



*Centro Studi per i Popoli Extra-
Europei Cesare Bonacossa*
University of Milan-Bicocca
University of Pavia
University of Zurich



CALL FOR PAPERS

FENCES, NETWORKS, PEOPLE Exploring the EU/AFRICA borderland

Pavia, Faculty of Political Sciences, 15-17 December 2011

Background

Over the last decade, growing scholarly and public attention has been attracted by the externalizing of Southern European borders into the African continent and by the increasingly restrictive migration policies of European nation-states. As a matter of fact, Europe has made (and is making) enormous investments in high-technology devices (satellites, surveillance systems, biometric data-bases) to secure its territory against what it sees as “waves” of migrants coming from and through Africa in search of political asylum or economic and educational opportunities. Efforts have been directed also at monitoring their movements once they reach the European Union while, regularly, media and political discourses have reacted to African political, economic and environmental crisis by warning against the risks of invasion from the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. Following old colonial ties, some member states and African governments have stipulated bilateral agreements meant to control migration and facilitate the repatriation of undocumented migrants and rejected asylum-seekers (e.g. Italy and Libya, France and Mali, Spain and Morocco).

A new *de facto* EU/AFRICA borderland is under establishment in Northern and Western Africa through the multiplication of physical border spaces (for instance the razor wire fences guarding off Ceuta and Melilla or migrant detention centres in the Sahara) and of border practices (navy patrols between the Canary Island and the West

African coast, repatriation agreements, development programs targeted to keep Africans in Africa, and media campaigns against ‘illegal’ migration in sending countries). The impact of such transformations on the ground has only started to be detailed together with their effects on local socio-political contexts.

It has been argued, for example, that sovereignty is today measured against the state’s capacity to control flows of people across its territory. Yet, this point calls for some further theoretical consideration, as emergent border regimes are also affected by migrants’ experiences and creative reactions to changing circumstances. The different and often conflictive participation of state and non-state actors – like international organizations, NGOs, human rights activists, security companies, intermediaries of migrants’ travels across the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea - in the management of human mobility is another topic worth discussing. Finally, there remains the challenging task to compare the EU/AFRICA borderland with similar (or dissimilar) processes of border securitization in other parts of the African continent, starting with South Africa.

This workshop aims to create a dialogue between specialists of African and European border studies. Such an encounter should be fruitful for a number of reasons. African border studies emphasize the (socially and politically) constructed nature of national territorial borders, and envisage the modes by which these are moulded through daily (social, cultural, economic, political) interactions. These studies also explicitly build on a rich geographical and historical comparative perspective, which opens up interesting thematic debates. The way in which African migrants themselves are interiorizing and re-shaping European policies of border externalisation is one of the issues to address. Changing border laws often contribute to diverse and multi-local socio-economic interactions, and also considerably influence the experiences of migrants. The latter, in turn, continue to draw their daily construction of the EU/AFRICA borderland on long histories of intercontinental contact and cultural exchange. Papers that cast light on the interaction between border legislations, surveillance technologies and migrant experiences by in-depth ethnographic and historical analysis, as well as contributions exploring the lasting impact of such processes on the construction of African and European ideas of nationhood, territory and mobile identities, are highly welcome.

Organization

The workshop will be hosted by the Faculty of Political Sciences of Pavia University. It is co-organized by the University of Milan-Bicocca ('Riccardo Massa', Department of Human Sciences for Education), Zurich University (Department of Geography) and the University of Pavia (Faculty of Political Sciences; Department of Political and Social Studies; Centro Studi per i Popoli Extrauropei 'Cesare Bonacossa') with the financial contribution of the European Science Foundation and the intellectual support of the ABORNE.

ABORNE (<http://www.aborne.org/>) is an interdisciplinary network of researchers interested in all aspects of international borders and trans-boundary phenomena in Africa. Its 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 and social processes that may be located at some distance from the geographical border.

Those who wish to participate should send an abstracts of 500 words to Timothy Raeymaekers (timothy.raeymaekers@geo.uzh.ch) and Alice Bellagamba (alice.bellagamba@unimib.it) together with a short curriculum vitae by 30 April 2011. In accordance with the rules set by the European Science Foundation, speakers based in countries financing the networking program will be given preference in funding. These are Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Additional funding is available for a limited number of participants from other European as well as African countries.

Since this is a closed workshop, all candidates will be selected on the basis of their abstracts and past credentials. The scientific committee will communicate its decision by 30 June 2011. Participants are required to contribute a paper of no more than 8.000 words (references included) by 30 October 2011.

Papers will be circulated before the workshop. A collection of essays to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in the ABORNE book series or by another publisher able to guarantee high quality and peer-review is planned.

Organizers

Alice Bellagamba (University of Milan-Bicocca)

Timothy Raeymaekers (University of Zurich)

Pierluigi Valsecchi (University of Pavia)

Scientific Committee

Alice Bellagamba (University of Milan-Bicocca)

Timothy Raeymaekers (University of Zurich)

Pierluigi Valsecchi (University of Pavia)

Chiara Brambilla (University of Bergamo)

Tara Polzer (University of Witwatersrand)

Henk Van Houtum (Nijmegen Centre for Border Research, Radboud University of Nijmegen)

Wolfgang Zeller (University of Edinburgh)