postwar statebuilding contexts in particular, discerning the outcomes of social actions is made more complex given the engagement between myriad social actors with differing social program outcome expectations. However, a grounded understanding of statebuilding through the prism of borderland dynamics engages with existing conceptualizations of locality, ordering, authority and social control. The integrative analytical framework that emerges thereof advances disaggregated borderland social actor and mutually transforming interactive process dynamics to understand the empirical content of micro-territoriality and pluralized sovereignty and their implications for statebuilding.

Chapter 4 : Interrogating Space, Place and Process: Political Ethnography in Complex Emergencies

“Even the most passive observer produces ripples worthy of examination, while the activist who seeks to transform the world can learn much from its obduracy.” Buroway (1998)

Introduction: Borderland Dynamics Organizing Social Livelihoods Amid Postwar Flux and Uncertainty

This chapter traces the methodological process deployed to understand everyday socio-political organization of order (informal), authority and control in postwar borderlands and their implications for postwar statebuilding. The methodology devolves from the premise that everyday practice routinizes patterns of interaction amongst borderland social actors and between them and postwar statebuilding social actors networked across local, national and international levels. Everyday borderland practices give rise to simultaneously competing and colluding immanent forms of pluralized ordering, authority and social control mechanisms. This chapter describes and rationalizes the use of a comparative political ethnography to understand borderlands trapped in complex emergencies. This spatial and socio-political state of flux raises methodological challenges that warrant empirical adjustments and readjustments. Such adjustments are necessary for the researcher to stay connected to selected organized borderland social actors. However, it is impossible to claim exact instrumental replication from one borderland research site to another as time, individual and situational dispositions made every encounter unique despite the whole process providing the basis for understanding the emic dynamics of borderland social organization. Organized borderland social actors are the custodians of the narratives and interpretations of their daily practice that provides the core analytical material for this thesis.

Nevertheless, the researcher confronts these interpretations to burgeoning research on locality and local dimensions of postwar statebuilding. These social actors also clarify the researcher's observation of everyday practice within Liberia's postwar borderlands.

It is necessary to state what is being compared in a comparative political ethnography of postwar borderlands and why this comparison is central to the understanding of postwar statebuilding. This study focuses on the comparison of two internal borderland cities in Liberia—Foya in Lofa County and Ganta in Nimba County. However, a third borderland city, Zwedru, serves as a comparative area for observing borderland phenomena from a County capital sitting on the edges of the state. Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County was selected to understand the possibility generalizable patterns of socially organized (similarities and differences) daily practice. The choice of these cities emerged from a reading of Liberia's troubled history of nation building and statebuilding since the arrival of the American Colonization Society (ACS) on the shores of Mesurado in 1820-21.

This chapter outlines a multi-sited comparative political ethnography of informal ordering within Liberia's postwar borderlands highlighting a research process, rationales underlying methodological choices and challenges encountered. Firstly, it provides a narrative of how the researcher's entry, engagement with and appropriation of a set of instruments that constantly adjusted to the flux of everyday life within borderlands. This mode of enquiry was dictated by the necessity to both observe everyday life in the context of postwar statebuilding (a political process rife with spatial, symbolic and social power implications); and the need to hear local narratives and interpretations of engagement with different statebuilding and peacebuilding interveners over

time and from multiple interpretive perspectives. Central to this endeavor is the deployment of the process of participant observation through transportation and attendance of social group functions; the conduct of focus group discussions; individual interviewing; the collection of borderland histories and individual life histories; and the exploration of archival material. Additionally, it provides empirical justifications for focusing on community leaders, commercial motorbike riders (and their associative live) and their interactions with the postwar state and its international statebuilding partners.

Secondly, it provides a set of justifications for the choice of research sites through a reading of local history in interaction with statebuilding in the long durée, from settlement of the American Colonization Society in 1820-21 to postwar statebuilding (2004-2015). While this process has been outlined in historical perspective in Chapter One, this history is inalienably linked to the spatial methodological choices made in during the course of the experiential fieldwork process. Brief descriptions of the specific research sites show their historical relevance in the tenuous war to peace transition in Liberia. It also justifies the focus on informal encounters with postwar statebuilding to evidence the salience of oft-ignored embedded informal order, authority and control.

Thirdly, it highlights some of the social and security challenges encountered during the execution of the research project and ways in which these challenges were dealt with. It concurrently presents the ethical considerations negotiated between the researcher and the interviewees, focus group discussion participants and some observed individuals during the course of the research project. Finally, it explains how a multi-sited comparative political ethnography provides *a posteriori* justification for a reverse engineered understanding of

borderland order, authority and social control in interaction with postwar statebuilding in Liberia.

Researcher engagement with borderland social actors evolved dialogically. This dialogical evolution shaped the nature and process of the engagement, the type of information that was gathered for analysis and the nature of the analysis. There were casual and more formal conversations with immigration officials and focus group discussions with commercial motorbike riders on the Makona River (Lofa) and St. John River border crossing. Union leaders, community chairpersons and mayors provided multiple dimensions of ordering, authority interaction and multiple loci for the negotiation and maintenance of social control. Meanwhile money-changers, sitting at the center of the borderland economy performed functions akin to a central bank on a daily basis with the proximity to the specific border being a determinant in the kind of currency which they traded. They shared their hopes and defined themselves and their socially organized public forms, not in terms of resistance, but as negotiators of process and practice. They cared more about the outcomes of their liminal orders and authority, than the outcome of the postwar state, while paying scant attention to the interconnectedness of both outcomes. Combined with participant observation, the interview evidenced the centrality of borderland dynamics to postwar statebuilding outcomes. From their position within borderlands (yet networked to national, regional and international social actors and their actions), organized social actors interact with multiple social actors who also exhibit varying permanent, transient and traversing characteristics. By focusing on understanding the negotiation of formality and informality within borderlands, this study shows how these liminal social actors develop and maintain alternative forms of informal order during processes of postwar

statebuilding. Thus, this was far from being a linear technical process of questionnaire design, interviewing, transcription and information analysis.

Liberia: Historically Contextualizing Borderland State Interaction

Liberia's politics continues to evidence deep influences of "black colonialism" the institutionalization of a privileged settler group over indigenous communities after the arrival of the ACS in 1820-21 (Liebenow 1969, Sundiata 1980, Saigbe 1983, Gershoni 1985). From independence in 1847 till date, Liberia's motto remains: "The love of liberty brought us here." It's lone star flag hearkens back to the American flag. Symbols of settler privilege continue to dominate Liberia's socio-political landscape despite the institutionalization of the national integration policy in 1964 by President W.V.S. Tubman. Up until the post-coup 1986 constitutional review process, Liberia's independence constitution of 1847 had sanctioned the differentiation between coastal Liberia (mainly settler colonies) and its hinterlands. Liberia's "black colonialism" effectively created two main identity groups a hegemonic settler group and the marginalized 16 indigenous ethnic groups. Far from ascribing a dominant ethnic character to Liberia's civil war the establishment of hegemonic privilege in Liberia evidences the necessity to understand contemporary Liberian politics through everyday practice. It is in everyday practices that patterns of informal ordering, authority and social control emerge and their existence negotiated. Their emergence therefore sets the stage for engage with the state within arenas of opposition and domination.

Nation building in Liberia was a challenge which different statebuilding policy interventions unsuccessfully sought to address over the years. It can be argued that, since independence, the creation of successive hegemonic encounters

between state and society replaced one another without fundamentally altering purposes, mechanics and ends of statebuilding in Liberia. More than a century of settler domination was replaced after the 1980 coup by Krahn and allied ethnic group domination. The systematic state-sanctioned repression of the Mano and Gio ethnic groups of Nimba County after the 1985 Quiwompka Coup attempt created further fissures, mistrust and uncertainty. Hence when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) marched through the Butuo on the border with the Ivory Coast in December 1989, many in Nimba County welcomed them as liberators. However, they themselves fractured with the emergence of the INPFL under the command of Prince Yormie Johnson. Subsequently, in 1993, Alhaji G.V. Kromah's United Liberation Movement for Liberia (ULIMO-K) attacked the NPFL through Foya to seize control of Lofa County. Thus, specific historical examples point to the salience of Liberia's hinterlands in shaping statebuilding means and ends.

Liberia is administratively divided into 15 counties of these, seven abut neighboring countries. Each county is divided into districts and statutory districts. Each district is made up of overlapping towns and cities, clans and villages with internal administrative boundaries often cutting through ethnic groups. For the purpose of this study site visits were undertaken in three counties Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. Within these counties two city sites were selected for research Foya, Lofa County and Gompa Nimba County. These sites were deliberately selected as a result of archival research at the Liberian archives in Indiana which provided insights into the evolution of the administrative division of Liberia; the origins and movement of the different factions engaged in Liberia's civil wars; and their historical importance in both wartime and peacetime economies. Within each of these contexts, I sought to uncover emic (insider perspectives on political and social

life and/or ground-level processes involved therein (Bayard de Volo and Schatz, 2004: 267).

This prior knowledge about Liberia that captures strategic and elite narratives of war, politics and statebuilding, informed the development and execution of comparative ethnographic research from two borderland cities. Different attempts at statebuilding crafted institutional arrangements and forms that were refracted upon Liberia's borderlands that reacted to statebuilding in differing ways. Thus, a comparative ethnography from the borderlands takes the broad historical strokes seriously. Meanwhile it proceeds by seeking to understand the coalescence of individuals into social organizations to forge resiliency amid vulnerability and through complex emergencies. It is here that is situated a grounded understanding of postwar borderland configurative and interactive process dynamics as they have historically interacted with previous attempts at statebuilding. Instrumentally, political ethnographies seek to uncover emic (insider) perspectives on political and social life and/or grounded processes involved therein (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004: 267). This perspective underscores the dynamic and mutually constitutive nature of social encounters. Hence the malleability of experiential ethnographic research processes that adjust and readjust to the flux of everyday borderland livelihood. The reflexive inclination of this particular study, in highlighting the complex ethnographic worlds of the contested local, challenges the oft-assumed omnipotence and autonomy of the international, whether it comes from international statebuilding, neoliberal politics, or cultural flows.

The rationale for two case study site selection from theoretical lens

The two case studies were selected based on the significance of the historical relationship between borderlands and interrelated dynamics of state collapse, warfare and state building in Liberia. Historically, the process of state construction in Liberia was premised on centrally-based Americo-Liberians' declaration of independence in 1847, and then subsequently seeking to develop a social compact that would incorporate "indigenous" populations. These dynamics are self-evident in Liberia's initial constitution that institutionalized two Liberias – coastal Liberia and the hinterlands.

Triadic intersection of labor, natural resources and taxation deepened antagonisms between the state and some parts of its hinterlands. By the early 1950s, these hinterlands had become the motor of economic production in Liberia without wielding much political power. Cheap labour from the hinterlands fueled coastal rubber plantations. Meanwhile the discovery of iron ore reserves in Mount Nimba in the 1950s led to the establishment of the Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company (LAMCO) and the construction of the country's first railway line from Yekepa to the port of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County. Meanwhile the installation of a hut tax system further antagonized hinterland populations who were expected to contribute more to a government in which they were barely represented than coastal settler communities.

These politico-economic processes had differing implications in Foya, Lofa County and Ganta, Nimba County. Foya, that provided much of the manpower for Firestone's plantations experienced an exodus of able-bodied males, some of whom returned to contribute to the explosion of a boomtown, according to local historians. Meanwhile others resettled on Liberia's coast. However, Foya

emerged as a border boomtown which depended more on commercial exchange with towns like Gueckedou in Guinea and Kenema in Sierra Leone, than Monrovia. Meanwhile, for Ganta, which supplied labor to LAMCO, the unionization of labor within the mines contributed to the development of socio-political consciousness that the Liberian state was slow to gauge and accommodate. Meanwhile Ganta quickly superseded Sanniquellie as the commercial hub in Nimba County benefiting from its relative proximity to the Freeport of Monrovia borderland hubs in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire.

These formative and evolutionary dynamics made these cities central to understanding the changing relationships between borderlands and state building. Hence, they purposefully were selected as liminal spaces from which to understand bottom-up postwar reconfiguration of informal ordering, authority and social control and their implications for international statebuilding processes.

The heuristic importance of studying borderland dynamics in Liberia's postwar statebuilding cannot be overstated. While studies have empirically explored regional war economies (Pugh and Cooper 2005), on networks and informal power in intrastate war (Utas 2012) on borderlands in war economies (Raeymaekers 2010, 2013), borderland in state formation in Indonesia (Eilenberg 2005), and the regional dimensions of the Liberian Civil War (Sawyer 2004), the ontological lens has hardly been turned to the permanence of micro-political actors whose social livelihoods devolved from and are based from and within borderlands.

Reflexivity: Researcher and Theory as Instrument

The methodological process reflectivity through constant intermediation between historical contexts of episodic statebuilding in Liberia, everyday borderland manifestations of informal social ordering, authority and control and critical statebuilding and peacebuilding literature. Critical statebuilding research has predominantly been aggregative. Its theoretical interests have largely focused on the articulation of ideological and relational power schisms and asymmetries between interveners and reactive subjects of intervention (Richmond and Franks 2009, Chandler 2008, Mac Ginty 2013, Sisk 2013, and Paffenholz 2015). In the case of Liberia multiple biographical texts have traced the life histories of elite warlords (Waugh 2013) and postwar leaders (Johnson-Sirleaf 2009), while ethnographies have focused on the cultural political dimensions of the civil wars (Ellis 2006); the forms and consequences of regional and international intervention (Adebajo 2002: 34-38) and civil war as state formation (Geddes 2014). However, despite contributing to the empirical content of micro-territoriality and pluralized sovereignty, seldom are “semi-literate” voices heard over the din of elite accounts on and about the postwar state in Liberia. When they emerge, local voices are a complex cast of characters alternating between victimhood and active participation in regional, national and local networks of violence (Autesserre 2013). They even sometimes exhibit complex coalescence of victimhood and agency to project what Utas (2005: 426) describes as “*victimcy*” the non-linear relational trajectory appropriated by the self-incorporate both elements of ‘victimhood’ and ‘agency’ as survival mechanisms in contexts of social vulnerability such as civil wars. However, these “local actors” are also cast as second-hand buyers and therefore passive “owners” of interventionary peacebuilding processes that are largely

programmed from global centers (Donais 2013). While these perspectives provide asymmetric variations in postwar statebuilding encounters, social actor homogenization and assumed hegemonies underestimate the negotiated positioning and options available to and deployed by socially embedded local actors within borderland spaces.

This study contributes to understanding social actor configuration, social action and their implications for postwar statebuilding. This enquiry is based on an ethnographic uncovering of disaggregated and pluralized micro-level mechanisms of social interaction in engagement with complex statebuilding processes. A process perspective views interveners as more than the sum total of their interventionary policies and programmatic practices, but as integral social actors to the postwar statebuilding project within transitional states. The distinction between social actors and their ‘actual’ social actions is methodologically important, firstly because it shifts the interpretive focus away from analyses of UN, OECD, World Bank, or International Alert policy documents to the micro-dynamics of local borderland social actor engagements with statebuilding interveners. Second, it is at the level of everyday local engagement that statebuilding actually gets attempted and alternative social forces harness social and symbolic power, which is then deployed in interaction with the state and its international statebuilding patrons. Thirdly, it is through this process of social interaction that the empirical outcomes of statebuilding projects and programs are shaped through contact with informal social ordering, authority and control. This informality within postwar statebuilding normatively and operationally challenges the re-emergence of the state and in turn reshapes long-term engagement between the intervener and active and differentiated informal subjects of statebuilding intervention.

Grasping the complexity of borderland social dynamics within postwar statebuilding necessitates understanding multiple interactive processes occurring simultaneously over time. It assumes that while states often view borders as structurally static outcomes of political bordering processes, the socio-political meanings and implications of borders and bordering emerge when individuals interpret and interact with them—whether as state agents and instruments, international statebuilding agents or society-level actors. Every set of social actors engages with borderlands with different expectations. Hence borderlands are not power neutral fields. Given the consideration of power embedded within borderlands, locally embedded social actors unavoidably become active agents in engagement with the resource-rich and empirically driven statebuilding interventions. Indeed, it seeks a deeper understanding of the outcomes of the encounter between entrenched networks of local resilience and transformative outcome expectations of externally-driven statebuilding intervention.

In understanding the outcomes of local and interventionary engagement, from the viewpoint of the borderland social actors, it is also necessary to understand the configuration (in structure and process) and symbolic interaction of postwar borderland social forces. Mead views symbolic interaction assumes that people act towards things based on the meaning things have for them and; these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation (Van Manen 1990). Therefore, engagement provides the empirical basis for interpretation and meaning. This political ethnography privileges organized social actors—the products of federated or negotiated individual action—and their social actions in everyday practice as the primary levels of analysis. By focusing on organized social actors and then exploring the interaction of subunits within these organized groups, patterns of internal

accountability, legitimacy and representativeness which provide the bedrock for socially embedded informal order, authority and control emerge. Local political dynamics shape the rules that determine legitimacy, accountability, representativeness and discipline within informal orders. Understanding these processes is not only an interpretive project, but one which depends on anecdotal evidence and participant observation. Focusing on organized social actors provides a basis from which to interrogate the view within critical statebuilding research that one of the primary limitations of postwar statebuilding lies in the neoliberal ideological inclination of the interveners.

Furthermore, by focusing on *arenas of domination and opposition*, it provides alternative explanations for statebuilding failure not exclusively situated in the intervener's motivation, but as the product of discursive power interaction and syncretic dissonance between the intervener and the active subject of intervention. While borderlands can themselves be characterized as arenas of domination and opposition, grounded empirics pointed to marketscapes as physical spaces; the territorial realms of community leaders as social and symbolic spaces and Commercial Motorbike Rider Unions (CMR Unions) as social and symbolic spaces as salient to understanding social action within arenas of domination and opposition.

More so, it was important to capture interpretive dissonance of interventions from the perspective and interpretation of the subjects (active agents) of intervention. This is working from the assumption that policy documents provide insights into the intent of international statebuilders. Thus this ethnographic experience required reflection on the dialogical principles of reflexive science, which demands constant cognizance of the interventionary role of the observer in the life of the participant; demanding an analysis of

interaction within social situations; uncovering local processes in a relation of mutual determination with external social forces; and regarding theory as emerging not only in dialogue between participant and observer, but also among observers now viewed as participants in a scientific community (Buroway 1998: 16). Social actors whose life histories are inscribed within borderlands in the *longue durée* interpret and engage with the re-emergence, make-up, negotiation and enforcement of internal and international borders as part of the postwar statebuilding process. This interaction provides a understanding empirical content of micro-territoriality and pluralized sovereignty as outcomes of postwar statebuilding.

Approaching postwar statebuilding from the bottom-up had ontological, epistemological and methodological influences on my research endeavor. Ontologically, by privileging critical engagement with quotidian borderland livelihoods within a postwar context, the quotidian management of economic and socio-political spaces and the processes therein took center stage in my interpretive endeavor. This in turn shaped my epistemological preference for seeking a multiplicity of voices within the community to articulate interpretations of their lived experiences within postwar spaces. Assuming the natural construction of social hierarchies and gendered roles in everyday processes necessitated recourse to a multiplicity of voices that situated themselves along different positions on the power spectrum. The recourse to ethnographically based participant-observation positioned me as an outsider looking in and seeking to understand emic constructions and engagement with issues of territoriality and sovereignty which are central tenets to postwar statebuilding. Being of western-educated Cameroonian origin, I clearly stood from a position of privilege in relation to my interlocutors.

However, given their experiences with many dimensions of the polyphormic international, I sought to negotiate difference by conforming to the social rules of adopting a “stranger-father” and living, eating, shopping and traveling the borderlands like the borderlanders themselves. Over time and through multiple pre-Ebola outbreak and post-Ebola visits to the same research sites, I was able to confirm and develop an understanding of everyday governance processes and micro-territorial interpretations of pluralized sovereignty within the Liberian borderlands.

Researching Centralized Margins and Marginality in Moments of Crisis Interrogating Configuration of Informal Orders

Researching marginality in moments of crisis stokes curiosity about pluralized modes of engagement (intra-local, local-national, local-international, national-international) that encounter the flux inherent within these crises. What may appear as monolithic structures – the local, national and international are refracted into myriad nodes of interactive everyday practice within the margins. Compounding the flux of everyday life within borderlands, crises reveal the complex dual coexistence of patters of vulnerability and resiliency embedded within them. Operating on the edge of the central, entry into margins in contexts of complex emergency is often mediated through prisms of fear, mistrust, uncertainty and expectation. Negotiating entry and establishing rules of engagement are therefore essential to the conduct of ethnographic research within borderlands.

Reflexivity embraces participation as intervention because it distorts and disturbs as a social order reveals itself in the way it responds to pressure (Buroway 1998: 17). This pressure is described by the uncertainty and flux that

characterized most postwar contexts. Studies on crises have overwhelmingly focused on the ideological postures, policies and programmatic orientations of international statebuilding interventions with only nascent attention going toward the exploration of localized engagement with these interventions. Even this ontological shift has tended to highlight local interpretations of external processes such as Security Sector Reform in Africa (Bagayoko 2012) and Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone (Millar 2014). This is still far from understanding notions of local gatekeeping and the informal norms that undergird them or the subjection of international statebuilding interventions to locally embedded social orders.

The triadic encounter between the flux and uncertainty inherent within postwar statebuilding, social embedded informal ordering and international statebuilding interventions makes for complex ethnographic research. However micro-societal complexities that undergird this triadic encounter and contribute to shaping everyday livelihood outcomes remain largely silenced, despite a number of notable exceptions. Shifting the ontological lens towards micro-level complexities in the shadows of crises, Woods' (2003) develops an in-depth ethnographic understanding of insurgent collective in El Salvador's civil war and Autesserre (2010) exhibits linkages between local and regional conflict complexes amid the paradoxical prevalence of national peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both studies deploy differing political ethnographic approaches to understanding the micro-dynamics of societies emerging from protracted civil war.

A study on borderland dynamics in postwar statebuilding continues in this tradition of shifting the epistemological lens to the micro-level individual and networked community that shape socio-organizational processes amid macro-

level, top-down postwar statebuilding. This political ethnographic approach acknowledges and gives serious consideration to macro-positivist interpretations of the institutional nature, content and outcomes of international statebuilding. Yet these positivist institutional forms despite their role in social interaction are not the central issue under study. The focus remains on the ways in which local actors within liminal communities organize to engage, negotiate and interpret their social, symbolic and physical positions within ongoing national and international statebuilding processes. Postwar statebuilding outcomes do not singularly depend on international intervention if anything international statebuilding and peacebuilding interventions are inherently limited in their reach and impact by routine everyday practices. These everyday practices are borne of the complex admixture of vulnerability and resilience forged in contexts of sustained emergency.

Local individual and collective agency evidenced through informal ordering, construction and deployment of authority and social controls in daily practice, play a central role in the shaping the empirical reality of postwar states. This study privileges descriptions and interpretations of social actors, actions and processes by ‘insiders’ (in this case borderlanders). They contextualize social continuities and change within Liberia’s postwar and post-Ebola context.

However, the role of the researcher within the ethnography being to closely study and experience social and cultural contexts of statebuilding interactions within complex transitional state in order to provide a more accurate account of local perspectives on statebuilding. Situating this ethnography within borderlands implies the necessity to understand both the role of marginality in the state and expressions of state forms from the margins. The construct of the borderland, being a geographical construct necessitates an understanding of

the administrative cartography of the state. For purposes of administration, there is a homogenizing tendency inherent to the state. Administrative units may mirror one another around a country, however they differ in their resource and personnel endowments, the nature of their networking into central power structures and autonomy in decision-making.

Entering the Foya Borderland: Memory, A Funeral and A Traveling Pandemic

In March 2014, after travelling 16 hours from Monrovia, I arrived on Broad Street, Foya, in northeastern Liberia at five a.m. A local family had graciously agreed to host me in Foya Kama quarter. Foya Kama is one of Foya's nine quarters and one of the oldest settlements in the borderland city. As evidence of its historical importance, Foya Kama's grassy hilltop hosts the Foya Borma Hospital, an Episcopal church whose missionary purpose includes supplying medical personnel to the hospital and operating a missionary secondary and high school. I had planned on spending two weeks in Foya making to begin a multi-stage ethnographic engagement with local postwar socio-political dynamics viewed from borderlands.

As I sat for what to me would have been early lunch with my host family, they inquired about the purpose of my visit, wanting to know how they could facilitate my study visit. As I synoptically told them about my research a family uncle (Old Man F.) interrupted me. He went into a 20 minute narrative of that day in 1993 when "Fine Boy"/aka/" Saah Tchui" (a ULIMO/Guinean rebel mid-level commander) had led an invasion from across the border in Guinea. His purpose was to seize Foya and the entire Lofa County, from the control of General Faiyah (NPFL). His spotty recollection evoked memories of the

villagers – men, women and children – being thronged to the Foya Airfield (situated at the southeastern end of the city at Ndama Road). He had been a quarter chief at that point. This is where I garnered interest in the concept of the Quarter Chief, which fell outside the customary realm of paramount, clan and town chiefs and the administrative realm of the City Mayor or District Commissioner. The concept of the Quarter Chief, though not a formal one, contributes to understanding everyday dynamics of micro-territorial governance from the borderlands.

The Foya quarter chiefs who had stayed through the 1993 ULIMO invasion were assembled and instructed to provide a labor force for the invading contingent. This labor force was coercively required to meet the logistical needs of the invading army, as well as ensure the economic sustenance of the invading force. They were coerced into pillaging the city and marching everything that could be sold in markets across the border in Guinea. The use of siege strategies by rebel forces spans most of human history, and in this case, it signals the importance of local economies to invading forces. In his lifetime, Old Man F. had seen different forms of forced labor. He had seen young men embark on the perilous journey to work in contemptible conditions on Firestone plantations in Margibi County. He had lived through the hut tax and multiple rounds of Kissi-Gbandi tribal wars. I listened carefully, took mental notes and asked curious questions. I realized that my ethnographic journey had begun and it had completely caught me by surprise. This old man in Foya Kama had not been on my list of preplanned potential informants however his vast historical insights on this borderland space stoked my curiosity and exposed the complexity of the task at hand for me. Most importantly was the realization that the memories of different era in the borderland's territorial history were interwoven with the lived social experiences of its residents.

Memory – however fractured, selective and pained by physical and psychological trauma – provided a frame through which to appreciate the historical evolution of borderland territorial ordering in relation to the state and in relation to contested informal micro-territorial ordering. Over the next couple of days, Old Man F. described some of the local customs and courtesies that were extended to outsiders – like myself – entering their relatively close-knit borderland community. He also advised me of who to meet negotiate access the individual and social spaces relevant to my research. Over the course of the ethnographic experience the individual and social spaces only grew wider and deeper in complexity. Old Man F. had assumed that I needed special information, which only certain people within the community could provide. However, I needed more than just verbal information to discern the emic mechanics of informal ordering within borderland spaces. The information I had gleaned within a week of my scoping visit in Foya coupled with the informal rules of borderland city engagement further deepened my curiosity about the engagement between programmed international statebuilding and pluralized informal ordering within borderlands.

Initially I had sought to escape the metaphor of researching along the main road – implying sticking to that which is seen from a rather convenient lens. So, I thought to visit multiple formal border crossings and then working my way backwards into the city – Foya. Of the six “official” border crossings from Foya Statutory District to Guinea and Sierra Leone, I purposefully selected two to visit – the Mankona River Crossing to Guinea and the Mende-Koma overland crossing to Sierra Leone. Firstly, this was a deliberate attempt to situate myself territorially through an observation of border administration and enforcement in everyday practice. The focus was to observe patterns of transport, checks,

controls and commodity movement between Foya and the neighboring countries. Secondly, I sought through this endeavor to understand the references of memorial points at the border mentioned during my encounters with borderland inhabitants. It had been difficult to understand the constant reference to the Makona river border control building that had been transformed by ULIMO fighters into a holding area for the Foya boys who would carry looted wares on their heads and had been reconverted its original purpose of border control building after the war. Navigating the territory came the dual realization firstly that this building was actually approximately 25 miles away from Foya's city center and allowed me to visualize the reconstruction of individual memories. Secondly the building that epitomizes different modes of repression stood emblazoned with its epithet acknowledging the contribution of international statebuilding to its reconstruction.

Prior to making any official contacts, I spent a couple of days at the Mankona River border crossing with Guinea. The border control post sits approximately one mile away of dirt track from the river crossing. The crossing is done mainly by canoe. After the border control checkpoint and right on the banks of the river was a Commercial Motorbike Rider (CMR) staging area. They provided the relay of human and material traffic from the river to the Foya and its envioning villages. At this river crossing, a signpost announced a SIDA-funded (Swedish International Development Agency) Sorlumba-Foya road construction project that was due completion the following October, "*in collaboration with the Republic of Liberia.*" The riverbank was an intermittent beehive of commercial activity with successive waves of traffic punctuated by long quiet lulls. Amid this transience though, was the semi-permanence of riverbank retailers who attracted the occasional visit of the revenue collection authority from the office based in the city Foya. The riverbank crossing was far more active with

everyday traffic than the Mende-Koma overland crossing to Sierra Leone, where activity was largely predicated upon the much-acclaimed Saturday Foya market day. The relative openness of access to the riverbank crossing also contrasted the closed nature of the overland crossing where the border control supervisor asked that I get official documentation from the district authorities before I could conduct any kind of research. I was already beginning to see regulatory differentiation of border control practice within the same borderland.

On Saturday, March 22, a funeral serendipitously introduced me to the networked dimension of borderland and centrally situated elite politics. From Thursday, March 20, the tents that began being erected in the space around a brick home in Peace Community Quarter, were a rather curious sight within Foya. Then the “4X4” sports utility vehicles, some adorned with the Liberian and Lofa County flags the mark of official county senators and congresspersons started rolling into town. Citizens of Foya from far and wide were congregating for the funeral of former and a postwar Foya City Mayor, Agnes W. Saa. Old Man F. informed me that it would be a good place to meet up and exchange with the City Mayor and the Quarter Chiefs (QC). The concept of the City Mayor seemed fairly straightforward, but the concept of the QC raised some questions. This funeral space was an arena of social engagement through which I got to meet up with all the Quarter Chiefs, without being able to meet up with the City Mayor who was very busy. However, head of the QCs pledged to convey my interest in Foya to “City” (as the mayor is referred to), while informing me that their doors were open to me anytime following the long tradition of Kissi hospitality. Foya is the heartland of the Kissi ethnic group in Liberia.

The importance of the funeral to the ethnographic experience was threefold. Within Foya's close knit community it provided a context within which I was introduced to the QCs by a former QC and respected member of the community. To the extent that during the subsequent days I ran into QCs while walking or motorbike riding around the City, we exchanged pleasantries as they taught me to start exchanging greetings (at the very least) in the Kissi language. Secondly, it provided a basis from which they, as well as the members of their community served as my instructors of local social history, culture and processes, which they seemed to enjoy doing. Finally, it provided the basis for an inquiry to the interwoven life histories of QCs, to their micro-territorial spaces, their communities and the borderland city in general.

A few weeks into my scoping trip, Liberia was confronted with another crisis - the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) on its northwestern Lofa county bordering both Sierra Leone and Guinea. Foya happened to be the epicenter of the EVD outbreak in Liberia, given its proximity to the area in Guinea that has been declared the point of origin of the outbreak by the World Health Organization. While in Foya, the Chief Medical Officer at Foya Borma Hospital succumbed to what, at the time, was a mysterious disease. By March 24th it had been confirmed that there were cases of EVD at the Foya Borma Hospital. The interconnectedness between Gueckedou, Guinea; Foya, Liberia and Kailahun, Sierra Leone made this triangular zone the epicenter of West Africa's EVD outbreak. While at that point people mourned without knowing the cause of death, the EVD that had started in neighboring Gueckedou had crossed the border into Foya. This health crisis represented another complex emergency adding to the vulnerability and necessitating even greater resilience from borderland communities.

National and international community response to the pandemic included international border closures; the hardening of internal borders into quarantine barriers; hybrid national and international health teams working with community leaders to stem its spread; public sensitization messaging to promote collective participation in combating the virus; and the provision of primary care resources in the form of buckets of chlorinated water for the washing of extremities across the country. A member of the Lofa County Ebola Response Team later would inform me that, “There were so many factors at play. As we went out to sensitize the people about this new disease, which we had never seen before, we realized disparities in the response to our sensitization between predominantly Muslim communities of Kolahun District and Christian communities in Lofa Statutory District for example. As infections recurred in the Muslim communities mainly due to postmortem cultural practices relating to burial rites, we discovered that we could better use their children as intermediaries in sensitization. This was very effective. Lofa County was declared Ebola free before the rest Monrovia. We did it.”⁶ Again the international and national agency had applied a monolithic solution to a problem with heterogeneous manifestations with reliable differences occurring through heuristic adjustments in practice based on local knowledge and territorial mapping of cultural differences onto epidemiological patterns.

Returning to Foya after the pandemic, I had to engage with two temporal prisms of complex emergency – one defined by war, the other by a pandemic. Both phases of crisis, seemed to have contributed to the realignment of informal ordering, authority and control and the deployment of informality in engagement with the state and its statebuilding benefactors. The EVD outbreak obliged the government to leverage informal orders in both sensitization and

⁶ Interview with HWI conducted in Foya, Liberia on August 2, 2015.

securitization campaigns, given that the pandemic was considered a national security issue. Therefore both Mayors and community members took a greater interest in the performances of informal micro-territorial governors. Meanwhile Micro-territorial governors also capitalized on this moment to promote the institutionalization of Community Watch Forums which at the quarter level basically contributed to the enforcement of quarantine rules. However, in most communities the CWFs outlived the EVD with implications for the enforcement of social controls based on norms developed through informal ordering.

Entering the Ganta Borderland: Memory, Generational Tensions and Impending Urbanization

Understanding spatial political dynamics within post-crisis contexts demands an ethnographic engagement a constant negotiation of spatial and symbolic meaning and intention between the researcher, their individual and collective interlocutors and the flux of daily practice. Thus, entry into Ganta was shaped by lessons learnt from Foya, the absence of a host family and the differences in the historical relationship between the territory and different iterations of the Liberian state or collapsed state. Given the relative lack of contacts within this borderland city, entry was slightly more formalized. Arriving in the City, I made contact with the City Mayor, Dorr Cooper (the current County Development Superintendent for Nimba County). A former intelligence officer during the Liberian civil war, he provided insights into the issues, challenges and hopes for his city. Since my initial interest, before entering the communities, was to understand the lay of the land a phone call to the border joint security command operating at the St. John border crossing on Guinea Road, provided access to both border officials, the bridge over the St. John River, which was

the only official crossing point from Ganta to Guinea. However, memory of the Liberian Civil war turned around a narrative of self-defense against the Doe government, which had failed to provide security and secure livelihoods and then persecuted the Mano and Gio of Nimba County. This memory of justification for collective action takes form in narratives about how “single-barrel’ soldiers defended communities against the Doe government initially, and then against other rebel movements who sought to occupy Ganta. Old Man K., for example provided insights of entire communities running to their “bush farms” where they sought refuge by living off the land during the war. Single-barrel soldiers who developed “civil defense” mechanisms ostensibly to protect civilian populations protected these “bush farm” displaced communities. Although he averred that some of these civil self-defense units eventually coalesced with rebel factions to engage in offensive war operations.

However, as the war ended, myriad challenges emerged relating to the return of internally and externally displaced populations. Land was heavily contested in Ganta, former mid-level wartime commanders converted to the private sector and the youth developed an economic force with Commercial Motorbike Riding. The combination of factors set the stage for inter-generational tensions in Ganta. CMR was seen by youth as representing a lucrative informal and opportune business sector that “did not require a college certificate for those of us who were born during the war,”⁷ as Milton M., a young CMR noted. However, a border control official decried the impact of CMR on the erosion of educational standards as “young boys all want to ride a motorbike. How can you help us convince these young people that getting something into their heads is more important than this motorbike think which is only temporary?”⁸ queried a

⁷ Interview with Milton M, a young CMR in Ganta on April, 2, 2014.

⁸ Notes from informal discussion with border control officials at St. John River crossing, Ganta on April 2, 2014.

senior border control official. However, it must also be noted that older residents of Ganta expressed a fondness for agricultural production, which was not necessarily shared by its youth. These differing perspectives on economic utility and production mirrored the postwar intergenerational angst that I had also observed in Foya.

Ganta sits approximately 161 miles away from Monrovia and about 50 miles away from the commercial city of Nzerekore, Guinea, where many from Mano and Gio sought refuge during Doe's persecution and the brutality of Liberia's two civil wars. It is also a commercial hub and arguably the economic capital of Nimba County. Since the end of Liberia's Civil War, successive Ganta City Mayors have pushed for rapid urbanization. The process of postwar urbanization was definitely going to make local winners and losers. It was also going to alter internal power dynamics inherent in everyday borderland social ordering, authority and control. This alteration in power dynamics is bound to affect the same postwar statebuilding processes, which are at their origin. Communities, such as Catholic Community, have emerged in areas that were rubber plantations during the war years.

Furthermore, the push towards rapid urbanization has exacerbated land tensions as the state has exercised eminent domain in the process of town planning, reserving space for public use for projects such as a market and a cemetery. Municipal ordinances have proscribed burials within private plots and required that commercial buildings on Main Street be at least two-storeys tall. Meanwhile, the state's lack of effective social control creates tensions between arbitrary administration of justice and public law enforcement. In the process, public spaces have become arenas of domination and opposition between the emergent state and borderland social actors.

The methodological implications of the scoping visit to Ganta, Nimba County is fourfold. Firstly, it affirmed the importance of life histories and oral historical in understanding the evolution of borderland configurations over time. Secondly, it highlighted the necessity to “find” a stranger father to negotiate entry into personal narratives, as well as aid in the process of verifying information and observations. Thirdly, it evidenced the comparability of social actor categories – Commercial Motorbike Riders and associated unions and Community Chairpersons – across borderland spaces in their relationship with statebuilding. Finally, it provided the foundations for seeking a deeper understanding of the directional interactive patterns between formality and informality in processes of ordering, authority and social control. This means that it stoked an interest in understand when and how informal social actors sought to formalize themselves. It also necessitated an understanding of the purpose and extent to which informal social actors pursued their formalization. Given the interest in discursive relational dynamics, the reverse process also gained relevance, i.e. understanding when and how formal statebuilding social actors sought to build relationships with informal social actors and the rationales underpinning these process choices (from the perspectives of the informal social actors).

Stranger Father: Mediated Ethnographic Rapport in Postwar Spaces

Seeking to understand borderland actors necessitated probing life histories, memory, alliances, trauma and survival. However, it also required the observation of daily practices in order to attempt to capture a deeper understanding of patterns that emerge thereof. These observations took place through travel, participation in meetings, negotiating terms of research

permissibility with authorities and questioning about personal and community challenges within the postwar context.

I inadvertently came upon the cultural construct “stranger father”. The stranger father is an individual with family ties within a specific community, which generally run several generations back, who serves as an entry point for the ‘stranger’ who is visiting the community. They basically are socially responsible for the stranger’s safety and conduct within the community. This piece of the research puzzle within the Liberian context contributes to both processes of participant-observation which Schatz (2013: 6) notes are centerpieces of political ethnography. His understanding of sensibility transcends the artificial distinction between fieldwork and deskwork to imply epistemological commitments that are more than about particular methods and implying the multiplicity of tools of inquiry at the disposition of the ethnographer (Schatz 2013: 6). However, the “stranger-father” adds another dimension to the flux within ethnographies of crisis for a number of reasons. Firstly, while the concept breaks the ice by providing a local point of reference for the researcher and interviewee within the community, it is extremely difficult to gauge the relationship between the stranger-father and the interviewee. This is despite the fact that the stranger-father does not sit in on the interviews. However, given that the reflexive ethnographic approach that takes the context as a point of departure and not the point of conclusion, the dialogical process of researcher-respondent data collection over time alters their interactions and refines exchanges.

Years of war breed suspicion, fear and mistrust, which are neither erased by letters of accreditation nor affiliation or pledges of interviewer/observer-interviewee confidentiality. Hence, effective access to communities was

facilitated through the negotiation and retention of a ‘stranger father’. The ‘stranger father’ often does not only know the social and physical space, but they understand the social space, individual networks and its cultural codes which guide social encounters – for example where to eat and not to eat, where and when the acceptance or the rejection of gifts may be conceived to be offensive, what signs portend insecurity or safety, who the authority figures are etc. They are local custodians of knowledge about the communities within which they also are networked. However, they also introduce a mediated dimension to the researcher’s positionality within the spaces under study.

Beyond breaking the ice between the researcher and the local communities, the stranger-father contributes alternative and in-depth interpretations to everyday local practice – contributing to making the distinction between sporadic occurrences and patterned behaviors. For example, there was a house in Blegye Pa Community in Ganta with lots of rocks on the roof. So, I asked my stranger-father, whether it was a postwar architectural innovation. He explained that the rocks had ended up on the roof due to an altercation between the owner of a private water well and well users within the community, which had ended up involving the police who solicited help from lumpen youth from Congo Community. The anecdote often gets narrated in the city to highlight a varying number of issues including – evidence of the water and sanitation crisis which continues to grip Liberia’s postwar borderland communities, the weakness of the police to deal with a belligerent and exploitative well owner, the informal power of lumpen youth who operate out of areas with limited social control and collusion between the state and informal actors in the pursuit of a variant of social justice. Thus, the stranger-father contributed to providing context to what appeared to be an architectural curiosity.

However, the use of a ‘stranger father’ also raises questions about the nature of the observations made and how much the observations could be influenced by the perspective and explanation of the ‘stranger father.’ However, seeking multiple respondents’ explanations of phenomena in both formal and informal settings provides a clear understanding of consensual meaning. More so, stranger fathers were preferably not embedded within the political structure of any given community, their backgrounds had to be non-threatening, had a long and respected history within the community and were still living within the community. These were researcher pre-conditions aligned with the researcher’s ethical considerations. Researching during and after crises requires sensitivity to personal life trajectories, memory and power dynamics in social reconstitution. Hence the stranger father was supposed to be as minimal a distraction from engagement with the borderscapes as possible. They remain my points of contact within the community and a point of contact by which the community can reach me.

Borderland Gatekeepers’ Contribution to Understanding Informal Order, Authority and Control

Local borderland gatekeepers represent a complex point of entry into understanding patterns of postwar informal ordering, authority and control in interaction with statebuilding processes. Given the tendency for social research to focus on borderland transience, community gatekeepers who mark themselves through permanence and mobility provide a frame from which to understand borderland power constitution and distribution. Interrogating length of service in the position of Quarter Chief and Community Chairperson provided an understanding of the longevity of these social actors within borderlands. Furthermore, it provided a starting point for gaining an

understanding of their roles within their communities and in relation to the state and intervening statebuilding actors who come into borderlands.

Whether official or nonofficial, the daily process of borderland gatekeeping is a communal function. The City Mayor may hold the key to the city, but the informal community chairpersons have a lock on the city. Meanwhile the informal community chairpersons also depend on an array of expertise and networked individuals within their communities to strengthen their positions as gatekeepers at the socially organized “community” level. Therefore, a borderland political ethnography requires an interaction with multiple gatekeepers and understanding how and why they deploy their authority. However, a fuller understanding is gained once again by exploring the intertwining of gatekeeper life histories to borderland social dynamics.

The reasons for understanding these personal and territorial connections are threefold. Informal governance takes time and effort, yet it is a fiscally unremunerated job, hence there it raises the question of why the pursuit and maintenance of local territorial authority and control. Secondly, there is a need to understand how the different occupational positions of gatekeepers and social capital embedded within gatekeeping informal orders, rationalizes contestation for local authority and control. Finally, there is the need to understand how the emergence of these informal gatekeepers, shapes arenas of domination and opposition within the postwar state.

To understand the nature of hierarchies that emerge in the construction of social communities (sharpened in crisis situations) necessitated the identification of and interaction with community-based social gatekeepers as well as their community members. While stranger-fathers serve an introductory

and trust building purpose, community gatekeepers often provide insights, which are further developed or challenged during focus groups discussions within the same communities. Given their social positioning within the communities within which they themselves live, and the power embedded in their role as gatekeeper, their engagement with the researcher and the stranger is understandably, not often power-neutral. Hence the very process of negotiated entry into borderscapes provides unique insights into the politics of power embedded therein.

An eventual encounter with the community leader often leads to the flipping of positionality. The gatekeeper plays the role of the researcher asking questions about the nature, purpose and potential outcomes (benefits) of the research project being undertaken both for their communities and for themselves. Within a postwar context, within borderscapes which are distant from power centers, the community leader's understanding of the purpose of the study could make the difference between a hospitable and cordial research environment and roadblocks within a non-responsive community. However, it must be understood that either outcome provides insights into social, symbolic, spatial, power and authority configurations and their deployment.

A Comparative Political Ethnography of Permanent Crisis in Borderlands

In this study, two process dynamics are in interaction statebuilding and borderland society building within a temporal context (one of crisis). Statebuilding takes place within a specific geographically delimited territorial space. Borderland dynamics occur within liminal spaces on the geographical edges of the state, yet are networks to national, regional and international

power centers. However, the relationship between borderlands and states and the role of borderlands within states are both called into question. This mode of inquiry draws upon the emergent tradition the “states in society” theoretical approach to explaining and understanding political phenomena. However, in this study the ontological lens is less on the state and more on society, hence the necessity to understand the complexities of the intersection of social space, symbolic space and physical space as constitutive of borderland dynamics in the aftermath of crisis.

Order, Authority and control are embedded within social, symbolic and physical nexuses of borderland spaces. Understanding the micro manifestation of ordering, authority and control within borderlands and its implications for postwar statebuilding necessitates a comparative political ethnography which focuses the research lens at a level of analysis that is often ignored or assumed to be insignificant – the micro-level (Bayard de Volo and Schatz, 2004). It requires a fusion of both the instrumental elements of scientific inquiry (the case selection, the interview, the participant observation) with sensitive elements of scientific inquiry (patience, empathy, humility and curiosity), which are often not taken seriously enough in political science. While the positivist political scientist is passionate about the explanation of causal dynamics between variables there is much that the interpretive political scientist can contribute to the explanation of variable complexity from the in-depth micro-level analysis of social phenomena. A comparative political ethnography of borderland is made more complex given the permanence of flux and crisis.

Comparing Memories of Permanent Crisis and Postwar Continuities

Memories of war and survival in Foya and Ganta provide a comparative prism of victimhood and resiliency under occupation versus community resistance and resiliency respectively. In December 1989, the NPFL rolled into Liberia through the border town of Butuo, which sits on the border with the Ivory Coast. As Taylor's forces marched on to take Monrovia they split off at Bong county with a faction led by General Fahyia, heading out toward Lofa County. Though the NPFL splintered with the emergence of the INPFL under Prince Yormie Johnson in 1990, they easily overwhelmed the internal defensive lines of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). After losing his commanding officer in an ambush in 1990, for example, Commander FB, a current Community Chairperson in Ganta switched over and joined forces with the NPFL, leading combat operations in Kakata, Margibi County. While memories of resistance proliferate war narratives in Ganta, narratives of occupation and eventual collusion with occupying forces characterize war narratives from Foya. These different memories of war provide a basis from which to trace the social organization of ordering, authority and control, while seeking to understand patterned similarities and differences across borderland spaces in comparison.

More importantly though, is the fact that the memories continue to capture narratives of permanent crisis and reaction to crisis by hinterland communities in Liberia, since the arrival of the ACS in 1820-21. Foya for example was occupied by different warring factions between 1989-93 (NPFL), 1993-97 (ULIMO-K) and between 1999-2003 (LURD). Foya residents narrate modes of occupation but post-NPFL forces, which were consonant with historical inter-tribal rivalries between the Kissi (Foya District) and Gbandi (Kolahun District)

communities. After the war, humanitarian aid agencies contributed to building health and sanitation amenities including water pumps and public latrines within already settled communities. However, important questions were raised to understand how the amenities constructed during the immediate postwar stabilization period provided the resource base for subsequent contestation of authority and control. As a corollary interrogation, this study was interested in how the politics of unequal public, private and NGO resource availability between communities affected ordering and the emergence of new modes of authority and control. The focus was to capture the nuanced differentiation in social control across borderland communities.

It is against this already vulnerable backdrop that the EVD outbreak occurred in March 2014. Borderland communities that had been at the epicenter of the Liberia's two civil wars found themselves yet again at the center of the EVD outbreak. Quarantines officiously hardened internal and international borders, negatively impacting subsistent economic and social livelihoods highly dependent on cross-border trade. An incoherent knee-jerk government response to EVD by imposing border closures created livelihood pressures on borderland communities which depend on sub-regional trade for subsistence. Communities within borderscapes responded broadly by negotiating with local state authorities to maintain partially open borders, while liaising with local health authorities to develop heuristic models for identifying, tracking and combating infection. Meanwhile, they also resorted to using clandestine and nonofficial border crossing points. Borderland actors proved more adept at using the emergent state to meet their health and economic needs than the reverse. This example also provided the most valid counterargument to border closure as the best means for combating regional health pandemics. Meanwhile intra-state quarantine measures also proved ineffective in curbing an outbreak,

which did not clear until a year later. Epidemiologists combating its spread through 14 harrowing months in Liberia have charted the movement of the EVD. However local health experts were at the front lines of a battle, which challenged local communities to organize themselves and alter behavioral patterns in daily practice in order to overcome the threats posed by the EVD.

Behind quarantine lines, borderland communities depended on a mix of state and INGO community interventions for EVD testing, triage and primary care. A stigmatized subset of these communities also depended on the INGO community to provide immediate and post-crisis relief. However, these borderland communities also eradicated the EVD long before it was eradicated from Monrovia's liminal spaces. This triggered a need to understand the role of borderland ordering as a resilient response to vulnerability. Central to this effort across both borderland cities Foya and Ganta was the centrality of the Community Watch Forum (CWF). Drawing from the need to establish hybrid securitization platforms within areas of limited state control, CWFs were developed at the initiative of the UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia) and the LNP (Liberian National Police). This arbitrary and controversial program provides a framework for understanding state-community interaction in security service provision from a comparative borderland perspective given the assumption that the state is expected to exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.

Donor aid plays a central role in the quest for authority and control within borderland informal orders. The occurrence of crisis (natural disaster or health crisis) results in the deployment of relief aid to affected communities. Who has access to this aid is as important as the individual who assesses individual impact. With the EVD, for example, those biologically unaffected by the

disease often complained about inequalities caused by donor aid with specifically targets EVD survivors. However, the feeling was that, just as was the case during Liberia's Civil War years, large swaths of the population endured grave collateral losses—either economically, through the loss of a breadwinner, or the stigmatization resulting from the loss of a loved one. While the state and the INGO community reacted to crisis, pre-Ebola and post-Ebola research site visits provided a comparative temporal frame to gauge the kinds of changes in informal leadership that had occurred during the crisis. Understanding comparative patterns of why and how these changes took place provides insights into the interactive purpose underlying borderland ordering.

Moments of crisis, representing “critical junctures”—a major event or confluence of factors disrupting the existing economic or political balance in society (Robinson and Acemoglu 2012: 101)—often set in motion differing social action responses that shape interconnected macro and micro environments. However, seeking to discern social livelihood processes within contexts of permanent crisis, post complex methodological challenges. By shifting the ontological lens to borderland communities, this study zeroed in on community leaders who operate between the family unit (the basic filial form of social organization) and the city/clan/village leaders (often the basic formalized incarnation of the state within liminal spaces). These community leaders are variably called quarter chiefs, community chairpersons or community representatives. However, given the governance functions they perform in daily practice they would be referred to as Micro-Territorial Governance within this thesis. Being unpaid servants of their communities, despite their informality (in official terms) they sit at the intersection between the formal state representatives and their communities. They interact with city mayors, work with INGOs in various capacities and wield symbolic power within

borderscapes. Therefore, their motivations for service and tenure longevity point to the political power dynamics within borderland spaces. They also evidence the social actions deployed by informal social actors during critical junctures to optimize and entrench their positionality.

In order to understand the nature of borderland political dynamics, therefore it is as important to interact and engage these coexisting competitive formal/informal leaders as it is to engage with their communities. Engaging with these community leaders evidences the quotidian negotiation of order, authority and control, essential for the interpretation of social and symbolic dimensions of statebuilding from the borderlands. From the researcher's position, this engagement takes the form of informal encounters, formal interviews and participant-observations of quotidian livelihoods from borderland spaces. Further information is gleaned from interaction with youth and women's representatives within the communities – they provide insights to the complex nature of social organization within times of crises within which the “known devil may be preferred to the unknown angel”⁹. Meanwhile the nature and content of focus group discussions exhibit insights on the issue prioritization and social ordering within borderscapes. Evidence of life histories are brought in to buttress responses in formal and informal conversations which evidence actor positionality and the depth of their networked connections to power centers of the state.

Life histories also provide insights on how personal experiences are interwoven to the physical, social and symbolic borderscapes. Life histories eliminate stasis and in some cases, show individual resiliency in the navigation of crises. Life histories provide an understanding of the social construction of positionality

⁹ Interview with womens' leader in post-Ebola Foya on July 28, 2015.

whether based on wealth, character or coercion over time. Life histories also exhibit permanence of livelihoods within the borderlands, evidencing the dynamics that are salient for understanding the motivations of social actors who deliberately position themselves within borderlands as opposed to political centers. If anything, there is predominance of rational choice decision-making at both the individual and community level. Interest negotiation seems to guide both individual and communal interaction with the postwar state and neighboring others.

Another group which provides interesting insights on the “in”formalized ordering and social action within borderscapes were unions. Unions differed in composition, organization and purpose ranging from moneychanger unions and fuel seller unions to unions of cash crop traders. However, they shared the common characteristic of evidencing malleability and adaptability to crises. The observation of different ‘operational’ groups within borderscapes and the symbolic power they seemed to wield on a daily basis led to the development of questions to understand modes of group organization, which were not often based on the geo-physical spatial location within specific quarters of communities. The example of commercial motorbike riders’ unions, tailors unions, money changers unions, petrol sellers unions and garage unions provide an understanding of how these groups as collective entities stamp their presence on borderscapes and engage with the postwar state to advance their different agendas.

The political ethnographic experiences of this study were complemented by archival research at the Liberian Archives at the University of Indiana, Bloomington. Research was also completed on Liberian newspaper archives and complementary desk research (mainly on borderland testimonies from

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission process) was done. Desk research was also completed to get an understanding of the proliferation of local NGOs and INGOs within Liberia's borderscapes. This is because NGOs are a permanent feature of the physical space within borderlands. Whether through their imprimatur stamped on projects funded over a decade ago, or billboards which are the relics of some postwar emergency program, long completed. However, they evidence the complex triadic INGO State Local community relationship which largely contributed to undermining local expectations of the state and hence the state's legitimacy, authority and control within borderscapes.

Transportation as a Comparative Postwar Arena of Opposition and Domination

Transportation was a central element in the comparative political ethnography of Liberia's postwar borderland dynamics. During the dry season, it took approximately 16 hours, traveling in a public transport vehicle to go from Monrovia to Foya. During the rainy season, the same trip is subject to the caprices of road conditions and the roadworthiness of the vehicles plying the roads, thus the same trip could take 30 hours. In April 2014, it took me six hours to go from Monrovia to Ganta City in Nimba County. A year later, it took me four hours less the road from Gbarnga (Bong County) to Gompa had been tarred. However, traveling between Liberia's borderland cities and Monrovia does not only depend on the road conditions, as transportation is a process of negotiating internal borders mounted by the state to exercise effective territorial control. These internal border checkpoints, often located at the entry of every county are also supplemented by inter-district joint security checkpoints manned by different units from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. As a foreign traveler, these internal border points provided a point from which to

observe the negation of state authority by the very state officials who are expected to implement “the rules”. Therefore, these internal border checkpoints often become arenas of opposition to state authority and attempts at domination by the state in everyday practice.

The different modes of transportation also evidence patterns of the informalization of formal social actors such as INGOs. There are three main modes of transportation from Liberia’s borderlands to ‘town’ (as Monrovia is normally called) public transport (regulated by the Liberian Motor Transporters’ Union); “NGO Car” (regulated by NGO rules and non-official) and the private vehicle. The private vehicle is often out of reach to most borderland residents; hence they opt for either public transportation or “NGO Car” (which is the preferred mode of transportation). Liberia’s National Transit Authority (NTA), and commercial bus and taxi operators are the main licensed providers of inter-city public transportation. The NTA serves most of the major cities in Liberia’s 15 counties. However, those cities not served by the NTA depend on commercial bus and taxi operators. Transport is important because each mode of transportation comes with different modes of engagement with the postwar state under construction. The process of traveling, thus provides insights into physical and material movement within space and the implications of certain practices of resistance to state order, authority and control by borderland communities. Furthermore, the insertion of NGO cars and company vehicles into the public transport business, for which they are not licensed further informalizes the sector and undermines the NTA.

Archival research at the Indiana University Liberian Archive Collection in Bloomington, evidences that infrastructural connectedness between hinterlands and Monrovia and its hinterlands has been a perennial problem.

Local communities react to their “enclavization” in differing ways. Poor transport networks strip communities, devoid of government jobs, of the capacity to develop alternative livelihoods beyond subsistence (especially when most of their production is agriculturally based). However, during the postwar years, transportation within borderscapes has become largely dependent on another category of transporter – the commercial motorbike rider (CMR) – who is generally regulated and unionized under the Liberian Motor Transport Union (LMTU).

The buzz of the CMR is a staple of Liberia’s borderlands. They meet the transport demands of traders, parents, students, workers, everyone who needs to displace themselves over relatively long distances in a limited amount of time and at a cost. They are a central part of borderland economies – contributing to the inflow of foreign exchange as they transport passengers across borders; providing jobs for the gas retailers who get supplied by wholesaler who themselves get supplied by the LPRC from the Freeport in Monrovia; and constituting community-based micro-credit schemes called the “susu”. However, they are also accused of being the source of social woes such as increasing school dropout rates for boys; increased teenage pregnancies; delinquency and age conflicts. In various instances, they have represented the most potent challengers of the re-emergent state, given their strength in numbers and the financial resources, which circulate within their networks. Their influence extends beyond borderlands as CMRs have been known to have benefactors within power centers. Thus, the formalization of a rather informal economic activity, CMR provides a framework from which to understand the internal ordering of economic informality within borderland and its consequences for developing nascent authority centers and control mechanisms.

Challenges in the Conduct of Research

Safety, time and trust are all intangibles that have to be managed and negotiated as part ethnographic research projects. The role of local informants with a historical understanding of the settings, who would contribute to verifying some of the information received through counter interviews. The role of the stranger-father which did not only provide an additional cost to the research project, but contributed another layer of mediated entry into communities.

A political ethnography in the shadow of crisis comes with methodological, ethical, instrumental and security challenges. Methodologically, gaining an understanding on individual evolution through crisis contexts necessitates probing memories of trauma (both as victims, perpetrators and as hybrid victim perpetrators). While at the macro-level the framework of truth and reconciliation processes has provided an official medium for recording wartime experiences, it remains a delicate subject of discussion. Therefore, there are glaring gaps in some life histories where the war years are unaccounted for. Some victims simply understandably declined discussion of their wartime life histories. Meanwhile others went into details about their survival “on the farm” as a place of refuge or on refugee resettlement within the sub-region. There is also an active effort by some local actors to whitewash their wartime life histories in order to either avoid potential future prosecution or justify their belied in ‘the revolution’ while maintaining positions of symbolic power within borderscapes. However, within the borderscapes I did not encounter anyone who had been externally displaced beyond the immediate neighboring countries Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. While these varying

representations of life histories do not provide for a complete understanding of each individual's evolution through crisis, taken together with their symbolic and social positioning within postwar contexts provides an understanding of the delicate balance between the individual and the community in interaction within a postwar state.

Crises are often characterized by a reduction of individual and collective security. This insecurity does not automatically end once crises abate. Therefore, the insecurity posed by both the postwar context and the EVD outbreak, were conditions I had to contend with as a researcher. While my respondents were largely immune to and resilient in the face of myriad insecurities, I had to proceed with caution. However, the guidance of my "stranger father" was primordial in maintaining my medical, physical and psychological safety within this context.

The security challenges inherent in crisis environments necessitated a sharpening of ethical considerations in conducting research. Sensitivity to hierarchies, security posture and informant safety are central to the conduct of social research within borderscapes. In this case, the decision to respect social and symbolic hierarchies was as much about expediency as it was an ethical one. Therefore, for entry into the research space, I engaged with a community gatekeeper who did the requisite introductions to the city mayor. No money was exchanged with in the process. While this could be considered submitting to existing hierarchies, having the acquiescence of the City Mayor to conduct ethnographic research within his jurisdiction was not considered to compromise the study. My position as a research student from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London placed me squarely as an 'outsider' within my research environment. Therefore, submitting to

multiple local authority – the City Mayor and later the Quarter Chiefs/Community Chairpersons – contributed to reducing the epistemic space between the ‘insiders’ and myself. The challenges provided by these issues and the ways in which they were surmounted are central to understanding the importance of ethnographic fieldwork and subaltern engagements in contexts of permanent crisis – War and subsequently, Ebola.

Methodological Limitations and mitigation

There were a number of conceptual and temporal limitation to the current research project that I consciously addressed through the entire research process. Conceptually, I approached the issue under study – postwar statebuilding – with notions borne of years of study. There were the structural, symbolic and process dimensions to postwar statebuilding. However, seeking to understand these processes from the borderlands raised conceptual challenges, given that as researcher, I was looking through a deliberate conceptual prism that was not necessarily the same as those of my interlocutors. While I understood their interaction with international NGOs and the state as part of a bigger post-war statebuilding process, they understood these processes as part of the negotiation of everyday livelihood processes. Therefore, I had the challenge of synchronizing their everyday and historically grounded narratives to observed phenomena and a burgeoning literature on postwar statebuilding. In the instances where attempts were made to verify these linkages between the conceptual and the empirical, my interlocutors expressed difficulty relating to macro-theoretical positions on statebuilding.

This position is also intertwined with linguistic comprehensions. A majority of the individuals who provided core interpretations of borderland livelihood

processes use English (my main language of enquiry) as a second language. Their mother tongue was principally Kissi in Foya and Mano or Gio in Ganta. The first step to overcoming this limitation was choosing a linguistically gifted “stranger-father” who was also sworn to confidentiality. While most of the interviews were conducted in English, in the two cases where there was the absolute need for translation, the stranger father played the role of translator. The second step towards overcoming this limitation was triangulating all information received through a double confirmation or rejection process. This process often confirmed the accounts captured in translation. The final step in overcoming this limitation was seeking multiple interpretations to the same phenomena – whether they pertained to the mechanics of micro-territorial governance or the negotiated navigation of borderland spaces by CMRs.

Another challenge encountered during the course of the study was the outbreak of the deadly EVD during the course of my first research trip to what happened to be the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak – the Foya (Liberia); Gueckedou (Guinea) and Kailahun (Sierra Leone) borderland triangle. This limited the time I could spend on the ground during my first trip. However, I sought to overcome this temporal limitation through a two-step process. The first step was to develop a historical understanding of statebuilding in Liberia based on archival enquiries about the evolving relationship between borderland communities and the centralized bureaucratic state in Liberia. This archival enquiry contributed to situating contemporaneous conflicts within the broader understanding of continuities and change in the administrative evolution of the state in Liberia. The second step was taking a second post-EVD research trip to the same borderland research spaces to pick up from where I had left off, but this time with a better understanding of the historical importance of these borderland spaces to state construction.

The Non-Negotiable Safety and Confidentiality of Respondents

Respondents from whom formal interviews were solicited were provided with confidentiality and engagement forms. These forms outlined the purpose of the study the nature of the interviews and the fact that confidentiality would extend beyond the formal interview to subsequent encounters with the researcher. For individuals who were not literate, the contents of the form were translated and their permission ensured before any formal interviews were conducted. These forms were not only a trust-building instrument, but they were backed by the codification of electronic interview files and their deletion from the recording device once interviews had been downloaded and password protected. Beyond guaranteeing the security of the respondents, I also ensured that when the situation became compromising, I placed the present and future safety of my stranger father ahead of the research's objective.

Sensitivity to uncomfortable issues within individual life histories was also a primordial ethical consideration. I was not going to badger research participants into answering questions about their whereabouts and activities during Liberia's civil wars and during the Ebola crisis. However, I was always going to interpret the reasons they provided for the gaps in their life histories, with the help of informal information triangulation and participant observation. However, some respondents were volunteered information during secondary informal encounters, which filled in some blanks and either confirmed or disqualified certain interpretive assumptions.

Conclusion

Turning the ontological lens towards a comparative understanding of daily practices within two Liberian borderland spaces evidenced pluralized patterns of informal ordering and the ordering of informality. These patterns of informal ordering in everyday practice determined the deployment of a comparative political ethnography of borderlands in order to understand informal sources of authority and social control. Maintaining a historical perspective allowed for an analysis of continuities and change. This approach takes structural dynamics such as national and international borders very seriously, but focuses on patterns of socially organized daily practice or “habitus” within borderlands in interaction with postwar statebuilding.

Central to this study are temporal elements of transition amid the permanent of crisis. Borderland social actors appeared both temporally and spatially anchored within their spaces. However, this rootedness was also made mobile through instances of crisis. Life histories provide insights on personal experiences interwoven with the physical, social and symbolic borderscapes. Life histories eliminate stasis and in some cases, exhibit individual resiliency in the navigation of crises. Life histories also evidence continuities and changes in social networks and the values that determine these patterns. There is predominance of rational choice decision-making at both the individual and community levels. For example, while the international community might be preoccupied with truth and reconciliation programs, borderland communities are preoccupied with building resilient livelihoods. Interest-driven negotiations guide social actor interaction with the postwar state and statebuilding architects.

Thus, through an admixture of rootedness and mobility borderland individual and social actors develop resiliency within contexts of sustained vulnerability. These coping mechanisms inure into socially organized forms of informal order within which quotidian modes of coping and attempts at collective valorization are built. The complex nexus of symbolic, social and spatial processes that produce borderland dynamics shaped the use of political ethnographic methods to discern them. These micro-political patterning of borderlands that have a historical dimension which often fuses the landscape to individual and social experiences. All of which have implications for analytical discernment.

While, the comparative prism applied in this study traces patterned similarities and differences in ordering, authority and control within borderlands in engagement with the postwar state, it does not claim generalizability or that it can replicated. However, it ought to serve the heuristic function of pushing the interrogation of the impact of locally embedded informal everyday processes on postwar statebuilding.

The political ethnographic experiences of this study were complemented by archival research at the Liberian Archives at the University of Indiana, Bloomington. Research was also completed on Liberian newspaper archives and complementary desk research (mainly on borderland testimonies from Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission process) was done. Desk research was also completed to get an understanding of the proliferation of local NGOs and INGOs within Liberia's borderscapes. This is because NGOs are a permanent feature of the physical space within borderlands. Whether through their imprimatur stamped on projects funded over a decade ago, or billboards which are the relics of some postwar emergency program, long completed. However, they evidence the complex triadic INGO State Local

community relationship which largely contributed to undermining local expectations of the state and hence the state's legitimacy, authority and control within borderscapes.

The material mainly gathered through interviews with approximately 150 members of different borderland communities, 10 Focus Group Discussions and participant observation (travel and youth meetings) provide the analytical basis for explaining the impact of informal ordering, authority and control on postwar statebuilding. Borderland social actors articulated their positionality in relation to one another and in relation to the different intervening actors governmental and nongovernmental. Through their narration of encounters with the state and statebuilding social actors, evidence emerged of deliberate social ordering to construct embedded authority and social controls, which are then deployed for the sophisticated appropriation of statebuilding interventions. These interventions then contribute to either strengthening and entrenching informal orders or fostering transformations within these orders. Life histories interwoven with the borderland spaces they inhabit exhibit a deep and embedded connection to social and symbolic borderland spaces that these social actors do not necessarily have with the post-war state.

Chapter 5 : Informal Ordering Micro-territoriality, Social Organization and Postwar Statebuilding in Liberia's Borderlands

Introduction

Postwar statebuilding within borderlands (which are effectively spaces of limited statehood) inevitably encounters interrelated phenomena of local informal ordering, authority and control. Exploring patterns of postwar socio-political ordering within borderlands, this chapter develops the first of a two-part analytical framework explaining informal ordering, its constitution into constellations of micro-territorial governance (MTG) and its encounters with postwar statebuilding. Informal ordering frameworks emerge out of distinct territorially, socially and symbolically grounded construction of quotidian modes of social organization outside state and traditional (customary) institutions. Quotidian mechanics of social organization endow behavioral predictability to socio-political and economic relations within borderland cities as well as in their interaction with surrounding villages. By empirically drawing upon observations of micro-territorial ordering and bordering processes within borderlands and interviews with Micro-Territorial Governors (MTGs) leaders of territorially based organized borderland communities emic patterns of daily informal ordering inherent in human and material processes of exchange, begin to emerge.

These informal orders are then deployed to engage with nationally and internationally constituted postwar statebuilding processes. Community-based non-state social organizations crystallize into informal orders vested in governing borderland human and material processes. They thereby effectively alternately strengthen and undermine the emergent postwar state's quest for

autonomy, authority and monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Meanwhile, they simultaneously set up arenas of domination and opposition with customary traditional authorities, which have a history of cooptation into the state bureaucracy. However, far from seeking to completely subvert the state informal orders engage with postwar statebuilding processes to negotiate vertical (power-based) and horizontal (spatially-based) positionality within borderlands.

Socially grounded patterns of quotidian informal ordering within borderland cities are instruments of non-state micro-territorial governance. While they are distinct from ordering devolving from state and traditional authority, they are part of both as they borrow their operational logics from both state teleology and traditional custom. Thus, they provide structural and functional bases from which to understand the formation and maintenance of informal social rules and hierarchies networked into state and traditional authority within borderland cities.

Furthermore, informal orders have implications for postwar statebuilding. Understanding informal ordering as a set of processes interconnected with multiple states and traditional authority structures implies a dynamic constitution and constitutive malleability subject to internal borderland and external national and international influences.

The complexity of informal borderland ordering conforms to an extent with paradigms of governance hybridity, which contribute to grounded theorization of the interaction between non-state actors and statebuilding and securitization processes. Despite the problems inherent in the use of the term 'hybrid', it allows conceptualization of the fusion of different factors operating within

processes of social interaction, that combine to produce the problematic nature of contemporary international peace-support environments (Mac Ginty 2011: 83). Theorization on postwar governance hybridity broadly seeks to understand process synergies that emerge out of the bifurcated interaction of local and international, formal and informal, traditional and modern, order and disorder, state and non-state. The interactive outcome of these naturalized polarities corresponds to the social crystallization of informally ordered hybrid arrangements. The outcome is relational instability shaped by the transience of the structural content of both informal orders and postwar states despite both their inherent structural permanence.

Exploring hybridity within the liberal peace has tended to focus on how “the liberal peace” projects the international while taking on board some local values and mores (Mac Ginty 2011: 79). This ontological positioning ostensibly puts the liberal peace at the center of the interpretation of hybrid outcomes. However, where informal ordering predates the hegemonic return of postwar statebuilding (as an extension of the liberal peace) the ontological lens shifts slightly. It moves from a paradigmatic critique of liberal peace interventions to centralize how resilient patterns of informal ordering reshape international statebuilding within liminal spaces of postwar states. Thus, the precariously balancing postwar arrangements forged between state and non-state social actors hardly totally coincides with synergistic hybrids, but is fraught with differentiated rational choice decision-making. This decision-making determines conflict or cooperative interactive choices. Informal ordering provides a territorially based socially organized platform through which non-state actors negotiate entry into and navigate arenas of opposition and domination with postwar statebuilding processes.

By exploring local actors' appropriation of territory, space and symbols to build a base upon which to engage with national and international statebuilders, informal ordering highlights the distorted autonomy outcomes of international statebuilding interventions. By seeking to strengthen the state's relations to society sequentially after operationally rebuilding the state's institutional content and capacity, international statebuilding interventions invariably circumvent the state's emancipation from society its autonomy making the postwar state a battlefield of contestation by societal groups. Autonomy is the extent to which the state acts upon its preferences by shaping, ignoring, or circumventing the preferences of even the strongest social actors (Migdal 1988: 6).

The degree of a state's emancipation from society, being a hallmark of the modern state, raises important questions about the autonomy expectations of postwar statebuilding interventions. Inflections of informal ordering as epitomized in MTG effectively bring the quotidian management of human and material processes under informal control, particularly within borderland cities. This starkly contrasts the theoretical salience of autonomy in international statebuilding from the everyday subjugation of the state to informal orders. Far from claiming homogeneity and unity of strategy, content and purpose in micro-territorial governance resulting from postwar informal ordering, this chapter describes differentiated mechanics of informal borderland ordering. Informal borderland orders structurally emerge from the negotiation of tacit social contracts that endow proximate neighborhood leaders with representative authority in engagement with "outsiders" with the focus here on postwar statebuilders.

Despite the interpenetration of political and social ordering in immediate postwar contexts, teleologies of international statebuilding reify and harden new binaries between state and society, formal and informal, order and disorder. The instrumental construction of institutionalized binaries through international statebuilding simultaneously actualizes and naturalizes local fields of opposition and domination for influence and resources between the postwar state and informal orders. Within these arenas, Richmond (2016: 5) argues that subaltern agency operates to circumvent and negate the direct and structural power of the state, the international geopolitical system and the global economy. This mode of engagement effectively undermines state autonomy within borderland spaces where the state already has a very limited presence. Overcoming the postwar state autonomy paradox in practice would require relationally equilibrating the top-down imposition of an institutionalized liberal political order with the bottom-up emergence of informal social ordering processes, which deliberately seeks to escape statebuilders' control in order to maintain its relevance.

Both the state and society overlap and compete as social actors seeking to optimize political advantage within the same postwar force field. Nowhere is this more evident than within liminal borderland spaces where state and socially organized groups compete for social service delivery and the management of development aid. Therefore, empirically discerning differentiated patterns of informal borderland agency in postwar statebuilding, it was necessary to develop a congruent analytical framework that integrates explanations of informality and ordering as emerging from quotidian interactive practices. Managing social services such as security and water and sanitation and the development and relief aid within their micro-territorial spaces sets up arenas of opposition and domination with statebuilding architects. It also provides a

basis for social contestation and power play within borderland micro-territorial governance spaces.

Informal Ordering: Contextualizing Local Actors, Structures and Processes.

Informal ordering represents patterns of social ordering occurring outside the postwar state, yet in constant interaction with statebuilding processes given that they effectively are based on the negotiation of micro-territorial ordering and bordering. They evidence actors who are territorially, socially and symbolically rooted in liminal spaces, while remaining nationally and internationally networked. Informal orders emerge through the formation of social organizations based on spatial proximity and shared community residence regardless of origin. Existing at an interspace between the state and the household, social organizations develop communally within borderland spaces as a result of the negotiation of internal borders within cities and the development of quotidian structures and patterns of management of social, symbolic and material processes. Their proximity to the household family unit coupled with their existence based on negotiated social rules and norms makes informal social ordering a cornerstone in the development of grounded patterns of authority-based social interaction. Informal social ordering as an analytical category is therefore indispensable in understanding the interaction of informal and formalized forms of authority and control within the postwar borderlands. This section describes how informal orders emerge and function in everyday practice, for whom they work and the benefits they provide to the borderland communities from which they draw their locally-embedded authority and legitimation. Informal ordering gravitates around the postwar state, since the state remains the central organizing component and resource

custodian within the sovereign territory. However, it is the nature of social interaction between informal orders and postwar statebuilding within liminal spaces that international statebuilding encounters its purposeful ‘transformative’ limits.

The emergence and deployment of informal orders in interaction with the postwar state and its statebuilding partners does more than just provide a framework for understanding the internal mechanics of society-state interaction within postwar statebuilding contexts. It exploration of quotidian politics-in-practice, empirically critiques static institutionalist approaches to political development upon which postwar statebuilding is built. It centralizes informal ordering in the explanation of postwar state-society relations. Emergent and expanding critical peacebuilding and statebuilding research has highlighted the salience of processes of social interaction on statebuilding and peacebuilding outcomes. In a bid to explore social interactions, actor categories have to be identified. Hence critical peacebuilding research on hybridity, for example, broadly highlights patterns of interaction and interpenetration of interest-driven formal state and informal societal actors, with the state’s ‘outposts’ mediated by ‘informal’ indigenous societal institutions, which follow their own logic and rules within the incomplete state structures (Boege et al, 2008:7, 2009).

However, the differentiation of social actor categories – whether on the state side or on the side of the indigenous social institutions – is important in capturing the real, rather than the supposed internal dynamics of these categories and the ways in which their internal content shaped modes of social interaction and by extension, statebuilding outcomes. The differentiation of social actors and the forms of order emerging from their processes of

organization provides insights into their political engagement with each other as well as with the emergent postwar state.

Social actor differentiation within research on postwar governance hybridity highlights the complex interplay among multiple and often competing forms of social ordering, each having immanent sources of power, distinct organizational logics and particularistic modes of internal and external legitimization (Luckham and Kirk 2013: 9). Therefore, a structural and functional understanding of individual and socially organized non-state actors provides an explanatory basis for their internal authority and accountability dynamics and relational engagement with postwar statebuilding.

Empirical evidence of informal ordering of quotidian processes within Liberia's postwar borderlands demonstrates the intrinsically interactive and political nature of territorially based non-state social ordering processes. These processes integrate territoriality, social positionality and symbols in the deliberate engineering of informal borderland orders. These socially organized actors are subsequently deployed for individual and collective political ends within arenas of opposition and domination with the different manifestations of postwar statebuilding. Unsurprisingly therefore, is the emergence of a networked interpenetration of political and social ordering in everyday practice between official and nonofficial actors and private and public-sector entities. This interpenetration, a socio-political manifestation evident from an integrated temporal and spatial analysis of postwar contexts, is often marginalized from consideration in international statebuilding. Attempts to institutionally engineer the selective interaction of state and society during postwar statebuilding processes, counter intuitively undermines postwar international statebuilding's autonomy-driven paradigmatic imperatives.

The structuring of informal orders is important in understanding non-state actor strategic decision-making in engagement with postwar statebuilding processes. Processes of informal ordering give rise to hierarchical structures of local governance with grounded accountability in the communities from which they emerge. Meanwhile, their interaction within arenas of opposition and domination vary from contestation to collusion, with different factors affecting an actor's strategic posture. Insights from the internal mechanics of informal ordering evidence the quotidian exercise of functional responsibility; and the embeddedness of grounded authority, legitimacy and representation (which will be treated in-depth in the following chapter). Understanding the structural component of informal ordering contributes to understanding 'why' and 'how' non-state social orders interact with postwar statebuilding.

The objective of non-state informal orders, far from seeking complete symbiosis with the state as portrayed in some interpretations of hybrid political orders, denotes self-interested motives for entry into and leveraging within arenas of opposition and domination with the postwar state. Hence it naturalistically undermines the emancipatory effort of the 'autonomous' state. Most peoples' primary preoccupation with their everyday living conditions and concern about finding new patrons (or old recycled elites) limits their individualized interests in changing the complexion of the political order (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 44). However, the construction of informal orders provides a basis for engagement with the dominant political order. Given the gravitation of informal ordering around different manifestations of the state, informal political ordering in Africa is a system grounded in reciprocal interdependence between leaders, different kinds of intermediaries and locally organized social orders. Within borderland spaces, informal ordering reveals a

degree of social permanence, which often eludes empirical accounts of the transience of cross-border social experiences. That which is transient is fleeting and while it might develop its own mechanics for engaging the states, it hardly develops a structured basis for engagement with and resistance to the permanence of state structures.

The interpenetration of formalized political and informal social ordering processes is a mainstay of quotidian postwar borderland spaces. They form the basis from which to understand the interaction of differentiated social actors with postwar statebuilding. Far from being power neutral, postwar informal ordering evidences the reconstruction of non-state power loci through the negotiation of spatial, social and symbolic positioning. All political action is couched in an environment of reciprocity, which dictates its symbolic and instrumental value (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 158). Thus, negotiated emic processes hold clues to the sustainability of positional interdependence both within formal and informal spheres. Focusing on informal ordering processes highlights quotidian understandings of negotiated grounded legitimacy. This analytical trajectory reflects complex social interactive dynamics underlying the construction, maintenance and deployment of authority by a multiplicity of informal postwar social actors.

Thus, the interpenetration of social and political ordering within borderlands empirically evidences the emergence of patterns of informal ordering. Seeming 'disorder,' is in fact a different kind of 'order', the outcome of contextually constructed political boundary formation and interpenetration; the definition of political and social registers; and rationalities (analytically coherent explanations for a given political conduct in a given historical context) and causalities (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 155). To these factors that explain the

emergence of contextually generated informal ordering, ought to be added the interweaving of individual and communal historical trajectories within micro-territorial borderland spaces.

Informal Ordering and Micro-Territorial Governance in Foya (Lofa County) and Ganta (Nimba County) Liberia

Territorial governance is a tool of political, social and economic control. Informal ordering emerges out of the formal delineation of internal borders through the administrative balkanization of sovereign territory into controllable spaces. Exploring non-state micro-territoriality gives rise to analytical categories that acknowledge diverse complex organizational assemblages, with variable performance in relation to authority and rights, depending on the properties of such assemblages within territory (Sassen 2013: 23). Given that cities differ in population, composition and economic content, the nature of state territorial administration differs from one city to another (Boone 1998) and so does the nature, content and process of informal borderland ordering. While formal sub-state administrative mapping seeks to ensure effective state territoriality, borderland micro-territorial structuring produces informal orders which develop alternative patterns of social control. Quarter Chiefs (QCs) in Foya and Community Chairpersons (CCs) in Ganta (described in this study as Micro-Territorial Governors MTGs) informally order borderland cityscapes into *de facto* administrative units. There is variability in their modes of quotidian governance as they executively and judicially administer these spaces with the assistance of zonal heads or a governing council. The normative differentiation between QC and CC evidences the absence of top-down harmonization for informal leadership roles. Hence, leadership within informal orders is

embedded in the socio-historical fabric of the communities from which they emerge.

Evidence collected from over 50 interviews with former and current MTGs, and focus group discussions within two borderland cities – Foya in Lofa County and Ganta in Nimba County – evidence modes of grounded accountability, legitimacy and representation outside the formal state apparatus and customary traditional governance structures. Unpaid and volunteer Micro-Territorial Governors are the administrative legs upon which the state-appointed City Mayors stand to govern borderland cities. In 2008, the Liberian Supreme Court ruled against the holding of municipal elections allowing the president to appoint City Mayors (Klay, 2013: 82). Despite this ruling, Micro-Territorial Governors continued to exist as fixture within borderland cities. These products of informal socio-political ordering exhibit an admixture of Weberian traditional authority characteristics – patrimonialism, patriarchalism, and primary gerontocracy – which legitimates their governance of human and material processes within their micro-territorial borderland spaces. The first level of analysis is simply that of the physical dynamics of micro-territorial borderland ordering. The second level of analysis delves into the implications of informal ordering for processes of statebuilding authority and control. Top-down statebuilding processes refract the physical and bureaucratic state onto borderland spaces, but borderlands territorially, socially and symbolically reshape that refracted state through a bottom up negotiation of authority, order and control.

Population expansion during the postwar years has increased pressure on the limited social services that borderland communities benefited from as a result of immediate postwar emergency aid. This pressure has increasingly raised the

political stakes of micro-territorial governance resulting from informal ordering while accentuating the postwar state's inability to meet the social service needs of its liminal communities. Foya's postwar micro-territorial ordering has been in constant flux with the emergence of new communities, due to changing population and resource dynamics, micro-territorial negotiation of social positionality, with power implications for all of the above.

Within Foya, there is the governing overlap of the very influential Paramount Chief of the Kissi; three Kissi clan chiefs (representing the Rankollie, Tengia and Wam clans); the Foya District Commissioner and the City Mayor as recognized government officials. This composite governance structure embodies the incorporation of customary traditional governance structures into the bureaucratic governance apparatus of the state. Their official status is predicated upon their clearly defined roles and authority within the state's apparatus. The fact that these officials are supposed to be on the government payroll is often alluded to by the volunteer Micro-Territorial Governors. Meanwhile at the level of the city, nine Micro-Territorial Governors govern the peri-urban space composed of an admixture of ethnic groups and foreign nationals.

In the very structuring of the nine micro-territorial quarters which constitute Foya City lies a structural oddity. The nine micro-territorial spaces are constituted to coincide with the number of city council members apportioned by the state in through Foya's incorporation statutes. However, the actual count of micro-territorial governors exceeds nine and becomes twelve when one starts conducting interviews. This difference is accounted for as evidence of the politicization of informal ordering. Communities such as Lissassa I and II, despite having Micro-Territorial Governors, are considered subsets of Foya

Kama Quarter. This, despite their MTGs exhibiting similar autonomy in the management of human and material processes within their spaces as all the other MTGs. The only difference being that in the escalation of civil cases for community resolution, they go to the Foya Kama MTG rather than to the City Court, which is presided over by the Head of the Quarter Chiefs¹⁰. Hence in Foya, the nine main MTGs, nursing the hope of being incorporated into the City Council in the event of funding availability, vie to maintain their count at nine. This reduces the potential of contestation for limited City Council spots when they are finally budgeted for.

Ganta is a more heterogonous city than Foya and their micro-territorial governance differs considerably. With a population of 41106 inhabitants (2008 census) it is the most populous city in Nimba County, with 8- mile incorporation radius extending northwards to the border with Guinea (which is marked by the St. John River). The City Mayor governs Ganta as the head of a 9-member City Council representing 9 wards. However, at the level below the City Council, Ganta is broken down into 28 communities, led by volunteer Community Chairpersons. These communities are further divided into 108 flexible zones, which allow for better informal territorial administration and top-down information dissemination by the City Mayor, through the MTGs to Zonal heads and thence to the community. In the absence of a City Court, the county uses the magisterial court that dedicates every Monday to hearing cases pertaining to the city¹¹.

The influence of traditional customary leadership on city governance is non-existent as the City Mayor exercises preeminent control. According to a local

¹⁰ Interview with Foya QC-12 on July 29, 2015 in Foya, Liberia.

¹¹ Interview with Ganta Oral Historian - 2 on August 2, 2015.

historian, Ganta city sits at the confluence point of two main ethnic groups the Mano and the Kpelle, hence the existence of two different names for the city – Ganta (Mano) and Ganta (Kpelle)¹². Ganta’s ethnic heterogeneity evolved historically since its emergence in late 15th century as a trading crossroads. “Ganta is said to have emerged in the 15th Century with Mano people coming to settle, followed by the Kpelle people from Guinea...the Liberian Frontier Force first came here 1914.... then the Mandingo people entering through Yekepa in 1921 to trade in Kolanuts”¹³ noted the local historian. Since the postwar settlement different ethnic groups from across Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have been attracted to Ganta by the commercial prospects of this crossroads borderland city.

Ganta’s encounter with the state came with the arrival of the Liberian Frontier Force in 1914. This arrival coincided with the appointment of the first Central Province Commissioner, Samuel Smith, in 1914 amid the Liberian government’s quest to protect its territory from the French in Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. According to Ganta’s oral historian, “the people of Ganta became Liberian after the entry of the LFF in 1914.” Another important historical encounter occurred in 1926 in Ganta with the establishment of the Ganta United Methodist Mission in 1926 by Dr. George Way Harley, locally known as the “White Ghost”¹⁴. Given that the United Methodist mission operated a leper colony, its activity was concentrated in what is today known as Blegey Pa Community. In the 1920s this mission constituted a clearing in the middle of the rainforest, on the outer southeastern fringes of Ganta. However, Ganta did not official become incorporated as a city until 1977.

¹² Interview with Ganta Oral Historian -1 on August 4, 2015.

¹³ Interview conducted with Oral Historian-1 in Ganta, Liberia on August 19, 2015.

¹⁴ Interview with Ganta Oral Historian-2 on August 2, 2015

However, Ganta's more contemporaneous history is shaped by a series of events that occurred over two months (October-November 1985). First, during the presidential elections of October 1985, Jackson F. Doe (Liberian Action Party) from Nimba County ran against Samuel Doe from Grand Gedeh (National Democratic Party of Liberia). Samuel Doe was declared winner amid allegation of widespread electoral fraud. Then in November 1985, a former Doe acolyte, Thomas Kwiwompka (a Gio) launched a failed coup attempt against Samuel Doe. Although the coup allegedly was launched from Sierra Leone through Grand Cape Mount County, Samuel Doe meted swift retribution upon the Gio and Mano communities of Nimba County (Ellis, 2006: 60). This ethnically based repression is thought to have created fissures within the Armed Forces of Liberia and driven Liberia over the edge into Civil War in 1989.

Within Ganta and above the family this historical legacy marked by fear, mistrust and uncertainty of "state" action has shaped the emergence of socially organized informal orders led by micro-territorial governors. Micro-Territorial Governors federate proximate households and bring them under their leadership thereby contributing to the informal spatial and territorial ordering of borderland cities. By bringing territory and people under their control, MTGs in Foya and Ganta establish themselves as gatekeepers between the inside (community) and the outside (extra borderland social actors). Focusing on this level of leadership, which is one step above the family and one-step below the state, evidences a number of observations about the postwar politics of micro-territorial governance from the vantage point of borderlands. This micro-territorial governance is a central factor in the quotidian management of human and material processes within postwar borderlands.

Table 1: Non-State Micro-Territorial Distribution in Foya and Ganta

(As of August 2015)

City	Sub-division	2 nd level Division
Foya	9 Quarters	0
Ganta	28 Communities	108 Zones

Table 1 shows the multiple levels of governance below the city mayor. The relationship between the first level of informal territorial ordering and the City Mayor is refracted on the second level administrative division of borderlands. In Foya, although there are nine recognized quarters, informal territorial ordering is further complicated by the emergence of a number of *ad hoc* quarters as subsets of older quarters – effectively making Foya a city with 12 quarters. Meanwhile, in Ganta, the 28 communities are further divided into zones with 108 zonal heads. The zonal heads compose part of a hierarchical governance structure that reports to and relay information from Community Chairpersons to the general community.

Table 1 provides an illustration of the extent of informal territorial ordering in the micro-territorial governance of borderland cities, confirming that liminal spaces of states are simply ‘differently’ governed, rather than ungoverned spaces (Clunan 2010: 17). The organizational and functional flexibility evident further down the ladder of informal governance is a function of malleability to quotidian local politics, resource dynamics and interpersonal relationships. This flexibility blurs distinctions between the formal and the informal, the private and the public; as the functionally public role of leadership at the community level remains a largely informal matter.

Micro-Territorial Governance: The System and Its People

They are a complex cast of characters, micro-territorial governors. Across Ganta and Foya of the 37 MTGs, there are three women (two of whom are MTGs in Ganta). There are former soldiers with the Armed Forces of Liberia who turned on the state to subsequently support different warring factions during Liberia's two civil wars. There are single-barrel soldiers (mainly in Ganta) who protected their communities against a marauding and genocidal state. There are those who cut a martial demeanor, swear having never carried a weapon during war, yet the community suspects differently, especially since wartime displacement and return effectively constructed a community mosaic of "strangered" kin. Young men and women ex-fighters who had fought for rival factions during the war and internally and externally displaced persons return to constitute communities. However, most borderland MTGs have glaring gaps in their personal histories – many of them do not want to talk in specific terms about their wartime experiences. Regardless of their wartime realities, most of these MTGs have historical connections to the communities which they currently lead. However, more important to understanding how they interact with architects and processes of postwar statebuilding, is why and how they informally order their communities and how they structure their interaction with the postwar state.

MTGs are volunteer leaders of their communities whose occupations are as varied as their wartime experiences. They often have full time jobs alongside their roles as Micro-Territorial Governors. FB, a Community Chairperson in Ganta, was a former officer with the Armed Forces of Liberia. After his convoy was ambushed by NPFL forces in Bong County in the early days of the Liberian Civil War in 1990, he reneged on the orders they had been given by the Samuel Doe regime to pacify the Nimba County hinterlands. He subsequently became

unit commander with Prince Johnson's NPFL faction, commanding combat operations in the vicinity of Kakata, Margibi County. After the war his attempt to integrate the postwar Liberian Army was scuttled by Dyncorp trainers who caught wind of his wartime activities. He feels personally targeted for exclusion while many of his former command brethren have found room within the postwar statebuilding apparatus. Currently, he is a MTG (Community Chairperson) in Ganta who together with a Liberian member of parliament co-owns a 133-man strong private security firm providing security services to business institutions within the borderlands. His prerequisite for serving in his private security firm "you need to have been trained either in the army or by a faction during the civil war."¹⁵ He is also the founding MTG for his community, which was constituted after the war.

QC-9 cuts a military figure and is the head of the Quarter Chiefs in Foya. He barks orders within the community and readily offers a military salute to certain individuals he encounters on Foya's streets or who come to visit him at the City Court. Describing Taylor's NPFL forces as "revolutionaries", he ardently defends "the revolution which was launched to save the Liberian people"¹⁶. However, he swears never having carried a weapon during the civil war. A MTG in Foya, he cumulates that role with the role of head Quarter Chief and the head of the City Court. However, city residents note that TN together with his older brother are ex-fighters, like a majority of the MTGs within Foya today.

CC-10 is a pastor who recently relocated to Ganta from Kakata. She joined the ministry during the war and preached through spells of internal and external displacement. She spent some time in Sierra Leone during the war as a

¹⁵ Interview with CC-4 in Ganta, 23 August 2015

¹⁶ Interview with QC -9 in Foya, 30 July, 2015

refugee. She was invited to take over the governance of her community because the previous MTG caused more problems than he solved. Soft-spoken, she leads a fairly affluent community on the fringes of Ganta's new layout.

A septuagenarian, QC-3 has been MTG in Foya intermittently since 1984. His community hosts the village residence of the Vice President JN Boakai, as well as that of a collection of former NFPL commanders. His community also hosts Foya's Saturday market, as well as the Foya Airfield. Therefore, his is a very strategic territorial strip of the borderlands. He acknowledged having "worked with different groups of fighters who came into Foya over the years. They come and go and we stay here. I ran to Buyedu [Sierra Leone] one time when the war got too bad. But when I came back, the people asked me to become their Quarter Chief again]."¹⁷

This is a synoptic overview of the complex life histories of the MTGs who govern informal orders within Liberia's postwar borderlands. Being unpaid, they all described their dedication to their communal duties as driven by "the urge to serve my people." However, to that is often added the individual or familial social capital derived from this kind of service. "When I go anywhere, although I am not paid, they acknowledge that the Quarter Chief is here."¹⁸ "Although I am not paid today, I am sure that my children would benefit from my service to my people as they cannot pass in the street without being recognize. So, I have to do a good job for them also,"¹⁹ noted another Foya MTG. Despite the seeming call to service, there is more to the quest to retain control of human and material processes as leaders of informal orders within liminal spaces.

¹⁷ Interview with QC-3 in Foya, August 7, 2015

¹⁸ Second Interview with QC-1 in Foya, 28 July, 2015

¹⁹ Interview with QC-5 in Foya, 30 July, 2015

Leading the informal ordering of human and material processes within borderland spaces makes them gatekeepers of entry and functioning within borderland communities. “Sometimes we are invited to meetings with NGOs and they pay a sitting fee,”²⁰ which CC-3 saw as a negligible reward for the time and resources invested in being an MTG. “When NGOs come here, like was the case during the storm time or Ebola time, they need the QC to help them know who was really affected. We also help the people provide their information to the NGOs”²¹. “When politicians come here from the City, they first meet with us so that we can gather the people to listen to them. We can hear what they tell us, but when time comes to vote, we do as we like.”²² This effectively places MTGs as gatekeepers and local custodians of any resources that accrue to the community. As gatekeepers, they are the principal interface with all manner of interveners who enter borderland spaces. Most often, City Mayors within borderland spaces are quick to bring these MTGs to the table to shape the interaction between the city and other formal social actors such as international NGOs.

However, the role of custodian at the level of the community comes with responsibilities to the community. The proximity of MTGs to the community makes them susceptible to arbitrary demands of accountability from the community. Where accountability falters, the community engineers the destitution and replacement of the MTG. Two communities – one each in Foya and Ganta – have recently undergone leadership changes due to crises of accountability on the part of the MTG. QC-8 MTG for AG Quarter in Foya, evidences the swift local accountability in the way the previous QC was ousted

²⁰ Interview with in Ganta, 16 August 2015

²¹ Interview with QC-1 in Foya, 28 July, 2015

²² Interview with QC-5 in Foya, 30 July, 2015

“I was appointed in March this year [sic 2015]. PM was in this position before I was appointed to take over. PM was here working in the community he alone. He did not have anyone in the community to work with him. Anything drop for the community, he will eat it. Even if it was a piece of plank which was given for the community, he would keep it for himself. He would not give anything to the rest of the community. So, the people they get vexed with him. They even took him to court, when they took him to court, the money he was supposed to pay [as restitution] was LD13500 and 5 bags of clean rice. Up until now he has not paid the money yet. Then the people said he must not be their leader because he is suffering them.”²³ An elder within Boe Community in Ganta claimed that the same accountability proceedings had claimed the head of the previous MTG. Evidently, the destitution of the leader might scupper their positioning at the helm of the territorially based informal order, however, the implementation of decisions from the city court on such matters based within informal orders falters.

Beyond the perks derived from the interaction with outsiders and from being the faces of borderland communities, they also control common initiative schemes that arise from within the community. The limited development of social programs within borderland spaces by international NGOs in partnership with the state provides a static resource base for contestation which hardly adjusts to population changes and demands. Considering themselves as key borderland stakeholders, MTGs often attribute the limited success of different development programs to their exclusion from different stages of program planning and execution. “One NGO came here and was sharing mosquito nets and before you know it, the mosquito nets were cut and you could see them selling in the market as skin scrub. On top of that my community did not even

²³ Interview to QC-8 in Foya, 10 August, 2015

receive its own share of mosquito nets them.”²⁴ “When MacArthur brought that rice equipment here from Libya, he did not ask anyone. How can you bring all these computers to come work rice farm in Foya when they is no electricity? He wanted to run the business like a military man without even asking us what we think, that was how the business failed.”²⁵

Meanwhile there are MTGs who use their positions of control to shape the content of their communities, while projecting their presence across the borderland space. Peace Community in Ganta, a nascent postwar community in Ganta is noted for its high number of retired members of the AFL and ex-fighters. It is not uncommon upon entering the compound of the MTG of Peace Community to be greeted by the appearance of military-aged males from adjoining houses. The MTG claims to be wanted at The Hague for trial for atrocities committed during the war. However, he operates a security firm which provides private security services to commercial entities – lounges, hotels and motels and night clubs – across the borderland. This private security apparatus, besides ensuring the security of commercial premises, also collect intelligence on all modes of goings and comings from Ganta.

However, the hand of the MTG in the constitution of a human protective network in other communities is subtler. “I have built houses around here that I put up for rent and in which I only want young men. No young women,”²⁶ stated a notorious MTG-cum-liege lord. He acknowledges having been a single barrel soldier during the Liberian Civil Wars in order to protect communities from predation by both state and insurgent groups. However, some community

²⁴ Comment made by RC, a resident of Bass Community during a Focus Group Discussion in Ganta, 17 August, 2015

²⁵ Interview with QC-1 in Foya, 28 July 2015

²⁶ Interview with CC-3 in Ganta, 12 August 2015

members claim that if that was the case, DD had become a predator himself as he harnesses dubious relationships within Ganta's community of hustlers and "grona boys" to extend his financial wealth. Meanwhile his preference for young men is to have on hand the human base for convertible peacetime and wartime predation.

The mosaic of characters that constitute micro-territorial governors evidences the differentiation of interest-driven motives for serving as MTGs. However, they sit at the helm of an informal order, which the city administrator seeks to incorporate into decision-making processes of city governance. This incorporation effectively creates a system of hybrid governance. This would be further developed in the chapter on authority, which delves into the nature and manifestation of embedded local authority. Capturing why and how informal orders are governed evidences patterns of proximate local accountability based community mediated moral norms.

Therefore, informal ordering springs from the organization of proximate households into organized social units aimed at giving predictability to communal social relations and provide communal representation in interlocution with formalized social actors state and international NGOs. Analytically, the voices of community leaders as they articulate their motivations for service, the authority and control they wield in the sustenance of socio-political order in borderland spaces provide insights into patterns of local authority, control and order within postwar statebuilding processes.

The Politics of Informal Ordering and Flexible Micro-Territorial Governance

Informal ordering is shaped by the flexible horizontal and vertical construction of local territoriality, which is evidenced when combining a spatial and temporal exploration of borderland transience and permanence. This flexibility is shaped by the negotiation of space through the enforcement of land tenure rules, community resource allocation and endowments, population density, community history and the charisma of specific Micro-Territorial Governors. Territorially, internal borderland space is highly dynamics as local politics determines the fusion or splintering of communities. The negotiation and contestation for spatial merging and splintering characterizes quotidian borderland community politics. Informal ordering constitutes local hierarchies of centralized predominantly male-dominated powerful networks, which statebuilding interveners can hardly ignore.

Liberia's international borders with Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire are hardly ever in question, having resulted from colonial treaties. The territorial markers carved by rivers and mountains represent internationally static territorial limits. However, quotidian dynamics reveal evidence of heuristically reflexive informal ordering within Liberia's borderlands. These have implications for postwar statebuilding. While the expansion and contraction of borderland cities' communities/quarters through splintering and merging do not occur daily, they are the long-term outcomes of everyday politics. This splintering and merging emanate from economic, demographic and developmental conditions. These processes are steeped in political machinations and contestation between local actors. Local leaders resist splintering or merging of territory under their control, which would wither

dilute their local political clout or completely eliminate their territory from the borderland's micro-map by bringing them under the control of another MTG.

Micro-territorial units within borderland spaces emerge either as original units in spaces which were previously uninhabited, or as the result of splintering from existing units. Demographic, economic and developmental pressures emerged as the principal drivers for the emergence of new communities and quarters. Increasing return of internally and externally displaced populations after crises' end coupled with a bustling informal economic sector on the margins of the state, drive population growth within borderland spaces. Generally, spaces splintered because they had become unmanageable due to population growth resulting in pressures on limited social infrastructure (such as water pumps, schools, health care centers where they exist). The emergence of intra-communal local leader rivalry also provides impetus for spatial splintering. New communities/quarters originate due to the construction of household units within previously uninhabited space within borderlands.

In Foya, Peace Community split from Ndama Road Quarter because of what the Quarter Chief for Peace Community described as marginalization and neglect while they were part of Ndama Road. QC-7, QC for Peace Community noted that, "There is only a main road which separates us from Ndama Road Quarter. If you stand from here [the City Council building] the left side of the road is Ndama Road Quarter and the right side of the road is Peace Community Quarter. When we started Peace Community, there were only 100 people living there, today there are over 360 households. The Vice President's house [VP of Liberia] is in Ndama Road Quarter. We noticed that everything that used to come here would end up in Ndama Road Quarter. On this side of the road where you now have Peace Community, people were suffering plenty. So, we

decided to reach out to the City Mayor of the time and create our own community so that we would be able to negotiate for some good things to also happen to our people. Since then many more people have come to live in Peace Community which is a growing community in Foya.”²⁷ Patterns of sustained marginalization therefore contributed to the negotiation of the splintering of Ndama Road Quarter in two. However, the social stature of the founding QC of Peace Community also played a major role. QC-7 owns four houses within Peace Community and he operated rice, sugar cane cocoa and coffee farms. His social stature is based on agricultural wealth. That, according to some members of his community, makes him a natural leader and helped them in securing their own community.²⁸

However elsewhere in Foya, despite population and administrative pressures, some micro-territorial units have either been resistant to splintering or have created sub-units. As a youth member noted “In New Foya, the population has more than doubled since people started to come back after the war. There is a new market here now. At times when we patrol [as part of the Community Watch Forum], there is a house, which the representative of Foya is building over there, where we find some rogues hiding at times. This community has expanded right to the hill. Even our community watch forum cannot patrol all over the place. Maybe the solution would be to create another community so that we have two communities here instead of one. But that is not easy. The quarter chief wants to control this large area.”²⁹

Accompanying the splintering of borderland micro-territorial units, is the merging of other MTUs. Rationales for territorial merging included the push to

²⁷ Interview conducted with QC-7 in Foya on 1 August 2015.

²⁸ Focus Group Discussion in Peace Community on 2 August 2015.

²⁹ Interview conducted with New_Foya_Youth-1 on 27, July 2015.

allow for resource sharing between communities, to eliminate ineffective leadership and to incorporate micro-communities into larger communities as zones. Catholic Community, in Ganta, for example emerged in 1997 out of space previously occupied by a rubber plantation. After the current MTG built his house, the Catholics came next and built a church and a school in 1999, which is where the community gets its name.³⁰ However, given that two neighboring communities abutting Catholic Community did not have access to the main road and their leaders were not doing much to change the situation, they merged to become zones within Catholic Community in 2008. Furthermore, they merged when the emergence of new communities made pre-existing micro-territorial configurations too small in terms of size, number of households and population to matter.

The splintering and merging of communities creates opportunities for some and eliminates possibilities for others. However, this shapes the quotidian management of human and material processes within borderland micro-territorial units.

Borderland Marketscapes: Between Informal Micro-Territorial Ordering and Statebuilding

Ganta (abutting Guinea) is Liberia's second most populous city. Meanwhile, Foya (bordering Sierra Leone and Guinea) is the most populous city in Lofa County. Foya and Ganta expand outwards for an 8mile radius from the epicenter of borderland marketscapes. Marketscapes partially explain the very existence of these population centers on the edges of the state, which are often mirrored by cross-border city population centers. The marketscape is arguably

³⁰ Interview with an originator of Catholic Community, Ganta on 18 August 2015

the main employer in borderlands given the streamlined bureaucracies of postwar statebuilding that only allow meager investment in the public service sector. Nevertheless, the postwar state's limited investments in revenue collection, police and immigration services are meant to seat its authority and ensure some visibility within liminal spaces. However, the largely unregulated borderland marketscape provides opportunities for material exchange by organized informal social actors, while challenging postwar state authority. This unregulated physical space captures the resilient hybridity of survival economies through the *mélange* of permanence with transience, legality amid illegality, the licit and the criminal.

Two distinct marketplaces are evident in Foya and Ganta – the formalized marketplace often run, regulated and administered by the municipality and corollary marketplaces – which arise due to the concentration of commercial activity around another economic activities such as transportation or banking. The agglomeration of cross-border and national wholesalers, retailers, hawkers, transporters and porters makes borderland marketplaces a bustling beehive of commercial activity. However, the quotidian informal structural and operational content of both formalized and corollary marketplaces largely seek to circumvent or dilute controls from both state and informal ordering. Therefore, the form, content and positionality of marketplaces in Foya and Ganta provide a material space for conflict and cooperation between the postwar state and territorially based informal orders epitomized in micro-territorial governors.

The hub of commercial activity within Liberia's borderland cities makes it difficult to see where the market starts and where it stops. Formal marketplaces benefit from eminent domain laws and dedicated spaces of commercial exchange within borderlands constructed to facilitate formal administration

and to order economic informality. Exercising eminent domain city ordinance rules, city authorities choose to either formalize the physical construction of marketscapes in spaces where they had historically existed or construct new spaces dedicated to commercial exchange. The same rules are designed to bring marketscapes under the control of state-assigned administrators. However, given the ordering constraints of formal marketscapes, there is the proliferation of informal marketscapes around different forms of social and economic activity such as transportation or even in private residences within borderlands. These alternative marketscapes based around transport hubs scattered around the borderland city evidence the postwar state's incapacity to singularly order informality (which would be further developed in the next chapter). However, it also provides a rationalizing logic to the role of micro-territorial governors and their patterns of informal ordering. Given their overlaps with community dynamics, borderland marketscapes set up arenas of opposition and domination between statebuilding, informal ordering and transient livelihoods.

Communities that blend into both formal and corollary marketscapes face sanitary, security and criminal challenges that come with the presence of the everyday city market within community limits. Micro-territorial governors within whose spaces designated borderland marketscapes fall, organizationally straddle the informalized economic and livelihood processes of marketscapes and its formal administration by the City Council. The quotidian overlap of micro-territorially governed spaces and marketscapes challenges the social protective justification for the very existence of micro-territorial governors within borderland communities.

In Ganta, for example, the municipal marketscape overlaps four communities Bassa, Old Car Garage, Gbalagbein and Congo communities whose

interaction with the market is differentially based on the community composition and emergent modes of intra-community social control. MTGs within these communities react differently towards the city marketscape overlapping into their community spaces. The predominant view within Bassa Community is that the existence of the municipal market on the edge of their community constitutes health and sanitation hazards for the entire community³¹. Focus group discussion participants claimed that the hazardous conditions persisted because the municipality had neither devised a waste management system nor set up public latrines. Meanwhile the municipality expected the community to cater to the management of refuse dumps. More so a City Inspector who resided in another community controlled the community's main water pump. Seeking greater control over the resources within his community and acting on behalf of his community, the MTG noted that "I wrote a letter to the City Mayor saying that I will not be the Community Chairman and the pump is in my community and you are from another community and you will be controlling it."³² The MTG for Bassa Community obtained the concession and the water pump was turned over to his control.

The implications for ceding of control of this resource, as was evident in other marketscapes within borderlands was the weakening of eminent domain control over municipal marketscapes by acquiescing to some parts of social control being embedded within informal orders. Resources such as water wells, pumps and public latrines (where they exist) which dot the borderland terrain, provide a physical arena for control and to generate resources for leaders of informal orders. Thus, control of water and sanitation resources is salient in liminal spaces where these resources are in short supply. Informally ordering

³¹ Focus Group Discussion in Bassa Community, Ganta on 17 August 2015

³² Interview with CC-18 in Ganta on 21 August 2015.

provided the basis from which to negotiate such control within postwar borderland communities in Liberia. However, it also shows the position of privilege that communities overlapped by marketscapes have when negotiating with state representatives as they simultaneously benefit from and are hamstrung by eminent domain laws.

The economic and social content of designated marketscapes enhances the social and symbolic posture of the borderland communities within which they exist, providing a basis for internal power contestation. In Foya, the daily market is located exclusively within the New Foya Quarter, while the Saturday market, also known as “Foya’s Birthday” is situated in Ndama Road Quarter. While the Saturday market is a historical fixture of Foya’s socio-economic landscape, the daily market in New Foya was inaugurated on June 26, 2007. It was part of a postwar project to “clear Broad Street which was becoming too too crowded as many market people were coming back after the war and our brothers and sisters from Sierra Leone and Guinea them were adding too and create sheds where people can sell their foodstuff and other products everyday.”³³

Unlike a majority of informally ordered borderland communities where leadership is largely designated by consensus, New Foya prides itself with holding elections to select the MTG. Since the end of the war and with the arrival of Foya’s municipal market at New Foya the area has expanded to incorporated neighboring villages; the population has grown exponentially; there is increasing pressure on the limited water and sanitation resources brought in as part of the immediate postwar relief effort; the wave of criminality is on the rise; and there is even more pressure on limited Ebola aid resources

³³ Interview with New Foya Elder, Foya City on July 28, 2015.

which are equally distributed to communities regardless of size³⁴. Given these circumstances, the community members have recently felt the need to split the Quarter in two. However, their desire to create New Foya I and New Foya II has met stiff resistance of their MTG in collusion with the City Mayor. Furthermore, the people of New Foya claim that their MTG after his designated three-year term, continues to postpone the presentation of the community's financial balance sheet report that would precede a new election for MTG and a subsequent hand over.

The quotidian micro-politics in New Foya contributes to understanding the relationship between informal and formal territorial governors within borderlands and their relationships to their communities. Its importance as the quotidian marketscape within Foya implies that New Foya is a revenue generator for the city. It is a space where the City Court comes to “cut tickets for the people who have a table or a shed even people with no table and only tray on head you get to pay ticket 5LD/day”³⁵ a means of raising revenue for a City Council whose City Mayors deplored his lack of a salary despite “already being on the job for over 6 months.”³⁶

Cross-border trade and its national extensions contribute to the population concentration within borderland cities. The permanence of borderland informal orders interacts with the transience of trade, making borderland cities important hubs of economic opportunity despite their liminal geographical positionality. Given the limited presence of the postwar state, informal ordering patterns emerge to give predictability to the proliferating human and material processes within borderland marketscapes. Within both borderland cities, the

³⁴ Focus Group Discussion in New Foya on July 30, 2015.

³⁵ Interview with Petit Trader_2-Foya, on August 2, 2015.

³⁶ Interview with Foya_CM_1 on August 4, 2015.

crystallization of informal ordering into permanent micro-territorial local governance structures deliberately and collusively positions itself as gatekeeper of statebuilding processes.

Secondly, given that these commercial spaces predate civil wars, the permanent communities surrounding markets have had to contend with intense postwar land tenure conflicts (resulting from coercive wartime land grabs). Thirdly, the postwar *marketscape* physically and functionally becomes a hybrid habitat and commercial space, as it serves the omnibus functions for interdependent groups of individuals. *Marketscapes* serve as homes for some market people, who find it cost efficient to inhabit the space where they sell their goods during the day. This is preferable to incurring the additional cost of traveling with their goods to the market every day. The stalls provide impermanent habitat for young people who *hustle* the same spaces during the day for their “*bran ma*”- as car loaders, occasional hawkers of dubiously acquired new and used goods, load carriers or informal security providers. This physical and functional hybridity (which is not devoid of organized competitive and cooperative networks) depends on, and contributes to diluting the form and content of social controls that emerge in postwar communities which host borderland markets.

Conclusion - Informal Ordering Implications for Postwar Statebuilding

Modes of informal ordering emerging from local communities show the structuring of quarters and communities into functional roles and operational zones. These functional and structural processes accentuate social control within these micro-territorial spaces while concentrating authority in the hands of volunteer leaders. Emerging from a protracted civil war, many of these

volunteer leaders recognize the transitional nature of their everyday contexts. They also acknowledge their roles in shaping this transition as MTGs within spaces where they live. Hence, their leadership is tinged with expectations of recognition which would translate to more concrete forms of reward – it is a very patient process. In the meantime, they reap social benefits from their symbolic positioning. Far from claiming unity in interests, there is a variation of motivations underlying community leadership. Beyond their discourses on and about leadership, these insights are the observation and interpreted in local daily practice. Informal ordering provides a basis for micro-territorial governance that is more proximate to communities than the state to which they belong. However, most MTGs would prefer a form of incorporation into the state, not as a manner of lifting their communities (as the communities would expect) but to become part of a centralized bureaucracy of extraction. Given the quotidian persistence of informal ordering, caution needs to be paid to nuanced interpretations of African political ordering based on a hybridized notion of Western norms. These are largely misleading, unless it is made clear that the graft did not have the intended results (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 146). Informal ordering as a framework of analysis highlights the legitimacy and advantage of organized borderland socio-political actors to operate accordingly to organizationally emergent logics which blend modernity and informality and ordering in quotidian practice.

Proximity to the household provides micro-territorial governors a flexible position from which to deal with outsiders entering their communities. These leaders of informal local orders are thus adept at negotiating different forms of rent from all external entrants into borderland spaces including the postwar state. Part of their role is to create social protection by building predictability into socio-economic relations within their communities, while enhancing the

material base of the community. Their detachment from the postwar state bureaucracy makes MTGs more nimble, proactive and responsive to the socio-economic needs of their communities – even if only as a morale presence.

While the quotidian micro-territorial governance within borderland cities evidence decentralized governance in practice, there are variations in how MTGs get into their leadership roles, as well as their prescribed term in office/service. Within Ganta and Foya, the terms of service for incumbent MTGs range from 5 months to 32 years. This variation is largely a function of physical circumstances, the personal disposition of the MTG and their relationships with both their communities and the City Mayor. It is an inherently interest-driven process which leverages social embeddedness at community level to construct and protect individual interests – the implications are the development of “liege lords” through MTG. Their positioning does not only reflect individual interest but also community interest, since the fulfillment of individual interests is predicated upon community acquiescence of informally ordered social configurations. While these are mainly volunteer positions, however there is evidence of power politics behind internally and externally driven competition for leadership positioning.

Given processes of informal ordering, borderland actors politically acquire socially-grounded authority and control over micro-territorial administration and human and material processes. Hence their legitimacy is derived from a socially grounded interpretation of accountability and direct representation. It is a process, which presidentially-appointed mayors constantly seek to undermine by discouraging the use of elections to bring community leaders to the helm of their communities. However, it traces the contours of ‘negotiated statehood’ (Hagmann and Peclard, 2010 543-554) which is often ignored or

marginalized when the ‘transformative’ process (Sisk, 2013:5) of international statebuilding perceive informal institutions of governance as hindrances to advancing their international norms.

Chapter 6 : Ordering Informality Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs) and the Decentralized Political Economy of Vulnerable Resilience

“I am everywhere in Liberia. Even money changers, I am sponsoring them; Pen-Pen Boys (Commercial Motorbike Riders), I am sponsoring them. I have a hand in everything in Liberia. It is not because I need the money, but what is most satisfying to me is that I am giving a Liberian a chance to live because I was once in a position where I wanted somebody to help me start off life.” Benoni Urey, 2017 Liberian Presidential Candidate for All Liberian Party on Voice of America (August, 14, 2015).

Introduction

Urey’s statement came after a rally at which he was accompanied by hundreds of honking youth Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs) to launch his bid for Liberia’s 2017 presidential elections. Urey, who made millions by heading a crony capitalist business empire ranging from telecoms to agricultural investments, served as Charles Taylor’s Commissioner of Maritime Affairs from 1996-2003. He was under a UN travel ban and asset freeze until late 2014. Despite controversy surrounding him and his wartime business dealing, his statement captures that informality commands in everyday politics in Liberia. It also exhibits understands the complex relationship of youth, everyday informal “bran ma” (daily bread) economics [Konings’ (2006: 39) “*debrouillardise*”] and violence in Liberia. As Urey travels a national political trajectory, his political rhetoric plays to the informal economic operators who, not only constitute a majority of the postwar Liberia population, but who modestly and resiliently muddle through the war to postwar transition. These informal economic operators, through the negotiation of labor and material positionality, organize to sustain their livelihoods amid the flux, uncertainty and vulnerability of the

postwar context in what constitutes the everyday political economy of vulnerable resilience.

It is important to grasp the complex historical context that gives rise to and produces postwar functional dynamics is important. The displacement of wartime rebel governance architectures in favor of postwar statist securitization processes in borderland spaces, leads to the emergence of immanent configurations of economic informality. The immanent configurations of economic informality describe processes of ordering informality. Given the centrality of individual and socially organized actors in ordering informality, these processes are often not connected to pre-war and wartime human and material productive dynamics. The reconstruction of the limited state however, does not only limit its remit, but it also opens up spaces for alternative configurations of economic production. Postwar borderland economic contexts are thus characterized by the complex quotidian transaction of informal livelihood processes through a maze of refracted state bureaucratic forms.

Ordering informality engages the operational coexistence of uncertainty and flux characteristic of postwar contexts to develop vulnerably resilient protective mechanisms. Largely occurring within informality, livelihood choices are shaped by assessments of their individual and collective human needs. These needs assessments are negotiated through the quotidian transaction of human and material livelihood processes within contexts of prevailing uncertainty and vulnerability. Informal economic actors, in the face of consistent uncertainty, usually spend a lot of energy building models or social constructions that serve to evaluate possible reactions to the persistence of uncertainties (Raeymaekers 2014:16). These “rational” calculations account for both individualized and collective action outcomes. However, beyond apparently “rational” calculations

described here, strategies to confront economic uncertainty also acquire different constellations according to social context (Raeymaekers 2014:19). Overall though, they lead to the development of strategies which, accounting for specific economic group particularities, collectively confront economic uncertainty and build individual and sector resiliency.

This study uses the informal social economics of Commercial Motorbike Riding (CMRing) as a descriptive analytical prism to explain processes of ordering informality. Besides the community leaders who daily informally administer the governance of human and material processes within borderlands, Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs) are quotidian borderland informal economic actors. To interact with permanent and transient dimensions of their borderland spaces, this externally unregulated and internally structured informal mode of economic production has grown exponentially within borderlands in Liberia's postwar years. They also transact international borders and structurally deploy themselves within borderland territorial space, not only to optimize profits, but to minimize internal conflict, strengthen resiliency and network into political orbits to gain and maintain leverage and informal social protection.

Ordering informality, explains multiple dimensions of informal economic social structuring that arises out of a specific livelihood factor of production – the motorbike. The commercial motorbike requires relatively high capital investment, its operation requires low skills training with a corollary high personal risk of injury. Meanwhile planning around the business normally is done within short time horizons. As TF noted in Foya, “I know that I cannot ride a motorcycle forever, so I have to use my young years to make some money so that I can buy my own motorcycle, build a house and take care of my

family.”³⁷ Therefore every CM plying the borderland streets brings together a complex array of negotiated interests – the operator, the owner, the public, the Union and state agents. Therefore, looking at the individual component within ordering informality accounts for a host of actors, actions and processes surrounding the Commercial Motorbike.

Moving from the individual to the structural level, there is the Union. Commercial Motorcycle Riders Unions are collectives which serve a representative and gatekeeping function for a rather significant socio-economic grouping of postwar youth. Thus, the Unions with varying histories and purposes epitomize ordered informality and stand between the operator and the state. They give structure to the evolution of postwar configurations of economic informality within borderlands spaces. This explanation purposefully engages Raeymaekers’ (2014: 26) analysis of informal borderland economies as generating a liminal political order that sits uncomfortably in the twilight between the power of states and markets.

Except that ordering informality evolves sets of structures which seek to build resilience and protections despite contexts of vulnerability. In doing so, they embed their activity within the borderland market and build networks into the centralized state. This process of ordering informality is explained through two sets of narratives. The first being the interactive exploration of individualized CMRs transacting borders and borderlands. The second set of observations analyzes unions (epitomizing ordered informality) and standing between multiple states (home and cross-border) and the CMR. Ordering informality within this context therefore describes the constitutive, process and interactive dimensions of informal economic actors within Liberia’s borderland spaces.

³⁷ Informal discussion with TF in Foya on 24 March, 2014.

Ordering informality begins to discern the emergence of informal economic groups and networks as unionized/associative spaces. Within these spaces, the negotiated alignment of individuals and the structural interests generates a socio-economic power nucleus with political implications. Consequently, these power spheres are individually and collectively leveraged in quotidian transactions with agents of postwar statebuilding. The overriding objective is to systematize different forms of quotidian security and economic protection for the CMR on one hand, and Union executives on the other.

The CMR sector interacts with the postwar state through the daily navigation of internal and international borders. It also engages with international NGOs through training, safety and public health programs. CMR “Unions” provide a central entry point for postwar state agents and their partners to engage with youth-related issues. This interaction legitimates union, strengthening representative position and encourages further entrenchment in informality. Their position between youth CMRs and the State, provides CMR Unions with a platform from which to appropriate, instrumentalize and subjectify interventions meant to target youth education, insecurity and unemployment, with consequences for postwar state authority and control. Understanding their internal mechanics and politics as well as their organizational structure provides a premise from which to discern patterns of interaction with or disconnection from architects of postwar state building. Understanding how and why crystalizing informal economic groups and networks interact with postwar statebuilding in practice holds clues to the durability of statebuilding outcomes. Far from implying a one-way relationship, there is also evidence of state agents working to instrumentalize unions for political gain.

The Political Economy of Ordering Informality: Escaping Interpretive Traps

The political economy of war highlights interconnected ordering patterns that undergird rational choice decision-making by individuals and socially organized and networked (local, national and international) constellations of actors involved in the strategy and economics of war (Reno 2004, Keen 2004, Pugh et al 2004). Often and rather interchangeably “informal”, “shadow”, “illicit”, “clandestine” and “underground” have been used to describe patterns of wartime economic exchange taking place in areas of alternative or contested governance. This conceptual occlusion ought not be transposed in analyzing non-state postwar economic patterns characterized by nuanced interweaving of economic informality and formality, illegality and legality, daylight and shadowy practice, given the normative contextual fluidity. By focusing on borderland dynamics this study implicitly contests these ascriptions that align with state and international conventional normative construction of categories, which in reality fail to advance a political analysis of ordered economic “informality” based on the vicissitudes of quotidian practice.

Where the literature has turned towards analyzing society-based quotidian economic livelihood phenomena, the focus has revolved around four interconnected interpretations of the political sociology of postwar statebuilding and peacebuilding taking actors as socio-economic agents; exploring interactive processes; providing crosscutting multi-level analysis and giving historical depth to emic constitutive mechanics. Given that ordering informality centralized borderland commercial motorbike riders within postwar statebuilding processes, this study benefits from political anthropologies of

youth, gender, warlords and strongmen. Such studies have contributed to problematizing war and postwar individualized agency as contextually shaped universal human phenomena rather than distinctly “African” wartime cultural phenomena (Reno 1998; Moran 2006; Macauley 2012 and Utas 2003, 2012). This line of research broadly explains the relationship between human agency and systemic processes by dovetailing interpretations of human agency with the negotiation of the emergence and sustenance of pluri-positional postwar social structures (Roitman 1990, Brast, 2013, Paffenholz, 2015). However, Paffenholz (2015: 868) even encourages adding analytical layers to render more complex the essentialist understanding of the local and the international systemic dichotomy. This study does just that by delving into the emic mechanics of ordering informality within postwar contexts.

This study further seeks to escape the elite interpretive trap, given that focusing on elite dimensions of violence, peace settlements and statebuilding often overlooks the quotidian dynamics manifest in the quotidian content of postwar spaces. Additionally, it seeks to escape the linear interpretive trap, by assuming that the non-linear transitional evolution from war to postwar exhibits multilevel dissonance and misalignment. Autesserre (2005) does this brilliantly by evidencing the paradoxical coexistence of local violence with a context of internationally guaranteed national peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Deepening the trans-spatial understanding of livelihood resilience within contexts of historical and functional duress, Raeymaekers (2014: 2) brings together the complex historiographic interplay of cross border human and material processes as they engage in transactional micro-economic production and reproduction in encounters with different temporal iterations of the state. These studies situated in disparate contexts and timeframes as Sierra Leone in the 1990s, Liberia between 1989-2005 and contemporary DRC emphasize the

necessity to incorporate historical dimensions of human and spatial reality to the interpretation of social choices which undergird ordered informality within postwar state building contexts.

Understanding postwar ordering informality emphasizes a non-linear and deliberate interrogation of the reconstitution of postwar communities, which are individually interwoven in prewar, wartime and postwar modes of socioeconomic production. The implication here is that postwar livelihood economics can neither be understood in a vacuum nor disconnected from the dynamics of war and its resultant loss of human life, transformation of property bases and population displacement. Therefore, the life histories of postwar informal economic actors are important in understanding their individual trajectories and livelihood choices. Second economic activity within postwar liminal spaces is predominantly informal. The informality, far from implying illegality, points to the non-regulation of land, labor and capital processes appropriated and deployed as modes of economic production. This is not to claim that the informal economy does not incorporate illegality, but rather to make a case for looking at the informal economy as an organic process, which far from seeking to benefit from illegality, arises from a context of uncertainty and resilient vulnerability.

Meanwhile, informal economic actors build networks of protection in order to optimize gains from the entrenching of informality. These protective networks contribute to deeper explanation of what Raeymaekers (2014:24) describes as a subjective dimension of economic entrepreneurship under conditions of long-term instability and violent change. Given that human livelihood processes especially within postwar contexts outpace the gradual return of the state, the

state's capacity for regulation is often playing catch-up to crystalized and entrenched socially organized economic informality.

Finally, the interactive processes, which produce formality and informality occur across multiple levels – spanning from the individual to the national level. Hence ordering informality is a systematic process that produces operational hybridity where informality is subject to localized patterns of unionized formalization, often at the expense of the state. Thus, ordering informality as quotidian practice within borderlands seeks to escape total formalization while benefiting from selective interaction with the state - creating an outcome where the state instrumentally varies in centrality and marginality in relation to their livelihood options.

Ordering informality as a process, structurally organizes informal socio-economic actors – traders, commercial motorbike riders, tailors, money changers and petit traders – into associations with fairly loose hierarchies. While these groups of individuals might be preoccupied with subsistent livelihoods (Chabal and Daloz 1998) their associative structures provide a platform for engagement with different kinds of state agents and policy. This growth of the CMR sector particularly has led to a process of unionization (neither original nor innovative), which serves two purposes – to order the informality by gaining the ability to license CMRs and to represent the interests of CMRs through as a socially organized unit on the one hand. On the other hand, Unions provide an apparently monolithic interlocutor with which state agents and statebuilding partners engage in attempts to influence certain aspects of ordered informality. Despite operating within a highly deregulated environment, CMR Unions are organized more like lobby groups within the postwar context.

Ordering informality does not merely seek to provide behavioral and operational predictability. It also provides a socially organized basis for negotiating internally designed and externally supported protection schemes and provides a platform for engaging the postwar state. This view is somewhat dissonant from Meagher's (2011: 51) observation that social marginalization and livelihood pressures often leave the associations of the poor vulnerable to opportunism or political capture by public officials, NGOs, or even by their own leadership. By exploring how structures of ordered informality appropriate norms and values projected by external interveners and transform them through processes of reinterpretation, instrumentalization and subjectification (Roitman, 2004:10; MacGinty 2014) this study relativizes both poverty and marginality. The "susu" informal credit scheme among CMRs and regulated by their Unions exemplifies social development strategizing emerging from marginality and based on learned wartime socio-economic practice in spaces of displacement. The ability to translate the "susu"'s purpose into empowerment outcomes would obviously be the subject of further mixed methods research.

Youth Agency and the Postwar Informal Economy

According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2014, 61.1% of Liberia's total population was under age 24. At the individual level, the reference to CMRing largely "a young man's" job³⁸ is particularly important given the historical significance of youth agency in the Liberian civil wars. This study privileges Utas (2003:8) analysis of "youth combatants" as active agents over Blattman and Annan's (2010: 882) concept of "child soldiers" with its implicit passivity. Thus, youth agency is centralized in the construction and maintenance of ordered

³⁸ Discussion with Immigration Officer_1 at Guinea Road Border Control Post, March 28, 2014.

informality. It also contributes to setting up analyses of generational fault lines characterized between youth CMRs on one side and older union leaders and formal and informal territorial administrators on the other, as CMRs transact borderscapes.

Historically, the uses of and abuses by youth combatants during Liberia's civil wars made international headlines and retook center stage during Charles Taylor's trial at the International Criminal Court. "Youth combatants" enjoyed more agency during the Liberian Civil war than any time before, with a high proportion of the fighting forces during the Liberian Civil Wars consisting of youth combatants (Utas, 2003:9). While youth combatants of Liberia's first civil war (1989-1997), by 2014 have grown into adults, "youth" continues to be associated with the bio-technology of war in the collective Liberian imagination. This association of youth and violence born of historical reality sustains fear and suspicion about youth cultures and political violence in Liberia. CMR Unions continue to contend with this stigma in the quotidian interaction with borderland communities.

A number of studies have traced the social evolution of Liberia's ex-youth combatants. Soderstrom (2013: 410) identifies ex-combatants in postwar countries as central, as they as a group can form a bedrock for renewed violence. Through experimentation with cognitive behavioral therapy among Liberian ex-combatants in Monrovia, Blattman et al (2015) observed that participants who had felt ostracized by society at the start of the project came out believing in their potential for societal inclusion. While these studies hold interesting insights for building upon DDRR interventions, they unfortunately do not say much about the penchant of contemporary youth for political violence. There was not a single CMR in the study areas Foya and Ganta

who had been a youth combatant during Liberia's civil wars. Although some "ex-fighters" as well as formerly displaced persons serve within the leadership of CMR unions. Focusing on understanding the responses of ex-fighters to postwar changes often creates blind spots to contemporary alternative loci of violence within more general explorations of postwar youth cultures. Contemporaneously, wartime youth agency of which Utas (2003) wrote has hardly dissipated, but has morphed into postwar youth agency, manifested within the informal economy.

Liberia's youth CMRs have collectively engaged the state, through their Unions, to seek and earn protections while retaining non-regulatory concessions. That however does not imply the complete exoneration of CMRs from informal controls by localized state officials. Meanwhile, outside the unions, they have also used the credible threat (and occasional deployment) of violence against representations of state authority — such as police stations, and the private sector, such as hotels — to different ends. These modes of operation from within and outside Unions highlight misalignments that exacerbate tensions in the triadic engagement of CMRs, Unions and the postwar State. Understanding these misalignments further deepens the understanding of systematic local micro-politics of ordered informality.

However, ordered informality has also contributed to dealing with crisis. CMRs were active participants in the fight against the Ebola Virus Disease, given the popularity of their mode of transportation as potential disease vectors within the Ebola's triangular borderlands of liminal Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The livelihoods of youth borderland navigators are based on mastering the socio-political and physical topographies of their borderlands, which to them straddle the national and the international. During the EVD crisis, the lives and

livelihood of borderland CMRs came under attack by an “invisible enemy and we changed the way we operated, protecting ourselves and our customers to continue earning money”³⁹. This resilience of youth agency makes “youth” a prized bio-political asset in Liberia’s postwar political landscape. Capturing a majority of Liberia’s differentiated youth, endows political actors with tremendous leverage. However, it is as perilous as herding cats, given the hard bargains, which they drive. The confluence, of youth, politics and informal economics in Liberia captured through the social organization of ordered informality in the CMR transport sector has implication for postwar state authority and stability.

Given these processes of ordering informality, borderland economic actors develop grounded competitive authority and control over means and ends of economic production. With legitimation of Unions occurring through socially grounded interpretation of direct accountability and representation, they cannot be ignored in the governance of liminal spaces. Far from implying the total ideational alignment of Riders and their Unions, their internal politics reveal schisms when Unions are perceived to be passive clients to political power elites. This challenge the notion of a wholesale capture of these associative bodies by public officials (Meagher 2011:51), although within Liberia’s postwar context political elites are perceived to have contributed to the fracturing of existing unions and the emergence of new ones more compliant to their political whims.

³⁹ Interview with CMR_5 in Foya on July 4, 2015.

Commercial Motorbike Riding: The Emergence of a Postwar Borderland Political Economy

“After the war in 2006, when we came back this place was just like that, nobody was capable to eat, no jobs, no NGOs. So, we were here, you know our neighboring country that is here, Guinea – I think we were six that planned that thing. We went to Guinea, we bought motorbikes, we crossed the motorbikes here. At that time, the roads were so deplorable that you cannot move.” JTS, Foya Commercial Motorbike Pioneer (July, 28, 2015).

The borderland wakes and beds down to the purring daily soundtrack of motorbike engines. Ganta and Foya, as borderland cities, have historically stood at the crossroads of formal and informal sub-regional economies. In 2012, Liberia’s Ministry of Transport estimated that there were around 500,000 CMRs in the country, earning between USD6-20 per day (CNN, 2013). Despite the predominance of quotidian human and material economic exchange, research on Liberia has largely privileged explaining macroeconomic causes and consequences of state institutionalization and performance. Export commodities (with Firestone’s rubber exploitation and LAMCO’s iron ore mining) were seen as central to the construction and decline of the pre-1980 neo-patrimonial state in Liberia (Sesay et al 2009; Ellis 2006; Sawyer 2004). For centuries, the political ruling class (4% of the population) controlled the mechanisms of resource allocation and supervised the means of production through the entire economy (Asibey, 1991: 389). More so de facto economic apartheid made the hinterland provinces the suppliers of labor and financing for the central government with the hut tax (Levitt 2005). Subsequent analyses highlight the role international aid in sustaining the pre-civil war Liberian state from 1980 to 1989. This approach presents the state as both structure and principal agent in political outcomes, sapping society of any agency.

Quotidian patterns of informal livelihood economics have largely been as macroeconomic causal interpretations of Liberia's political outcomes have been favored. Coincidentally, LAMCO's mining operations, which were taken over by Arcelor Mittal Liberia in 2006 are primarily based in Yekepa, on the Nimba Mountain ranges which separate Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire. While macroeconomics of natural resource endowments is important for the state in theory, the microeconomics of social livelihood processes form the core content of daily encounters with the state in practice. Within Liberia's borderlands informal livelihood economies do not only predate the state, but they produce socio-political dynamics that appropriate and limit the state's remit of authority and control. The Mandingo first arrived in Lofa in the seventeenth century as individual traders conducting long-distance commerce between the forest areas of Liberia and the savannah regions further inland, bringing much-needed goods as well as important skills such as blacksmithing (Bøås 2014).

The integration of CMRing into the borderland economy is very much a postwar phenomenon. Multiple accounts in Foya narrate return from external displacement (predominantly from Gueckedou, Guinea) to a barely recognizable borderland. There were no jobs and diminishing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) presence, which had supported them during the refugee life. In 2006, six returnees from came together to give structure to what had been up to this point, the indiscriminate transportation of human and materiel within Foya and its environs. They had many templates from which to work ranging from the Liberian Road Transporters' Union (LRTU) and other models of unionizing they had experienced in exile. Today, Commercial Motorbike Riding has grown to over 455 (as of July 2015) riders in Foya. Meanwhile, in Ganta City, there were over 1400 CMRs registered with the local Liberian Motorcycle Transport Union (LMTU) chapter in August 2015. In

sheer numerical terms, CMRs are an unavoidable part of the borderland informal economies.

According to accounts by LMTU representatives, in both Foya and Gompaa, local unions started as “social projects” to combat the marginalization and stigmatization of the CMR and to empower CMRs. Though the emergence of local unions antedates the creation of the first national union, the LMTU in 2004, there was no evidence to suggest that local unions used the LMTU as a blueprint. In 2005 the Ganta Motorcycle Transport Union (GMTU) formally emerged in Ganta to assemble the CMRs in the city and its environs into a socio-political movement to serve the interested of CMRs. It is not until 2012 that the GMTU was incorporated into the LMTU. Once established, they worked as a social bloc to counteract the stigmatization of CMRs as uneducated, unruly and undisciplined youth. A Sike notes that it was also “to put boys under control and to organize people.”⁴⁰

Meanwhile the local Foya Motorcycle Union chapter emerged in 2006 and was incorporated into the national LMTU chapter in 2007. As JS Tomah noted, “every now and then we are getting new members and the job is very challenging, because there are no jobs and youths are many. And among the motorcycle riders, there are many high school graduates. Without a job, the person won’t sit. We welcome them on board and we won’t deny them because if we deny them, there will be increase in criminal activity.” JS Tomah presents the composition LMTU Foya’s membership as predominantly composed of high school graduates who do not have the opportunity for advancement to higher education. This compositional factor of borderland CMRs runs counter to narratives that link youth violence and CMRing to the proliferation of ex-

⁴⁰ Interview with LMTU Ganta Official_1 in Ganta on August 25, 2015.

combatants within the ranks of CMRs. “The pen-pen drivers are mostly ex-combatants who fought during the Liberian civil war. As they engaged in the process of disarmament, demobilization and integration (DDR), many of the ex-combatants used funds from the DDR process to buy motorcycles and become pen-pen drivers.” (Purdue 2013). In 2013, CNN This view is corroborated by personal interactions with CMRs on all the five operating bases within Foya and seven operating bases in Gompa. Furthermore, according to JST, LMTU Foya performs a social function of reducing criminal activity by providing a social avenue for youth empowerment, which is beneficial to local and state government.

As an emancipatory socio-economic project with national implications, local chapters subsequently sought incorporation into the national LMTU chapter. Incorporation into the national chapter, not only gave them the leverage when dealing with local authority/bureaucrats, it also provided them with the instruments (stickers and ID cards) with which to deal with international border agents. However, local LMTU chapters have avoided the homogenizing influence of top-down diktat from the national chapter, who in turn gives them decentralized control of the affairs of the local chapter. Salient points of convergence are the reporting of membership numbers, the payment of registration fees for the printing of stickers and IDs, communication of leadership changes and solicitation for coordinated campaign action. Taking an example of the way registration numbers are reported to the national LMTU chapter, Gompa and Foya record and report their CMR registrations differently. While Gompa City records registrations by fiscal year, Foya records its registrations by calendar year. Nevertheless, CMRs are expected to renew their registration annually, at risk of facing penalties from the local chapter.

Figures obtained from local LMTU chapters are indicative of the proliferation of CMRing and its indispensability as a borderland economic activity, which blends three production factors – capital, labor and the owner (entrepreneur) into a hybridized (in)formal postwar economy. Table 1 shows the number of registered commercial motorbikes from 2005 – 2015 in Gompa, Nimba County and Foya, Lofa County. The focus of this table is on the technology – the motorbike, which carries a capital investment of approximately USD850, since it is the motorbike that is registered and not the rider. The figures Gompa from 2005-2007

Table 2: Annual Figures for Union Registered Commercial Motorbike Riders

City/YR	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Gompa	1085		600		700		580		1500	
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Foya	56	200	234	252	230	260	275	310	356	455

Having created a socio-economic space for themselves, CMRs transact international borders where they ‘talk’ with immigration and security officials. They crisscross the borderland space in interaction with symbols of state, society and markets. Though operating within the informal sector, given that CMRs often escape direct state taxation, CMRs contribute to formal and informal local revenue generation. As the community of CMRiders (CMRs) has grown, so has the propensity for self-organizing.

Commercial Motorbike Riding and the Postwar Youth Cultures

With the proliferation of CMRs, youth cultures have emerged around CMRing in borderlands, which makes it a medium through which youth assert their agency, interact with the rest of the society and the state and in the process gain

relative control over their life options. Despite their life histories being shaped by and tinged with references to war, their daily discussions remain anchored to vogues and trends reflective of global youth cultures. During a focus group discussion meeting at the Makona River waterside border crossing from Foya (Liberia) to Gueckedou (Guinea), they teased each other about their origins (Guinean, Sierra Leonean and Liberian). Subsequent focus group discussions at several CMR bases confirmed many of the insights gleaned from the first one.

Mainly young men, they spoke of migratory dreams to the United States of America. They thought that migration would provide the next step on their journey to being able to provide for their families. They talked about rumors that the United States Army or Marine Corps was recruiting service members in Liberia. This to them, was a way to fulfill the migratory dream. All the while, they fingered their mobile phones imported from Dubai through Guinea and Monrovia, with Facebook profiles showing off the ‘friends’ they had worldwide through the power of mobile connectivity. They wanted to banter about the soccer rivalry between Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, with sharp differences in opinion about the role of the individual in a team and role of the team in individual performance. They were fans of Real Madrid or Barcelona, Chelsea or Arsenal. And many of them are regulars at JT Soriba’s video club where they watch games from live satellite downlink, after which bets are often settled. They have hope and dreams rooted in their agency.

They generally did not think that their government could do much for them, feeling the need to “make a way for myself and my future”⁴, ST noted. If anything, they felt that government was composed of a bunch of opportunists,

⁴ Interview with ST at Sorluma border crossing on March 22, 2014.

no different from those who had ruled Liberia before the wars. However, they remain young men, whose dreams, ideals and aspirations are hinged on their occupation as CMRs and their occupation of symbolic, social and physical centrality within the borderland space.

This sets up several generational fault lines with borderland actors who feel the need to assert control over the youth agency garnered through CMRing. Thus, CMRs confront a counter perspective from older individuals (mostly state representatives in borderlands) who see CMRing as “mortgaging the country’s educational future, since youth run away from education for the immediate gratification of a few LDs (Liberty Dollars)/day as Pehn Pehns or even working on the rubber farms. It is a serious problem”⁴². This perspective, however, does not capture the complex social ties, which bind individual CMRs to an emergent socio-political group and its implications for long-term livelihood projection.

Borderland CMRs and an Informal Economic Agenda

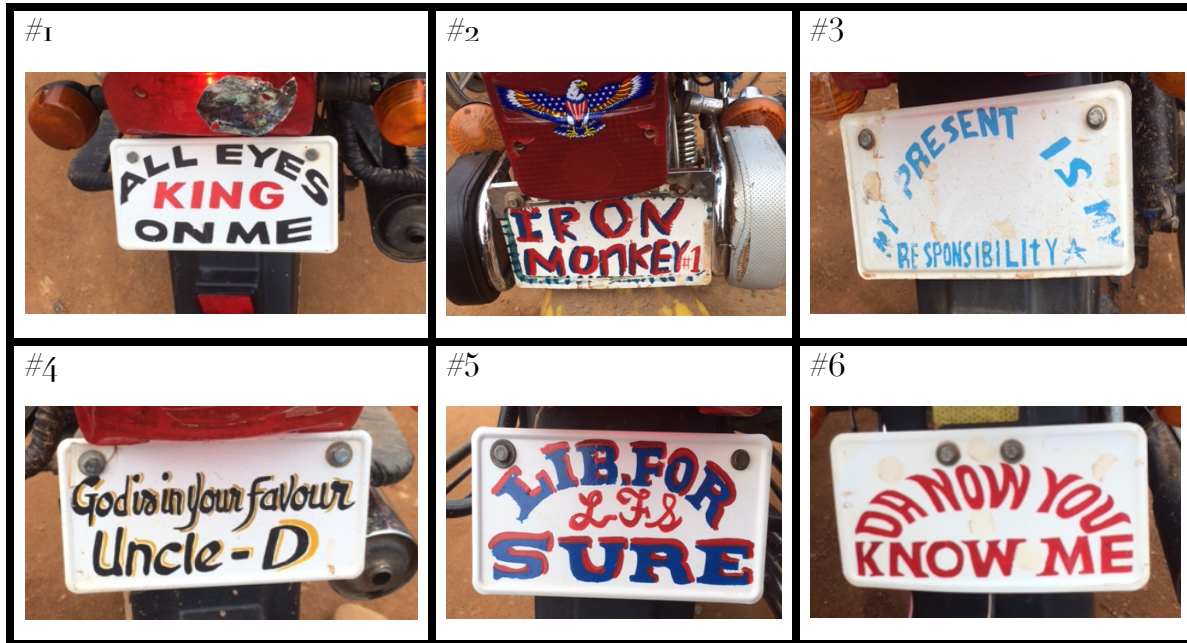
The motivations that drive CMR on the borderlands are principally economic. In the pursuit of their individualized economic agendas, they encounter different societies and different manifestations of the state. They follow some rules and circumvent others. They seek to optimize their profits, which translate into a concomitant flexibility of social and symbolic options. Interviews with individuals at different levels of the CMR chain evidence the evolution from riding to ownership, which in borderlands represents a path towards empowerment on the margins of the state while remaining embedded within one’s local community. According to JS Tomah, he “began riding bike

⁴² Interview with Immigration Official at St. John River Crossing, Ganta on 30 March, 2014.

in 2007. I bought my own bike. I bought it in Guinea for USD750. The rate at that time was a little bit encouraging 70LD/USD... You know in this world, there is a lot of suffering. You walk long distances moving from one place to another. When I came to get my first money, which of course I did benefit to buy a bike. Where I used to go, because I had a distance to go teach, using the bike to go and come. After teaching I did CMR. The union came, I became part of the union. They saw my input and output and that is why I was encouraged. And also, what I was making on the field of teaching is very little. So, the bike can embark me at least to succeed my family and do other things. You see bike riders, so people have two, two houses right now. Some people start from bike riding, now they have cars. As we are speaking now, some are here.” This narrative captures the aspirations of the CMR in Liberia’s borderlands, but those aspirations do not end at the acquisition of wealth.

Young CMRs use their bikes to project messages of self-worth and their views of the world. Fig 1 below shows some of the messages, which personalize and transform the motorbike from a random piece of mobility into an individualized symbol. The rider of panel #6 is a 24-year-old rider who spoke of how “when you struggle, people dem don’t know you. Them when dem see you on motorbike, dem want make you give them free ride. Nah dem dey put food for my table?” The CMR on panel #3 said he had left school when he got the opportunity to ride a commercial motorbike because “I did not think that school will provide for my future. You see any office jobs since you have come around here?” These are only a selection of the perspectives captured in an attempt to understand what some of the personalized inscriptions on commercial motorbikes meant to the riders.

Figure 1: Selected Inscriptions on the Rear of Commercial Motorbikes



Being on the borderland, they experience border crossing, with the interaction with border agents on both sides of the border. According to JS Tomah “At the time when the border was open, before Ebola, I crossed so far at Gueckedou, because when you get to the waterside you have to talk with the security this side, they will give you a pass and when you cross, then that is the pass you will show to the Guinean security. After they can judge it and tell you to go and do what you are supposed to do. When the border is open, when you get there you only pay 30LD. Before you go through the Guinean side you give them about 2000 Guinea Franc... [sic On the Sierra Leonean side] When the road is open, here it is dry land. When you get to the checkpoint on the Liberian side, you talk with the security, they give you a pass to go to the Sierra Leonean side. You pay 25LD on the Liberian side and when you get on the other side, you pay 2500 Leone (about 45LD). On the Sierra Leonean side, we go all the way to Kenema... Once you have your identity and your plate, you go, you come, no disturbance... On the Sierra Leone side, when they see Liberian bike, they will identify it because we have the sticker, you show your ID card, because we

trained them and gave them ID cards most of the riders, that you need to show it. The computerized ID card is issued by the union. The card comes directly from the National head office.” JS Tomah’s is the official narrative as he is the chairman of the local chapter of the LMTU. TT, a young CMR, however noted with surprise, “which borders are close? When did they close them? I carry market women everyday from the waterside to Foya here and they cross, no problem. When they reach the small gate, they take temperature and wash hand, nah all.” This dual narrative captures the official line the LMTU provides in consonance with the state’s narrative of closing borders in response to the Ebola pandemic. However, in reality, the interconnectedness of borderland communities makes preventive measures, such as temperature controls, hand-washing and collection of traveler contact information (for tracking purposes) more effective than attempts to close borders. Border closures invariably lead to the use of alternative crossing points devoid of controls and through which travelers would be unaccounted for.

Not all interactions with neighboring authorities are made equal. As JS Tomah noted, “Traveling on the Sierra Leonean side is a little bit easier than on the Guinean side. You can use your bike to go to Sierra Leone once you have the necessary documents without disturbance and go all the way to Kenema. Sometimes people used to go there and buy goods in Kenema same day and come back. You will go the same day, come back. But sometimes you will enter here now night hour. Sometimes when you reach to the border, security will tell you to wait until the next morning before you cross. On the Sierra Leone side, when the war broke out, we went there. I was stopping at Bo. I later went to Freetown before I came back. I know most of that area. I know Kenema, I know Kailahun, I know Bo, I know Pujahun, I know Freetown, I know McKinney, I travelled all these towns.”

Interactions with the Guinean authorities seem to be more challenging than with the Sierra Leonean authorities. According to TT, they cannot purchase fuel in Guinea for sale in Liberia because, “Guinea, you don’t even tamper to even take a half liter to even bring it across here. They don’t allow it. Nah [sic because it is] the peoples’ policy. Nah [sic because it is] French speaking country. You don’t take even bag of rice from over there to bring it here. Things leave from here go there like oil, coffee, cocoa go across. But now oil can go there. You only go you buy these finished goods, you bring it in Liberia, but they don’t allow you to bring any other thing. Except when you carry your bike sometimes, you buy, you put it in the tank, that is the only way you can bring it in.” Despite trade enforcement measures on the Guinean side, the transporters of the borderlands have devised ways of circumventing these controls.

The road infrastructure affects the cost of transportation, which in turn affects the cost of products that end up on borderland market. As JS Tomah averred, “for now from here [sic Foya] to the waterside, you can pay 200LD because they have paved the road, the machine worked on it. It is okay. First time, when you talk about 2009-2010, 500LD for one person because of the road condition. From the waterside to Gueckedou town is 5000 Guinea Franc. There is two fares because you have to pay the canoe from shore to shore which is 1000LD. From that, if you want to cross your bike, you put it on the canoe and they cross you, you pay 5000.” It also affects the cost of operating the bike between rainy and dry seasons. There are no price controls on the CMR fares, which are the product negotiated consent between the CMR and the passenger either prior to or at the destination of the fare. However, this has its own

complications, which often lead to wrangling between the CMR and the passenger.

From Rider to Owner: Labor, Credit Facilities and the Entrepreneurial Dream

At 31, JT Soriba is a young borderland entrepreneur and a CMR pioneer in Foya, Lofa County. He evidences the individual and collective resiliency developed through displacement and which is visible in most borderland life histories. New patterns of livelihood organization learned and developed through displacement are often deployed for social advancement on return. JT Soriba was 21 when he returned to Foya from Gueckedou, Guinea in 2005 (two years after the signing of the Liberian Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra in August 2003). A year later, he returned to Guinea to buy his first motorbike for USD650 (2006\$). Today, he owns four commercial motorbikes in Foya among other social and business ventures. Residents of borderlands largely depend on CMRs for basic transportation within the borderlands, between borderlands and County centers and across borders. As a technology, the commercial motorbike circumvents challenges posed by the rugged terrain of rolling hills. It overcomes the infrastructure lacuna exhibited by the prevalence of seasonal roads. It also informalizes the engagement between the technology and its operator and the emergent state. Despite the risks of serious bodily harm involved with using commercial motorbikes for their daily displacement, CMRs provide transportation for all seasons. Their social and economic place in the postwar borderland space makes them a centerpiece of bottom up postwar reconstruction.

The capital investment in the commercial motorbike is simultaneously financial, social and human. The manifestation of that capital is inseparable from its labor and entrepreneurial components, given the nature of the largely informal contracts that associate both worker (CMR) and entrepreneur (CMO) to capital. J.S. Tomah described the two types of schemes that bind CMRs to CMOs are the “*Work and Pay*” scheme and the “*Daily Work*” Scheme. According to JS Tomah, the Work and Pay scheme “lets the rider free the bike...If at all we make an agreement, you [the CMR] and myself, I go and purchase the bike [the CMO]. Then we agree on a certain amount for you to pay. After you pay the amount, the bike will be yours. I will give you the freedom to run the bike. When you generate the required amount of money, the bike is for you. This way, many bike riders work their way to becoming bike owners within a year.”⁴³ However, such programs often do not take into account the depreciating values of these assets, which depend on seasonal roads to generate revenue.

The Daily Work scheme operates slightly differently. According to A. Sikeh, “The rider and the owner, they agree on the money which the rider will give to the owner at the end of the work day. Everything that the rider makes above the agreed money, he will keep.”⁴⁴ This interpretation of the Daily Work scheme is corroborated by both JS Tomah and JT Soriba.

In both schemes, both the CMR and the CMO are vested and invested in the productivity of the asset – the motorbike. This arrangement transforms the CMR into a vested worker with stock options in the delivery of transport services. Meanwhile the aspect of ownership itself is pluralized through the

⁴³ Interview with JS Tomah at LMTU Foya Office on July 29, 2015.

⁴⁴ Interview with A. Sikeh at LMTU Ganta Office on August 25, 2015.

degree of control, which both CMR and CMO have on the fixed, yet depreciating asset. Thus, the CMO engages with the emergent postwar state in the borderland by proxy of the CMR even in cases where the CMO is a state agent. Both CMR and CMO have an interest in increasing their income by circumventing costs imposed by local (unions and city councils), national (commerce and law enforcement) and international actors (border agents) who administer these modes of production.

In most cases, oral contracts are executed between nuclear or extended family relations (laborer and entrepreneur), based on filial trust. Even when contracts are written out, they are hardly ever notarized into the rational-legal domain. Though the enforcement of such contracts could possibly end up in the rational-legal sphere, it is usually a last resort after having made its way through informal dispute resolution channels. It is from this very informal place that CMRs have proliferated the borderland space. The “work and pay” and “daily work” contracts are often oral as the investor (owner) meets the laborer and they both reach agreement about over the means of production – the CMR. This has contributed to the emergence of informal labor management mechanisms within the business of CMRing, as well as the use the Unions as internal and external conflict resolution mechanisms.

Ordering informality has led to the internal configuration of CMR unions into in-house credit schemes – known as the “*susu*”, which has also attracted investment from CMOs. Local unions oversee “*susu*” schemes, which encouraged CMRs to move from the driver seat to full ownership of their own means of production. Hence local unions developed an emancipatory project for operators within their economic sector in rural communities, until then, largely dependent on seasonal agriculture (Foya) and commercial trade (Ganta).

This contributes to the development of a sustainable framework of youth empowerment through CMR. In Foya, for example, there are 16 susu groups across the 4 bases, with a majority of 6 susu groups operating out of Base 2 New Foya.

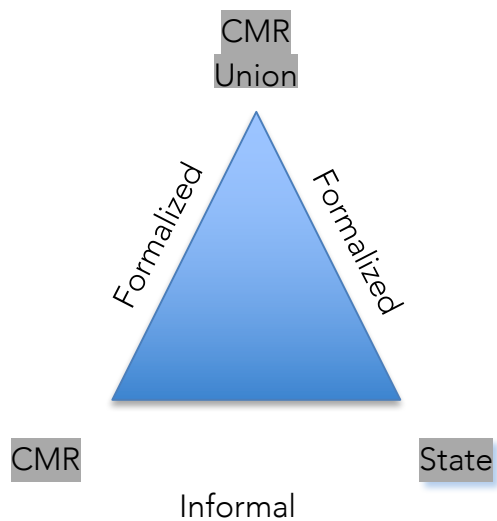
Meanwhile, derivative businesses such as fuel sellers, foreign exchange sellers (coupled with telephone refill cards and cell phone charging stations) and food sellers congregate around these CMR bases, effectively and heuristically spawning multiple and decentralized commercial hubs within the borderlands.

Between Commercial Motorbike Riders and the State – Commercial Motorcycle Unions and Borderland Ordering of Informality

Establishing the pluralized logics and registers which frame the interaction between CMRs, CMR Unions and State agents provides would provide an understanding of the emic mechanics of the triadic relationship. The constitutive mechanics of ordering informality is fluidly predicated upon its organizational logic and internal politics that differs from one informal economic sector to the next. Internal politics of ordering informality are subject to the alignment of interests between individual economic actors (as members) and unionized social structures (as institutional and associative bodies). The socially negotiated interdependence of the individual economic operator and the social organization (also a socio-political actor) is built upon constant interaction between both parties. Ordering informality occurs when quotidian livelihood processes encounter hegemonic orders – incarnated in the State. Hence it is in the exploration of the triadic interaction between – the informal economic operator, the structural manifestation of ordered informality and the

state that an explanation of the tenuous relationship between bottom-up livelihood economies and the state emerges.

Figure 2: Relational Triad Between CMRs, CMR Unions and the State



As evidences in Figure 1, the internal and external politics of CMR unions straddle borderland youth dynamics and the state. The internal Union political dynamics exhibit formalized modes of participation through membership rights and privileges. Meanwhile the Unions also have formalized relationships with the state which licenses them. This coincides with the definition of informal institutions advanced by Bagayoko et al (2016: 5) as largely structured around implicit practices, social understandings, networks of interaction of interaction and social sanctioned norms of behavior. However, the direct relationship between the state and individual CMRs and the state is either mediated by the Union or largely informal. The expectation of these groups, given their proximity to the border, is one of protection as they transact international borders. Organizing as a union provides a framework for engaging both their state of origin as well as neighboring states. Therefore, when CMRs cross national borders, they are identified as entities and not merely individuals.

Given the membership expectations of individual CMRs from the Union, there is a degree of participation that is not experienced with the state. However, this participation also often translates into the political misalignment between individual CMRS and the Unions. Despite differences between borderland cities, there are patterned organizational and functional similarities in the interaction between motorcycles unions, CMRs and the state within these borderlands.

What began as local unions have been incorporated into a national union – the Liberian Motorcycle Transporters Union (LMTU). Meanwhile, the local politics of unionization has also led to the emergence of competing unions. For borderlands once dependent on a subsistence-agriculture based economy, the CMR sector has become a cornerstone of the borderland economy in its own right. It has also spawned the growth of related economic sectors such as – local foreign currency exchange; a local petroleum wholesale and retail market; and a technical service sector in motorbike maintenance. Meanwhile, forms of ordering and control embedded within unionized CMR structures, provides a platform for networked social and political organization. So, organized, they become a coveted political force for both local and national politicians.

The management of local LMTU offices shows that despite being tethered to the national chapter, they have largely escaped the homogenizing influence of top-down ordering. According to its charter, “LMTU Ganta [Gompa] is a union of motorcyclists operating in Ganta and its environs that works for sustainable unity, empowerment and social welfare amongst motorcyclists.”⁴⁵ Locally, they also remain gatekeepers between the state (in its local and national manifestations) and CMRs. Registration numbers, for example, are a

⁴⁵ LMTU Ganta Charter displayed in their offices in Ganta on August 23, 2015.

contentious issue within unions and between local and national union chapters. There is a fiscal cost associated with accurate reporting of registration figures. It binds the local chapters to produce an equivalent amount of funds per registered member to the national chapter. Hence underreporting registration membership implies a smaller contribution to the national chapter. Thus, registration reporting has often been the source of conflict between national and local chapters and between local chapters and their membership. In Foya, JT Soriba notes that, “when we do all our collections from our members, we can report to him [the LMTU county representative], then he has to take the report to Central [Monrovia]. So, when he comes back we ask him for receipt that he paid to the Central, we can’t get receipt.”

Within borderlands, the result of non-accountability has often been the emergence of alternate Unions. In the case of Foya, a new union, the Liberian Tri-MotorCycle Association (LIMCA) is currently being established. Meanwhile in Ganta, the United Safety Motor Cooperative of Liberia (USMOL) is already in existence. Meanwhile, at the national level, there are three unions – the LMTU, USMOL and United Motorcycle Transport Union Liberia (UMTUL). The emergence of these competing unions within both center and margins reflects competing resource agendas within both borderland and the center.

However, different explanations were gleaned for the challenge with getting an accurate count of CMRs. A. Sikeh, the Vice President for Operations for LMTU-Gompa, explained that, “it is extremely difficult to keep track of the CMRs, because there are some people who buy a motorbike and give it to a relative to run as a business for them with no registration. Our field officers are there to make sure that they are registered and accounted for. But there are times when the unregistered CMRs physically attack and insult our field

operators.” However, HS, a 20-year-old CMR in Gompa noted that “I cannot tell you how many motorbike riders there are in Gompa. But we plenty, plenty. If you think that the union will tell you how many we be, nah lie. I no even know their own work. They sit in office and chop money.”

Meanwhile, JS Tomah, the Foya LMTU Chapter Chairman, noted that, “we are working for the motorbike riders at the Union, because the annual registration of 500LD can only cover the costs for printing the sticker and the ID card. Here we don’t use plates as the other people do it in the town [Monrovia], here we deal with stickers. The sticker is just for 500LD. So, we get help from NGOs and when politicians come to town they also help us.” This ID card and sticker prove invaluable when crossing international borders, but do not matter much when working within the internal borderland. Hence some borderland CMRs are reticent about acquiring stickers and ID cards, if they do not need to cross borders, a view, which runs counter to union rules. This difference in perspective captures the quotidian misalignment between the Unions and their members around the issue of numbers, membership and roles.

Beyond its socio-economic youth empowerment project the Union also works actively to promote rider and passenger safety, mainly through training. In order to meet their training objectives, unions have worked with NGOs to develop training manuals used to educate new riders and for refresher programs for older riders. According to JS Tomah, in Foya, “The training that we took [dispensed] was on bike riding concerning violations. You don’t ride bike carelessly. You know, for someone who has not been trained on a motorbike before does not know most of these things. He has to be trained. We also train on the manner of approach of the passenger or joint security. Even as a bike rider, you don’t just get drunk or you take any other drugs to help riding

your bike. All these things were done, I have the manuals here. So, there are lots of things in that manual that we talk about. Rights and Rice Foundation. All these guys that were trained before, you hardly see them go against these things. Only the new riders, even some accidents can happen, probably you only see like new riders. Or those that are just joining the group.” As gatekeepers, the unions interact with NGOs, such as GiZ and the Rights and Rice Foundation, which have dedicated programs to enhance the safety of the CMR sector, seen as a cornerstone of Liberia’s postwar reconstruction, given its engagement with Liberia’s youth.

In Ganta, promotion of rider and passenger safety has gone beyond training into the LMTU’s recommendation to purchase insurance and a crash helmet (sold through the LMTU) for rider and passengers. This has been a source of contention within LMTU Ganta stemming from a rise in motorcycle accidents with the increased urbanization of the commercial center and the concomitant proliferation of auto, trailer and motorcycle traffic. According to A. Sikeh, “no CMR wants to buy the insurance because they always say that ‘it will never happen to me’ and when it happens it is too late, they lose their investment and at times, even their life”. While CMRs have been more responsive to purchasing personal protective equipment (including crash helmets) for themselves from commercial vendors, they neither extend the privilege of protection to their passengers (because it presents a public health challenge), nor have they warmed up to purchasing insurance policies. MD, a CMR in Gompa, talking through his crash helmet noted that, “the union dey sell helmet wey cannot even protect you in accident. So, I buy my own for Main Street. But that insurance, no way. I ride safe so no need for insurance... God always protect me. Even through war he protect me. Even now he protect me.” While A. Sikeh points to the need for a sensitization campaign to get CMRs to buy

into the purchase of insurance policies which protect both them and their investments, he notes that it is extremely difficult to even embark on such a sensitization campaign since in Ganta, the riders hardly attend meetings except in moments of crisis, since the time spent at meetings is often considered to be a loss of revenue.

Calling union meetings is not harmonized from one borderland city to the next. According to JS Tomah, “we have a schedule to meet two times a month. If there is any information or emergency, I have a taskforce on the field who work. If you violate, they will be able to straighten you, they are not military people, so they talk to you actually, they arrest your bike if you violate. They carry messages to every rider on every base and when time goes on, I send them to the field to the various parking lots to oversee whatsoever is going on and sometimes in the evening they give me a report. Or sometimes weekly, I ask them to give me a report. Or if the situation is beyond their control, I do go on the field and handle the case if there is anything like that and address the situation.” There are elements of direct and effective control of the CMR sector in Foya by the union in Foya which deserve deeper analysis.

Borderland motorbike Unions have unavoidably morphed from a socio-economic project into political movements. Liberia’s war history is wrought with images of drug-induced gun-toting youth combatants wreaking havoc on the civilian population. Borderlands have been particularly vulnerable to the challenges posed by this youth bulge, given the relatively meager state investment in social services (schools, health care and job training programs) although youth unemployment numbers remain unknown. Even when NGOs have partnered with the state to meet social service needs, it has been unsustainable. Hence CMRing has absorbed many of these borderland youth,

who otherwise will be left either unemployed or over reliant on agricultural jobs.

By creating avenues for otherwise disenfranchised borderland youth, unions become gatekeepers between CMRs and the state. According to JS Tomah, “we encourage them to be part and parcel of the Union. Show them all the talents to be a motorcyclist, the rules of the union and rules of the road. We can write a proposal to NGOs for help for some to go and advance themselves in school or a trade.” A Foya LMTU leader noted that “sometimes the District Superintendent or the Commissioner call me. Sometimes if they see certain acts that are going on, since you cannot travel behind every bike rider, sometimes they go out, if they misbehave in his presence, sometimes they do complain.”⁴⁶ He continued, “The Commissioner calls me and tells me things to advise them and sometimes when we get to the meeting here I can advise on it. Sometimes he himself used to arrest them because when you do that kind of bad behavior, or you don’t want to take your time, he will ask you to stop, tell you what you’re supposed to do as a rider, because you don’t overtake someone on the right while the person is going. Sometimes he used to call me to say ‘there are certain riders here that are doing thing which can cause an accident if they continue.’ So, I call them, talk to them, advise them.”

In Ganta, A. Sikeh explains how he de-escalated a situation when “the motorbike riders came here and told me that they wanted to go burn down the police station. I asked them what they wanted to accomplish by burning down the police station. After listening to them, I told them that they will be more effective in making their concerns known by parking their bikes for a day and letting everyone in Ganta try to find a means to go to the market, send their

⁴⁶ Interview with LMTU Foya Official_2 July 28, 2015

children to school, or go to hospital or go to work. The pressure on the people of this city will force the authorities to call the police to order and it is better than burning up the police station.” He might have saved a situation from going out of control, but with radical fringe group of CMRs, this amounts to collusion with the police.

JS Tomah captures the relationship between the Liberian National Police (LNP) and LMTU Foya when he notes that, “On the line of security, as a chairman I work directly with the Traffic Officer of the LNP because that is our guide. On the field, because they are so many, because as you know after the war people got on the field of motorcyclist, some have fought war before, but now to cool them down we have to encourage them to be on the field. Anything that happens there, I will channel it to the LNP traffic officer so they will be able to help assist me.” Hence for reasons of public safety symbiosis between state agents and the LMTU is unavoidable. While it is a delicate balancing act for the union leadership to work between the state and the CMR, it is a position, which empowers them to spatially order and position CMRs within borderscapes.

The leaders of the local unions are usually selected to serve in those positions by the members of the union. However, quite a bit of politicking goes into this selection process. JS Tomah was ‘elected’ by acclamation on 23 July 2012 to serve a three-year term as chairman of the Foya LMTU local chapter. He expected to hand over the reins of the organization to a new bureau in August 2015. Being a public-school teacher by day, a CMR during his non-teaching hours and an owner of two commercial motorbikes himself, he presents the hybridity of the CMR sector within borderlands. By his accounts, “before starting as a motorcyclist, I was in the teaching field. So, I bought my bike and

after class, I will join with them and ride. Under their leadership [the previous union leaders] CMRs were suffering... This is why a group of people came to me and said that we want you to lead us. Later, they contacted the LMTU Lofa County coordinator and he called for election. We went to election and I won.” He claims that the previous leadership whom he ousted had tried to form a counter union, known as AUTO. However, the wrangling has continued, leading to papers being filed with national and local authorities for the establishment of a second motorcycle union in Foya.

Having established himself as a local organizer, JT Soriba, once led the local Foya chapter of the LMTU, and is the current leader of the union seeking to establish itself as a rival to LMTU in Foya, the Liberian Tricycle and Motorcycle Association (LIMCA). Typical of occupational hybridity within borderlands, JT Soriba owns four commercial motorbikes. He is also invested in telecasting soccer games from the restored carcass of an abandoned warehouse, which still exhibits bullet holes on its façade, on Foya’s commercial Broad Street. He is also currently serving as chairman of the Foya Progressive Intellectual Forum (FPIC), a social group of 70 young members (25 female). The FPIC organizes public debates and discussions on hot button issues and plays a central role during elections. He considers himself a political figure.

Therefore, his role in the emergence of LIMCA is as political as it is social. He uses his business acumen to develop political networks and increase his social stature within Foya. The rivalry between LMTU-Foya and LIMCA therefore, captures the political dynamics which belie unionization within a predominantly youth operated sector on the borderlands.

Despite these rivalries that develop talent in local political organizing, Unions leverage their position within borderlands to spatially order CMRs within the borderscape. Spatial ordering of informality benefits unions, CMRs, derivative businesses, customers and the state. In Foya, the Union has ordered CMRs into four bases, strategically situating Base 1 on Broad Street; Base 2 at New Foya Market (the daily market); Base 3 at Kpormu Road Market; and Base 4 at Ndama Road (where the Saturday regional weekly market occurs). In Ganta, staging areas are divided into 7 bases Base 1 at Sacliffea Parking; Base 2 on Guinea Road; Base 3 at Gbahn Parking; Base 4 at Beer Garden; Base 5 at Kpein Parking; Base 6 at LPMC; and Base 7 at Market Parking.

This spatial distribution of bases, allows for all areas of the borderland city to be within a short distance from a CMR staging area. The predominance of their locations at intercity automobile parks in Gompa also allows CMRs to serve as a relay to those who arrive by car to be transported to their specific borderland homes/destinations by commercial motorbike. This scheme also gives Unions easier operational control over CMRs while bringing order to a potentially chaotic situation. It also provides an organizational base for the informal credit schemes the ‘susu’, since an operational leader on each base controls the ‘susu’ operations to minimize disputes between the participants in the ‘susu’ scheme.

The fuel business within borderlands has flourished on the back of CMRing. According to TT, “We buy gas from the gas seller who also have a union. They buy gas from Monrovia, bring it and we the riders buy it from them. The mayonnaise bottle, that is 100LD. The gallon is 400LD. On the urban side, they use gallon. Most of the motorcyclists buy in gallons, but we here, because we are not equally equal, we have been selling in liters. That particular mayonnaise

bottle nah liter. Nah how we measure it. Because of the road network, prices will go up. Actually, when the sellers struggle hard to go to Monrovia, so when they go bring it because of the road network, so they can raise the price certain time. But for this year, we thank God, since the year begins we are buying it even 85LD. Only recently they have raised it up to 100. All the gas comes from Monrovia.” The leader of the gas seller’s union is a Gambian national who has lived in Foya for 3 years. He is both a gas wholesaler and a retailer who gets his supply mainly from the Freeport in Monrovia.

Appropriating NGO Interventions Interactions and Expectations

Though operationally inscribed within the informal sector, given that CMRs often escape direct state income taxation, CMRs contribute to formal and informal local revenue generation through the payment of fees to cross borders and daily local council charges. According to TT, “When you go the waterside, you don’t need to pay anything at the control post. They see your motorbike and they know you from here. But if you want cross to the other side, you better take your ticket from them. Because the Guinea people dem will not let you pass if you no get ticket from here.” He further notes that ““I go Guinea plenty more than Sierra Leone, so I cannot really compare the two. When I cross Guinea side, I talk in Kissi, but I know small French too, hahaha ‘bonjour’. But if I am not making good money, I will not pay to cross the border because there is no guarantee to get a good customer to come back. And I no want burn my gas and money if I no get round trip.”

However, like much of the communities in the borderlands, they have challenges to which they look to both the government and the non-governmental sector for help. As CMRing has established itself as an integral

economic and occupational activity within borderlands, its relationship to social and political violence has become an issue. This awareness has attracted the attention of international NGOs – such as the German Cooperation Mission – which have sought to develop programs to enhance the safety and proficiency of CMRs within borderlands.

However, many of the programs are unsustainable and therefore have a spotty record within the borderlands. According to JT Soribah, “The Rights to Rice program provided training for trainers of commercial motorbike riders and I was one of those who got training through the program. They pay us to participate in the program and that was good. But since then, no training.” However, subsequent training programs have evolved from training trainers to the provision of training manuals, which JS Tomah acknowledges. Although a huge Rights and Rice Foundation billboard sits at Foya’s main intersection of Broad Street and Ndama Road, a majority of young CMRs claim to never have benefitted from any training through the program.

However, Unions particularly remain hopeful that NGOs would continue to promote development in borderlands. According to JS Tomah, “we can write a proposal to NGOs for help for some [CMRs] to go and advance themselves in school or a trade... We wish for NGO or government to come in, we have some high school graduates who want to advance themselves, but there is no chance for now. At least to help for those who are out of high school to go and advance themselves. Those who have not graduated should be encouraged to go back to school because bike is not something you depend on forever, but education, when you learn, you learn it forever until your death.”⁴⁷ The reason they need this help from NGOs is because “You don’t just go to the big town [to go to

⁴⁷ Interview with JS Tomah in Foya on July 29, 2015

university] because you see your friends going there. You have to at least develop or have a foundation where to start. Maybe in that process you will get the help. But if you don't start anywhere, only go there, maybe you will join an ugly group, and you will suffer tomorrow. This is why they are hustling (not to say they are stealing) but they are on bike looking for money to get to the city or any other area they have colleges or universities to attend." They need some kind of support mechanism to leave the borderlands to attend universities and vocational training programs within the city.

Conclusion:

Local politicians have a vested interest in organizations through which they can reach out to an influential youth constituency. Both national and local politicians and parliamentarians keep close contact with LMTU leaders. JT Soriba, through the FPIC notes that "Our leaders that are in Monrovia over there, always when they come here, I think nah the first place [sic the FPIC] that they can go to talk to us. When they come, they book appointment with us. We schedule them time, when they come, we discuss relevant issues of this district." On the side of the union JS Tomah, notes that "Our local politicians, they can give jerseys to the union. We use these jerseys when we organize outing on Sorlumba highway to play football and enjoy ourselves."

The CMR provides economic rhythm to a borderland landscape, which in its marginality has been bereft of the public works projects that transform seasonal roads to macadamized thoroughfares. As individuals, they are an unavoidable presence in quotidian borderland economies. However, collectively, CMRs empower themselves where the state has failed to provide meaningful social investments. Through the organization of local micro-credit schemes, CMRs

can make the leap from riders to owners, thereby boosting their economic potential.

However, with the return of the postwar state, they have been obliged to join unions in order to develop social protection mechanisms and guarantees as they navigate international borders. Despite the occasional misalignment of interests between Unions and their members, Unions have emerged into gatekeepers between the state and CMRs. This gatekeeping role evidences interdependence between the union and the state to meet the mutual objective of diminishing social violence. Their role also reflects the gradual process through which these actors generative of a liminal political order that sits uncomfortably in the twilight between the power of states and markets (Raeymaekers 2014: 36).

CMRing also spawns the emergence and ebullience of derivative economic activities which transform the hitherto plain physical borderland spaces into hubs of petty trading, thereby enhancing the livelihood options of borderland communities. However, they remain expectant of help, mainly from the non-governmental sector, because they are acutely aware that the CMR is a short-term activity, which many youths engage in for a few years before moving on to other commercial or political activities. Therefore, it is a sector, which challenges the assumption that postwar societies are trapped in short-term planning horizons.

Chapter 7 : Grounded Authority in the Maintenance of Informal Orders

Introduction

Grounded authority is largely the product of organized informality, administrative plurality and complex endogenous and exogenous networked interaction. Thus, it does not fit neatly into Weberian rational-legal, traditional and charismatic patterns of authority that focus on explaining the production and maintenance of order through the interaction of subjects and leader within the *verband* [which Parsons (1964: 56) translates as the “corporate group”]. This sociological interpretation of organization structuring and processes highlights three interrelated factors. Firstly, there is the internal differentiation of roles as a fundamental distinguishing factor of the organized social group. Secondly, this role differentiation derives from the relationship between the very nature of the orientation of coordinated action and an ‘order’ itself. Thirdly, given that the terms of the order must be carried out and enforced, it requires a responsible agency of administration and enforcement (Parsons 1964; 56). Through the structural configuration of informal ordering and ordering informality presented in chapters four and five, borderland social actors build and maintain grounded authority and control over the informal administration of territory (space) and socio-economic livelihood processes.

This chapter builds upon the previous two, by exploring the social construction and quotidian deployment of grounded authority through processes of informal ordering and ordering informality. These forms of ordering taking place within different spheres of borderland activity provide a comparative prism for understanding the plurality of grounded authority. Given their grounding in everyday practice, these forms of authority highlight social agency within

borderland spaces and their differentiated implications for postwar statebuilding. Hence grounded authority importantly evidences the postwar challenge of recentralizing authority within a hegemonic state.

The assumption here is that the externally driven nature of postwar international statebuilding allows for the emergence and maintenance of grounded authority. By treating society building as secondary to statebuilding, postwar processes have invariably focused on institutions of state its social service provision dimensions. However, the heuristic evolution of organized grounded quotidian livelihood processes is obliged to engage with the re-emergent externally backed postwar state. It is in the process of social organization for engagement with the postwar state and its statebuilding partners that historically embedded practices reconstruct and deploy grounded authority.

Thus far from viewing grounded authority from the limited postwar temporal frame, an expansive historicization of grounded authority would contribute to understanding its social embeddedness. Furthermore, narratives about the evolution of grounded authority within borderlands also provide a comparative temporal frame for understanding relational continuity and change. This is particularly important within Liberia's borderlands, given the role rebel groups played in deploying differing modes of coercive, collusive and charismatic authority within borderland spaces.

Grounded authority in everyday practice derives from the specificity of informal spatial (physical), social and symbolic ordering making it inherently particularistic and intrinsically political. Without being legally codified, it is socially inscribed into the quotidian configuration of relational intra and inter-

group dynamics. This inscription into social practice contributed to legitimizing informal orders and inures into “a certain minimum of voluntary submission; thus, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance of obedience” (Weber 1964: 324). This chapter does not focus the moralistic qualification of grounded authority whose paradoxical implications are captured in much of the literature on the local turn in peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, Richmond, Suhrke). However, by focusing on describing the social construction and quotidian deployment of grounded authority is evidences the complexly connected and disconnected plurality of authority specifically within the Liberian context.

While postwar statebuilding research has emphasized linkages between political participation and state legitimacy (Call, 2008: 14), in its monolithic treatment of its object of inquiry, it has often ignored connections between micro-social patterns of legitimation on state legitimacy. Socially grounded authority as seen from Liberia’s borderlands is embedded, decentralized, the subject of negotiated legitimation, representative and empowered to act on behalf of borderland communities. Grounded authority derives from a degree of proximate social cohesion or polarizing social fracture, which often escapes the control of the postwar state. These are unquantifiable qualities the largely unembedded postwar state (the product of international intervention) cannot purport to possess. However, it advertently or inadvertently contributes to strengthening informal custodians of grounded authority. Interaction with national and international statebuilding interveners further legitimizes these postwar informal borderland actors.

Processes of informal ordering and ordering informality differ in their engagement with the state. Meanwhile, there is also great variation in the

demands that state representatives and their intervention partners make of informal actors who wield grounded authority. The expectations the postwar state, its agents and its intervening partners make of actors of informal actors create non-codified, subjective and unstable interdependences. Complex bargaining between the central state and borderland elites could create complex interdependencies and jointly controlled institutions giving both groups access to revenue streams derived from trade, aid, and agricultural production (Goodhand 2008: 239). In cases where informal actors appropriate and subjectify the state, the transformation of the local components of the state is so extensive as to harm significantly the state's overall chances of achieving integrated domination of society (Midgal 1994: 26). The mutual transformation of the state and informal orders through interactive processes evidences pluralized authority. Thus, quotidian reality nuances Sisk's (2014: 6) articulated objective of statebuilding as a political process through which national-level government institutions prevail over rebel groups, warlords and hereditary authority.

In every day practice, there is clearly a functional utility for grounded authority within postwar borderlands. Clunan (2010: 6) links the softening of state sovereignty in the early 21st century to the state being joined by a number of other actors, benign and malign, who sometimes compete and sometimes collaborate in providing governance and security through bottom-up and horizontal forms of organization. However, there is more critical and emancipatory salience to the social construction of grounded authority that extends beyond a purely functionalist interpretation. The functionality of custodians of grounded authority is intricately interwoven to the history and culture of the social, physical and symbolic contexts from which they emerge.

This larger interpretive prism that holds clues to the legitimating rationales underlying grounded authority.

Informal ordering of territorial governance generates MTGs whose functions often fill gaps in state governance, hence the occurrence of governance overlaps that tend towards interactions shaped by conflict and confluence. Highlighting the role of micro-territorial governors (MTGs) as the embodiment of grounded authority, this chapter uses brings together life histories and narrative of encounters with statebuilding to provided differentiated interpretations of the construction and deployment of grounded authority. Meanwhile socially organized ordering of informality highlights the carving out of space for the deployment of authority within borderland economic production. Here, the emergence of Commercial Motorbike Unions and the authority they exert upon their members as well as in interaction with the state and its interventionary statebuilding partners highlights the pluralized nature of grounded authority. Given that MTGs and CMR Unions offer different historical trajectories with they allow for a comparative exploration of grounded authority.

Far from explicitly challenging the state's extending remit of control, grounded authority emerging from informal orders delineate locally based spheres of engagement with the state thereby reshaping the state's authority to quotidian local exigencies. This analysis explores how informal orders shape alternative authority and control frameworks, which then engage with the state and outside interveners and makes them pliable to the domination of local everyday practice. Grounded authority provides a platform for engagement with the state, thereby operationalizing political participation, while providing the state with a socially constructed entry point into communities. The deployment of grounded authority for quotidian crisis management is evidenced in community

responses to such events as the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease and latent and manifest forms of social violence.

The legitimacy derived from socially grounded interpretations of accountability and direct representation contributes to the emergence and sustenance of social controls within borderlands. Bleisemann de Guevara (2012: 10-11) argues that while states regularly fail to institutionally comply with normative rational-legality, quotidian life is governed by informal institutions whose legitimacy flows from different sources. As Suhrke (2007: 1294) poignantly observes, while foreign assistance places significant know-how, capital and, often military force behind the reconstruction effort, it does not provide legitimacy beyond the utilitarian functions associated with the return of peace and the start-up of reconstruction. This has proven insufficient in contemporary cases of international administrations of post-conflict areas, which have all faced problems of internal legitimacy. However, in a rather circular manner, grounded authority remains subject to the internal politics of communities (which swiftly changes leadership in the event of perceived incompetence or lack of accountability) while simultaneously exercising domination (Weberian *herrschaft*) the same communities. In this setting, presidentially appointed mayors constantly seek to de-legitimize socially grounded authority by discouraging the use of elections in the process of informal leadership legitimation.

When it comes to outcomes of grounded authority, local twists and turns in peacebuilding and statebuilding research have enunciated the emergence of hybridity and hybrid governance arrangements (Mac Ginty 2008, 2010, MacGinty et al. 2013, Millar 2014, Luckham et al. 2013, Boege et al. 2008, 2009) and security (Bagayoko et al. 2016) frameworks. Thus the literatures on

“locality” and resultant “hybrid” outcomes are an inescapable feature in the exploration of grounded authority emerging out of informal ordering processes. However, these discourses appear largely to recycle neo-modern interpretations, which fetishize the “local” and reify the binarized “hybrid” as omnipresent, inescapable and viable alternative outcomes of international statebuilding encounters, where more polymorphic understandings of socio-political configuration, interaction and evolution would be more reflective of quotidian reality.

The Negotiated Grounded Authority of Borderland Micro-Territorial Governors

Weber (1964: 382) concludes his theorization on the institutionalization of authority by stating that it is quite “evident that imperatively coordinated groups, which belong to one or another of these pure types [of authority] are very exceptional.” Authority is viewed as emanating from a social order that is often hierarchical and pyramidal. Socio-political interaction within an authority-laden social organization occurs on various levels. There is interaction between the head (singular) and the rest of the structure governing the corporate group. Another level of interaction occurs between the governing structure and its constituent members. Finally, there is also interaction between the head and the constituent members. However, taken together, these nature and content of these interactions determines legitimacy, shapes compliance and enforcement standards, as well as the durability of the social organization.

Weber’s analysis of authority and its sources, however, focuses primarily on the endogenous construction and maintenance of authority. Furthermore, it does

not interrogate how the pluralized manifestation of authority within differentiated social organizations existing within a supposed “sovereign” interact with each other as well as with that “sovereign”. This oversight stems from a fetishization of the top-down centralized bureaucratic state as an ordering hegemon within a sovereign territory. However, it is necessary to open up an understanding of authority construction, maintenance and deployment that accounts for both endogenous and exogenous interactions. This is especially relevant in cases contexts where authority is but through networked vertical and transversal interaction across local, national and international spheres.

The identification of the social order, whether formal or informal, is important in the process of understanding in depth, the construction, deployment and maintenance of authority through quotidian practice. The nomenclature of Quarter Chiefs and Community Chairpersons (grouped into an analytical category described as Micro-Territorial Governors [MTGs]) is a fixture in the quotidian administration of borderland cities. These MTGs manage their territorial spaces in varying forms, however there is the omnipresence of an organizational structure in place. This organizational structure often takes either the form of a board of governors with specific functions such as assistant quarter, secretary, treasurer, youth representative, women’s representative, chaplain and a council of elders. This structure predominates within Foya’s micro-territorial governance. Another organizational structure exists within Ganta – this is characterized by the deployment of zonal heads underneath the MTGs to help coordinate the governance of micro-territorial spaces. Hence there is a fluid internal differentiation of roles. *“I meet with my zonal heads once a week and I update them on what is going on at the city level and if there is any information from the Joint Security meetings, which take place every*

*Friday, I pass it to them. They also tell me about the problems in their areas and we see how we can solve these problems for our people,*⁴⁸ noted a community chairperson in Ganta. The description of their roles in very glib terms accounts for their adaptability to the different challenges they face in managing their micro-territorial spaces. There is nothing that occurs within these spaces that they consider impossible for them to deal with.

However, it raises important questions about sources of their grounded authority, how it is deployed and sustained and its implications on the state and its quest for effective sovereignty through the centralization of authority. It also explores whether these custodians of grounded authority use the state as well as other hybrid governance arrangements as sources of income, power and legitimacy, penetrating for the sake of their own well-being (Paffenholz 2015: 864). Thus, the understanding of grounded authority within this study is based on the specifics of the postwar context and relational dimensions of governance within borderland social groups under study.

Firstly, the historical context provides insights into the construction and resilience of grounded authority within borderland cities through different critical junctures – the 1980 military coup, the onset of the Liberian Civil Wars in 1989 and the end of the civil war in 2004. Within borderlands, the incorporation of cities in the early 1970s followed the elevation of hinterlands provinces to County status in 1964. The incorporation of cities was a rational-legal process that brought state agents into the administration of these territories. However, they also simultaneously created spaces for the emergence of alternative and informal forms of social ordering which straddle traditional-cum-patrimonial authority and the rational-legal authority of state agents. This

⁴⁸ Interview with CC- 14 Ganta Community Chairperson on August 27, 2016.

form of negotiated authority therefore arose out of the informalized social ordering of urbanized human and material processes within predominantly rural settings. The narratives of current and previous MTGs and their subjects provide varying understandings of socio-political phenomena of compliance and legitimacy essential to the resiliency of negotiated authority within postwar borderlands.

In Foya and Ganta, there is a multiplicity of narratives about the resiliency of territorially based informal ordering. “When the ULIMO-K boys entered here in 1993. Kromah and his boys, I was the Quarter Chief for this area. They used to ask us to provide them with boys to carry their load down to Makona River so they can cross it to the other side [Guinea]. We had a hard time because many young boys them, they had ran into the bush”⁴⁹, noted a former Foya QC. “Our Quarter Chief made a team of young men them as single-barrel soldiers, I was one of them. Since the government has given up its responsibility to protect us, its people, we decided to protect ourselves,”⁵⁰ noted a current Community Chairperson in Ganta. Both narratives provide a historical background to the functional evolution of MTGs and different manifestations of authority captured through temporal vignettes.

Three observations emerge from the historical vignettes about the historical role and authority of MTGs within borderland cities. The first observation is that informal social ordering within borderland cities has shown a remarkable degree of adaptability and resiliency. MTGs, with authority derived from their proximate subjects have proven malleable and capable of appropriating violent,

⁴⁹ Former Foya QC Interviewed on March 23, 2014 in Foya, Liberia.

⁵⁰ Ganta Community Chairperson Interview on August 17, 2015 in Ganta, Liberia.

administrative and development interventions to perpetuate their place within changing political contexts.

Secondly regardless of the political context, MTGs are subject to varying forms of authoritative coercion. The state as a socio-political actor, whether in real or notional terms, hangs over their communities as an omnipresent hegemon. Meanwhile during wartime occupation, they subject to the coercive exactions of rebel governance structures. In either circumstance, they straddle their communities and the existing hegemon in view of justifying their role by harnessing whatever social protections they can for their communities.

Finally, MTGs are inscribed in the DNA of borderland cities. As a borderland political institution, they are omnipresent and more embedded within the communities over which they govern than either the state or different iterations of rebel occupiers. Far from romanticizing their role, as they are adept at developing rent-seeking schemes and authoritarian tendencies their local politics evidence networked connections which they harness to strengthen their authority over the spaces and human and material processes under their control.

The Nature and Function of Negotiated Grounded Authority

Outside the relationship between MTGs and their constituents, different iterations of the state (physical and notional) and its international statebuilding partners are contribute to the production and reproduction (constitution and deployment) of grounded authority through informal borderland social ordering. The nature and quotidian functionality of MTGs ensures a deeper

understanding of the how and why grounded authority is constituted and deployed within borderland informal social orders.

Territorially based informal ordering is proximate to the physical household (landed property). It arises out of a cluster of households that develops a shared communitarian rationale for social organization. This does not imply that it is devoid of its own patterns of conflict and cooperation (which we will get to on the section of functions). However, it provides predictability to quotidian social processes within borderland cities where both traditional and state authority is diluted. “As you can see, today I have asked each house to provide one person so we can clean the area around our well. We don’t want the city council to come here and start cutting tickets. We will also go round and tell people to brush around their house,”⁵¹ noted CC-12. The purpose of the community clean-up campaign being undertaken in Dekemeihn Community in Ganta is tied to a communitarian understanding of wellbeing, responsibility and maintaining a good rapport with the City Council. This proximity allows for the MTG to organize labor in the service of standards developed by the City Council. This places the MTG between the community and the city council. Hence the authority of the MTG has to be negotiated between both parties. Given this medial positionality, the authority of the MTG is negotiated on the one hand with the proximate constituents and on the other hand, with the City Council.

Despite the benevolent discourse that dominates the rationale for MTG service, there is a great deal of social capital in serving in the position. Across the board, MTGs note that they are neither part of the rational-legal structures of state governance, nor are they paid for the benevolent social protections for

⁵¹ Interview with CC-12 in Ganta on August 16, 2015.

which they lobby on behalf of their communities. “I am only doing this job as a service to my people. They need someone to speak for them and they asked me to speak for them and that is what I am doing,”⁵² averred a Ganta Community Chairperson. Despite the volunteer nature of the function, there are some MTGs who have been in their positions since 1984. Thus, the benevolence of MTGs ought to be taken at face value, given the lengths to which MTGs go to make their leadership of communities perennial.

A deeper interrogation of why they serve in positions of authority points to the social capital that underpins their service. “When my children walk down the street people look at them and see that they are the children of the Quarter Chief for this and that community, they can help them get somewhere,”⁵³ noted a Quarter Chief in Foya. Therefore, the day-to-day governance of micro-territorial units comes with its social perks. Meanwhile community members are equally aware that MTGs are interest driven actors. “Since they speak for us and judge cases, they decide the penalties for every case and it is hard for anyone to bring a case against them. Like our Quarter Chief has not presented his accounts report at the end of his term, which would permit us to go ahead with the election of a new Quarter Chief”⁵⁴, noted an elder resident of New Foya.

Beyond the social recognition that comes with being an MTG, they also manage common resources like water sources, while advocating for the provision of more social services. “My job is to control these water wells which were provided by Equip Liberia. The money that we collect when we sell water goes

⁵² Interview with CC-8 in Ganta on August, 22, 2015.

⁵³ Interview with Foya Quarter Chief on July 29, 2015.

⁵⁴ Interview with Foya resident on August 1, 2015.

to buy cement and other things for the maintenance of the pump,”⁵⁵ noted a community chairperson in Ganta. These resources, which overwhelmingly reach the borderland spaces courtesy of INGOs contribute to the daily projection of grounded authority by MTGs. Hence INGOs are complicit in the entrenchment of informal ordering and the quotidian deployment of grounded authority. However, overall, the accounting that goes into the management of these communal resources remains rather spotty, as they were unable to provide any ballpark estimates of daily revenue generated. Accounting and accountability often becomes a problem when water pumps go into disrepair for protracted periods.

Meanwhile, in some communities, the infusion of INGO materiel and funds leads to the quick turnover of leadership in the case of proven misappropriation. This was clearly the case in the transfer of MTG leadership in AG Quarter in Foya. As narrated by the incumbent Quarter Chief (who happens to also be Foya’s first female QC): *“I was appointed in March this year (2015). PM was in this position before I was appointed to take over. He was here working in the community – he alone. He did not have anyone in the community to work with him. Anything drop for the community, he will eat it. Even if it was a piece of plank which was given for the community, he would keep it for himself. He would not give anything to the rest of the community. So, the people they get vexed with him. They even took him to court, when they took him to court, the money he was supposed to pay [as restitution] was LD13500 and 5 bags of clean rice. Then the people said he must not be their leader because he is suffering them. During the time they removed PM, they put TFK as acting QC.”*⁵⁶ Politics of aid administration within communities evidences the gatekeeping role of local actors. However, it also

⁵⁵ Interview with CC-12 in Ganta on August 16, 2015.

⁵⁶ Interview with Foya Quarter Chief on August 2, 2015.

shows the malleable accountability exercised by MTGs. Depending on how the local political game is played, the resources deployed by INGO aid programs get appropriated to deepen the authority of MTGs who manage processes of informal ordering.

MTGs are acutely aware of their positionality as entry nodes into the communities. This allows them to leverage their relationships with state and statebuilding actors seeking access to the quotidian dynamics of their micro-territorial fiefs. As gatekeepers, they position themselves between their communities and the state and non-state actors who seek entry into these communities. As Goodhand (2008: 231) observes borderland elites may play a crucial mediating role, acting as powerbrokers with the capacity to extend the influence of the state or make the borderland ungovernable. However, in the case of Liberia's borderland MTGs, they actually make the borderland differently governable straddling a state engagement function with entrenching and informally institutionalizing their own roles.

This position allows them to personify a conduit between the formal and the informal, the official and the non-official, thereby increasing the social and symbolic components of their grounded authority. They benefit from bases of governance grounded in community-based norms of legitimacy, accountability and representation that differ from the positionality of state-appointed officials within borderlands. Hence the legitimacy gap between micro-level state governance and micro-level informal governance. To create illegitimacy synergies, City Mayors have consistently discouraged the use of elections, while privileging consensus in the designation of MTGs, based on the premise that *“since I was not elected myself, I do not see why you should worry about elections*

within your communities.”⁵⁷ However, some MTGs have disregarded this recommendation and proceeded to “institutionalize” electoral processes in the designation of MTGs.

Hence MTGs perceive themselves as legitimate stakeholders within development planning meetings. They take partial credit for the successful delivery of social services that ameliorate local livelihoods and advocate for their community’s needs to be met by both state and non-state actors. If anything, they exhibit the manifestation of efficient local capacity, which is often silent in development discourse. Through the negotiation of entry into their communities they exhibit an astute mastery of local knowledge, daily practice as well as the role, practices and functions of INGOs. Fieldwork within Liberia’s borderlands suggests that international NGOs, despite being heterogeneous in nature, function and program content, tend to bring homogenous sets of guidelines into the borderlands. The encounter of INGO ontologies with ontologies of local borderland communities as evident through daily practice produces mutually transformative outcomes for both the subject and objects of aid intervention. Communal reconstitution of grounded authority contributes to the development and deployment of sophisticated modes of interaction with intervening configurations of authority, order and control (be they the state or INGOs).

Take for example the Action Contre la Faim (ACF) water provision programs in Foya which were part of a broader health and sanitation project. The New Foya MTG describes the appropriation of the wells to evidence social cohesion and income generation possibilities opened by the project. *“In my community, we stick together and that makes us strong... when ACF were here, they dug some water*

⁵⁷ Interview with Ganta Community Chairperson on September 2, 2015.

*wells, that's where we generated some funds for our community. When we say we want to gather ourselves together, we want to do anything, that's where we collect our percentage from. Every month end we collect LD20 from each of the family heads and that money goes into savings. Whenever we need to get a census or we need any other thing that we want to do for the community, we take it from there,*⁵⁸ he noted. This provides a common description of the grounded authority wielded by MTGs in resource controls within their micro-territorial units. In an almost naturalistic fashion, they described themselves as using these social resources for the community.

However, this same process of income generation creates accountability tensions between MTGs and their communities. An elder member of the same community noted that the Quarter Chief had failed to meet the accounting requirements necessary to allow for succession: *“On the elder side, the challenge number one is that our QC's time is over. We asked him to make a report to which he paid a deaf ear to us. We do not know why he is acting like that, but we have asked him. This is the third week we asked him to make his end of term report. The first week, he failed. The second week he failed. That is why we came back Monday. From there we can forward it to the City Mayor for advisement. He has to make a report of all his activities – money (whatever he possesses or what he has given out on behalf of the community) – that is the report we want from him.”*⁵⁹ Despite the grounded authority wielded by the MTG, the state representative remains an arbitrator of local matters. Far from pointing to the instability of the system, it points to the interpenetration of grounded authority derived from informal ordering and rational-legal authority derived from the state authority. This interpenetration crystallizes both authority structures regardless of the individual exercising grounded authority or rational-legal authority.

⁵⁸ Interview with Foya Quarter Chief on July 28, 2016.

⁵⁹ Interview with Foya elder on July 31, 2015.

MTGs use of both INGOs and nationally based politicians to simultaneously justify and deepen their grounded authority. *“When politicians come out here during campaign election time, they meet the mayor and the mayor asks us to assemble our people so that they can talk to them. Although we cannot tell the people which side to pick, they know,”*⁶⁰ chimed a Foya Quarter Chief. In other cases, congressional members have been known to contribute to emergency relief supplies in cases of natural disasters, through interaction with the MTG. Therefore, their informality hardly takes away from the daily nature of grounded authority which they wield.

As part of their deployment of authority, MTGs receive training from INGOs to serve as community conflict resolution actors. Tetra Tech is an NGO, which is invested in training and facilitating community dispute resolution and community securitization. The training that they provided to Community Chairpersons in Ganta city is described by CC-3, Catholic Community Chairperson as such, *“There are certain forums here called watch forum, whose role it is to educate us on what we need to do within our communities to secure it. Just as I was telling you we are trained that as town chiefs, when woman and man fight in a home and they bring the case to you, you should settle it good. Talk to the man good, talk to the woman good, if there is no compromise, you carry it to the City Mayor’s office. Or if somebody steals within your community and you happen to catch that person, call the security to come apprehend him/her and take them to the police station. That is what we are here doing.”*⁶¹ This kind of training assumes the absence of these skills within the authority-wielding position of the MTG, despite the fact that individuals who had served in these functions prior to the civil wars,

⁶⁰ Interview with Foya Quarter Chief on July 31, 2015.

⁶¹ Interview with CC-3 in Ganta on 16 August 2015.

performed the same functions based on the normative social construction of micro-territorial dispute resolution.

Furthermore, INGOs are at the center of the institutionalization of security council meetings which assemble both formal and informal actors involved in territorial administration. As CC-14 noted *“As part of my job I also participate in the Security Council meeting which takes place on the first Friday of every month. It is sponsored by Tetra Tech.”*⁶² These Security Council meetings effectively are an external legitimating factor for MTGs wielding grounded authority.

Grounded Authority in Interaction with INGO Programmatic Dissonance, Incoherence and Resistance

Speaking to local capacity and the expectations they have from NGOs, Edward Yeamah of New Foya said: *“We are looking for NGOs who can put us together to make farm, because that is the easiest work that we can do and generate money quick. Whenever you say “let us go on farming”, when we say farming we say we must go to farm to say let us go plant palm farm or plant cocoa garden, that will cause problem among ourselves, because to receive a bush, that is agriculture, which can hardly be removed. Whenever you put it on ground now, to remove it would be hard. And to go somewhere and get bush from somebody or from any other village and say “oh you all give us bush we want to do farm here to say we want to plant cocoa or garden,” it won’t be necessary. But farm, you can borrow somebody’s farm and develop it, you need to do something inside for which at the end of the year any seeding which you people get, the person will benefit from the seeding too. You can give the person a certain percentage of the seeding that you receive and the soil will be developed. Whenever you leave the area, the benefit will still be there.”*

⁶² Interview with CC-14 in Ganta on 27 August 2015.

Furthermore, in terms of community development projects, he noted that, *“Like New Foya, if I say we want to form a project, like to make a swamp. We are going to include the youth mostly. Elders will be amongst us for advice, So the youth, both boys and girls – they will form the youth body. They will meet the core requirement of the work. They will come up with one group understanding that this work we are going to do, we are going to be supported by somebody. Before we get the support from somebody, how are we going to work? We should hire our labor out or we ourselves should be the labor for this project? So that question will be asked among ourselves. We will come up with one decision. On my own style, my youth I have here, we ourselves would be the laborers for that work then we will see how best we can work. Because even on the farm everyday if you send a person says “go do work for me” and you cannot monitor that farm, maybe the extent to which you want to go with the farming the person may not reach there because he will see some grass that can be to heavy or him. If I go there myself, I will first ask them to clear that area up. My Youth Leader is a very strong man.”*⁶³ The relationship between the youth leader and the Quarter Chief falls in line with customary and age structured distribution of roles within Liberia’s postwar communities.

CC-18 of Bassa Community in Gompa City noted that *“We had a mosquito net distribution here two months ago. It did not reach all the communities. I can tell you for a fact that it did not reach my community. When I enquired, I was informed that the NGO people had few workers so they were unable to cover the entire city. The next day in the market we saw mosquito nets around, people were cutting it to make “sarpo” (sponges with which people take baths) and selling it.”*⁶⁴ This same notion of the challenge with aid effectiveness was captured in the words of the head of the Foya Tailor’s Union, I.T.K, when he described how *“UMCOR [United Methodist*

⁶³ Interview with QC-1 in Foya on 28 July 2015.

⁶⁴ Interview with CC-18 in Ganta on 16 August 2015.

Committee on Relief] provided vocational training for some people to become tailors. They put the trainees under me, since I had been tailoring before and was still a tailor when I was living in Buyedu [Sierra Leone] during the war years. But after their training and when they continued as apprentice, they had to pay their license for 500LD every year. Some time, they don't work plenty, so they sell their machine to do agriculture...After some time, we get all the machine into my shop and negotiate with Revenue collection to pay for 5 instead of 7 machines." This evidences a way in which social actors negotiate economic livelihoods with the state creating a win-win situation for both parties involved. However, it also shows that local state agents often act independently from the hierarchical constraints of centralized bureaucracies.

Reflecting on the elusive quest for INGO projects into their community, a Pastor from Bassa Community in Focus Group Meeting narrated their futile outreach to NGOs: *"We have been hearing about NGOs and sometimes we engage them face-to-face. And sometimes we write letters. Sometimes they promise us saying that they will come back and for us to look for conducive areas. Sometimes, we find the areas, but other areas are benefitting and we are not benefitting. So we do not know whether we are marginalized in the system. Other communities receive aid and they are benefitting, but we are not benefitting from anything. Most especially, this community is also put under the pronouncement of "eminent domain" by the president. So based on that, they feel that it is just like a no man's land and because of the "eminent domain" pronouncement, anything you say, nobody wants to listen to, so they can do whatever they want within the community."*⁶⁵ However, Bassa Community represents a spatial complexity within Gompa City. It is a community, which overlaps with the Gompa City daily market, which falls under the eminent domain rules of national authority. However, given the limited presence of the

⁶⁵ Notes from Bassa Community Focus Group Discussion on 16 August 2015.

state to enforce these rules, it had developed into a space with diluted social controls as it eludes both the control of the state and the informal local community leader.

Given their impermanence within borderlands, INGOs are seldom in tune with local needs and realities. However, even if there more tuned in, their resource base would hardly enable them to overcome historically entrenched structural challenges. These are challenges that clearly belong within the purview of the emergent state, which outsources them to be dealt with through the structuring of informal orders and the ordering of informality.

Ordering Informality and Alternate Socially Grounded Authority

Modes of informal economic ordering within borderlands develop their own “corporate group” governance structures with hierarchical interaction between leaders and their member. While they are a function of changing socio-economic conditions, grounded authority arising from the ordering of informality constitutes a political configuration deployed in interaction with the postwar state and its statebuilding partners. This variant of grounded authority is not based on specific territorial control, but is strategically positioned to optimize economic productivity within borderland informal economic orders by building political protections against persistent uncertainty and enduring vulnerability.

Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs) and Commercial Motorbike Owners (CMOs) are the individualized embodiment of multiple factors of production (service, labor and capital) within postwar borderlands that were historically dependent on cross-border trade and agriculture. However, their choice of

membership within any of the competing CMR Unions occurs within the constructs of a social contract. Membership provides the basis for the social organization of politically-networked protections in the quotidian performance of their livelihood functions. In return they produce, support and legitimate a powerful social organization within grounded authority is embedded.

Raeymaekers (2014:31) aptly identifies the environment of constantly shifting border identities as the spatial context within which businessmen (a complex admixture of formal and informal economic actors) – smugglers, entrepreneurs, and transnational traders – have come to occupy a central role both as brokers and enactors of this transformative borderland space. However, focusing on the deployment of grounded authority by units of ordered informality – CMR Unions – turns the explicative lens upon the quotidian interactive mechanics between CMRs, CMR Unions and multiple states that sustain grounded authority. Hence it shifts the locus from “economic strongmen” who use agricultural land for other kinds of economic investments without worrying about its productivity (Raeymaekers 2014: 34) to postwar Liberian borderlands modes of economic production, which clearly compete with agricultural production and supplement trade networks, while serving as the main youth employer.

The quotidian limit a border imposes on individual borderland navigators is captured when H.S, a Ganta CMR, notes that, *“I do not like crossing the border because headache on that side plenty for nothing. So, I just wait on this side of St. John’s bridge for passengers. Or if I am lucky, like I bring you here, I will find person to take back to Ganta. The bridge close at 6 o’clock in the evening. If by mistake I want to return after the bridge close, how I go stay for Guinea?”*⁶⁶ The limits are not only

⁶⁶ Discussion with H.S. at St John Border Crossing on April 2, 2014.

temporal, but they are also administrative, given that there were persistent complaints about difficult with cross-border immigration and customs officials. These types of quotidian challenges are partially assuaged by membership within CMR Unions. The CMR Unions enters into engagement with different states with the representative and grounded authority of their members.

Entering into these engagements, they often seek to develop informalized frameworks that facilitate CMR navigation within borderlands and across borders. This is done, for example, through the issuing of licenses, which are recognized as valid identification document for CMRs crossing borders with human and material cargo. The use of CMR licenses to cross borders is a localized phenomenon negotiated by local CMR Unions and immigration officers, given the degree of quotidian exchange between both authority figures. The outcome is the effective introduction new documentation into immigration practice that does not conform with any *de jure* immigration stipulation.

However, the documentation does not save the individual CMR from the continuing informalization of exchange with state authority represented by immigration and customs officials, a practice, which is replete in cross-border ethnographies. TF, a Foya CMR noted, “*some customs people them humbug too much. If you don’t know your rights they can give you a hard time like they have never seen you before. But that when they are hungry. Sometimes, you give them small thing...like 10LD. But when business bad and you no want give them anything, some understand, but some bring problem and they waste your time.*”⁶⁷ TF’s explanation of the quotidian exchange with state agents reflects a familiarity and complicity characterizing individual relationships outside the socially organized framework of CMR Unions. This aspect is important in understanding the complex

⁶⁷ Interview with TF at Makona Border Crossing on March 23, 2014.

interaction between the CMR and pluralized manifestations of authority in the Unions and state agents.

Organizing CMRs into socially organized unions, endows the unions with the grounded authority to formalize informality through incorporation with state agencies. They are recognized by the state as legitimate socio-political actors. However, internally it also implies the development of governing principles and by-laws, with the assignment of roles and responsibilities. Members have protective and facilitative expectations as much as they union expects compliance and loyalty from its members. This is ultimately the basis from which grounded authority is constructed within CMR Unions. However, functional compliance by both member and Union leaders is constantly tested in quotidian practice.

However, organizationally JST, Foya CMR Union head noted, *“we have a schedule to meet two times a month. If there is any information or emergency, I have a taskforce on the field who work. If you violate, they will be able to straighten you, they are not military people. They talk to you actually, they arrest your bike if you violate. They carry messages to every rider on every base and when time goes on, I send them to the field to the various parking lots to oversee whatsoever is going on and sometimes in the evening they give me a report.”*⁶⁸ It is not uncommon therefore, for the authority of the Union to enforce membership rules or to coerce CMRs into membership to be questioned. This often leads the to bring the state in as an arbitrator, especially in cases where violence is deployed. Therefore, CMR Unions have developed enforcement mechanisms that exercise the rights to arrest bikes over violations, a function which would ordinarily be reserved for local law enforcement.

⁶⁸ Interview with Foya LMTU head on August 3, 2015.

Despite the bureaucratized structuring of CMR Unions, both in Foya and Ganta, challenges to Unions' legitimacy and accountability has led to the emergence of rival unions. Describing the ongoing creation of a new CMR Union in Foya, JS noted, *"This is just a very new union. We want to coordinate the affairs of our county first, because that's the first job that the people gave us. When I raised this idea, we sat down in our own little way, we put small small thing together as to how this message can reach over those in places like Vahun, Kolahum, Bolahum and Foya and Voinjama as well. Now we have the operation in Voinjama that's working for LIMCA [Liberian Tricycle and Motorcycle Association]. So, central gave us the numbers so we can call them here they should come for meeting here so we can settle and we can serve all over the county. That is the process we are on presently."*⁶⁹

The creation of a CMR Union is a deeply political process that is networked to "central". This points to a circular process of emergence originating from the de-legitimization of the existing union within a borderland space. This is followed by a resource generation process and seed membership to drive the process of creation of a new social organization. Therefore, rather than directives coming from "central", it become a object in the rivalries of liminal social organizations.

Leadership within borderland CMR Unions has exhibited deep connections to centralized political actors. The authority wielded by CMR Unions matters because they are youth-driven organizations, which gives voice to a youth-led profession in a majority youth country. Centrally located political actors covet the active support of the LMTU and in exchange, they provide patronage and protection to issues relating to licensing and regulation of commercial motorbike operations. As JS Tomah noted, *"Our local politicians, they can give*

⁶⁹ Interview with JS in Foya on August 1, 2015.

jerseys to the union. We use these jerseys when we organize outing on Sorlumba highway to play football and enjoy ourselves.” This is just one way in which centrally-based elites seek to instrumentalize CMR Unions into their personal political agendas.

Local politicians have a vested interest in having an organizational outfit through which they can reach out to the youth through a constituency, which appears to represent their interests. It is not uncommon therefore, for local politicians and representatives in parliament to keep close contact with the leaders of the LMTU. JT Soriba, through the Foya Public Intellectual Forum notes that *“Our leaders that are in Monrovia over there, always when they come here, I think nah the first place [sic the FPIF] that they can go to talk to us. When they come, they book appointment with us. We schedule them time, when they come, we discuss relevant issues of this district.”*⁷⁰

Given their grounded authority derived from ordering informality, CMR Unions interface with the state and its international statebuilding and development partners, as well as with its predominantly youth labor constituency. While this is akin to the gatekeeper role of MTGs, their sources of legitimacy and capacity for enforcement differ.

Given their position as borderland navigators, they constant encounter different manifestations of grounded and state authority mainly represented by union leadership, MTGs and state immigration agents.

The CMR Union leaders see the functional aspects of their authority as representative, nodal, agenda building, empowering and problem solving. The

⁷⁰ Interview with JT Soriba in Foya on August 1, 2015.

representative function is leveraged through the membership rolls they build up and it is in turn deployed to negotiate with the state and INGOs. Given that they constitute a legitimate “*verband*” they sit at a nodal point between the individual CMR/CMO and external agents of statebuilding and development. Meanwhile, they develop the specific agenda-setting function of challenging social stereotypes about youth culture and violence in Liberia. In the process, they create, manage and sustain micro-credit schemes such as the “susu” to contribute to turning bike riders into bike owners. Overall, their nodal positionality gives them an internal mediatory role in membership conflicts, as well as in problems, which may arise between their members and the general public.

Conclusion

The question that arises from the postwar context is about the possibility of establishing a stable government with the multiplicity of entrenched informal orders and their patterns of grounded authority that effectively makes them more important social actors than the state within borderland spaces. This chapter highlights the pluralized and differentiated construction and deployment of authority within postwar Liberian borderland spaces as a result of informal ordering and ordering informality. The comparative explanation of the interactive construction and deployment of grounded authority in quotidian practice within borderlands evidences the multiplicity of the phenomenon. It also shows the complexity faced by the state as it seeks to centralize authority in the face of competing patterns of grounded authority which are sedimented through daily practice. While the postwar state is in constant mutation based on its arrangement with its international statebuilding partners, it also constantly being engaged by these liminal informal political orders.

Grounded authority provides quotidian stability amid the uncertainty and vulnerability of life on the edge of the state. While they are subject to exogenous influences, their normative basis is embedded in their quotidian experiences. Therefore, individuals may rotate out of MTG positions, however, the authority embedded within the role and function of MTGs or CMR Unions are presented as perennial. Given the proximate legitimation of their constituencies, custodians of grounded authority flexibly adjust and negotiated with demands for accountability, in the absence of which there is often fairly expedient de-legitimation (often with the intervention of state authority). However, processes of legitimacy and de-legitimation are also grounded, proximate and normatively inscribed in social codes deployed in everyday life.

The grounded authority of these informal socio-political orders is simultaneously based on balancing endogenous structuring and exogenous influences. Grounded authority derives from and is strengthened by the relationship between the leader, their leadership structure and the constituents. However, exogenous social actors such as state agents, centrally based local politicians and INGOs also contribute to strengthening the grounded authority of specific individual custodians of grounded authority. Given the influence that grounded authority wields within borderland spaces, the postwar state is compelled to function with and attempt to penetrate and control informal orders. Given that the grounded authority within informal orders comes with implicit and explicit acquiescence of the postwar state, the distortion of classical notions of the bureaucratized centralization of rational-legal authority centralization is a quotidian reality within postwar borderlands. This coincides with Suhrke's (2007) assessment that the process of strengthening the central state in conditions of feudal-like dispersion of power

in potentially leads to confrontation with locally based structures of power and authority. Custodians of grounded authority are permanent markers of borderland spaces, making the state rather impermanent and fleeting within borderlands. The historical permanence of grounded authority compels the state to adapt to local ordering and control, while negotiating its authority in relation to grounded authority.

What devolves out of the interaction between the grounded authority custodians and state authority within postwar borderlands therefore is a pluralized and differentiated coexistence of multiply constructed and deployed authority nexuses. In everyday practice therefore, grounded authority takes the lead in conflict resolution practices and broader management of livelihood and securitization processes. Meanwhile the limited postwar state is obliged to depend on these entities that develop their own modes ordering, governance and administration.

Given that INGOs often straddle the state and local communities and contribute to the depending of grounded authority, the resulting hybrid security and postwar development arrangements such as those sponsored by Tetra Tech imagine stable outcomes based on unsustainable and often competing authority arenas. The complex interaction of pluralized authority reflects what Wacquant (1997: 347) describes the active “engagement with external and internal social forces that crosscut and mould their world,” in a process of mutual reconstitution.

Chapter 8: Politicized Social Controls: Understanding Pluralized Informal Ordering and Power in Liberia's Postwar Borderlands

Introduction: Violence and Elusive Social Control Amid Statebuilding

Anecdote One: During the week of July 20th 2015, a Sierra Leonean national in his early 30s was the victim of mob violence in Ganta. According to John T., a Sierra Leonean community leader from Yekepa, his countryman was a businessman who became the victim of a wanton act of mob violence. "I hear that he was walking in an area around the market and then he heard people shouting 'rogue, rogue, rogue' so he started running. Since he was running, others stopped him and beat him to death before the police could arrive," he noted⁷¹. Mob violence as response to the transgression of some social norms represents a quotidian challenge within borderland. MTGs and their communities struggle with this arbitrary and collective enforcement of the normative content of socio-moral codes which itself transgresses the function and operative authority embedded within informal orders.

The social control issues at the core of this anecdote are inherently political. Firstly, they provide a basis for the empirical interrogation of non-state actors' quotidian reconstruction of social control mechanisms into frames of micro-territoriality and micro-sovereignty. Secondly, it raises important questions about the political implications of alternative social control mechanics in at the margins of states. Finally, it necessitates an understanding of the differentiated subjectivities of social control as a function of the configurative (structural), symbolic and relational (networked) factors.

⁷¹ Interview conducted with John T. in Yekepa on August 10, 2015.

Anecdote Two: On September 30th 2015, Ganta, a series of violent events ground Ganta to a halt. The discovery of the bludgeoned lifeless body of Nyah Domah, a CMR and union member in his 30s mobilized the union and its members to action. On one hand, the union leadership urged a restrained response to the murder. Their position was simple – halt CMR activities and conduct a sit-in strike to pressure the Ganta police into a swift investigation. On the other hand, the Union membership wanted swift justice for the perpetrators of this act of violence against one of their own. This particular murder came only a couple of weeks after the supposed ritualistic killing of another CMR. Bill Lauriss, a *grona boy* from Congo Community was arrested and questioned in relation to Domah’s murder. His alleged accomplice, a Sierra Leonean national, was beaten to death by an angry mob. Meanwhile, almost spontaneously, links were made between Lauriss and a prominent local businessman, Prince Howard (who has maintained his innocence). A mob burnt down Howard’s Alvino Hotel (which straddles Congo and Guinea Road Communities) and his home. Almost simultaneously, a mob also vandalized the Ganta Police Station (which sits on the edge of Bassa Community) – a symbol of state ineptitude and perceived elite protection. All this happened before the state could reassert a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence by mobilizing the Police Support Unit (PSU) in Gbarnga (neighboring Bong County) to intervene in Ganhpa.

The widespread nature of the second incident resulted in the institution of a curfew from 6pm to 6am in Ganhpa. Movement and business activities were halted between those hours. Activities of Community Watch Forums (CWFs) that had contributed to population securitization and sensitization during the Ebola pandemic were suspended. The Liberian state mobilized and deployed security personnel from PSU-Gbarnga to enforce the curfew in Ganta.

Differing forms of micro and macro violence make up the everyday repertoire of social action amid the flux and uncertainty that characterize postwar borderland cities. Cities feature prominently in Tilly's (1990: 17) analyses of war, collective action and state formation in Europe - both as favored sites of capitalists (defined as those who have worked chiefly as merchants, entrepreneurs and financiers, rather than as the direct organizers of production) and as organizational forces in themselves. Historical, temporal, internally constitutive and global contexts pose daunting challenges in the adaptation of Tilly's to the Liberian postwar context. However, it provides a theoretical premise from which to ontologically focus enquiry into the implication of everyday non-state social control on postwar statebuilding.

Within liminal cities, the unintended or purposive limited presence of the postwar state creates functional and operative ambiguities that result in extra-judicial and arbitrary mob persecution supplanting rational-legal means of criminal prosecution. These omnipresent ambiguities are differently rationalized, shaped and given meaning by pluralized informal orders, thereby operationally asserting essential non-state social control functions. Thus, do communities within postwar borderland cities informally organize themselves to endow quotidian human and material processes with regulated predictability - a central element of social control. The securitization imperatives at this level seek to ensure the predictability of individual and social action.

Social control mechanisms generated as a result of pluralized informal ordering have power implications for individual and social actors within postwar borderlands and for their engagement with the state. As part of their social control mechanisms, pluralized informal orders have negotiated socially

accepted normative non-state responses to domestic violence, inter-neighbor conflict, land tenure disputes or different forms of commercial and contractual conflicts. On a wider scale the anecdotal examples raise important questions about the quotidian interrelated dynamics of informality, power, violence, social control capabilities within pluralized informal orders and postwar statebuilding in Liberia.

Social Control: Locality, Power and Everyday Social Action in Postwar Statebuilding

Socially grounded authority in postwar borderlands derives from the structuring of both informal ordering and ordering informality⁷² and results in the emergence and deployment of multiple politicized social controls. MacIver and Page (1949: 137) define social controls as institutional mechanisms by which society regulate behavior and the way in which patterned and standardized behavior in turn serves to maintain the social organization. This definition highlights social control as a process of positional and relational negotiation between individuals and social organizations with structural maintenance outcomes. These aspects of social control are especially important in the analysis of postwar borderland contexts where non-state social actors position themselves to control social processes.

However, the early definition of social control suffers from power and social action outcome blind spots that are especially relevant in understanding social controls within postwar borderlands. Focusing on social action outcomes within postwar borderlands departs from the individualized and behaviorist emphasis within early socio-psychological interpretations of social control. It

⁷² For the purposes of readability, reference would be made to pluralized/plural informal orders/ordering to capture coalesced notions of informal ordering and ordering informality.

shifts the interpretive lens towards an interrogation of social control as the multi-dimensional negotiation of compliance and social action predictability within liminal spaces of postwar states. Duffield (2001: 313) highlights this shift by noting that contemporaneous regulatory techniques of control create the possibility of modulating the behavior of populations or countries through controlling processes and networks rather than disciplining the individual *per se*. It is multi-dimensional to the extent that both non-state actors and the postwar state are guided by differing rationalities in their attempts to develop social control mechanisms and predictable social action outcomes over the same territories and peoples. This multi-dimensionality is relevant in the exploration of how quotidian leaders of pluralized informal orders engage within their communities on one hand and with the postwar state and its statebuilding partners on the other hand to negotiate social control, as well as to react to the episodic breakdown or systematic dilution of social control.

Social control is not power-neutral. MacIver and Page's above definitional exhibits a power-neutrality that ignores the micro-hierarchies that emerge from those processes that seek to shape and determine the regulatory nature and content of social action. Given that states remain an unavoidable social actor in territorial administration, their deployment of coercion in an attempt to exercise clear priority social control over all other organizations within substantial territories (Tilly 1990:1) puts them into fields of engagement with non-state social organized entities. The salience of power and social action therefore becomes particularly relevant when advancing social control as an analytical framework for pluralized informal orders constituted on the territorial margins of postwar states.

Recent literature on the local twists and turns has highlighted the analytical integration of “power” and an amorphous and often hybridized “local” in the explanation and understanding of peacebuilding and statebuilding as political social action outcomes. Richmond and MacGinty (2013; 763) argue that this local turn has implications for the nature and location of power in peacebuilding. Furthermore, the location(s) and nature(s) of power then have implications for how, why and to what effect power is deployed as a central constituent of social control. Despite its conceptual and empirical forays into power and the local in statebuilding, Paffenholz (2015: 864) correctly observes that most critical studies overlook the power of local elites in their interpretations of hybrid structures. Especially given that integrative hybrid interpretations advance neo-modern and unproblematic interpretations of the relationships between encounters between the local and diverse peacebuilding and statebuilding interveners.

In cases where power has been centralized as an interpretive category in local statebuilding and peacebuilding research, it has often been uni-dimensionally articulated as a confrontational rather than a cooperative or even a discursively deployed construct. Confrontation between statebuilding and locally based structures of power and authority is captured in Suhrke’s (2007:1296) description of processes of state strengthening in conditions of feudal-like dispersion of power in Afghanistan. However, the analysis of everyday patterns and mechanics of social control assume more subtle forms of engagement between pluralized informal orders and postwar statebuilding. These vacillate across a spectrum from confrontation to cooperation, making confrontation (just like instances of mob violence) one of many products and outcomes of social actor engagement.

It is interpretively problematic when local actor objectification and appropriation of postwar statebuilding interventions are viewed unidimensionally as modes of resistance. Duffield (2000) explains the liberal peace project as a colonial approach to governing the ‘borderlands’ as part of an apparatus of power which attempts to discipline and normalize.” This is even more so when this resistance is pitted against assumed uni-linear and top-down patterns of control (domination) inherent within international statebuilding interventions. Together, these assumptions that devolve from critical statebuilding scholarship reifying the theoretical oppositional obsession between power as domination and power as resistance. This trickles into the “local turn” research agenda, which Paffenholz (2015: 862) describes as identifying the dominant international with a monolithic West, and as a continuation of neo-colonial policies of control now taking part in the liberal peacebuilding enterprise. However, differing modes, patterns and interaction of political and social controls permeate quotidian practice within and across international, national and local levels within contexts of international statebuilding.

Acknowledging this complexity necessitates an exploration of social control that goes beyond understanding how the dominant international seeks to control the passive local and the forms of resistance that inure from this interaction. Multiple analytical and interpretive trajectories arise from interaction between local, national and international actors. Each entity – being networked to some degree with the others – develops operational rationales and agendas based on their social and symbolic positionality. Escaping the replication of *dependencia* discourses, borderland social actors continuously developed and deployed creative ways to alternatively incorporate, appropriate, objectify and resist international statebuilding interventions. Most importantly, they continuously

seek to make these interventions work for themselves – the networked borderlanders. These practices contribute to their development of social control mechanisms that they seek to deploy in shaping and regulating social action.

However, the sociological turn in statebuilding research has increasingly engaged power relations through Bourdieu's conceptualization of symbolic power. Hebert-Lemay (2011: 1834) researching UN interventions in Kosovo and East Timor refers to symbolic power as an aspect of most forms of power that requires acceptance as legitimate by the subject to reach its aim as it is routinely deployed in a quotidian manner in social life. The symbolism, routinization and legitimation inherent within the conceptualization of symbolic power is therefore more suited to the analysis of the normative construction and deployment of social control within pluralized informal orders in postwar borderlands. The introduction of symbolic power dimensions, make social control processes and outcomes inherently political.

Importantly, therefore, the sources, construction and deployment of social control reflects the symbolic, locally legitimized and routinized power wielded by informal borderland social actors in engagement with both the postwar state and statebuilding interventions. Weber's (1968: 153) definition of power as the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be able to carry out his own will despite resistance, however, emphasizes the coercive over the collaborative exercise of power. Meanwhile, Parsons (1960: 199 – 225) offers a cautionary observation against the uni-dimensional interpretation of power that limits it to its distributive aspects – power of A over B. He rather theorizes in favor of “collective” analyses of power, whereby persons – or social actors – in cooperation can enhance their joint power over third parties or over nature.

This provides an ampler framework for the analysis of power and social control within the contexts of flux and uncertainty that characterize postwar borderlands. Furthermore Mann (1986: 6) notes that in most social relations, both distributive and collective, exploitative and functional aspects of power, operate simultaneously and are intertwined.

This chapter develops an interpretive analysis of the purposive construction and deployment of social controls by pluralized informal orders. It also describes the endogenous and exogenous challenges encountered in the deployment of social control. More importantly, it also describes the implications of these patterns of embedded social controls on broader postwar statebuilding processes. Social control captures quotidian management of social action, which while based within the margins of states, are differentiated based on their configuration, interactional, hierarchical, networked and normative. Thus, while some scholars of Liberia such as Ellis (2004: 2007) have focused on how politicians use social networks to maximize and articulate power, especially when the formal procedures of bureaucratic governance have become weak, everyday practice from borderlands explore representations of how pluralized informal orders use their political networks to entrench social controls within contexts of flux and uncertainty. This is the premise from which an interpretation of social controls within Liberia's postwar borderlands develops.

Social Control: Micro-Territorial Governors, Power Dispersion and the Regulation of Everyday Social Action

A. Micro-Territorial Governors and the Maintenance of Normative Codes

Within cities on the edges of states, customary (often deriving from traditional mores), moralistic (deriving from Judeo-Christian teachings) and rational-legal codes constitute the core of informal normative guidance that regulate individual and social action. While far from rational-legal juridical codification, these norms emerge from the constitution of cities away villages as a function of the agglomeration of differing identity groups. Although largely informal, these norms provide the empirical juridical content to socialized ordering within proximate groups in areas where state presence is limited and traditional authority is largely suspended. Hence territorial positionality and informal ordering matter for the constitution of the normative content of quotidian social control that micro-territorial governance grapple with within borderlands.

The normative codes that form the basis of quotidian social control within borderland spaces are largely negotiated. Negotiating social control refers to dynamics of rulemaking, the construction of hierarchies and consent mechanisms. This negotiation manifests itself through omnipresence of these rules in everyday practice within liminal spaces. Negotiating social control is also driven by ever changing dynamics of what Munro (1996: 148) describes as relations of control and consent, power and authority. Across the board in Ganta and Foya, contestation around the personality of the MTG did not affect the normative nature and content of social codes. Hence MTGs could change, but the rules by which the new MTGs operated are known, tacitly agreed upon by community members and subject to peer compliance.

However, in many instances, codes of social conduct developed within communities are more expansive than those covered in civil statutes in Liberia. Another participatory anecdote best explains this point. My research assistant and I arrived on Ganta's Broad Street at about midnight on March 29, 2014. Since we had not made any firm sleeping arrangements, my assistant advised that we seek out one of the young men ambling in the shadows of commercial activity for advise on lodging options. This young man led us through a maze of alternating wooden, zinc and brick seemingly makeshift constructions to a motel. The motel attendant noted that they had only one room left, and unfortunately, they could not have us share that room because two males were not allowed in the same room. Apparently "if we break that rule today, it will not look good for the image of our establishment, sorry," the lady had noted. As we trudged back to the main road to find alternative accommodation, my research assistant and I ruminated about the assumptions the hotel attendant might have made about us and the social codes she was applying which ostensibly or actually might have tarnished the reputation of their establishment. However, this example pointed to the everyday application of social codes emanating from lived experiences. While I did not proceed to research questions of the enforcement of sexual standards, it provided insights into the generalized enforcement of social controls.

The codification of social control within borderland communities also emphasizes the regulation of subtler forms of perversion. While hurling an insult is not prohibited by civil statutes, except in cases of slander and defamation, most borderland communities have instituted fines for "public misconduct" which captures violations related to physical and verbal abuse towards one's household member or a neighbor. "If people come and stand on their veranda and start to throw insults at each other. We bring them, judge the

case and give a fine,”⁷³ noted TK, the female MTG for Assembly of God Quarter in Foya. These statues bind all members of the community, meanwhile the MTG, her secretary and treasurer track and collect the fines levied to community members. She in turn presents quarterly reports to the community.

While these norms that constitute the institution of social controls are used to regulate individual and collective action within the community, the fines collected constitute a resource which politicizes social control and leads to the rise and fall of MTGs and in some cases the politics of perennial leadership. The utilitarian dimension of social control is also evident in the rule surrounding community use of shared resources such as wells, public latrines and palaver huts. Acknowledging CIFORD (Community Initiative for Rural Development) for their contribution to installing a well in Deakehmein Community, Ganta, for example, the following rules and regulations are inscribed on the wall which encloses the pump

- A) The pump shall open for service from 6:AM-10: AM 2nd service from 3:PM - 7:PM;
- B) Pump user fee - \$5.00LD per container;
- C) Only from 10 years and above are allowed to get water from this pump;
- D) The trained community pump mechanics should be up to the task of repairing the pumps;
- E) Feet wear are not allowed;
- F) Don't use your mouth to drink from this pump.

While these rules are inscribed on the pump's enclosure, not all pumps within Deakehmein Community benefit from the same normative transparency. Neither is this general practice across communities within borderlands.

⁷³ Interview conducted with CC-2 in Foya, on 31, July 2015.

However, these rules are peer enforced as the MTG noted “we are all security for ourselves. So together we make sure that the rules are respected.” This consensual enforcement of social controls culminates with violations being brought to the attention of the MTG for resolution.

Fines derived from the enforcement of these rules are used both for the maintenance of the pump and the expansion of health and sanitation initiatives within the community. Some of the money is used to buy gloves, shovels and wheelbarrows that are used in an ongoing campaign to rid the community of plastic and other forms of debris. These campaigns are developed by the MTG in collaboration with his zonal heads and mandatorily involve participants from all of the community’s nine zones. Households supply the voluntary manual labor for these campaigns in which most of the community claim a vested interest. However, the MTG raised a difficulty with getting home renters within the community to participate in these community activities. Given that they are renters and not homeowners, “they feel that it is not their business to take care of another person’s house. So, we try to convince them that it is in the interest of everyone to keep clean surroundings. If we fail, we take the matter up to the City Mayor,”⁷⁴ noted S.A.G, MTG for Deakehmein Community.

Social control within Liberia’s borderlands is manifested in implicit codification of non-state regulations governing human and material production single space (city), multiple nexuses of social control (MTGs). While Peclard and Hagmann (2010: 544) use the framework of negotiated statehood to investigate past and ongoing dynamics of state domination, the normative codification and dispensation of social control within postwar borderland spaces focuses the ontological lens on immanent dynamics that strengthen the

⁷⁴ Interview with CC-12 in, Ganta on 12 August 2015.

hierarchical positionality of specific informal social actors in consensual relationships with their communities.

B. Incorporating Borderland Cities – Reproducing Non-State Social Controls

Comments from residents and MTGs within Liberia’s borderland cities reflect the opinion that “there are not enough police to enforce law and order in this city,”⁷⁵ or “if someone steals my wood and I report to the police, they will take him to Voinjama for judgment. If I have to go to Voinjama to bear witness in the case, can you imagine how much money I will spend to travel and stay there? Just for wood that the man stole.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, an MTG linked security and justice as interrelated issues by noting that the judicial system seemed to abet criminal behavior through its leniency, thereby stoking the proliferation of mob justice⁷⁷. These views reflect the incapacity, cost and distance attributed to the everyday regulation of human and material processes by the state in borderland cities. The agglomeration of ethnically and nationally diverse populations at these borderland trade nexuses necessitates the production and reproductions of everyday social control mechanisms to ensure even a semblance of predictability in behavioral and social action. The communities that inhabit borderland cities understand this and so does the state. Hence, the patterned reproduction of social control results from and in deepening engagement between the borderland communities, MTGs, centrally based borderland elites and the state.

Historically though, the nature and content of social control within borderland cities predates the incorporation of these spaces into cities by the state. Historical archives evidence the emergence of Liberia’s borderland

⁷⁵ Focus Group Discussion held in Bassa Community, Ganta on August 17, 2015.

⁷⁶ Focus Group discussion in New Foya on 28 July 2015.

⁷⁷ Focus Group Discussion in Jacob’s Town, Ganta on August 9, 2015.

agglomerations (particularly in Foya and Ganta) as a result of cross-border trade by kin communities who spoke similar dialects despite divergent colonial histories. Kissi-speaking traders who spanned tri-national border communities in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone dominated trade in Foya. Meanwhile, Mano and Gio-speaking traders from Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire largely contributed to building and sustaining Ganta as a trade hub. However, both Bøås and Ellis also point to the omnipresence of Mandingo traders across every borderland space within the Mano River area. Implicitly therefore, even before Foya and Ganta were incorporated by the Liberian state as cities in the 1970s, they already exhibited city-like characteristics of capital flow and accumulation, ethnically heterogeneous populations and trade networks that expanded outwards nationally and internationally. This is the historical backdrop against which borderland communities constituted themselves into non-state configurations of non-state informal ordering to engage initially with the extractive imperatives of the Liberian Frontier Force prior to incorporation and with Internal Revenue agents after incorporation.

Since the incorporation of agglomerated borderland spaces into cities, social controls have adapted to and engaged changing political contexts in a process of production and reproduction. Charts 7.3a and 7.3b descriptively depict the time in service of MTGs in Ganta and Foya respectively (as of August 2016). They range from 0-32 years in Foya and 1-32 years in Ganta.

Figure 3: Duration of Current Micro-Territorial Governor Service (Ganta)

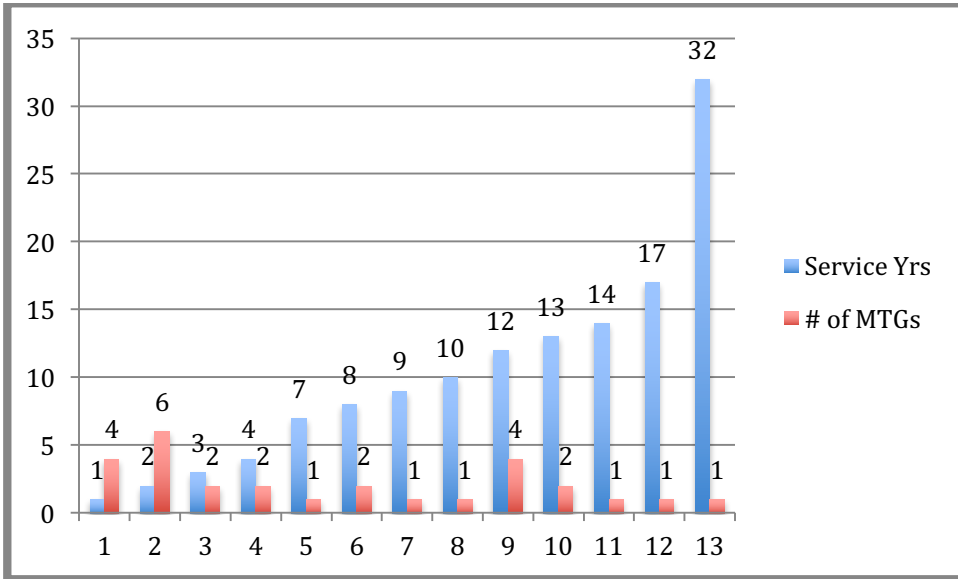
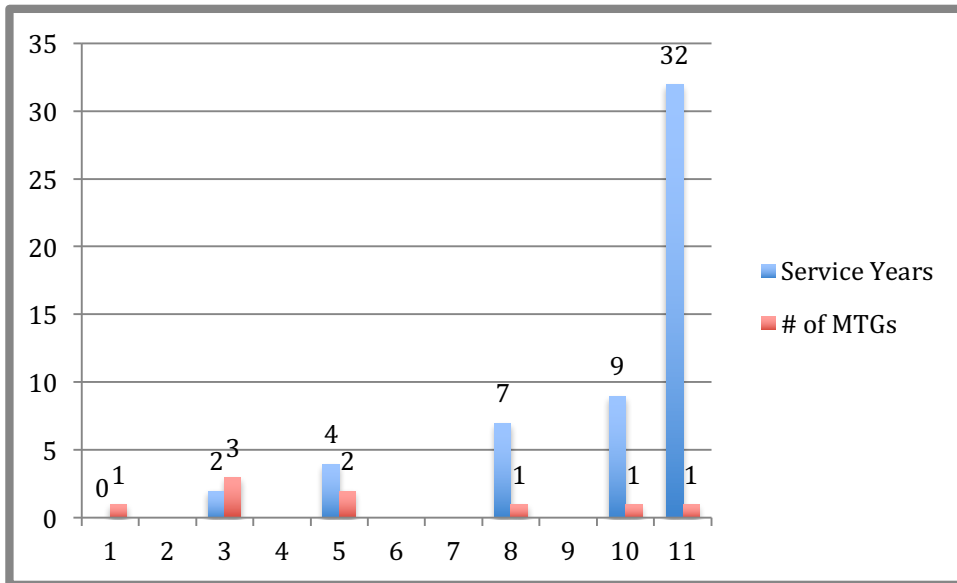


Figure 4: Duration of Micro-Territorial Governor Service (Foya)



Both charts evidence the exceptional nature of 32 years of MTG leadership. In the case of Foya, Saah Dukor’s leadership at Ndama Road Quarter, was interrupted by a brief refugee sojourn in Buyedu in Sierra Leone during the second Liberian civil war (1999-2004). Meanwhile in Ganta, Anthony Barr’s

leadership of Guinea Road community has been uninterrupted by years of civil war. The historical context surrounding MTGs leadership is important because crises, while evidencing adaptive modes of human and material production, also offer insights into the production and reproduction of modes of social control.

Foya was subject to different modes of occupation by rebel factions during Liberia's Civil Wars. At different points Foya came under NPFL, ULIMO-K and LURD occupation. According to OMF, who was MTG during the NPFL and early stages of the ULIMO-K occupation, the difference between both was that the NPFL sought to collude with MTGs to administer Foya and its surroundings, while ULIMO-K imposed rather repressive modes of social control including the institution of forced labor to finance their war effort and obliging the civilian population to purchase human body parts⁷⁸. Importantly, the social control importance of MTG that emerged with the incorporation of the city has shown remarkable resiliency through wartime and postwar statebuilding. Among other factors, this is partly attributable to Baud and Van Schendel's (1997: 226) observation that it is only in borderlands that the power of the state is circumscribed by local political networks that (continue to) connect the two sides and are therefore international too.

In the long run, therefore, social controls benefit borderland communities, the state and even occupying rebel factions. The management of everyday basic social service provision (such as water, dispute resolution and securitization) and local knowledge developed through daily practice contribute to the production and reproduction of social control mechanisms. Crises engender innovative social control mechanisms that largely depend on non-state

⁷⁸ Discussion with OMF in Foya on March 27, 2014.

informally socially organized actors. One of such social control mechanisms is Community Watch Forum, organized by local Liberian National Police (LNP) units at the informal community/quarter level prior to the Ebola pandemic, but reinforced during the health crisis. The idea was to get local communities involved with their public safety and security given the limited human assets available to Police Support Units in borderland cities. When they were organized, CWFs were armed with flashlights and batteries. These groups of volunteer community-based informal security personnel were divided into severe shifts. From dusk to dawn, they conduct patrols within their community areas of operation. These vigilante-style (mainly youth) groups are supposed to monitor, inform and transmit criminal transgressors to the local police.

CWFs consider themselves an essential element in the securitization of human and material processes within the borderland communities in which they live. Nevertheless, most members of these groups nursed they hope that it was a first step to them being called into a more formal and paid role within the police and security system. However, this volunteer force runs on informal organizational and operational rules (which differ from one community to another within the same city) on the spatial margins of the state. They have generally adopted and sought to enforce the state-endorsed 'bring the rogue to formal justice' mantra. However, they have proven more efficient at deterring criminal activity within their communities than the PSUs, and many of their members remain disappointed that the formal police system fails to keep up with their 'informal policing' efforts. CS, a female CWF member in Foya noted that "we caught a rogue and handed him over to the LNP. He disappeared and after two weeks we saw him again and when they come back they are more dangerous, since they live in the communities with us." There are obviously functional, process and outcome disharmonies between the LNP and the CWF.

These disharmonies contribute to entrenching this social control mechanism, which might have emerged to support local policing, but which over time may overtake it and potentially provide an additional challenge to state-described law and order.

C. MTGs: Shaping and Deploying Social Control in Everyday Practice


Having empirically outlined the negotiated normative content of quotidian social control within Liberia's borderland spaces, necessitates moving on to the shaping and deployment of social control. The social, symbolic and territorial positionality of Micro-Territorial Governors (MTGs) centralizes them in relation to the community as well as the state in the mutually beneficial construction and maintenance of social controls. The mutually beneficial nature of these interactions neither assume nor imply either symbiotic hybridity with the state or generalized "decentralized despotism" (Mamdani 1996: 52) towards their communities. This is especially the case given that the "institutionalization" of informal ordering runs counter to the power centralizing imperatives of statebuilding. Discerning the different registers from which MTGs operate viz their communities and the state in quotidian practice allows for variation in social control along a scale from hegemonic to consensual. This variation arising from daily practice provides an interpretive basis for understanding competing, cooperative or merely survivalist political agendas and strategies deployed by MTGs. Secondly shapes an understanding of the patterned reproduction of social controls through the triadic encounters of people, social groups and the state in the *longue durée*.

Finally, the reproduction of social control provides insights into local power dynamics and the deployment of local power within borderlands. Assuming that the postwar state and its interventionary partners seek to recapture the

statist imperatives of effective territorial control inherent tensions emerge between this statist objective and society-based pluralized informal orders.

Of the 37 micro-territorial divisions analyzed within two borderland cities, 51% (19) were created either during Liberia’s interwar years (1997–1999) or thereafter. Of these 19, only two—New Foya and Kpormu Road Quarters in Foya—had proceeded with a change of leadership during this timeframe. Understanding leadership alteration points to the negotiation of hierarchical positionality within informal orders. This in turn reveals insights into the everyday politics of hegemonic and/or consensual social control negotiated endogenously within informal orders and exogenously with networked external actors—the state and statebuilding interveners. Implicitly, informal ordering does not directly coincide with what Mamdani (1996: 41) analyzed as “decentralized and democratic forms of organization” as it sometimes exhibits centralizing and controlled access characteristics (as shown in Fig. 7.1 below). Given that informal ordering develops a scale of social control ranging from hegemonic to consensual, their functional dynamics in daily practice are located along this scale.

Figure 5: Variation Along Hegemonic-Consensual Governance Continuum

Hegemonic		Consensual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Static 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternating Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled Access 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncontested 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contested

Given that the MTG function is largely benevolent, occupants of this role deploy multiple interrelated registers in the maintenance of varying patterns of hegemonic and/or consensual social control. Two synoptic cases illustrate the appropriation of different registers in the development and deployment of social controls by MTGs – one each from Foya and Ganta. In Foya, EN, the New Foya MTG also runs a dry goods store at the New Foya daily market. He claims that, “I even use the money from my business to fix the pump for the community when it breaks down.”⁷⁹ This overlapping financial element in the performance of MTG roles does more than simply make for rather convoluted accounting. It also provides a rationale for the community to be beholden to the MTG, thereby legitimating his preferred mode of social control and eliciting tacit compliance.

Furthermore, the interwoven finances also explain the tardy bookkeeping reports that often precede MTG elections in New Foya. This led an elder within the community to note that “if by next week we do not get a financial report, we would take the matter up to the City Mayor.”⁸⁰ However, it is not certain that such a move would lead to the eviction of the MTG, given that Foya’s nine MTGs are also de facto “unofficial” members of the City Council.

This case illustrates the complex dynamics linking MTGs to their communities. However, reflecting a predominantly consensual social control framework, interactions between the New Foya MTG and his community are largely consensual as he requested and was granted extra time to prepare his financial report. Moreover, unlike more hegemonic MTGs and despite attempting to control the members of his community whom I could engage with during my

⁷⁹ Interview with QC-1 on July 28, 2015 in Foya, Liberia.

⁸⁰ Interview with New Foya Community Elder on August 1, 2015 in Foya, Liberia.

research project, he respected the confidentiality of interviewees from his community and stayed away during focus groups discussion. This reflected relatively open access to community members and their opinions about informal ordering in its multiple dimensions.

The complexity of MTG-community negotiation is exacerbated when the relative absence of the state elevates MTGs to unofficial positions in city management thereby limiting the capacity of their communities to effect leadership changes in the face of the personalization of relationships between the City Mayor and his non-official council members. In the case of New Foya, which social control although negotiated and consensual, nevertheless depicts the MTG wielding considerable gatekeeping and executive powers in shaping of social control within his micro-territorial space. By negotiating the extension of financial reporting deadlines, he astutely buys time beyond his two-year term limit.

The second illustration is from Peace Community, Ganta. This is a relatively new, postwar community, which sits at the entrance of the city along the Paynesville-Guinea Border highway. “When I came here, this area was a new layout. It was a bush,” noted the MTG for Peace Community. However, the MTG, FB, uses his position to control the human content of his community. He asserts that, having served as an officer in the Armed Forces of Liberia, I try to convince former soldiers and friends to come a build within this community.” FB also operates on multiple registers, serving as Director of Nimba Guard Services, a private security firm he operates together with a sitting member of Liberia’s House of Representatives. FB’s deployment of his 119 man NGS team to guard private business premises in Ganta provides his with a web of

intelligence collection, which spans hotels, motels, bars and financial institutions.

The second case reflects patterns of social control closer to the hegemonic end of the spectrum. By singularly defining and inviting a specific category of individual former AFL members and ex-fighters to provide the core membership of his community, FB effectively builds a social control mechanism into community composition. This social control mechanics effectively determines subsequent patterns of community legitimation of MGT leadership and compliance to social control norms. Like a broad group of MTGs within communities that emerged out of inhabited spaces after Liberia's civil wars within borderlands, their claim to consensual leadership does not translate into everyday practice. In Ganta mainly, MTGs of these postwar communities point to the former city mayor, Dorr Cooper telling them that communities did not need to elect their MTGs, given that he the city mayor had not been elected to his position. However, their grip on the definition and deployment of social control within their communities, coupled with their longevity in service (15 years on average) point to patterns of personalized entrenchment of positional power. Meanwhile, they use their diverse and networked connections to build greater leverage into maintaining their local positions.

Manifestations of social control at the territorial margins of the state operate at an informalized intersection between the individual and the state in daily practice. It is evident in interactions between mayors and MTGs as they seek to regulate human and material processes within these margins. Both cases illustrate the nature and location of symbolic power within informal orders deployed through varying patterns of social control. These processes that

centralize MTGs in the daily lives of borderland communities make the postwar state the “twilight institution” (Lund, 2006: 687). This is especially the case given the state’s dependence on these MTGs to exercise effective territorial control. Hence this analysis coincides with Moore’s (1978: 56) reading of networked micro-political configurations in and their broader interpenetrated connections to state formation writ large.

Socially grounded authority derived from informal ordering endows community chairpersons with the power to resolve community disputes, apprehend criminals and hand them over to the Liberian National Police, mediate the engagement of international NGOs with their communities, manage community projects which devolve from prior NGO engagement and negotiate with the City Mayor (the official representative of the state). Therefore, there is a naturalistic and direct link between community leaders and the community. The functions performed by community leaders are based on power informally vested upon them by their communities and acquiesced to by the state – therefore they derive from the demographic constitution of the spaces they control, territorial control itself and the limited state presence.

However, the state’s enforcement of eminent domain rules within communities that predate it has effectively created internal borders between communities and areas designed as state controlled spaces – such as marketscapes and areas subject to road construction projects. The overlap between the state’s eminent domain and informally ordered spaces diffuses social controls in areas proximate to these state-governed spaces. However, since these spaces are marked by the absence of the state, they also escape the controls developed through informal ordering. They become refuges for transient livelihoods and

criminal activity stoking intra-communal, inter-communal and communities-postwar state tensions.

Social Controls within Ordered Informality – The CMR, The “Susu” and Transitions to Ownership

It is not uncommon to see makeshift wooden barricades blocking the uneven paths that link borderland communities. These barricades epitomize the rivalries that exist between the public transport functions of Commercial Motorbike Riders (CMRs) and the non-trespassing private property demands of micro-territorial communities. It is also a microcosm of larger generational cleavages between the largely youth CMRs and older MTGs and family heads. “You see these young boys prefer to either go tap rubber or ride motorcycles than to go to school,”⁸¹ noted a Guinea Road community elder in Ganta. Meanwhile CMR Union leaders “fight against the predominant view within the community that we are young, violent and uneducated, although most of our members have high school diplomas,”⁸² articulated an LMTU-Ganta leader. Having focused the first part of this chapter to mechanics of social control emanating from territorially based informal orders, the ensuing section describes social controls put in place through processes of ordering informality. While the emergence of social controls from the management of proximate household relationships seems rather naturalistic, the negotiation of social controls informal economic operators – Commercial Motorbike Riding (CMR) highlight rational logics and mono-registers, with differing and more mediated patterns of social control. The nature of social control to which CMRs get subjected also differ depending on the regulators – whether state or non-state.

⁸¹ Interview with a Guinea Road community elder on August 24, 2015.

⁸² Interview with LMTU-Ganta leader on August 16, 2015.

Most critiques of international statebuilding interventions deplore its emphases on markets and democracy, while ignore local knowledge and processes (Chandler 2006: 14-16). Donais (2012:4) avers that even where the importance of “local ownership” proclaimed by interventionists, it is about convincing and cajoling local actors to accept the wisdom and utility of what remain externally defined policy prescriptions. This justifies understanding the contributions of active local agency in the regulation and facilitation of everyday aspects of postwar socio-economic and development job creation, welfare and basic service provision which Francis (2012:2) acknowledges have critical implications for creating the durable foundations for winning the peace in divided communities.

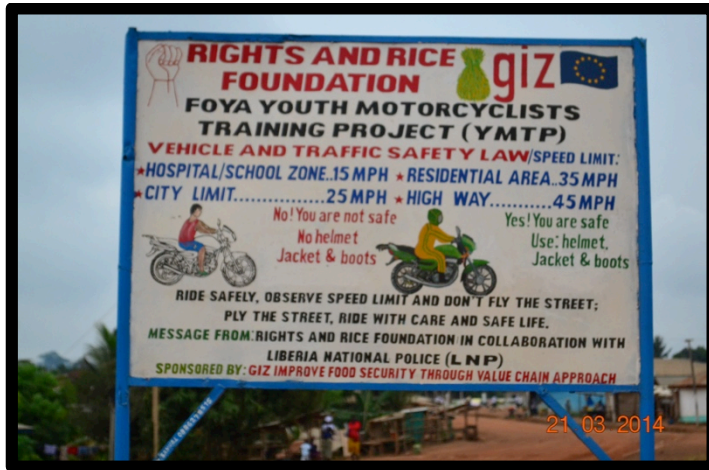
Transportation is arguably the most important informal economic sector within Liberia’s postwar borderland cities. This importance is predicted on sheer numbers (of CMRs), relatively minimal capital and human investment and maintenance costs, challenges of navigability within and between borderscapes, and the historical importance of borderland cities as national and international trade hubs. Given its informality, the social control of CMRing within borderland seeks to regulate the activity in relation to borderland communities, the home state and neighboring authorities. The implications of these social controls do not only take regulation of CMRing out of the hands of the state, but it places CMR unions as a mediating social control mechanism between the individual CMRs and the State.

Social controls emerging from ordered informality, while centralized and hierarchically structures, remain very ineffective in imposing effecting shifts in the collective social action of the intended subjects of control, especially when they opt to act collectively outside the impositions of the recognized social

order. The case of the interaction between Commercial Motorbike Rider Unions, CMR (Commercial Motorbike Riders), the state, and borderland spaces is used to present these processes. CMR Unions have the authority to negotiate licensing for CMR operators, but are limited in either enforcing the mandatory use of protective equipment for CMRs and their passengers or encouraging the purchase of accident insurance coverage. These state-desired measures have the buy-in of the CMR Unions but not the CMRs. However, they develop territorial management policies, which ensure the CMR coverage of entire borderland cities through the creation and management of staging areas. The challenge of imposing social controls on the informally ordered private sector is also evidenced in what was largely described as a culture of violence among CMRs. Therefore, this section shows that though processes of informal borderland ordering within postwar states create different forms of social control outside the state.

At the main intersection in Foya, there sits the biggest signpost in this borderland city. The signpost epitomizes cooperation between the international (German Cooperation Mission), the state (Liberian National Police), the national non-state (Rights for Rice Foundation) and the local (Foya Youth Motorcyclists Training Project). These signposts outline the personal protective equipment necessary for operating motorcycles in general as well as the speed limits when riders navigate inter and intra-borderland spaces. The history and social control utility of this signpost offers insights into the non-state negotiated enforcement of the rather rational-legal rules and suggestive safety guidelines.

Figure 6: NGO-Sponsored Public Service Billboard



The signpost (visualized above) is the product of a 10-year old (as of August 2015) CMR Training for Trainers' program which JTS credits with providing him with the resources to extend his fleet of commercial motorbikes and to become active within the leadership of the pioneering Foya Commercial Motorcycle Union. However, this program has yet never been replicated since its initial stint, despite the growing number and expanding informality of CMRing within Foya and its environs. The assumption by the international and national actors involved seems to have been that through the initial training session, capacity for sustained training had been transferred to the CMR Union.

There are different patterns in the institutionalization of CMR training and refresher as social control programs by CMR Unions within borderland cities. According to AS, Chief of Operations for the union in Ganta, they work to organize two training programs per annum. These programs are sponsored by the CMRs themselves through the contribution of 150LD. Despite the payment of these training dues, he noted that CMRs hardly turn up for training sessions

because it taken them away from working⁸³. However, JSTomah, the head of CMR Union in Foya noted the challenge of conducting regular refresher training exercises in the absence of the financial and human resources that had supported the first training of trainers' session⁸⁴. Nevertheless, the Foya CMR Union collects 25LD per meeting for the two meetings they strive to hold each month. However, JSTomah's argument for the absence of subsequent training sessions reflects a justification for dependence on external resources for the organization of training, without providing the necessity for such training. These sporadic training of trainer missions emphasize the essentialist capacity and safety component of individual CMRs. However, they are oblivious of the local politics of CMRs and their Unions and the peacebuilding implications of the relationship between CMRs, their communities and the state.

The social control of CMRs by the state is predominantly mediated through the CMR Unions. This mediated social control often avoids direct confrontation between individual CMRs and state agents. As JSTomah stated "When the commissioner of police is riding around and he sees certain violations by riders, he calls me and described the rider and the violation and I will look into it." This mediated social control mechanism puts the onus within the CMR Union to manage the social behavior of its members within the borderland spaces.

Mediated social controls through the CMR Union is made possible by the robust and structured capabilities that union Chiefs of Operations build within these social organizations as part of the process of ordering informality. The Chief of Operations in Ganta, AS, A. Sikeh, the Vice President for Operations for LMTU-Gompa, explained that, "it is extremely difficult to keep track of the

⁸³ Interview with LMTU Ganta Chief of Operations in Ganta, Liberia on August 14, 2015.

⁸⁴ Interview with LMTU Foya Chairperson in Foya, Liberia on August 3, 2015

CMRs, because there are some people who buy a motorbike and give it to a relative to run as a business for them with no registration. Our field officers are there to make sure that they are registered and accounted for. But there are times when the unregistered CMRs physically attack and insult our field operators.” The CMR Unions have proven adept at dealing with sporadic and quotidian violence from their members. These issues are also resolved within the organization without recourse to the state.

CMR Unions play a central role in socially controlling and mitigating quotidian violence perpetuated by and inflicted upon CMRs. AS evoked “a culture of violence surrounding the motorbike rider. This can be explained by the lack of adequate education and training and our country’s [Liberia’s ndlr] long history of civil war.”⁸⁵ He referenced the recent spate of violence in River Gee county where CMRs had burnt down a police station because the police had “protected” a motorist accused of having been in an accident that was fatal for a CMR. This specter of violence that hangs over the CMR activity within borderland cities necessitates social control mechanisms to avoid CMRs perpetuating disorder.

By creating different bases which are micro-managed by CMR Union officials, the union does not only order an informal economic activity, it develops a framework for social control through its own appropriation of borderland territoriality. In Ganta, for example, these bases facilitate the collection of the 20LD/day operating fees which the Union requisitions from CMRs in Ganta. These bases 4 in Foya and 7 in Ganta are symbiotically attached to commercial and commercial motor transport hubs within the borderland spaces. However, more importantly, their micromanagement decentralizes and

⁸⁵ Interview conducted with AS in Ganta, Liberia on August 14, 2015.

expands social controls to the benefit of mediation and conflict resolution amongst CMRs and between CMRs and borderland communities and state agents.

The CMR Unions heuristically sees linkages between peacebuilding and the creation of growth opportunities for CMRs – another social control mechanism is built on the creation of growth opportunities. There is consensus between CMRs and union leaders that “motorbike riding is not a career.” Hence CMR unions in Foya and Ganta have created micro-credit schemes to provide opportunities for riders to become owners. This microcredit scheme known as “susu” incentivizes CMRs to look beyond immediate daily gains from CMR riding towards future ownership and possible capital investment in other economic sectors.

CMR Union officials within the different bases manage “susu” schemes. There are various “susu” schemes on each CMR base in Foya and Ganta. According to JSTomah, there are five susu groups on Base1; six- Base2; three-Base3 and 2-Base4. Hence a total of 16 CMR susu groups in Foya alone. Together with base members representative CMR Union officials set up and enforce rules for the amount of contributions, disbursement timeframes, penalties for default and mediation mechanisms for the processing of complaints resulting from disputes relating to the “susu” scheme. According to TT, a member of the a “susu” group in Base1- Broad street, Foya – the voluntary nature of participation in the group mitigates the conflicts that could have arisen through mandatory participation.

The negotiated and constructed social control capabilities embedded within social organizations such as CMRs that order informality exhibits regulative,

symbolic and responsive capacities. The multifarious agenda of CMR Unions incorporates mutual interests of its members, community members, MTGs and state representatives. Ordering informality mandates membership within this unions, however the voluntary participation in union activities mitigates internal conflict. Meanwhile, the issuing of registration cards provides CMRs with a rational-legal document that allow them to negotiate national and international border authorities and also ensure compliance to union rules and regulations. The expected outcome is to endow predictability of behavioral action of CMRs on one hand and social action on the part of Unions from whom social responsibility is expected. The ability of borderland CMR unions to socially control their predominantly youth members endow them with political power in their mediation with state agents and community representatives. However, as was evidenced in the violence that gripped Ganta in late September 2015, social control is also often elusive. When the Unions fail to control their members during critical junctures, the resultant outcome results in the temporary muscular intervention of the state in a legitimization of its monopoly over the use of violence.

Violence and the Elusiveness of Social Control

The encounter of permanent and impermanent livelihoods within borderland cities brings issues of quotidian criminality, justice and violence to the fore. “The Minister of Defense [Brownie Samukai ndlr] is building a house towards the other side of New Foya here. Because the place is still under construction, you see these thieves for a jump the fence and stay there,” noted a New Foya youth. Meanwhile the problem of the encounter of permanence and impermanence was posed differently in Ganta. During a focus-group discussion in Bassa Community, an elder noted, “the overlap of the city market into our

community has brought challenges without any benefits. We cannot even control the water pump that is there. People throw dirt anyhow making problems for our health.” Both communities are overlapped by borderland daily marketscapes and pose different sets of challenges for the community members and their MTGs.

It is within the informality of these peri-urban borderland spaces, where the state resources are thinnest, that Community Watch Forums have arisen as UNMIL troops have been drawn down. Despite the growth of CWFs, ‘faceless’ mobs often appropriate justice and victimize the singular ‘rogue’ posing a challenge for MTGs, the custodians and enforcers of micro-territorially bases social controls. The MTG for Gbalagbein community noted that “a few months ago we could not wake up in this community without seeing a body in the streets, beaten to death as a rogue.” Despite conflict resolution training dispensed to MTGs by the INGO, TetraTech, to foster community justice mechanisms and securitization these often-impermanent singular borderland ‘rogues’ are scarcely given the chance at community justice as conceived by international interveners.

Nevertheless, the socialized roguishness embedded in marketscapes as well as community spaces bordering markets is organized, protected and controlled through modes of alternative governance which are tolerable to both the state and the local community. Socialized roguishness applies within those spaces where according to WM of Blegey Pa Community “local leaders endorse the settlement of ‘grona boys’ [vagrant stragglers ndlr] who use any means necessary to get their ‘bran ma’ [daily bread ndlr]”. Within these limited spaces, there is sustained interdependence between MTGs and the ‘grona boys’. It is through this prism that differentiated illicit and roguish actions are interpreted as either

worthy of death or simply part of the struggle for *“bran ma”*. The socialization of gona boys through the deliberate or passive acquiescence of some MTGs, therefore legitimizes their predominantly illegitimate activities.

MTGs have been more adept at dealing with cases of household violence than mediating broader issues relating to mob violence. “When a husband beats a wife. Or there is a disagreement between them and they quarrel. They come to me and my advisers. We hear the case and try to bring them together,” noted the Catholic Community MTG in Ganta. This seems rather straightforward. However, the MTG for Gbalagbein community noted that “it is hard to intervene when people are beating someone they call a ‘rogue’ because if you intervene, you can also lose your life.” Thus, sporadic instances of mob violence within Liberia’s borderlands have deepened uncertainty and mistrust in the rational-legal administration of justice. No individuals have been prosecuted in Ganta, for example, for participating in acts of mob violence targeting the “subaltern” rogue.

However, the state’s response to the burning of the Ganta police station as well as the hotel and residence of a centrally-connected borderland elite following his alleged involvement in the murder of a CMR was markedly more robust. This differentiation does not bode well for the uniform application of the state’s laws and the deepening of the state within borderlands.

Conclusion

The social, symbolic and territorial positionality of pluralized informal orders centralizes them viz-a-viz their community as well as the state in the mutually beneficial construction, reproduction and maintenance of social controls. The

mutually beneficial nature of these relationships does not imply symbiotic hybridity, given that the “institutionalization” of pluralized informal orders runs counter to the power centralizing imperatives of statebuilding. However, the state benefits from non-state sources of social control, despite the individual and communal advantages that flow to MTGs and representatives of CMR Unions. Informal ordering processes in Liberia’s postwar borderlands lead to social control outcomes (which depending on the context) conflict and cooperate with the state. By discerning the different registers from which pluralized informal actors operate viz their communities and the state in quotidian practice this chapter allowed for the development of differentiated typologies of politicized social control.

Differentiated construction and enforcement of quotidian social controls provided an interpretive basis for understanding the competing, cooperative or merely survivalist political agendas and strategies of pluralized informal orders. This differentiation framed the understanding of the mechanics of social control constructed as a result of the triadic relationship between people, informal social groups and the state. Furthermore, it highlighted a historical dimension to the production and reproduction of non-state social controls in the *longue durée*.

Pluralized informal orders provide non-state borderland social actors with an organized basis for the negotiated construction and deployment of power within liminal spaces and beyond. The reproduction of politicized social controls provides insights into local power dynamics within borderlands through an understanding the local deployment of power. Assuming that the postwar state and its interventionary partners seek to recapture the statist

imperatives of effective territorial control there are inherent tensions between this objective and the very existence of these pluralized informal orders.

Evidenced in quotidian practice show that differentiated typologies social controls inure into rather incipient power loci within Liberia's postwar borderlands. By highlighting the inherently political imperatives for social control i.e. power dynamics, agenda setting and influencing by informal socially organized borderland actors, insights are drawn into the transformative pursuit of stable social action amid contextual flux and relative vulnerability. This empirical exposition of differentiated social control outcomes resulting from pluralized informal ordering within postwar borderlands evidences syncretic dissonance between borderland socio-political dynamics and international statebuilding.

Evidently, exchange and interaction between pluralized informal orders and postwar statebuilding interveners is mutually transformative and largely characterized by the paradox of formalized informality. This is partially rationalized through the postwar context of flux and prevalent vulnerability within which it is occurring. The quotidian micro-sociological interaction of locally-based social agents and structural dimension of postwar statebuilding gives consideration to Wendt's (1987: 356) argument for a synthesis that develops mediating concepts that can link structures and agency in empirical situations, thereby binding agents and structures into mutually implicating ontological and explanatory roles.

Evidence from the study shows that social control resulting from informal ordering flows from the recursive centralizing and hierarchical configuration of non-state social actors. It is through this negotiated integrative structuring that

non-state informal actors garner their legitimacy. As Mary Parker Follett (1941: 204) noted “We get control through effective integration. Authority should arise within the unifying process. As every living process is subject to its own authority, that is, the authority evolved by or involved in the process itself, so social control is generated by the process itself. Or rather, the activity of self-creating coherence in the controlling activity”. Thus, as with the case of pluralized informal orders social control arises out of necessity rather than being imposed exogenously. It is its endogenous that makes pluralized informal orders particularly potent and resilient.

Despite the power centralizing imperatives of international statebuilding, the daily deployment and enforcement of social controls by informal non-state actors within postwar borderlands points to postwar pluri-centrality of power. Without claiming the absence of a struggle for statist hegemony, the assumption of power pluri-centrality emphasizes the importance of local actors, structures and processes to postwar statebuilding outcomes. Their power of pluralized informal ordering derives both from their communities and from their interactions with formal social actors who seek to engage with borderland spaces. The power embedded within the behavioral regulation negotiated by pluralized informal orders within borderlands provides the basis for their appropriation, subjectification and indeginization of statebuilding interventions.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Through two Liberian postwar borderland cities, Foya and Ganta, this thesis offers an interpretive analysis of how differentiated localized forms of informal ordering generate and maintain emic ecosystems of social control. These end up structuring quotidian livelihoods on the margins of Liberia's postwar state, providing a bottom-up and interactive lens through which to understand outcomes of international statebuilding intervention in practice. The return of relative stability to the Liberia's borderlands, occurs despite the processes of international statebuilding interventions, but largely through micro-territorial processes of informal ordering by actors who often escape the ontological gaze within classical International Relations.

The quotidian informal ordering by micro-territorial governors (MTGs) evidences bottom-up processes that are produced through everyday social action in liminal spaces. Far from being apolitical and stripped of power dynamics and implications, micro-territorial governance, which falls outside formal territorial administration, actually straddles the postwar state under construction and geographically-situated communities.

This position between communities and the postwar states, though informal from the view of the state and its international statebuilding partners, is endowed with grounded authority derived from a complex admixture of representative, performance and process legitimacy constantly negotiated and renegotiates through rules-based quotidian social interaction. Therefore, MTGs provided the ontological position from which to understand the interaction between the elusive "local" and the omnipresent "international" within postwar statebuilding.

As gatekeepers into the borderland's micro-territorial spaces, MTGs are not only a repository of spatial and historical knowledge, but they also wield grounded authority in the management of quotidian human and material processes. They develop dispute resolution mechanism, manage the community's collective resources and represent their communities in interaction with both the state and its international statebuilding partners.

The political economy of statebuilding within Liberia's postwar borderlands also evidenced multifarious and often interconnected ordering patterns undergirded by rational choice decision-making. Hence, by describing processes of informal ordering and ordering informality, this thesis does not only seek to show the multiplicity of informal social organization within Liberia's postwar borderlands. It also demonstrates similarities and differences in their informal rules-making, basis of grounded authority and their interactions with international statebuilding processes.

Commercial Motorbike Rider Unions (CMR) provided the basis for understanding processes of ordering informality. Transportation is a centerpiece of borderland livelihoods as individuals and communities based within liminal spaces seek to forge opportunities with both the national and the international. The topographical dispensation of postwar borderlands with its seasonal dirt roads, naturally advantages navigation by CMRs. Hence, CMRing becomes a social action that incorporates interpretive elements of topographical space, the economics of social symbolism and physical interaction with multiple others, including passengers, border controllers, police officers and the Ebola Virus Disease.

CMRing is understood to be an informal economic activity because other than respecting the formal rules of the road, it is not governed by a professional deontology. Therefore, anyone with access to a motorbike could use it for commercial purposes. In order to bring some form of order, which invariably creates a centralized node of social control to this disparate informal economic ecosystem, CMR Unions were created.

These CMR unions are social organizations which wield an inordinate amount of political leverage within borderland spaces. It is worth noting that within each borderland spaces, there is at least one CMR Union. These unions coordinate the activities of the CMR through borderland spatial management. By setting up staging areas they carve out the borderscape, not only to manage competition between CMRs, but also to determine pricing from one point of the borderland to another.

Given the strong youth presence among the ranks of CMRs, their unions serve as a legitimate interlocutor with the local, the national and the international. Nevertheless, this research also evidenced inter-generational conflicts between youth CMRs and older state administrators alongside the potential for socio-economic mobility created through the “susu” financial self-help scheme.

These processes of informal ordering and ordering informality occur largely in interaction with international statebuilding processes. Their contribution to the ordering of quotidian livelihood processes is an often-neglected part of the explanation of international statebuilding outcomes in classical IR. These individually and socially organized, and networked (local, national and international) constellations of actors form an essential part of the statebuilding ecosystem, and not just as potential spoilers.

Micro-Territorial Dynamics and Postwar Statebuilding

The obsession with the state in International Relations creates disciplinary and methodological blind spots that have been largely exploited by historical, sociological and anthropological ontologies. Firstly, International Relations theory largely ignores the empirical content of state-society relations, which is banished to the sub-discipline of Comparative Politics. Secondly, the focus on the state has inured into the subliminal assumption of the Western state as “ideal” despite the typological, functional and ontological fallacies embedded within such a generality. Thirdly, the focus on the monolithic state in IR has privileged static, uni-linear and modernizing modes of explaining and understanding phenomena reminiscent of Fukuyama’s (1994) “end of history” narrative and Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” interpretation of International Relations. These are dominant paradigms that have privileged Western understandings of IR at the expense of the relational impact of differing forms of hegemony propagated by Western states thereby creating distortions in the empirical content sovereignty and territoriality within the “global borderlands” (Duffield).

The dominant paradigms within IR have contributed to policy designs that privilege the hubris of social engineering projects such as international statebuilding and peacebuilding. Fukuyama’s (1994) prophesy of the liberal democratic and capitalist economic end of post-polar human history has failed to materialize. However, it has largely informed the demand and supply modeling of the state that amounts to the commodification of governance. Critics of international statebuilding have zeroed in on its perverse liberal political and economic bias (Chandler 2008 and 2010, Mac Ginty and

Richmond, Richmond, Millar). Given the historical importance of state-society interpenetration in processes of statebuilding, Engel and Halden (2013:7) note that a proper understanding of different state forms requires close analysis of the conflicts between different social forces as they promote state projects that will advance particular interests over others. Given the fixed nature of state boundaries across most of Africa, even where societal processes appear to undermine the statebuilding project, they might contribute to long-term state formation.

Critics of International Statebuilding have contributed varying interpretative trajectories, which accentuate the interactive and real role of locals and locality in processes of postwar reconstruction. However, even this body of literature has largely fallen short of engaging constructs of informality that fall outside the interpretive purview of Eurocentric IR. Informality is messy, complex and challenging and ignoring it would not wish it away. The tendency for classical IR to “romanticize the local as a zone of incivility” (Richmond 2009: 152), to criminalize informality and cast it in “shadow” terms (Hagmann and Peclard 2010: 5442-544) and transnational criminal enterprises is problematic. It does not account for the mutually constitutive and sustaining relationship between informality and formality in actual territorial governance and in establishing the empirical content of sovereignty.

This characterization results in the second tendency within IR to strive to domesticate, tame and subject the informal through processes of hegemonic ordering. The empirical content of sovereignty and territorial integrity in most post-colonial states is premised on the coded modernization of traditional societies. However, these processes have not necessarily met with compliant informal actors. In adapting to the crystallization of the hegemonic state,

informal actors have constituted themselves into social orders, which do not fall within the strict confines of Eurocentric understandings of civil society. Cubitt (2013: 93) argues that during war to peace transitions, most democratizing interventions generally disregard and disrespect local versions of civil society. This represents a contradiction of the *demos* ideology and develops into a manipulative distortion of the state/society relations at the heart of democratic postwar statebuilding. By focusing on localized borderland representations of informal ordering of territoriality and the economy and their implications for international statebuilding in Liberia, this thesis contributes to an understanding of local dynamics to international issues that are often ignored.

The role of informal actors and processes in postwar international statebuilding engages with contemporaneous theoretical and empirical evolutions of peacebuilding and statebuilding in International Relations. By situating its ontological lens on borderland spaces, this thesis importantly engages with alternative manifestations and interpretations of territoriality and sovereignty within postwar statebuilding contexts. It specifically makes an empirical contribution to burgeoning theorization on and about local twists and turns in international peacebuilding and statebuilding. However, it views the determinacy of “local agency” in postwar statebuilding (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013) as inalienably intertwined with the empirical content of postwar territoriality and the negotiation of decentered sovereignties amid flux and uncertainty. Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013:764) see unpacking the local turn as an exercise necessary to understand the changing conditions of peace understanding the critical and resistant agencies that have stakes in subaltern views of peace, how they act to uncover or engage with obstacles, with violence, and with structures that maintain them. However, understanding locality and

local dynamics within peacebuilding and statebuilding takes more than just making ontological and empirical twists and turns.

It necessitates the centralization of spatial multidimensionality as relationally constituted and constituting. These processes of constitution account for messy historical, social, symbolical and transversal engagement that produces complex informal outcomes of everyday livelihood processes. Instead of treating ‘local actors’ as a residual category in investigations of the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence or comprehensiveness of their own operations; Engel and Halden (2013:4) centralize local actors and their worldviews, positions and conflicts vis-à-vis each other and vis-à-vis intervening forces. Meanwhile by focusing on the interface between the formal and informal, particularly with local reactions and engagement with formal statebuilding programs, Mac Ginty (2013: 28) develops a process-oriented empirical research agenda for statebuilding in IR. Both perspectives, while instructive in investigating the implications of informal ordering on international statebuilding, provide interesting theoretical trajectories in need of confrontation with quotidian processes. It is these quotidian processes that provide the empirical content for a pluralized understanding of the empirical content of territoriality and sovereignty within postwar contexts of flux and uncertainty.

Historicized Locality in State Formation

While some interpretations of international statebuilding interventions have evidenced their unavoidable necessity within postwar contexts (Paris 2010; Paris and Sisk 2012, Sisk 2014, Fortna 2008), their positioning based on the intent of the intervener is deeply problematic. Siding with the hegemon has spawned counterarguments decrying the purposive “social engineering” inherent within

international statebuilding (Krause and Jutersonke 2005). However, even the counterarguments have remained largely based on Eurocentric understandings of the concept rather than the pervasive nature of the process (Sabaratnam 2013). While acknowledging the contributions of both perspectives to the development of a distinctive theoretical space for statebuilding in IR, they have largely remained silent to the histories, contexts and micro-relational dynamics of exchange within contexts of international statebuilding. Meanwhile these are actually the processes, which produce international statebuilding outcomes.

Shifting theoretical and analytical foci towards in-depth empirical case studies of international statebuilding have pointed to more nuanced understanding of the complexities underlying local, national and international interactive processes and their implications for postwar statebuilding. Exploring interaction between networked local, national and international actors and processes evidences how local actors (whether at national or subnational level) develop the ability to construct and maintain alternatives to the liberal peace statebuilding project (MacGinty 2013: 21). Meanwhile in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, internationally driven national peace has not stemmed the proliferation of interconnected pockets of local violence as part of ongoing contestation within state formation Autesserre (2008). Although these explorations of postwar statebuilding in IR have shifted the ontological lens to the sub-state level, they have largely remained ahistorical. They have not developed in-depth understandings of historical continuities and change that account for the constitutive, interactive and eventual outcome implications of international statebuilding.

Local history holds clues to patterns of everyday socio-political resistance to antecedent statebuilding and national building efforts that have inured into

alternative spaces and patterning of order, authority and social control. The evolution of historicized research on state formation has focused on long-term process trajectories within the European context with (Tilly, 1991). However, while this has often been cited in the critical statebuilding literature, human and material history has largely remained marginalized in the IR literature on statebuilding. Cramer's (2006) emphasizes the importance of political history in understanding the outbreak and evolution of violence in developing countries since not much can be deduced from a theoretical, ahistorical model, however, sophisticated its array of variables. While historical and development studies as disciplines have embraced historicized understanding and explanations of social phenomena, IR has made only timid steps in that direction.

However, the critical tradition of statebuilding research continues to push the disciplinary boundaries by incorporating the historical evolution of concepts and phenomena within IR. Richmond (2005) for example has also contributed to a historical understanding of peace formation since the nineteenth century by developing an understanding of precursory concepts to the liberal peace in IR. Richmond (2016) has pushed that thinking further by exploring the implications of peace formation for political order. This paradigmatic push is reflected among statebuilding actors in Global North who have increasingly normatively recognized the importance of understanding antecedent statebuilding history. As articulated in the OECD's (2011: 25) policy guidance:

“viewing statebuilding in a historical context reminds us not only that it has often been a tumultuous and lengthy process driven by internal and sometimes external upheaval, but also that the historical antecedents of any state are fundamentally important to its contemporary character.”

Despite this recognition, it remains to be seen how this history gets accounted for within postwar statebuilding programming. More than just acknowledging this history, there is the necessity to understand the plurality and the

differentiated nature of the interaction between society and state as captured by Boone (2003) in her exploration of political topographies in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire.

In practice international statebuilding has often taken the peace accords as the starting point of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes, amounting to what Mac Ginty (2013:19) describes as international actors being “present at creation,” given that in the liberal worldview, the past can be regarded suspiciously and equated with illiberal political practices that must be replaced with ‘modern’ practices (Mac Ginty 2013:25). Hence international actors implicitly marginalize the importance of antecedent processes of statebuilding and their implications for the construction of patterns of differentiated social dynamics. It also ignores the historical implications of state-society interpenetration through mutual constitution as evidenced in society’s different historical encounters with state and nation building. Therefore, as much as the state cannot be considered pristine and completely disconnected from society, the same can be said of society. Everyday practices and processes, however, evidence historical resilience and the heuristic evolution of lived experiences.

A historicized understanding of spatial, symbolic and social locality contributes insights to three interconnected levels of positionality – that of individuals within their communities; that of communities in within the city; that of the city within the state and that of the state in the world. Positionality has implications for the construction, negotiation and deployment of power relations over time. Historicizing this interactive positionality connects the formal and the informal for a to capture the actual complexity of relationships within contexts of international statebuilding. In the case of Liberia, it highlights borderland communities that predate different iterations of the state.

These communities have evolved progressively, while the state has often been subject to capture, subversion or disintegration. This invariably shapes the historical relationship between the communities and different iterations of the state. Secondly, the state has used different patterns of territorial administration over time to construct and impose its sovereignty while protecting its territorial integrity (even if its international borders have remained stable since 1921 (Gershoni 1985)). However, by focusing on individual life histories in interaction with their communities and the constitution of micro-territoriality, this thesis goes to the core of micro-territorial governance. It evidences the importance of micro-territorial governance, which though informal, contributes to strengthening the sovereignty of the state and its territorial integrity, by harnessing embedded alternative authority structures and informal modes of social control.

Silences of Micro-Comparative Statebuilding: Alternative, Pluralized Informality

By opting for a micro-comparative understanding of informality within Liberia's internationally driven postwar statebuilding project, this thesis evolves an understanding of quotidian territorial and economic ordering. Empirically, the postwar state exhibits a limited presence within Liberia's borderlands. This limited presence does not necessarily contrast the historical disposition of the Liberian state. Whether it was the creation of districts out of hinterlands and six counties out of the settler coastal territories by the King administration in 1923 (Gershoni 1985: 59) or Tubman's National Reunification Policy in 1964 that normatively transformed provinces to counties (Hosloe 2009), the relationship between administration and the territory have remained tenuous. Kings territorial administration decree instituted the hit tax of one

dollar and educational taxes in areas where schools had been established (Gershoni: 1985: 59). Therefore, since the declaration of Liberia's independence in 1847, different iterations of the state and statebuilding processes have struggled with the effective exercise of sovereignty and territorial control.

It was evident therefore, that communities exhibited age-old social processes in quotidian practice as they engaged with different iterations of the state. Evidently, borderland actors in postwar Liberia are connected to the state through formal processes of legislative, executive and judicial representation. However, borderlands exhibit historical interconnectedness between its communities and the territory they are composed of old communities that is not evident in their discourses of connection to the postwar state. The social engineered imperatives of postwar statebuilding projects centralized, top-down administrative units. Its bureaucrats are dispatched to administer and order human, territorial and material space. They also seek to generate revenue from the commercial content of borderland spaces. By seeking a break with the governance and administrative past, which is seen to be a proximate cause of civil war, postwar statebuilding opposition between the old and the new are created into statebuilding practice. Postwar borderland communities emerge through the heuristic reconfiguration of social relations a composite product of life histories and prewar and postwar experiences. Meanwhile the postwar state rides on the back of its international statebuilding partners driven by a "mission civilatrice". The confrontation of heuristic process with strong spatial, social and symbolic linkages to the past and exogenously programmed intervention sets up fields of opposition and domination. It is within these fields that local power is constituted and deployed to social, symbolic and functional subjectification of the postwar state and its international statebuilding partners.

This thesis acknowledges notes that Liberia's *de jure* international borders with Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, the product of colonial border treaties, have remained largely uncontested since the 1920s. Nevertheless, everyday processes captured within Liberia's borderlands reveal evidence of heuristically reflexive territorial use and governance from below. Micro-Territorial Governors (MTGs) constitute unavoidable gatekeepers and facilitators or hindrances to engagement with borderland communities. By governing informal orders emerging from micro-territorial structured quarters and communities they are endowed with embedded authority. They deploy this embedded authority to develop modes of social control steeped in the socio-cultural mores and codes of their proximate communities. Given their positionality at the helm of micro-territorialized informal orders, MTGs effectively interact with both the state and its international statebuilding partners to endow territoriality at the margins of the state with its empirical content and alternatively negotiated sovereignty. These are modes of territoriality that effectively subjectify the state, which is obligated to informalize its interaction with MTGs in order to govern effectively.

While the state constantly redraws its administrative cartography to facilitate its territorial management and enhance its penetration of society, micro-territorial configurations are also subject to their local political cartographic reconfigurations. This results in the splintering and merging of micro-territorial units in processes, which eliminate leadership rivalries and consolidate territorial control over expanding spaces and population densities. New informal micro-territorial borderland units emerged either through origination—community construction in previously uninhabited spaces—or as a result of the splintering or merging of existing units. The principal drivers for

the emergence of new micro-territorial units were demographic, economic and developmental pressures, which had implications for the constitution and deployment of power through local, national and international networks. Rationales for territorial merging included the promotion of resource-sharing between communities, the elimination of “ineffective” leadership, and the consolidation and expansion of political power by some MTGs.

Micro-Comparative Pluralized Informal Ordering

MTGs account for informal territorial ordering in a critical geo-political sense. However, the micro-comparative comparison of borderland cities within contexts of postwar international statebuilding would have been incomplete without understanding the role of informal economies, which are the quotidian heartbeat of these liminal spaces. The marketplace is the main employer within Liberia’s borderlands. Even in borderland concession areas where the state heavily invests in securitizing natural resource extraction by multinational corporations, the informalization of the marketplace dominates economic activity. Borderland investment in the police and immigration services are meant to reassert postwar state authority, despite the relatively unregulated borderland market challenging that authority and actively working to escape its control.

Designated market spaces are historically, materially and functionally constituted. Depending on their cartographic positionality, borderland hub cities in Liberia have long histories of commercial exchange with both the Freeport in Monrovia and sahelian trade routes (Gershoni 1984: 16). This history puts agriculture and trade as the main economic activities within Liberia’s two hub borderland cities – Foya and Ganta – where this study was centered.

However, commercial transportation has emerged as a major informal economic activity since the end of the Liberian Civil Wars. Materially, designated market spaces within borderlands attract goods and services from the broader sub-region. The concentration of human and material capital within borderlands makes subjects these spaces to systematic revenue controls from multiple sources – the municipality and the State. Meanwhile, topographically, the entire borderland space appears to be one big market. This decentralization of the market space functions to dilute the state's capacity to control economic activity while deepening economic informality. Therefore, an exploration of economic informality within postwar borderlands within this thesis benefitted from a focus on the socio-political configurative dimension of informal economic sectors with a focus on Commercial Motorbike Riders.

The relatively unregulated designated market space captures the resilient hybridity of informal survival economies through the *mélange* of permanence with transience, legality amid illegality, the licit and the criminal. Economic operators straddle these seemingly oppositional registers, as they constitute themselves into unions to enter into fields of opposition and domination with the postwar state. Communities that blend into market spaces exhibit the tensions between MTGs and municipal representations of the state. Therefore, they provide a prism for understanding informal and alternative responses to sanitary, security and criminal challenges that come with the presence of the official market within community limits. However, the presence of the market also enhances the community's social and symbolic posture within the borderlands. These communities have a privileged position when negotiating with the state as they simultaneously benefit from and are hamstrung by eminent domain laws.

Meanwhile the social organization and functioning of CMR Unions provide insights into the power relations between subaltern postwar actors and the re-emergent state. These Unions evidence the ordering of informality as they work to set and build a policy agenda that represents and protects CMRs in the face of the flux and uncertainty that characterizes the postwar statebuilding context. Through processes like licensing and the formation of mutually beneficial credit schemes they deftly blend formal and informal resilience based on their positionality as subalterns within borderlands. Their use of the topography the establishment of operational bases also evidence how they appropriate territoriality to enhance their productivity, transport service provision and reduce in-group conflict.

However, whether in the case of MTGs or CMRs, the use or threat of use of violence shows their willingness to advance their specific agendas even in the face of opposition by the state and international statebuilding partners. Therefore, these actors, while not the criminalized and shadowy characters depicted in some IR literature, represent informalities that contend with formalization processes and formal actors to do three things – construct and maintain informal orders; enhance and deploy their power-based authority; and develop alternative modes of social control that protect their constituencies and set up fields of opposition with “outside” actors and processes. Within most postwar contexts, such informality better accounts for the empirical content of sovereignty and territoriality than internationally imagined and imposed programming of statebuilding.

Further Research Trajectories

This thesis contributes a micro-comparative empirical understanding of informal borderland actors and processes in postwar statebuilding. With

greater means and time this study would benefit from tracing the networked nature of these informal actors and processes with more formal actors and processes. These networks would provide a clearer picture of the interdependent strengths and weaknesses of these informal processes for postwar statebuilding.

Secondly, the question could be asked why does informality matter? The arguments of limited state presence within borderlands and the dominant presence of alternative sources of ordering, authority and control may be congruent. However, they only provide part of the picture. Therefore, the ethnographic interrogation of informality could benefit from more expansive mixed methods research for a historical understanding of the political economy of informality within postwar statebuilding. Such an approach would not only deepen our understanding of the interconnections between informal orders and processes of ordering informality, but would ascribe quantitative weights to their impact and role in the sustenance of quotidian livelihoods.

Thus, deepening research on informality in international statebuilding would develop an understanding of the implications for either completely subjecting informality to formal processes or heuristically mainstreaming informal and formal processes as a function of localized dynamics.

Appendices

Map of Liberia (Research focused on cities circled in red).



List of Borderland Micro-Territorial Units

Foya	Ganta
New Foya Ndamah Road Kpormu Road Power Quarter AG Quarter Kpakior Quarter Jacob's Town Foya Kama Peace Community	LPRC Community GWR Community Catholic Community Old Car Garage Community Small Ganta Community Boe Community Blegay Pa Community Peace Community Glenyiluu Community Gbatu Quarter Community Gbalagbein Community Gehpa Community Palm Farm Community Pearson Community Christian Community Gbloryee Community Toweh Yard Community Royal Community Nyan Kormah Quarter Hope Village Community Public Works Yard Community Bassa Community LPMC Bye Pass Community Jacob Town Community Valley Community Deakehmein Community Guinea Road Community Congo Community

Sample Semi-Structured Questionnaire for Quarter Chiefs

Phase One: Life Histories

Question 1 Would you kindly tell us a little bit about your background?

Phase Two: Process and Structure

Question 1 What role does quarter chief play in your community?

Q2 How did you become quarter chief?

Q3 How long can you stay as QC/CC?

Q4 How many households are there in your quarter?

Phase Three: Functional and Relational Questions

Question 1 What is the greatest challenge you face as quarter chief?

Q2 Are there any privileges you enjoy as quarter chief?

Q3 How would you describe your relationship to your city mayor?

Q4 How would you describe your relationship to your community?

Q5 What are the major needs your community faces?

Q6 As a community leader how do you address these needs?

Q7 Do you have any expectations of government?

Phase Four: Project Planning and Execution

Question 1 How do you address the needs of your constituents on a day-to-day basis?

Q2 Are there NGO projects in your community?

Q3 Are there government-sponsored programs in your community?

Q4 How do you interact with your community?

Q5 Are there major businesses within your constituency?

Q6 How do NGOs gain access to your community?

Sample Semi-Structured Questionnaire for Commercial Motorbike Riders

Introduction: We are interested in understanding how borderland transporters deal with the terrain and administration.

Phase One: Life Histories

Question 1 Would you kindly tell us a little bit about your background?

Phase Two: Process and Structure

- Q 1 How many hours do you work everyday?
- Q2 How did you become a bike transporter?
- Q3 Do you interact with border authorities?
- Q4 What is the nature of your interactions with border authorities?
- Q5 Do you ever get to cross the border?
- Q6 How well do you know the areas on the other side of the border?

Phase Three: Functional and Relational Questions

- Q 1 What is the greatest challenge you face as bike transporter?
- Q2 How do you deal with these challenges?
- Q3 Have you or any of your friends been involved in accidents?
- Q4 Who owns the bike you ride?
- Q5 What are your expectations of the bike owner?
- Q6 Where do you get fuel for your bike?
- Q7 How does the supply of fuel affect your business?

Phase Four: Project Planning and Execution

- Question 1 If there was no trade, how would your life be affected?
- Q2 Why did you not opt for an education?
- Q3 Do you feel secure in your job?
- Q4 What are your aspirations?
- Q5 What are the major businesses within your constituency?
- Q6 Have you dealt with NGOs before as a commercial motorbike rider?

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