

## **Border Markets and Economic Networks in West Africa: A Conceptual and Methodological Approach**

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This paper is a preliminary attempt to present an innovative approach of border markets in West Africa. The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, we would like to examine the importance of border markets in the contemporary West African economy. Our hypothesis is that the specificity of border markets within the spatial organisation of West African networks is to offer a prime location for brokers, i.e. economic agents capable of building bridges between disconnected parts of markets. Secondly, we wish to explore new methodological ways of analysing the characteristics of border markets. Our hypothesis is that to date, most of the geographical and historical literature on cross-border economic networks in West Africa has considered networks in a metaphorical way. The aim of the paper is to go one step further by considering networks as an analytical concept, using a combination of both social network analysis and qualitative tools.