

Border Matters:  
Embodiment, Environment, and Infrastructure of Border Spaces

Warsaw, Poland – 4-6 May 2026

Conference program

*All events will be held in the Conference Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the German Historical Institute Warsaw (Aleje Ujazdowskie 39, 00-540 Warszawa)*

Monday, 4 May 2026

17:30-18:00 Opening comments

18:00-19:30 Keynote lecture

Michal FRANKL (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Prague)  
'Humanitarian Border Crossings: Aid in No Man's Land'

The talk follows the trajectories of humanitarians who helped refugees stranded in the no man's land that formed along the shifting borders in East Central Europe in the late 1930s. These refugees languished between boundary stones, fences, or barriers in a no man's land that could take the shape of barren, windy fields, cold, hostile forests, a rusty barge, or decrepit, abandoned factories. The material and other aid provided by aid workers was essential for the survival in no man's land, but it also expressed the hierarchies and tensions inherent in humanitarian activity. Drawing on the experience of no man's land in 1938–39 and on current research in humanitarianism and border studies, the talk will explore border crossings and border experience as integral to and constitutive of humanitarian activity generally. The talk argues that studying borders and border crossings provides new insights into humanitarianism in its various forms, locales, and scales.

19:30 Buffet dinner (at GHI Warsaw)

Tuesday, 5 May 2026

10:00-12:30 Panel 1: Phantom borders

*Chair: Sandra DAHLKE (Max Weber Network Eastern Europe)*

Izabela PASZKO (German Historical Institute Warsaw)  
'When Borders Disappear: The Afterlives of Infrastructure at the Three Emperors' Corner'

David JISHKARIANI (MWS Georgia branch office)  
'Making Visible Borders in the South Caucasus: The Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in Action (1922–1936)'

Ralf MEINDL (German Historical Institute Warsaw)  
'Invisible borders – Ermland in the 19th and 20th centuries'

Richard WITTMANN (Orient Institute Istanbul)  
'Mount Athos as a Sacred Borderland'

12:30-13:45 Lunch (at GHI Warsaw)

13:45-15:00 Panel 2: Bordering and urban space

*Chair: Petra TERHOEVEN (German Historical Institute Rome)*

İclal Ayşe KÜÇÜKKIRCA (Orient Institute Istanbul)  
'Homelessness and Homemaking in a Border City: Nusaybin in Post-Conflict, 2016-2023'

Jaromír MRŇKA (German Historical Institute Warsaw, Prague Branch Office)  
'Queer Underworlds as Border Infrastructures: Rethinking Spatial Form under State Socialism'

15:00-15:30 Coffee break

15:30-17:30 Panel 3: Redefining imperial boundaries

*Chair: Christoph K. Neumann (Orient Institute Istanbul)*

Debarati BAGCHI (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi)  
'The Making of an Agrarian Frontier: Land Rights in a Border District in Colonial India'

Ruslana BOVHYRIA (Max Weber Network Eastern Europe)  
'The Property Frontier of Empire: Lianozov Company and the Making of the Russo-Iranian Borderland, 1870-1916'

Zeynep TEZER (Orient Institute Istanbul)  
'Mobility, Borderscapes, and Imperial Entanglements in Ottoman North Africa'

17:30-18:00 Coffee break

18:00-19:30 Panel discussion: 'Uncommon Experiences: Sharing Borders in Contemporary Europe'

*Chair: Andrew TOMPKINS (German Historical Institute Warsaw)*

Julia BUYSKYKH (University College Cork/GHI Warsaw)

Jan MUSEKAMP (German Historical Institute Warsaw)

Ettore RECCHI (Sciences Po Paris)

20:00 Restaurant dinner (location tbc)

Wednesday, 6 May 2026

10:30-12:30 Panel 4: Border-making materials

*Chair: Magdalena SARYUSZ-WOLSKA (German Historical Institute Warsaw)*

Felix LÜTTGE (German Historical Institute London)  
'Towards an Amphibious History of the Sea'

Andrew TOMPKINS (German Historical Institute Warsaw)  
'Fish, ships, and oil: Territorial conflict between East Germany and Poland, 1945–1989'

Melike ŞAHINOL, Gülşah BAŞKAVAK, and Ayşe Berna UÇAROL (Orient Institute Istanbul)  
'Beyond Borderlines: Paper Walls as Mobile Boundary Infrastructures in Transnational Surgical-Craftscapes'

12:30-13:45 Lunch (at GHI Warsaw)

13:45-15:45 Panel 5: Paperwork as borderwork

*Chair: Sebastian SCHWECKE (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi)*

Didi TAL (German Historical Institute Washington)  
'Paper Borders: Gender, Visas, and Cinematic Storytelling in *Hold Back the Dawn* (1941)'

Alexandre BIBERT (German Historical Institute Paris)  
'Detours, Intimidation, Visas: The Deterritorialized Iron Curtain in Franco–GDR Trade Union Circulations (1950s–1960s)'

Atiba PERTILLA (German Historical Institute Washington)  
'Showing Money, Seeing Race: The Debate over Financial Tests at the American Border, 1890–1930'

16:00-18:00 Optional: Guided tour in Warsaw – choice of either

- POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

or

- Museum of Contemporary Art (*Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej*)

or

- the Royal Baths park (*Łazienki Królewskie*)

*The meeting point for all tours is at 16:00 at the reception desk of the GHI Warsaw (ground floor). The tours start at 16:30 and last 1.5 hours, ending at 18:00.*