(Re)constructing borders through the governance of tourism and trade in Ladakh, India

Birte Vogel and Jessica Field

This paper analyses how everyday life, the state and nationhood are regulated and organised in a conflict-affected borderland space through economic activities. It focuses on two elements that are often overlooked when scholars discuss spatial governmentality: tourism and trade. Both are commonly declared to be elements of peace, peacebuilding and cosmopolitism. However, the spatial governance of tourism and trade can also profoundly shape how national belonging and the limits of territory are perceived and experienced by borderland populations and visitors. These dynamics can be acute in conflict-affected border zones, where state sovereignty may be under existential or territorial threat. This paper exposes such dynamics in the Indian conflict borderland area of Ladakh, a part of Jammu and Kashmir State until October 2019. Building on scholarship that has analysed cultural and social dynamics of "bordering" in the region, this paper argues that it is possible to read (socio-)economic boundary-making in Ladakh through the state's influence in the organisation and experience of trade and tourism for Ladakhis and visitors. The paper highlights how their spatial organisation, in part, underwrites difference and separation, and aids in framing the contested territory as 'Indian'.

Key words: tourism, trade, borderlands, India, conflict

1. Introduction

Wherever societies are affected by violent conflict "boundaries and borders are taken more seriously" (Goodhand 2005, p. 225); they are omnipresent elements of everyday life that regulate economic, social, physical and cultural movements and interactions. At the same time, boundaries are not *just there*, they carefully uphold, or are made permeable by power, in the form of (non-)state actions in areas of economic, cultural and social life (Falah and Newman, 1995, p.690), which shape the nature and possibilities of conduct. These dynamics are often amplified in contested borderlands, which are geopolitical spaces that emphasise separation and segregation (Paasi 1999, Van Schendel 2005). This article seeks to examine the manifestation of such dynamics in the contested borderland area of Ladakh, India. Specifically, we will explore how the governance and organisation of tourism and trade, key economic activities for the region, shape perceptions and experiences of borders, reinforcing national boundaries and conflict territoriality.

In the peacebuilding literature, tourism and trade are often seen as symbols of peaceful relations between countries and/ or communities—especially in border conflict zones. Scholarship on this subject argues that tourism and trade can bring conflicting groups together, lessen the chances of new conflicts, or bring positive economic development to a region (see for example Rummel, 1979; Gartzke, 2007 on trade, and Gelbman, 2010; Pratt and Liu, 2016, D'Amore, 2010 for tourism). Our paper contributes to challenges to this narrative (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003; Pretes, 2003) by showing an alternative side: namely, that tourism and trade can also be organised and governed to reproduce or reinforce (national) boundaries and conflict territoriality. In doing so, the article contributes to the spatial turn in International Relations (IR) and Peace and Conflict Studies (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel, 2016; Vogel, 2018; Gusic, 2019), or the peace turn in Geography (Gregory, 2010; Morgan, 2011, McConnell et al, 2014), depending on which disciplinary perspective one is coming from. Both turns read social realities through space and place making, and often in relation to experiences of the everyday (Lefebre, 1984; 1988; de Certeau, 2006 [1984]; Massey, 2005). Spatial organisation is integral to examine in conflict-affected societies, as specific spaces and sites shape human behaviours (and vice versa), and manifest the exercise of power (e.g. Lemay-Hébert, 2018; Vogel, 2018; Gusic, 2019). While analysis of conflict-affected societies from a spatial perspective is slowly increasing in IR, there has been no sustained inquiry into linking peace and conflict with space and place, leaving room for conceptual and empirical novelty (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel, 2016).

Our site of analysis is the Indian borderland area of Ladakh in conflict-affected Jammu and Kashmir State (J&K).[1] Ladakh is best known as an historic site on the Silk Road (Rizvi, 2011 [1983]) and as an emerging tourist hotspot for spiritual, cultural and adventure tourism (Norzin, 2016). The Himalayan district is also at the intersection of a number of different frontiers, tangible and intangible. It sits at the edge of India's national territory lines, backing up to China and Pakistan – both of whom claim entitlement to parts of the district. As a Buddhist-majority district it also has more cultural similarities with Tibet than the remainder of India. Ladakh is seeing huge growth in tourism and trade, with more tourists arriving every year (Press Trust of India, 20 January 2019), and the expansion of access roads to and from the district to better enable the passage of people and goods. The region very much relies on these sectors for survival.

MAP Ladakh

Scholars such as Aggarwal (2004), Aggarwal and Bhan (2009) and Smith (2009) have laid the foundation for analysis of this particular borderland. In her book, *Beyond Lines of Control: Performance and Politics on the Disputed Border of Ladakh*, Ravina Aggarwal (2004) examined a range of cultural 'performances' in Ladakh – such as Independence Day celebrations, sports games, marriage rituals and boycotts – each of which have rendered the national borders between India, Pakistan and China (and between communities inside Ladakh) more visible.[2] These (often civil society-led) performances, Aggarwal argues, are an articulation of state politics through non-political cultural forms (2004:loc.350).

Adding to this, we explore how economic activities (re-)produce borders and state politics in Ladakh. We argue that the spatial organisation of tourism and trade matters for the perception of the contested territory as "Indian". We posit that, as well as increased mobility and connectivity, it is also possible to read practices of "bordering" and separation in trade and tourist organisation – practices that reinforce the types of communal and territorial differences that underpin India's conflicts with China and Pakistan. Specifically, we find that tourist mobility in the region has been encouraged in order to firmly put Ladakh on the map of "Indian" travel destinations. However, the areas of the borderland open to visitors frequently changes under central government orders, turning local tour and hotel operators into soft migration enforcement. The movement of goods has also faced restrictions, as cross-border trade with the Pakistan-administrated side of J&K is prohibited in order to re-enforce the frontier with Pakistan. Instead, the Indian government invests into infrastructure projects that, long-term, might allow for better trade with the rest of the country. Thus, aspects of both tourism and trade governance serve to reinforce nationalist narratives about territorial integrity, identity and connectivity to the political centre.

To make these arguments, we first engage with debates about social borders: the production of (and by) space, and its manifestation in everyday life.[3] The first two sections of this paper will briefly outline key debates around border and bordering, as well as tourism and trade, and why they are usually seen as promoters of peace. The article then presents the historical and current political organisation of Ladakh before looking at implication tourism and trade on boundary making in the region. Our findings offer new ways of looking at the implications of economic activities in conflict zones as they challenge dominant ideas that these ostensibly outward-looking activities are vehicles for promoting connectedness and peace. Instead, we highlight how their spatial organisation in Ladakh, in part, underwrites difference and separation from its neighbours and aids India's state legitimacy in the area, as well as their claim over the contested territory.

2. Borders, bordering and space making

Borders are experienced and reinforced in borderland areas not just through what is visible, but also through non-territorial layers of boundary-making (Cons and Sanyal, 2013; Cons, 2014). These indirect layers can include state/local cultural performances, or they may be implicated in everyday norms governing social relations. The everyday nature of these more invisible layers of border-making mean that the experience of populations at different points along the same border can vastly differ. Moreover, in conflict-affected societies, borders can be shifting, overlapping and temporary, and they can apply to some communities while not to others. This understanding concurs with Van Schendel (2005) who contends that borders are created, affected and experienced, not just by politico-physical (e.g. fences and security guards) factors, but also a range of other elements such as environmental (e.g. rivers, mountains), economic (trade), cultural (intra-communal divides, linguistic), performative (rituals and actions) and ethnic and religious factors. Many of these processes, institutions, and environmental features are subject to, and shaped by, policies that come from the government (national and state), and non-state actors that hold power, and have implications for how borders are framed, governed and experienced.

With reference to African borderlands, Bøas (2014, p. 6) has argued that borderlands are spaces where the state retreats, and the bureaucratic-administrative power of the state is transferred to personal power of influential individuals who govern the borderlands on behalf – or instead – of the state actors whose reach does not extend to the peripheries. While this is true in numerous cases, many Asian borderlands have complex layers of bordering that also write the state back in (Van Schendel, 2005; Aggarwal, 2004). This article is interested in how the state shapes how populations experience the diverse layers of borders that surround them, not just through the direct means of regulating access, for example, but also through more indirect means, such as the symbolic or physical use and governance of space. This "bordering" can depend on social norms that create invisible boundaries between and through communities based on ethnic, religious or other identity markers (Gusic, 2019). An example would be the theatrical performance that occurs daily on the India-Pakistan border at Wagah (on the Indian side) and Lahore (on the Pakistani side). At this site in Wagah, crowds gather to be entertained by Bollywood music followed by a 'hyperbolic choreography of male aggression' as the Indian army performatively slams the gate on Pakistan. The aim is to emphasise a continuing aggression with the neighbouring state and a violent frontier (Van Schendel, 2007, p. 42).

While the gate itself is a direct and "hard" border as it keeps Pakistan "out", the daily Wagah ritual is more indirect, serving as a regular and conspicuous reminder of separation, difference and tension between the two nations. And it is a significant space for the performance to occur, as it is the only land border where foreign travellers are able to cross between the two countries (Timothy, 2019).

This indirect bordering can occur because, as Massey (2005, p. 100) argues, space is constituted 'through the practices of engagement and the power-geometries of relations[;] … it is structured *through* such relations, and through an understanding of those relations as differentially (and unequally) empowering in their effects'. Thus, space is not an empty shell but produced and structured by both state and society (Crang & Thrift, 2000; Lefebvre, 1991; Gusic, 2019). This frame is instructive when imagining borders as governed by the state but going beyond walls, as the Wagah event not just occurs, but is entertainingly performed by the state for its citizens and tourists in an iconic border space. It shows how the state not only governs people's movements but also their emotions, which can in turn impact on their everyday behaviour, interactions between citizens, and their perception of the state and its legitimacy, authority and power. Building on these ideas of governance through indirect bordering, this article offers a case study to render different layers of borders visible. However, current research mostly focuses on 'how society shapes space and thereby neglect the "talking back" of space vis-à-vis society' (ibid, p. 48). Thus, we also demonstrate how the space itself adds to the process of bordering, by focusing on the seasonal environmental 'borders' created in the area, and how it shapes society, and state actions, respectively.

3. Tourism, trade and bordering

Economic activities, such as tourism and trade, are often cited to make borders, both physical and social, permeable. Before moving forward, we want to unpack some of these assumptions in more detail. A dominant strand in tourism scholarship suggests that the biggest advantage of tourism is that it enables inter-cultural understanding and education (Vinay and Khanna, 2008; Scott, 2012). According to these arguments, both hosts and travellers experience new cultures, and are thought to develop mutual empathy. This is based on idea of contact theory, which argues that engaging with "the other" reduces stereotypes and opens people out for different perspectives. Further, it is argued that tourism might foster co-operation between different ethnic groups in post-conflict societies that have to co-operate in order to establish a functioning tourism infrastructure. Becken and Carmignani (2016) and Farmaki (2018) present more nuanced views on tourism and argue that many of the above benefits only materialise

within a wider government strategy that mitigates the potential negative side effects of tourism (Becken and Carmignani, 2016), such as ecological problems, and new revenue that finances conflict parties. In all cases, contextual factors have to be taken much more into account (Farmaki, 2018). There are also developmental arguments, for example, that tourism leads to economic growth (Chauhan and Khanna, 2008), which in turn again can contribute to peace or positively impact on its sustainability (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Mishra and Verma, 2017).[4]

We seek to contribute to scholarship which argues that the development of tourism can play an important role in constructing, and legitimising, the nation and national identity (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003, p. 23; Pretes, 2003). This can be through, for instance, the (re)production of nationalist ideals in the deployment of certain symbols for tourist consumption (Selwyn, 2016, p. 105) – the Wagah border as a site of tourist entertainment is a relevant example here, too. Legitimisation can also happen through the physical planning and development of territory into spaces for tourist consumption – a sort of "flag planting" activity that identifies and marks a place as "destination" in the national imagination and declares it as, essentially, safe to visit, as well as belonging to a particular state (Rowen, 2014). This creation of national identity can be further fostered through the strategic use of museums and heritage sites that tell particular stories about a place and its significance in national history. This argument is particularly compelling if we think about national territories as "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991). Tourism becomes one way of including remote and non-central areas on the economic and emotional map of the national territory (Pretes, 2003).

Similar advantages as discussed for the tourism industry are also raised for trade. On a state level, (free) trade is thought to increase the opportunity costs of war and make it undesirable for states (Gartzke, 2007). On a community level, it increases social contact between different groups (O'Driscoll, 2019) and fosters Track Two (or "back-channel") diplomacy between businesses who become stakeholders in peaceful relationships. As such, small-scale trade has become a popular tool for NGOs to foster positive relationships. Likewise, increased trade can lead to economic growth and prosperity, yet, the benefits of this might be unevenly distributed and foster new conflicts (Vogel, 2020). Evidence also suggests that trade can also be used to opposite ends. In situations of conflict, governments and social leaders often call for boycotts—such as during the Nazi times in Germany when Jewish shops were attacked and boycotted years before the war. During the Austrian empire, the government called for a "buycott", the consumption of national products only (Kühschelm, 2010). More recently, the European Union attempts to facilitate economic interaction between conflict parties within and beyond its territory. In Cyprus, this is attempted via the Green Line

Regulation but remains largely unsuccessful, not least because the ongoing conflict between the North and South largely leads to a boycott of Turkish Cypriot products in the South of the island (Vogel, 2020). The reluctance to spend money in the Turkish Cypriot side of the island is also cited as motivation for Greek Cypriots not to visit the area North of the internal border. As Farmaki et al. (2019) argue, some Greek Cypriots feel a moral imperative not to contribute to the Turkish Cypriot economy. The case also demonstrates that tourism and other forms of economic activities can be interlinked. Thus, while both tourism and trade are broadly believed to foster inter-cultural contact and globalisation, and thereby aid a more liberal outlook and positive relationships between states and communities, they can also work to different ends. The literature remains inconclusive under which conditions economic activities actually contribute to peace.

4. Studying tourism and trade in the borderlands

In order to empirically illustrate boundary making through the regulation of economic activities, this article focuses on the Indian border region of Ladakh. Ladakh is an important case study because it is a popular international tourist destination in a sensitive border-conflict area where tourism and trade are key economic lifelines. Their gradual expansion is seen as signs of the region "opening out" and heading towards a peaceful future (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008, p.356), but how these activities are governed by the state and experienced by the local population suggests different conclusions. The analysis we present from this case study contrasts and enriches some of the already existing literature discussed above and provides a lens through which to view the spatial organisation of economic activities in other contested border zones. Further, conflicts are more pronounced in borderlands. Thus, what we can find here on tourism and trade might be more visible than it is in other geographical areas yet the dynamics will likely equally exist elsewhere.

Research for this article has been conducted in three research visits to Ladakh, Leh and Kargil, between May 2018 and September 2019, with a total of eight weeks spent in the field – in addition to desk analysis. The research was embedded in a wider project on the organisation of markets in the region, and their historic and contemporary political and social functions. Methods for data collection included semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that allowed space for interviewees to go beyond already defined topics in our research design. We also undertook field observation and exploration of key market and museum sites in Leh and Kargil. In total, we conducted 35 interviews. Interviewees were targeted based on their professional position. The majority of the interviews were conducted

7

with Presidents and other official representatives of different trading associations and unions, as well as market leaders and tour operators in Leh and Kargil. The research design focused on trading association and unions based on the assumption that these stakeholders have a particularly strong understanding of the diverse issues faced by their members. They also have a good understanding of the broader economic and legal developments in their sectors. As representatives, they are often well networked with the political representatives on a local and state level and are in a strong position to provide insights into the nature of some of the current economic and cultural policies. To supplement and triangulate the data, we conducted interviews with individual traders and members of the tourism industry in both locations. These were selected randomly across different market spaces and undertaken during hours where business was quiet to minimise the impact on their economic activities.

It is also important to note the timing of the research. On 5th August 2019, in the middle of our fieldwork period, the Government of India announced that Jammu and Kashmir State (J&K) will be split into two separate Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on 31 October 2019. The research took place during a time when J&K was still a State, with a great deal of autonomy, including special land protections for J&K residents and power in devolved matters. As such, while our research occurred during a particular moment that will have no doubt changed by the time this reaches publication, it is important to note that – as Doreen Massey (2005) has argued – the histories of spaces are implicated in the present. She posits that environments and spaces are sites of interrelations; they are the coming-togetherness of a multiplicity of historic and contemporary interactions, 'from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny', and spheres in which distinct trajectories can coexist. These spaces are inherently political and always under construction (Massey, 2005, p. 9) and the researcher, she argues, must be wary of "slicing" time to analyse a particular moment of history as neither space nor time are static, bounded places and moments. As such, it is important to see the space under analysis in its historical perspective. Ladakh has undergone a substantial transformation from a central hub of trade and regional interaction to the periphery of the Indian State, and all the shifts in between have significance for the current moment.

5. Ladakh in historical perspective

Until the government of India re-organised J&K into two separate Union Territories, Ladakh was the geographically-largest division of J&K, and one of the most remote regions of India. Ladakh is situated high up in the Himalayan mountain range. It was an independent kingdom from the mid-10th century, and its physical borders reached as far as Rudock, Guge and Purang

(Western Tibet) at its peak in the mid-17th century (Bray, 2011). In 1834 this Tibetan Buddhist kingdom was invaded by the Dogra army under the instruction of Hindu Raja Gulab Singh, and was then incorporated into the Princely State of J&K in 1846 where it remained within British Indian governance authority until Partition in 1947. During this period of British supremacy, border governance was driven by trade priorities with Western Tibet and Central Asia as well as territorial integrity (Howard, 2011). The region was viewed by the British Raj as a useful buffer zone between British India and the Chinese and Russian empires (Fisher and Rose, 1962, p. 28). With the division of Pakistan and India in 1947 and increased tensions between India and China over Tibet in the 1950s, however, border governance took a militarised turn. While its neighbouring region Kashmir Valley has been the more violent part of the frontier in recent history, Ladakh has had its own share of border conflict and continued disputes over ownership. In 1962 it was a key battleground in the Sino-Indian war, which saw China advance and claim the previously Indian-held Aksai Chin region – a high altitude desert area that had been part of Ladakh since the mid-nineteenth century. In 1965 and 1971 the region, particularly the city of Kargil, found itself on the frontlines of conflict between India and Pakistan. More recently in 1999, Pakistan infiltrated Kargil, sparking a conflict won by India.

Since 1962 the Indian army has had a permanent presence in Ladakh, and the region was closed off to most outsiders until 1974 when it was partially re-opened to tourism. Since then, certain parts of Ladakh have expanded at an accelerated pace. Leh, the largest city in Ladakh, has become a launchpad for both adventure and spiritual tourism in the wider area, and many of Ladakh's villages have kickstarted "homestay" packages for ever-increasing numbers of heritage tourists, capitalising on Indian and foreign tourist curiosity about the region's long-preserved traditions and remote mountain lifestyle. Hotels and guest houses have seen a huge boom, with the construction demand bringing in scores of labourers (Norberg-Hodge, 1991, p. 93; Alexander, 2005; Field and Kelman, 2018). While the economic impacts for some of the Ladakhi community have been positive, broader developmental impacts have been debatable, with many problems being ascribed to the region's peripheral place in state and national governance.

Until February 2019, J&K state parliament had only two divisions: Jammu and Kashmir (Ladakh was awarded divisional status just six months before the Union Territory announcement). Ladakh was previously a part of the Kashmir division, which has fuelled a feeling of political marginalisation in the region.[5] It is common to hear on Ladakh's streets that the divisional authorities and state government in Kashmir has not been very receptive to, and

supportive of, suggestions from Ladakhi politicians and that "Kashmiris don't help us in Ladakh".[6] Indeed, key political figures, faith leaders and civil society organisations in Ladakh have, for decades, agitated against this perceived inequality of treatment and distribution of resources by the J&K government, which many believe is fuelled by communal politics. This feeling has been compounded by the fact that development policies for Ladakh have long been formulated by the J&K state government and the central government in Delhi, and Ladakh can only send one MP to Delhi (Norberg-Hodge, 1991, p. 92). At various times, Ladakh has called for direct rule from Delhi, for government benefits, and for more power. While they have now succeeded in all three (gaining Scheduled Tribe status in 1989, seeing the creation of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in 1995, and gaining Union Territory Status in 2019), differences between Ladakh's two main blocks, Leh and Kargil, were already entrenched and thus gains from these political wins have been unevenly felt across the region.

Economic development, along with a strong local bureaucracy and better transport links to wider India, have cemented Leh – a majority Buddhist area – as the centre of power and resources in Ladakh, a Buddhist-majority division. In contrast, Muslim-majority Kargil (the eponymous block of the second-largest town in Ladakh, situated on the border with Pakistan) has somewhat stagnated. This frontier block is isolated for nearly half the year due to harsh winters and heavy snowfall, which cut off the access roads. It also suffers from perceived and actual political and social marginalisation. All regional offices are in the Leh block, which many people from Kargil perceive as unfair, as their block is bigger, both territorially and in terms of population. These various layers of political and environmental bifurcation have 'tended to reinforce the regrettable tendency towards communal groupings', and economic or political gains for one district and/or social group has often been seen as coming at the expense of the other (Rizvi, 2011 [1983]: 94). Between 1989 and 1993 communal tensions spilled over into violence and boycott action as Buddhist groups in Leh turned their agitation against the Muslim-majority state government towards the Muslim-minority population within Ladakh (van Beek, 2000). While open conflict dissipated with the creation of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council in 1995 (later to divide into Leh and Kargil branches in 2003, again as a result of perceived inequality of representation), elements of communal separation have remained and the complex political set up continues to contribute to a general feeling of remoteness and minority status.

What is notable in this brief history of the region is layers of visible and invisible "bordering". Shifting divisions have been consciously and unconsciously drawn around both territory and social groups *within* Ladakh, as well as *between* Ladakh and the region, state and

nations. While some of these borderlines have been drawn by governing authorities – such as country, state and district boundaries – others have been created, performed or at least affected, by other factors such as environmental changes, tourism development, migration, trade, and the politics behind communal identity. As noted above, there is a growing body of literature examining socio-political divisions in Ladakh in these areas and the implications of nationhood and boundaries performed and experienced within them. Two areas that remain less explored, however, are two that are perhaps most broadly considered as harbingers of peace and reconciliation – tourism and trade (Rummel 1979, Gartzke, 2007; Gelbman, 2010; Pratt and Liu, 2016). The following section will begin with an analysis of tourism and how it is affected by, or is itself affecting, border politics and experiences.

6. Bordering through the organisation of tourism

In 1949, following a ceasefire with Pakistan, the border between Ladakh and central Asia was closed by the Indian government, ending thousands of years of trade and mobility, cutting off the district from its main economic base and also limiting the possibilities of tourism to and through the area (Rizvi, 2011 [1983], p. 92). The region was only opened to tourists and other visitors in 1974 – a move that was, to quote Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991, p. 92) likely 'intended to place Ladakh firmly on the map as Indian territory'. Since then, the centre of the tourist industry in Ladakh has been Leh, reachable by flights during the short summer months, or by challenging roads at other times of the year. In 2018, Leh saw 3,27,366 visitors pass through – which was a 30% increase on the previous year (Press Trust of India, 20 January 2019). This is a remarkable number given that the region is mainly accessible in the summer months, and Leh only has a total population of 1,33,487 as per the 2011 census (Directorate of Census Operations, J&K, 2011, p. 12). Leh's expanding urban sprawl in the Himalayan mountains acts as a gateway to wider Ladakh for domestic and international tourists. While it is possible to access tourist sites and experiences in the Kargil block, accessing via road from Srinagar for example, the access routes to Leh are more reliable for reasons we shall return to shortly.

The dominance of modern tourism is highly visible on Leh's streets; the focal street running through the centre, main bazaar, is distinctive for the preponderance of shops selling pashmina shawls (a specialism of the region), Tibetan and other regional trinkets, and dried fruit and spices. Overlooked by the 16th century Leh Palace, this main street is also full of restaurants and cafes offering both local speciality food as well as northern and southern Indian dishes or Italian-style coffees to passing tourists. There are half a dozen roads connected this

main pedestrian artery, and these congested pathways are populated with hotels, tourism agencies, more eateries, shops and some markets.

While the Indian Government has enabled this industry to expand by opening the region to foreign visitors in 1974 and permitting civilian flights from 1979, they have not relinquished full control over mobility. For instance, while Leh town is free for tourists to roam around, many areas within an approximately 50-mile radius of the militarised borderlines between Pakistan and China are classed as 'protected areas' and require an Inner Line Permit (ILP) for Indian tourists or Protected Area Permit (PAP) for foreigners. Some areas still remain fully prohibited for entry. Until summer 2017, the permits were applied for through a government office situated next to the District Commission in the centre of Leh city and it could take a couple of days to process. Tourists would often then use this time to visit attractions, museums and shops in the centre. Aggarwal and Bhan (2009: 521) describe the ILP areas as largely restricted to outsiders – including international and domestic tourists, researchers and scientists – for 'security reasons' and note that they are 'characterised by a visible military presence' (see also: Deng, 2010). Some of the most famous tourist attractions in Ladakh, such as Pangong Lake (popularised by the 2009 Bollywood film '3 Idiots') and the Nubra Valley, require ILPs/PAPs for all visitors except permanent residents of J&K state. In summer 2017 this process went online, though it still requires administration from tour operators based in Ladakh to complete the process.

The ILP has its roots in British India, when the British developed the system to protect and monitor economic activity in its tea plantation regions (Aggarwal, 2004, loc.1074). In independent India the system has continued, particularly in the north east, for a range of reasons that include frontier security and the protection of land and the cultural and economic interests of the indigenous, tribal populations (Kurian, 2014, p. 46). In Ladakh, the ILP's purpose is security and its levels of restriction have peaked and troughed over the decades. For instance, the ILP for Indian tourists was abolished for areas such as the wider Nubra Valley in 2014, but then reinstated in 2017 for reasons that are unclear. Some form of permit has remained necessary for all foreign visitors since at least 1958, with the only group free to move without a permit (but with some form of ID) being permanent residents of J&K. Arguably, these ILP/PAP zones are not under threat of imminent attack, as there is a significant and inhospitable distance between these sites and the Chinese army – and the government actively and regularly shuts down tourist areas considered to be high risk, such as Kashmir Valley. There are, however, occasional standoffs between China and India over territory incursions along the wider contested borderline. The most significant recent incursion into Ladakh was in Depsang

Valley, Ladakh, in 2013, when the Chinese Army set up camp in the Aksai Chin area of the Line of Actual Control, a disputed territory between India and China (India Today, 31 July 2014). It was subsequent to this incursion that the Jammu and Kashmir state temporarily abolished the ILP for Indian tourists, suggesting that increased Indian tourist mobility in this area would enable a greater claim over the disputed territory. Debates over the ILP's effectiveness as a means of protecting the culture, land and/or security of an area remain inconclusive (Aggarwal, 2004, loc.1074). Nonetheless, what the ILP does represent is a form of mobility control and a performance of difference and separation.

Literature that examines confinement and the construction of difference emphasises that physical modes of state control, such as borders and fences, have all but disappeared and have been replaced by increasingly decentralised law and law enforcement that 'effectively produce experiences of confinement' through limiting mobility and disciplining lives (Pasquetti and Picker, 2017, p. 533). According to Darling (2016, p. 183), this type of disciplining includes '"top down" devolutions of authority to municipal levels and a "bottom-up" assertion of authority by municipalities in the form of local ordinances on migration'. In the former development, a variety of authorities, services and professionals are co-opted directly and indirectly into migration control (Darling, 2016, p. 184). Though these studies primarily concentrate on urban centres, they are instructive when examining remote urban and rural spaces, too.

In Ladakh, the 'co-opted' authorities and professionals include local government, tour operators, tour guides and guest house owners whom deal daily in the politics, bureaucracy and restrictions of ILPs/PAPs. For these Ladakhi tourism professionals, particularly during the busy summer months, their daily lives are entwined with the management of "bordering", i.e. the issuing and monitoring of border compliance. In peak season prior to the ILPs/PAPs going online, the queue of tour guides and travellers applying for a permit could be seen snaking outside of the office next to the District Commission headquarters. Importantly, this process and performance of "bordering" begins in Leh, long before tourists reach the restricted zones, as it is the urban centre where the visitors must first grapple with the imagination of border restrictions and the tour guides must process the papers and explain restrictions on mobility. For tourists, the ILP/PAP application and travel experience is one of peripheral-ness as they make a time-limited journey on the permission of the government to an officially demarcated borderland space. Unlike in some border tourist zones where the conflict is the attraction (see for example China/Taiwan and Israel/Palestine [Timothy, 2019; Gelbman, 2010]), in the border zones of Ladakh the natural landscape and cultural life of the villages are the draw. Thus, it is

the ILP/PAP itself, enacted through the practice of tourism, that serves as a reminder for residents and visitors of conflict, borders and separation.

This restriction of visitor mobility in the region and emphasis of Ladakh as a contested border conflict zone is reinforced by other displays of conflict and separation. For instance, alongside Ladakhi cultural monuments, a significant tourist attraction in the Leh block of Ladakh is the Hall of Fame Museum situated near Leh's airport terminal and a number of Indian military bases. This museum-cum-monument, currently ranked 4.5 out of 5 on TripAdvisor from over 1,600 reviews, charts both the modern history and ecology of Ladakh, and the Indian Army's multitude of military victories and displays of strength since Indian independence in 1947. It is maintained by the Indian Army and, among other displays, there are permanent information exhibitions on all of India's wars with China and Pakistan since independence, as well as an exhibition dedicated to displaying the uniforms and equipment of soldiers who are posted in the inhospitable glacial regions.

The name of the attraction itself is telling. The Hall of Fame museum is designed to inform and remind visitors about the Indian Army's presence and mission in the region and situates (celebrates, even) their role as the brave 'protectors' of Ladakh (Norzin, 2016, p. 83). It is also a conscious site of tourism: it is recommended in guidebooks, it is a stop on tour itineraries, it offers multiple opportunities to take photographs next to exhibits, and it has a gift shop with a variety of military- and Ladakh-related souvenirs for purchase. In this space it is possible to see the convergence of both industries as a form of 'militourism' (Teaiwa, 1999, p. 251; O'Dwyer, 2004, p. 36). In other words, military presence in Ladakh has not just enabled the opening of tourism in a politically sensitive territory, but with the museum in Leh, this militarism is presented an attraction in its own right – a narrative of heroism cultivated for tourism consumption in the gateway to the rest of Ladakh.

Building on the work of Carolyn O'Dwyer, Debbie Lisle (2016, p. 19) writes about the importance of the politics of "gazing" in tourist zones where there is a conflict history or present. 'What we see', Lisle writes, 'doesn't simply reflect reality but actually brings it into being'. In this heavily curated museum space and its surrounding grounds, tourist pleasure converges with military culture and tourists come to understand military exploits as deeply interwoven with the history, culture and terrain of the land they have come to explore for leisure. For instance, the museum's narration around the presence of the Indian Army in Ladakh post-1947 is situated in the longer history of Ladakh as a border conflict zone populated by communities and their 'warrior' soldiers – there are clothing displays of traditional Ladakhi

outfits alongside traditional 'warrior' uniforms, as well as Indian army military outfits later on in the museum's chronological displays. These visual politics are part of a saturation of meanings that, to quote Lisle (2016, p. 18), 'tap us into adjacent trajectories of colonial conquest, nation building, and tourist consumption', as well as reminding both visitors and locals that Ladakh is a space of border contestation, militarisation and separation. While not restricting or enabling economic mobility in the region like the ILP/PAP, it consciously contributes a reminder and justification of that reality.

In contrast, a quite different museum experience is offered in the centre of Leh in the Central Asian Museum, which opened in 2011. This museum was built using traditional Ladakhi techniques and materials to celebrate and educate visitors about Ladakh's historic trade and cultural links with Central Asia. It is a one-minute walk from the central bazaar, situated in the back alleys populated with traditional bakeries, and it consciously evokes Ladakh's historic cross-border interactions and history. The Museum's launch leaflet (Central Asian Museum, Leh, 2011) stated that:

> Like few other regions, Ladakh's culture has been shaped by the transmission of goods and ideas from such disparate regions as Tibet, Yarkand, Kashmir, Afghanistan and city states like Samarkand and Bukhara, connected by the various branches of the Silk Road. The political events of the mid-20th century in the region have put an end to cross-border trade for the time being, plunging Ladakh into relative geographic and cultural isolation. The Central Asian Museum Leh has been set up to commemorate this important facet of Ladakh's history, and to educate the public about it.

Over four floors if offers visitors information and artefacts from daily caravan life across Central Asia as connected to Ladakh.[7] A similarly-inspired, and slightly older, family-run museum also exists in Kargil: the Munshi Aziz Bhat Museum of Central Asian and Kargil Trade Artefacts, which is named after a prominent early 20th century trader and displays information and trade artefacts primarily recovered from the Aziz Bhat Sarai (a historic rest stop for traders). Taken together these civil society-founded heritage centres and tourist spaces can be seen to simultaneously contest and reinforce the conflict territoriality encapsulated in the Hall of Fame museum. On the one hand they are producing and curating cultural knowledge about Ladakh's cross-border peaceful interactions through displays of Silk Road artefacts and (hi)stories—consequently offering tourists an alternative history to the Indian Army-curated border conflict narratives of the Hall of Fame. The Central Asian Museum Leh in particular offers a dual resistance to a nationalistic "gaze", as it is consciously built in local a vernacular design as well as housing artefacts that tell a counter-nationalistic story. Indeed, the emphasis

on locality is central to such architecture (Urry, 2005 p.207). On the other hand, these two museums *reconfirm* separation and bordering by rooting trade mobilities and community connections as broken by 'political events' and therefore firmly in the past—thereby supporting the Hall of Fame's telling of Ladakh's present condition. The following section explores trade mobilities in the present in further detail.

7. Bordering through trade

As discussed, the location of Ladakh's two economic centres Kagil and Leh in the remote Himalayas, mean that they are hard to reach. In fact, during winter it is hardly possible to travel to or between them by road, creating a feeling of isolation and disconnect of the local population from the rest of the country. This remoteness is partly the result of various international conflicts, and contrasts with the historical feeling of centrality discussed in the previous section that originates from Ladakh's historic location as a hub for trade on the Silk Road. However, since Partition—and with ongoing conflict in Kashmir, enmity with China and China's occupation of Tibet—the major land routes to Central Asia have been closed off. As a consequence, Ladakh has had to economically re-orientate itself towards India rather than being part of a global economy and Central Asian community. Trade across the external borders with China and Pakistan is strictly prohibited.

This poses major economic and livelihood challenges to the local population in both districts. For instance, the seasonal and political borders mean that traders have to stock goods before the winter months as they are hardly able to get additional products into the city once the snow closes the pass, which can be as early as October and often lasts until April. That not only means that small-scale traders have to take loans to pay for goods upfront,[8] but it also has implications for consumers as certain products are not available during the winter, and prices increase to reflect the higher transportation costs. This is particularly true for fresh food products such as vegetables and meat (that have to be replaced with pickled and frozen goods for most of the year). The situation is better in Leh district due to the airport and regular flights that arrive and depart during winter. In Kargil, however, community leaders have linked the isolation to another major problem in the region that affects the local population: the local perception is that people from Kargil die on average 20 years earlier than people living in neighbouring Jammu.[9] This, civil society actors argue, is a direct consequence of the lack of fresh fruit, access to healthcare facilities and medication and oxygen during winter.

Thus, Kargil is disproportionately affected by the seasonal isolation and the closed border with Pakistan compared to Leh. As discussed, all political offices are situated in the Leh

district contributing to Kargil's feeling of marginality. Kargil is the weaker socio-economic district, as most of the tourism industry remains in Leh. In contrast to Leh, Kargil's airport is currently only used as a military airfield and not open for commercial flights, making roads the most important, and often only way, to get tourists, people and goods in and out of Kargil. This uneven access to economic possibilities and development is a major point of frustration for the trading community in Kargil who feel that the community in Leh is privileged with better opportunities and infrastructure.[10] This plays into the perceived unequal treatment of majority-Buddhist Leh and majority-Muslim Kargil, and the connected tensions between the two communities (see also Hussain, 2013).

Furthermore, Kargil is directly situated on the Line of Control (LoC), and the closed border (Skardu/ Kargil border) with Pakistan is less than five kilometres away. Much of the political economy scholarship regards 'the border' as an economic opportunity (e.g. Bøas, 2014: 7). In particular in situations of conflict, smuggling and other informal and formal activities increase in border regions. However, the India-Pakistan and India-China borders in Ladakh are heavily securitised and offer limited opportunities for informal and illicit trade. Thus, the isolation is not just a consequence of the geo-political location and seasonal borders of Ladakh but also the governance of trade and infrastructure development in the area. People in the region have demanded change to address this. For instance, in 2017, the Indian Home Minister came to Kargil and a range of civil society organisations (such as trader associations) demanded two major changes for the region: First, better connectivity and road infrastructure between Srinagar and Kargil, and second the opening of the road to Skardu crossing. While the city of Skardu faces the same issues of road connectivity as Kargil, Skardu has an airport with daily connections to Islamabad ensuring that more products and medication remain available during the winter months on the other side of the Line of Control. Trade across the LoC thus could have a major positive impact on trading options and access to food for Kargilis.

This demand for the so-called Line of Control Trade, and its denial by the Indian government, has to be situated in the wider political context of J&K state. At other points along the same border, the Indian and Pakistani governments have agreed to allow trade across the dividing line.[11] These economic activities are used as confidence-building measures between people and the states, underlying the importance of trade and economic activities for peace at the local level and national level. The London-based peacebuilding NGO International Alert (2015, p. 9) suggests that "the theory of change underlying the strategy to facilitate trade across conflict as a peacemaking strategy is that trade fosters interdependence between people and companies across the conflict divide: the parties come to value their (repaired) relationships

and they are more likely than in the absence of trade to gravitate towards a 'win-win' solution". However, trade remains prohibited at the Skardu/ Kargil border and citizens perceive the refusal as unfair, as several LoC trading points have opened in the Kashmir region "where the violence is a problem but not in Ladakh were people live peacefully".[12] This is particularly frustrating for the communities of Kargil, as opening the border would dramatically change the experience of food shortage in winter.

The experience of hardship, in particular in the Kargil region, is not inevitable but politically designed. To alleviate the experience of food austerity caused by a closed border, the Indian army brings supplies into Kargil via their airfields during the winter months, taking over the role as the visible carer for the local population, and making the distant capital Delhi a more present trade partner and deliverer of goods than the nearby Pakistan. As well as being a material lifeline for the inhabitants of Kargil, this serves as a (performative) reminder to Ladakhis that they are isolated and dependent on the Indian state.

Apparently responding to growing criticism and pressure from the region, and traders in particular, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a new infrastructure project – the construction of the Zoji La tunnel to connect Ladakh better with the rest of India (rather than engaging with debates around LoC trade with Pakistan).[13] As such, the move can not only be seen as an internal attempt to better integrate Ladakh with the rest of India, but also as a security move to be able to reach the peripheral areas of the country quicker in situations of national emergencies. While India's infrastructure programme is years away from completion it serves the narrative that the Indian State "is doing something" for Ladakh and—similar to the state's "flag-planting" through certain tourist activities—reinforces the contested area as Indian.

8. Conclusion

This paper contributes to the 'spatial turn' in peace and conflict studies by investigating the (re)construction of national borders through the governance of tourism and trade in contested territories, using Ladakh as a case study. While dominant strands of the literature suggest that tourism and trade are "peace inducing" and break down borders, we demonstrate that national borders in Ladakh are in fact constructed and reconstructed through the Indian state's governance of these economic activities. We therefore suggest that the governance of tourism and trade can contribute to the spatial organistion of territories in additional ways to those usually discussed. For example, a traditional reading of the opening out and growth of tourism in Ladakh would regard the process as a sign of stability, peace and mobility in the region

(Timothy, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). However, we have shown how state-imposed tourist mobility restrictions, the co-option of tourism professionals as migration enforcers, and the development of 'militourism' instead reinforce national borders and emphasise the ongoing conflicts with China and Pakistan. Similarly, Ladakh is typically framed as a more "open" region compared to Kashmir Valley, yet we have shown how the region's restricted cross-border trade and the government's rhetorical commitment to domestic connectivity and infrastructure projects actually reinforces state territoriality for the Ladakhi population (arguably worsening their socio-economic position in the process). This article thus made two main contributions: one to the regional literature on performance of Indian state power and authority in the South Asian borderlands, and one to the conceptual understanding of how tourism and trade can contribute to the governance process of conflict-affected spaces.

Frist, it is possible to see a range of direct and indirect layers of border-making by the Indian government—not just through the maintenance of a physical frontier, but also by the (re)construction and governance of tourist and trade activities and mobility. This manifestation of state territorial strategy through the organisation of tourism and trade is reinforcing the identity and status of Ladakh as a conflict borderland for locals and visitors. Moreover, as tourism and trade are ostensibly outward-facing activities (whether they are restricted or enabled), the Indian state's performance of sovereignty through them serves a dual geopolitical purpose of asserting Ladakh as Indian to both internal and external audiences in the midst of a contested border zone. In highlighting these processes, our findings expand the vibrant regional literature which explores the presence and performance of the Indian state in Ladakh and other contested borderland areas in South Asia (Aggarwal, 2004; Aggarwal and Bhan, 2009; Cons and Sanyal, 2013; Smith, 2009; Van Schendel & De Maaker, 2014). The paper adds tourism and trade to the variety of other spatialised practices through which the Indian state reinforces authority in contested border zones.

Second and following from the above, our findings highlighted two governance functions of tourism and trade that remain conceptually and empirically underexplored. The first function is outward facing and concerned with the integrity and (international) visibility of borders. As discussed above, our findings suggest that we can read both the opening for tourism and the restriction of trade as mechanisms to reinforce the visibility of state borders. We support scholars' assertions that state regulations on tourist and trade mobility (such as tourist ILPs/PAPs and the prohibition of cross-border trade) can render borders as visible as physical demarcations. The second function is inward facing by creating experiences of the state and nation despite a geographical disconnect. It is possible to observe this through

different activities: through the promise of infrastructure projects connecting the peripheries with the political centre; through providing aid and resources in situations of crisis and isolation, and through constructing ideas of nationhood through attractions tourist spaces and symbols of sovereignty (such as the Hall of Fame museum in Ladakh). These arguments connect to the growing critical literature on the (spatial) governance of tourist activities and their effects on nationalism and state territoriality generally (Pretes, 2003; Gelbman, 2010; Timothy, 2019) and extends these claims to the literature on trade.

It is therefore important that scholars take a spatial approach to the study of economic activities in addition to the prominent, albeit important, debates on the peace impacts of a booming sector or the uneven distribution of benefits from tourism and trade that currently dominate the peace and conflict literature. While this paper offers insights in relation to a single case study, our findings point to the necessity to undertake a more critical reading of the governance of tourist and trade spaces in other conflict-affected societies to understand the diverse and complex roles they can play to organise and claim contested spaces.

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[1] As of 31 October 2019, Ladakh was separated from J&K State and is now a Union Territory under the direct rule of Delhi. We will discuss this further in the methodology section.

[2] The social boundaries enacted and maintained in this region through the governance of social and economic activities in relation to faith are certainly a key part of the wider processes of bordering in Ladakh and are explored in the rich literature on the region (van Beek, 2000; Aggarwal, 2004; Aggarwal and Bhan, 2009; Smith, 2009). While this paper primarily focuses on how territorial borders are enacted and maintained through the geographical manifestations of tourism and trade, we hope that it provides a springboard for further research on the community-level social dynamics of these activities and subsequent perceptions of borders.

[3] For a comprehensive discussion on the everyday in International Relations and international interventions see Mitchell (2011) for ideas on the economic everyday Distler et al (2018).

[4] The idea that development and economic growth lead to peace has been heavily contested in recent years, pointing out that it also often leads to inequality and new conflicts (see for example Distler et al., 2018 or Pugh et al, 2006).

[5] Local BJP figure, personal interview, *23 June 2018, Kargil.*

[6] Professional from the tourist industry, personal interview*, 23 June 2018, Kargil.*

[7] Funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, J&K state, it was conceived and designed by a collaboration of local and international heritage actors, artisans and volunteers (Central Asian Museum, Leh, 2011). These included: The Tibet Heritage Fund, J&K Tourism, Ladakhi historian Abdul Ghani Sheikh, and the School of Architecture, Berlin University of Technology among others.

[8] Interview with small-scale traders Kargil and Leh, May and June 2018

[9] Interview with religious leader, Kargil, 21 June 2018

[10] Local BJP figure, personal interview, *23 June 2018, Kargil.*

[11] LoC trade is heavily volatile and depends on the current political situation. Trade can be, and has been suspended at several occasions, by any side. It has last been suspended in April 2019 following the Pulwama attacks.

[12] Interview with Official Representative, *Ready Made Goods Association, Kargil, 21 June 2018.*

[13] This is also seen as a move to limit China's and Pakistan's growing influence in the region, and counter the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – a rework of the old Silk Route that currently leaves India out but will run through parts of Pakistan-administrated J&K.