



國立台灣大學 地理環境資源學系  
Department of Geography, National Taiwan University



8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network

13-15 January 2026

Venue: National Taiwan University, Taipei City, Taiwan

*Call for Paper (Long Version)*

### **Negotiating Asian Borders: Actors, Displacements, Multiplicities, Sovereignties**

Over the last four years, the geopolitical landscape of the world, and of Asia in particular, witnessed fundamental shifts marked by concurrent and overlapping crises. From rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea to the impacts of economic and security realignments across the region; from extreme weather events to the displacement and scattering of refugee communities across international boundaries – these crises are reshaping how people live their lives, negotiate their identities, recall their pasts and imagine futures. In coastal and island regions, maritime borders have become key sites where geopolitical fault lines are redrawn, as sovereignty disputes, security concerns, and economic interests intersect across oceanic spaces. At the same time, nation-states have reinforced borders, both physical and virtual, through heightened surveillance and defence. Yet shared values of freedom and peace continue to foster transnational solidarities that transcend land-based divides, connecting diverse actors across borders, seas, and more-than-human worlds.

The multiple crises facing our world today warrant critical reflection of how we think of bordering, sovereignty, belonging and solidarity. Today, borders are transforming in multiple forms as communities, technologies, infrastructures, and natural forces interact, blending physical and virtual boundaries together. Borders are negotiated in new ways, on the ground, across the ocean, and “in the cloud”, with profound implications on our understanding of actors, displacements, multiplicities, and sovereignties. The tactics people use to navigate contemporary borders, the historical linkages and narratives of borders, and alternative visions of borders and borderlands are all important parts of these transformations. How people navigate and make sense of these turbulent times remains a key question to be answered. Tracing historical linkages and dynamics can unveil diverse narratives on borders and sovereignty, inviting voices, memories, and imaginaries towards alternative visions of the present and future.

The theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> ABRN conference is “Negotiating Borders” across Asia. The four sub-themes offer specific points of engagement, with broader possibilities of cross-fertilisation of ideas and research directions. Exploratory questions are listed under each sub-theme as a starting point for conversation:

## Actors/Actants

1. Who are the main actors negotiating borders and boundaries, in human and more-than-human worlds? Who is excluded from these processes and how?
2. How are these actors profiled, imagined, networked, managed, and controlled?
3. How do diverse actors negotiate their voices and echoes, their presence and impact, their visibility and invisibility, strategies, and practices?
4. How do different actors navigate, contest, and enforce maritime borders, and what strategies emerge in response to shifting sovereignties at sea?
5. What are the hopes and visions of different actors, and what are the possibilities for creating borderland commons (e.g. around shared habitats, waterways, energy resources, specific trades, and technologies?)

## Displacements

1. How does the forced displacement of populations transform borderlands?
2. How are these processes shaped by gender dynamics as well as different age cohorts, particularly among youth?
3. What are the political/legal and economic responses of state and other authorities to large-scale displacement and how do they reflect in wider bordering dynamics as well as social empowerment and integration?
4. How do maritime borders shape experiences of displacement, and how do displaced peoples navigate legal, political, and ecological uncertainties across the seas?
5. How do transborder solidarities, loyalties and belonging of displaced people impact upon socio-economic and (potentially) social-ecological developments in borderlands?

## Multiplicities

1. How are borders evolving to form new and surprising assemblages?
2. How to trace multiple connections of global supply chains, just-in-time (and now “just-in-case”) logistics, offshoot and proxy enterprises, physically and virtually?
3. How do fast-evolving technologies such as generative AI simulate and stimulate novel understanding of complex social-ecological systems in and beyond borderlands?
4. How do maritime borders and/or islands create shifting assemblages of governance, trade, and technology, and what do they reveal about the multiplicities of bordering?

5. What roles do borderlands play in overlapping socio-economic and social-ecological systems in Asia?

### Sovereignties

1. How can we better understand multiple and intersecting forms of sovereignty that transform politics and imaginations? e.g. cyber sovereignty, health or biosovereignty, energy/resource sovereignty, air/water/climate sovereignty, data sovereignty, volumetric sovereignty etc.
2. How are borders reconstituted, gained, evaded and undermined, as ideas and practices around sovereignties evolve?
3. How do maritime borders and/or islands complicate notions of sovereignty, as territorial control intersects with ocean governance, security regimes, and transnational economies?
4. How do multiple forms of sovereignty shape research methodologies?
5. How do evolving sovereignties influence or pose any implications for the ethical conduct of research?

We invite conceptually innovative papers, based on fresh research, in order to develop new perspectives in the study of Asian borderlands and its broader geographical reach, especially their material, virtual, and oceanic connections to other world regions and continents.

One of the main goals of this conference is to spur collaboration and conversation across diverse fields in the hope of building up a more nuanced picture of the intersections and relationships across Asian borderlands. Submissions are therefore invited from scholars, writers, policy studies researchers, artists, filmmakers, activists, the media, among others.

Only a small number of individual papers will be selected. We therefore encourage you to submit a full panel proposal. We will consider proposals for panels and roundtables that have a thematic focus, are of a comparative character, and involve scholars or practitioners affiliated with different institutions.

The **deadline** to send in panel, roundtable and paper proposals is **20 May 2025**.

Please visit <https://www.ias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network> to submit proposals. Participants will be notified by **31 August 2025**.



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Very limited financial support may be made available to specific scholars residing in the Global South and some junior or low-income scholars in other parts of the world. The grant application will be open after the selection result notifications.

Further information regarding the registration fees, and other practical matters, will be provided on the ABRN website in Autumn 2025.

Convenors:

Po-Yi Hung - National Taiwan University, Taiwan

Juan Zhang - University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Willem van Schendel - Amsterdam University, The Netherlands

Tina Harris - Amsterdam University, The Netherlands

Henryk Alff - Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (HNEE), Germany

Busarin Lertchavalitsakul - Naresuan University, Thailand

Hasan Karrar - Lahore University for Management Sciences (LUMS), Pakistan

Duncan McDuie-Ra - Monash University, Malaysia

Ruba Al Akash - Yarmouk University, Jordan

For more information, please visit the website at <https://www.iias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network>, or email [asianborderlands@iias.nl](mailto:asianborderlands@iias.nl)