Tourism and an evolving international boundary: Bordering, debordering and rebordering on Usedom Island, Poland-Germany

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ABSTRACT:

Tourism has clear connections to bordering, debordering and rebordering. Each part of this process has important implications for tourism and development in the heritage borderscapes of border tourism destinations. The study illustrates past and current changes to the border within the bordering-debordering-rebordering framework. In particular it highlights the role of tourism in this process as both an agent and recipient of border changes. To examine the main ideas presented so far empirically, the authors chose a location on Usedom Island on the Baltic coast, which is a unique coastal tourism destination on the border of Germany and Poland. The paper uses a mixed methods, case study approach utilizing formal and informal interviews with local authorities, the content of strategic development documents and archived photographs, and systematic landscape/ locational surveys. The Polish-German border symbolizes the territorial evolution of Germany and Poland, and represents differing languages and cultures that are simultaneously united through the debordering effects of the EU and Schengen, and divided through the symbolic rebordering activities of border commemoration for tourism purposes. The border functions as a destination, thanks to the binational differences, maintained border markers, heritagized relict border landscapes, decaying border infrastructure, and newly erected additional signage and symbols that commemorate the international boundary. All of these elements are of critical importance in border destination management.

1. Introduction

International borders have geopolitical, historical and symbolic values and meanings. In most parts of the world, demarcation pillars, inscribed stones, survey markers, signs or other symbols indicate the precise location where countries meet. These markers are legally surveyed indicators of where one state's sovereign authority ends and another one begins. Boundaries may not only demarcate territory and spatial units, they may also be symbolic representations of nationhood, social solidarity or cultural identity. In many places, they underscore differences between neighboring countries or opposite sides. Boundaries often emerge as centers of national, regional or local discourses and social actions. They have many purposes and may function as socio-economic dividers or uniters as bordering processes create wide chasms between peoples and places on the other side, or through

debordering processes, they may present opportunities for socio-economic development and cross-frontier cooperation (Herrschel, 2011; Kolosov & Więckowski, 2018; Lundén, 2007; McCall, 2012).

This paper examines the processes of bordering, debordering, and rebordering in the context of the European Union and the Schengen Treaty as manifested in a unique coastal tourism destination on the border of Germany and Poland. The study illustrates the past and current changes to the border within the bordering-rebordering framework noted above. In particular, the paper highlights the role of tourism in this process as both an agent and recipient of border changes. The paper first examines border morphological processes and the crossover between borders and tourism, and then applies these concepts to the case study.

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2. Evolving geopolitical landscapes: managing borders and tourism in borderland destinations

In legal terms, a border is an invisible vertical plane that separates two or more territories. It establishes a meeting place of neighboring sovereign entities (Kristoff, 1959; Pounds, 1963) and is literally the maximum extent to which a state may exercise its legal authority (Prescott, 1987). State borders separate political and institutional systems (Guichonnet & Raffestin, 1974), as well as economic systems, social structures and societal norms, lifestyles and standards of living, and sometimes cultures and languages. The Westphalian idea of fixed boundary lines began to develop in the Late Middle Ages as states became increasingly imbued with the ultimate source of legitimate authority, law and sovereignty (Herzog, 1990). Prior to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, the interdependent notions of state, state sovereignty and state boundary were nebulous and ill defined, but the 1648 treaty started an evolutionary process that continued to unfold into the twentieth century; today, state sovereignty and the lines that mark it are principles of international law (Timothy, 2021).

The multidimensional and interrelated concepts of bordering, debordering and rebordering have permeated much academic writing in political geography in recent years. This discourse suggests a complex evolutionary process wherein international boundaries are unfixed and perpetually in a state of flux. This has significant implications for tourism and managing borderland destinations, which will be discussed below.

2.1. Bordering

Bordering refers to the formation of borders, but it also alludes to the idea that states are separated by national frontiers that have tangible and real, as well as intangible and abstract, effects on state operations and the lives of ordinary people (Newman, 2006). Bordering is both a political and social process by which states, national identities and senses of otherness are created through history.

Bordering entails the establishment of an international border. According to international law, a sovereign state must have a permanent population, a defined territory, a functioning government, and recognition by the community of states, which allows it to establish relations with other states (Glassner & Fahrer, 2004; Shaw, 2017). Bordering enables countries to fulfill the legal requirements of sovereignty by marking the extent of their territory, exercising their legal authority, providing public services, establishing international relations, exploiting natural resources, governing the population, and controlling goods, services and people entering or leaving.

Throughout history, bordering has also meant establishing a line of security and defense. In many cases, although not always, state boundaries become a focal point of militarization when relations sour between neighboring countries or during times of conflict or unrest. This is not a matter of course in every case but has occurred frequently throughout history. In these instances, border-crossing procedures are intensified and simple demarcations are enhanced with additional security infrastructure, such as walls and fences, guard towers, security cameras, and laser sensors. In this case, border monitoring and maintenance, which might not have been a high priority before, now becomes a high priority with a great deal of effort expended to maintain the border. Also in bordering, borders become symbolic representations of nationhood and cultural solidarity (Kolosov & Scott, 2013; van Houtum, 2005). They are often seen as symbols of protection, control or division, depending on their history and functions. Borders may be closely linked to concepts of differentiation and separation: us against them, here versus there—sentiments that may be accentuated through nationalistic propaganda, showings of military might, and accentuations of differentness.

Although tourism has little influence in bordering, there are a few instances of tourism being an impetus for border changes and exchanges in sovereign territory, such as the case between France and Andorra in the early 2000s to facilitate construction of a bypass tunnel for tourist traffic (Timothy et al., 2014). In another rare expression of tourism's bordering role, Xu et al. (2018) explain how tourism was the main impetus for the delimitation of certain local boundaries in China—borders between villages, communities and tourist attractions as these neighborhoods competed for tourist spending and as planning regimes realized the importance of the growth of the industry.

Whereas tourism rarely manifests as a cause of bordering, bordering has deep associations with tourism. Bordering clearly affects human mobility; borders and their obstructive effects have long been barriers to travel and transfrontier socioeconomic development, including tourism. By the same token, however, bordering has provided the impetus for much tourism development. For instance, owing to tax and price differentials, and legal differences, borders frequently provide advantageous conditions for shopping, gambling, prostitution, and medical tourism that might not be available in non-frontier regions (Timothy, 2001).

In the historic process of bordering, multifarious narratives of history and lived versions of bordering coalesce at state frontiers (Andersen and Prokkola, 2021). As such, borders become symbolic representations of nationhood, cultural solidarity or sometimes social disunion (Kolosov & Scott, 2013; van Houtum, 2005). They are often seen as symbols of protection, control or division, depending on their history and functions. In the European Union, borderlines have become increasingly symbolic representations of integration and cooperation (Więckowski, 2010). Border elements have symbolic values and hence function as tourist attractions, with implications for heritage and nature protection. The tangible elements of a borderscape include demarcation apparatuses; walls, fences, gates or other physical barriers; customs and immigration posts and checkpoints; administrative buildings; guard towers; minefields and bunkers; cleared forest vistas; and flags, coats of arms, welcome signs and warning signs. These frequently act as tourist attractions in their own right, as has been well documented in many localities (e.g. Gelbman, 2008; Timothy, 2001; Więckowski, 2010), especially in the extreme cases of the East and West German divide and other parts of the former Iron Curtain (Eckert, 2019), the buffer zone between North Cyprus and South Cyprus until 2007 (Gelbman, 2010; Scott, 2012a), currently between North and South Korea at the Demilitarized Zone (Hunter, 2015; Shin, 2007), and in other areas that are far less contentious, such as the US-Canada, China-Vietnam, and many frontier areas in Europe (Tintěra et al., 2018; Więckowski in press).

Local authorities and destination management organizations frequently use these elements of the border landscape in promotional and marketing exercises (Guo, 2015; Timothy & Gelbman, 2015; Więckowski, in press). For example, Amritsar, India, and Lahore, Pakistan, both promote visits to the Indo-Pakistani border to witness the elaborate daily closure of the border gate, which is one of the region's main tourist attractions (Chhabra, 2018). The border markers on the divided island of St Martin have been highlighted for decades in the promotional literature of both Sint Maarten and Saint Martin and are among the most prominent heritage attractions on the island (Fielding, 2017). Likewise, many communities along the former inner-German border rely on the relict border landscapes of the Iron Curtain for their tourism economies, and the relict landscapes are a salient part of their promotion and planning (Eckert, 2019).

Comparative studies have shown how bordering causes spatial and administrative differences on opposite sides of international frontiers and the resultant tourism landscapes created by these differences (Gelbman & Timothy, 2019; Guo, 2015; Prokkola & Lois, 2016; Timothy et al., 2016). Borders that divide villages and towns, such as Baarle-Hertog/Baarle-Nassau, Belgium and the Netherlands, Tornio-Haparanda, Finland and Sweden, Valka-Valga, Latvia and Estonia, and Gorizia-Nova Gorica, Italy and Slovenia cause both unique tourism management opportunities and challenges (Gelbman &

Timothy, 2011; Jańczak, 2013). The heritage of division and peripherality creates an inimitable sense of place with unique border stories that produce distinct heritage narratives which do not normally exist in non-border regions. Tales of smuggling, border closures during times of contention, and frontier restrictions on ordinary life are salient elements of borderland lore that are uniquely tapped as part of the heritage appeal of borders (Gelbman & Timothy, 2011, 2019; Timothy, 2021). Simultaneously, borderland tourism is fraught with sociopolitical, cultural, security, and economic obstacles that hinder tourism planning and management, especially in cross-border contexts. A lack of political will, sociocultural differences, differing legal and policy frameworks, and security priorities are among the most prominent challenges to managing tourism in borderland contexts (Gelbman & Timothy, 2019).

The management of the borderline as a state membrane and tourism asset depends on the functions of the border and the relationships between neighboring countries. This is clear in the case of the Wagah border gate between India and Pakistan mentioned previously. Although the border-closing spectacle each day, which draws thousands of spectators from both sides who are unable to cross the shared frontier, fulfills a legitimate boundary function, it is also an object of the tourist gaze in which hostile countries use an exaggerated pompous and ceremonious theatrical performance to symbolize power and cross-border conflict in a way that both draws visitors and emphasizes the two neighbors' animosity toward one another (Chhabra, 2018).

2.2. Debordering

Debordering is a process in which sovereign states reduce their isolation by collaborating more with other states and opening themselves up to globalization processes and an increasingly borderless world of free movement and commerce (Albert & Brock, 2000; Newman, 2006). Concepts such as permeability, opening, cooperation, and integration are associated with the notion of debordering (Yndigegn, 2011). In the words of Albert and Brock (2000, p. 20), "debordering within the world of states is understood as an increasing permeability of borders together with a decreasing ability of states to counter this trend by attempts to shut themselves off". The modern concept of debordering is most evident in post-WWII Europe with the rise of political-economic alliances and trade blocs (e.g., European Union), the goals of which have been to shrink border barriers in favor of economic growth and human mobility.

Debordering is part of the increasingly popular 'open borders' discourse and is closely associated with frontier permeability and neoliberal trade, increased human mobility and an overall decline in the traditional barrier effects of state boundaries (Herzog & Sohn, 2019; Timothy, 2019). One of the best manifestations of debordering is the proliferation of dozens of supranational alliances and trade blocs in all parts of the world. Europe has been the most widely cited laboratory for debordering processes with the formation and expansion of the European Union and its associated Schengen Agreement, both of which have reduced the intervention of state boundaries on trade and human mobility (Timothy, 2019), and blurred "the differences between social and spatial entities and the mental categories associated to them" (Herzog & Sohn, 2019, p. 180).

Borders function as laboratories for socio-economic development and transfrontier cooperation, and much has been written about this function (e.g. Nilsson, 2018; Paasi, 2011; Scott, 2012a, 2012b; Więckowski & Cerić, 2016). Cross-border regional development projects become more normative as boundaries are mobilized as instruments of place-making (Scott, 2012a, p. 86). Through Europe's integration process, many symbolic places of memory-making have appeared in relation to international borders (Prokkola & Lois, 2016), with many landscapes of integration now turning former borderscapes into the relict boundaries described by Hartshorne (1936), even though the borderlines themselves remain lines of sovereign authority.

Debordering processes often result in derelict border landscapes that no longer function in the same defensive capacity they once did. Although former border elements (i.e. relict borders) remain in the cultural landscapes of many places and attract certain history enthusiasts, relatively few of them are commemorated as historic monuments or heritage attractions, despite their importance in national identity creation and their former impact on everyday life in the borderlands. However, there are notable exceptions such as remnants of the Berlin Wall and localities along the former inner-German border, including several *Grenzmuseums* (border museums) located along the former divide, which are good examples of relict boundaries that serve as important heritage attractions (Eckert, 2019). The physical manifestations of the border that become historic artifacts, heritage 'monuments' and visitor attractions, are manifold. The nature of border heritage depends on the historical development of the border (the bordering process), the varying functions of the border through time (e.g. military defense, ideological filter or simply a line of demarcation), the current level of openness, and the nature of the relationships between adjoining states.

These types of heritage assets are the foundations of the local tourism economy in many borderland regions. Openness and harmonious relations can sometimes result in the debordering process of dismantling former infrastructure and relics, and through debordering, many of the additional border tourism services (e.g. duty-free sales) become irrelevant when neighboring countries join a customs union or through other debordering processes. From a debordering perspective, with the opening of the EU's internal boundaries, both physically and symbolically, cross-border regions have become spaces of communication, cooperation, interaction and co-development in many areas, including nature protection, infrastructure, economic and cultural collaboration, and joint tourism marketing (Adie & Amore, 2020; Boonchai & Freathy, 2020; Fall 2005; Timothy, 2019; Więckowski, in press). In debordered spaces, tourism can more easily support regional transfrontier identity formation and image building (Prokkola, 2008), and is currently being used to enhance cross-border heritage protection and promotion in many places, including for example on the borders of Finland and Sweden, Finland and Russia, and Latvia and Estonia in Europe (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2011; Nilsson et al., 2010; Prokkola & Lois, 2016; Tintěra et al., 2018).

2.3. Rebordering

Rebordering was born out of the September 11, 2001, terror incidents and the securitization of North America's frontiers in response to future threats and the resultant reformulation of controls over human mobility (Newman, 2006; Rumford, 2006). Rebordering indicates an assertion of control and reconstructing borders in both physical and metaphorical terms with a return of bordering policies and practices (Herzog & Sohn, 2019). Since September 11, rebordering has raised obstacles to unwelcomed risks, including terrorism, drug smuggling, and unlawful entry (Jones & Johnson, 2016). Prominent physical examples are the Israeli-Palestinian security fence (Gelbman, 2008) and the recently erected (2015–2016) border barriers in Europe, even between Schengen states aimed to slow illegal immigration from Africa and Asia. These physical barriers create geopolitical and tangible obstacles that tend to hinder cross-border mobility, including tourism. In Europe, the physical enlargement of the EU eastward has simultaneously debordered parts of Europe and rebordered the union's margins with hardened external frontiers (Rumford, 2006; Stetter, 2005; Yndigegn, 2011). When security challenges arise to threaten social, political, and economic stability, the state can activate rebordering to intensify border controls and sometimes even cease cross-border tourism (Su & Li, 2021).

Rebordering processes can also be understood in a symbolic or metaphoric sense. Ferrer-Gallardo (2008) argues that the reconfigurations of the Spanish-Moroccan border since 1986 represents a threefold process of geopolitical, functional, and symbolic reshaping. Symbolic dimensions impact the geopolitical and functional reconfiguration of the

border in terms of national and post-national identity (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008). Rebordering in the tourism context is a symbolic process where local authorities (or entrepreneurs) intentionally emphasize the boundary and the differences between countries to enhance its tourist appeal. Erecting commemorative monuments, interpretive signs, and other physical features that emphasize the border's existence and underscore 'differentness', establishes an 'us versus them' perspective on otherness that would not exist if there were no border (Heintel et al., 2018).

Another example of rebordering includes the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021. As it emerged, many governments decided that closing their own state borders was the most effective protection against the spread of the virus. These efforts resembled former times, with the restoration of border controls, the sealing of borders, or even their outright closure (Więckowski, 2020a). Today, within the EU and in light of the legal framework established by Schengen, there are some unique manifestations of rebordering, which will be discussed in the case study that follows.

3. Study context and methods

To examine the main ideas presented so far empirically, we chose a location on the Polish-German border: Usedom Island (Uznam in Polish) on the Baltic coast. The island's total area is 445 square kilometers (373 km^2 in Germany, 72 km^2 in Poland). Its population is 76,500 (31,500 in Germany, 45,000 in Poland). The area is a popular coastal destination and nature preserve renowned for its dunes and beaches, and it is one of both countries' premier holiday destinations (Duda, 2018; Gardzińska et al., 2015; Marchwacki, 2014; Więckowski, 2010). The Baltic Sea coast is one of Poland's most developed tourist regions, visited by four million tourists annually and significantly exceeding the national average (Bal & Czalczynska-Podolska, 2020). Some 30 million tourists visit the Meklemburg-Pomeranien German coast each year (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019) of which Usedom is a part.

The earliest forms of tourism around Usedom Island focused on therapeutic recuperation in the early nineteenth century. Świnoujście, which was part of Germany at the time and functioned as an important port town in the eighteenth century, became a seaside health resort in the 1820s, later becoming a more popular health resort once brine and therapeutic mud were discovered (Bal & Czalczynska-Podolska, 2020). Świnoujście and nearby Heringsdorf became increasingly popular health resorts at the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to close railway connections with Berlin and other German cities. Today, the area's urban centers of transportation and tourism services are the neighboring towns of Świnoujście, Poland, and Heringsdorf, Germany, with Herringsdorf's Ahlbeck district being the closest urban center to the boundary. Ahlbeck and Świnoujście lie approximately 3 km apart, with the international border running between them. Both towns have substantial beachfront tourism development. When Poland subsumed Świnoujście and the eastern portion of Usedom Island, the city became the most isolated (and continues to be) part of the country. Being separated from other parts of Poland by a branch of the Oder River and the nineteenth-century Piast Canal shipping waterway, Świnoujście has no direct road connections to the rest of the country (Jędrusik, 2013; Musiaka 2014).

From a border analysis perspective, this location is a suitable example of the patterns discussed earlier, given the significant changes that have occurred on this border since the Second World War and its historic evolution through the collapse of communism and Poland's ascension to the European Union. The opening of Poland's borders in 1989–1990 resulted in a massive increase in cross-border traffic. Więckowski (2018) identifies four main purposes for transboundary mobility in Poland's border areas: trade, shopping tourism, transit, and leisure tourism. Shopping tourism emerged as Germans became increasingly interested in Polish food, while Polish tourists were eager to purchase manufactured German goods and textiles. However, tourism

services are still insufficient to accommodate growing numbers of tourists (Szytniewski, 2013). Leisure- and health-oriented tourism resembles shopping tourism in that most participants are relatively affluent, such as Germans visiting the Polish seaside. One of the most pervasive forms of borderland tourism has been cross-border shopping, which largely entails Germans shopping in Poland. In general, tourism now plays a key socio-economic role in the Polish borderlands adjacent to Germany (Więckowski, 2010). In addition to being a popular coastal tourism destination, the border enhances the appeal of the area owing to the cultural differences it highlights, and the fact that it enables domestic tourists to visit 'abroad' if even for a few minutes or a few hours to appreciate the differences (Więckowski, 2020b). Additionally, Świnoujście sees a lot of German tourist traffic due to the high quality of services in Poland and lower prices compared to those in Germany.

3.1. Methods

This paper uses a mixed methods case study approach to examine the touristic, historical and symbolic values and meanings of borders through bordering, debordering, and rebordering. Like most case study-based research, a variety of data and information sources were used to understand a highly complex border morphology and its connections to tourism. According to Yin (2003), case study research is valued because it can elucidate situations that are longitudinal, representative, critical, unique or revolutionary. This case study of border changes on Usedom Island best fits Yin's definition of 'unique', as it is a clear example of a situation that is unusual enough to warrant analysis, yet it also can provide insight into other border locations and the various morphological processes they too have undergone. Although this study traces some historical events and temporal changes, and multiple site visits were undertaken over the years, we would not classify this as a 'longitudinal' study.

The authors examined the bordering processes in this case study from different perspectives. Megoran (2006) argues that beyond the purist method of immersion and participant observation within a cultural group, ethnography may also more broadly include interviews, observations, text and image analysis, and other such fieldwork techniques. He uses ethnography to examine changes in an international border and how these changes affected people's ordinary lives, and he calls for other border studies to be done utilizing broader ethnographic approaches. Our approach resembles Megoran's (2006) adapted ethnography and includes interviews, the content of strategic development documents and archived photographs, online user-generated comments, and systematic landscape/locational surveys.

Data for this study was collected through fieldwork between 2014 and 2020. Every tourist attraction and the entire border layout was examined, and recorded in fieldnotes and photographs. In addition, in the course of 2018 and 2019 fieldwork, every element of the border landscape was mapped. Informal discussions and in-depth interviews were undertaken with ten local authorities (key municipal decision-makers and planners from both countries), ten local residents, and more than a dozen entrepreneurs and people working in tourism services in 2014, 2016 and 2019 (hotel owners, cafes, restaurants, petrol stations, local tourist offices and Polish shops with local products for Germans), tourists (unstructured interviews/discussions with at least 15 tourists in 2014, 2018 and 2019), and a content analysis of the approximate 1700 opinions concerning the attractions on the Polish-German border as recorded in the user-generated content platform Google Maps. The quantitative content analysis of the online data is reserved for a different research project, but some quotes are utilized here to illustrate key points qualitatively.

At least ten official policy documents from various associations, Euroregions, border regions, joint development projects and regional strategies, media reports (more than 100 local newspaper articles and event announcements from local and regional sources), brochures and webpages, and several tourist information billboards at the border were

used to understand policies and landscape changes through time. In addition, four interviews were also undertaken at the Border Guard Center, which trains border officials to oversee the entire Polish-German border. All visits to the study area included participant observations and copious field notes that were constantly reviewed, checked and revised along the way. During the past seven years, dozens of interviews were undertaken and recorded with many different stakeholders. In this particular study, most of the interview data was used to paint a broad picture of the bordering situation and its management at this location rather than to understand the experiences of individual stakeholders. Archived data were used as background information and to trace the spatial evolution of the destination through the periods of bordering, debordering and rebordering.

Visual site surveys allow researchers to observe and collect evidence of certain spatial phenomena, to verify the presence or absence of a phenomenon, and to answer predetermined questions or raise questions for further analysis. In this case, the locational/landscape surveys were geared toward understanding bordering, debordering and rebordering and included land-use surveys, diagramming, photographing, and journaling the physical characteristics of Usedom Island's border situation in the past and present. The interviews, archival data and analysis of current textual and visual content were key in shedding light on changes in the borderscape of this important tourist destination. Although this locality has been researched on several occasions over the years by one of the authors, the bulk of the fieldwork for this paper was undertaken by both authors in July–August 2019.

4. Border processes on Usedom Island

4.1. Bordering Usedom Island: WWII to 1989

As noted previously, the Polish-German border that divides Usedom Island was established artificially in 1945 at the close of the Second World War. Most of the current German-Polish border is located in the Lusatian Neisse and Oder Rivers, with some segments located in canals or on dry land (Eberhardt, 2015). The short segment of the boundary on Usedom Island lies in a small canal (the Peat Canal, or Kanał Torfowy in Polish) and further north on land until it reaches the Baltic Sea.

Following the Second World War and the westward adjustment of the new post-war Polish-German frontier, the current location of this border was established as a line of separation between Poland and Germany, and after 1949 Poland and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, or GDR). Although both countries belonged to the Warsaw Pact and were satellite states of the Soviet Union, the East German-Polish border was strictly controlled, patrolled and monitored. Despite the ideological similarities between the two governments, crossings were thorough and arduous (Keck-Szajbel & Stola, 2015).

As a security and military zone, the GDR-Poland frontier was well fortified and clearly demarcated. Although Poland's national borders have been marked in different ways throughout history, on Usedom the land border, including in the dune zone, was specified with small stone boundary markers approximately 20 cm above ground, flanked on either side by pillars decorated with each country's national colors and coat of arms.

In terms of the broader border infrastructure, a 20-m cleared vista, or buffer zone, edged with barbed-wire fences and guard towers enabled soldiers to monitor the movement of illegal border crossers. Warning signs, place name signs and physical symbols of national territory (e.g. flagpoles, national insignias, and informational signs) were raised, and both states constructed administrative buildings, customs stations, and passport processing offices. Small bridges that were built across the Peat Canal/Kanał Torfowy before it became the international border were destroyed post-1949 to enable the funneling of people and goods into the island's official crossing point near the beach (Fig. 1). A former railway bridge over the canal was demolished in 1947–1948 when the railway line from Świnoujście (formerly Swinemünde, Germany) to

Fig. 1. Border features on Usedom Island. Source: authors' fieldwork.

Berlin and other parts of Germany was deconstructed (Fig. 2).

The heavily fortified border and unambiguous crossing procedures reflected a tenuous relationship between Poland and the GDR owing to Germany's WWII defeat and the resultant repatriation of the German population out of Poland's newly acquired territories into the new borders of Germany (Eberhardt, 2017). There was also a prevailing sense of animosity wrought by Germany's occupation of Poland and its loss of territory to Poland following the war. Inter-state relations improved substantially in the late 1970s, resulting in large waves of East Germans visiting Poland as border restrictions were eased (Kuszewska, 1992). Even though Usedom Island was a popular beachfront destination after 1949, crossing the boundary on the seaside was strictly prohibited during the second half of the twentieth century, with fences bisecting the beaches and tapering into the Baltic Sea. Warning signs and armed guards on the beach dissuaded people from transborder sunbathing. At this locality, the border has undergone widespread changes since its post-WWII establishment, reflecting local, national and pan-European conditions.

Fig. 2. Remnants of the railway bridge over the Peat Canal, destroyed at the end of WWII. Source: authors.

4.2. Debordering Usedom Island—from securitization to touristification, post-1989

The 1980s were a tumultuous time in all of Eastern Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and other geopolitical events of the earlier 1980s (e.g. Poland's Solidarity movement) led to revolutionary movements in Poland, East Germany and other Eastern Bloc countries in which authoritarian regimes collapsed and were replaced by democratic governments and capitalist economies between 1989 and 1991. At this time, positive international relations in Eastern Europe hit an all-time high. Fig. 3 provides a conceptualization and ideographic summary of the changes of border functions and important events related to tourism in this case study.

In 1989, Poland underwent a democratic transition. On October 3, 1990, East and West Germany reunified, and the inner-German border became obsolete. The German-Polish Border Treaty was signed on November 14, 1990, to settle longstanding issues between the two countries and formally and legally establish their common border. After 1990, the Ahlbeck-Świnoujście border checkpoint opened to non-commercial vehicular traffic, cyclists, pedestrians and shuttle bus passengers from other countries outside the Eastern Bloc (Jędrusik, 2013). The June 17, 1991, Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation furthered bilateral relations and helped create a clearer path forward by enabling cultural exchanges and improving relations and transboundary tourism (Węcławowicz et al., 2009). However, at that time, Germany's eastern border was the legal extent of the European
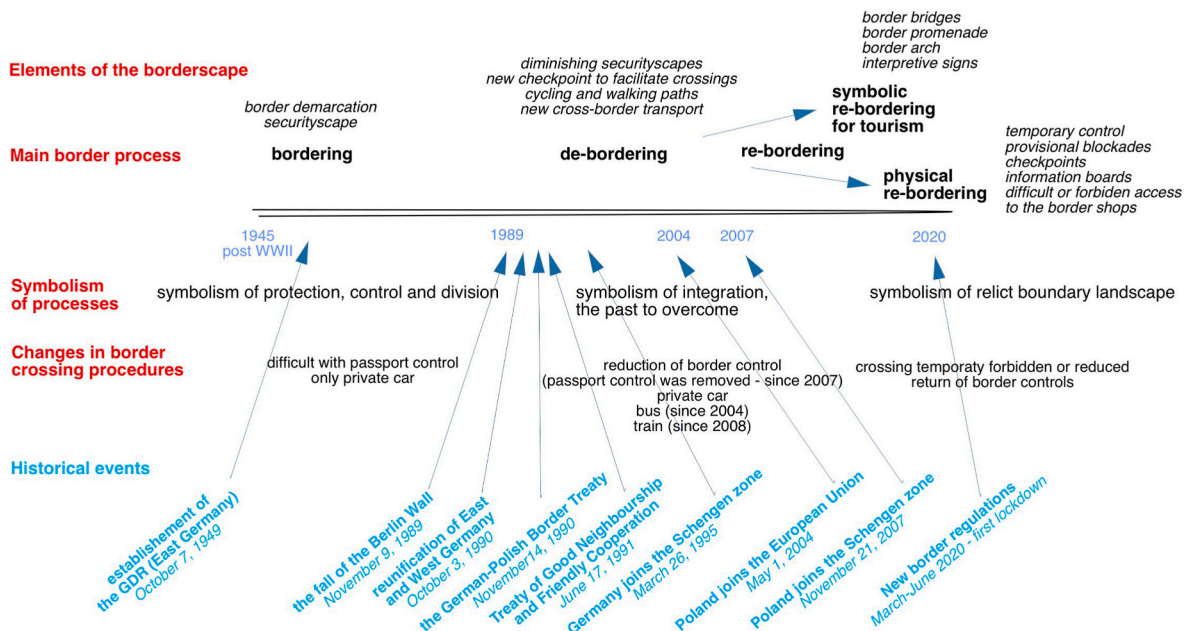

Fig. 3. Tourism in bordering, debordering, and rebordering on Usedom Island, Poland-Germany. Source: Authors' conceptualization.

Union, and on March 26, 1995, the open border policies of the Schengen Agreement came into effect between Germany and most of its western neighbors but not those in the east.

Poland joined the European Union on May 1, 2004, at which time border crossing procedures on the island relaxed somewhat, and the beach itself began to open up. Customs checkpoints were eliminated in 2004, although passport inspections were still required until December 21, 2007, when Poland officially adopted the Schengen rules of free movement. Some of the border infrastructure was removed in 2004 and 2007. However, an additional shared checkpoint, the Świnoujście – Garz station, was established south of the main crossing, entirely on the Polish side of the border, on June 1, 2007, to enlarge the capacity of border crossings for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other local border traffic. By the end of December 2007, all border formalities between Germany and Poland had ceased, and most of Usedom's accompanying border structures had been dismantled. On the beach, fences and warning signs were gradually reduced after 2004 and all beachfront barriers were dismantled in 2007 with complete freedom to cross (Więckowski, 2010). The border markers were restored and reinforced around the same time. According to one border official interviewed, "In the early 2000s, we changed damaged border posts and coated them with plastic covers. They are more durable and aesthetic and have brighter colors".

After Poland joined the EU and Schengen area, new spaces for debordering were created to increase access to the broader transfrontier region for leisure pursuits, tourism and local commerce. Plans for a cross-border bus service began in 1997, but it only came to fruition in 2004 when an international European bus line (Ostseebus) was launched to connect Polish Świnoujście to the nearby German resorts of Ahlbeck, Seebad Heringsdorf and Seebad Bansin. Until Poland's accession to Schengen in December 2007, buses could not physically cross the border; passengers had to disembark at the boundary to change vehicles and undergo passport inspections. Today, buses travel freely between the border communities. Other access for local, leisure and tourism purposes was sought, especially given Świnoujście's isolated physical position within the Polish state. In 2005, a letter of intent was signed between Świnoujście's mayor and the Usedome Coastal Railway (UBB) to rebuild the rail line that had existed before WWII. Poland's 2007 Schengen status paved the way for this to become a reality, and early in 2008, the Germans extended the UBB line 1.5 km to the center of Świnoujście, where the new Central Station was constructed very near the original location where the Swinemünde Bad station stood before the war. Since 2008, the UBB has connected Świnoujście to several downline locations in Germany, including Berlin, during the tourist season. The new cross-border railway line—Świnoujście (City Center)-Ahlbeck—has become an important point of the area's tourism appeal (Musiaka 2014; Duda, 2018; Więckowski, 2020b) (Fig. 4a).

There is now one pedestrian and cycling bridge over the Peat Canal to reconnect adjacent rural areas of high recreational value. The bridge was built with EU structural funds in 2010. In addition, a vehicle bridge was built in 2007 to accommodate car traffic, cyclists and pedestrians at the new Świnoujście-Garz frontier station. Likewise, there is a small culvert which can be crossed by bike or foot near the Szczecin Lagoon. Several cross-border cycling and walking trails were developed after 2007 and are now promoted island-wide by local tourism agencies (Municipality of Świnoujście, 2015).

Figure 4a. International train crossing from Poland into Germany

Figure 4b. New arch across the borderline

Figure 4c. Map and information a few centimeters inside Poland

Figure 4d. Original border fence falling into dereliction

Fig. 4. Border infrastructure and tourism elements. Source: authors.

A popular recreational route (Europa Promenade) paralleling the beach east to west was built in 2011 with EU funding. Now both communities are freely connected by ostensibly the longest cross-border beach promenade in Europe and a symbol of successful European integration. The cross-border cycle and walking trail is nearly 4 km in length. Beyond the trail itself, the development features benches and rest areas, interpretive signage and information boards about the history and nature of the area. As part of the project, a stainless steel gate/arch was built over the borderline, symbolizing the closer integration of the two border communities. From the archway, straddling the borderline in a zigzagging fashion, a boardwalk leads from the promenade to the beach (Więckowski, 2020b) (Fig. 4b).

Several other tourism-related projects on both sides of the border were funded by the European Union, including parking, trails, village lighting, information boards, playgrounds and rest stops, and shelters on trails and local streets in Germany and Poland. According to online comments by a Polish tourist in 2020, these tourism enhancement projects help create an "… interesting place. Mainly done so that you can take a photo. In the past inaccessible, now in the Schengen zone it has a completely different dimension". In 2019, another tourist commented online that, "There are tourists from both sides, so the place now connects rather than divides nations". In addition, several city tourist maps and information boards have been set up to provide tourist information about the border and its history, recreational trails, retail opportunities, and other activities in the area (Fig. 4c). These are located in various spots on both sides of the border. Some were financed by EU development funds, while others were funded by the local municipalities.

Although the border is entirely open today for trade and travel, it remains a legal state frontier that separates two different cultures, economies, legal and political systems, currency regimes (Poland has not yet adopted the euro), contested histories and various other differences. Tourists appreciate many of these differences. According to one tourist in 2019, this is "a nice place with an exit to the beach, but intriguingly why in nearby Ahlbeck do you have to pay three euros to enter while German citizens do not have to pay to enter on the Polish side". According to a local entrepreneur, "Thanks to the differences in prices and taxes, we have a job, selling them (Germans) many products and services" (border shopkeeper in Poland, 2014).

The international border at this location, and elsewhere along the Germany-Poland divide, is well demarcated, even though it is no longer patrolled by military forces or used as a filter or checkpoint for the flow of goods and people. Nevertheless, the Poland-Germany boundary remains an indelible part of the cultural landscape of Europe. As of 2020, the borderline is a functioning border, but many of its non-functioning features comprise a relict boundary landscape in Usedom. These remnants can be divided into two types: defunct border relics and continuing border infrastructure.

Defunct relics of this relict landscape include the 20-m border strip, derelict barbed-wire fences, and remaining administrative structures. Although most of the built landscape for customs and passport administration has been removed, the former jointly used customs station at the south side of the island, the Świnoujście-Garz station, lies unused, as do former German buildings at the Świnoujście-Ahlbeck main crossing. Throughout Europe, many former customs stations have been repurposed into local museums, tourist information offices, or bars and cafés. This is not the case on Usedom, as most border buildings are sitting empty or have been transformed into other government services. The empty security strip is seeing signs of dereliction and vegetation overgrowth, but particularly unique about it is the remnants of the security fences. Although diminished, some poles and barbed wire continue to adjoin the security strip, but these are overwhelmingly ignored by both national governments and local administrations and are deteriorating rather quickly (Fig. 4d). There are few, if any, efforts to try to impede the deterioration of the secondary (internal) Iron Curtain in this area, not like the protective efforts made at many locations on the actual former Iron Curtain further west (Havlick, 2014; Zmelik et al., 2011). This is despite

the fact that there is some visitor interest in these relict border landscapes, especially among older tourists for the nostalgia these landscapes educe (Izotov & Laine, 2013). According to one elderly German tourist interviewed in 2014, "Nice place. There was barbed wire here in my childhood. There is something to tell the children". Likewise, an older Polish tourist suggested that this is an "interesting place to show young people what the border with the friendly GDR (formerly East Germany) looked like in the past".

As regards remaining border functions, the island's land boundary is marked the same way it was before the 1990s—with small stones and parallel national pillars. The elements of the border landscape that continue in their border function are the demarcation markers, highway signs with Polish or German driving rules and speed limits, announcements of entering each country, and national flags. While relatively insignificant individually as attractions, together these form a critical mass of borderscape elements which, together with the relict and currently functional features of the border, produce a unique political landscape that appeals to some tourists.

As noted at the outset of this paper, an indirect part of the broader borderscapes everywhere includes commercial establishments that cater to the needs of tourists. This is even the case at the inner-Schengen border on Usedom Island. There, border retailing reveals the forces of supply and demand, together with the debordered retail regime. There are several commercial establishments adjacent to the border at the Świnoujście-Ahlbeck crossing (Dołzbłasz & Zelek, 2019). On the German side are a café (*zur Grenze*) and a small fair ground where special events are held (Fig. 1). Several cigarette shops are located on the Polish side immediately adjacent to the border, and further into Świnoujście are a handful of petrol stations. The borderland locations of these retail services reflect the reality of differential prices and tax rates. Although Poland's VAT tax is 4 percent higher than Germany's, cigarettes are substantially less expensive in Poland, with the recent average price of a pack of 20 cigarettes in Poland costing $3.48 USD and $5.52 in Germany (Wunsch, 2019). Gasoline is also taxed very differently, costing on average $1.13 USD per liter in Poland and $1.42 in Germany at the end of 2020 (Global Petrol Prices, 2020).

For two decades, the development of tourism has contributed to debordering by drawing the neighboring resort communities of Świnoujście, Ahlbeck, Bad Heringsdorf, and Bad Bansin closer together in socioeconomic terms. The increased connections (the new train service, promenade, local buses and recreational trails) and the diminishing of the former border functions, together with the physical 'isolation' of Świnoujście from the rest of Poland, have strengthened Polish Usedom's connections to the German part of the island in real terms (Duda, 2018; Jędrusik, 2013). Świnoujście and its German neighbors together form the most important tourism zone on the entire 467-km Polish-German border (Więckowski 2010, 2020b).

4.3. Rebordering Usedom Island—touristification, memorialization and a global pandemic

Although the debordering process in law, policy and practice has enabled freedom of mobility, abode and trade in goods and services, from a heritage and tourism perspective, one could argue that the recent monumentalization of the border and its touristification is in fact a symbolic or metaphorical rebordering. Although the goals of the new tourism and recreation-oriented transnational infrastructure on the island—the seaside promenade, the new border-straddling archway and boardwalk (Fig. 4b), and the recreational bridges across the Peat Canal—are meant to symbolize openness, friendship and unity, on one level they continue to perpetuate the role of the border as a symbolic representation of division, historic differences, and national territorialization. In doing this, authorities are simultaneously opening the border to greater tourism flows and emphasizing the distinctions between Poland and Germany, creating a sense of otherness in the monuments they build and the types of tourism (e.g. shopping) they encourage. But,

this is the nature of sovereignty. To be a truly debordered tourist zone, these elements of the borderscape should not be erected. In fact, there are segments of Polish and German society that wish the border would cease to exist entirely. Nonetheless, the border continues to function as a legal line of state sovereignty and therefore must be maintained, but it is tourists' interest in the border that has caused it to continue to be commemorated with new elements of the border landscape being constructed and promoted. If the security strip were ever to be reconstructed or otherwise conserved for heritage purposes, it would also indicate a manifestation of an abstract rebordering for tourism.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic provides additional perspectives on rebordering, tourism, and other cross-border mobilities. The Schengen Treaty includes provisions for signatory states to erect temporary checkpoints or blockades at their common borders during emergencies and times of crisis. The 2015 cross-Mediterranean refugee crisis in Europe was such a situation, wherein many Schengen states constructed fences and initiated border checkpoints to block and monitor the flows of undocumented immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017). In 2020–2021, the COVID-19 pandemic was treated similarly by many European states, with countries enacting border-crossing restrictions and erecting provisional blockades and checkpoints. In some cases, border villages were divided, neighbor from neighbor, and in a few instances where single shops lie astride an international boundary, as in the case of Baarle Hertog (Belgium) and Baarle Nassau (Netherlands), customers were prohibited from crossing the borderline at the microscale inside individual shops and businesses (Bradshaw, 2020).

In common with many other frontiers in Europe, the Polish-German border was closed in the spring months of 2020. No permanent infrastructure was built, but temporary barriers (e.g. gates, fences, warning signs, a strong police presence, and other blockade mediums) were erected on the Polish side of border access points to prevent unnecessary crossings and to monitor those who were allowed to cross. On Usedom Island in particular, the spring and early summer saw a strong police presence on the beach, on the dunes trail and promenade adjacent to the beach, along transborder footpaths, and at the two main traffic crossing points. Although these security measures were considered temporary, they became a salient part of the transitory border landscape of 2020 and are now ensconced within the annals of the history of the Polish-German borderlands.

For its intense media coverage and continued curiosity factor, the rebordering of this inner-Schengen, inner-EU boundary (and many others in Europe) during the pandemic became a sort of loosely-defined 'tourist attraction'. Many people appeared at the border to observe how it was re-erected for security's sake in a post-Schengen laboratory. Many people showed up to protest the border closures, especially cross-border workers, but the global media was full of images of relatives and friends meeting at newly-erected border barriers to converse across security lines (Noack, 2020; Stuttgarter Zeitung, 2020), somewhat reminiscent of former days when people would sometimes 'meet' at a distance to chat through the former Iron Curtain. As regards the COVID restrictions as a type of attraction, one local guide commented online in 2020 that this is a "… cool border. Especially now in the 'covid period', the border becomes more attractive. It is a bit like the times when you had smuggling across the border. Only now, nothing is smuggled. You only go for the impressions".

5. Conclusion

International borders have strong symbolic meanings and representations. They mark life as lived in one place versus life as lived in another. They denote a sense of national identity, even in cases where debordering has occurred, and they narrate important histories and neighborly relations. Even relict border landscapes can become heritage attractions because of what they used to represent or symbolically continue to represent today. This study of the Usedom border shows that

these processes are both physical and symbolic debordering and rebordering, which are different but nonetheless facilitate tourism development. As noted at the outset of the paper, and throughout the empirical findings, the role of tourism is both an agent and recipient of border changes.

The Polish-German border symbolizes the territorial evolution of Germany and Poland, and represents differing languages and cultures that are simultaneously united through the debordering effects of the EU and Schengen, and divided through the symbolic rebordering activities of border commemoration for tourism purposes and the current COVID-19 pandemic. While some of the border elements identified in this study have existed for many years, the current security agenda, peaceful relations between neighbors, globalization processes, borderline symbolisms and the desire to promote cross-border tourism undoubtedly accentuate their role as attractions or barriers in the current borderlands.

Although the current boundary remains a line of sovereign control (bordering), Poland's ascension to the EU in 2004 and Schengen in 2007 was the most meaningful act of debordering yet to have occurred. Debordering processes at this location, and along the entire frontier, have produced significant changes in cross-border tourism. Increasing cross-border cooperation in transportation, infrastructure development, and the creation of new tourism spaces has meant the border continues to be a historical attraction both for its continuing role and physical presence, as well as for the relict features that remain in the area's borderscape.

The symbolic debordering and rebordering of the Polish-German frontier, especially with regard to cross-border mobility and tourism, is an important management consideration in the borderlands and continues to highlight the need for cross-border cooperation. Usedom Island is an example of the process of debordering and rebordering where the boundary line continues to exist, but its associated security and administrative functions have been succeeded by new bridges, arches, promenades, retail services and interpretive tourism media. Although these new developments were intended to unite the two sides of the frontier, they have had the unintended consequences of symbolically rebordering a borderland destination that prides itself on its otherwise debordered condition. Because of the border's potential to attract tourist attention, underscoring the binational differences, maintaining the border markers, heritagizing the decaying border infrastructure, and erecting additional signage and symbols are of critical importance in border destination management.

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