

Call for Papers: ABORNE Conference

Cross-border trade in Africa: The local politics of a global economy

Basel, September 8-11, 2010

ABORNE, the African Borderlands Research Network (<http://www.aborne.org/>) is an interdisciplinary network of over 100 academic researchers and institutions in Europe, Africa and North America. Its members are from all disciplines of the social sciences, with an emphasis on anthropology and history. They share a long-term interest in all aspects of international borders and trans-boundary phenomena in Africa. The emphasis is largely on borderlands as physical spaces and social spheres, but the network is also concerned with regional flows of people and goods as well as economic processes that may be located at some distance from the geographical border. From April 2009, ABORNE is funded by the European Science Foundation as an ESF networking programme.

ABORNE will hold its fourth annual meeting at the University of Basel, Switzerland, from 8-11 September 2010. Basel is an attractive town in the centre of Europe, very close to the international borders to Germany and France. The conference has room for about fifty speakers in both plenary and parallel panels (see below). Papers are invited from scholars of African borderlands and borders at all levels. Financial support is available for a limited number of participants. Due to the restrictions of a funding scheme financed by European tax payers, only speakers based in countries financing the networking programme will be eligible for funding (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, UK). Additional funding for an equal number of scholars based in Africa will in all likelihood be available.

Titles and abstracts are due by 30 May, 2010. To apply, please send the following information to both Gregor Dobler (gregor.dobler@unibas.ch) and Wolfgang Zeller (wolfgang.zeller@ed.ac.uk): name, institutional affiliation, contact details (email and phone), abstract (100-200 words), or panel abstract and paper abstracts (100-200 words each).

For more information please contact Gregor Dobler (Gregor.dobler@unibas.ch) or Wolfgang Zeller (wolfgang.zeller@ed.ac.uk), or see www.aborne.org.



Theme

The first ABRONE annual conferences from 2007 to 2009 had the aim of providing a broad overview of the field, and to bring together experts working on very different topics to work on the theoretical framework of borderland studies. The 2010 conference, in contrast, aims at the development of a common perspective on one sub-field of borderland studies, cross-border trade.

Cross-border trade has been one of the earliest themes in African border studies, and it has always been exemplary for the field's strengths: a lively interest in the real world, the ability to bridge different disciplinary approaches and a freshness which often stems from the engagement in careful empirical studies. Many social situations in borderlands are shaped by different forms of trade. Trade is one of the main reasons to cross borders, and it is intrinsically linked to the administrative, legal and financial divisions the border represents. Because different regulations meet at international borders, they provide opportunities for trade in all forms. In the literature on cross-border trade in Africa, some themes have emerged as important points of comparison. The following list, which is meant to stimulate the development of panels, is by no means exhaustive.

- Licit/ illicit trade and the role of the state

Cross-border trade is often on the outer edge of legality and formality. The border allows evading regulations, which are enforced within one country, or using the necessary transfer of goods and people between the countries to change their status. Smuggling, tax-evasion or round-tripping are normal ways to increase the profits of trade in legal goods, while trade in illegal goods often provides even higher gains. Much of the literature has concentrated on the relation between 'licit' and 'illicit' trade and on the political consequences they have for domination and regulation in borderlands. The discussion is thus closely linked to the debates on statehood in Africa and the role marginal spaces play in its negotiation.

- Global connections and their local articulation

Today, every borderland is linked to the global economy by flows of goods and people. Changing conditions on the world market (and in world politics) have immediate consequences for profit rates, trade networks and traded goods all over the globe. Borderlands typically are places where different trade networks are linked; as thus, they are often more susceptible to changes in the global environment than in-country trade is. They do not only see boom or bust, but new actors in trade can emerge due to changing international conditions. As new actors typically change the local power game, as well, global connections contribute to rapidly changing social situations in borderlands.

- Trade boom towns as social situations

Trade chances on borders can culminate to create a boom which attracts new businesses and rapidly transforms a border area. Through their rapid growth and the boom condition, these towns themselves are typically less clearly regulated than towns in the interior. Bureaucratic state intervention mingles with administrators' attempts to use their legitimacy to participate in the boom. Boom towns are thus often sites in which legal and illegal, licit and illicit actions exist as joint twins, not as separate and opposed entities. They are the antipode of trade corridors and embody many of the dynamics characteristic for borderlands.

- Corridors and localities

Local dynamics in border areas massively influence the course of international trade networks. Due to their changing and often under-regulated nature, they are not easily controlled from the outside; in the very least, they are places of friction, where goods have to pass through customs' procedures. This turns

borderlands into a risk and a cost for large-scale international trade. In an age of selective deregulation, trade corridors have been designed as a means to bypass borderlands and make trade more efficient. Often, however, these corridors only relocate the border situation and create new power imbalances on the way.

- Trade and regional co-operation

Cross-border trade bridges two countries. While the necessary transfer of goods creates opportunities for individual traders, it increases transaction costs and may be detrimental to the national economies. As a consequence, efforts for regional integration are often driven by cross-border trade. The official frameworks of regional cooperation agreements are, however, often detached from local trade dynamics and real world economic integration from below. The mutual consequences of both dynamics can be important, and range from the emergence of peaceful co-operation from below to de-stabilising effects of unwanted trade.

- Trade and peace or war

Trade is not always innocent and neutral. There are strong links between many conflicts on the African continent and trade dynamics, from 'blood diamonds' to arms trade. Trade can finance conflicts and fuel struggles over resources. But trade can also lead to cross-border cooperation and to strong networks which prevent conflicts. While there are many case studies on individual border trade situations, the conditions under which trade furthers peaceful cooperation or violent confrontation have not systematically been explored.

Forms of contributions

We invite contributions that concentrate on these or other topics linked to cross-border trade in Africa. Two kinds of papers will have the best chances for acceptance: Papers which start from one or several specific border situations and link their empirical findings to a wider framework, and comparative or conceptual papers which bring together research on one topic. In order to enhance panel coherence and conceptual discussions, we invite **three different forms of contributions**:

- Four **plenary panels** will concentrate on one of the themes outlined above. These panels should be jointly prepared in advance by a group of people. They provide the opportunity (and involve the obligation) for close cooperation, and might form the core of a publication project. Each plenary panel lasts 120 minutes, including discussions. Applications should be made jointly by the group. If you plan to submit a plenary panel, please contact the organizers at an early stage. Since there are only four slots available, some propositions will probably have to be transformed into parallel panels.
- A group of people interested in a common topic linked to cross-border trade, but not yet at a stage of coherence necessary for a plenary panel might apply jointly for a **panel in a parallel session**. Each parallel panel lasts 90 minutes, including discussions. For both plenary and parallel panel suggestions, each paper will be reviewed individually, as well, and funding restrictions should be taken into consideration. Cooperation between European and African participants is strongly encouraged; the organisers will gladly assist in making the necessary connections.
- **Individual papers** will be assigned into parallel panels by the organisers.

Provisional Timetable

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
[10-12 Management Meeting]	9-11 Plenary Panel 2 11.-11.30 Coffee Break 11.30-13 Parallel Panels 2	9-11 Plenary Panel 3 11-11.30 Coffee Break 11.30-13 Parallel Panels 4	10-12 Plenary Panel 4	10-15: Excursion to the border (on registration)
Coffee, informal welcome	13-14 Lunch	13-14 Lunch	12-13 Lunch	
13 Opening				
14-16 Plenary Panel 1	14.30-16 Parallel Panels 3	14.30-16 Parallel Panels 5	13.30-15.30 Closing Session	
16-16.30 Coffee Break	16-16.30 Coffee Break	16-16.30 Coffee Break		
16.30-18.00 Parallel Panels 1	16.30-18 Guided Tour Africa in Basel	16.30-18 Parallel Panels 6		
19.30 Opening Dinner	(no organized dinner) 20.30 Concert	(no organized dinner) Free Time or cultural program	Dinner and party	