

## **State formation and the politics of infrastructure**

### *Summary/Zusammenfassung*

In this research project, I analyze the interrelation between processes of state formation and the formation of material constructions. Driven by a strong commitment to converge in-depth empirical work with broader theoretical analysis, I have scrutinized 'building' projects in rural and urban Ethiopia through ethnographic fieldwork since 2009. In a rural district in the Oromiya highlands, on the one hand, I studied road construction projects as examples for state-led development initiatives and analyzed contestations about the construction and maintenance of these roads in local political arenas. In Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited eastern lowlands, I further studied the urban 're-development' of a former garrison town and the way its formation relates to a history of state expansion in a frontier zone characterized by the endurance of violent conflicts and political disorder. In this ethnography of the city of Jijjiga, I demonstrate how state formation advances in the course of the city's infrastructural formation by inscribing law and violence into material constructions. Overall, my analysis in historically and geographically specific configurations is inspired by literature in political geography, anthropology and history. It reveals state, territory and society to emerge as effects of cultural and material politics entangling and disentangling landscapes. It thus leads me to call for an inherently political understanding of built environments in which political b/ordering is ultimately a cultural and material process.

### *Keywords/Suchbegriffe*

Anthropology of the state, state expansion, territorialization, infrastructure, entangled landscapes

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### *Duration of Project / Projektdauer*

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