**Borders and Crossings Conference 2017**

Aberystwyth University, 10-12 July

Dr. Anna-Leena Toivanen

Université de Liège, CEREP

anna-leena.toivanen@ulg.ac.be

**African Travellers and Tourism in Europe: Bernard Dadié’s *La ville où nul ne meurt (Rome)* (1968)and Pap Khouma’s *I Was an Elephant Salesman* (1990/2010)**

Africans’ mobilities are only rarely conceived as travel. The word “travel” connotes certain levels of affluence, ease, and leisure, which do not quite correspond to the stereotypical idea of African mobile subjects as mainly underprivileged victims. Tourism, in particular, seems incompatible with the often coerced mobilities of Africans. Yet, the continuously expanding corpus of African travel writing suggest that the concept of the African traveller, or even that of the African tourist, is far from an oxymoron.

In this paper, I focus on two very different (semi-fictional) travel narratives that represent the figure of the African traveller in Europe in contexts that can be defined as touristic. Firstly, there is Bernard Dadié’s travel book *La ville où nul ne meurt (Rome)* from 1968, which depicts the narrator’s travel from Paris to Rome. Secondly, there is Pap Khouma’s fictionalised autobiographical account *I Was an Elephant Salesman* (first published in Italian in 1990) narrating the protagonist-author’s travels from the African continent to Europe – to Italy and France in particular – as a vendor of diverse “African” knick-knacks. The two texts explore different sides of tourism in Europe: while Dadié’s narrator claims the identity of an affluent, erudite, and cosmopolitan African traveller, Khouma’s narrator is a vagrant trying to gain his livelihood in the shadows of tourism industry. The paper pays attention to Dadié’s and Khouma’s use of tropes of mobility and to the way in which the texts construct the position of the African traveller in European touristic settings.

**Bio:** Dr. Anna-Leena Toivanen is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the University of Liège at CEREP (Centre d’Enseignement et de Recherche en Etudes Postcoloniales – Centre for Teaching and Research in Postcolonial Studies). Her current research project is titled: “Cosmopolitanism Revisited: Afro-European Mobilities in Contemporary African Diasporic Literatures.” Her recent publications have appeared in *Research in African Literatures*, *English Studies in Africa*, *ARIEL*, and *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*.