CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

> Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living
> on the borderlines of the 'present'.
>
> Homi Bhabha (1994: 1)

The proposed dams to be built along the course of the Salween River on the Thai-Burmese border are controversial in nature, and involve five key groups of actors. The first group of actors includes mainly the Thai and Burmese states, but even the Chinese state too. On the one hand, the Thai government has attempted to control the flow and movement of people around the borderlands by the Salween River, whilst the Burmese government has tried to penetrate and control the eastern part of the country, that previously controlled by ethnic minority armed groups. The Chinese state, on the other hand, has played the role of financial donor, through the presence of its corporations and companies.

The second group of actors involved in the Salween dam projects includes the supra-state organizations, with the two main organizations being the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The MRC takes up the position of an intergovernmental agency, engaging in development of the Mekong region through the setting up of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) programs,[1] while the ADB represents an International Financial Institution (IFI), acting as a donor and providing technical and supervisory support to the GMS programs.

The third group of actors includes the transnational corporations (TNCs) and state-owned enterprises, some of which are Thai state-owned enterprises such as the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand International Co., Ltd. (EGATi), which is a subsidiary of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), the

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[1] The GMS programs encouraged state-led cooperative economic development among the six countries through trade liberalization. It has been promoted by the ADB since 1992 (Asian Development Bank 2007; Sokhen and Sunada 2008; Wong 2003). The program was launched mainly to enhance economic cooperation, covering nine priority sectors: agriculture, energy, environment, human resource development, investment, telecommunications, tourism, transport infrastructure, and transport and trade facilitation (See more detail on ADB's website: http://www.adb.org/).

Chinese state-owned enterprise Sinohydro Corporation, and other transnational companies such as the MDX company and the Burmese International Group of Entrepreneurs (IGE Co.). These corporations are quite powerful players in relation to the issue of dams around the Salween borderlands.

The fourth group of actors includes the transnational advocacy organizations (international NGOs and transnational NGOs (ethnic groups in exile); Thai and local NGOs), who act as human rights as well as environmental activists. Many dams and transmission lines are being built in this area in a manner that involves severe human rights abuses and environmental degradation (Akimoto 2004; Butler 2004; EarthRights International 2005; Gray 2006; The Karen Women's Organization 2004), and as a result the Salween Watch coalition[2] was formed in February 1999 in order to monitor these projects outside of state control, to voice people's complaints.

The fifth group of actors has local residents as its members, whom I will term the 'border people', those who inhabit the Thai-Burmese border zones. These people are concerned with the issues of livelihoods and security within the area, for they believe that the Salween dams will endanger their lives and security. As a result, they are engaged in a campaign, as part of a transnational social movement, to stand against the Salween dam projects.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

On July 11th, 2009, a public forum held on the issue of the Salween dams took place at Muang Mean village,[3] which is located alongside the Salween River. I had the chance to observe this event during my field trip to Saw Myin Dong village[4] and the meeting was attended by hundreds of people, including those from ethnic minority groups (mostly Karen)[5] living in villages alongside the Thai-Burmese border,

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[2] Salween Watch is a coalition of organizations and NGOs working on Burma-related and environmental issues that primarily aims to prevent the building of harmful hydro-electric power dams in the Salween basin. Group members try to inform and raise awareness among local communities and the international community about the impacts of the proposed dam projects.

[3] So as to ensure that this ethnography will not bring more trouble to the local people as a result of my work, their names and the place names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

[4] I was engaging with them when working as an NGO activist.

[5] There are many Karen languages, the Sgaws, Pwos, Kayahs and Pa-Os, who speak of Karen dialects rather than Karen languages. There is no single Karen language (Renard 1980: 5).

including Bon Bea Luang and Saw Myin Dong villages, Burmese Karens[6] who had crossed the border, as well as other Thais, foreigners, soldiers, Thai NGOs and EGAT staff members. The meeting had been initiated by transnational civil society groups undertaking voluntary collective action across the nation-state boundaries, all in pursuit of what they deem to be the wider public interest (Price 2003: 580). During the meeting, the border dwellers expressed their anxiety about the livelihoods that would be affected by the dam projects, and their view was that the building of the proposed dam in their area should be halted. This particular dam, due to its exclusionary development process, is likely to deny border people access to and use of resources such as water, fish, riverbank land and forests.

The Salween dams, namely Tasang Dam, Ywathit Dam, Weigyi Dam, Dargwin Dam, and Hatgyi Dam, are being built to produce hydro-electricity, which is to be sold to Thailand and other countries in the region. In a commercial sense, the Salween River is being put up for sale as part of the power market in the region, for in a sense, building a dam turns a river into a commodity, so that it is merely seen as a resource – one which is absent of human history, and one that exists purely for the production of electricity. This represents a process which may be referred to as the commodification of nature (Smith 1984), one "organized in the form of buying and selling" (Polanyi 1980: 73) and which is related to the state practice of "territoriality"[7] (Sack 1986) or state territorialization[8] (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001; Peluso 2005).

According to Sack, territoriality is the attempt by an individual or group, such as state, to affect influence or control people, phenomena and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area (Sack 1986). Thereafter, the

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[6] Some Karens in Burma have been in rebellion against the Burmese government since 1949 (Renard 1980: xxiv).

[7] This is not an instinct or drive, but a rather complex strategy, and the device through which people construct and maintain spatial organization. It is a powerful strategy to control people and things by controlling area (Sack 1986).

[8] However, the role and process of state territorialization is not static and unilinear. It is adaptable in a practical way to think that the process of state territorialization (Peluso 2005) can be shifted in diverse ways, which is becoming more and more important in the contemporary debate during an era of globalization, in which two different lines of anthropological critique have been taking place. For a long time, the debate among academics was about how much power the state has in-hand (or how much state authority remains in all state operations). First, scholars insisted that the regional and global forms of connectedness that led to nation-state de-territorialization were still very much relevant (Appadurai 1996; 2001; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Kearney 1995). Alternatively, scholars emphasize that the reversal of state de-territorialization is leading to a period of "re-territorialization" in which states try to regain control (Ong 1999a; Peluso 2005; Pitch 2007).

geographic area is turned into commodities for trade on the particular markets. However, Peluso and Vandergeest assert that the state is not a monolithic or rigid apparatus,[9] and so in exercising its power, the state operationalizes power differently, and gains a degree of legitimacy from the use of global discourses (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001), such as the development discourse (Escobar 1995; Gupta 1998), in order to adapt to local conditions.[10] This is the process by which the modern state[11] (Weber 1958) has gradually expanded its inordinate power over the natural resources and populations within its nation boundaries, and this view has been developed and applied in order to understand the relationship between the state and society. However, the state's perceptions and analysis are limited to the national level. Within this approach, the Salween River has been made available for purchase, as it has the potential to produce electricity as a commodity in a neo-liberal and transnational context.

Some thinkers, especially Ong, called attention to the ways in which industrializing states in Southeast Asia have reproduced sovereignty, which is supreme authority within a territory, in a flexible way, as a response and challenge to globalization (Ong 1999b; 2006). Ong urges us to think of sovereignty as an ideology that expresses the shifting relations between the state, the market and society (Ong 1999a; 1999b). Ong asserts that, rather than accepting claims about the end of sovereignty, we need to explore mutations in terms of the ways in which localized political and social organizations set the terms for and are constitutive of a domain of social existence (Ong 1999b: 214-15). Thus, graduated sovereignty refers to practices

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[9] The main point of state territorialization, according to Vandergeest and Peluso is that modern states have specified territory in order to control natural resources and expropriate rather than to control people. However, it has affected people's ability to control resources utilization (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; 2001).

[10] Great Britain hired a German forester, Dietrich Brandis, in 1856 to go to British India (British Burma was a part of it) to head the Forest Department. In 1896, the Thai government hired a British forester to head the Royal Forest Department. In this sense, Scott asserts that the politics of modern forestry in Southeast Asia are derived directly from Germany's imperialism (Scott 1998). However, Peluso and Vandergeest argue that the states have rather adjusted the colonial forestry system in accordance with the specific location. For example, this approach allowed Thailand to use a modern forestry system to get rid of communists (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001).

[11] According to Weber, the state is a human community that successfully claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force in a given territory (Weber 1958: 78).

of the state in relation to neo-liberalism (Ong 2006).[12] In Southeast Asia, state power and authority come together in special economic zones in order to meet the capitalist requirements of foreign corporations (Ong 2000). Supra-state regulations, such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Thailand and China, have been re-created in the neo-liberal context along the Mekong trade border (Walker 2000), while migrants from Burma have been subjugated by Thai laws relating to citizenship[13] at the borders (Pitch 2007), and in the context of the regionalization of development.

The dynamism and flexibility of state sovereignty has been revealed, and as Ong (1999a; 1999b; 2000), Walker (2000) and Pitch (2007) point out, the act of re-territorialization may be seen as states trying to gain more and more power, develop regulations and increase their legitimacy when controlling the movement of people and cultures across nation-state boundaries.[14] In the case of the Salween borderlands, the work of the TNCs has been linked to nation-states in terms of operating commercial logging activities, particularly during the colonial period, and the

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[12] There are two aspects to graduated sovereignty as a product of state-globalization interactions: (a) the differential state treatment of segments of population in relation to market calculations, thus intensifying the fragmentation of citizenship already pre-formed by social distinctions of race, ethnicity, gender, class and region, and (b) the state-transnational network whereby some aspects of state power and authority are taken up by foreign corporations located in special economic zones (Ong 2000: 57).

[13] The necessary framework for citizenship is the sovereign, territorial state. The legal status of citizen is essentially the formal expression of membership in a polity that has definite territorial boundaries within which citizens enjoy equal rights and exercise their political agency. In other words, citizenship, both as a legal status and as an activity, is thought to presuppose the existence of a territorially bounded political community, which extends over time and is the focus of a common identity (Leydet 2011).

[14] In the last twenty years, many social theorists have started paying attention to the widespread phenomena of rapid flows and movements of people and cultures across the borders of nation-states and cultural boundaries (Appadurai 1991; 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). These transnational flows and our perceptions of culture have been changing. Nowadays, culture is increasingly perceived as an unbounded entity. There are few borders to distinguish people and things spatially. At the same time, the concept of transnationalism is becoming popular as an analytical tool to understand such phenomena in a globalizing world (Appadurai 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Kearney 1995; Ong 1999a). However, flexibility in the state sovereignty approach involves analyzing how states attempt to exercise their power, relying more on the social structure dimension. Instead of looking at the global process of transnationalization in a unilinear way, in which globalization is seen as the central force of the modern world - largely disconnected from specific national territories (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Kearney 1995), we could really situate its process in a context of dynamism and possibility of difference. As Gupta and Ferguson assert, on the one hand, the transnational process opens up room for the nation-state to continually maneuver the monopoly on ideas about national community and the moral claim over resources (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 50). On the other hand, these are the creations of negotiation between nation-states and various transnationalized groupings. In so doing, the potential of multiple agencies is revealed (Appadurai 1991; Decha 2003; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Malkki 1997).

proposed dam projects in the 20th century, and these projects have helped form the practice of the commodification of nature around the borderlands. In order to do this, states have regained the capacity to monopolize and enclose natural resources, and to dispossess local people.[15] In this sense, re-territorialization is part of what can be called "frontier capitalization," in the sense that where states have previously territorialized, capitalism re-territorializes by turning resources in certain areas into commodity capital, for corporate profit or more broadly to facilitate accumulation (Hall, et al. 2011: 13; Nevins and Peluso 2008). This re-territorialization represents a process of enclosure and dispossession; implicit in the way it is undertaken by states and/or corporations, or by capital (Hall, et al. 2011: 13). This represents a kind of uneven form of development (Smith 1984), one that distorts access to resources in an unfair manner and in which certain people enjoy benefits "at the expense of the rest" (Polanyi 1980: 68).

These are difficult issues to tackle when states do not have complete sovereignty over the ambiguous frontiers existing in a transnational context; however, states and TNCs strategically join together in order to enforce their collective wills. The states' aims are to territorialize and take control of uncontrolled frontiers, and capital's will is to commoditize resources for trade in the open market. Their collective purposes are then combined, so that they both receive the benefits accruing, such as the capitalization that has occurred along the Salween borderlands. Even though state power is unclear in the Thai-Burmese border zones, I argue that the states involved have played a crucial role in driving forward global capitalism and supporting its development. This is in contrast with the notion of neo-liberalism, whereby the global capitalist market is supposed to work by itself as a free capital market mechanism.

The production of nature often involves the extensive seizure of land and resources, and the exploitation of people (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 12). Because the Salween borderlands are ambiguous frontiers, more and more the Burmese and/or Thai states, and/or the TNCs, exemplify the intensification of commodity production

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[15] Enclosure involves appropriating land, resources and people, both to turn them into commodities and to free or create a labor force to work and make capitalist accumulation possible (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 3).

in the area. The border people who live in the Salween area have been excluded from these resources, such as the forests – which have been turned into timber, and the river – which has been turned into a hydro-electricity. The border people keep saying that the proposed dams will affect and disrupt their livelihoods, or even displace them from their homes, and by displaying concern about their livelihood security, they are also producing "nature" as resource-based livelihood. The Salween forests and the River are sources of livelihood security that is a complete contrast to the commodification of nature by states and/or the TNCs. It is therefore a contestation of the meaning of place; the way space is organized or appropriated by the border people at the margin of the state.

In brief, I am concerned with border people's bargaining and negotiation processes, those that take place beyond national boundaries and allow a broader possibility for them to invent a strategy which is not limited to within the boundary of the nation-state, but functions as a link between diverse groups of people, from many places and on different scales – to enhance their network and strengthen their fight for a common goal. As Horstmann points out, the borderlands provide states with a privileged position; to discipline and survey their populations as well as the practices used by the people to resist them, which include the flexibility shown in affiliation networks spanning two or more countries. Importantly, he strongly urges us not to ignore the capacity of local people or border people and to take into account the borderlands as active areas whose identity is made and transformed by border communities who are able to negotiate the highly ambiguous space at the frontier (Horstmann 2006b: 6, 22). My research also draws on this theme of transnationalism, in which the central concern is the potential of local people to create and formulate a social movement on the Thai-Burmese border, so as to serve their purpose and their struggle for survival.

Since the commodification of the Salween forests and rivers is about conflicting access to resources, my research is based on a political ecology approach,[16] which I use in order to explore the political and ecological dynamics of producing nature at the border zone. Meanwhile, if states and/or TNCs compete for

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[16] The main focus of the political ecology approach is conflict over access to environmental resources (Blaikie 1985; Bryant 1998; Moore 1993).

control in terms of access to resources for trade, the border people compete for control in terms of access to resources for their livelihoods. This research focuses on nature, commodities and people living around the Salween borderlands, within the context of neo-liberalism, and where a number of stakeholders are involved. Thus, the issues and questions posed by people's everyday survival struggles – as strategies, are the central points of this study.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

My research studies the frontier of environmental politics at the Thai-Burmese border, which runs along the Salween River and where controversy has arisen around the proposed building of dams, those built within the framework of energy security across the Southeast Asian countries (Agence France Presse 2007; Akimoto 2004; Apinya 2007a; Apinya 2007b; Cho 2008; Gray 2006; International Rivers 2009; Kultida and Praiwan 2003; Living River Siam, et al. 2008; Piyaporn 2007; Sai Silp 2007; TERRA 2005; TERRA 2006; The Epoch Times 2004; Tunya 2007; Wong 2003). My research pays particular attention to the process of negotiation carried out between the border people and other agencies, the ways in which these actors have contested the meaning of place – in particular the Salween forests and rivers, and how transnational advocacy activism has arisen at the borderlands, through collaborations and articulations, leading to the formulation of a social movement. This is a form of collaboration among groups of people that has taken place on different scales, ranging from those people living at the border, to international NGOs and exiled NGOs, Thai and local NGOs, as well as academics and intellectuals.

In terms of rhetoric on the ground, the border people, who are active and have emotional experience, have tried to create a negotiated space in order to deal with the various actors on the one hand, whilst on the other have articulated with the everyday violence and cultural politics they have encountered. Thus, I perceive them as actors who have ability and creativity within a framework of multi-faceted relationships "embedded in the mundane practices of everyday life" (Escobar 2005: 302), rather than as passive actors under the control of those above. I see this relationship as a real face-to-face negotiation between local and global perspectives, one in which different worldviews are engaged in a struggle for an interpretation of nature, the politics of

which engenders different kinds of movements and resistance in the Salween borderlands.

In order to understand how and to what degree border people can survive along the Thai-Burmese border and their ability to articulate the insecurity of life there and negotiate with multiple fields of power relations, where transnational apparatus manipulates economic integration or regionalization so as to ensure regional energy security, I propose answering the following set of research questions:

1. How does frontier capitalization work in the Salween borderlands?

2. How have the border people transformed their border livelihoods into a border identity?

3. What everyday life practices have the border people used to deal with the conflicts taking place?

This study will enhance our understanding of the process of capitalization and social movements taking place in and around the borderlands, within the transnational contexts of culture, power and place. In this regard, the interaction of transnational apparatus, state sovereignty and global-local articulation has created a contradiction between development and violence. In the meantime, these contradictions have opened-up strategic sites of contestation within which local people have been able to negotiate for a greater role in the decision-making process regarding river ecosystem management and development.

1.3 Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review

As stated above, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between nature, commodities and people in the contemporary neo-liberal period. In light of this objective, I will analyze the commodity production and locate the anti-Salween dam campaign as a transnational social movement at the margin of the state, in an area where border people make a living and have to deal with various actors. This section is divided into two sub-topics and deals with a review of the related studies and concepts. The first part contains a review of the theory of practice as the starting point for my theoretical background, and then carry out a review of the four main concepts that underpin this study: borders, the commodification of nature,

thirdspace and collaborative articulation, while in the second part I will elaborate upon the relevant literature on borderlands and other literature related to my case study.

1.3.1 Theory of Practice

Practice is, basically, always connected to the idea of space, which may; therefore, be termed a "space of practice." According to Bakhtin, practice is situated in a particular context, so the space of practice, for Bakhtin, means practice in the space of dialogue (Bakhtin 1993). On the one hand, Bakhtin's idea of life as an 'event' is very close to Heidegger's idea of "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 1962). For Heidegger, a human being is never directly in the world except as being an existent in the middle of a world amongst other thing or by way of being in some particular circumstance (Hornby 2012). Life can be comprehended only as an ongoing event, and not as a given, and Bakhtin further says that "My participation transforms every manifestation of myself (feeling, desire, mood, thought) into my own actively answerable deed" (Bakhtin 1993: 56-57). Therefore, "being-as-event" has to link thoughts and acts together, for being is always communicating,[17] and communication for him is about "I relate to other" ('I-other relations'). His epistemology is *dialogical,* in which participative thinking and acting requires an engaged and embodied relation to the others, and to the world at large (Gadiner 2000: 54). On the other hand, Bakhtin's idea of communication or dialogism is very close to Wittgenstein's idea of rule following (Wittgenstein 1971). Wittgenstein asserts that, it is hopeless if we try to detach thoughts and acts, focusing on the participative thinking and performed acts, which means that, whatever we think or act, it has to be

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[17] The reality of human beings, for Bakhtin, is our embodied existence within the everyday life-world. Our relation to others and the world is necessarily embodied, situated in concrete time/space, and saturated with normative evaluations (Bakhtin 1993). He has stressed the situated and embodied character of lived existence and its consequences for ethics and aesthetics. Condition is inherent in the very act of being human. Being is properly understood as an open process of axiological accomplishment, a continuous activity of creating existential meaning. We always engage with other persons within the life-world, it would be incomprehensible to place the entire world in the consciousness of another human being who is so manifestly himself a mere particle of the macrocosm. The process of value creation could not take place outside of the 'contraposition' of self and other, in which incarnate subjects live their lives in distinct times and places, but co-participate in a shared life-world and act to 'consummate' each other's life narrative by providing an exotopic viewpoint, a 'surplus of vision' (Gadiner 2000: 53-56).

a form of communication or a relation of meaning. An act is not an individual act alone, or separate from other, and a thought is not an abstract idea. Whenever we communicate, the meaning is not abstract; it is a meaning interaction. When we put the meaning into a communication, the meaning can vary, depending on the situation (Bakhtin 1993). Bakhtin ended up with the concept of *heteroglossia*, which means the multiform speech genres and modes of discourse found in the everyday life-world (Gadiner 2000: 60).

In examining the practice of the border people's identification with a specific situation related to a certain relationship – a power relationship – I am concerned with the dialogue taking place at a particular 'moment' within the transnational social movement, as part of their activism at the Salween borderlands, the location that has created their identities.

1. The Frontier/Border Clash

In this section I will review the concept of 'borders' and highlight their implications for my study. Foucault asserts that the sovereign power of a nation-state in the modern age is based on fixed and clear territory and boundary order (Foucault 1997c). Therefore, a border is conceived as a bounded entity that allows a state to generate territorial sovereignty over subjects within its boundary. According to Donnan and Wilson, there are three elements to a border: juridical borderlines, agents and institutions of the state, and frontiers. The juridical borderline separates and joins the state, while agents and institutions of the state demarcate and sustain the border, and are found most often in border areas but also often penetrate deep into the territory of the state. The frontier itself is a territorial zone of varying width which stretches across and away from state borders. Within the frontier area, people negotiate a variety of behaviors and meanings associated with membership of their nations and states.[18] A frontier is thus the expression of the spatial limits of state

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[18] Eventually, boundary refers to the territorial limit of a modern state. However, Kristoff argues that a state boundary is not the end of a state's political power. It is the agent of the state's continual expansion: it is at the forefront of the state's role with its neighbors (Kristoff 1959). Frontier is used in the sense of "outer-oriented, which denotes where the state power extends. It is not the end, but rather the beginning of the state in terms of knowledge, expanding into the realm of darkness and of the unknown" (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 48). For example, Leach's work is a precise case showing the difference between frontier and border (Leach 1973). Leach argues that the spatial ordering and

power, the manifestation of political control and an indicator of changes in political power within and between states (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 15-16, 46). In other words, physical space is very important for spatial management, and resources at the boundary become the heart of the art and science of government. It sounds as if the real borders such as a geo-body[19] (Thongchai 1994) exist to divide one adjacent state from another, or divide them both from us. In this sense, a border can be conceptualized using two terms: institution and process. As Donnan and Wilson mention, a border, in an institutional sense, refers to the territorial limit of a modern state's boundary, and in an inner-oriented sense, indicates the end of a nation, creating territorial sovereignty over subjects within its boundary. However, in terms of process, it is always changed and re-made; it is not a complete social production process, but an ongoing process, infused with tension at all times (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 5-6, 48).

Drawing on its conceptualization as an institution and process, I want to focus on the tension between frontiers and borders. The role of Thailand's border has structurally changed from time to time. The situation within its territory is that the juridical borderline was settled some time ago. Even if it functioned politically to prevent the flow of political ideology across countries during the cold war period, its role has changed so that now it has more of an economic function – during the neo-liberal period. The political border; however, is being transformed by the forces of

political dynamic of pre-colonial Shan polities and their relations with the hill people, differ distinctively from the modern European notions of nation-states bounded by frontiers and exercising exclusive sovereignty over their subjects (Tambiah 2002: 122). Colonizer states used a frontier line to classify ethnic groups, which in Burma proper was a zone Burmese people lived in, and non-Burma proper was a zone of 'non-Burman people' (Leach 1973).

[19] The main debate revolves around the question of what the border exactly means and its implication to people. From his notion of imagined community, Anderson suggests that nation is an imagination and is generally constructed without the primordial sort. It is the product of language in public sphere at the modern time (Anderson 1983). However, Thongchai argues that Anderson's imagined community actually needs mediators; technologies (not ordinary languages but mapping) in operation. It becomes geo-body of nationhood which was created in friction or tension of old and new idea. It is not only positive identification that considers positively any natural qualification of us, but it also has a negative one that identifies characteristics which do not belong to us (Thongchai 1994: 15-16).

Nevertheless, Pitch asserts that Thongchai's geo-body of nation does not cover all issues in border study. Within borderlands, the cultural politics, identity or discourse analysis which focus on only border-making and division of state's sovereignty are not enough to understand modern states. Instead, the border people have to be seen in the analysis of the relationship between state borders in terms of political power and bodies (Pitch 2007; 2008). Pitch maintains that the border is on the body. By creating the regime of border partial citizenship, in the context of political economy of regionalization, the nation-state still has some abilities to control its people and to legitimize territory.

neo-liberalism – its role has been influenced by its new economic function, to open up economic space. Thus, the border now tends to support cooperation among states rather than separation (Battersby 1999). Its previous role has had to be set aside to create the conditions for its new function – as a site of global flows, of economy and cultures. The economic role of the border is increasing, while its political role is diminishing, and the attempts to transform and liberate the Thai border, through regional integration, can be seen in the economic cooperation and development of what is called the "GMS programs" (Asian Development Bank 2009), including the GMS Power Grid, to which the proposed Salween dam projects are linked (International Rivers 2009; Shining Som 2009; Wong 2003).

In contrast, the Burmese frontier represents the process of the expansion of a political entity, during a stage in which the Burmese nation-state is still being established. According to Rajah, the situation within Burma's territory is itself a frontier, one which has not exactly set the juridical borderline as yet, for it is a zone of ethno-nationalist movements against the formation of the Burmese nation-state (Rajah 1990; Smith 1991; 2002). As a result, Burma's frontier regions represent an unsettling project, and not only the unsettling project of border making; there is a kind of unsettling character about the border itself, and this is reflected in the border's ambiguity, with the result that the Salween borderlands are exceptional – the situation there is not as simple as the "borderline separates and joins states" (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 15-16). Hence, the situation at the Thai-Burmese border is that there exists a zone of contradictory interaction between the Burmese frontier and Thai border, and this has led to a complicated situation and confusion developing, because border and frontier roles are being played out at the same time.

This area is rather a zone of contradictory outcomes (due to state actions), through the clash between the Burmese frontier and the Thai border. The clash itself leads to "state violence"[20] (Scheper-Hughes 1992; 2006; Taussig 1992), for when the

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[20] Such spatially-fixed borders, whether a line on the map or bodies determining the mental state, beliefs and behaviors of its population. Unfortunately, they treat the others, such as the border people, in particularly violent ways. When one group imposes a set of meanings, ideas and symbols on another, this is referred to as an exercise in *symbolic violence* (Painter 2000: 246). According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is a form of brutal violence when people misrecognized themselves without resistance that they do not realize the power of subjugation (Bourdieu 1993). People have internalized the processes of stereotype by the state.

state does not perform its duty to protect its subjects, excluding the non-subject people such as the displaced and the migrants, its role disappears, leading to violence and a crisis of the state. However, when states try to perform their political role and attempt to make regulations to control cultural flows and protect their subjects – this can also lead to danger and violence; therefore, whether states do or do not perform their function, it can lead to violence, and sometimes it is not easy to predict how a state will behave. Death and violence are a reality in border zones, and border people, who in general do not have much power, not only suffer but also face enormous social and political problems. Furthermore, Decha (2003: 27) maintains that decisions made under the state of exception decide what the law needs to do in and around over the borderlands, so that people's life-forms are stripped away and their naked-ness revealed by nation-states. Human beings are naked under the spotlight of sovereign power, as lives can always be threatened. In other words, the exception, as a fundamental principle of sovereign rule, is predicated on the division between citizens in a juridical order and outsiders stripped of juridical-political protections (Ong 2006: 5).

In this regard, I argue that states can regulate and discipline populations by creating insecure life situations. The art of the state is to exercise its power over border people by inflicting violence and suffering on their lives, so as to keep the status quo at the borderlands. So, around the Thai-Burmese border, people on the Thai side are stereotyped as illegal immigrants, so that powerful groups and legal persons can benefit by exploiting them, while on the Burma side they are threatened and even murdered. Even though they are human beings, they are stereotyped and discriminated against as bounded objects by the two states. In this way, the imagination of the border area becomes a real entity bringing-about suffering for the border people and their lives. The state border, which has emerged and is juxtaposed with the modern nation-state, can be seen as a container that limits things and people within its sides, becoming a tool of the powerful which is used to exploit both people and natural resources.

Foucault chooses instead to focus on how to change one's body to be the self – the techniques of human beings[21] (Foucault 1997a). Human beings are creative agents, but the problem with this subject, for Foucault, is that the body itself can be seen as death. States exercise power over individuals as a fetish. The body as a fetish; however, might not be concerned enough to the self. Perhaps, Foucauldian "technologies of the self" should be appropriate to fulfill the analysis,[22] and this point is thus related to self-identification.[23] It was and is evident that the state's claim for sovereignty and its aspirations to nationhood may be written on the body by practice, for the state tries to produce subjects upon whom it can enforce these inscriptions, but there are always those who will challenge and subvert this project of the state (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 130). As a meaning of being, subjects are not always under the dominated domain and certain communities will not be dominated all of the time (as the same meaning of functionalism). In contrast, subjects are critical thinking beings who are concerned with their own benefits and interests, though this kind of reflexive modernization cannot be characterized as the "iron cage" of modernity (Thanet 2006).

To sum up, I take this particular type of area, and especially the Thai-Burmese border zone, seriously, so as to understand border people's potential. To do so, I will apply the concept of borders to analyze the complexities of social movement taking

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[21] *Self* is a reflexive pronoun, and it has two meanings. *Auto* means "the same," but it also conveys the notion of identity. The latter meaning shifts the question from "What is this self?" to "Departing from what ground shall I find my identity?" (Foucault 1997a: 230).

[22] In a chapter "Technologies of the self," Foucault mentions that there are four major types of technologies, each a matrix of practical reason: (1) technologies of production, which permit us to product, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meaning, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immorality (Foucault 1997a : 225). In addition, in the chapter "Subjectivity and Truth," Foucault states that the technology of the self is a reflection on modes of living, on choices of existence, on the way to regulate one's behavior, to attach oneself to ends and means. What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one govern oneself be performing actions in which one is oneself the object of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts? The technology of the self, which is to say, the procedures, which is no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-master or self-knowledge (Foucault (1997a: 87-89).

[23] Constructing self as a way to strengthen or find oneself through the relationship with the other participants in the movement (McDonald 2004).

place at these borderlands, the areas in which ethnic identity and cultural experiences are embedded. In this case, the border people confront the frontier/border, and sometimes they do not belong to whither the Burmese and Thai states, and face enforced development and violence, plus live in fear of jeopardy and with little hope of a normal life. They have had to contend with continuous wars and discrimination, but as active agencies have attempted to find the way with which to deal with the structural domains of the two nation-states and the TNCs; and the ambiguous frontiers nearby provide them with the negotiating spaces they need. Contested meanings are produced to help them struggle against the Salween dam constructions, and even though there is a contradiction between the frontier and the border, plus border-making, it somehow might provide a space of opportunity for the border people, who have tried to create a suitable position and construct a history around the frontier where they live.

2. Commodification of Nature

The claim about the social construction of nature and the environment has become influential across the social sciences (Demeritt 2001: 22). Modern domination of nature depends on the production of a space of constructed visibility within which three objectives have to be fulfilled: 'nature' has to be held at a distance, set up as an object, and structured as a more or less systematic totality. In term of acquiring technological control over nature, Heidegger thus declared that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture" (Anderson 2001: 80; Gregory 2001: 92). In this sense, the social dimension is taken for granted; that nature cannot be seen as originary in nature because it is about the social construction of nature – its meaning or definition is socially constructed. The development of the material landscape presents itself as a process reflecting the production of nature[24] (Smith 1984: 32).

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[24] Once the relation with nature is determined by the logic of exchange value, and first nature is produced from within and as a part of second nature, first and second nature are themselves redefined. First nature is concrete and material, the nature of use value in general. Second nature is not just the material creations of human labor but also the institutions, the legal, economic and political rules according to which society operated. It is abstract, and derivative of the abstraction from use-value that is inherent in exchange-value. Human labor produces the first nature, human relations produce the second nature (Smith 1984: 46, 54-55).

Under capitalism, commodification produces nature, either conceived as material or an image, as socio-nature (Smith 1984). For Marxist thinkers, the production of nature is integral to the historical geography of capitalism − its labor process, commodification imperative, and pattern of uneven development (Anderson 2001: 71; Smith 1984; cf. Castree 2001; 2005). As a Marxist, Smith insists that firms operating in a capital economy will seek to overcome the 'barriers to accumulation' that are thrown up by the non-human world. For him, these firms will try to find ways of 'making nature to order' in order to realize profits. The non-human world becomes a mere *means* to the end, which is making profits (the overriding objective of firms in capitalist societies). Nature is becoming increasingly 'internal' to the logic of capitalist societies (Castree 2005: 161). In this regard, people socially identify nature, and then the social construction of nature becomes a condition to create exclusion, the process that prevents some people from having access to resources[25] (Hall, et al. 2011: 7). According to Hall, Hirsch and Li, the opposite of exclusion is not inclusion, but *access,* which refers to the ways in which people are *prevented* from benefiting from things (more specifically, land). Hall, Hirsch and Li maintain that four powers lie at the heart of exclusion, and they blend into one another, these being: regulation, the market, force and legitimation[26] (Hall, et al. 2011: 15-16).

In addition, exclusion process facilitates the commodification of nature. The notion of exclusion is related to the concept of primitive accumulation[27] and enclosure (Marx 1982), as well as accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003). Marx's

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[25] Exclusion tends to have two characteristics: condition and process. A *condition* tends to denote situations in which large numbers of people lack access to land or in which land is held as private property. A process highlights large-scale and often violent actions in which poor people are evicted from their land by or on behalf of powerful actors. However, Hall, Hirsch, and Li approach it in a sense that it involves glaring inequality and dispossession that all land use and access requires exclusion of some kind. Even the poorest people cannot make use of land without some assurance that other people will not seize their farms or steal their crops (Hall, et al. 2011: 4). The processes of exclusion can be divided into three main types: the ways in which already-existing access to land is maintained by the exclusion of other potential users, the ways in which people who have access to land lose it, and the ways in which people who lack access are prevented from getting it (Hall, et al. 2011: 7-8).

[26] Regulation sets the rules regarding access to land and conditions of use. The market is a power of exclusion as it limits access through price and through the creation of incentive to lay more individualized claims to land. Force is exclusion by violence or threat of violence. Legitimation establishes the moral basis for exclusive claims, and indeed for entrenching regulation, the market and force as politically and socially acceptable bases for exclusion (Hall, et al. 2011: 4-5).

[27] Adam Smith coined the term "previous accumulation," and then Karl Marx renamed it to mean "primitive accumulation" (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 11; Harvey 2003: 143).

concept of primitive accumulation refers to core elements of the process by which non-capitalist social formations are transformed into capitalist ones, in particular, the separation of workers from direct access to the means of production, most notably, through land enclosures that dispossess farmers and turn land into private property and capital (Hall, et al. 2011: 13).[28] As Marx points out, great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled onto the labor-market as free, unprotected and rightless proletarians. The expropriation of their land and product is the basis of the whole process. It is the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production; the process which leads to two transformations: the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage-laborers. Primitive accumulation precedes capitalist accumulation; accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but is the point of departure (Marx 1982: 873-76). In this sense, the commodification of people (laborers) and nature (land) is a component of primitive accumulation. "Conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force" (Marx 1982: 874) are critical and often hidden components of both the primitive accumulation process and the ongoing forms of accumulation and state power (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 11).

With the progress of capital accumulation and the expansion of economic development, the landscape, as a material substratum, is more and more the product of social production. The appropriation of nature and its transformation into means of production represents the expansion of capitalism (Smith 1984: 32). As Smith notes, "…[C]apital stalks the earth in search of material resources; nature becomes a *universal means of production* in the sense, that, it not only provides the subjects, objects and instruments of production, but it is also, in its totality, an appendage to the production process"[29] (Smith 1984: 49). Commoditization is the process through

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[28] Enclosure is generally taken to mean the conversion of common property into private property (Hall, et al. 2011: 13).

[29] In an exchange economy, the appropriation of nature is increasingly regulated by social forms and institutions, and in this way, human beings begin to produce more than just the immediate nature of their existence. Under capitalism, the surplus product appears in the form of surplus value. Under dictate from the accumulation process, capitalism as a mode of production must expand continuously if it is to survive. The reproduction of material life is wholly dependent on the production and reproduction of surplus value. The process of accumulation is regulated by the law of value. With production for exchange, the relation with nature is no longer exclusively a use-value relation; use-

which everything comes to acquire a price and a monetary form (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 14-15), including nature. In this sense, the commodification of nature is the way in which capital transforms it into a commodity to be bought and sold on the market.

The commodification of nature (land), people (labor) and money is the process by which they are transformed into what Polanyi calls "fictitious commodities." This is a commodity fiction created by capital, in which labor, land and money are actually bought and sold in the market[30] (Polanyi 1980: 72). Capital treats these things as commodities (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 16); however, Polanyi maintains that labor, land and money are obviously not commodities, unlike manufactured goods or food, even if they are essential elements of industry. As Polanyi put it, "Anything that is bought and sold must have been produced for sale is empirically untrue in regard to them. In other words, according to the empirical definition of a commodity,[31] they are not commodities… None of them is produced for sale. Nevertheless, the commodity description of labor, land, and money is entirely fictitious." In this regard, the market mechanism functions along the lines of the commodity fiction. To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment would result in the demolition of society (Polanyi 1980: 72-73).

In neo-liberal condition, both states and private entities are developing new ways of gaining access to and control over whole segments of territory (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 17). Following Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation', Harvey has recently re-conceptualized primitive accumulation as accumulation by dispossession. He notes that: "In the case of primitive accumulation as Marx described it, this entailed taking land, say, enclosing it, and expelling a resident population to create a landless proletariat, and then releasing the land into the privatized mainstream of

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values are not produced for direct use but for exchange. Exchange-value, not use-value, is the immediate reason for production (Smith 1984: 40, 48-49). As Marx points out, the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalist production; capitalist production presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labor-power in the hands of commodity producers (Marx 1982: 873).

[30] "Labor is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself… [L]and is only another name for nature, which is not produced by man; actual money, finally, is merely a token of purchasing power which, as a rule, is not produced at all, but come into being through the mechanism of banking or state finance" (Harvey 2003: 145-46).

[31] Commodities are empirically defined as objects produced for sale on the market; markets, again, are empirically defined as actual contacts between buyers and sellers (Polanyi 1980: 72).

capital accumulation."[32] Furthermore, the state, with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, plays a crucial role in both backing and promoting these processes. The developmental role of the state goes back a long way, keeping the territorial and capitalistic logics of power always intertwined though not necessarily concordant (Harvey 2003: 145-49).

The escalating depletion of the global environmental commons (land, air and water) and the proliferation of habitat degradation are the result of the wholesale commodification of nature in all its forms (Harvey 2003: 148). As Harvey points out, through the new mechanism of accumulation by dispossession, many formerly common property resources, such as water, have been privatized and brought within the capitalist logic of accumulation. In the process, alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption have been suppressed. Nationalized industries have also been privatized; family farming has been taken over by agribusiness, and slavery has not disappeared (particularly in the sex trade) (Harvey 2003: 145-46). These enclosures have enabled primitive accumulation by state agencies, corporate interests and powerful individuals in strategic positions – accumulation possible in both the colonial and more recent periods. These enclosures continue to animate and underpin neo-liberalism and the production of people and nature as new and old commodities (Nevins and Peluso 2008: 5-6).

Furthermore, Harvey maintains that globalization is the contemporary version of capitalism's long-standing and never-ending search for a 'spatial fix'[33] to its crisis

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[32] Marx's description of primitive accumulation reveals a wide range of processes. These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights...into exclusive private property rights; the suppression of rights of the commons; the commodification of labor power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); the monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade; and usury, the national debt, and ultimately, the credit system as radical means of primitive accumulation. In short, it entails appropriation and co-optation of pre-existing cultural and social achievements as well as confrontation and suppression (Harvey 2003: 145-46).

[33] The idea of "the spatial fix" initially came out of attempts to reconstruct Marx's theory of the geography of capitalist accumulation. Harvey first deployed the term "spatial fix" to describe capitalism's insatiable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies by geographical expansion and geographical restructuring. He notes, for example, that capitalism has to fix space (in immoveable structures of transport and communication nets, as well as in built environments of factories, roads, houses, water supplies, and other physical infrastructures) in order to overcome space (achieve a liberty of movement through low transport and communication costs). This leads to one of the central contradictions of capital: that it has to build a fixed space (or "landscape") necessary for its own

tendencies. As he points out, the geographical expansion of capitalism, which underlies a lot of imperialist activity, is very helpful to the stabilization of the system, precisely because it opens up demand for both investment goods and consumer goods elsewhere. Access to cheaper inputs is just as important as access to widening markets in keeping profitable opportunities open. The implication is that non-capitalist territories should be forced open not only to trade but also to permit capital to invest in profitable ventures using cheaper labor power, raw materials, low-cost land and the like (Harvey 2003: 23-24, 139). Harvey's term "spatial fix" involves a form of what some academic scholars call "transnational enclosures" (Barney 2008; Yos 2011), which intends to create commodities such as hydropower production from an international river for an upstream nation at the expense of downstream nation. This process is what Biggs calls meta-commoditization (Biggs 2008).

In addition, the commodification of nature which has proceeded in the neo-liberal market situation is not a smooth linear movement, but it is a paradoxical or dialectical process, what Polanyi calls "double movement" (Polanyi 1980: 132), in the sense that it is a shifting process. The commodification of nature can be reversed, as de-commodification of nature, and re-emerged, as re-commodification of nature, according to power relations between state and people and circumstances. In addition, the commodification of nature relates to territorialization of nature (Nevins and Peluso 2008). Even in Burma, where neo-liberalism seems far from a practice or a policy driver, the state (or pretenders to state power) is in the business of creating new territories – concessions – for the exploitation of gems. The violent practices of miners, small and large, within these concessions, would seem to be a combination of the old and new forms of enclosure (MacLean 2008, cited in Nevins and Peluso 2008: 16, 19). Contemporary Burma keeps opening up opportunities for resource concessions, such as for gem and gold mining, and dam constructions in "spatially discontinuous zones across the country" (MacLean 2008: 153). As the Burmese government cannot control the areas previously occupied by ethnic nationality groups, its power is limited only to some places; however, MacLean argues that the

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functioning at a certain point in its history only to have to destroy that space (and devalue much of the capital invested therein) at a later point in order to make way for a new "spatial fix" (openings for fresh accumulation in new spaces and territories) at a later point in its history (Harvey 2001: 23-25).

government strategically uses the procedure by which it agrees to let investors mine, in order to territorialize resources in ethnic insurgent zones. This is because, to carry out these activities – mining and exporting resources – investors have to get permission from the central government; they have to deal with state power in order to obtain a license to mine. By so doing, the more the government agrees to let investors mine, the more it can territorialize, at a distance, the resources, without having to move directly into such areas. In other words, the more the state opens up the market for capital, the stronger it becomes. The commodification of nature is thus a tool that the government uses to gain access to resources at the margins of the state. Since the government allows companies to extract mineral resources as primary commodities in uncontrolled areas, both it and the investors gain profits and further their interests, even though the government has no actual authority or direct control over these areas. Therefore, the state's de-territorialization of nature facilitates market's (re-)commodification of nature.

Moreover, the state can create the re-territorialization of nature that leads to re-commodification of nature. For example, the state re-territorializes rivers with dam constructions, and dam constructions become re-commodification because when the state constructs the dam, the river is turned into electricity for trade. However, the state and/or market's (re-)commodification of nature is contested in that people compete against it. They redefine nature in order to adjust power relations. In the meantime, the state also redefines nature in order not to adjust power relations but to reinforce its power. The state has to adjust its strategy to deal with the people's struggle. When the state has accumulated more power, the state might re-commodify nature, transforming the landscape and creating new commodities under a neo-liberalist agenda. Therefore, social construction of nature is shifting back and forth as dialectical movement upon the negotiation process in which there is resistance and the state does not have an absolute power.

In short, I will employ the concept of the commodification of nature to identify the context of my research, which is that corporate utilities have turned resources such as forests and rivers into commodities, namely timber and hydro-electricity, and states have engaged in this process as part of a re-territorialization project, in turn excluding local people from access to these resources.

3. Thirdspace and Subaltern Struggles

Until the second half of the last century, space was initially conceptualized by philosophers, scientists and social scientists. For many, space was either a fixed phenomenon or divided into physical space (the *physical* field – nature, the Cosmos, mental space), mental space (the *mental* field – logical and formal abstractions) and social space (the *social* field – human interaction) (Merrifield 2006). It was thus dead, fixed and undialectic. Foucault (1980) and Lefebvre (1991) asked us to rethink space and maps, using what has now been termed as the critical reassertion of space in social sciences circles.

In modern social theory, Foucault challenges the view of space as dead, fixed, undialectical and immobile (Foucault 1980: 70). In addition, in geographical debates on the social production of space, Lefebvre asserts that space is not an object or stability, but an active place where social relations occur. The active – operational or instrumental – role of space, as knowledge and action, lies in the existing modes of production (Lefebvre 1991: 11).

Lefebvre's view on with space includes his insistence on escaping the dual mode of thinking about it, and he begins his critical "spatial triad" or "trialectics of spatiality" by focusing his attention on *social space* (Merrifield 2006; Soja 1996). Social space, for Lefebvre, is an interweaving of three moments; spatial practice or perceived space, representations of space or conceived space and spaces of representation or lived space[34] (Lefebvre 1991: 11). Following this line of thought, spatial disciplines, such as architecture, regional planning and geography, have been influenced by Lefebvre's notion of the production of space. Drawing on Lefebvre's ideas, Soja proposes the notion of a third space, in which *first space* is perceived as space which is fixed on the concrete materiality of spatial forms which can be empirically mapped and thought of as real, *secondspace* is conceived space –

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[34] S*patial practices* are perceived spaces, which includes the perception of the world, of their ordinary everyday lives. It is empirically observable and consists of the structure, routes and patterns of lives that connect people and places which embrace production and reproduction. *Representations of space* are conceived spaces, which is tied to the relations of production and to the order in which ideology, power and knowledge exist. They are conceptualized spaces, constructed by professionals and technocrats. S*paces of representation* are lived spaces that we experience in everyday life. Lived experience is more on feeling than thought that we feel the presence of spaces with passion, action, and lived situations (Lefebvre 1991: 33, 413).

conceived in ideas, mental or cognitive forms – as imagined, and finally *thirdspace* is lived space; it is not just a simple combination or an in-between position of binary categories, such as subject-object, mental-material, nature-social, bourgeoisie-proletariat, local-global, structure-agency, center-periphery or real-imaged, but rather another, a third possibility or moment; disordering, deconstructed, and reconstituted, open to additional otherness, and both similar and strikingly different (Soja 1996: 60-61).

Thirdspace, for Soja, is the terrain for the generation of counter-spaces; the spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising from a subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning (Soja 1996: 10, 68). Other academic scholars, such as Bhabha (1990; 1994) also mention the term *thirdspace*. In cultural studies, and Bhabha uses it to refer to spaces of resistance, those opened at the margins of the new cultural politics, and firmly rooted in the experience of post-coloniality (Bhabha 1990), saying that cultural hybridity[35] would benefit from it (Kahn 2000; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Moore 1997; Soja 1996). *Thirdspace*[36] provides the terrain for elaborating upon strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha 1994: 1-2). It gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable; a new area of negotiation, of meaning and representation (Bhabha 1990: 211).

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[35] Cultural hybridity is a result of a long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces, in which the stronger culture struggles to control, remake or eliminate the subordinate partner, that sort of thing is more than the sum of the two cultures, colonizing and colonized. In the case of extremely imbalanced encounters, subordinates have frequently managed to divert the cultural elements they were forced to adopt and have rearranged them for their own elusive purposes within a new ensemble (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 9).

[36] Actually, the concept of "third space" also means "in-between spaces" which cultural hybridity came out with; the unpredictable, its origins cannot be identified. Bhabha explains that the concept of hybridity draws upon the notions of cultural difference and cultural translation. With the notion of cultural difference, he has tried to place himself in the position of liminality, in the productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness. Different cultures, the difference between cultural practices, the difference in the construction of cultures within different groups, very often set up among and between themselves an *incommensurability* (Bhabha 1990: 209-10). The notion of cultural translation, which was informed by Benjamin, suggests that all forms of culture are in some way related to each other, because culture is a signifying or symbolic activity (Benjamin 1968). The articulation of cultures is possible not because of the familiarity or similarity of *contents*, but because all cultures are symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices. Its process or moment is far beyond the division of beginning and ending and move away from the singularities of class, race, and gender to the complex identities cut across the borderline of any dimensions in the modern world (Bhabha 1994: 1).

It can be argued that *thirdspace* provides us with the room to examine and illuminate the complex world of social fact, such as through the work of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (Brenner 2000; 2001; Soja 1996). Following Lefebvre's insights, ethnographic works such as those by Anan (1998), Atchara (2009), Kahn (2000), Moore (1993; 1997; 1998; 1999), Moore, et al. (2003), Pinkaew (2001), Yasuda (2008) and Yos (2003), have been carried out in many areas in relation to local people's movement and resistance. These works collectively urge us to rethink the notion of place-making – to see localities as products of contestations.

On the question of spaces of resistance, Moore states that resistance was often conceived in the past as meaning an opposition to the dominant (*firstspace* vs. *secondspace*), and his criticism of this is directed towards the work of Scott who in his agrarian studies, attempts to develop a general theory of resistance which he terms "infrapolitics" (Scott 1990), as produced by the powerless (Moore 1997; 1998). Moore asserts that, instead of conceiving of a space of subalternity, insurgency and resistance 'outside' of power, domination or hegemony, the challenge is to understand their mutual imbrications (Moore 1997: 91-92). In other words, the spaces of domination and the spaces of resistance are not flattened out, made interchangeable and reversible; for example, resistance does not necessarily mean a direct confrontation, because power between parties is uneven; powerless people have to evade the powerful and seek new strategies to deal with them (Pile 1997: 15-16).

Increasingly, many ethnographic works, such as those by Kahn (2000), Moore (1998) and Yos (2003) have demonstrated how sites of resistance, where resistance is often fetishized or essentialized, have been conceptualized both for individuals and social collectivities. Moore describes how people's struggle against government resettlement projects in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands in the 1990s were local to a specific terrain, but were characterized as having trans-local linkages, beyond the local. Resistance here represented the process of place-making by local people, after a resettlement regime was introduced by Magwedere's government post-colonial state to evict Kaerezi farmers from their land. The people fought against the state and

claimed their rights over the land by referring to the historical record in terms of Tangwena territoriality and identity formation[37] (Moore 1998).

As a result of these actions, the Magwedere government was denied the right or legitimacy to carry out its resettlement projects. Moore concludes that the subaltern struggle is always connected to the cultural formation and political legacies of anti-colonial resistance, such as African nationalism and the contested legitimacy of the post-colonial state. By reading resistance as spatial practice, we can see how contested and embattled terrains can be re-inscribed, redefined and re-mapped (Moore, et al. 2003: 16). Identity, hybridity and the articulation of cultural differences are produced through in-between spaces. People thus make their spaces and spatialities on the ground within the process of forming their various identities, then they need to conceive of localities, not as inert, fixed backdrops for identity struggle, but rather see themselves as products of these contestations (Moore 1997: 87-92, 102-04).

In his ethnographic work, Yos precisely elaborates how place and the production of ethnic identity are related (Yos 2003). He argues that in the case of a conflict around access to natural resources between the Thai state and the Lua ethnic minority people on the highlands of northern Thailand, a sense of Lua identity has been situationally reconstructed in order to resist the Royal Forest Department (RFD) and assert rights over the control and use of forestland in Doi Phu Kha. The Lua have acted strategically on two different levels. First, they have created a spatiality of resistance around the forests and swidden fields, those places they need to survive. Second, they have also used the existence of a sacred feast to reconcile friends and relatives and reconstruct a sense of solidarity. Similarly, those of the Karen ethnic group in northern Thailand have redefined their ethnic identity; labeling themselves as protectors of nature and the forest. Conservation issues can also become a negotiated space when local people use them to struggle against nation-state policies (Anan 1998; Pinkaew 2001; Yos 2004).

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[37] Since they had assisted President Robert Mugabe, who escaped the danger from Rhodesian security forces through Kaerezi territory into Mozambique during the Zimbabwean liberation war in 1975, their chief, Regayi Tangwena, became a nationalist hero and they control their own territory. It is a very specific event that a woman, Angela, has used to argue and discredit the chief Magwedere as outside the Tangwena history of cultural construction. She also has got the support from her son, who works in the city (See more detail in Moore 2001).

Kahn's ethnographic work on the Tahiti Islands in French Polynesia is based on *thirdspace* drawing upon Foucault,[38] Lefebvre and Soja and tends to move beyond the contradictory perspectives (Kahn 2000). On the one hand, Tahiti in terms of image is identified by the dominant, mass-media representations, whilst on the other Tahiti in terms of the material sense is perceived by the locals. Kahn instead embraces Tahiti as a "habitat of social practices", by illustrating multi-layered representations of Tahiti and how the habitants create a *thirdspace* as a means of protesting against the nuclear testing run by the French government. Kahn examines Tahiti as a perceived space, a physical site perceived by the local people during their daily life activities, such as working in their gardens, fishing and visiting with friends, or staying in the house to clean, cook or watch television. However, it is also a conceived space for tourists, a space of destination which is held up as seductive through images shown on calendars and postcards, and in magazines and guidebooks. Simultaneously, it can also be seen as a *thirdspace*, as a social and lived space; a space produced in response to nuclear testing, and as a site where the sense of place is threatened. Thus, it emerges at the intersection of worldwide politics, the mass media and local beliefs. As we can see, Tahiti is a sacred ancestral land and an identity reference, and Kahn concludes that Tahiti is comprised of overlapping and often contradictory fields of experience, representation and intervention which are complex and interwoven, dynamic and intertwined, historical, spatial and generative processes (Kahn 2000: 8-9, 22).

There is, then, a vast array of ethnographic studies on subaltern struggles and marginalized people, communities who stay in the clear spaces, such as indigenous peoples inside forestlands (Anan 1998; Li 2001; Moore 1993; 1997; 1998; Peluso 1992; Pinkaew 2001; Yos 2003; 2004), plus women in rural areas (Rocheleau, et al. 1996). In recent years, marginalized people, especially those living in unclear or blurred spaces and who have migrated across state boundaries as forcibly displaced people (Decha 2003), as refugees (Malkki 1995) or as migrants (Amporn 2007; Yasuda 2008), have been more and more emphasized and have become the central concern of this type of ethnographic study. Many academic scholars are now

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[38] For Foucault, space, power and knowledge are related as dominants that can control people by using knowledge to identify and occupy the place (Foucault 1980).

interested in their lives within the contemporary transnational world, even though they are invisibly hidden in the folds of society.

Taken together, these studies provide a critical insight for my study, that is, into the relationship between the concept of space and place. Space and place are inseparable; they cannot be understood separately, and at times they are interchangeable. Space can be a place where social relations take place, a space of social relations called a "social space." Social space can be identified as the *thirdspace,* that is, the notion goes beyond any binary categories which generate counter places. It is actually a space of resistance to the dominant order, and importantly, the space of resistance is rooted in the experiences of the subaltern, so that identity formation and representation are at the heart of cultural politics. It is in this spirit that I seek to employ the concept of *thirdspace* as a way of articulating spaces of resistance, and so as to make sense of the lives of border people and their struggle, through transnational social movement, against the proposed Salween dam projects.

I understand that the Salween borderlands are materially perceived by the border people through their life activities and experiences in relation to the environment, human constructions, the authorities patrolling soldiers who wear uniforms and carry a gun, and through forms of death and violence. This perceived space is the result of uneven power relations taking place on the Salween frontier. In contrast, the Salween River and its borderlands are also mentally conceived as the Thai-Burmese border and represented as a resource-rich area for regional development. The border is cited for producing energy in particular by various professionals, technocrats and state authorities, as well as by TNCs through technological mediums and the GMS programs. It has been encoded as an instrument to be used by the relevant states to dominate and impose their order on the border people who make a living along the Salween River. Simultaneously, the *thirdspace,* as social/lived space, has been produced in response to the proposed Salween dam projects. The Salween River and its surrounding borderlands have become sites of resistance that border people now use to develop their sense of self-identification and to defend their lives and natural resources as part of the river ecosystem. They have then manipulated their lives in terms an articulation of conceived and perceived

relations, in order to create their own spaces of negotiation, or their own contested spaces.

Finally, *thirdspace,* which is produced by the experiences of the border people living along the Thai-Burmese border, will induce us to understand their ability to challenge, negotiate with and adjust to the juridical border and the sovereign state already encoded; to code and decode again and again. It is in this way that I will try to apply Bhabha and Soja's notion of *thirdspace* to study social movement during the process of negotiating a bordered terrain of development and resources management at the borderlands. In this regard, the sites of resistance, at multiple levels, where various groups of people interact across the borderlines, should not simply be reduced to a passive physical or mental space, but to an in-between space or bordered lives (Bhabha 1990). By doing this, my approach will be to see how the border people, those who travel across the border, make sense of their own space and spatialities, and that the everyday life practices of ordinary people, as resistant practices, are not limited to within a given local context, but also played out in the larger context of a contemporary transnational world.

4. Collaborative Articulation and Transnational Civil Society

To understand the relationship between culture and nature (natural resource management), Moore, Pandian and Kosek (2003), and Tsing (1999), draw upon Hall's concept of articulation in the theorizations of cultural studies (Hall 1986). Hall explains what the articulation means as follows:

> In England, the term has a nice double meaning because 'articulate' means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an 'articulated' lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not

necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all
time… So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the
articulation of different, distinct elements which can be
rearticulated in different ways because they have no
necessary 'belongingness' (Hall 1986: 141).

According to Hall, the concept of articulation is mostly useful for thinking
about linking and making enunciations on groups and projects; it has some usefulness
even for thinking about changing individual goals and identities (Tsing 1999: 13). In
this regard, Moore, Pandian, and Kosek take both race and nature as historical
artifacts; assemblages of material, discourse, and practice irreducible to a universal
essence. Their question is how race and nature invoke each other, speak through each
other and build on each other. Nature is not merely the material environment, nor is
race merely a problem of social relations; race and nature are both material and
symbolic and are made and unmade, bound together and pried apart. Nature and race
become articulated together in particular historical moments that precisely express the
social struggle. In this regard, struggles over resources, territory and cultural meaning
are related so that cultural differences may be seized as a means of making race
(Moore, et al. 2003: 2-3, 16).

Likewise, Tsing makes a link between culture and nature in the way that
conflicts over natural resource management are "culture," in what she calls "cultural
mobilization" (Tsing 1999). It is not only because groups of people have opposing
perspectives, values and ways of life, but they also require the mobilization of their
own position in the reformulation of a problem, as well as the appropriate forms of
representation through which the argument should be addressed. Cultural
mobilization thus refers to the process of re-assembling a way of life or a set of
practices, knowledge, legacies, values and organizational forms in the midst of
challenges from other groups, from new ways of thinking, or from the condition of the
environment itself (Tsing 1999: 6-7, 13).

In this regard, Tsing speaks of "articulations" and "collaborations" in the
forging of natural resource management projects, saying that the concept of
articulation alone might not enough to understand the complexity of environmental

politics in the contemporary transnational world. To do so, the concept of 'collaborations' is applied to her own ethnographic study, and she argues that environmental projects are moments of tentative hegemony,[39] formulated through semiotic and social articulation, so that the agendas of particular collaborative partners are taken on board. In her study, the differences meet together in a movement that was formed against a dam project and a logging company, in which three main actors – environmentalists (students or nature lovers), politicians and spokesmen (Meratus village leaders) – who have a rather different kind of commitment to nature, came together to create a campaign in which they produced a different narrative story (Tsing 1999: 2-6, 14). She also finds herself as a collaborator in a woman leader's historical life, skillfully interpreting her story and critical strategies (Rafael 1994: 300). For Tsing, social movement then can be understood in strategically effective moments of interconnection among negotiating parties,[40] those that make powerful environment projects, and this is not necessarily positive for everyone, being as they are, alive. These projects are thus reshaped through interactions with corporations, international agencies and local people (Tsing 2005: 246-48).

As such, transnational collaboration does not mean all collaborators share common goals; but it implies overlapping agendas of coalition. The different interest groups, different ideas, different backgrounds and ideologies encounter one another or work in coalition as a friction of collaboration. It is obvious that transnationalized social movements cannot succeed without cooperative links among dissimilar parties (Tsing 1999: 4-5, 14). To some extent, it not only provides us with a way to move beyond the binary opposition of state and civil society, but also how to move away from the notion of monolithic, static and homogenous transnationalized environmental movements (Clavin 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998, cited in Benner

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[39] On this point, Tsing refers to Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Gramsci was interested in how various class fragments struggle and cooperate to formulate hegemonic "common sense." It is various ruling class fragments that usually win hegemony, but this is not a reason for working-class parties to abandon attempts to accumulate hegemonic collaborative projects. It is through these projects that they can enunciate and empower a working-class perspective (Tsing 1999: 14).

[40] What Tsing means by negotiating parties is "national resource bureaucracies" that they are not only powerful shapers of environment themselves; they are also perhaps the most important sites of struggle over environmental classification and regulation. They engage the expertise of international agencies, the negotiations of transnational NGOs, and the corporation protest, and resistance of communities (Tsing 1999: 2).

1999). It thus requires a dialectical viewpoint to understand the adaptive, dynamic and heterogeneous movement. As Ferguson and Gupta argue in the case of Africa – where states are weak, instead of there being opposition between the state and civil society, the state itself starts to look, somewhat suspiciously, like a civil society. Government officials moonlight by using their educational and institutional capital to gain resources through their own grassroots organizations, while in turn, local voluntary organizations, which evolve to be integrally linked with national and transnational-level entities, such as USAID, CARE, Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders, end up performing state-like functions, as has happened across Africa. The new organizations that have sprung up in recent years do not act as challengers, pressing up against the state from below, but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state – sometimes rival, sometime subservient, sometimes watchdogs and sometimes parasites, but in every case operating on the same level and in the same global space (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 991-94).

In recent years, many ethnographic works have been carried out in the Mekong region, such as by Hirsch (1995; 2001; 2002), Hirsch and Wyatt (2004; Woods 2003; 2008), to reveal the national barriers which constrain and limit the functioning of civil society, as well as social and environmental movements. Hirsch asserts that national spaces continue to constrain the emergence of a Mekong civil society. In the case of Thailand, civil society has emerged in the mainstream framework of the nation-state, and this has limited their role play to within the Thai border. As a result, they care about their natural resources, but do nothing to prevent the exploitation of or protect natural resources in neighboring countries (Hirsch 1995; 2001).

In the case of Laos, the resistance movement is poorly articulated at the local level and is carried out as a substitute for the local political economy, while the prevailing culture of non-confrontation poses a stiff challenge, making progress almost impossible. The instances of real, local participation are rare; therefore, local people have a problem participating in resistant movements despite the involvement of a range of actors. Even though a number of sectors are involved, including NGOs, villagers, district and provincial authorities, the national committee, the MRC and

international representatives, they work within a limited space, as direct negotiations do not involve the affected people[41] (Hirsch 2001: 238-49; Hirsch and Wyatt 2004).

However, this does not indicate that local people are passive, but rather is indicative of the repressive response national authorities make to local communities when their displeasure is articulated, without or with the help of outside players (Hirsch 2001: 238). More seriously, in the case of Burma trans-boundary environmental governance is hindered by the Burmese military dictatorship, a severely dysfunctional civil society, ongoing battles between the junta and ethnic insurgents along Burma's frontier and the close ties between China and Burma, with environmental justice prejudiced by the dearth of democracy and human rights (Woods 2008: 64). Therefore, trans-boundary environmental governance, which is the way in which communities participate in decision making, has found it difficult to emerge (Woods 2003). People within the local spaces have been threatened by their own government, in association with state-owned enterprises and private companies from neighboring countries, allowing regional development to continue in line with a neo-liberal agenda.

Hirsch offers us an alternative perspective on participatory river basin management – as a negotiated process (Hirsch 2002). Rather than subscribing to the belief that people always act selfishly, we have to learn from the coordinating process; how people engage with and challenge the programs and policy design. In this regard, the idea of scaling-up participation and transcending beyond nation-states is needed. The processes of negotiation among cross-scale actors on development projects, are thus understood as representing uneven power relations involving local people as active agents. Decha persuades us to consider transnationalism as a way of viewing the border people, even if they are forced and displaced persons, as those with a capacity to instigate change, but in their own way (Decha 2003).

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[41] One of channels of negotiation among various agents, provided by Mekong River Commission, is prior consultation: the Mekong countries have been asked to give their opinions on a dam proposed in the territory of one of their neighbors. Thus, the first of the Mekong mainstream dams, the Xayaburi, was notified for prior consultation by MRC member states over a six-month period in March 2011. They needed to take into account the concerns of neighboring countries. However, in practice, the prior consultation does not require consensus (Hirsch 2011).

Accordingly, the emergence of civil society does not only occur at the state level, but also beyond the nation-state (Clark 2003; Hirsch 2001; Khagram 2004; Woods 2003), such as in the regionalized civil society response to GMS programs, or the active transnational civil society movements (Apinya 2007b; Tunya 2007). Civil society can be seen as heterogeneous; not merely as a collective action bounded entity. As Tsing reveals, collaborative articulation among various groups of people on different scales within environmental projects, means that players encounter differences among each other, as occurred within the environmental movement that took place against dam projects and logging companies in Kalimantan. These movements represent heterogeneous organs that produce different stories – that have different imaginations of the same movement. This sort of 'friction within collaboration' indicates that such movements are defined in different ways by different groups of people (Tsing 1999; 2005).

Furthermore, Tsing urges us to re-think how to conceptualize negotiated space (Tsing 2005). For example, when neo-liberalism expands into the borderlands, it manifests itself not only as a form of hegemonic rationality of capitalism, but also as a tool that local people can use to empower themselves within the negotiating process through social movements and everyday life practices; maintaining and improving their livelihood security strategically. They thus try to adjust the power relations and make self-identification and contestation out of their cultural position. It is in the terrain of everyday life that the interests of the dominant culture are negotiated and contested; therefore, socially significant groups represent alternative cultural possibilities (Escobar 2005: 306).

To sum up, these works suggest that the concept of collaborative articulation helps to understand the transnational social movement taking place in my study area, a movement in which the border people are trying to create negotiated spaces in order to protest against the Salween dam projects and rationalize their ability to gain more power over the local resources. These negotiated spaces are being shaped or produced as part of the interaction between the cross-scale actors, especially transnational corporations, state agencies, the local authorities and local people. In the context of regional development, where all actors have their own agendas

embedded in practices of movement, the borderlands cannot be seen as a homogenous entity.

These transnational issues are a substantial phenomenon within the Thai-Burmese border zone, where the Salween dam projects are being implemented, and where the struggle is being formulated. Both the dam development and anti-dam movements go beyond nation-state imagination and are thus related to self-identification and representation. The Salween river ecosystem, of course, cannot be delimited within each nation-state boundary, and people's lives are not merely tied to one place or to one side of the state border, so their experiences precisely express this kind of transnationalism, that is, they keep moving and shifting their position according to the particular situation, whether it be warfare, forced relocation and/or displacement.

1.3.2 Literature Review

This part deals with two issues: the relationships between state and borderland and the Salween movement.

1. Relationships between State and Borderland

Studying the relationship between borders and the state has long been a tradition within border studies (Prescott 1972; 1978; 1987). As Donnan and Wilson point out, what is common in the many approaches taken to border studies, is that they are confined to the same objective of study – they look at borders in terms of institutions or structures and processes, through which the movements and interactions of people and their cultures, both inside and beyond borders, are investigated.[42] For example, geography turns its focus or lens away from state boundaries to investigate the action, agency and process within border landscapes in

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[42] The main idea in anthropology is that a border has its own culture. Anthropology's focus today, genuinely reflects the experience of many groups of people. Groups, such as refugees, migrants, workers, criminals, soldiers, merchants and nomads, are no longer characterized as occupying discrete spaces or as having discrete cultures. By crossing a wide range of geo-political and metaphorical borders, they create many boundaries in their movements through their and other people's spaces and places. However, they themselves still believe in the essential correspondence between territory, nation, state and identity (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 10).

terms of the way social issues and borders interact[43] (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 62). A border can be conceptualized as a "borderscape," which is not a zone or space given to ready instrumentalization, but rather a landscape of competing meaning with a range of actors[44] (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xv). In other words, it can be conceptualized as a new political horizon that pressures the familiar political order of states, territories and borders (Soguk 2007: 286). In so doing, its structures and functions are made and remade; defined and redefined, unlike the state borders themselves. Donnan and Wilson maintain that borders will continue to play a role in relation to states (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 5-6).

Gregory asserts that "*thirdspaces*" and paradoxical spaces are not necessarily sites of emancipation (Gregory 2005: 134), and I shall take Gregory's paradoxical spaces as my point of departure, that is, seeing the border as a paradoxical space. As Soguk points out, the paradoxical meaning of the border is that it is both an obstruction and an opportunity for human beings at the margins of states. It can fold inward to envelop and contain individuals and groups in societies within particular regimes of governmentality, and also fold outward to restrict entry and expel irregular migrants (Soguk 2007). It is conceived as a tool of exclusion, and is a transformative and creative instrument used to distinguish politicized subjectivity from the chaos outside, and maintain its distinction (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: x-xvii).

Borders are used by one party to edge out another from an occupied territory, as has happened with Burma and its ethnic minorities (Grundy-Warr 2001; 2004),

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[43] Donnan and Wilson review how geographical border studies have tackled issues of territory, sovereignty and identity, in relation to key concerns in their perspectives on borders, nations and states. Political geography has been drawn to the study of the spatial dimension of borders and political boundaries since prior to World War I. Within the state centric viewpoint, the case study approach in political geography has tended to fall into set categories, such as the study of disputed areas, boundary changes, boundary delimitation and demarcation, disputes over natural resources, and internal boundaries. However, culture was not a main focus. By World War II, the central issue of borders was shifted from the form of the international border to their functions. This approach tends to focus on structures and functions of the state at the borderline, classifying these borders in categorizations of form that interrelate with social, economic, political and cultural conditions of nations and states. Recently, the new border geography has been developed through the re-orientation of border landscape geographers which considers border landscapes as a product of economic, political and cultural processes, and comparison between border areas and their contiguous populations and state territories (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 44-49).

[44] Rajaram and Grundy-Warr state that a common purpose of the diverse studies (in a book named *Borderscape*), is the uncovering of modes of recognition and the hidden geographies that are concealed by these. Some concentrate on the construction of the border, which is territorial spatialization and its systems of recognition. Others pay attention to interstitial and in-between spaces of the border, demarcating sovereign space (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xix).

Israel and Palestine (Gregory 2005), and Britain and Ireland (Kearns 2007). These studies have tried to understand the relationship between the sovereign power of the security state and political violence inside state territory, at the borders and in disputed territories, in what are called "geographies of violence" (Gregory and Pred 2007: 3). In this regard, Gregory points out that Israel has used three discursive strategies to withdraw Palestinians from the occupied territories, Gaza and the West Bank (Gregory 2005: 124) – as disputed territories, saying:

> 'Locating' mobilizes a technical register, in which Palestinians are reduced to objects in a purely visual field: co-ordinates on a grid, letters on a map. 'Opposing' mobilizes a cultural register, in which the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians is reduced to a conflict between 'civilization' and barbarism. 'Casting out' mobilizes a political-juridical register, in which Palestinians are reduced to the status of outcasts placed beyond the privileges and protections of the law so that their lives (and deaths) are rendered of no account (Gregory 2005: 129).

Basically, these scholars apply Agamben's notion of the state of exception in their studies, and his book, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* written in 1998, is a seminal study of the modern state and sovereignty.[45] His concern is the hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the bio-political models of power, which, for him, cannot be separated (Agamben 1998: 6). He notes the fact that Foucault describes power as penetrating subjects' bodies and forms of life, orienting two distinct directives of study.[46] For Agamben, these two faces of

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[45] The traditional approach to the problem of power is exclusively based on the juridico-institutional model, which covers the definition of sovereignty and the theory of the state (Agamben 1998: 5).

[46] Bio-politics means the endeavor, begun in the 18th century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population (Foucault 1997c: 73). It must be understood in terms of the management of state forces, which tends to treat the "population" as a mass of living and co-existing beings who present particular biological and pathological traits and who thus come under specific knowledge and technologies (Foucault 1997d: 71). Foucault summarizes in *The History of Sexuality* the process by which, at the threshold of the modern era, natural life is being included in the mechanisms and calculations of state power, and politics turns into *bio-politics*. Thus, the individual as a simple living body becomes what is at stake in a society's political strategies. The development and triumph of

power converge, while the position remains strangely unclear in Foucault's work (Agamben 1998: 4-5).

Sovereignty, for Agamben, is the originating structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by suspending it (Agamben 1998: 28). *It can even be said that the production of a bio-political body is the original activity of sovereign power*. In this sense, bio-politics is at least as old as the sovereign exception, and is, for Agamben, the original activity of the sovereign (Decha 2007a: 252). Placing biological life at the center of its calculations, the modern state therefore does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life[47] (Agamben 1998: 6). Thus, bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), *may be killed and yet not be sacrificed*. At once excluding bare life and yet capturing it within the political order, the state of exception is actually constituted[48] (Agamben 1998: 8-9), and a zone of indistinction between law and life thus emerges through the logic of the paradox of sovereignty; the inclusive exclusion (Agamben 1998: 9, 27, cited in Decha 2007a: 233).

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capitalism would not have been possible, from this perspective, without the disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which through a series of appropriate technologies, so to speak, created the "docile bodies" that it needed. Foucault did not show how he would have developed the concept and study of modern bio-politics: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the 20th century (Agamben 1998: 3-5). Bio-politics, for Agamben, was the originary activity of the sovereign (Decha 2007a: 252).

[47] The Greeks used two terms for life that are distinct: *Zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings, and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. The entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the *polis* – the politicization of bare life as such – constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the politico-philosophical categories of classical thought. Politics was the place in which life had to transform itself into a good life and which had to be politicized as always already bare life. The killing of *homo sacer* can be considered as less than homicide, and the killing of the sovereign as more than homicide - what is essential is that in neither case does the killing of a man constitute an offense of homicide. *Homo sacer*'s life can be killed by anyone without committing homicide (Agamben 1998: 1, 4, 7, 102).

[48] Schmitt's definition of sovereignty was that who decides on the state of exception borders on the sphere of life and becomes indistinguishable from it. The problem of sovereignty was reduced to the question of who within the political order was invested with certain power, and the very threshold of the political order itself was never called into question. It is something like a paradoxical inclusion of membership itself. *The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included*. The sovereign decides the originary inclusion of the living in the sphere of law. The state of exception is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension. The exception is truly, according to its etymological root, "*taken outside (ex-capere), and not simply excluded*. The decision concerns the very relation between law and fact. The "sovereign" structure of the law has the form of a state of exception in which fact and law are indistinguishable (yet must, nevertheless, be decided on) (Agamben 1998: 11-12, 18, 25-27).

Although the power of the nation-state may be abating in the transnational world, it will continue to express its power and draw life from people, especially at the borders. This does not mean it has been totally rejected; people sometimes need help and protection when they face poor conditions such as no road, land, food, shelter or security, and as Decha points out, a nation-state becomes powerful in terms of managing its people as soon as they require protection through the use of sovereign power (Decha 2003; 2008). Decha (2008) also appraises Appadurai's concept of an "ethnoscape" (Appadurai 1996), which emphasizes the power and consequences of moving subjectivities, but fails to account for the experiences of forcibly displaced persons whose mobility is exceptional and limited, and who are ultimately left behind in the border regions, a time when nation-states often promulgate the "state of exception" (Agamben 2004; Taussig 1992). For Agamben, "the production of a bio-political body is the original activity of sovereign power; and this original activity is the 'originary inclusion of the living in the sphere of law', which in turn results from what he describes as the sovereign's decision of the exception…the decision of the sovereign is not 'the expression of the will of a subject hierarchically superior to all others' (Agamben 1998). The decision of the state of exception does not decide whether or not a person or an act is licit or illicit, but what the law needs" over the borderland; this people's form-of-life is stripped out and their naked-ness revealed by the nation-state. The lives of human beings are thus naked under sovereign power, as their lives can always be threatened (Decha 2003: 27).

The rule of law protects citizenship, but forcibly displaced people are defined as outside of the community (Decha 2003; 2008). As Taussig argues, state citizens often live in a state of emergency that is not the exception, but the rule, as decided upon by the state (Taussig 1992a). This state of exception has thus become the rule, one which uses violence both directly and in the media to consolidate power over people. Thus, a zone of indistinction between law and life emerges through the logic of the paradox of sovereignty; the inclusive exclusion (Agamben 1998: 9, 27, cited in Decha 2007a: 233). This is the normal regime as the law of silence, the law of 'let it be', and the law of forgetting (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 174).

Nevertheless, Ong argues that Agamben seems to be searching for a politics that is not founded on the bio-political fracture, or the oscillation between the two

poles of inclusion and exclusion. Traditionally, sovereignty is predicated on the exclusion of living – being not recognized as modern humans. In effect, categories such as migrants, refugees and illegal immigrants, have been defined in ways that make their rights and claims external to citizenship and the law (Ong 2006: 196-97). In this sense, the exception as a fundamental principle of sovereign rule is predicated on the division between citizens in a juridical order and outsiders stripped of juridical-political protections. In contrast, drawing on Foucault's bio-politics,[49] Ong conceptualizes the exception more broadly, as an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed in order to include as well as to exclude. The sovereign exception does not only make out excludable subjects who are denied protections, but can also be a positive decision to include selected populations and spaces as targets of calculative choices and value-orientation associated with neo-liberal reform (Ong 2006: 5-7). With a liberal approach, neo-liberal decisions have created new forms of inclusion, setting apart some citizen-subjects, and creating new spaces that enjoy extraordinary political benefits and economic gain (Bigo, 2007: 13).

This is what Ong means by the term "graduated or variegated sovereignty" (Ong 1999a; 2000), that the state is configured more flexibly and shifts its major concern from national entity to diverse spaces and populations in its encounter with different forms of sovereignty (Anusorn 2010: 312-13). For instance, in Southeast and East Asia, zoning technologies have carved-out special spaces in order to achieve the strategic goals of regulating groups in relation to market forces. Ong argues that to remain globally competitive, the typical ASEAN state makes different kinds of bio-political investments in different subject populations, privileging men over women, and focusing on certain kinds of human skills, talents and ethnicities. This unequal bio-political investment in different categories of the population results in the uneven

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[49] Governmentality refers to the ensemble of knowledge and techniques (institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics) that are concerned with the systematic and pragmatic guidance and regulation of everyday conduct (Foucault 1991: 102-03, cited in Ong 2006: 4). It is useful in describing regimes which covers a range of practices that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other. Following Foucault, neo-liberalism as technology of governing relies on calculative choices and techniques in the domains of citizenship and of governing. The art of government strained by the condition of transnationality has to further stretch the bounds of political economy and sovereignty. Thus, we need to explore the interplay among techniques of governing and of disciplining, of inclusion and exclusion, of giving value or denying value to human conduct (Ong 1999b: 214-17; 2006: 4-5).

distribution of services, care and protection; while some subjects are invested with rights and resources, others are neglected outright (Ong 1999b: 217; Ong 2006).

Ong insists that Agamben's including Carl Schmitt's, notion of old or traditional sovereignty is too narrow in the era of a transnational world. She explains that many academic scholars have approached exception and neo-liberalism (or transnational capitalism) separately, while other ethnographic works, such as those by Anusorn (2010), Decha (2003; 2007a), Grundy-Warr (2001) and Horstmann (2007), analyze the states of exception that exist around the borderlands[50] but somewhat fail to analyze transnational capitalism. In contrast, Ong does characterize the 'state of exception' and neo-liberalism, in her analysis, with "neoliberalism as [an] exception" (Ong 2006).

However, it is important to note that political border, for Ong, is clear-cut territory, and as she put it, "the nation-state is a fixed territoriality" (Ong, 2006: 20). She emphasizes the transnational elements that cut-across political borders and would rather focus on transnational capitalism. In this sense, territorial disputes; for example, the issue of ethnic conflicts or powerful groups occupying the territory of the powerless such as the Israel-Palestine disputes over the territories of Gaza and the West Bank (Gregory 2005), or the Burmese state and the Karens in Karen State (Bryant 1996; Keyes 1994; Rajah 1990) are not her point of focus (Ong 1999b; 2006). In other words, the ambiguity of frontiers is not the context of her studies. In doing this, Ong's notion of graduated sovereignty is helpful to understand the state-globalization interaction taking place in the transnational or post-development era, an approach which can be applied in the context of a clear-cut nation state boundary. Even so, Ong does not apply it to study unclear nation-state boundaries or ambiguous frontiers,[51] or the political violence of war against terror (Gregory 2007). Within those situations, the sovereign power of the state works extremely well.

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[50] Borderlands are zones of people's interaction wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where different classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy (gender, age, status and distinctive life experiences) without losing their differences, in which the states and power are concerned (Anzaldúa 1999; Gupta and Ferguson 1997b; Rosaldo 1993).

[51] Geographers also conceive frontiers in relational concepts (Curry and Koczberski 2009). Frontiers are seen as spaces of multi-faceted development trajectories (Fold and Hirsch 2009: 95), spaces of capitalist transition (Barney 2009), transitional spaces which reflect dynamic of spatial and social transformation in context of capital flows (Hirsch 2009).

The study of state sovereignty here is two-fold. One the one hand, studies of the geography of violence are concerned with problems of the sovereign power of the state, without relating to transnational capitalism (Gregory and Pred 2007), whilst on the other hand, Ong's study of state-transnational capitalism interaction does not focus on the borderlands, border zones or ambiguous frontiers in a situation of political conflicts and violence (Ong 1999b; 2006). To find alternative ways of study, several ethnographic works, which draw on different approaches created by Agamben (1998; 2004) and Ong (2006), and in context of Thailand and including Burma will be analyzed here.

Following Agamben's notion of sovereign exception, some academic scholars have examined the fragmented nature of sovereign power and explored the differential approach of sovereign power towards different migrants in different social and political contexts. In his discussion of sovereignty, territory and the nation-state, Grundy-Warr explores the impact of this on the people and places around border regions, and particularly in Burma (Grundy-Warr 2001). The Burmese military government has implemented a number of strategies, including the use of cease-fire agreements and the 'Four Cuts'. The four cuts strategy as counter-insurgency program has been designed by the *Tatmadaw* (Burmese Army) in the mid-1960s to cut the four main links – food, funds, intelligence (information), and recruits – between ethnic nationalities' soldiers, their families, and local villagers (Decha 2007a: 253). The impacts of forced relocation, displacement, refugees and migrants have simultaneously spread across the territory of Burma and its neighboring countries, and have not been limited to the borderlands. In terms of the development projects and policies introduced to resolve the political conflicts, displacement and so on, he states that the international border was conferred in a situation of war and in response to internal affairs. Displaced persons not identified as refugees can receive humanitarian relief after they cross the international border into Thailand, and he concludes that their status, the international concern shown and relief provided are restricted by political and spatial sovereignty (Grundy-Warr 2001: 24-25).

Furthermore, Decha maintains that girls and women from Burma have become a bio-political body; the primary object of a sovereign power. The forcibly displaced people's quotidian lives have been placed under a "state of exception." In the

Agambenian sense, admitting people's flights from Burma to Thailand to an asylum is a strategy used to turn their lives from "outside," into the sphere of Thai laws and therefore inside the agreements Thailand has made with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The Thai government and the UNHCR agreed to cooperate more closely on displaced persons from Burma during May 1988,[52] but the two sovereign powers' inscriptive strategies have not coincided since that time. The Thai government wants to grant temporary shelters only to *people fleeing fighting,* whereas the UNHCR has been trying to push for the criteria to also include *people fleeing the effects of civil wars* that do not always reach through direct fighting. In this regard, the Thai government has preferred to deal with the refugees on the basis of discretionary policy decisions, rather than to be bound by international law or specific national laws[53] (Decha 2007a: 233-35).

Nevertheless, Decha's explanation is quite similar to Ong's idea; that the refugee camp represents a zone of graduated sovereignty in which ethnicity often becomes a sorting mechanism used to define the meaning and claim of sovereignty, and a zone where national sovereign power manifests itself over another international sovereign power (Ong 1999b). Ong maintains that, for Southeast Asia states,

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[52] The agreements signify intended cooperative relations between two sovereign powers, one national, the other on international, to act upon forcibly displaced people from Burma. The two entities agreed to coordinate with each other on the following issues: admission to asylum, registration, UNHCR access, repatriation, relocation of temporary shelter areas, UNHCR assistance parameters, and long-term strategies. However, the first issue, admission to asylum, centered on the question of how displaced persons should be perceived and how they should be recognized (Decha 2007a: 234).

[53] In an Agamben sense, Thailand's Regulations Concerning Displaced Persons from Neighboring Countries, issued by the Ministry of Interior on April 8th, 1954, and Thailand's 1979 Immigration Act are the two juridical fabrics that an immigrant encounters when traversing through the Thai-Burmese in-between spaces into Thailand's territory. The forcibly displaced people from Burma who choose to be before the law would be inscribed into/by Thai laws, whereas those who choose to proceed through doorways at the Thai-Burmese state boundary are beyond the law – at least until they are caught (Decha 2007a: 235).

The 1979 Immigration Act contains no reference to refugees, and no permanent legal mechanism is in place for making a determination whether an individual qualifies for protection as a refugee. Hence, the Thai state apparatuses have consistently avoided using the terms *refugee or asylum seeker.* The generic term for Indochinese and others arriving in Thailand is *displaced persons* and all are prima facie *illegal migrants* unless they arrived before March 9th, 1976. According to 1954 regulations, a displaced person means someone who escapes from dangers due to an uprising, fighting or war, and enters in breach of the Immigration Act (Vitit [n.d.]; Lang 2002; Alexander 1999, cited in Decha 2007a: 235-36). Even though, at first, this definition clearly fits with the United Nations refugee juridical fabrics, the Thai kingdom has its own reasons for not acceding to the refugee instruments. Genealogically, the displaced people have been classified by the kingdom into three major groups: Burmese-national displaced people, people fleeing fighting and illegal economic immigrants (Decha 2007a: 235-36).

receiving countries have refused to extend asylum to refugees (ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians) in ways that would have made them citizens in other cases. The prevailing practice is not to offer asylum, but to emphasize the state policies of control and deterrence, so that refugee law has become immigration law, focused on the protection of the border rather than the protection of persons. In effect, seeking asylum in contemporary shelters along the Thai border confers no political obligations on the Thai government (Ong 1999b: 220).

However, it is surprising to me that Ong does not refer to the case of displaced persons from Burma who suffer while traversing across the borderlands into Thailand (Ong 1999b). It seems to me that her notion of the refugee camps as a zone of graduated sovereignty has been underlined in order to support her argument, without analyzing how and in what manner the sovereign power of the Thai state enacts laws, and how its army intensifies the suffering experienced by displaced people along the Thai-Burmese border, in complex ways. Drawing on Agamben's notion of 'bare life' and 'state of exception', then in contrast to Ong, Decha has investigated the lives of forcibly displaced people from Burma and criticized the ways in which state sovereignty decides upon the 'state of exception' (Decha 2003; 2007a; 2007b).

Similar to Decha's notion, Anusorn supports the Agambenian statement of sovereignty rather than Ong's graduated sovereignty (Anusorn 2010). As Anusorn put it, "the sovereignty of the monarch is not 'graduated sovereignty' as posited in Ong's formulation" (Anusorn 2010: 312-13). Anusorn maintains that the problem lies in the exceptional features of the monarch himself. The monarch is ascribed with sovereignty to exercise not in a flexible way. The challenge, for Anusorn, is that agency is obtained through the monarch in a state of exception – an ordinary person – but is enacted through the exceptional monarch – a transcendental figure.[54] And given that the exceptional monarch is the Thai state imposing its singular sovereignty in

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[54] The Muslims stripped the King of his exceptional status by transforming him into a human being and engaging him in an intimate relationship using the sentence "We love 'Mr. King'." The word "love" denotes an intimate relationship not an act of solemn worship or reverence; whereas the word "นาย" literally means "mister" which denotes a human being not the supreme one. Taken together, "We love 'Mr. King'" is an expression of an intimate human relationship between the two parties who are on the same ground, not a solemn reverence of the followers to the sovereign. The King, then, has two "states of exception." On the one hand, the King is the Thai state, in the state of exception in its encounter with different forms of sovereignty. On the other hand, Muslim finds support and protection under the royal patronage as exceptional sovereignty. In this regard, they have placed the exceptional sovereign monarch into the state of exception that renders such engagement possible (Anusorn 2010: 310-12).

disguise, to enact agency through the exceptional monarch does not amount to a truly expanded space of difference and diversity within the polity. Therefore, it would seem to be difficult for the Muslims in southernmost Thailand to use inequality to solve inequality (Anusorn 2010: 318-19).

Aunsorn's and Decha's understanding of state power is based on a conventional understanding of sovereignty, reflected in the way they analyze the practices of the Thai state with regard to the minority Muslims[55] (Anusorn's case) and the forcibly displaced Karens (Decha's case). Sovereignty, as state power, is centralized and concentrated in the military apparatus of the regime, to ensure order and stability and to safeguard the territorial integrity of the nation-state; representing a supreme form of power over the population (Ong 2000: 56). Nonetheless, I contend that both Anusorn (2010) and Decha (2003; 2007a) do not lay enough emphasis on transnational capitalism in their analysis; therefore, state strategies, in relation to global market forces, in producing graduated sovereignty and transnational social movement, have not been touched upon by these ethnographic research studies. For example, in the case of the southern border provinces of Thailand, the role of transnational capitalism is apparent in the way the Thai state has tried to articulate the Muslim minority and capital markets through its development plans for the Special Southern Border Provinces Development Zone and the Southern Seaboard (The Government Public Relations Department 2008). It is this that Anusorn (2010) has not analyzed.

In the case of the Thai-Burmese border zone, Decha refers to the practices of state terror that have threatened imperceptibly the forcibly displaced Karen through an interaction between the national sovereign power of the Thai state and the international sovereign power of the UNHCR (Decha 2007a). In his case, the work of the exiled NGOs, in association with transnational NGOs, on humanitarianism which is another form of sovereign power is not analyzed. This point, in Ong's sense, is a kind of graduated sovereignty that reinforces the ethno-racial discriminations of

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[55] It is noteworthy in the southernmost region, and they there have many forms of sovereignty – religion, ethnicity and nation. However, Thai state recreated the Thai Kingdom to impose its sovereignty in a state of exception in a full manner, not in a flexible, fragmented or suspended way, whereby the singularity of sovereign power premised by the unitary state is unable to accommodate ethno-religious differences as well as equality among the citizens. It has resulted in unrest up to the present day (Anusorn 2010: 31).

populations; whereas the other dimension of graduated sovereignty – the rise of production and technological zones (Ong 2000: 66) is not referred to. Moreover, Decha later adds a more problematic issue, that is, 'transnationalism', in his research (Decha 2007b). At the Thai-Burmese border zone, technologization and capitalization on the one hand, and transnational social movement on the other, should be studied in more detail.

Transnationalization is influencing the shape of state power, for as Bigo points out, the border line of the state is still a powerful boundary, because the state tries to configure all the other boundaries concerning identity, solidarity and equality along the lines of its territory. However, increasing transnationalization contradicts this alignment of boundaries along the state frontier, as well as the consequent delimitation of what is inside and outside. Bigo maintains that the reduced significance of the border is based upon the fact that a differential freedom of movement of different categories of people has created a new logic of control that for practical and institutional reasons is located at transnational sites. Hence, a state frontier can no longer be employed to delineate who is in (with the state) and who is out (against the state), or distinguish between what or who is inside or outside.[56] Thus, the abandonment of life by the law is always contested and resisted[57] (Bigo 2007: 9-13).

Further to this, Ong suggests that, while such state-centered institutions continue to exist in all Southeast Asian countries, new strategies are emerging that

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[56] As Bigo asks, how will it be possible to find again the boundaries, the distinctions between those who are hostile and those who are not, when everybody is inside the country? How can people be protected against those wanting to get in, and how are entrants' motivations to be clarified? These questions remain unanswered (Bigo 2007: 29). He maintains that the detention camp for foreigners at the borders of the European Union deal with the notion of exception and the difference between surveillance for all but control of only a few. It is de-judicialized to *ban* some people that governments refuse to consider them to be under their sovereignty. It appears where the line tracing the border is unclear, where inside and outside are not delimited objectively (Bigo 2007: 4-6, 11).

[57] Bigo points out that Agamben's notion of the state of exception forgets society and the web of power and resistance. He maintains that Agamben ignores the resistance of the weak and their capacities to continue to be humane and to subvert the illusory dream of total control (Bigo 2007: 12). However, Agamben's notion of power, for Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, does not necessarily preclude resistance. Intentionally, there are not clear zones of power and zones of abjection but rather Agamben's intention is to clarify the focus of resistance. It is mostly clear in the identification of the nature of the relations between rule and exception that allow for the questioning of the bordering of the norm. The aim is not to continue to remain within the conditions of subjectivity and resistance given by territorial power but rather to investigate the limits of these and thereby think a notion of the political that strives to go beyond territoriality and toward the global (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xxi-xxii).

focus on forming links with global capital and producing a middle class (Ong 1999b: 216). Ong maintains that members of the middle classes in Southeast Asia who are frustrated with conventional party politics and the corrupted electoral systems have turned to NGOs as a way of participating in public life, and at least at the micro-level, NGOs have been able to promote the process of securing the social, economic and cultural rights of particular target groups, such as the poor, refugees, workers, women and children, political prisoners, and minority and aboriginal populations. These NGOs have become "seedbeds for progressive forces" and are fighting not only arbitrary state power, but also the state's flexible approach to sovereignty, which sometimes denies human rights to its subjects (Ong 1999b: 233-37; 2000: 71).

Unlike Anusorn (2010) and Decha (2003; 2007a), Pinkaew analyzes the transnational social movement of Shan women, advocating gender rights and highlighting their position – located in-between both Thai and Burmese sovereignties (Pinkaew 2008). Pinkaew focuses on the transnational production network, which corresponds to Ong's analysis, rather than the practices of state terror and sovereign power of the state as such, even though she does not refer to Ong's work. As Ong points out, the public sphere in Asia has the ability to increase the power of interlinked NGOs; to form a potential global counter-public and to articulate alternative visions. The process of social construction allows for the possibility of redefinition and renegotiation of what the social world is like (Ong 1999b: 237).

In this regard, I am concerned with the sovereign power of the state in relation to transnational capitalism at the ambiguous Salween frontier, where two moments appear at the same time – a frontier for capitalization and intensified everyday life violence, and the transnational anti-Salween dam campaigns. On the one hand, Lionnet and Shih maintain that nation-states are alive as mechanisms of control and domination, even when TNCs are supposed to have dissolved their boundaries (Adejunmobi 2007; Koshy 2005; Lionnet and Shih 2005: 9). On the other hand, Ong insists that the transnational civil society network led by NGOs has been proactive in its struggle against state repression and the state's flexible approach towards sovereignty (Ong 1999b; 2006). Therefore, it has challenged the sovereign power of states.

In a nutshell, the interaction between the transnational, the state and the border has long been discussed within border studies, within which the exclusive and absolute sovereign power of the state is seen as exercising a 'state of exception'. Nowadays, 'transnational' is becoming an influential notion within border studies, meaning that the state has been furnished with different forms of sovereignty, particularly with regard to transnational capitalism. Transnational capitalism has challenged the sovereign power of the state, leading it to act more flexibly, in the sense that governments have had to develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty in order to accumulate capital and flows. Hence, the notion of flexible sovereignty and flexible citizenship within the state of exception has been developed; however, this notion has been created within the framework of clear-cut state boundaries, not ambiguous zones or war zones. The concern for some has thus been about the struggles and sufferings of forcibly displaced people (Decha 2003: 138), and also how to conceptualize sovereignty more broadly (Ong 2006). A more pertinent question might thus be: Is it possible to conceptualize flexible sovereignty as a 'state of exception', for the ambiguous zones of the state?

2. The Salween Movement

This section discusses three aspects of the Salween campaign: (i) the situation at the Thai-Burmese border, which is different to that in other parts of the Mekong region, (ii) the diversification of the campaign, and (iii) the campaign taking place beyond the community. Doing this will help bring about a better understanding of the perceptions and imaginations of the border people, for even though a state's intention is to civilize the margins, the process of doing this creates exclusionary institutions and deprives, at times violently, local people's access to their natural resources. It is thus important to know how the border people, those prevented from accessing their resources by the frontier capitalization process, are able to create spaces of negotiation when dealing with the various actors.

In the global and regional context, this transnational study is situated as part of a regional development that comprises many actors, such as China and Burma, members of ASEAN, inter-government organizations, namely the Mekong River Commission or MRC, international agencies, namely the ADB, international

organizations, namely the World Commission on Dams (WCD),[58] international NGOs, namely International Rivers (IR),[59] EarthRights International (ERI), Mekong Watch, Thai NGOs, namely the Toward Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA),[60] Living River Siam (SEARIN)[61] and transnational NGOs, namely the Salween Watch. All of these organizations play a different role in the region, as part of development and environmental movements.

Regional programs for economic integration and cooperation since the 1980s have increased infrastructure construction and development projects along the Thai-Burmese border. For example, GMS programs have been set up as packages for the development of the region, covering agriculture, the environment, human resources development, investment, telecommunications, tourism, transport infrastructure, transportation and trade facilitation, and energy plans (Asian Development Bank 2006; 2007; 2009). According to these GMS programs, energy is an essential element of economic development, and; therefore, a vital need which the Greater Mekong Sub-region Power Grid (GMS Power Grid) plans to fulfill – a web of power sources and interconnections which covers coal power plants and hydropower dams – a web to establish or secure the region's future power supplies. In addition, the GMS Power Grid will be connected to the ASEAN Power Grid in a broader sense, in the near future. With the creation of this power grid, the Salween dam projects came alive;

[58] Brokered by the World Bank and by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Commission on Dams (WCD) was established in May 1998 in response to the escalating local and international controversies over large dams. It was mandated to review the development effectiveness of large dams and assess alternatives for water resources and energy development, and to develop internationally acceptable criteria, guidelines and standards for the planning, design, appraisal, construction, operation, monitoring and decommissioning of dams (See more detail in United Nations Environment Programme Dams and Development Project Website: http://www.unep.org/dams/WCD/).

[59] International Rivers, the international environmental and human rights organization, has been working with partner organizations and dam-affected people by providing advice, training and technical assistance, and advocating on their behalf with governments, banks, companies and international agencies in Latin America, Asia and Africa since 1985 (See more detail in International Rivers Website: http://www.internationalrivers.org.).

[60]FER is a non-profit organization based in Bangkok, Thailand which was established in 1986. FER's institutional mandate is to conduct research and produce research based documents regarding ecological issues with the perspective of sustainable development and greater participation of local communities within the Mekong Region. TERRA is a project under FER and was established in 1991 to focus on issues concerning the environment and local communities within the Mekong Region. TERRA works to support the network of NGOs and people's organizations in the Mekong Region, encouraging exchange and alliance-building, and drawing on the experience of development and environment issues in Thailand (See more detail in website: http://www.terraper.org/home.php).

[61] The old name of Living River Siam was South East Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN). It is a non-profit organization based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, founded in 1999.

claiming to be a key part of the future – a good future. The dams are thus needed in order to make this dream a reality. In this regard, the GMS Power Grid is more concerned with regional energy security than with border security.

The supra-state organizations, transnational corporations and states have promoted regional energy security, and at the regional level have manipulated the regionalization of development, claiming that the power development projects, such as the hydropower dams being built, will ensure regional energy security and induce economic growth in the long run. A stable energy source is important for the creation and maintenance of economic self-reliance, allowing countries to adapt and respond to globalization and neo-liberalism, mainly because the international economy is highly competitive. In so doing, supra-state organizations' agenda in Mekong region seems to be about the sharing of economic benefits. The emergence of so many development projects, both within states and through cooperation among supra-state organizations at the regional level, clearly represents a neo-liberalist agenda played out at the global level and exerting inordinate power over the region. In this sense, states have become the metaphor for regionalization, in which the global development discourse is derived from the ideas of neo-liberalism. As the world becomes borderless within the globalization era, so the geographical landscape and the borders are being reshaped and perhaps being shaped into new forms as a result of the economic assemblage (Pitch 2007), and the direction neo-liberalist form of development regards natural resources as a form of property which needs to be managed. Natural resources are thus transformed into commodities to be traded on the market for profit.

The Salween River no longer marks a political boundary for the Chinese, Burmese and Thai states, but has instead become a linkage among transnational agents and these same states, who now utilize a range of techniques to enhance and control the border as a natural resource, for "development." Thus, the Salween basin is enclosed by transnational agents associated with states that are trying to occupy it and to some extent exploit the natural resources within. This situation, which can be called "transnational enclosure," is ultimately about how much of the basin's resources can be used and who will manage these resources and for whose benefit (Yos 2011).

The anti-Salween dam campaign is part of a social movement which has been formed through a number of alliances between organizations such as the Salween Watch Coalition, international NGOs, and Thai and local NGOs. The Salween Watch Coalition is run by exiled activists who fled Burma a number of years ago, and who now live in Thailand – in Chiang Mai, Bangkok or other cities near the Thai-Burmese border. They are in effect outsiders, working far from their own country yet trying to mobilize people from both sides to work with Thai and international NGOs and advocate for the Salween cause. Furthermore, campaigns protesting against the dam projects have been launched across a number of major cities worldwide, including in Bangkok, Manila, Sydney and Washington D.C., in order to pressure the governments of Thailand and Burma to review and cancel the projects. Many grassroots organizations from Burma, as well as villagers from the proposed dam sites, have signed and sent petitions to the Thai and Chinese governments asking them to halt dam construction in Burma (Apinya 2007b; International Rivers 2008; Salween Watch Coalition 2009; Tunya 2007).

The Salween campaign, involving a number of NGOs, is quite different from other dam campaigns, including those campaigning against dams being built along the Mekong. The Salween is special case, as dams here are being built in war zones in which Burmese government troops and ethnic insurgents are fighting. On the Mekong, war is no longer an issue. Fortunately, both the Salween and the Mekong campaigns are connected; not separated, so that when the campaign against the Mekong's mainstream dams was lunched, Salween activists also joined in, even though they are relatively minor players within the overall Mekong campaign.

The network created at the broader level is comprised of diverse groups of people who are involved with social movements, and among the diverse groups of people involved, there are local people (who move back and forth across the borders), borderless people (migrant workers or refugees), Thai NGOs and international NGOs. This movement goes beyond what we might call a "community," though in the past, the campaigns held against dams focused on the affected communities, that is, they were place-based movements; but this case is a distinct and peculiar social movement. As a result, the proposed Salween dam projects have drawn strong protests from

human rights activists and environmentalists, as well as from local ethnic groups (Sai Silp 2007).

The question is: how have they been able to use the border as a site to create their movement and identities? How have they collaborated with NGOs and developed their position as local people among the social movement at the border? And how have the border people created and put forward arguments against the dam project in an unclear zone of power, the Salween borderlands, where they are unclear which state or group of people is in control? This area can be a rather ambiguous frontier; there is sometimes difficulty in even identifying and determining the actual borderlines, and this issue is of interest for people who are concerned about national security. In fact, the notion of territory might be used as a tool by border people in their arguments against the Salween dams; therefore, how individuals or groups, who have no state but by being part of the movement, that is exiled NGOs on the Thai side and international NGOs, have been able to use a transnational claim in order to campaign against the Salween dam projects.
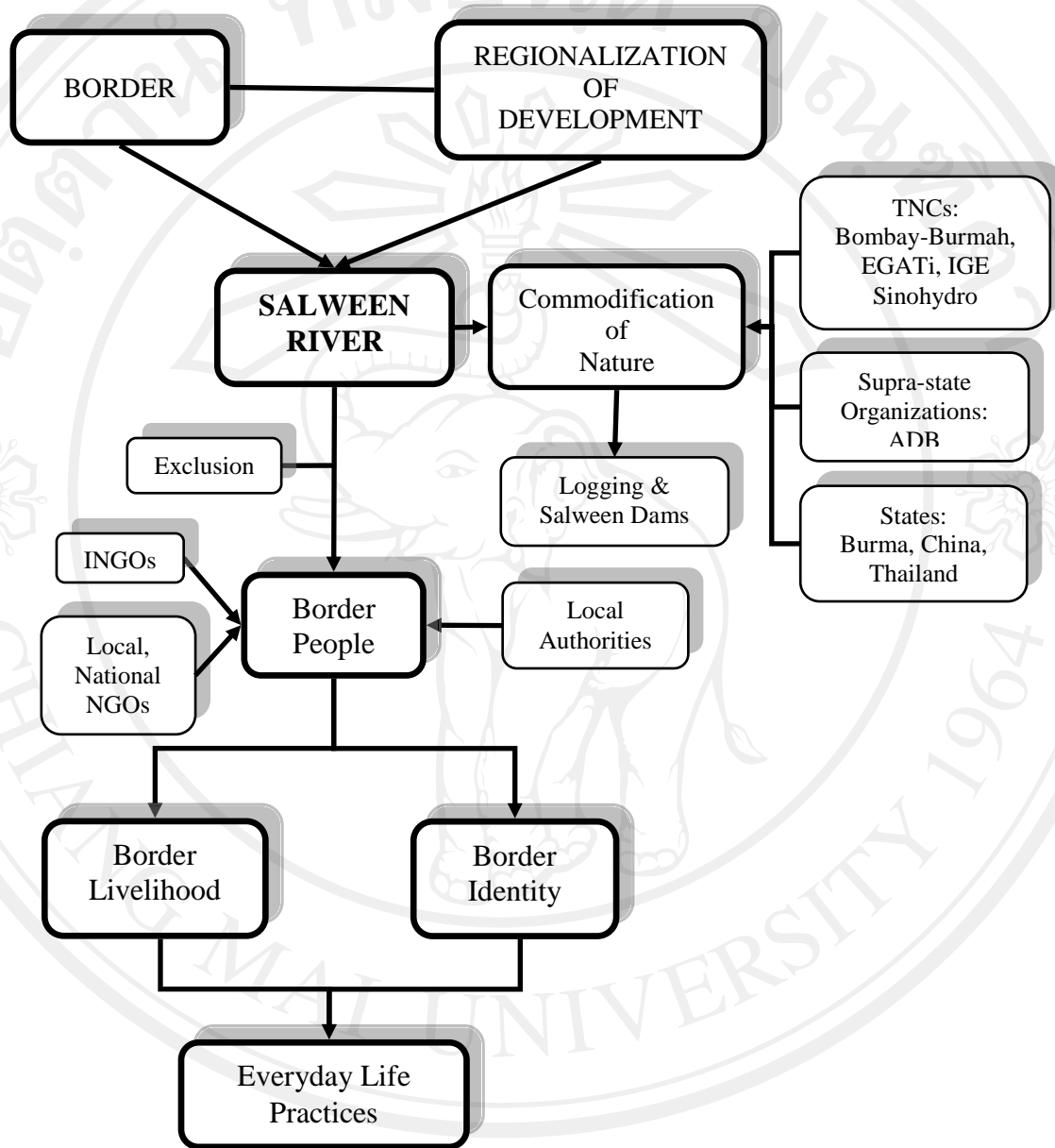
1.4 Conceptual Framework

My research aspires to shed light on the relationship between people, commodities and nature within a regionalization of development context, focusing on the Salween borderlands, and seeks to answer the question: What is the interaction between the commodification of nature, border livelihoods and border identity? The border, as a zone, is used to understand the border livelihoods that have been affected by the everyday violence that has occurred since the Salween borderlands became resource frontiers, given the ambiguity of the frontier and the contradiction between the frontier and the border – a liminal space of rule between the Burmese and Thai states.

The regionalization of development, a minor form of globalization, and as ruled by TNCs and supra-state organizations – in association with nation states, has the power to organize natural resources in my study area by turning the Salween River (as nature) into hydropower (as social nature), and then hydropower as social nature into a valuable commodity to be used for trade on the energy market. The process of production itself is organized in the form of buying and selling (Polanyi 1980: 73),

and this same process of the commodification of nature is occurring around the Salween borderlands, systematically excluding some groups of people from access to resources, those they previously used and controlled. The process has been characterized by its use of the power of exclusion, which operates around the borderlands to dehumanize human beings. Nevertheless, the border entities dealing with and representing local people – the local authorities, as well as local, national, transnational and international NGOs – have tried to compete with this commodification of nature by producing different meanings of nature, and through these contested meanings have turned the Salween River into a space or site intimately woven with local identities and livelihoods. It this space I wish to investigate. In light of this objective, the concept of *thirdspace* in terms of social/lived spaces or contested space, will be employed to explore the border people's methods of contesting, as well as their involvement in the anti-dam campaign, one which expresses heir intention to live safely along the Thai-Burmese border, even if their status is ambiguous. I will also look at the ways in which the relationship between the numerous groups of people and the nation-states involved has been reframed, by linking the problems they face to environmentalism and human rights issues. They have made strategic transnational alliances, defining and articulating human rights violations in order to gain support from the international human rights movement (Kearney 1995: 560).

In addition, these border people should be looked at from the perspective of, not only a border livelihood dimension, but also in terms of a border identity dimension, because they have been dehumanized by the commodification process. As human beings, they have decided to express their own identities and dignity, for the transformation between border livelihoods and border identities, for them, is the practice of everyday life. This can be further conceptualized as an everyday life struggle, and in this regard, I will use the notion of collaborative articulation to analyze the environmental and social movement that has helped express the relationship between livelihoods, identity and commodification, in which various groups of people with different standpoints have come together to participate and collaborate in the resistance project, one which has had unpredictable consequences (Tsing 2005).

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

1.5 Research Designs and Methods

The research designs and methods are comprised of four issues: research experience in borderland study, the field work, research methods, and writing and translation as data analysis.

1.5.1 Research Experience in Borderland Study

According to Appadurai, cultures, such as identity, are not fixed and unbounded to one place (Appadurai 1991). Due to the movement of people and cultural flows, the concepts of culture are constantly changing. Previously, culture, as a unit of social analysis, was seen as a bounded entity, an essentialism that fixes people to a place or location. Since Appadurai, many ethnographic studies have shown precisely the limitation of a single-sited ethnography – the locale, the community or even the nation-state itself – as a unit of analysis. Recently, trans-local methodology was introduced in order to rethink the concepts of culture, method and the unit of social analysis (Appadurai 2000; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Prista 2008). I draw upon this methodology to understand border people who go beyond nation-state boundaries, and a social movement that has taken a transnational form.

My research is based on trans-local or multi-sited ethnography. I conducted my fieldwork within and beyond the Thai-Burmese border zone. At the Salween borderlands, tensions between various political, economic and cultural groups prevail, such as the Burmese military, ethnic insurgency groups, local state agencies and local people. It is a very complex situation in which the local people do not easily trust outsiders, including myself. The fieldwork beyond the borderlands is the social movement against dams led by NGOs. As the Center for River Training is involved with transnationalized environmental movements around the Mekong River, and is part of a coalition named the "Save the Mekong Campaign" (www.savethemekong.org), they are working against the proposed dam projects along the river's course. In terms of the GMS Power Grid, the Salween dam projects are also included in this campaign. As an anti-dam movement, I observed their activities happening beyond the Salween borderlands.

On one occasion, the Center for River Training chose the Salween River basin for a student fieldtrip. I was coordinating for the Center for River Training between 2008 and 2010. I was assigned the task of organizing this trip for the students, who were mainly activists from the Mekong area countries, the aim of which was to visit the area and learn more about the local situation. Fortunately for me, I have a good relationship with a local NGO, the Community Development Center, which works closely with the local people. I, along with local NGO activists, have often visited the

villages in this area; therefore, it is very clear that I was seen a NGO activist in local people's eyes, and so, more or less, had their trust to a certain degree.

What challenges are you faced with when doing research within the Salween borderlands? First, there is the language barrier, for I do not understand Karen and; therefore, on this work had to rely on those villagers who can speak Thai. Moreover, given the limited time I had to carry out my research, I had to depend largely on information provided by spokesmen such as the village head and the Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO) representative,[62] who very much took good care of me and were willing to share their opinions with me. These people do not just represent the border dwellers, but also have much experience in dealing with outsiders. Gradually on occasion, it became possible for me to meet other people in the local villages and observe the villager's life activities, and I gained enormously from the information they shared with me; from their experiences and stories.

I have heard so many words being used in terms of power relations, decision-making and management, such as water management, forest management, sustainable development and the sufficiency economy, and these words or ideas are usually used to communicate with the outside world the fact that local people reveal their ability to maintain a good life, and that they have rights to stay on their ancestors' land. On the one hand, it is interesting to see how they actually organize these things at the grassroots level, and on the other, to see how and what kinds of networks work in the villages, among the villagers, Thai and international NGOs, forestry officials, local government officials, the military, schoolteachers and the media. This is one of the challenges I faced as I searched for an opportunity to communicate with all these different sector actors. In this sense, I needed to gather together clues in order to explain or capture how the decision-making process works in the community, so these factors, as well as the background to the situation in the area, were needed in order for me to uncover more, as I know this would benefit the villagers' strategies and the methods used by them to struggle within the larger field of power relations and interests that exist around the dam projects.

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[62] Tambon (Sub-district) Administration Organization (TAO) is a local governmental organization at district level. Two representatives of each village are directly elected by the villagers to be the members of a TAO council and are in the position for four years.

1.5.2 The Field Work

My research was carried out over a number of phases related to the research methods used, the details of which are as follows:

Step 1: Research Sites Selection

My research was not limited to one location, village or community. The proposed Salween dam projects, as part of the region's discourse on energy security, are a cross-border issue, and their impacts will not be limited to either one site or one side of the Salween River, or even to one country, but it will impact upon both sides of the Salween River and affect many places around the nation-states' border. In this regard, I prefer to call this an issue-oriented study, focusing on the social movement and campaigns formed against the Salween dams. In many ways, the local people's security is threatened both by the GMS Power Grid and by the transnational assemblage driving it.

The Salween River, which runs along the Thai-Burmese border, is known by the Karen as the 'river in the Karen land'. Along its course there are many communities which I would categorize as 'border villages', and also as 'temporary shelters[63] (Decha 2003; Tunya 2007). These border villages and temporary shelters, as pieces of the jigsaw puzzle which forms the social movement, must be examined in order to properly demonstrate the people's struggles and the strategies used by them in response to these struggles. When searching for the social movement at the border, limiting my study to a single village or to a separate community where the impact of the dam is most severe, would not have taken into account the full extent of the

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[63] The Salween River is the world's 26th longest river, and the longest and free-running international river in Southeast Asia. It originates in Xiqang Ziqiou (Tibetan Plateau – politically called Tibetan Autonomous Region) of the eastern Himalayas and passes through western Yunnan of China, after which it leaves China and meanders through Burma (where it is known as the Thanlwin) and Thailand (where it is known as the Salawin, Thai: สาละวิน) on its way to the Andaman Sea by way of Mawlamyaing (Moulmien). The Salween River forms a 127-kilometer-long borderline between Thailand and Burma (between Karen State and Mae Hong Son Province) before draining into the Andaman Sea, and has a total length of 2,820 kilometers. It runs through a narrow and mountainous watershed of 324,000 square kilometer across three countries: China is 50.8 percent Burma 46 percent and Thailand 3.1 percent and the river-side population is 4.88 million. UNESCO said this region "may be the most biologically diverse temperate ecosystem in the world" and designated it as a World Heritage Site in 2003. It is home to over 7,000 species of plants and 80 rare or endangered animals and fish (Babel and Wahid 2009: 10; Wikipedia 2009).

movement, for in terms of place-making, those in different communities might create different strategies when constructing the meaning of the frontier or identifying their own place.
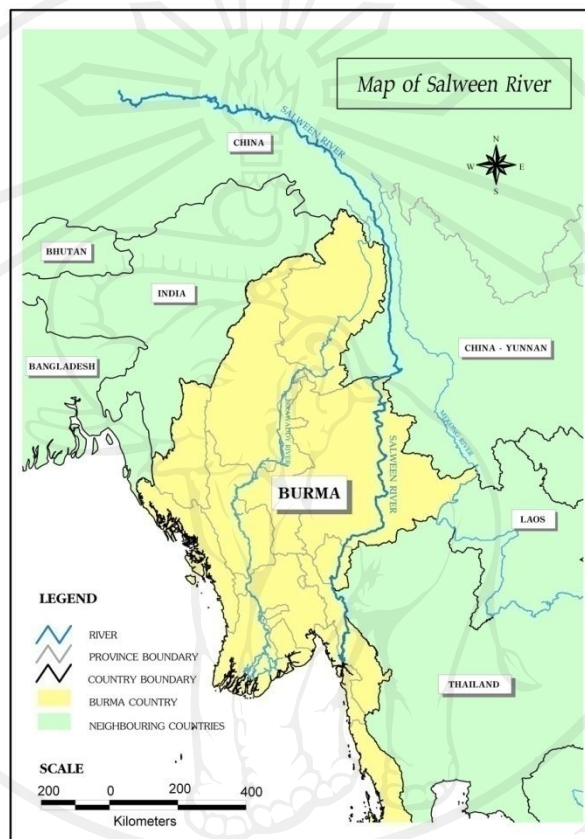
Figure 1.2 The Salween River

Source: Salween Watch 2009: http://www.salweenwatch.org/images/stories/maps/sw-river-map.jpg

I therefore selected three border villages to be my research sites: Saw Myin Dong village, Bon Bea Luang village and Muang Mean village, all of which are in the 'front line' in terms of the frontier/border clashes taking place. I will briefly describe the villages below:

1. *Bon Bea Luang* **Village**

This village is located right next to the Salween River, which people use to travel to Mae Sariang District in Mae Hong Son Province in Thailand. The river is

also the shortest way for people from both Thailand and Burma to gather together to trade, and people from both sides of the border often cross the river to visit each other. Once, when trade and commerce was booming, the village had a larger population, and many people came to stay along in the village, which has been established for fifty years and was a meeting point for travelers from all directions, including traders involved in the cattle trade, mining and logging. These businesses allowed the community to expand and local people benefited from the economic growth that took place. However, the unstable political situation and the political conflicts that have taken place between the Burmese troops and the ethnic minorities have had a bad effect on the economy of this village.

Bon Bea Luang village has had six village chiefs since it was formed; however, its population has decreased from over 1,500 in 2007, to 1,328 in 2010. The population is made up of Christian Karen (506 people, 108 households), Buddhist Shan (over 300 people, 77 households) and Muslim Burmese (522 people, 88 households). The shop owners are mostly Karen, whereas the boat owners are both Karen and Muslim. Most of the villagers are wage laborers, working on general labor work, and carrying goods and products (men make up about 70% and women 30% of the wage laborers). In this way they can earn money from working hard during the dry season (though not all year round), which last for about nine months (between November and July). Laborers also go to work for *khon muang* (townspeople) in the fields, where they can earn 70 baht per day (just over two US Dollars), or if they have a Thai ID card, 120 baht per day (four US Dollars). In addition, more than half of the population goes out to work in the nearby cities; for example, the women work as housekeepers in Chiang Mai and the men work in slaughterhouses in the Chang Klan area of Chiang Mai.

More than half of the villagers are stateless; some people have Thai ID cards with full Thai citizenship, while others have blue hill tribe cards, orange illegal migrants from Burma cards – for those with a permanent house or a green with a red rim card representing those from a highland community waiting to be surveyed and identified. Other have no card at all. Despite having such kinds of card, those who do not have a proper Thai ID card do not have full Thai citizenship; instead, the different

types of cards imply different types of 'non-population' status, which the Thai nation-state uses to limit their resource access and livelihood opportunities.

These have participated in the campaigns against the Salween dams, but it is not their first priority; their first priority is the citizenship issue, as they try to engage in the process of registering themselves as Thai citizens. To be a Thai citizen is a better position for them, as it gives them a greater chance of surviving and gaining access to resources and state services. This includes the chance to be able to protest against the Salween dams as full Thai citizens, those recognized by the state authorities.

2. *Saw Myin Dong* Village

Saw Myin Dong village is located along the Salween River and is one hundred years old, and has another sub-village which falls under its administrative remit. Most of the villagers are Christian Karens who have lived in the area for many generations. In total there are over 100 households and the population is more than 1,000. More than half the members of the village are Thai nationals.

The villagers here in the past moved around quite freely, even across the Salween River, to plant and work; some even worked as elephant riders helping with the logging concessions inside Burma. Thereafter, those who worked inside Burma had to move back to live inside the village, after the logging concessions ended and as war broke out in the 1980s.

The main sources of income for the villagers come from the river and the riverside area, with fishing taking place in the river during the wet season, then in the dry season – when the water recedes – the river bank being used for planting crops. So, the river is the main source of income the villagers; the river is money for them. Alongside the river they plant rice and maintain subsistence agriculture; therefore, they totally depend on the river and their riverbank farms.

Archeological research was carried out in the village area in 2007, showing that the Salween area, in the past was a key trading route within Indochina, within which diverse communities were located. The villagers have since used the findings of this research to legitimize their status and increase their bargaining power, as "local people with a long history," when dealing with outsiders.

3. *Muang Mean* **Village**

Muang Mean village has been located on the Thai side of the Salween River for a long time, and there are three sub-villages under its administration. The villagers of Muang Mean are also mainly Karen, and have lived in Thailand (and previously Siam) for hundreds of years. Their ancestors also lived on the Thai side, but farther into the mountains, migrating down to the Salween River about 60 to 70 years ago. The population of the village is about 600, of which about 200 (86 households) live in Muang Mean village itself. Over 80 percent of the population here is Thai nationality, while the rest either have blue highlander cards, the green with a red rim cards – meaning they are highlanders waiting for investigation and identification by the Department of Provincial Administration, or orange cards – meaning they are illegal immigrants from Burma who have a permanent house.

The villagers claim that they are the Thai King's subjects, based on a community history that states King Rama IX and the Queen visited them in 1970s. They also represent their homeland as belonging to the Thai state due to the Thai state boundary, which encompasses their village; however, the villagers here have close connections with people scattered on the Burmese side and along the Salween River.

The villagers here grow rice, beans, corn, chilies, pumpkins, tobacco and many other kinds of vegetables, plus plant rice in the paddy fields, carry out shifting cultivation in the hills and maintain orchards and have gardens along the riverbank. Their sources of income are the vegetables and tobacco they grow and sell, working as wage laborers and selling forest products and fish.
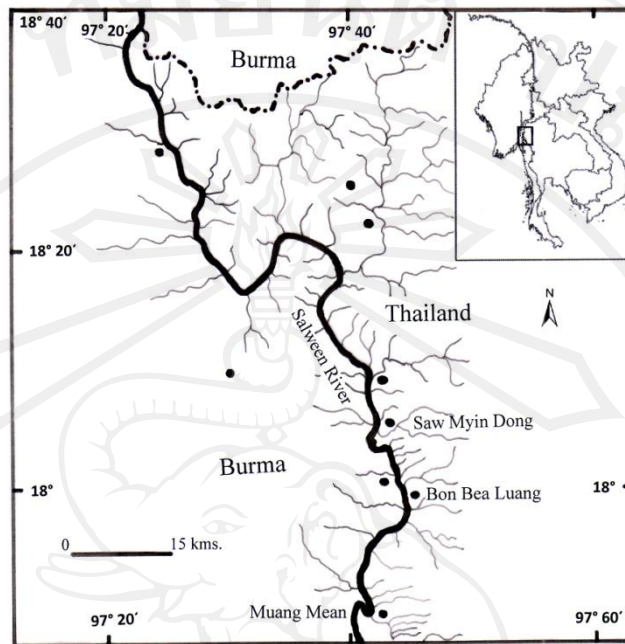
Figure 1.3 Location of villages at the Thai-Burmese State Boundary
Source: Adapted from Montree and Landharima 2007

Step 2: Target Group Selection

There are various groups of actors involved in the social movement, to a greater or lesser degree and on different scales. At the transnational level, international NGOs and exile NGOs, TNCs and international financial organizations, namely the ADB, are involved, while at the national level, there are Thai NGOs and government agencies, from Thailand, Burma and China, involved. At the local level, local NGOs, local government agencies and border dwellers are involved, and among the border dwellers there are many different groups, such as ethnic minority groups living on the Burmese side nearby the border – who sometimes cross the border as stateless people, local people who live in Thai border villages – particularly Christian Karen, Buddhist Shan and Muslim Burmese. These people play different roles in the movement against the Salween dams and its campaign. My research focuses on the practices of the border people, especially those local people who live along the Salween River and stay in the villages nearby.

My key informants included both men and women – both formal and informal leaders from each of the villages, those who have played a significant role in the campaign taking place at the Thai-Burmese border. I selected formal and informal leaders by which criteria of their participations in support the border people's struggle within and beyond villages. I interviewed eight formal leaders who are village heads and assistants, and TAO's members, and I interviewed six informal leaders who are elder people and women. I also interviewed seven villagers who are involved with specific cases. In addition, I participated in activities, particularly ceremony, meeting, seminar, conference, and training course. By doing this, the role of international NGOs, Thai NGOs, local government agencies, TNCs, EGAT and the ADB are focused upon.

Step 3: Research Time Frame

I carried out my research over the period 2007 to 2010. However, Burma is currently changing fast, and particularly since national elections were held in November 2010, the situation has become very dynamic. Since I carried out my research before these changes took place, I will limit my discussion to the years before 2011. Due to being new developments in Burma since 2011, my research will not cover these new developments. The details of my data collection and research activities are, chronologically, as follows:

My friends and I, who are associated with a local Karen NGO, visited Bon Bea Luang village and another village located along the Salween River, as well as a temporary shelter nearby the river on the Burmese side, to carry out a survey during the period May 9th to 11th, 2007. Students from the Center for River Training, Living River Siam (SEARIN) staff members and I also visited another Karen village located on a Salween tributary for a field trip between July 11th and 14th, 2007.

After these visits, I accompanied students and staff from the Center for River Training and Community Development Center staff on a visit to Bon Bea Luang and Muang Mean villages, between July 15th and 19th, 2008. I then attended a Mekong Public Forum International Conference entitled 'The Mekong Mainstream Dams: People's Voice across Borders', hosted by academics and international and Thai

NGOs – including the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC),[64] the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, the Australian Mekong Resource Centre, FER/TERRA, SEARIN, Mekong Watch, Oxfam Australia and International Rivers, on November 12th/13th, 2008, at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

I also visited the Community Development Center and Bon Bea Luang village to interview informants and attend the Stateless Children's Day Festival, between January 7th and 9th, 2009, when I observed the work and collaboration taking place among people and organizations, as well as EGAT's operations along the Thai-Burmese border. In this village, I also interviewed key informants on the issue of everyday violence, and then Center for River Training students and staff, plus visited Bon Bea Luang and Saw Min Dong villages for a field survey between July 7th and 10th, 2009. At that time, I interviewed key informants in the village, plus met with other village representatives and assigned spokesmen. After that, I attended a public meeting on the Hatgyi Dam on July 11th, 2009, along with relevant students and staff, plus participated in a seminar entitled 'Situations along the Thai-Burmese Border: From Colonial History and Ethnic Conflicts to Thai Investment and Impacts' hosted by the Friends of Burma organization and RCSD, on July 23rd, 2009, at Chiang Mai University. I also joined in the Mee-Net Partners' Meeting/Seminar held by the Mee-Net team and supported by Siemenpuu Foundation on October 5th/6th, 2009 in Bangkok.

I hired two research assistants to study in villages for one month in February 2010. My research assistants and I conducted field work at Saw Min Dong, Bon Bea Luang and Muang Mean villages during the period February 12th to 21st, 2010, during which time I interviewed key informants, then when the Center for River Training's field trip took place in late June 2010, I joined this, plus several other events held by them in 2010. Therefore, most of my data was collected from the Thai side of the border (necessary due to the political situation).

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[64] Thai National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is a part of the Thai government, but is an independent authority monitoring human rights cases nationwide. It was set up under the Thai Constitution 1997.

1.5.3 Research Methods

I chose an ethnographic study as the methodology for this research, though the decision to do this was not easy to make, given that I am an outsider and the region is a volatile violent place; a war zone. It proved difficult to get around this problem, so stated above, I confined my data collection activities to the Thai side of the border. However, this should not be seen as limiting the scope of this study, since some of my informants were immigrants from Burma, having fled the political conflicts there.

In this regard, I applied qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, tape recordings, field notes and participatory observation, as well as secondary data collection. The in-depth interviews, tape recordings with permission from interviewees, field notes and participatory observation were used during my fieldwork to collect data from the key informants – including their role and position in the movement. I interviewed the key informants in order to gather their biographies and information about how they engage in the campaign, and using what strategies. At the same time, I also tape-recorded the interviews and took notes. In addition, I used participatory observation methods when I went to the villages – living alongside the villagers, as well as when attending meetings in the villages and seminars or conferences in Chiang Mai and Bangkok in order to clarify the role of the international NGOs, Thai NGOs, government actors and others.

Maintaining my focus on the proposed Salween dam projects, I collected secondary data about the debates going on about the dam and energy security issues, from those who are part of the transnational advocacy campaign. This data helped me gain a better understanding of both the GMS programs, and in particular the GMS Power Grid and proposed Salween dam projects, as well as the human rights and environmental movement in this region. Such mobilizations and movements involve governments, local organizations and NGOs, which are focused on the regulation of neo-liberalism and the policies applied by supra-state organizations, transnational corporations and the ADB, which help form the logic underpinning a regional formation at large.

1.5.4 Writing and Translation: Data Analysis

I used data from different sources to analyze the cases. First, I looked at paper-based sources such as journals, book, and magazines, then also electronic sources produced by a number of organizations such as the ADB, EGAT, EarthRights International, International Rivers, Salween Watch Coalition, TERRA and SEARIN. I also took field notes during my fieldwork and recorded my interviews with key informants, as well as other meetings, seminars and conferences.

The paper sources and electronic articles were collected and divided-up into three categories – concept papers, Salween case studies and other related cases. I digested several concept papers in order to formulate the research questions, and took-down the narratives of various agencies. I also analyzed, on the one hand the processes used by states and/or TNCs, including supra-state organizations, to transform the forests and rivers into commodities for trade on the markets in the colonial past, as well as in contemporary neo-liberal age, and to answer the questions: how have these processes worked in the Salween borderland? Who have been the actors and what role have they played in the capitalization of resources process? And: What kinds of technologies have been used in the production of commodities? On the other hand, I also examined the negotiations that have taken place in terms of the contested meanings addressed by the border people, in order to answer the questions: How do they turn the forests and rivers into livelihoods? And: How have they transformed their livelihoods into identity? These questions were based on the empirical data I collected. In addition, I also used my fieldwork information to analyze the roles of the NGOs and border people within their strategies to mobilize the campaign.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One here included the introduction, consisting of six sections. The first section included the statement of the problem, showing why this issue is an important one to study, while the second covered the research questions and objectives. The third section contained the theoretical concepts and literature review, expressing how I developed the research conceptualization, and the fourth described the conceptual framework, framing the

research scope. Section five outlined the research design and methods used, revealing how the study was conducted and analyzed. This last section gives an outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two elaborates upon the history of the Salween resource frontier, from the colonial period and on to the post-colonial time. The situation here is not new, but has changed in terms of the actors involved and the forms of appropriation displayed. Chapter Three examines the capitalization process, that is, how the Burmese and Thai states and global capitalist markets have identified the Salween borderlands, and the Salween River has turned into a hydropower battery, producing electricity as a commodity for trade on the regional energy markets. To do this, a development discourse or 'civilizing the margins' and development as 'anti-politics machine' have been the main mechanisms used in support of the territorialization and capitalization processes. Chapter Four examines the relationship between states and global capitalism. The Burmese and Thai states play a crucial role in driving the capitalization process around the Salween borderlands, and without the states' violent practices in place, the global capitalist market could not operate or run its process effectively.

Chapter Five examines interaction between threatening border livelihoods and contesting border identity. Here, I will analyze the negotiation process used by the border people in terms of the production of space and how border livelihood is related to border identity construction. The local people have tried to produce contesting meanings in order to confront the capitalist market and state agents. Chapter Six is about redefining citizenship and local livelihoods, and in this chapter I will analyze the everyday life practices of the border people through the anti-Salween dam campaigns and the transnational advocacy, in terms of how they redefine citizenship and livelihood. Finally, in the Conclusion, I analyze my three main findings, discussing the everyday life practices displayed on and around the Salween, and then theoretically compare this situation to other studies. This is followed by my contribution to the state of knowledge on borderland studies, and a brief note on my recommendations.