

Summer School "Caucasus Conflict Culture" 13

5 places available for students | Summer 2025

Closed Borders in the South Caucasus: Consequences for Border Communities

Closed borders in the South Caucasus due to security concerns and unresolved conflicts have led to serious socio-economic challenges for border communities, including economic isolation, social fragmentation and human rights violations. Despite these challenges, cross-border relations persist, particularly in Georgia, demonstrating both the resilience of these communities and the opportunities for cooperation. The project aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of closed borders through an interdisciplinary student research project in the border community of Lagodekhi, Georgia, combining fieldwork with theoretical knowledge based in border studies. It invites students to explore how borders are constructed and perceived in relation to historical, political and cultural factors by addressing questions such as: What are the mechanisms through which cross-border ties and relations are created and maintained? How do closed borders affect the economic activities and livelihoods of border communities? What alternative economic strategies are border communities using to cope with the challenges and opportunities of closed borders? What coping mechanisms, resilience strategies and resources (ethnic, kinship, contacts with local officials, etc.) do border communities develop and apply in response to the economic and social challenges of closed borders?

The current student research project examines the consequences and causes of border closure in the Georgian-Azerbaijani border region. Each group of students selects and researches a topic related to the effects of border closure on border communities, such as social fragmentation, migration and demographic shifts, security and perceptions of conflict, the comparative dynamics of changes in border regimes and cross-border relations, patterns of employment and cross-border trade. Students will be introduced to the practice of fieldwork, anthropological methodology and the organisation and conduct of a research project. A key aim of the project is to bring together students from the conflict regions of the South Caucasus and Germany and to give them the experience of working together in multinational teams. The project is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). This event is the 13th in the series 'Caucasus Conflict Culture' and is organised in cooperation with partners from the region.

We have the opportunity to take five students from Marburg to Georgia. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered. The trip is planned to take place from 20.-31. August 2025 and will bring together 30-35 people. The research will take place in Lagodekhi, Georgia. Please note that due to the dynamic conflict situation in the South Caucasus, the date, topic and location of the Summer School may change.

This offer is primarily addressed to students of the MA programmes Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie, Friedens- und Konfliktforschung or Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Marburg. There will be an **information meeting** for all applicants on **03.03.2025 from 4-6 pm** held online (<https://webconf.hrz.uni-marburg.de/n/rooms/kxg-sag-g78-a1q/join>) where the project will be presented. For further information you can visit the project website <https://caucasusconflict.wordpress.com/> or watch a documentary film shot during a previous summer <https://vimeo.com/234465854> (password: CCC5)

We look forward to receiving your **application by 14.03.2025** at sophie.falschebner@uni-marburg.de, preferably in one file. Please use this application form (<https://uni-marburg.de/xMjx0o>) and attach a short CV. Previous knowledge of the region is not required.

Sophie Falschebner & Stéphane Voell, Zentrum für Konfliktforschung, 14.02.2025