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Dimensions of Social Order:  
Empirical Fact, Analytical  
Framework and Boundary  
Concept



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# Dimensions of Social Order:

## Empirical Fact, Analytical Framework and Boundary Concept

Katja Mielke, Conrad Schetter, Andreas Wilde

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this paper is to stimulate a discussion about the conditions, modes and benefits of non-state-centric socio-political analyses. By introducing the notion of 'social order' the authors attempt to draft a conceptual approach of how to understand political processes and outcomes in a comprehensive way. Referring to some preliminary research results obtained during two years of extensive field and archival research in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the paper embodies, first, a unique attempt at utilizing a number of theories borrowed from the social sciences and, second, a piece of research that has to be seen as work in progress rather than an all conclusive formula. The point of departure is the empirical observation that some kind of 'social order' always exists. We understand 'social order' as the structuring and structured processes of social reality. It is constantly generated by the interplay of worldviews and institutions. Translated into an analytical framework this approach potentially provides a new kind of vocabulary which – if used systematically – bridges different schools of thought in the social sciences as well as between actors in different societal fields related to politics, such as academia, policy-making, and in applied fields. In the case of a successful reception 'social order' – as advocated here – could serve as a trans-disciplinary boundary concept.

**Keywords:** social order, boundary concept, worldview, institutions, trans-disciplinary approach.

# Introduction

“I can still remember this strange situation, when the Taliban forces captured Kabul, the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood suddenly withdrew from Charikar<sup>1</sup> and escaped to the Panjshir Valley in the north, leaving the town and its population to themselves. Between this overhasty withdrawal and the arrival of the Taliban, Charikar and its people continued normal life for approximately ten days or two weeks without any problems. Perhaps everyone else could have expected *harj wa marj*<sup>2</sup> among the people under those circumstances. Surprisingly, the order of the town did not collapse. During those two weeks life went on as if nothing had happened, though there was nobody to preserve order among the people. Life continued in the bazaars and streets of our town, and neighbors lived side by side without facing any problems. It was remarkable even for me in this situation that the population remained calm. Neither *harj wa marj*, nor even disputes among neighbors occurred. Nothing serious happened in these two weeks in Charikar until the Taliban arrived...”<sup>3</sup>

This statement of an Afghan interviewee contains two remarkable issues to which we would like to draw attention: First, this brief anecdote from a witness of the Afghan civil war seems to contradict the commonly held view that central authority is essential to impose order on individuals; a notion that goes back to Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1970) based on the core argument holding that disorder, chaos and anarchy – a war of all against all – would prevail without the state as an overall authority and ordering force. Even as – in this case – various militias and war factions competed for central power during Afghanistan’s civil war in the mid-1990s, the absence of central authority did not necessarily turn the life of the population into chaos and anarchy. Second, the popular perception of the dichotomy between order on the one hand and disorder, anarchy or chaos on the other hand is expressed in the interviewee’s amazement at the persistence of social life in spite of the absence of a strong central government as an ordering force. This shows that normative conceptions of the relationship between order and disorder are reflected in their popular attributions to the status of certain social environments (of which they are regarded as characteristic). Thus this statement shows certain ambivalence: on the one side social order can be seen as a continuously existing context of human beings, on the other, it reflects individual as well as collective normative perceptions of what the world should look like.

This working paper aims to look at the phenomenon of order from a social interaction perspective. First, we would like to discuss social order as an *empirical fact*, which structures the interrelations of human beings. Here we argue that social order should be seen as an empirical observable continuum of social structures, which provide the basis for social interaction. In the second part of this paper we will elaborate an *analytical framework* of social order. We aim to discuss core aspects of social order with reference to several established approaches from the social sciences. Institutions and worldview will be introduced as single elements of social order analysis and their interplay will be described and offered as an alternative tool for understanding and deciphering social relationships at various levels and units of analysis. While we empirically show that there is one respective social order that exists continuously, on the methodological/conceptual level we aim

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<sup>1</sup> Capital of Parwan province, this town is situated along the main North-South-road connection in Afghanistan, 40 miles north of Kabul.

<sup>2</sup> The Persian term *harj wa marj* bears several connotations and literally means confusion or tumult, describing a state of unrest that is often equated with anarchy or chaos.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Najla Ayyubi, January 16, 2008, Kabul.

to show that – due to the normative worldview of human beings – a multitude of social orders might exist at the same time. Finally, we would like to address – as an outlook – how the notion of social order potentially provides a new kind of vocabulary, which could become an inter-disciplinary or even a trans-disciplinary *boundary concept*.<sup>4</sup> The notion of social order provides the scope for developing an analytical framework for social science analyses based on interdisciplinary knowledge and – if successful – integrates various social science disciplines and schools of thought as well as actors of different societal and applied fields in their efforts to understand contemporary constellations of order in contexts that differ from the European World.

The condensation of different authors and schools of thought into a single scheme, as we will suggest below, results from our strong initial impression that various strands of the social sciences address similar problems of ‘reality’ and of ordering social processes that surround us in our daily routines. Yet, according to their academic/scientific socialization and self-imposed disciplinary territorialisation, hardly any overarching issue-oriented ‘arena of communication and exchange’ exists that would enable its participants to jointly work on integrating their various perspectives in order to develop concepts for intellectual and real-world questions. Differences usually are most visible and carried on in terminology. Beyond the question of different labels, various disciplines have developed more or less completely exclusive analytical concepts in regard to certain societal phenomena. Furthermore, they emphasize different elements according to their disciplinary perspective. These weaknesses of inter-academic communication had already been identified by Talcott Parsons (1968) and motivated him to put forward his hypothesis about the selective convergence in the sociological works of Alfred Marshall, Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto and Emile Durkheim, from which he deduced the basic outline of social system theory. Though we acknowledge that our method of ‘summarizing’ or grouping different researchers with their approaches under one umbrella poses a risky endeavor because it ultimately means combining concepts, which evolved in most different contexts (place, time and (social-sciences-) disciplinary-wise), we see ourselves in the legitimate tradition of Talcott Parsons and hope to be able to show the surplus of such an ‘umbrella’ perspective and promote the fuzziness of such an approach as advantage in form of a boundary concept of social order.

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<sup>4</sup> While interdisciplinary research focuses on the boundaries between various scientific disciplines, trans-disciplinary research includes also the boundaries between the scholarly community and practitioners and policy-makers, thus bridging academic and practitioners/non-academic preoccupations with related phenomena. For an example of recent attempts at boundary work at ZEF see Hornidge et al 2009).

# 1. Social Order as Empirical Fact

The main puzzle which caused us to engage in inquiries on ‘social order’ arose from a research project on “Local Governance and Statehood in the Amu Darya Border Region (Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan)”, implemented between 2005 and 2011.<sup>5</sup> Observations in the media, policy circles, academia and among the public usually detected ‘chaos’ and ‘anarchy’ in Afghanistan over the last decades, often supported by reported eyewitness accounts (see Orr 2002, Rashid 2009). These observations went hand in hand with the theoretical discussion on ‘failed states’, which argues that the state has been losing its influence as the overarching ordering scheme for the past decades (see Milliken & Krause 2002; Rotberg 2003, 2004). In addition, academic discussions exposed that the academic community lacks a coherent tool to investigate political order without focusing on the state. Remarkably, the terminology used by academics reveals that the mainstream academic community still maintains its conceptual focus on the concept of the ‘state’ as can be observed in the ‘failed states-discourse’: The spectrum ranges from ‘*collapsed state*’ ‘*failed states*’, ‘*fragile states*’, ‘*anomic state*’ ‘*para state*’ to ‘*dysfunctional state*’, or ‘*deformed states*’ etc.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this discussion suggests a very normative lens of looking at politics in as far as the state is taken as the norm which is automatically put into the center of any remedial exercises, e.g. national ‘rebuilding’, ‘reconstruction’ and ‘development’ efforts. Alternative lenses to grasp the nature of political processes going beyond the scope of ‘state’ are rare and often dismissed.

However, during our intensive field research in Northern Afghanistan between 2006 and 2008 we were struck not to find anything similar to disorder or chaos.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, we found surprisingly stable organizing principles at different levels of Afghan society – despite a widely-propagated absence of statehood (see Abdullaev et al. 2009; Mielke et al. 2010; Schetter & Glassner 2009a, 2009b). This impression of continuously ‘existing structures’ of society in a country, which is seen as the prime example of a ‘failed state’ was further solidified by empirical insights from field research in southern Uzbekistan and southern Tajikistan showing that even in these supposedly highly centralized states local authority and decision-making thrived in partly state-remote spaces and local politics seemed to follow its own logic which could not be grasped with the commonly available social sciences vocabulary (see Boboyorov forthcoming; Poos forthcoming).

Finding that state-centric analytical tools dominate the social sciences in all spheres<sup>8</sup>, the search for another approach to describe and understand political decision-making and outcomes

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<sup>5</sup> The project has been generously founded by the Volkswagen Foundation. In 2006, at the beginning of the field research it became obvious that the mainstream discussion on governance and fragile statehood – due to its state-bias – proved unfit to provide a comparative lens for looking at local governance processes in settings where the meaning of state and central authority seemed to vary considerably. In search of suitable alternatives the research team started discussing what a more adequate conceptual perspective to understand local realities could look like. Many people have so far engaged in the discussion process. Here, we would like to thank Trutz von Trotha, Peter Mollinga, Henrik Poos, Bernd Kuzmits and Hafiz Boboyorov and the members of the ZEFa research colloquium who gave valuable advice throughout the process of writing this paper.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Jackson (1990), Schneckener (2003, 2004), Klute & von Trotha (2001), von Trotha (2000), Reno (1998); Waldmann (2002); Mair (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Our preoccupation with Afghanistan dates further back. Conrad Schetter has been working in and on Afghanistan since 1994 and Andreas Wilde since 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Either state-biased terminology prevails or the functions of the state are being transferred onto non-state actors. An ostensive example is the governance discussion, in which government functions are opened up for non-state actors, but the state terminology persists (e.g. Hyden et al. 2005).

remained quite unsatisfactory. If at all, anthropological studies are an exception in this regard. Especially the classical anthropological work of Evans-Pritchard (1968, 1978) about the Nuer of southern Sudan provides an intellectual starting point for understanding the significance of social order in stateless contexts. Despite a strong tendency towards constant fission and fusion between different tribal segments, Evans-Pritchard identified an 'ordered anarchy' –which was discussed by other authors such as Christian Sigrist (1979) in the 1970s. According to this understanding frequent skirmishes within the Nuer tribe as well as the structural conflict with the neighboring Dinka were not attributes of disorder or the breakdown of social order, but served as stabilizing elements and kept the societal system in equilibrium (for the interconnectivity of violence and order see also Elwert 2004; Pospisil 1958).

Because an integrative analytical approach for the investigation of human interrelationships in conditions of limited or no statehood still remains a desideratum we intend to qualify the dominating state-centric perspective by addressing the phenomenon of 'social order'. Understanding this term in a non-normative way, we assume that social order is the structuring characteristic of social interactions. Structuring here is thought to take place in two ways: on the one side it shapes processes, outcomes and reality, on the other side it is at the same time recursively shaped by these processes and their outcomes. It constitutes a framework for action in which humans organize themselves in any circumstances. In this reading, social order is free of normative content from the outset. Such a perspective allows us to view social order(s) as (an) empirical fact(s) the facet(s) of which change(s) incrementally all the time (though with different/varying speed). Starting out from this working definition our approach rests on the following premises:

- *The anthropological premise:* Individuals are understood as human beings, who do not live or exist in isolation but interact with each other in everyday life. This means that we do not follow the Hobbesian way of regarding people as atomized, solitary actors, who behave like wild animals, are hostile to each other and need institutions of central authority (Leviathan) to survive at all. Thus the 'social' in our social order concept refers to the sociability and intentionality of interactions that characterize human behavior. However, social is understood in distinction from societal (Mann 1990, 34).
- *The sociological premise:* As is consensus in modern sociological research, we assume that our 'reality', as we perceive it to be constituted by human interactions, is socially constructed (Berger/Luckmann 1966). No outside or objective reality exists; neither can it be grasped artificially. As a consequence, social order must be seen as the structuring device for processes and realities that are constantly being (re-)constructed by its individual or collective protagonists. In this sense it integrates structure and agency approaches and follows late sociological pondering that takes individuals' actions to explain structural events and processes and bridges micro- and macro-levels of analysis for understanding (and explanation of) societal processes.
- *The persistence assumption:* Social order as a phenomenon always exists, irrespective of the details of how the structure is produced and influenced by power shifts etc. The form of social organization, i.e. the structuring organizational principles over time – whether statehood, kinship or segmental patterns –, might gradually change, but a certain degree of 'structuredness' (no matter at which scale) remains.
- *The power premise (see chap. 2.3.):* We assume that power plays a decisive role as ordering force. Hereby we draw on conceptualizations of power that emphasize its relational dimension as was elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu (1979), Michael Mann (1990), Michel Foucault (2005) and others.

This means, that power is inherent in social relationships and not to be understood as object which can be appropriated or possessed. On the contrary, it takes the form of multiple networks of relationships. Power is omnipresent (Bierstedt 1974/1957 144; Wrong 1979: 2) and inherent in any social relationship without being necessarily institutionalized as authority (Popitz 1994: 15-16; Foucault 2005: 255; Lukes 1974).

- *The methodological premise:* The outline of the social order concept as detailed below is no attempt at building a theory as we understand theories to describe cause-effect-relationships containing explanative hypotheses with empirical validity (Popper 1982: 31-33). From this perspective we do not aim at closing the gaps of social systems theory for example. It would be overconfident to aim at providing the 'key for understanding the world'. Our goal is much more modest: We suggest that 'social order' can be developed as a framework that provides guiding hypotheses (an outline) within the borders of which cause-effect-relationships can be investigated empirically.

## 2. Social Order as an Analytical Framework

We propose social order can be investigated empirically in the set-up and process of human interactions. Its conceptual dimension is concerned with guiding hypotheses about how ‘the world’ is structured or about the structuring characteristics of ‘reality’, which is socially constructed by the people who live in it. These guiding hypotheses are meant to help formulate questions that can be empirically investigated by a researcher – with the aid of other social science theories (see section 2.4.).

Generally, the topic of ‘social order’ is not new. It rather reflects one of the fundamental issues in the social sciences and in conceptual variations it figures prominently in the work of Emile Durkheim (1984, 1992, 1993), Max Weber (1980/1921) or Pierre Bourdieu (1979). Talcott Parsons’ (1951) broad work on social system theory was largely motivated by the question: How is social order possible and why is it that we have order and not chaos? Sociology as such centers on the question of (social) order, its conditions, prerequisites and societal interrelationships. To a certain extent all schools share the normative presupposition that vests desired societal relations and outcomes with order, and tend to interpret dysfunctions as manifestation of disorder.

Upon investigating the literature and history of sociology as a social science we came to the conclusion that no broader deliberations exist, which aim – at some degree of coherence – to form a common analytical framework of social order that is not normatively biased. While the notion ‘social order’ suggests a clear-cut definition, in most of the academic publications this term still remains vague and has been hardly addressed in sociological research as such: On the one hand the definition of social order often remains blurred in respect to other sociological terms such as ‘community’, ‘state’ or ‘institutions’ (see Elias 1983; Jung 2001). On the other hand, several schools of thought, i.e. the various strands of institutionalism, emphasize different subjects connected to social order whilst mutually excluding each other (e.g. neo-economic institutionalism by North et al. 2009). Furthermore, most of the existing social science theories are insufficiently underpinned with empirical data, especially from non-industrial societies. This is to some extent compensated by social anthropologists, historians or the advocates of area studies, yet practice-oriented scholars often use their own conceptual frameworks without considering the toolkit of social science theories and approaches. Thus, it is not surprising that a systematic stocktaking of various understandings of social order is largely missing in the academic literature (see the attempts of Anter 2007, Hechter & Horne 2003; Wrong 1994).

It should be noted that our understanding of social order aims to avoid a normative perspective. The definition given above is proposed to keep the definition as broad and self-reflexive as possible from the outset. We do not judge social orders as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ by ascribing certain normative characteristics to them. This implies that we do not start from the assumption that social order is necessarily based on the cohesion of communities (see for example Elias 1983, Hahn 2006), harmony, peace and the like. Similarly, social order should not be seen as a normative concept implying that one type of social order is superior, stronger or better than another one. The ‘social’, in our understanding, does not refer to the productive ‘good’ outcome of human interactions (as cooperation usually bodes for), which would already induce a normative bias to the concept. This non-normative notion coincides with the assumption that social interactions are at least not always influenced by a rationality solely defined in terms of utility, efficiency and market orientation as the New Institutional Economics (NIE) of North et al. (1990) suggest. Subsequently, the concept should

be seen as an instrument for the analysis of politics, providing a deeper understanding of meanings, processes and dynamics in contexts that differ from industrialized societies. In doing so, it should enable the social scientist – no matter whether sociologist, political scientist, historian, or anthropologist – to adopt a bottom-up perspective and to come to a profound understanding of different societal contexts from within and to be able to communicate the findings to a broader audience (society, other disciplines, applied fields).

The understanding of social order here suggested includes the assumption that different social orders are thought to overlap in time and space putting actors in different contexts (e.g. contemporary rural society, urban contexts), though as such they might well include hierarchical structures. In this sense the difference with the social systems theory of Parsons (1951), Luhmann (1988) and others is based on the assumption that horizontal equality among social 'systems' or orders is possible, without them necessarily consisting of sub-systems or 'orders' of second or third order etc. Overlapping networks of power as conceptualized by Michael Mann (1990) are thought to be the glue or driver of all interactions that take place to structure humans' realities (as socially constructed processes).

Our understanding of 'social order' proposes that all actions follow at least two principles. First, routinized, experienced acts are carried out regularly without the actors consciously reflecting upon them. Second, in situations where routines are challenged by new contexts or figurations (Schütz 1991), decisions are unique. While the 'automatic' actions of everyday life follow uncontested institutions and norms, unique decision-making offers the opportunity to trace conscious evaluations of strategies for action given a possible variety of competing ways to decide on things. This variety of competing ways is usually pre-designed institutionally, but the choice of a particular institution results from the influence of various possible cognitive variables. Thus deviance from or compliance with existing norms and mainstream rules depends on the actors' situational preferences (i.e. his preferred cognitive pattern/variable). This is why we suggest grasping social order as a structuring and structured characteristic of social interactions. The latter are determined by the interplay of institutions and cognitive structures. Both continuously structure reality through their mutual interplay in different temporal and spatial contexts. Furthermore, the interplay of both components is governed by power configurations as will be sketched out in section 2.3. The distinction of institutions and cognitive factors ('worldview'<sup>9</sup>) in this approach is merely analytical, yet in practice both – cognitive schemes and institutions – are mutually dependent and enforcing<sup>10</sup>. Since the research on cognitive aspects of social order is still in its infancy, it would be difficult if not impossible to detect and prove it empirically. The next two sub-sections are meant to clarify what we conceptualize as 'worldview' and institutions.

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<sup>9</sup> One of the first who used the term worldview was the social anthropologists Robert Redfield. He defined 'world view' as "... an arrangement of things looked out upon, things in first instance conceived of as existing. It is the way the limits or 'illimits,' the things to be lived with, in, or on, are characteristically known." (Redfield 1953: 87; cited in: Naugle 2002: 246). The term worldview has been used independently and in an interdisciplinary way by many scholars. Some described it as way of thinking and perceiving, others as construct comprising ideas, belief systems or even scientific theories (see Naugle 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Similar, arguing in favor of a methodological 'relationalism', Bourdieu argues that dichotomist notions of structure versus actor, or system versus acting subject, collectivism versus individualism (chaos versus order alike) do reflect perceptions of a social reality being part of common sense and popular perceptions. Sociology has to leave these dichotomies behind. These notions have influenced even the language which suits the expression of situations and conditions rather than processes (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1996: 34-35, 42-43).

## 2.1. Cognitive Patterns

In order to conceptualize the cognitive dimensions of social order we borrow from Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) *Habitus*-concept, Denzau/North's (1994) ideas on 'shared mental models', Berger/Luckmann's (1966) symbolic *universes*, Esser's 'habits and frames' (2004) and Giddens' 'structuration' (1997) to show how they can be subsumed under the umbrella-notion of 'worldview'.<sup>11</sup>

One of the classical concepts broaching the link between actors' cognitive mindsets and behavior/agency is Bourdieu's (1979) construct of *Habitus*. According to Bourdieu a person's behavior and daily interactions are steered/guided by his/her *Habitus* in a twofold way – as 'structuring structure' which stresses the creative capacity, a generating principle and *modus operandi* for concrete actions; furthermore as 'structured structure'; here the emphasis is on an individual's incorporated history and experiences as *modus operatum*. The 'structured structure' can be traced empirically in practices and views. The 'structuring structure' describes the underlying aspects of detectable structures, i.e. what generates regular practical actions and patterns of perception, evaluation and thinking in general. Both are conditioned and influenced by the social environment in which the individual experiences socialization. This refers to the immediate core family-context on the one hand, but also to the broader socio-cultural environment the family is embedded in on the other. Though Bourdieu stresses the uniqueness of single persons' *Habitus*, it is valid to differentiate and comprehend a group *Habitus* that originates from group members' socialization in a broader, shared socio-cultural environment. Thus, individual *Habitus* and group *Habitus* differ in certain aspects (e.g. deriving from specific family-related upbringing), but share also major commonalities that structure individuals' and single groups' actions in everyday life.

Using a different terminology, Giddens' *Structuration* theory (1997) focuses on two key-components: social (inter)action and structure. Each individual is, according to the structuration theory, embedded in the *durée* of the daily life constituting itself as course of intentional actions causing unintentional results which constantly produce and reproduce the preconditions for social life in form of feedback affects. Similar to the *Habitus* concept, the *Structuration* stresses the twofold way (duality) of the structure. The structural moments are the medium as well as the results of social practices (Giddens 1997: 77). The continuity of social production and reproduction in time and space is based on this duality. Accordingly, it is impossible to reflect upon the present without considering the past as the former is the mirror of the latter. Giddens underlines the embeddedness of the structure not only in time and space but also within the cognitive sphere by referring to the significance of memory, consciousness and perception. The structural moments are learnt and imprinted in the individual's memory by experiencing daily life and routines. The temporariness of the experiences is continuously processed by perceptual schemes, which can be defined as

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<sup>11</sup> Although Redfield's explanations differ in so far as he conceptualizes worldview as man's idea of the universe (Naugle 2006: 246; Hallowell 1981), other academics adopted this term and put it into praxis of anthropological research. Especially Hallowell (1981: 19-20) comes closer to social theories like the *habitus* or the *structuration*-theory by further developing this worldview concept. He argues that self-identification and culturally coded notions of the nature of the self are essential to the operation of all societies and that "a functional corollary is the cognitive orientation of the self to a world of objects other than self. Since the nature of these objects is likewise culturally constituted, a unified phenomenal field of thought, values, and action which is integral with the kind of world view that characterizes a society is provided for its members. Human beings in whatever culture are provided with cognitive orientation in a cosmos; there is "order" and "reason" rather than chaos. There are basic premises and principles implied, even if these do not happen to be consciously formulated and articulated by the peoples themselves." (Hallowell 1981: 20)

neurological foundations. These neuro-schemes are congenital and form the processors running the reflexive regulation of daily actions (Giddens 1997: 95-98).

A similar concept attending to the cognitive factors was proposed by Denzau/North (1994) with their concept of 'shared mental models' and ideologies. Whereas mental models are understood as "...internal representations that individual cognitive systems create to interpret the environment..." (Denzau/North 1994: 2), shared frameworks of mental models provide collective actors with "...an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured" (Denzau/North 1994: 1). In this sense shared mental models resemble ideologies. Together with institutions, mental models and ideologies are crucial for making sense of the world, i.e. how individuals interpret and order their environment (Denzau/North 1994: 11). At birth mental models and their interpretative structure are wholly genetic, but subsequent socialization, as a result of experiences made in a particular socio-cultural and physical environment (Denzau/North 1994: 7), and most of all active and ongoing communication, provide for the evolution of shared frameworks and institutions. Indirect learning in confluence with cultural heritage provides common categories and concepts for the members of a certain society which enable them to communicate and organize their experiences collectively. This also includes the passing on of shared explanations for phenomena that are not directly experienced by them, i.e. religious beliefs, myths and dogmas for example.

These three concepts – *Habitus*, 'structuration' and 'shared mental models' – indicate that the significance of the cognitive dimension of social order lies with 'meaning' and an answer to the question 'How does one make sense of the world?'. This has gained prominence, because classical rationality assumptions (*homo oeconomicus*) have been found to be flawed due to their questionable assumptions about actors' complete information and stable, hierarchical preference-sets. Due to the complexities of the world/environment and the high costs for attaining even roughly 'full' information in order to establish individual preference rankings, human beings usually act based on insufficient information or even "...in part upon the basis of myths, dogmas, ideologies and "half-baked" theories" (Denzau/North 2004, 1; see also Geuss 2008). This is largely unproblematic, as the average person is naturally provided with knowledge about the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) which he/she inhabits through socialization processes. Thus, everyday life and routines follow given patterns or recipes for typical action/s in typical situations (Schütz 1991).

At the bottom-line routines and such recipes break down complexities and thus simplify available alternatives and enable practical decision-making. Hartmut Esser (2004) applied the idea of 'framing' for situations that transgress everyday life-behaviour, for example when additional information is required, because routines are not helpful anymore.<sup>12</sup> In his interpretation, frames (just like habits) provide avenues to break down complexities. Yet the decisive difference between habits as routinized everyday behaviour and frames is the latter's ability to simplify actors' objectives and priorities which are assumed to be unstable, uneven, incoherent and in the process of constant (re)definition through interaction processes as has been elaborated by the schools of symbolic interactionism (Mead 1973; Blumer 2005; Whyte 1961) and ethnomethodology (Goffman 1959, Garfinkel 1967). Framing facilitates individuals' daily interactions by providing actors with overarching goal structures and guiding objectives that are readily accepted by individuals because of their bounded rationality (Esser 2004).

Berger/Luckmann (1966: 102-104) utilize the term "symbolic Universes" (German:

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<sup>12</sup> Esser here builds on Schütz' (1991) concept about the meaningful structure of the social environment.

symbolische Sinnwelten) to describe the cognitive sphere of order as matrix underlying all significance and meaningfulness social behavior is rooted in. Influenced by the theories of the German phenomenologist Alfred Schütz, their concept of the “symbolic Universes” places emphasis on the historical, socio-cultural ‘lifeworld’ (*Lebenswelt*) of people as the common course of cognitive awareness. In Berger’s view, human beings must create a conceptual shield to protect themselves against an otherwise meaningless cosmos. This shield forms a “sacred canopy” protecting entire cultures and individuals from chaos. At the center of the canopy is the *nomos* that structures the world and represents an area of meaning. It is only a thin, cognitive line that protects individuals and society from direct encounter with nihilism (Berger 1969: 23-24). As Pierre Bourdieu (1987: 127) notes, within each social group a shared pre-reflective understanding about a social order exists which provides a continuum of meaning for the collective. This collectively shared continuum is expressed in the everyday occurrences, which is perceived by the majority of people as normal. In *Sein und Zeit* Martin Heidegger (1978) highlighted the ‘public expression’ [öffentliche Ausgelegtheit], which defines the average understanding of the world or what is perceived as “normal”. This appears as a continuum of meaning and enables the members of a social group to understand things and actions in a particular way (Han 2005: 29). In the words of Martin Heidegger this average understanding is expressed as “they (do sth.)” [“*man tut*”]. *They* do, act, perceive and judge as *they* do, act, perceive and judge: “The ‘they’, which is nothing definite, and which all are, but not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness.” (Heidegger 1978: 164).

For our purpose we suggest to conceptualize the different theories and concepts on the impact of mental structures – *Habitus*, (shared) mental models/ideologies, habits and frames, ‘structuration’, and symbolic *Sinnwelten* –, which have been hitherto used independently and in a social science multidisciplinary way, under the ‘umbrella’ notion worldview. This can be read as an attempt to bridge the structure-agency divide many sociologists have been cultivating for decades against the backdrop that the order of things exists in our heads, implying that it is self-evident, unquestioned and normal.<sup>13</sup> The manifestation of worldviews takes place along patterns of real and sensual experience, sedimentation and storage, and, finally, accumulation of knowledge. So the worldview – in the terms of Berger and Luckmann *Sinnwelten* – is a concrete social product with its own history (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 104).<sup>14</sup> Berger and Luckmann define the process, during which experiences are stored in the consciousness of humans, as sedimentation. Experience is stored in the human mind and is transformed into memory. Only in this “sediment form” an institution can be transmitted from one generation to the next. What remains of the original experience is just a small rest of it. The final materialization of the sediment takes place through means of language transforming the initial experience into an accessible object of knowledge that is finally incorporated into the pool of traditions (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 72-73). Consequently, there is no reason to

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<sup>13</sup> According to Bourdieu (1982: 730-731), the behavior of all members of a given society originates from a common pool of perceptual structures embodied in opposite word pairs which describe and fix the order of things, e.g. wrong and right, above and below, black and white, or left and right etc. The cognitively entrenched opposite pairs not only define what is right or wrong, but by “putting/keeping things in order” they influence moral perceptions and emotions. The truisms entrenched in the worldview provide the means for the definition of situations, typisation, and interpretation. The structures resulting from the socially determined and constructed classification schemes constitute themselves as the natural and necessarily given conditions. Yet, they are de facto the historically shaped and contingent products of existing power relations between social groups (Bourdieu/Wacquant 2006: 33).

<sup>14</sup> Although Berger and Luckmann do not make use of the term ‘worldview’, their concept of the ‘symbolic *Sinnwelten*’ shows similarities in terms of content (cognitive aspects of behavior and socially constructed reality) – see Cognitive Patterns as ‘Worldview’.

conceive the worldviews as static or fixed. Since even in the life of an individual the process of accumulation, storage and sedimentation never really comes to an end, we can suggest that a worldview is a more or less fluid and constitutes a flexible structure that is continuously exposed to sedimentation and enrichment. In the course of an individual's life his or her worldview takes different forms and contents. This does not imply that we necessarily deal with an ever expanding and steadily evolving worldview. But we can assume that the worldview of a child differs to some extent from that of an adult: Children usually perceive the course of time as slow and tenacious in comparison with adults who are confronted with multiple tasks and duties, and thus often feel running out of time. With the different experiences a human being makes in his/her life, the worldview takes on different forms as it is exposed to changes and adjustments.

## 2.2 Institutions

One way to reach an analytical understanding of how 'order' is achieved has been propagated by the 'new institutionalisms'.<sup>15</sup> This strand of thinking is grounded on the idea that human interactions are shaped by institutions, which are crucial for economic growth and well-being. Two distinct lines of argumentation dominate the discussion: first, an efficiency driven calculus-approach; and second, theories considering decision making and action less determined by strategic considerations than by a process depending on the path of previous decisions and culturally decoded arrangements.<sup>16</sup>

Institutions set the parameter for social production, and establish stable criteria according to which actors are able to anticipate the future and act accordingly (see Esser 2000b: 5-6; Knight 1992: 25). Institutions are often described as rules of the game (North 1990), which reduce uncertainty triggered by incomplete information regarding the behavior of the individual (Esser: 2000b, 9; North 1990: 3-4, 25). Human life could not continue successfully without institutions, because of the complexity of its environment. Institutions address the need to reduce this complexity and uncertainty and make things predictable (North 1990: 20; Soltan 1998: 57; Luckmann 1992: 130). Moreover institutions structure human life so that it is "... made up by routines in which the matter of choices appears to be regular, repetitive, and clearly evident, so that 90 percent of our actions in a

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<sup>15</sup> 'New institutionalism' divides up into three main branches focusing on the character of institutions: rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism and social institutionalism. To the differences between the several approaches see Hall and Taylor (1996: 936-950); Campbell (1997: 18-31); Srivastava (2004: 10-22); Orrnert (2006: 449-455) and DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 11-27).

<sup>16</sup> The secondary literature provides us with a confusing variety of definitions of institutions and their functions. Very often the term is applied to any large-scale organized group or agency, whilst smaller social units are defined as associations. Here, the distinction is solely a question of size and scale. Since organizations, like institutions, provide a structure to human interaction, both concepts are frequently mixed. Whereas associations and organizations are characterized by visible structures, an institution is in fact less visible (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Bierstedt 1974, 328). Hodgson states that institutions "enable ordered thought, expectation, and action by imposing form and consistency on human activities" (Hodgson 2006: 2). To separate institutions from organizations, Jon Elster defines an organization as "... a group of actors defined by their capacity for centralized decision making. In some cases, their creation can be traced back to a specific moment in time" (Elster 2007: 427). Organizations include political bodies, such as political parties or parliaments, as well as economic (e.g. firms and enterprises), social (e.g. clubs, churches) and educational bodies (e.g. schools). They appear as groups of individuals bound by some common purpose for the achievement of certain objectives. Furthermore, the emergence of organizations and the way they develop are highly influenced by institutions. But at the same time, organizational structures affect the evolving institutional framework. In contrast, institutions are symbolic systems and material practices concretized and reproduced by social relations through which people strive to attain their ends (Friedland/Alford 1991: 249).

day do not require much reflection” (North 1990: 22). Berger and Luckmann (1966: 56) explain the existence of stable patterns of performance with the instability and vulnerability as pure biological facts. It is often noted that the rules of the game reduce the costs of human interaction considerably in comparison to a world without such constraints (North 1990: 36; Knight 1992: 31-32).

Esser (2004: 14-15) adds the *orientation function* according to which institutions set the parameter for individual orientation and collective order. They help human beings to control the immediate results of their limited rationality and protect the individual against his or her own inconsistency (Esser 2004: 18), and, helping to prevent or to correct errors, they might block or hamper costly actions and may solve the problem that narrowly focused human motivation causes for the organization of collective action (Soltan 1998: 49, 57). Moreover, institutions are crucial for processes of distribution within society because they determine and structure the access to resources. The relative power of actors thus depends on the institutional framework of the society. In addition to this *regulation function*, institutions appear as resources per se because of their organizational power (Göhler, 1994: 22). Setting the parameters for social interaction, institutions objectively define a situation and neutralize the manifold strategic potentials manifest in many situations. It is because of the *reduction function* that institutions have also enabling effects. They enable us to behave strategically against the backdrop of the limited choice set.

Institutions are rules with a particular claim to be obeyed. They are binding rules. Whereas a norm has a more abstract and fixed form like property rights constraining behavior, an institution encompasses behavioral regularities (Esser 2000b: 60-62). Only this claim turns regularity in behavior from other regularities such as personal routines and personal conventions into institutions. These rules are even binding if single actors do not know or forgot them. Consequently, we have to distinguish institutions from other behavioral regularities such as purely personal routines that may help the individual to organize one’s daily life, but which are “... purely personal constraints, idiosyncratic to the individual actor” (Knight 1992: 3).

Berger and Luckmann (1966: 61) compare a sequence of habituation, routinization and final institutionalization visible through material expression of relevant activities with a slow construction of society based on a web of institutions. Thomas Luckmann (1992: 134, 149) describes the process of institutionalization as ‘routinization’ of actions carried out by several individuals. The actions of others and one’s own actions become a routine, a commonly conducted activity which appears predictable after a while for all actors engaged in it. The process is completed when the institution in question is regarded legitimized and transferred from one generation to the next. As corner stones of society institutions are constantly produced and re-produced. Their presence and genesis are described as immediate products of human activities (Berger/Luckmann 1966, 55-56). Luckmann (1992: 153-155) sees the reason for the establishment of a norm or institution in the meaningful solution of particular issues. Here, two important points have to be added; first a specific rule does not mean that all members of a society follow the rule in the typical situation or context. Norm violations should not be regarded as nullifying the norm. Second, in some situations actors may fear the consequences of following the rule and prefer non-compliance, or the personal interest of an actor might prevent him or her to act in accordance with the rule which is required.

## 2.3 Explaining Change in Persistence: Power as Driving Force and Outcome of Social Order

After explaining the conceptual components of the social order concept (mental-cognitive patterns and institutions), we intend to pay particular attention to the interplay between both. We assume that bringing power in as conceptualized by Popitz, Bourdieu, Wrong, Mann and others yields considerable explanatory value for the situational manifestation of the interplay between cognitive schemes and institutions. Power is not only a simple by-product inherent in the figurations of social order but an ordering component (Popitz 1992: 57). It is therefore not global or massive, diffuse or concentrated, but exists in itself (Foucault 2005: 255). As such power has a dual nature: it is structuring the way cognitive patterns and institutions interact and produce an observable outcome; and at the same time power itself is structured and generated by these processes.

Most pronouncedly Pierre Bourdieu (1979/1996) elaborated that power is constantly produced and an outcome of social interactions manifest in permanent dialectic interplay between the structuring structure and the structured structure. Therefore, this interplay is of a pronounced political nature, i.e. institutionalized practices and the resulting relations are not only to be seen as the embodiment of knowledge, experiences and the history of a society, the relations as such are crystallized power. Taking on the form of multiple relations of authority which act back on their producers, power becomes imprinted together with the order of things in the human mind (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1996: 209). This suggests that social order should not be conceptualized without the dimension of power. The exercise of power is directed towards human agents, as it has an immediate impact on their behavior (Wrong 1979: 2-4; Foucault 2005: 255; Giddens 1997: 66-67). Thus, power is – in the dialectic sense of production and reproduction of mental cognitive structures and institutionalized practices – the cause and the product of itself.

The acceptance of power relations inherent in the ‘natural order of the things’ – the social organization of time and space, social stratification and division of labor – as something natural relates to the co-ordination between the worldview and the institutions causing the constant ‘imprintment’ of cognitive structures in the human heads and bodies (Bourdieu/ Wacquant 1996: 288-90). Since power has a habituating effect, the whole social order is perceived as the natural order of things by the actors. In the result, it imposes itself as reality which is not reflected or called in question by the average member of society; social order is transcendent to the consciousness of its producers.

The insights with regard to the relational aspect of power correspond to the ideas of Michael Mann (1990: 14-16) and Michel Foucault (2005: 114) who state that power is deposited in networks of human interactions. Accordingly, power is by no means static or fixed, but rather circulates within a chain of relations and actions. It is neither a locatable phenomenon nor can it be acquired or possessed like wealth or a particular good.<sup>17</sup> Social interaction causes the permanent build-up of complex chains or networks composed of many distinct “ego-alter” interactions as links. When examined apart from its context, a single interaction between two individuals may possess clear-cut attributes which are blurred or modified when it is viewed as part of the entire sequence or network to which it belongs (Wrong 1979: 69). As Mann (1990: 14-16, 33) puts it, these networks should not be defined as several dimensions, levels or aspects of one overall total system. Instead, society must

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<sup>17</sup> It is impossible to possess power like an instrument or resource. To have power means resources which are used with more or less skill, more or less determination, and more or less luck (Uphoff 1989: 320; see also Mann 1990: 21; Giddens 1997: 67).

be interpreted as manifold, overlapping social webs and networks which also have a spatial dimension.<sup>18</sup> Enhancing Foucault's ideas on power Mann (1990: 20) refers to his observation that human beings are very well social but not necessarily societal beings, thus, he argues, they must enter social (power) relations. The tendency of tying networks originates in the need to institutionalize social relationships. The force behind human history is not to be attributed to institutionalization processes but to the restless drive to weave and knot networks of extensive and intensive power relations. Humans further expand these networks while pursuing their goals, and thereby go beyond the level of institutionalization they had previously achieved (Mann 1990: 34-35).

Given the persistence assumption mentioned above, how can dynamics and change be grasped? How does the worldview change? As we have seen, the social world and human agents stand in a dialectic relationship with each other. From the view point of the *modus operandi*, the cognitive schemes operate as a matrix underlying practices, which thus appear as a structured structure. However, the *modus operatum* at the same time reconstitutes and underpins this matrix so that both elements are simultaneously structuring and being (re-)structured. As Luckmann (1992: 134, 149) points out, an institution is established along a sequence of habituation and routinization, but it becomes only a part of the worldview (*symbolic universe*) when it enters the deeper layers of the cognitive sphere. The establishment of an institution is complete when the practice is regarded legitimate and meaningful by the majority of the members of a collective and when it is transferred from one generation to the next. Only with legitimacy attached to it, an institution unfolds its restructuring effect and becomes constantly imprinted in the human mind. Legitimacy provides an institution validity and an internal mechanism of control. The behavior of actors appears right or false, justified and appropriate or vice versa because of their meaning which is recognized and understood by the individual (Esser 2000a: 34).

From this follows that legitimacy, power and action are closely interlinked: Institutions only become obsolete and abandoned, when the figurations of power (networks) in a society have changed to such an extent that the particular institution does not fit the existing power constellations anymore, and second, when this factum reaches the surface of consciousness, especially under conditions of conflict or contest. An institution is transmitted with the worldview as long as the members of a given collective/society do not reflect upon its relevance or legitimacy. Only if the majority of the actors become aware of an institution's lack of meaning against the backdrop of changed power figurations, the respective institution gets 'disbanded and removed' from the (collective) worldview. This implies that institutionalized practices can persist and remain part of the worldview, even if they have lost their legitimacy. It is removed from the repertoire of socially constructed cognitive codes and perception schemes only when the actors regard it as 'unsuitable' and unfitting the prevalent constellations of power.

Thus, the main argument unfolded here is that how exactly institutions and the cognitive patterns of actors interrelate depends on a variety of factors: the setting or context, including assumptions about options, resources and motives of *alter*, but also the respective external factors at play. Accordingly, the quality and extent of interactions and, thus, the specific characteristic of a social order – good/bad as in the sense productive/non-productive enabling welfare/peace/conflict-mediation vs. poverty, anomy, destruction, and violent conflict - are a function of how the cognitive components are structuring the worldview and are being restructured by it. Social order and its

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<sup>18</sup> This insight goes hand in hand with the remarks of Bourdieu/Wacquant (1996: 37) and Giddens (1997: 216-217).

'producers' stand in a dialectic relationship with each other, implying that social reality is the product of human interactions, but at the same time it re-impacts on its producers (Berger/Luckmann 1966). Regarding the conceptual components of social order, this means that the worldview or the structuring structure (*modus operandi*) form the matrix underlying and guiding human behavior. But in the moment a practice is conducted and structured by the worldview, it simultaneously imposes itself in a restructuring effect (as *modus operatum*) upon the worldview.

Legitimacy appears to be an integrative moment that significantly contributes to the constitution of worldviews. All parts and sections of the institutional framework are incorporated into one overall framework of reference through the interconnection between worldview and legitimacy (Berger/Luckmann 1966: 102-03). It is legitimacy in connection with moral feelings that remove institutions from the pure (economic) interest of individuals and make them hence binding (Esser 2000a: 151-52).

## **2.4. Application: The Heuristic Value of the Analytical Framework**

As a framework, social order describes the way in which social interactions that take place among individuals or groups at different social and spatial scales are structured. We propose that all interactions and chains of interactions result from the interplay of institutions and cognitive patterns of a certain number of individual or collective actors. Depending on the issues being negotiated and the social arena in which interactions take place, the investigation of various social orders can be imagined and investigated from the perspective of the researcher, his main interests and questions. To demonstrate the heuristic value of a social order perspective for social sciences, we would like to provide briefly the basic design of three empirical studies. All case studies were conducted in the framework of the research project 'Local Governance and Statehood in the Amu Darya Border Region'. The initial framework of inquiry – a mere institutional perspective – proved unfit to grasp and operationalize the idea that local governance processes go far beyond what political scientists conceptualize as local government. Each of the briefly discussed cases features nicely the quest of the social order perspective for hybrid/fuzzy figurations as it does not limit itself to a single social science discipline, but individually merges several to elaborate the answer to a particular research question/the specific problem.

### *Example 1: Historical Research in Transoxania – An Alternative Narrative*

The interest of the historical sub-project on local politics in Transoxania – the Central Asian region between Syr Darya and Amu Darya – initially revolved around the question of how durable socio-political institutions indeed were and how they developed throughout history. The bulk of the mainly Soviet-inspired secondary literature (which is partly available only in Russian) places the emphasis on the conditions of states. Simultaneously, the circumstances in the region during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century are often described in terms of a 'decline-scenario' originating from a political vacuum since the end of the Tuqay-Timurid dynasty (around 1747 and before). In contrast to the approaches of the past, the social order concept helps shed fresh light on a number of narrative sources to be found in the archives and libraries of the research region (e.g. court chronicles, *insha*-documents and other archival material). At the same time, it enables the historian to overcome the prevailing decline scenario leading to superfluous assumptions about the "dark age of Central Asian despotism" and a "swamp of corruption." This picture, too often contrasted with a glorious past (e.g.

the Timurid period – 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> c.), especially takes shape from a Weberian point of view and present-day functionalist categories of intact authority or systems of authority. Yet, especially the questions of the durability of the institutional setting and its potential change are difficult to answer from this perspective.

Taking the relational understanding of power as a point of departure for the analysis of the texts, the historical sub-project (Wilde: forthcoming) enriches the above-outlined assumptions on the interplay between mental-cognitive structures and institutions by taking three different components into consideration: (1) patron-client relationships; (2) gift exchanges; and (3), closely related to the first point, mediation structures. All three elements of social order do not only feature prominently as instruments of authority in the sources, they are also influential on a larger scale beyond the level of the state/central-government or interstate relations, even today. In the context of the research region, the institution of patronage is seen as a special form of power and an instrument crucial for the exercise of authority within extended patron-client networks (*Herrschaftsverbänden*). Connected with the term *Herrschaftsverband* and the generation of power(-relations) within it, patronage emerges as feasible concept in order to overcome the focus on territory and offers a sound explanation of persistence and change of institutions. Here the concept of (relational) power in relationships has an explanatory value as it provides a tool for the understanding for the mechanisms of work in the societies in question. Embodying an alternative to the rather static perspective of the 'oriental despotic rulers', whose 'unlimited authority' rested not on a web of relationships, but on ultimate power as an object to be seized, it offers also a sound understanding for the resilience of institutional setting and the incremental change of certain rules.

### *Example 2: Local Governance beyond Local Government – Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries*

The main research interest for this sub-project was how life at the local level is being regulated after a period of almost 30 years of turmoil, violent conflict and a recently begun international intervention in Northeastern Afghanistan. Against the backdrop of a rich academic literature of the 1960s and 1970s about diverse local issues (bazaar, marriage relations, nomads, tribal codes etc.) it was largely unknown in 2006 through which mechanisms interactions at local level were being negotiated, what the role of collective 'goods' achievement in this was and how all these processes differed from pre-war times. Furthermore, the current role of government agencies and their interrelationship with local society was unknown, as were the principles and incentives of local decision-making and implementation. While Afghanistan had been regularly analyzed as needing institution- and state-building from scratch, the filling of a power-vacuum and strategies to end and overcome chaos and anarchy (personified by 'the Taliban'), the social order approach poses several initial guiding hypotheses for the conduction of the empirical research: First, that there cannot be an institutional void at the local level; if none of the commonly known institutions have been detected there must be some so far either unknown to us or largely dismissed. These need to be 'discovered'. Second, correspondingly, that local capacities for regulating social interrelations have never been absent but exist(ed) despite turmoil and violent conflict (perceived anarchy). Alone their logics and working mechanisms, including dynamics for change must be understood, i.e. investigated. Third, that the role of the state is at best limited, because the government's capacity for agency has to be qualified against the background that central authority could be just one of many influencing factors which determine negotiations and outcomes on the local ground. The latter point sheds light on the difference between a conventional political science approach and the social order

concept, which – as analytical framework – is inclusive. As a consequence the distinction of local government versus local governance was introduced. Whereas political scientists would solely tend to focus on the former and come to the conclusion of institutional gaps, the latter incorporates any stakeholder involved in and concerned with the making and enforcement of binding decisions through certain mechanisms and forms of social interactions in relevant action arenas of everyday life (*Lebenswelten*). The particular case study (Mielke: forthcoming) focuses on natural resources management, aid intervention and conflict mediation and provides an analysis of the worldview of local rural society, i.e. how prevailing cognitive patterns and institutions structure processes of social life in these arenas and are being reinforced by the same processes.

### *Example 3: Zooming in on the Bazaar: Considering the Full Picture*

A third study takes the social order approach as analytical framework to investigate the embedding of retail and trade in the bazaar (market) of Kunduz. Whereas economists who narrowly stick to their discipline<sup>19</sup> are likely to investigate an ultimately market-related question, e.g. to explore the mechanisms of demand and supply with a quantitative methodology and some expert interviews with the provincial department of economic affairs, the social order perspective includes the views and perceptions of a sample of individual shopkeepers, traders, households, religious authorities and the municipality, in short of all the stakeholders in the bazaar. The underlying assumption is that the bazaar is not only a center of economic activity, but closely interwoven with and part of local rural society. Thus, the focus is on the embedding of retail and trade in the social, political and cultural structures found in Kunduz and its hinterland (Yarash/Mielke 2011).

Because all three examples are taken from local governance research the authors are involved with, it is a well-justified question to ask if a social order perspective could be applied also on macro scale, i.e. to analyze and understand societal interaction processes at aggregated level. At the current moment the answer is inconclusive: On the one hand the research of Beckert (2009) shows that it is being applied to traditional meta-topics like abstract markets in the economic sector, on the other hand this seems to be the exception if the various (actor-centered) neo-institutionalist approaches are not counted because of their narrow definition of ‘institutions’.

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<sup>19</sup> For a change see Beckert (2009) for an investigation of economic markets from a social order perspective. He emphasizes that knowledge about the social preconditions of markets is essential for any intervention.

### 3. Social Order as a Boundary Concept

The previous section demonstrated how social order can be used as analytical framework in different social sciences disciplines, hybrids thereof and arts and humanities. What has become clear is that conceptualizing social science research from a social order perspective involves mostly methodological approaches and theories from more than just one traditional discipline. The social order approach is comprehensive and pluralistic in a sense, i.e. not limited to singular variables of explanation. Its relative openness ('fuzziness') is an asset and helps bridge different schools of thought and sub-disciplines of social science and bring scientists from different outlooks and fields together in order to communicate about and analyze a problem or 'puzzle', which has to be made communicatively accessible to all involved, in the first step. From this perspective a further step in the future could be to establish a link with natural sciences. The analytical framework of social order could provide the background folio for inquiries of problems and questions of natural sciences, which are closely interconnected with social sciences and arts and humanities such as climate change, natural hazards, environmental pollutions or risks (Latour 2001, 2005).

As Mollinga (2008) has elaborated elsewhere, the intention is to identify a disciplinary crossing-boundary space for the 'rational organization of dissent'. Mollinga defines "... boundary concepts are words that operate as concepts in different disciplines or perspectives, refer to the same object, phenomenon, process or quality of these, but carry (sometimes very) different meanings in those different disciplines or perspectives. In other words, they are different abstractions from the same 'thing'" (Mollinga 2008, 24). Our analytic framework of social order can be understood as an interdisciplinary boundary concept with the potential to enable communication within scientific circles. One further step could even be to include a trans-disciplinary approach, by expanding the boundary concept of social order to non-academic fields, e.g. to the policy arena and political discourses. For instance, drafting new approaches towards 'democratization' in hitherto autocratically governed societies would, according to the social order perspective, entail a long-term engagement. At the same time, it would be convenient to take bottom-up approaches into consideration, provided that local worldviews and ways of acting are acknowledged and respected. This is unlikely because the more or less prevailing inertia inherent in any social order, and the fact that our worldview is the product (and the cause) of certain institutionalization processes that drive the social life/socialization of individuals in the western hemisphere. The interplay of cognitive patterns and institutionalized practices produced and is still producing a particular kind of order in the heads of its producers: an obvious example is the cognition of the world as an ensemble of sovereign nation states. It has difficulties to acknowledge behavior, which falls not into the expected frame of typical procedures, routines and ways of acting. Therefore, it is discriminated against and labeled 'deviant'. For example, Somali pirates are seen as renegades of the ocean to be persecuted and punished, in the extreme case violence as a legitimated means to cope with them. The Taliban are perceived as terrorists threatening security at local and global level; peace talks with them are doomed and if they are taken into consideration, public opinion and media turn against such exceptional attempts. There are attempts to find alternatives and new ways to cope with so perceived 'problems' but the worldview inhibits sudden alterations and complete innovations without barriers of thought. This implies that there are limits to the extension of social order as a boundary concept, which enables communication amongst academics in the first place, and between academics, practitioners, and people from the policy domain in the second. The inherent logic of social order requires that the worldview is manifest and taking shape in us. The worldview is beyond

consciousness. As a consequence, a constant reflection, cognition and processes of realization, which would be needed to recognize the worldview and consciously alter it, are not part of the program/inscribed into the academic system so far.

This said, the authors have to honestly acknowledge that up to this point just a group of a few 'exotics' and 'scientific spinners' aim to find a common language. For altering the worldview of our fellow colleagues and to persuade them of its value, the concept needs to be pushed; this paper is the first step in this direction. It will be developed further through consequent application in interdisciplinary research projects. Also inherent in its own logic is that this process is open-ended.

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