

# Borderlines

Issue 8 • Spring 2009

NEWSLETTER AND  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Borderlines is the newsletter of the International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham University. It has a readership of more than 2,500 boundary scholars, practitioners and enthusiasts around the world. In addition to highlighting the activities of the Unit, we are keen to include information on boundary-related events, publications and research at other institutions. Please send information relating to relevant activities to Jane Hogg at the address below.



**IBRU works to minimise conflict associated with international boundaries on land and at sea around the world.**

Our work is interdisciplinary in approach and global in scope, integrating theory and practice in order to provide:

- practical expertise in boundary-making, border management and territorial dispute resolution
- academic leadership in the study of boundaries and their impact on international relations and borderland development.

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## Editorial:

# 20 years on: borders still count

**The International Boundaries Research Unit began work in 1989, the year that saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first use of the term 'the borderless world' by Kenichi Ohmae. At the time, few would have predicted that boundary and border studies would still exist in 2009, let alone be the thriving discipline it is today.**

A crossing point on Myanmar - Thailand boundary near the village of Nor Lae. If only all boundary crossings were as welcoming!

(Image courtesy of Robert Lancione)



Over the last two decades numerous commentators have suggested that the forces of globalisation will soon render international boundaries redundant – a view summed up by former US president Bill Clinton in 2001: “You live in an age of interdependence. Borders don't count for much or stop much, good or bad, anymore.”

While it is certainly true that the majority of the world's borders are less effective barriers to flows of people, capital and ideas than they once were, it is an oversimplification to claim that they are becoming insignificant. Many states around the world are still embroiled in serious territorial disputes. A growing number are struggling to retain control over large areas of their territory, especially in borderland regions. And all states continue to wrestle with the conundrum of how to facilitate desirable cross-border transactions while maximising the security of their populations. Borders definitely still count.

If anything, boundaries present more of a challenge today than they have ever done, and it is encouraging to see experts from an ever-widening range of backgrounds addressing territorial issues from a variety of innovative perspectives.

The changing nature of the discipline is reflected in IBRU's new mission statement (left) which emphasises the importance of integrating both theory and practice in resolving boundary-related conflict. This is especially true in the field of border management, which is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our work.

IBRU has always sought to bring together scholars and practitioners from around the world to find practical solutions to real-world problems. In this context, we are delighted to be marking our 20th anniversary with our biggest-ever conference on the theme *The State of Sovereignty*. We will also be continuing our popular professional training programme in 2009 with three workshops in July and September. Details of these events can be found on pages 3 and 4.

As we celebrate 20 years of boundary studies in Durham, we would like to thank our many friends around the world for your ongoing support. We can't predict what the next 20 years will bring, but we look forward to the challenges ahead as we work together towards clearly-defined, well-managed and peaceful international boundaries.

# IBRU - THE BEGINNINGS

IBRU's founder and former Director, Gerald Blake reflects on the Unit's origins and early work

The IBRU concept was cooked up in 1988 by Jim Dening of Archive Editions and Gerald Blake of Durham's department of Geography, who had previously collaborated in publishing primary documents on Middle East boundaries. We were credited with "a prescience unusual in academe" in launching IBRU (Miles, 1994) but in truth we had no idea that it would attract so much interest and become one of the foremost research centres of its kind.



Professor Gerald Blake

Between January 1989 and June 1990, £33,000 was provided to IBRU by Archive Editions. Without this funding IBRU might never have existed, and our debt to Jim Dening is very considerable. He was also a wise and enthusiastic advisor in the crucial early days.

Once word got round about the establishment of IBRU, the response was phenomenal, and quite unexpected. It seemed that everybody wanted to get to know the new kid on the block, which was

very flattering, but difficult to handle. It was as though the international boundary community worldwide had been waiting for the creation of IBRU. We knew that the Unit would eventually have to be self-supporting, and we therefore tried to advance on all fronts to prove our worth, which was exhilarating but exhausting, and sometimes frankly inefficient. We did research, conferences, publications, consultancy, and began to build a reference library. Within a year we had assembled a large database of active and influential border scholars and practitioners from all over the world.

Our first conference in September 1989 was held in a small room in the visitor centre of Durham's beautiful botanic gardens. To our delight it brought some of the world's leading boundary experts into IBRU's orbit, some of whom have remained friends and collaborators ever since.

A second conference in 1991 confirmed the breadth and depth of boundary studies, theoretical and practical, historic and contemporary. Through these meetings and other contacts it became clear that geographers were expected to contribute to finding practical answers to practical problems, and we did.

IBRU's early credentials as a research enterprise were well established when we were awarded a grant by the Leverhulme Trust in 1990 to assemble a database of international boundaries most likely to cause future conflict. We were able to appoint staff tasked with collecting and analysing detailed data on scores of boundaries. The resulting knowledge base was much coveted from outside IBRU, and was one reason why we embarked on an ambitious publications programme,

*"We were credited with "a prescience unusual in academe" in launching IBRU, but in truth we had no idea that it would attract so much interest and become one of the foremost research centres of its kind."*



Participants in IBRU's first conference in September 1989

including the acclaimed *Boundary & Security Bulletin*.

Our success in predicting future conflict was negligible, simply because boundary disputes have a nasty habit of erupting after years of dormancy. Our database, however, continued to grow impressively for another decade. It included news reports from newspapers, the internet and even short wave radio broadcasts. It was unique and it was greatly appreciated.

**IBRU has inevitably evolved from what it was in its early years, and is far stronger as a result. The emphasis has shifted to embrace borderlands as well as boundaries, and management as well as delimitation. Training workshops and state of the art consultancy are today's core activities, but IBRU remains a worldwide focal point of efforts to create and secure peaceful international boundaries.**

## Mapping maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic

In August 2007 Russian scientists sent a submarine to the Arctic Ocean seabed at 90°N to gather data in support of Russia's view that the North Pole is part of the Russian continental shelf. The expedition provoked a hostile reaction from some of Russia's neighbours and prompted much media speculation about the possibility of a "new Cold War" over the resources of the Arctic.

While there are a number of disputes over maritime jurisdiction in the Arctic – and potential for more as states define the areas in which they have exclusive rights over the resources of the outer continental shelf – the reality is not nearly as anarchic

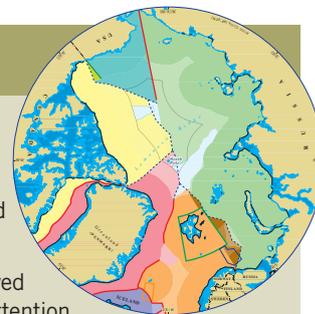
as some commentators have suggested. In fact, the Arctic littoral states have all committed to define their jurisdictional rights within the framework of the international law of the sea, and so far they have all abided by that commitment.

Following the publication of numerous poorly-informed articles about jurisdiction in the Arctic, in August 2008 IBRU prepared a detailed map and briefing notes offering an objective overview of the current state of play in the region. The map, constructed using specialist GIS tools, identifies agreed maritime boundaries, known jurisdictional claims and disputes,

and potential areas of seabed that may be claimed in the future.

The map received global media attention and in the three days following its publication was downloaded more than 40,000 times, demonstrating the demand that exists for high quality geographic information on boundary issues.

View the map and briefing notes at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/arctic)



# 2009 training workshop programme

IBRU's unique boundary training programme has been running since 1996, attracting over 1,000 participants from 112 countries. Workshops are led by teams of expert tutors and provide a relevant combination of background theory and practical application in an informal teaching environment. Numbers are limited to maximise interaction between tutors and participants, and workshops regularly sell out well in advance - so book early to guarantee your place.

## Maritime Boundary Delimitation

**20-22 July  
2009**

**Venue:**  
Durham University, UK  
**Price:** £1,495\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Clearly-defined maritime boundaries are essential for good international relations and effective ocean management, yet few coastal states have agreed all their maritime boundaries. Part of the reason for this is that boundary delimitation requires a range of specialist legal and technical skills which are not always readily available to governments.

Combining lectures with practical exercises, IBRU's most popular workshop offers world class training in the principles and practice of maritime boundary delimitation.



### Topics covered include:

- The legal regimes of maritime space
- Identifying an equitable solution
- Relevant jurisprudence and state practice
- Constructing a median line and other technical tasks

## Managing Transboundary Resources

**23-24 July  
2009**

**Venue:**  
Durham University, UK  
**Price:** £1,250\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Many of the world's international boundaries run through areas rich in natural resources, for which there is ever-increasing competition. Most states agree in principle that transboundary resources should be shared in an equitable manner and managed as efficiently as possible. However, in practice it is often very difficult to establish effective regimes that achieve these goals.

This innovative workshop will identify strategies and tools for the effective management of transboundary resources on land and at sea.

### Topics covered include:

- Unitisation of straddling oil and gas deposits
- Joint development regimes
- Managing transboundary waters
- The role and function of joint boundary management commissions
- Options for dispute resolution



\*\*\* Discount rate for participants attending both July workshops: £2,495 \*\*\*

## Boundary Demarcation & Maintenance

**14-16  
September  
2009**

**Venue:**  
Durham University, UK  
**Price:** £1,495\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Delimitation of a boundary in a treaty is a crucial first step in boundary-making, but on its own delimitation is of limited value. For borderland populations, boundaries rarely have any meaning until they are visible on the ground. Only when a boundary has been physically demarcated can it really begin to function effectively.

Many of the world's international boundaries have never been made visible on the ground, and many of those that have been demarcated have subsequently become invisible due to inefficient maintenance regimes. This workshop will provide practical guidance to policymakers, surveyors and engineers on options for the effective demarcation and maintenance of international boundaries in different physical and human landscapes.



### Topics covered include:

- Principles of effective demarcation and maintenance
- Mapping for boundary demarcation
- Collaboration between relevant agencies
- Logistics and costs
- Case studies

**To make a provisional workshop booking, please contact Jane Hogg  
Tel: +44 191 334 1961 Email: [ibru-events@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ibru-events@durham.ac.uk) or book online at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/workshops](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/workshops)**

\* workshop fees for UK-based participants are normally subject to VAT at 15%

IBRU 20th anniversary conference

# The State of Sovereignty

Durham University, 1-3 April 2009

Governments around the world are facing increasingly complex challenges in the exercise of territorial sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction. IBRU's 20th anniversary conference will address a topic of growing international concern:

## The State of Sovereignty

The changing nature of sovereignty in a globalising world has attracted attention from a wide range of disciplines, but the practical implications of such changes for boundary-making, management and dispute resolution have rarely been examined in depth. This major international conference will provide scholars and practitioners with an opportunity to exchange ideas about the meaning and function of sovereignty and international boundaries today and in the decades ahead.

The conference has attracted more than 90 speakers from 30 countries. Between them they will lead 26 sessions over three days

exploring a diverse range of themes - from 'failing' states to disputed maritime space to cartographies of sovereignty - and regional issues from the Arctic to the Middle East to Western Sahara. Full programme details and paper abstracts are available on the conference website at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/conferences/sos](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/conferences/sos).

### Conference fees:

**Standard rate:** £795 (£695 for bookings confirmed by 13 February)

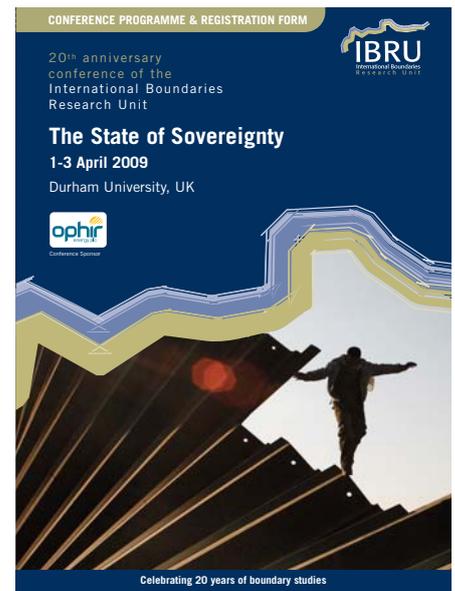
**Academic rate** for full-time university teachers & researchers: £495 (£395 for bookings confirmed by 13 February)

**Student rate** for full-time students: £265

*All rates include accommodation and meals throughout the conference, including a gala dinner in Durham Castle on 2 April.*

To register for the conference, please complete the booking form on the conference website or contact

[ibru-events@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ibru-events@durham.ac.uk)



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## New resource from IBRU

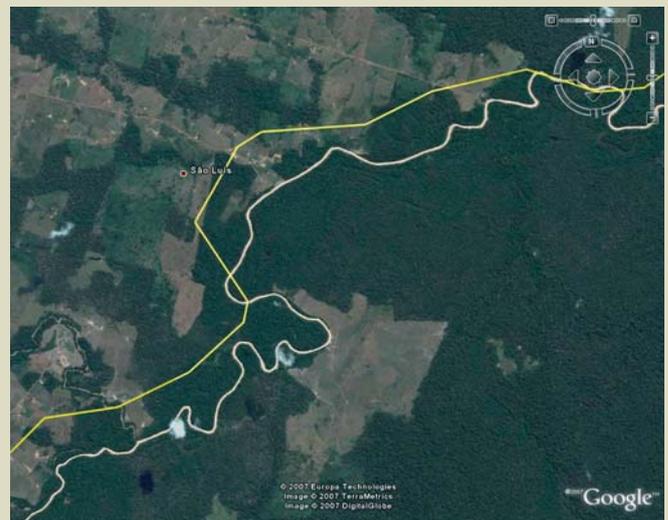
# The International River Boundaries Database

Rivers have been a popular choice for international boundaries throughout history, and today three quarters of the world's land boundaries follow rivers for at least part of their length. Often chosen for their defensive capability or because they were a feature of the physical landscape that did not require demarcation, river boundaries nevertheless pose significant challenges to boundary-makers, not only in terms of the definition of the boundary line in a dynamic natural feature, but also the management of important transboundary resources.

Over the last two years IBRU has gathered information about river and stream boundaries across the globe to create the International River Boundaries Database (IRBD). Compiled from a wide range of textual and cartographic sources, the IRBD provides information on over 1,200 river boundary sections, including their documented names, the location of the boundary within the river channel, and estimated lengths. Previous attempts to estimate river boundary lengths based on small-scale mapping led to significant underestimates of the true scope of these unique political-geographic entities. For many boundaries, the IRBD also includes KML files which enable the user to view the course of river boundary sections in Google Earth.

The IRBD is not simply a static reference tool. It is designed to provide a foundation for further research, discussion and policy development by scholars and practitioners, and IBRU is keen to receive contributions to the database from local authorities and other experts.

The IRBD can be accessed at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/irbd](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/resources/irbd)



A screenshot from Google Earth showing a section of the Abuna river boundary between Bolivia and Brazil. The true course of the river is highlighted in white and differs significantly from the boundary depicted by Google (in yellow) derived from small-scale mapping.

It is hoped that the IRBD will generate a network of good practice guidelines for states to consult and share when facing the unique challenges inherent in having a river serve as an international boundary.