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Commodification of contested borderscapes for tourism development: Viability, community representation and equity of relic Iron Curtain and Sudetenland heritage tourism landscapes

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Abstract Tourism can symbolically underpin policies for economic and political cross-border cooperation but the resulting rhetoric may not be supported by all tourism-related stakeholders. Our research on the viability, community representation and ethical components of the Iron Curtain Trail and the European Green Belt in the German-Czech borderlands shows that these tourism projects commodify conflictive borderland histories to gain support for a European-wide cross-border cooperation discourse. Despite these efforts, both projects are contested on local levels. The contestations result from the selectivity of EU-inspired memory politics and lacking participative governance across the border. This combination undermines the capacity to deal with (i) different socio-spatial identities, creating challenging encounters between commodified borderland histories and locals with their memories; (ii) development and promotion challenges of the tourism projects, potentially undermining their viability as tourism products. In the light of these contestations, defining when EU-inspired borderland tourism projects are successful becomes a political issue with important moral questions regarding whose memory should be commodified, and for which purposes.

Introduction

For several decades, borders and borderland settings have been interpreted not just as territorially dividing elements but also as social constructs that mediate and even facilitate exchange between neighbouring communities. The border studies literature has come to stress

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the complex and multifaceted role of borders in globalizing societies, highlighting the cross-border cooperation challenges and opportunities as well as the role of borders in social consciousness and identity processes (Van Houtum 2000). From a concrete policy perspective, this changing view on territorial borders reflects in the European Union (EU) regional policy, which has focused on cross-border cooperation in the framework of a 'Europe of the regions' with increased intensity since the 1980s (Jakola 2016; Johnson 2009). Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, which symbolically marked the end of the 'border as barrier' thinking, possibilities to establish systematic cross-border contact and work towards integrated cross-border regions have further increased (Gelbman & Timothy 2010).

The changing perspectives on the functioning of territorial borderlands have also had a pronounced impact on tourism studies. One significant evolution is the interpretation of borderlands as potential tourism attractions, even in cases of current or previous hostile boundary situations. In their most basic form, borderlines can become direct objects of tourist attention, for example, through the excitement of crossing borders and reflecting on borders as heritage locations (Timothy 1995; Timothy 2001). This is also applicable to relic borders that do not function as territorial delineations anymore but that are still "characterised by a natural landscape that serves as a background for the cultural/political landscape and built environment" (Gelbman & Timothy 2010, p.250). Commodification of these relic borderlands into tourism landscapes may spatially demarcate and symbolically construct a feeling of commemoration and represent renewed interest in cross-border cooperation (Gelbman & Timothy 2010). Additionally, shopping, gambling and vice are regularly prominent in international borderlands due to contrasting national legislatures on these issues. Also attractive natural landscapes are often located in proximity to international borders as a consequence of large distances to politico-economic cores of society and the (previous) separating and marginalising effect of the border (Timothy 1995; Timothy 2001; Ioannides et al. 2006).

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Because of the potential of many borderlands to attract tourists, tourism is frequently seen as a pathway to regional development in these often socio-economically underdeveloped regions (Timothy 2001; Prokkola 2010). However, borderlands have traditionally been defined mostly in terms of territorial delineation and separation, and regularly coincided with contestation. Even the most collaborative or integrated borderlands (Martínez 1994; Timothy 2001) have primarily functioned as territorial barriers and political frontiers, and have only recently made the change to also cover (in)direct tourism functions and commodified tourism narratives. Transitions from hostile border zones to objects of tourism attention may not be smooth, particularly for local communities who have incorporated the borderlands in their day-to-day creation of meaning and sense of place (Prokkola 2007).

This chapter analyses the viability, community representation and ethical components of borderland tourism projects that function as part of broader European cross-border integration plans. Since an important "way to view memory politics is through both the officially produced images of memory *and* the way the public responds to these products" (Tomczuk 2016, p.109), this chapter focuses on the creation of tourism narratives and the socio-spatial conflicts resulting from this commodification process. We use a case study of the relic Iron Curtain and Sudetenland landscapes between Germany and the Czech Republic, departing from 35 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014 as part of a larger project on tourism governance and regional development complexities in the German-Czech borderlands, to show how cross-border tourism projects can result in contestations and societal agitation (see Stoffelen 2018 for a detailed methodology). The selected tourism projects result in challenging encounters between commodified Iron Curtain histories, which have a symbolic function in EU-inspired cross-border regionalization discourses, and locals with their memories.

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Memory contestations in cross-border tourism development

Many commentators have discussed the multifaceted role of tourism in region-building processes in rural contexts. In general, this literature stresses the intricate balance between, on the one hand, safeguarding the sector's stakeholder empowerment and regional regeneration capacity and, on the other hand, industry-oriented growth perspectives. Tourism is interpreted as a precursory sector to reach region-building aims but also one that is not automatically synchronized with larger regional processes due to the complexity of reaching the above described balance (Kauppila et al. 2009; Stoffelen & Vanneste 2016).

From this observation follows that the role of tourism in cross-border connectivity processes is more diverse than only creating border-related tourist attractions. To conceptually frame the interaction between borderland contexts and tourism development, Timothy (2001) distinguishes between three types of interrelations. He describes borders as (i) tourist attractions and destinations; (ii) real and perceived barriers for development and cooperation; and (iii) modifiers of the tourism landscape. The relationships between these different borders-tourism intersections are dynamic "and the current global economic and political climate has a major role to play in this fluidity" (Timothy 2001, p.172). This fluidity in the interrelations between tourism and borderland settings can also be conceptualized through the constitutive role of tourism in 'borderscapes'. This concept describes the multi-sited, relational and socio-spatial configuration of borderlands resulting in and given form by discourses, locational practices and material outputs (Dell'Agnese & Amilhat Szary 2015; Brambilla 2015). From this view, borders are not just obstacles for transboundary exchange but also socially constructed institutions and power-laden political-discursive processes that are at least partly shaped by tourism development practices (Paasi 1998; Laine 2016).

This conceptual connection between border landscapes and tourism development can be translated into several policy observations in European borderlands. While the continuous

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barrier effect of transnational borders is undoubted, also for tourism development, many regional policies pursue cross-border regionalization plans with tourism projects (Scott 2013). Tourism can be a means for regional proudness, support rural infrastructure upkeep and provide an economic impetus to the borderlands on local and regional scales (Stoffelen & Vanneste 2017a). Tourism development can also be a medium to outline political border discourses and symbolically reflect EU-inspired policy perspectives towards potential cross-border integration (Scott 2013; Zhurzhenko 2011). As such, the commodification of borderlands for tourism can be strategic and the created (cross-)border narratives can have important symbolic roles to shape border discourses and gain support for general cross-border policies (Scott 2013).

The promotion of tourism can, therefore, function as a conduit for politics of memory in borderlands. Politics of memory are the discursive and material re-evaluation and re-framing of history and borderland dynamics for strategic (political) purposes (Zhurzhenko 2011; Tomczuk 2016). For example, Gelbman and Timothy (2010) describe how acting upon collective and individual memory provides an intermediary step to turn (hostile) border landscapes into landscapes of tourist attraction. Through selective reflections on these memorial landscapes, specific histories and socio-spatial memories can be employed with political objectives in mind, for instance regarding regional or national identity (Stoffelen & Vanneste 2017b).

The politicized nature of tourism development in (cross-)border contexts follows from the discussion above (Prokkola & Lois 2016). Power relations in tourism commodification and in the creation of borderland narratives make bordering processes through tourism development selective (Scott 2013). Moreover, stakeholders operating on different levels seek different goals with borderland tourism projects (Stoffelen et al. 2017). This way, transnational tourism projects may result in attracting visitors to the commodified borderscape and may provide economic, political and symbolic support for the larger discourse of cross-border relations.

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Such projects may simultaneously alienate others, mostly local communities, who may feel that their place-based meanings are not or under-represented in the commodified borderscape. Since "tourism is an agent in the creation of both spatial and mental layers of the landscape that may clash with already present layers of others" (Stoffelen & Vanneste 2015, p.549), borderland tourism commodification processes may lead to discomfort, disconnection and potential contestation among stakeholders (Cantrill & Senecah 2001). Such situations can undermine local support and the long-term viability of borderland tourism projects. These insights also indicate that reaching cross-border region-building and the socio-spatial dispersal of tourism-related impacts throughout the borderlands is complex. Relic border landscape tourism projects, such as regarding the Iron Curtain and Sudetenland in the German-Czech borderlands, may be sensitive for contestation and stakeholder alienation because of the projects' political role in EU regionalization processes.

Iron Curtain and Sudetenland tourism projects

Setting the scene: General evolution of cross-border discourses

The cross-border contact between north-eastern Bavaria, southern Saxony and Thuringia (Germany) and the Karlovy Vary region (Karlovarsky kraj) in the west of the Czech Republic has changed drastically during the twentieth century (Figure 1). Prior to World War II, ethnic Germans constituted most of the population in the current Czech borderlands. Their presence dates back to the expansion of the Holy Roman Empire in the Middle Ages. This area with predominantly German-speakers was later dubbed 'Sudetenland'. The German-Czech socio-cultural connections remained close until the annexation of Sudetenland by Nazi Germany in 1938. After World War II, the ethnic Germans were forcibly expelled from the Czech borderlands as a retribution for the war. They were replaced by people from Central and Eastern Europe. The subsequent erection of the Iron Curtain further reduced the social, economic and political connectivity between the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and Czechoslovakia until 1989.

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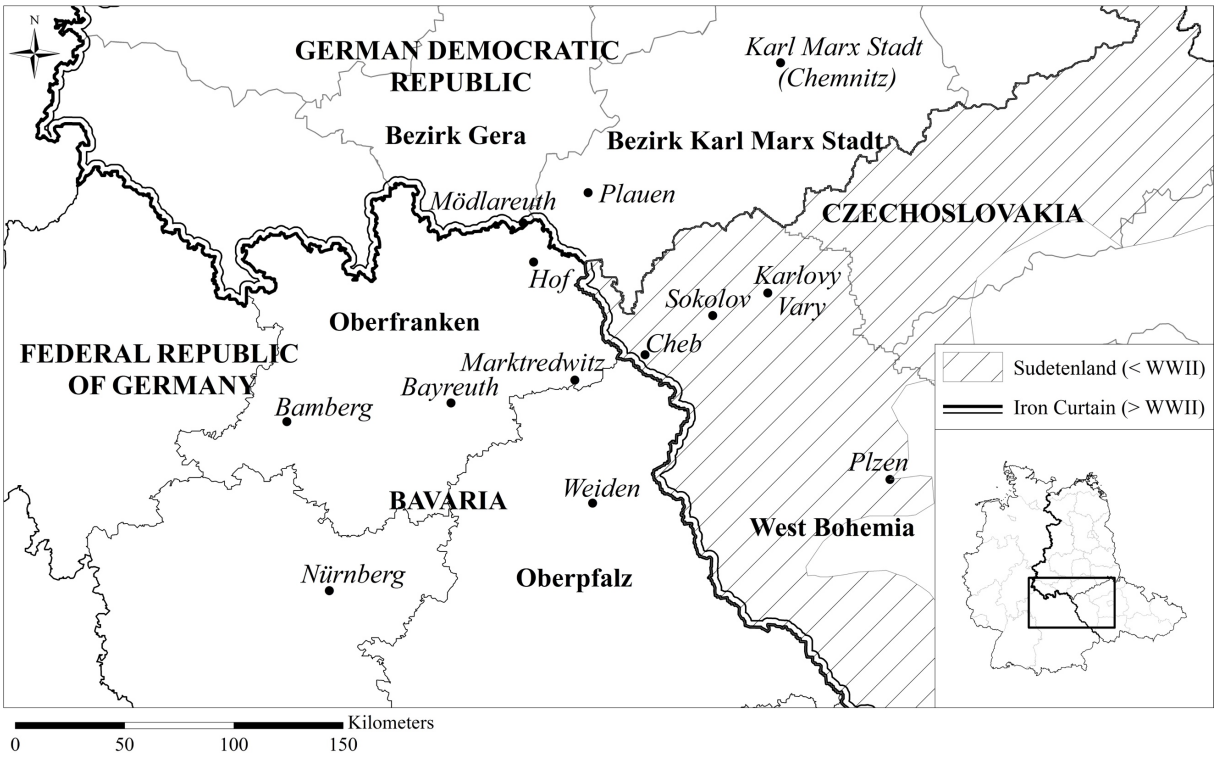

Figure 1. The administrative delineation of German-Czech borderlands for the period 1950-1990 with indication of the former Sudetenland. This area disappeared after World War II. Its borders are mapped following Braun and Kvasnicka (2014, p.256).

The rhetoric on cross-border relations in the German-Czech borderlands has shifted rapidly since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Currently, policy documents stress the importance of cross-border cooperation for future regional development. Symbolic is the development of Euregio Egrensis, a cross-border organization that formalizes cooperation in the German-Czech borderlands, as soon as 1993. The Czech accession to the EU in 2004 gave a further boost to cross-border policies. Most regional plans nowadays stress the advantage of the area's borderland location and use variants of the slogan 'Located in the heart of Europe' to highlight this. The following remark from a German district officer during an interview is illustrative for this perceived value of cross-border cooperation:

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> The border situation was for a long time a disadvantage because of the Iron Curtain. [It was] kind of the end of the world. And it [requires] a lot of time to make this thinking disappear. It's not the end of the world, but the entrance to another world in a way […] More and more it's becoming an advantage in terms of being central. (German regional district officer)

Practically all interviewees mentioned that intensifying cross-border cooperation would still be beneficial. They mostly referred to the establishment of economic networks but the interviewees also actively discussed the intensification of cross-border social ties and the breakdown of the mental border that had grown between the 1940s and the 1980s.

Border landscape commodification for tourism

Tourism functions as a prolific sector in this system of increased attention to cross-border cooperation in the German-Czech borderlands. On both sides of the border but particularly in the Czech Republic, regional plans include the tourism sector to deal with the area's weak socio-economic structure. Many INTERREG co-funded tourism projects have been initiated on local scales in the last decades. Because of the geographically peripheral location, the area is characterized by relatively low population densities in the middle mountain landscape, making the German-Czech borderlands a well-resourced nature-based destination. Spa tourism, especially in the Czech Republic, and cultural offerings in regional towns complement the nature-based tourism supply. More direct border-related tourism products are also present but are politically selective in their commodification. Below, we will discuss this selectivity with a focus on two relic landscape reflections in the commodified borderscape: the Sudetenland and the Iron Curtain histories.

Sudetenland reflections

The Sudetenland history, with particular reference to the forced removal of ethnic Germans from the Czech borderlands after World War II, showed to be a socially sensitive topic that currently still influences the region (see also Svašek 2002). In the interviews, the impact of

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this history was mostly discussed for the Czech area. The Karlovy Vary region was described as a difficult mentality area resulting from the massive inflow of people from Central and Eastern Europe without local roots and traditions after the Second World War. Social relations and community groups were noted as relatively weak and as developing rapidly only since the last decade. Regarding Germany, interviewees noted the continuing sentimental value of the discussion, especially among the elderly:

> There are certainly still sentimental issues in [the Sudetenland discussion], but in a non-hostile way. [For example,] it would hurt me when I'd go there and see that my parental home has been demolished because a border was built here. (Local German community organization representative)

Consequently, this topic was not discussed in a context of tourism apart from some remarks on the tourist flows directly after the fall of the Iron Curtain by former Sudeten Germans with romanticized images of their homeland. When contemplating the societal sensitivity versus the potential gains, the Sudetenland history is deemed by the interviewees not worth the effort to develop on a large scale for tourism. Only on a local scale, a network of village museums exists in Bavaria with nostalgic reflections on the village life in the nineteenth century. Additionally, most urban attractions in Karlovarsky kraj still position themselves in the German market with their previous German names (e.g. Karlsbad for Karlovy Vary, Frankenbad for Františkovy Lázně, Marienbad for Mariánské Lázně, Eger for Cheb). Yet altogether, there is a tendency to only give little attention to the Sudetenland history in the commodified borderscape.

Iron Curtain reflections

The commodification of relic Iron Curtain landscapes can also be considered potentially contested considering the politically and socially disruptive situation that lasted for several decades (Tomczuk 2016). Yet, the commodified German-Czech borderscape does include Iron Curtain tourism products and narratives. Most high-profile is the town of Mödlareuth

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between the German states of Bavaria and Thuringia, located in proximity to the Czech border (Figure 1). This small village is nicknamed 'Little Berlin' because of the erection of a wall in the 1960s that separated the western from the eastern part. Currently, the village hosts the 'German-German museum' and functions as one of the most symbolic places for the divided Germany during the Cold War. The museum includes a fenced area where the previously restricted zone is recreated with watch towers, dog cages, bunkers and barbed wire fences, of which some are original and others are reconstructed (Figure 2).

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Figure 2. Top: Impression of the German-German museum in Mödlareuth. Bottom: Information panel in Mödlareuth on the previous border wall, stating: "You are standing here in the divided village of Mödlareuth directly at the border to the GDR in front of the approximately 700-meter-long concrete barrier wall. Mödlareuth, originally one village and sheltered in the Tannbach area, is today an example of the division of Germany. But this border is not a border! We are here in the middle of Germany". Source: A. Stoffelen 2014.

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Apart from Mödlareuth, the Iron Curtain history is commodified in the German-Czech borderlands in two projects with European-level recognition. The first is the 'European Green Belt' (EGB). This project, which runs along the whole previous Iron Curtain, builds on the within-Germany 'Grünes Band' (GB) that developed directly after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. The EGB centres on nature conservation, environmental awareness and education in the previously restricted border zone, which due to low levels of human impact for several decades constitutes an area of high natural value. The aim of the project is to create awareness about the memorial landscape with its natural heritage that resulted from the socio-political situation during the Cold War. This awareness should allow to improve ecological networks and sustainable development of the borderlands. Low-impact tourism and 'soft' recreation (e.g., through hiking and cycling paths, guided excursions, information panels) are important tools to deliver this message:

> It was one of the first aims to protect and develop the Green Belt as a memorial area. […] And to gather all the information, also from contemporary witnesses, and to give it to the younger generation. Because in Germany we now have a generation which has no idea how the former border looked like or how it was to live in the GDR or at the border. (German nature conservation NGO project manager)

The narrative of the EGB project reflects the trend to stress the dilution of the border in the area. (E)GB slogans include 'Borders separate. Nature unites!' (Frobel et al. 2011), 'From deathzone to lifeline' (European Green Belt 2016), and 'A living monument to European history' (Grünes Band Deutschland 2009). Reflecting the larger message that the project is future-oriented, the EGB website emphasizes that the project fits within policy frameworks of cross-border cooperation:

> The Green Belt is an initiative that is tailored to fit the current political situation and current developments. (European Green Belt 2016)

The second project in which the relic Iron Curtain landscape is commodified for tourism is the 'Iron Curtain Trail' (ICT). The trail constitutes a long-distance cycling route, often on

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previous border patrol roads, along and across the previous Iron Curtain from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. The idea was coined by Michael Cramer, a German member of the European Parliament, following his Berlin Wall Trail concept (Cramer 2012; Havlick 2014). Promoted by the European Commission, the ICT was institutionalized in 2011 as route 13 of the EuroVelo Network (European Parliament 2013). The ICT has a thematic overlap with the EGB. It also focuses on awareness creation about the memorial landscape of the Iron Curtain and tourism is interpreted as an agent in doing so. A memorandum of understanding was signed between both project managements in 2014 to exchange information and to cooperate on the development of sustainable tourism along the relic Iron Curtain (European Green Belt & European Cyclists Federation 2014). However, the ICT is more tourism-focused than the EGB, and not the natural landscape is the object of the project actions but the cultural landscape at the intersection of border-related tourist attractions, political-historical perspectives and natural values:

> The Iron Curtain Trail cannot only be about infrastructure. It has to be mostly about this living history. […] I think for Europe it's important to understand the historical context and, you know, the conflicts that are happening even now. (Czech NGO coordinator)

The trail has simultaneous aims of providing an interesting tourism product, which creates awareness about the past, and establishing a forum for local stakeholders on both sides of the border to get to know each other and work towards a shared future. The trail infrastructure should serve not only tourists but also locals, thereby improving cross-border mobilities and, by extension, exchange on local levels (European Parliament 2013).

Hence, both the European Green Belt and Iron Curtain Trail are strongly guided by and illustrative for political strategies that stress the value of cross-border integration. They present the border as a connecting element rather than as a separation between Germany and the Czech Republic. Creating awareness of the relic Iron Curtain landscape is a way to portray a desired future by learning lessons from the past. In this sense, the commodified

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memoryscape functions as part of the multi-layered cultural cross-border landscape of the German-Czech borderlands and is anything but devoid of political values (Stoffelen & Vanneste 2015).

Commodified borderland contestations

The identified absence of large-scale Sudetenland expressions and the presence of Iron Curtain reflections are indications of the selectivity of the tourism commodification of the relic German-Czech borderscape. Despite their relatively high profile, the Iron Curtain tourism projects are not univocally supported by all stakeholders as they encounter two types of contestations: the projects' application and management and the borderland narratives of these projects.

Application and management

Interviewees highlighted several aspects that impede the development and management of the borderland tourism projects. First, some interviewees doubted whether the projects provide tourism products that are strong enough to become long-term tourist attractions. The value of the ICT and EGB in, for example, 2014 (25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain) was stated without doubt, but not for the subsequent years. Moreover, the lack of supportive infrastructure and tourism amenities as well as the low accessibility of the area because of its geographical peripherality may undermine the strength of the ICT and EGB (European Parliament 2013). Additionally, not many barbed-wire fences and watchtowers remain apart from the earlier described German-German museum in Mödlareuth. The creation of awareness about the Iron Curtain landscape is, therefore, a difficult process that depends on intangibles and storytelling to deliver the message to tourists. A German destination management organization (DMO) manager noticed:

> The problem is that you can't see much. […] There are some places where you can see the border. The rest is green. And [when] you can't recognize the border, it's difficult

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> to communicate […] to the tourists […] how it was 25 years ago. (German DMO manager)

Second, because both projects are European-level in size and organization, the centres of decision-making are located far away from the actual borderlands. Additionally, the creation first of political support, then of an overarching legal entity, and finally the local implementation in a variety of institutional settings has proven to be arduous. Consequently, local interviewees often perceived the implementation of the ICT and the EGB as slow. Some noted that they had heard about the projects but were unaware of their status even though both projects had moved beyond the initial planning phase at the time of the interviews:

> I cannot recognize real activities. What's the aim, how can we manage it? Who works really on this thing? […] Somehow this message that there is an activity [isn't] really [present] here. (German nature park director)

Third, question marks were placed around the responsibility and dependency on other stakeholders. Especially the maintenance and promotion once the EGB and ICT have been established was deemed a topic that should have been discussed before the projects' initiation. Regional managers felt that they needed to invest many resources while tourists will only spend maximum two nights in the destination before moving on. They also pointed to their dependency on other destinations further along the route to invest in the trail. Proactively engaging in the projects was perceived as a high-risk affair:

> [I]t's hard to promote a trail this long. Who is responsible for it? […] For whom gives it a return on investment? […] And what will we do when the next destination says, "I'm not interested in it"? (German DMO manager)

Encounters with sensitive histories

The second identified type of contestation regards the commodified narrative of the projects. These projects present a relatively homogeneous image of the Iron Curtain history, which should foster support for larger cross-border integration ambitions. Closely resembling the

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findings from Tomczuk (2016), who argues that the communist political memory in the Czech Republic is still contested, we found that the narrative of the Iron Curtain borderland projects is a topic of socio-spatial identity debates. There was widespread support among interviewees in Germany and the Czech Republic that people should be informed about the negative aspects of the past. Interviewees mentioned the low historical awareness of younger generations. They also recognized the opportunity provided by memorials such as the ICT, EGB and remaining border remnants for education, even though these represent a symbolic landscape layer which they preferably would not have had at all. For example, an interviewee discussed the Schneeberg mountain in Bavaria, which was closed for the public during the Cold War because of the now unused telecommunications tower on the summit:

> [The tower] is in the middle of a nature protection area. So we try to find a way to use it. There are people who say, "just smash it down", but that's not possible because it's a monument. I think it's not nice, this tower, but it's an important monument to explain to young people how the situation was. It gives small hints how 25 years ago this border was [opened] and how severe the situation was [before]. (German nature park director)

While most interviewees agreed on the awareness creating potential of the relic border landscape, others had doubts about using this heritage for tourism promotion. An intricate balance exists between the unchallenged educational value and sometimes individual senses of place that are negatively fuelled by the memorial landscape and its commodification. Some stakeholders noted that projects like the ICT and EGB focus too much on the past and risk to add to cross-cultural misunderstandings and prejudices. Some even symbolically referred to the possibility that a 'Green Iron Curtain' would be erected, not one with barbed wire but one in which the environmental legacy of the Iron Curtain symbolically cements mental barriers. The borderland tourism projects, thus, lead to challenging encounters between local memories and commodified histories:

> It's the question if it's to our advantage. […] Maybe it's because of our negative experiences. When we hear 'Iron Curtain' it's not positive for us. (Czech interviewee)

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> It's just a personal feeling but […] the name 'Iron Curtain' is not really positive. Especially the people in [the former] East Germany are still happy there is no Iron Curtain anymore […] Maybe projects like the Iron Curtain Trail will support the thinking about [the former] East Germany in a negative way. (German interviewee)

While departing from an ethical perspective that highlights an inclusive, equitable and peaceful future for Europe, the rationale behind the ICT and EGB establishes an implicitly political normative morality regarding the remembrance of this past that does not automatically reflect local place meanings. This situation is not aided by complexities of the multi-level tourism governance situation in the German-Czech borderlands (Stoffelen et al. 2017). While the Bavarian tourism destination management system is characterized by intensive multi-scalar information exchange between local public and private sector stakeholders and regional destination agencies, the system in the Czech Republic is not conducive for bottom-up participative management. Regional tourism governance in Karlovarsky kraj is characterized by high competition and lacking internal and public-private information exchange. There is also a distinct absence of cross-border networking organizations that aim to align the German and Czech tourism governance systems. No broad-based forum has been established in which the encounters between educational values and local memories regarding the Iron Curtain can be discussed apart from some outreach during the project development. The project implementation, therefore, remains dependent on the pro-active stance of individual stakeholders in key positions, providing a vulnerable system to guarantee participative conflict mediation in the long run.

Discussion and conclusion

Our chapter analyses the viability, community representation and ethical aspects of borderland tourism projects that commodify potentially conflictive border landscapes as part of EU policies on internal cross-border regionalization. The presented study of relic Iron Curtain and Sudetenland landscapes between Germany and the Czech Republic shows that memory politics in European borderlands are contested processes.

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In the German-Czech borderlands, projects like the Iron Curtain Trail and the European Green Belt simultaneously build on and actively modify the border landscape through addition of a commodified memoryscape layer (Timothy 2001; Gelbman & Timothy 2010). The results from the case study on these projects, however, confirm that "the organizational capacity and power relations between stakeholders, influencing the way territorial resources are configured for tourism purposes, importantly determine the outcome of such situations and the mental landscape layers that come to dominate" (Stoffelen & Vanneste 2015, pp.553–554), particularly in borderland contexts. Iron Curtain tourism in Germany and the Czech Republic provides an active but selective agent in memory politics to symbolically illustrate and give form to EU-inspired plans for promoting cross-border cooperation (Zhurzhenko 2011; Scott 2013). Regarding the ICT and EGB, the encountered contestations result from the selectivity of these memory politics and a missing participative governance system across the border. This combination undermines the capacity to deal with (i) contested encounters between local memories and the created borderland tourism narratives; (ii) development and promotion challenges of the tourism projects. As such, the long-term viability of and local support for projects like the ICT and EGB is all but guaranteed.

These insights show that the commodification of relic border landscapes for tourism is embedded in a multi-scalar field of politics and power relations. As such, the results confirm the view from Prokkola and Lois (2016), who emphasize the political nature of heritage-based tourism development in transboundary regions. In European borderlands, tourism projects involve intricate relations and sometimes incompatible goals between stakeholders from EU-level policy to local project implementation, and may disconnect from local socio-spatial experiences and memories (Johnson 2009; Laine 2016). These encounters between European cross-border policy and local memories are further put under tension by the recent national-institutional tendency to increasingly close internal European borders in the wake of the 2015

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migration wave, thereby challenging both the European cross-border discourse and local (cross-)border life.

This discussion raises questions when borderland tourism projects such as the Iron Curtain Trail can be deemed successful. Are they successful when they succeed in attracting tourists and allow them to create meaningful experiences, in other words, when the project provides a successful tourism product? Is it when the project succeeds in its underlying goal to provide symbolic, political and economic support for larger EU discourses on (cross-border) regionalization? Or is it when a socio-spatially equitable participation and representation of stakeholders' place-based meanings and memories is achieved, with everyone being able to discuss their visions in the project development and management? This ambiguity opens a discussion on the role of locals and their memories to reach larger regionalization goals. Currently, EU projects such as the ICT establish a normative morality regarding the representation of the past, stressing European unification from the top down by using local histories but without incorporating how these have fuelled local place identities. Defining when symbolic borderland tourism projects are successful is, consequently, inherently political and ethically ambiguous. Equity aspects in terms of whose memory is commodified and institutionalized, and for which purpose, are highly challenging in such projects.

In this sense, uncertainties remain about the functioning of symbolic borderland tourism projects as mediums for cross-border region-building processes embedded in larger EU regional policies. As it stands, the case of commodification of Sudetenland and Iron Curtain heritage in the German-Czech borderlands shows that cross-border tourism development seems to coincide with some form of selective opening and closing of the border. This selective opening and closing can apply to policymakers, community members, tourists or a combination of these stakeholders that are (dis)empowered to symbolically give form to the border and/or physically cross it. Relic border landscape commodification for tourism purposes as part of memory politics results in projects that are created by some and for some,

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but not by all and for all. This selectivity results in a field of tension between stakeholder visions regarding the borderland settings that may not be easy to manage for the benefit of all.

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