

Wednesday, 6 May 2026

10:00–12:30 Panel 4: Border-making Materials

Chair: Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska (GHI Warsaw)

Felix Lüttge (GHI London)
'Towards an Amphibious History of the Sea'

Andrew Tompkins (GHI Warsaw)
'Fish, Ships and Oil: Territorial Conflict between East Germany and Poland, 1945–1989'

Melike Şahinol, Gülşah Başkavak, and Ayşe Berna Uçarol (OI Istanbul)
'Beyond Borderlines: Paper Walls as Mobile Boundary Infrastructures in Transnational Surgical-Craftscapes'

13:45–15:45 Panel 5: Paperwork as Borderwork

Chair: Sebastian Schwecke (MWF Delhi)

Didi Tal (GHI Washington)
'Paper Borders: Gender, Visas, and Cinematic Storytelling in Hold Back the Dawn (1941)'

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

Atiba Pertilla (GHI Washington)
'Showing Money, Seeing Race: The Debate over Financial Tests at the American Border, 1890–1930'

Reflecting on borders in the wake of the material and spatial turns and against the backdrop of climate change in the Anthropocene, the 2026 annual conference of the Max Weber Foundation aims to bring together scholarship on the physical dimensions of contemporary and historical boundaries—between states, nations, cities, empires, and regions, but also between the sacred and the profane, the public and the private, the urban and the rural, and other spatially delimited zones.

Max Weber Stiftung —
Deutsche
Geisteswissenschaftliche
Institute im Ausland
Rheinallee 6 · 53173 Bonn
T +49 (0)228 377860
F +49 (0)228 3778619
info@maxweberstiftung.de
www.maxweberstiftung.de



An Institute of the
Max Weber
Foundation
.....
German Humanities
Institutes Abroad

Border Matters:

Embodiment, Environment,
and Infrastructure of
Border Spaces

Warsaw, Poland
4–6 May 2026

Conference program

Monday, 4 May 2026

..

17:30-18:00 Opening comments

18:00-19:30 **Keynote lecture**

Michal Frankl (Leibniz GWZO Prague)

"Humanitarian Border Crossings: Aid in No Man's Land"

Moderator: Jan Musekamp

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.

Tuesday, 5 May 2026

..

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

Chair: Sandra Dahlke (MWNO)

Izabela Paszko (GHI Warsaw)

'When Borders Disappear: The Afterlives of Infrastructure at the Three Emperors' Corner'

David Jishkariani (MWNO Tbilisi)

'Making Visible Borders in the South Caucasus: The Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in Action (1922–1936)'

Ralf Meindl (GHI Warsaw)

'Invisible borders – Ermland in the 19th and 20th centuries'

Richard Wittmann (OI Istanbul),

'Mount Athos as a Sacred Borderland'

13:45-15:00 Panel 2: Bordering and Urban Space

Chair: Petra Terhoeven (GHI Rome)

İclal Ayşe Küçükkırca (OI Istanbul)

'Homelessness and Homemaking in a Border City: Nusaybin in Post-Conflict, 2016-2023'

Jaromír Mrňka (GHI Warsaw, Prague Branch Office)

'Queer Underworlds as Border Infrastructures: Rethinking Spatial Form under State Socialism'

15:30-17:30 Panel 3: Redefining Imperial Boundaries

Chair: Christoph K. Neumann (OI Istanbul)

Debarati Bagchi (MWF Delhi)

'The Making of an Agrarian Frontier: Land Rights in a Border District in Colonial India'

Ruslana Bovhyria (FU Berlin/MWNO Tbilisi)

'The Property Frontier of Empire: Lianozov Company and the Making of the Russo-Iranian Borderland, 1870-1916'

Zeynep Tezer (OI Istanbul)

'Mobility, Borderscapes and Imperial Entanglements in Ottoman North Africa'

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

Chair: Andrew Tompkins (GHI Warsaw)

Julia Buyskykh (University College Cork/GHI Warsaw)

Jan Musekamp (GHI Warsaw)

Ettore Recchi (Sciences Po Paris)

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

