

When borders come back

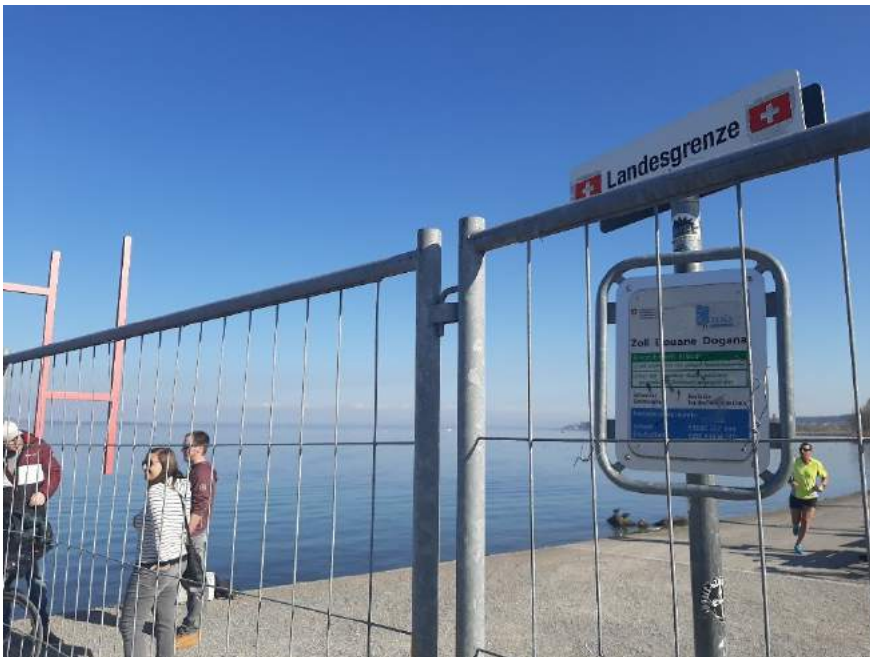
A photo-report by Memory Lab - associate Gruia Bădescu, March/April 2020



1. On March 17th 2020, a metal fence appeared in the middle of the lakeside green open space shared by the German city of Konstanz and Swiss Kreuzlingen. The German Federal Police built it as part of a country-wide closing of borders policy. This hit the integrated urban region of Konstanz- Kreuzlingen by surprise.



2. In 2007, the cities of Konstanz and Kreuzlingen inaugurated the Kunstgrenze (the “Art border on the state border between Germany and Switzerland, where before stood a border fence. ”). Konstanz artist Johannes Dörflinger’s art works were allegedly inspired from Tarot practice, and include white-red sculptures which dominate the wide expanse of green space at the seaside shared by the two cities.



3. Just two tiny signs by the lake indicated that this is the borderland (“Landesgrenze“).



4. With the March restrictions, people have not been allowed to travel, unless they work on the other side. Sightings of couples holding hand across the fence were not uncommon.



5. By the lake, a group of three on the Swiss side and one man on the German side were commenting that the last time this area saw a fence was after Hitler took power. In fact, a border fence between the two cities existed until as late as the 1990s. Originally built in

1878, it was rebuilt higher during the Nazi times, where it was called “fence for the Jews/ Judenzaun”, but endured to half a century later, when it was described by some as a “fence for the asylum seekers/ Asylantenzaun”. After bilateral treaties between the EU and Switzerland and the inclusion of the latter in the Schengen agreement, the two cities removed the fence in 1999 (West Konstanz) and 2006 (by the lake).



6. The Border Creek: Further from the Art Border park, the Grenzbach demarcates the border between Germany and Switzerland. From an alley in Konstanz, one can see the buildings of Kreuzlingen.



7. The Emmishofer border post. During the Covid crisis, this has been the only border point which remained open for those who have had the right permissions to cross the border, with a vehicle or on foot. Only people who were citizens, permanent residents or worked on the other side have had the right to cross.



8. German border guards check the papers of a bicycle rider. He was allowed to cross into Germany.



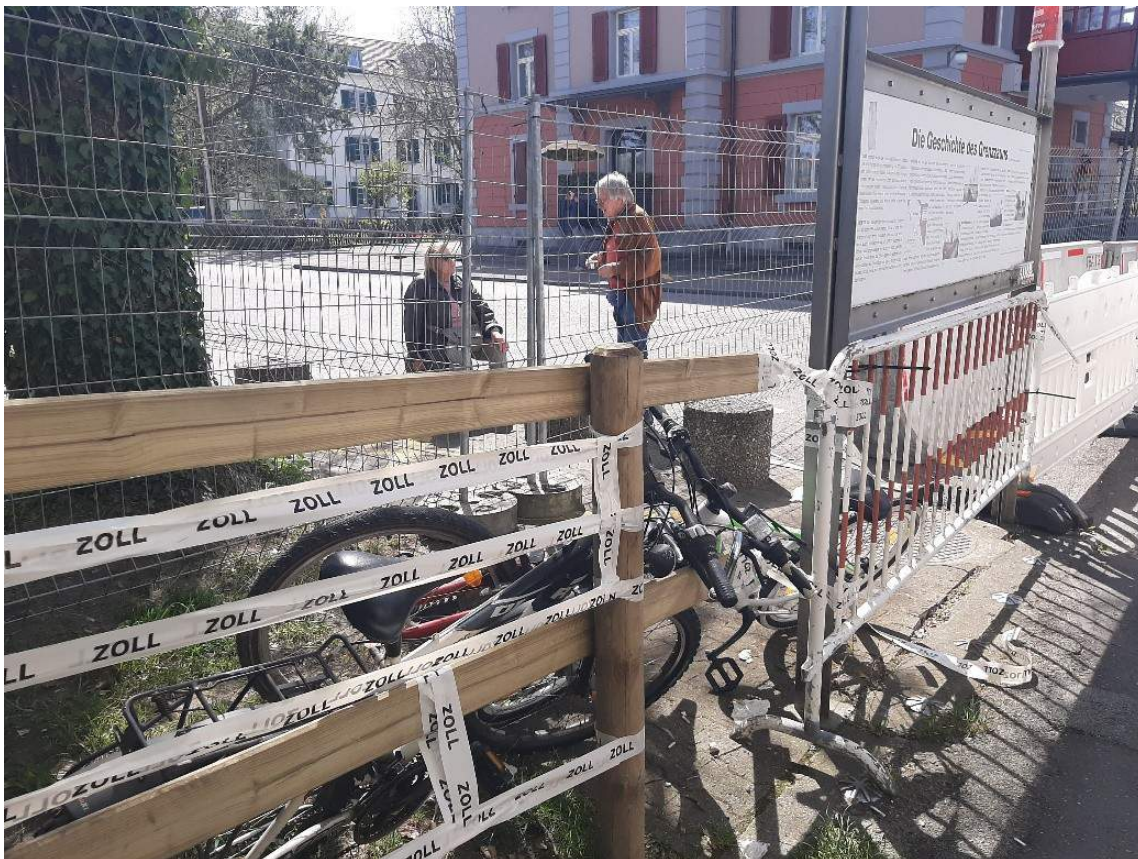
9. Closed border point (Hauptzoll) at Kreuzlingen's main street.



10. The exhibit on the history of the border between Germany and Switzerland, point of interest for those who crossed this border on foot, replacing the border post, and culminating in the panel on the "open border", now inaccessible from the German side.



11. Memory rematerialized: Panel on the history of the Border Fence, placed on the pre-Covid open Wiesenstraße, now standing by the new border fence.



12. Bicycle in no man's land.



13. Fine for crossing this border, up to 3.000 EUR



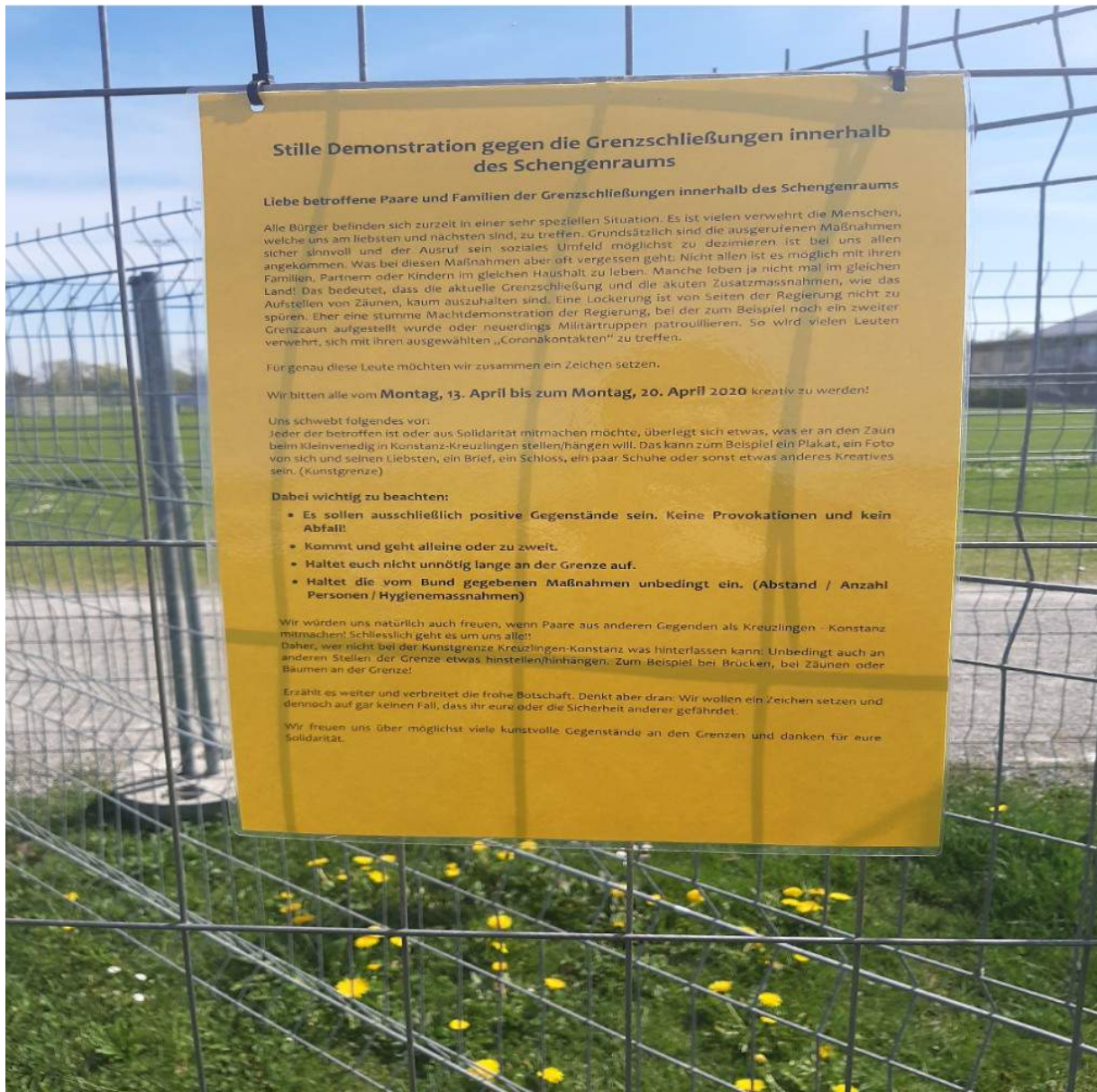
14. Trains from Zurich still end at Konstanz, but mostly run empty on the short section in Germany.



15. The “Little Venice” area, a vast green expanse of land shared by the two cities. Border fence not visible from the bridge over the railtracks.



16. The double fence has been up since early April. The city council of Kreuzlingen decided to erect a second fence in order to prevent people from touching each other from the two sides, i.e. couples. The distance between the two fences matches the social distancing rules...



17. “Silent demonstration against the closing of the border within Schengen space.

(...) In principle, the proclaimed measures [regarding social distancing] certainly make sense
 (...) But what is often forgotten with these measures is that not everyone is able to live with their families, partners or children in the same household. Some do not even live in the same country! This means that the current border closing and the additional measures, such as the erection of fences, are hardly bearable (...) Many people are denied to meet with their selected "corona contacts". For exactly these people we would like to set an example together.

We ask everyone to get creative from Monday, April 13th to Monday, April 20th, 2020!

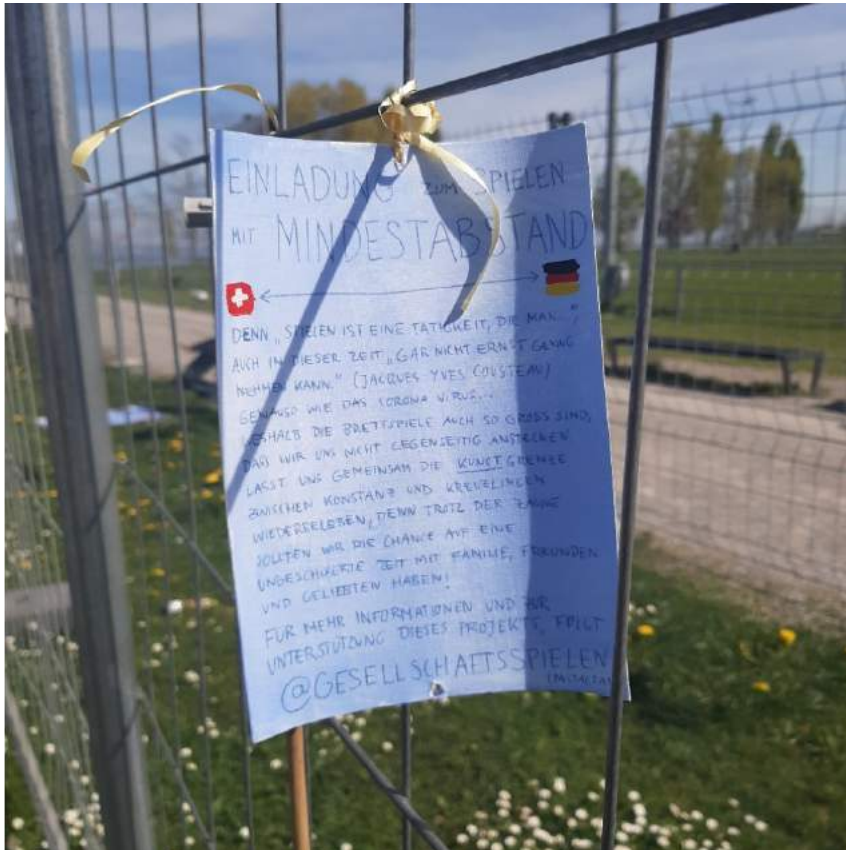
Everyone who is affected or who wants to participate out of solidarity can think about something they can bring to the fence. For instance, a photo of yourself and loved ones, a letter, a lock, a few shoes or anything else creative. (Art border) (...)”



18. "Silent demonstration against the closing of the border within Schengen space (...) Bring only positive items. No provocations and no rubbish."



19 and 20. "Society games". No clue how the Germany- Switzerland team game got in there.



21. Game rules : “Invitation to play with minimum distance”



22. Together, apart



23. "A recently married couple mourns their marriage, which fell victim to this border after only 25 days."



24.



25. "Open borders for love"



25. "Both Art. 6 of the Basic Law for the / Federal Republic of Germany, as well as Art. 14 of the / Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation protect marriages and families."
 "Neither destroyed families, nor nationalism solve a pandemic. The fence has to go!"



27.



28. "Special regulation for couples and families"



29. No way in between. Ducks can cross, however.



30. Police officer inspects what now adorns the German side of the fence.

Photos and captions by Gruia Bădescu, March / April 2020¹, for Memory Lab
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1 Photos 1 to 5 were taken on 18 March and all others on 15 April 2020