

Call for Papers: Young Researchers Conference

"Identity Constructions and Meaning-Making in Border Regions"

The Young Researchers Conference "Identity Constructions and Meaning-Making in Border Regions" offers a unique platform for young researchers who are exploring the dynamic processes of identity and meaning construction in and through border regions. While conferences, colloquia and other scientific events are increasingly being held on a wide range of border-related topics, and border studies networks are finding their place in the scientific world, we found that there is a lack of a network of young researchers working in border studies. Our aim is to create such a network, which will be interdisciplinary and international, at the junior conference we are organising in 2025.

We would like to lay the groundwork of this network and debate on the establishment of such a network, its functions, its usefulness for young researchers like ourselves and its scientific orientation. We will do so through the following theme: **The construction of identities and meaning-making in border regions.**

Studies on borders have shown that borders are not only places that separate, but also places that unite, places of movement and places of flows (Shields, 2014 ; Rumford, 2006). In this young researchers conference, we will look at how these flows can influence the identity and sense of belonging of the people who cross them. Various studies have shed light on the role of the border as a place where one meets the other (Amilhat-Szary, 2015, van Houtum/van Naerssen, 2002). In addition, it becomes important to perceive the border as something unstable, fluctuating and volatile that can change its way of being at any time. These changes are made by actors respectively for actors according to their individual experiences, meaning attributions and overall narratives linked to the border. The border is considered to be in a process of continuous development rather than bearing an eternal and fixed determination (Newman, 2006). This follows concepts that increasingly theorise borders as fluid social and societal processes (Wille, 2024; Konrad, 2015). The ways the material and immaterial dimension of borders can evolve, apply also to identities that are, if not completely formed, at least shaped and influenced by borders (Laine, 2016). Despite their discursive and social constructedness, the physicality of national demarcations and their peripheral location within the nation state has to be taken into consideration. Geographically speaking, the centre-periphery dichotomy within nation-states plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and economic realities of these regions. While peripheral regions often experience neglect from central governments, particularly in terms of infrastructural investment, their location at intra-EU-borders receives special attention in the context of European integration (Knippschild & Schmotz 2018). This (symbolic) significance as "European integration laboratories" (Jańczak, 2018) plays a crucial role in place-making strategies of the borderland, contributing to a narrative that emphasises the uniqueness of a

particular region (Sohn, 2022; Zimmerbauer, 2011; Hospers, 2006). These constructions heavily rely on the choices actors make in what is portrayed in their narratives and how it is portrayed (Sohn & Scott, 2020).

While the relationship between borders and identities has been the subject of a large number of empirical articles (Barthel, 2020; Kriska, 2019), we will focus our attention on the question of theorising the construction of cross-border identities. Furthermore we want to identify the conflicting forces in the process of meaning-making of borders, which will allow us to untangle the complexities of borders and border regions.

If you are a junior scholar interested in these topics we invite you to submit a proposal for our conference. Possible themes for submissions include, but are not limited to:

- Cross-border identity building
- Meaning-making of borders
- Strategies of place-branding
- Cross-border living spaces
- Third places in border regions
- Border narratives & representation
- Cross-border communities
- Theoretical and methodological contributions

In this context, we are particularly interested in contributions that engage with the following questions:

- How to define a common analysis scheme for cross-border identity-building which takes into account the diverse empirical case study landscape ?
- Where are the limits of comparative approaches and what could be alternatives?
- How to conceptualise their relation to the border?
- How does a borderlander interact with the border he crosses?
- How do meaning-making processes change in response to rebordering and debordering dynamics in cross-border living spaces?
- What are the conflicting forces that attribute meaning to borders, and how do these forces affect cross-border initiatives?
- How is the border portrayed and mobilised by cross-border actors, and what narratives are produced to achieve their goals?
- How do cross-border regions use place branding strategies to navigate their peripheral location and construct a unique regional identity?
- How have the symbolic meanings of borders evolved in the context of European integration, and how do these meanings influence place-making strategies?

Important Dates and Information:

- Conference Date: 18 & 19 March 2025

The conference starts on 18 March 2025 at 12:30 at the University of Lorraine in Metz, France and ends on 19 March 2025 at 17:30 at the LISER in Esch-Belval, Luxembourg. Online participation will not be possible. Participants wishing to stay in Metz will be transferred by bus to Belval in the morning of the second day. At the end of the conference, a return by bus will be provided as well. A joint dinner will be organised on the evening of the first day in Metz.

- Venue: University of Lorraine (Salle des Thèses, Espace Rabelais, Ile du Saulcy, 57000 Metz, France) & Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (Jane Jacobs/Salle de conférence, 11 Porte des Sciences, 4366 Esch-Belval, Luxembourg)

CfP Submission opening date: October 14th, 2024

CfP Submission closing date: December 15th, 2024

Decision Date: January, 2025

Members of the scientific committee:

- ❖ Lola Aubry (University of Luxembourg)
- ❖ Grégory Hamez (Université de Lorraine)
- ❖ Christian Lamour (Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research)
- ❖ Frédérique Morel–Doridat (Université de Lorraine)
- ❖ Christian Schulz (University of Luxembourg)
- ❖ Christian Wille (University of Luxembourg)

We may be able to offer some financial support for participants who do not have external funding. If you are in need of assistance, please submit a motivational letter outlining your current situation. Funding decisions will be made individually, based on each case.

Submission Guidelines:

We invite the submission of abstracts. All submissions should include a research question, the methodology and first (preliminary) results.

- Abstracts: Approximately 300 words
- short biography including your thesis title, discipline and research focus (for internal purposes): max 200 words



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Next Steps:

- Submit your abstract per email: youngborderconf@gmail.com.
- After submission, you will receive a confirmation email.
- We will inform you of the status of your submission in January 2025 at the latest.

We plan to publish a selection of papers in a special issue. More information will follow at the conference. If you are interested in having your work considered for publication, we encourage you to bring a complete paper or a draft to the event.

Please do not hesitate to contact us in case you have questions regarding the submission process: jerome.jakob@liser.lu & niklas.schulz@univ-lorraine.fr.

Take this opportunity to become part of an engaged academic community and contribute to the discussion on the fascinating topics of border regions. We look forward to receiving your ideas and research findings!

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