



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

**FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES
ÉCONOMIQUES ET SOCIALES**
Département de géographie



First CALL FOR PAPERS
BORDER REGIONS IN TRANSITION (BRIT) XI

in cooperation with **ABORNE**,
(African Borderlands Research Network)

The Mobile Borders

with special sessions on African and Alpine borders

September 6-9, 2011 Geneva, Switzerland/ Grenoble, France

**Co-hosted by the Geography Department, University of Geneva and
the Alpine Geography Institute, University Joseph Fourier-Grenoble I /
CNRS unit : UMR Pacte**

THE CONFERENCE

Contemporary borders undergo a permanent process of *de-territorialisation* / *re-territorialisation* but do not disappear, as had been predicted by some in the early 1990's. But the very location of the border is more and more open to question. This mobility will constitute the core issue/problem for our conference. Debordering / Rebordering processes involve selective and hierarchical processes on borderlands, and also multiply the forms and processes of materialization of the borders themselves. The material spatial inscription of borders and their growing *visibility* appear more and more difficult to define, as these become more fluid, open or fuzzy.

Firstly, the classical *significance* of fixed borders can be subject to a very real mobility when the natural discontinuities that ground it changes. The position of thalwegs, for instance, may evolve with the displacement of rivers bed. Climate change may also be responsible for topographical change, inducing for example the thaw of glaciers used to delimit boundaries, requiring a *renegotiation* based on the location of a summit point, a pass or a watershed.

But the notion of mobile border embodies a larger dimension when considering the evolution of border functions the location of which is no longer constrained to the limits of national sovereignty areas, but on the contrary tend to be pushed back and forth, projected, multiplied, diffused. The control function can notably be disseminated within a national territory, and no longer fixed at its entry point. Biometric, numeric, or smart borders illustrate that tendency. Borders are more and more organised as networks, therefore promoting the idea of reticular borders located within communication hubs. Whether in airports or train stations, of following mobile teams of customs officers, migrations and transactions are now controlled through “mobile borders”.

Whether these changes erase borders or supplant strictly territorial dynamics with new reticular or network ones is subject to debate. The link between these new spaces and existing configurations such as extraterritoriality is another point of contention.

It therefore seems crucial to question the future of borderlands in this evolving context: some borders may appear break free of ancient constraints imposed by the boundary line, while others may loose the comparative advantages induced by the discontinuity. New dynamics emerge where borders tend to be pushed back and forth, where the linear limits tend to transform into an exchange zone or an area of collective projects. Border spaces play with the boundaries, transgressing, transcending, or moving them strategically.

Finally, numerous ephemeral spaces and territories come to light in the contemporary context, adding another dimension to the mobility of borders. Agricultural frontiers, temporary appropriations of public space constitute other power relationships with a society crossed by limits defined by a growing mobile nature.

The conference will therefore be dedicated to the comprehension of embedded and individualised, projected, fluctuating and ephemeral borders. But concentrating on the dissolution of borders only could appear cynical in *an* era which sees the multiplication of solid physical borders such as walls and fences. This is why we also wish to welcome communications which will analyse the link between the transformation of the border functions and the emergence of unseen barriers, considering these not only as resurgences of old military reflexes of national territory fortification. Walls themselves can be mobile, all expansionist move justifying their transfer.

Co-chaired by Dr. Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary, Joseph Fourier University (Grenoble I) and Prof. Frédéric Giraut, University of Geneva, the conference will bring together between 120 and 150 international scholars who have been researching borderlands and de/rebordering dynamics around the world. The meeting is conceived as a unique occasion for those scholars to contribute to a conceptualisation of the Mobile border.

Following the Xth edition of BRIT which, for the first time in its history, met the Southern hemisphere (in South America, in Arica, Chile / Tacna, Peru). The goal of broadening the network membership beyond Europe and North America is pursued through the association with the ABORNE network (African Borderlands Research Network: <http://www.aborne.org/>) and will result in the important presence of African borders specialists and stakeholders.

A particular emphasis with dedicated lectures and field trip will be on the Alpine experiences in dealing with and going beyond inherited borders.

SUGGESTED SUBJECT AREAS

The sessions will therefore focus on the following topics, understood widely:

- Border theory - mobile borders
- Borderlands and blurred borders
- Materiality of borders vs Mobile functional borders
- Walls and closed borders
- The Alps as field of rebordering

These themes will be accompanied by series of panels illustrating the local case, one of remarkable cross-boundary cooperation and links (labour migration) in a complex European context that results from the complex political positioning of Switzerland within the EU and part of the Alpine range.

- Multi-scalar cooperation
- Cross-boundary politics: management and / or governance?
- Cross-boundary prospective
- European integration: Schengen or not Schengen ?
- Cross-Boundary agglomerations and their governance
- Labour migration in borderlands
- Social Vulnerability of borderlands
- Borders and Nature Conservation

Selected papers will be submitted for publication in special editions of either the *Journal of Borderland Studies* (JBS) or *Geopolitics* or *L'espace Géographique* or *The journal of Alpine Research*. Finally, due to the more general significance of the topic of mobile borders, the proceedings of the workshops especially dedicated to the conceptualisation of the expression Mobile border will be published as an edited volume *in a University press*.

NEXT STEPS

If you wish to submit a paper for this conference, please submit a one-page summary of your proposed paper (no more than two proposals per participant) together with a brief bio or CV to brit2011@unige.ch.

Proposals for complete panels consisting of three to four related papers and a discussant are also welcome. Please submit a brief description of your proposed panel as well as summaries of all papers and bios or CVs for all participants.

If, in addition to submitting a paper, you are also interested in volunteering as a discussant on a panel, please indicate your willingness to do so along with your area of expertise. See below for suggested topics.

Poster sessions will be open to younger researchers and to other participants not selected for the panel sessions. Poster sessions will lead to an awards ceremony on the last day of the conference.

The deadline for submission of paper proposals and suggested panels is **March 15, 2011**. Notification of acceptance will be made by **April 30, 2011**.

Final papers will be due electronically by **August 15, 2011**. All papers should include a cover page indicating the conference name and date of presentation, the name of the author, institutional affiliation and detailed contact information.

REGISTRATION FEES AND TRAVEL EXPENSES

The BRIT XI registration fee is 180 € before **April 1** and 250 € after **April 1, 2011**. Student registrations are 125 €. Participants are responsible for their own travel expenses to/from Geneva, CH and Grenoble, FR. Transportation between the two venues is included in the registration fee. Subject to availability of funding, BRIT IX will cover the conference registration fee and a portion of travel expenses up to 50% for selected presenters. Funding support preference will be given to graduate and postdoctoral students.

A dedicated website will be open by the end of 2010

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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