

Call for Paper

Panel – The transformation/development of businesses in towns in border areas

2nd World Conference of the Association for Borderlands Studies (10-14 July 2018 Vienna/Budapest) <http://www.abs2018world.com>

Chairs: Héléne Yildiz (University of Lorraine) and Sandrine Heitz-Spahn (University of Lorraine)

The town and, more specifically, its businesses represent the pillars around which all the economic, social and cultural activities of the town and its conglomeration turn (Yildiz, Heitz-Spahn and Belaud, 2017). Marketing studies have analysed business in towns since the 1960s and more particularly since the 1980s (Desse, 2001). This period saw the rise of large commercial centres that sprang up on the edges of cities, creating the problem of a commercial void in town centres. This issue has affected countries all around the world that are open to global commercial competition. For example, in the United States, Macy's announced the closure of thousands of points of sale and it seems that this is just the beginning. According to *Business Bourse* (2016), this crisis will worsen rapidly as the collapse of retail shops accelerates. The closure of town centre shops can cause many types of damage from an economic, social and cultural point of view in villages, city centres or shopping areas in towns (Vias, 2004; Sands and Ferraro, 2010; Ozuduru et al., 2014). In fact, the flight of economic and social capital causes job loss and a negative migratory flow (Flora et al., 1997; Leistrizt and Hamm, 1994; Sharp et al., 2002; Nilsson, 2016).

Border trade represents a disturbance on the fringes of national systems, resulting from regulatory and administrative differences that translate into the development of comparative advantages. The way that those in business, as well as consumers, adapt to this context influences the barrier-effect of the border. Research by geographers has shed light on this to improve our understanding of the development of establishments near a border (Renard-Grandmontagne, 2013; Renard-Grandmontagne and Lebrun, 2014) and of the phenomenon of the way these shopping areas are expanding (Smits, 2006; Spierings and Van der Velde, 2008). However, we need to understand the forms these businesses take and what is at stake for them in border areas. This can be done via a variety of different disciplinary approaches (marketing, sociology, history, anthropology), which is the topic of a special session at the ABS World Conference.

Border towns and their businesses should think carefully about integration, a digital presence within their zone and the kind of social links that are formed between all those concerned. Consumers are becoming more expert and fickle, demanding connection, ready to look up what the competitor is offering on their smartphones even when they are standing in a shop. This phenomenon is exacerbated in border towns because of the difference in taxes on goods. To face these major challenges it is necessary to contribute to the construction of development projects for businesses in border areas via a multidisciplinary approach. This special session “**The transformation/development of businesses in border area towns**”, which will take place in the 2nd ABS World Conference in Vienna and Budapest, 10–14 July 2018 addresses social scientists in particular, as well as researchers in management sciences, geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology and history. This communication session will allow researchers from different disciplinary horizons to meet and define axes for research into the transformation and evolution of border area towns.

We would like to invite researchers to make original contributions on the theme of **business in border areas**, on topics such as:

- the comparative analysis between several towns or several countries of consumers' purchasing habits in border areas;
- retail store strategies in border areas;
- the action plans and means set up by institutional organisations to revitalise trade in border areas;
- the causes of decline/renewal in commercial border areas;
- cooperation strategies between different actors (institutions, shops, consumers) to stimulate trade in border areas;
- the study of trade patterns between towns in border areas;
- the role of digital applications as a vector for flow in border areas: to be efficient, digital tools need to simplify the search for information and purchasing rather than complicate things. What are the solutions?

Please send proposals to: helene.yildiz@univ-lorraine.fr and sandrine.heizt@univ-lorraine.fr
Deadline for proposals: 01.09.2017

Proposal structure:

- Title of the talk
- Speaker(s)
- Abstract max. 500 words (incl. bibliography)
- 4-5 keywords
- Contact information (name, university affiliation, institute, mailing address, email)
- Biographical information (max. 300 words)
- Papers should be in English.

For further information please contact H el ene Yildiz or Sandrine Heitz-Spahn at the above addresses.

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