

**DAAD Go East International Summer School 2013:  
Border Regions in East Central Europe – Poland and Czech Republic  
Szczecin, Liberec and Prague, 15-29/9/2013**

Borders have been a subject of international studies in humanities, social sciences and cultural studies for quite some time. Against the backdrop of the political developments in the 20th century and with a dominant perspective on political geography, issues of national demarcation prevailed in the vast majority of scholarship. Conversely, connections across political boundaries as well as parallel developments on both sides of the border received little attention, not only for Eastern Europe. The social and political dynamics since 1989, however, have not only changed the character of borders in East Central Europe, but even more, in many cases they are becoming fluid: Firstly, by removing the Iron Curtain with its physical barriers, and secondly by the enlargement of the European Union and most recently by the expansion of the "Schengen" area to include Poland and the Czech Republic. Under these changed political circumstances, individual and civil society activities have emerged as particularly central forces in setting the pace of change. These political and social processes have been accompanied by a change in scholarly approaches, which now focus on the social and cultural construction of borders and are thus interested in regions beyond national boundaries.

Approaches towards such social and cultural studies that analyze these processes and respond to global changes since the 1990s may be noticed in many places in recent years, however they have not yet crystallized into research paradigms in Poland and the Czech Republic. Against this background, the summer school "Border Regions in East Central Europe" will not only present finished concepts but introduce dynamic processes and discussions.

The focus of the summer school is on the German-Polish border region along the lower Odra (Oder) river and the Czech-German-Polish border region in the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše / Riesengebirge / Karkonosze). These regions show some similarities as well as significant differences which will be discussed during the summer school. Among the similarities one may point out the impact of state socialist regimes and the low permeability of the borders after 1945 as well as the change of population structures on each side of the border due to forced migrations of large parts of the population during and after the Second World War. Differences may be noticed particularly in the temporal dimension of the borders: The borders of Bohemia have stood over a longer period due to history and its natural situation, whereas the boundary along the Odra and Nysa (Neiße) rivers is a product of the Second World War. Further differences can be seen in the social and cultural construction of the border regions: in Bohemia they emerged already in the 19th century but are of significantly lower relevance after 1989 compared to the Polish case, where discussions on the cultural heritage generated intensive regional discourses.

Szczecin offers very good conditions for the observation of the German-Polish border region, as the city has been shaped more than any other Polish city by the border, which let the city remain in a peripheral position during the People's Republic. As a result of the political change of the border in 1989, the complexity of the border (in communication, mentalities, economic relations) became visible.

In the Czech Republic, the first part of the program will be held in Liberec (Reichenberg), where the situation at the border played an important economic role in history. Whereas its population was mostly German until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the immigration of Czechs into the city produced ethno-cultural boundaries, whose divergent cultures of memory are noticeable even to the present day. Finally, the results will be discussed in Prague, and a comparison between border regions in Poland and the Czech Republic shall be drawn.

The discussions at the summer school will primarily focus on the following issues:

- historical origins and the political, social and cultural character of borders;
- border conflicts (both political and in the mentalities of the societies at the border);
- cross-border entanglements and their stimulating factors;
- the representation of borders and border regions in local, regional and national memories.

The International Summer School "Border Regions in East Central Europe" will continue the DAAD Go East Summer School on "Memory Cultures in Central Europe" in Szczecin and Prague in 2012. It addresses MA and PhD students from the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, and beyond. The summer school will examine historical and current issues of border regions in East Central Europe and discuss opportunities as well as problems of intensifying transnational entanglements. In talks and panel discussions with prominent experts (historians, art historians, scholars of culture and literature, social scientists), politicians and representatives of relevant civil society organizations, and also by preparing own presentations of selected topics, the participants will analyze and understand current debates on these border regions. On-site visits and excursions will be a part of the program.

The Summer School will be held in English.

Eligibility: Application with a one-page letter of motivation, resume, application form, recommendation by a university teacher.

Czech or Polish language knowledge is appreciated, but not required.

Participation fees:

650 EUR for participants from Germany and other countries except Poland and Czech Republic. Please note: the DAAD has agreed to support up to 10 German participants – for further information, please contact the organizers). Participants from all other countries should contact the organizers for more information about their participation fees.

**Application deadline: 1/6/2013**

Organizers:

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