

Call for papers

African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE) annual meeting

“Security and Trade in African Borderlands”

Paris, France, December 17-18th, 2020

Conference website: <https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/events/conf/aborne/>

Submission link: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=aborne2020>

Abstract registration deadline: August 1, 2020

Submission deadline: October 15, 2020

Contact: aborne2020@africa.ufl.edu

About the ABORNE annual meeting

The African Borderlands Research Network ([ABORNE](#)) annual meeting is a leading event on interdisciplinary research on African borders and borderlands in the world. Since the ABORNE network was founded in Edinburgh in 2007, meetings and other related events have been held on a nearly yearly basis in both Africa and Europe.

Background

Divided by 81'000 kilometers of land borders, the African continent is multiplying initiatives to implement the principles of unity and solidarity formulated since the creation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963. In July 2019, for example, the African Union launched the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a common market that should promote economic exchanges and strengthen continental integration between countries. These initiatives are intended to cope with the often rapid development of informal trade and the emergence of global networks that connect Africa to the rest of the world. Border areas, in particular, are home to vibrant local economies, in which dense cross-border networks of traders and suppliers offer significant opportunities for value addition and job creation, especially in the fast-growing food sector.

In recent decades, however, the multiplication of trade facilitation initiatives in Africa has been accompanied by a deterioration of security conditions in border areas. Trade activities have been significantly disrupted by political insecurity, with major consequences for local livelihoods. One of the peculiarities of the conflicts in the continent is indeed to exploit border areas, even as states seek to promote formal exchanges. In the Gulf of Guinea, for example, porous borders have greatly encouraged the rebellions that ripped apart Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire from the early 1990s.

More recently, Sahelian and Saharan border areas have served as a base for many armed groups to destabilise the states of the region, from eastern Mauritania to Lake Chad. Recent [studies](#) show, for example, that border regions are proportionally more dangerous than other regions in

West Africa, due to a combination of terrorist and trafficking activities. In Central Africa, rebel groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have perfected the art of eluding military counter-offensives and caused massive human rights violations across borders. In the Horn of Africa, Al-Shabaab has contributed to destabilization of Somalia and its neighboring countries since the mid-2000s. Similar developments have been observed in North and Southern Africa.

In this context, many African countries are in the difficult situation of having to pursue their regional integration efforts without having the resources to control their borders. This imbalance in the regional integration process penalises both trade and political stability as criminal activity develop in the absence of security, while the temptation to resort to violence increases in areas where there are few trade possibilities. Because of unstable border areas, many opportunities for local territorial development are left unexploited. These include infrastructure upgrades, improved market access, food systems transformation, as well as worker mobility.

Scientific objective

The objective of the 2020 ABORNE annual meeting organised by the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club ([SWAC/OECD](#)) and the University of Florida Sahel Research Group ([SRG](#)) is to rethink the complicated relationships that bind trade and security in African borderlands. The conference will make a significant contribution to the academic and policy debates related to the opening of borders to trade and their control by states and regional organisations. The conference will serve as a global forum for border scholars, local, regional and national policy makers and other border professionals from customs and security agencies, irrespective of their disciplinary backgrounds, methodological approaches, or geographical scope.

The conference will offer a unique opportunity to explore how trade facilitation initiatives, border cities and informal trade networks are affected by political instability at the margins of African states. Particular attention will be paid to the conceptual and empirical contributions that explore regional dynamics rather than case studies.

Topics of interest include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Historical and spatial changes in cross-border trade networks
- Regional trade facilitation initiatives
- Transport corridors, infrastructure and mobility in border regions
- Food systems transformations and the expansion of food value chains across borders
- Impact of political insecurity on border cities and markets
- Borders, safe havens and violent extremist groups
- Transnational political violence and Jihadism
- Military strategies to control transnational flows
- Technologies to securitise borders
- Migration policies and border regions
- Trafficking and borders

Organising committee

- Dr Olivier Walther (Chair), [Department of Geography](#), University of Florida.
- Dr Marie Trémolières, OECD [Sahel and West Africa Club](#), Paris.
- Mr Matthew Pflaum, [Department of Geography](#), University of Florida.
- Mrs Alison McLatchie, OECD [Sahel and West Africa Club](#), Paris.

Scientific committee

- Professor Anthony Asiwaju, University of Lagos
- Professor Pierre Englebert, Pomona College
- Professor Jan-Bart Gewald, Leiden University
- Professor Paul Nugent, University of Edinburgh
- Dr Cristina Rodrigues, Nordic Africa Institute
- Dr Marie Trémolières, OECD
- Dr Olivier Walther, University of Florida

Publication

After the conference, a selection of papers will be submitted to the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (JBS), the peer-reviewed publication of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS).

The publication calendar is as follows:

- 15 December 2020: submission of the first draft to the conference organisers;
- 1 March 2021: submission of the final draft to the editor of the special issue;
- 1 April 2021: submission of special issue by the editor to JBS;
- April-July 2021: first round of peer-reviews;
- August-September 2021: revisions and re-submission by the authors;
- September-November: second round of peer-review;
- December 2021-February 2022: editing and proofreading
- Spring 2022: online publication

Only the papers submitted before the conference will be considered for inclusion in a special issue submitted to JBS.

Quality management

All papers presented during the annual meeting will be subject to peer review. Interested participants will submit a half-page abstract (roughly 500 words) written in English. Authors must use the online submission system hosted by the [EasyChair Conference System](#) to submit their papers. **Please do not send your abstract to the Chair!** Abstracts will be selected on the basis of originality, relevance, and clarity of presentation. Following a review of abstracts by the scientific committee, authors will be invited to present a paper. Paper submission implies that at least one of the authors will present the paper if accepted and that at least one of the authors will register for a full conference fee.

Language

The language of the conference is English. All papers must be presented in English.

Full papers

Participants interested in participating in a special issue of the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* will be asked to submit a full paper prior to registration on October 15, 2020.

Important Dates

- Abstract submission due: August 1, 2020
- Notification of acceptance: September 1, 2020
- Registration: before October 15, 2020
- Conference: December 17-18 , 2020

Registration

The conference will bring together a maximum of 60 participants. All participants will cover their own travel and accommodation costs, except those invited by the organisers. Participants will be asked to pay after their abstract is accepted (or on site if electronic payments are impossible). Only registered participants will be included in the conference program. The participation fees include a conference bag, a certificate of participation, coffee breaks, and some lunches and dinners. The organisers will consider the possibility of broadcasting some of the talks live.

Conference venue

The conference will take place at the OECD, 46 Quai Alphonse le Gallo, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt, France. The venue is located within an approximately 15 minute walk from the subway (Boulogne-Pont de Saint-Cloud) and one hour from Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport. Paris offers regular flights to hundreds of destinations and many choices of accommodation and restaurants.

Contact

Olivier J. Walther, Chair
Department of Geography
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32607
United States
aborne2020@africa.ufl.edu

The call is also available here: <https://easychair.org/cfp/ABORNE2020>