

INTRODUCTION

The following three articles are based on papers given during the panel “Rural History in the Czech-Polish-German borderland” at the Rural History Conference 2017 in Leuven (Belgium).

This panel aimed to discuss the negotiation of (rural) history in border regions, especially in the area connecting the Federal Republic of Germany, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Poland. Hereby, border regions were not only understood as territories but also as spaces of contacts.

The following questions were addressed: How is history remembered and negotiated in regions where inhabitants have been confronted with shifting borders, forced migration and resettlement and/or rural depopulation? What individual or collective constructions of identity and alterity can be observed? Who is the “other” and how do people encounter each other?

How can the relations between the rural borderland and the urban/political/national centers be described? Does it make sense to speak of a ‘double periphery’: the one of the rural and the one of the border area? How do people gain a sense of agency to promote their political interests and/or individual lifestyles? Does the rural borderland constitute a space of opportunities or is it rather a lost place?

Which ideas (and presuppositions) of ‘borders’ and ‘rural areas’ are influencing the research of cultural anthropologists?

Anja Decker, Sarah Kleinmann (together with co-author Arnika Peselmann), Johanna Bichlmaier and Jana Nosková (together with co-author Sandra Kreisslová) approached these questions from a historical as well as from a cultural anthropological perspective. The following three papers (Anja Decker’s paper will be published elsewhere) should be understood as interim reports which represent the current state of research.

Panel Overview

Chair: PD Dr. Ira Spieker, Institute of Saxon History and Cultural Anthropology

Discussant: Arnika Peselmann M.A., Institute of Saxon History and Cultural Anthropology

Speakers: Johanna Bichlmaier M.A., Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg; Anja Decker M.A., Institute for European Ethnology, LMU Munich; Dr. Sarah Kleinmann, Institute of Saxon History and Cultural Anthropology, Dresden; Dr. Jana Nosková, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Praha.