



Program Point Sud 2017

Linking borderlands research and policy in Africa and Europe: Tackling Translation Challenges Niamey, LASDEL, Nov 29-Dec 4, 2017 Report



1 Organisers

Prof. Dr. Gregor Dobler, Anthropology, Freiburg University

Dr. Mareike Schomerus, Development Studies, Overseas Development Institute London

Dr. Mohamadou Abdoul, Sociology, GIZ, Addis Abeba

2 Themes and Objectives

The challenges of translating research into informing policy and practice are well-known, yet in the context of African border studies, they have become particularly acute in recent years. On the policy side, an international agenda of securitization and migration control has gained strength stronger and is in competition with local efforts to cross-border integration. Researchers are often skeptical towards both agendas. They are reluctant to refashion their work into applied research that offers concrete policy recommendations, often fearing that findings will be simplified and instrumentalised. This is all the more salient in the context of borderlands studies, where researchers often argue against the very paradigms that inform policy measures.

In the context of Europe and Africa, these difficulties intersect with a crucial divide in knowledge production. European researchers tend to work in academic structures that encourage independent research with occasional, light-touch engagement with policy – more often than not as the designated critical voice in the room. African researchers often work in underfunded institutions that survive only through policy consultancy work. This means that knowledge produced in European institutions is often published in very long-term cycles and in ways that are not accessible to policy makers. In contrast, knowledge produced in many African institutions is often swift in answering focused policy research questions, but offers little consideration towards academic theory or building a sustainable knowledge base. As a result, academic theory continues to develop extremely slowly in Africa and policy-relevant, yet academically rigorous, research in Europe remains rare.

Thus, two types of exchanges are urgently necessary should border management become more deeply informed by research and should research be more reflective of why certain decisions in border management are taken. The workshop initiated what will, we hope, become a regular forum for discussion between European and African borderlands research and practice.

3 Methodology and Results

Before applying for the workshop, we had put together an international and interdisciplinary team of six core participants from both the academic and the policy side. These core participants also selected the other participants following a call for papers. Out of 35 abstracts received, we were able to select 11 academic contributions for funding. Since policy practitioners do not often react to academic calls for papers, we contacted additional practitioners based on personal and institutional contacts. While almost all of the selected academic participants came to the workshop, drop-outs came to be a problem on the side of the practitioners, but in the end we had five excellent practitioners as contributors and further local practitioners as guests.

The workshop took place at LASDEL in Niamey, which once again proved an ideal venue – welcoming, relaxed, with excellent infrastructure and local connections that allowed to integrate border practitioners from Niger into the conference. Not least, researchers at LASDEL are themselves keenly engaged in the questions the workshop addressed.

We had consciously organized the workshop for six full days (Nov 29 – Dec 4, 2017). This gave us ample time for discussions, for off-program engagement and for interaction with local partners and border institutions. As feedback showed, this length and the possibilities of interaction it created was greatly appreciated by all participants.

In order to accommodate the participants' different approaches and afford enough opportunity for interaction, the program was made up of different formats. **Panels** consisted of short individual presentations – conceived either as case studies from individual border regions or as more conceptual papers – followed by intensive discussions. **Roundtables** were shaped by short inputs by presenters followed by a moderated panel discussion and a general discussion. A public panel discussion, excursions and conference dinners rounded up the program. Each panel or roundtable took up one dilemma in the relation between practitioners and researchers – dilemmas that had been identified in advance by the invited practitioners.

All six workshop days were shaped by intensive discussions and great engagement by all participants. While we did not close the gap between research and practice, we certainly came to a better understanding of its emergence and of ways to bridge it. We also realized clearly that both sides often have different views on how best to bridge the gap, and on when best not to bridge it. Particularly in the context of border securitization and migration control, academics want to keep their critical distance from predefined political agendas they cannot influence; practitioners, on the other side, often have to implement such agendas and might be interested in academic knowledge, but not necessarily in academics' political and ethical aims. In many areas less fraught with controversy, however, cooperation can produce excellent results for both sides.

With two events, we left the framework of a workshop. A public panel discussion was covered by a local radio station, who also interviewed several participants; a visit of the joint Nigerian-Nigerian boundary commission gave us important insights into the day-to-day workings of a West African cross-boundary institution.

The excellent lunches, coffee breaks and dinners offered welcome relaxation, but also the opportunity to further discuss workshop topics and future cooperation.

Program (without meals and coffee breaks):

Wednesday Nov 29:

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| 9 am | Welcome (LASDEL, Gregor Dobler, Mohamadou Abdoul, Georg Klute) |
| 10 am | Overview and objectives of the conference (Mareike Schomerus) |
| 10.30 am | The dilemma: Research is expected to solve the current crisis – how could border studies achieve that?
Gregor Dobler: A brief overview of border studies
Bill Miles: Policy Changes towards the Nigeria-Niger Borderlands
Francis Musoni: Agenda 2063 and the Future of Border Jumping in Africa |
| 2.30 pm | The dilemma: The realities of what happens at borders is often not reflected in policies. What can research offer to sharpen the understanding of such reality? |

Lotje de Vries: Barriers as Bridges: local sensitivities and global security discourses

Innocent Moyo: Non-state actors and the fate of open borders in the SADC

Thursday Nov 30:

9 am Practitioners' roundtable: What are the greatest challenges we see?
Mohamadou Abdoul, Ayité Bagol, Hamadou Mounkaila, Muhammad Bose Ahmad

11 am Researchers' roundtable: What are the greatest challenges we see?
Olivier Walther, Moustapha Koné, Francis Musoni, Lotje de Vries

2.30 pm The dilemma: How can we better understand borders through better data or different perspectives?
Georg Klute: Researching borders
Moustapha Koné, Leonardo A. Villalón and Olivier Walther: Cities and Borders: A New Research Policy Partnership

Friday Dec 1:

Morning: free time; joint visit to the national museum
4 pm Public Event: Border management practice and research: What we need to learn from each other. Mohamadou Abdoul, Emmanuel Gregoire, Muhammad Bose Ahmad.

Saturday Dec 2:

10 am The dilemma: Researchers and practitioners use different languages
Mareike Schomerus: Understanding 'evidence' in research/ policy partnerships
Sergei Golunov: Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap in Contemporary Border Studies
Rinku Gajera: Bridging the research-policy gap through a collaborative platform

12 am Working groups: Possibilities of future practice/ research collaborations

2.30 pm Border case studies
Julien Brachet: De la ligne à l'étendue: politiques et pratiques des frontières migratoires
Mountaga Diallo: La gestion des frontières: Quel modèle de gouvernance ?

4.30 pm Working groups: Possibilities of future practice/ research collaboration

Sunday Dec 3:

10 am Roundtable discussion: What is the impact of security policies on day-to-day border management? Philippe M. Frowd, Olakudoye Faleye, Hamadou Mounkaila

2.30 pm Olukadoye Faleye: Vacuity of Regulations: An Anatomy of Nigeria's Border Securitization Policy, 2015-2017

4.30 pm Discussion: Emerging research topics

Monday, Dec 4

9.30 am The dilemma: Different priorities in Africa and Europe
Mohamadou Abdoul: European approaches for African borders
Leena Hoffmann/ Lawali Dambo: Cross-border Co-operation in West Africa

11.30 am Wrap-up

3 pm Meeting with the Deputy Secretary General of the Bilateral Commission for Niger-Nigeria Cooperation, Madame Touré Aminata Djibrilla Maïga

4 Sustainability of the Event

We decided not to work towards a joint publication, since the papers were rather diverse and the dialogue between practitioners and academics would not be best reflected in a collection of papers. Several network initiatives stemming from the workshop, and which we expect will lead to joint papers, were announced by workshop participants – on the ethics of doing research in borderlands, on security and migration in West Africa and on methodologies and scale in cross-border research. Three researchers who did not know Niger have concrete plans to return to LASDEL to do research, and two regional experts envisage cooperation with the joint boundary commission.

5 Participants

1. Emmanuel Gregoire, Geography, IRD Niamey
2. Francis Musoni, History, University of Kentucky
3. Georg Klute, Anthropology, Uni Bayreuth
4. Gregor Dobler, Anthropology, Uni Freiburg
5. Hamadou Mounkaila, Commission Nationale des Frontières, Niamey
6. Innocent Moyo, Geography, UNISA, Johannesburg
7. Julien Brachet, Anthropology, Sorbonne, Paris
8. Lawali Dambo, Geography, Université Niamey
9. Leena Hoffmann, African Studies, CILSS, Ouagadougou
10. Leonardo A. Villalón, Anthropology, University of Florida
11. Lotje de Vries, Anthropology, Wageningen U
12. Mareike Schomerus, Development Studies, ODI, London
13. Mohamadou Abdoul, GIZ Addis Abeba
14. Muhammad Bose Ahmad, Director General of the National Boundary Commission, Abuja
15. Mountaga Diallo, Dakar
16. Moustapha Koné, Geography, Niamey
17. Olukayode Faleye, History, Ilesha
18. Olivier Walther, Geography, University of Southern Denmark
19. Peter Tinti, Independent Journalist
20. Rinku Gajera, Design Studies, Helsinki
21. Serghei Golunov, Border Studies, Kyushu University
22. Tilmann Scherf, Political Science, FU Berlin
23. William Miles, Political Science, Northwestern U, Boston