

# Reviewing the Spanish-Portuguese border: Conflict, interaction and cross-border cooperation

## Repasando la frontera hispano-portuguesa: Conflicto, interacción y cooperación transfronteriza

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### Abstract

European borders, or borders between European Union member states, are historical products that embody the ebbs and flows of European borderlands. These areas are evolving from past struggles and confrontations between European kingdoms toward a future of progressive European integration. Such processes are highly complex, as they involve border deactivation. In this work, we examine the evolution of the Spanish-Portuguese border from the perspective of cross-border interaction.

*Keywords:* borders, cross-border cooperation, European Union internal borders, border interactions, border deactivation.

### Resumen

Las fronteras europeas y, muy específicamente, las fronteras entre Estados miembros de la Unión Europea constituyen productos históricos "vivos" que personifican las vicisitudes de los territorios fronterizos europeos en constante evolución: desde un pasado de luchas y enfrentamientos entre las diferentes unidades sociopolíticas europeas, hasta un futuro de progresiva integración comunitaria. Tales procesos de desactivación fronteriza resultan de gran complejidad. En la presente contribución, analizamos el caso de la frontera hispano-portuguesa, revisando su evolución desde la perspectiva de la interacción transfronteriza.

*Palabras clave:* fronteras, cooperación transfronteriza, fronteras europeas internas, interacciones fronterizas, desactivación fronteriza.

### Introduction. European borders from separation to integration

Considered by some as "scars of history" (De la Fuente, 2009, pp.115-130) and by others as "time written in space" (Kavanagh, 2009, pp.155-172), borders have played a critical role in the configuration of the nation-state. Border limits differentiate, isolate, protect and separate one state from surrounding states. In this sense, "national territory" is defined by the presence of borders and can be understood as hermetic and impermeable territorial space that provides territorial and physical support for the socio-political unity that occupies it, suggesting an almost indissoluble relationship between borders, states and nations (Donnan, 1998; Donnan and Wilson, 1994 and 1999; Taylor, 1994 and 1995).

As lines of demarcation, the tangible result of border delimitation is a feature of *discontinuity* or difference (juridical, political, customs-economic-fiscal, linguistic-ethnic-cultural, etc.) that emerges on both sides of the frontier, as bordering territories follow different legal, social, economic and political systems (Cairo, 2001;

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Foucher, 1991). It is precisely within this discontinuity (and in its economic, legal and cultural consequences) where we find the principal concern among leading regional economists regarding the subject of borders (Christaller, 1966; Lösch, 1967), who believe that borders fragment or separate contiguous territories. Borders introduce artificial barriers that tend to isolate territories from neighboring states, dividing existing markets and preventing territorial and productive complementarity. Insufficient investment in these territories has limited their economic development.

With the gradual progression of globalization (and of the subsequent global economy), the nineteenth-century view of the border as a defensive *wall* of separation and exterior margin of the nation-state has progressively lost its relevance. Instead, borders are beginning to be viewed as *bridges* that shape border zones as zones of interaction, connection and cooperation between contiguous territories and communities (Bradshaw and Linares, 1999; Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 1998; Newman, 1998; Newman and Paasi, 1998), resulting in the coining of the "transborder narrative" (Lezzi, 1994). From this perspective, border areas serve as an ideal platform for maximizing interchange between both sides of the frontier. Within the peculiar territorial framework of the European Union (EU), borders between member states have presented significant obstacles to European economic integration, and thus, their de-activation has constituted a fundamental goal for the construction of the *European Common Market*, the basis of the current Eurozone and its political expression as the EU.

Thus, over the last four decades, Europeanist discourse on member state borders, or intracommunity borders, has clearly moved into a transborder discourse (Lofgren, 2008; Sideway, 2001) that insists on viewing intra-European borders as "spaces of intersection and cooperation" (Cairo, Godinho and Pereiro, 2009; European Commission, 2007). This view does not extend to exterior borders of the EU, for which the basic "defensive barrier" view remains, as in the case of community borders with Morocco (Cairo, 2009; Ferrer, 2007 and 2008), Russia, Byelorussia or Ukraine.

Through their evolution, European narratives regarding borders have evolved from a view of borders as peripheral or marginal zones that are "difficult" to develop in socioeconomic terms and that are thus in need of economic stimuli (Tamames, 1994) to a vision of European borders as "hinge" zones of territorial connection that propel European economic integration (De la Fuente, 2009). Thus, from the perspective of European integration, intra-community border zones should constitute one of the fundamental pillars of integration processes, as border territories and their populations engage in daily contact with "other" Europeans (Van Houtum and Strüver, 2002).

In this context, which is so favorable to interaction, transborder cooperation<sup>1</sup> will serve as the fundamental tool to carry out these ends, with a series of institutional mechanisms for its regulation to be established.<sup>2</sup> Thus, powerful economic stimuli offered via European Regional Policy, and especially through the European Regional Development Fund (The ERDF), together with the creation and development of specific economic tools for border zones such as *Innovation & Environment Regions of Europe Sharing Solutions* (INTERREG) will generate a climate favorable to

<sup>1</sup> Defined in article 2 of the Convention for a European Framework of Cross-Border Cooperation as "any concerted action tending to reinforce and develop neighborly relations between communities or territorial authorities belonging to two or various contracting parties, as well as to the conclusion of accords and arrangements appropriate for this purpose" (Association of European Border Regions [ARFE], 1997; Council of Europe, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Both the CMECT (1980) and European Charter of Border Cooperation (1974) respond to this purpose. Both policy instruments will be promoted by the Council of Europe and ARFE, true facilitators of the cross-border phenomenon in Europe.

investment activities in these areas. An activity complementary to the above-mentioned but central to the sociopolitical plan has been the generation of the so-called *Euroregions*<sup>3</sup> with the creation of the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion (1976), the first of several.<sup>4</sup>

Within this framework of progressive EU border de-activation, the Spanish-Portuguese border is one of the most enduring, extensive and stable intra-European borders (Kavanagh, 2009; López, 2005). This border shares characteristics common of many European border territories and reflects vicissitudes of their evolution from a remote past marked by conflict and struggle (in this case, between the two great Iberian realms) to a hopeful present characterized by transborder cooperation and greater harmony between Luso-Spanish border populations and markets.

Throughout the 1 234 km Luso-Spanish border's seven century-long existence, the area has fulfilled an extensively diverse and changing series of territorial functions, from traditional functions (military, defensive, and commercial functions) to its important current functions as an intra-European border, providing territorial support for transborder cooperation and a threshold for the flow of goods, people, merchandise, services and capital.

In the present study, we review the history of the Luso-Spanish border from the perspective of transborder interaction. We address various typologies of interaction, from those of conflict to peaceful interactions (such as human, cultural, socioeconomic and state interactions), by describing changes in historical trends that since 1992 have led to the arrival of transborder cooperation for a border such as that of Portugal and Spain, which has not been especially favorable to this type of relation. This border's consolidation as a quotidian *modus actuandi* embodies a contemporary trend as the longest-lasting frontier in Europe. However, this process has not been absent of contradictions, mistakes, ambiguities or voluntarisms that we note in the fourth section of this paper.

The text is divided into three sections. In section I, we review four traditional interactions that occurred along the Luso-Spanish border: interactions of conflict and cooperation; border hybridization interactions, both cultural and human; socioeconomic interactions, licit or illicit; and the peculiar matrix of Hispano-Portuguese state relations that involved "having their backs turned."

Section II describes the unfolding of the Luso-Spanish cross-border area and its early outcomes (which affected community programs, and INTERREG in particular, as mechanisms for stimulating investment, including relevant quantitative data). Furthermore, we describe the new community instrument of regional policy that finances Luso-Spanish transborder cooperation – the so-called Program for Cross-border Cooperation Spain-Portugal (POCTEP) of 2007-2013. Situating this within the political-institutional context of the EU, we describe its principal characteristics and anticipated financial contributions.

In the final section, we provide various conclusions and reflections. Throughout the text, we maintain balanced reference between Portuguese and Spanish sources.

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<sup>3</sup> Territorial juridical figures oriented towards structuring cross-border cooperation between two or more European countries.

<sup>4</sup> At present, there are 67 Euroregions.

## Traditional Luso-Spanish border interactions

### *The Luso-Spanish border: origins and configuration*

The "Iberian Strip," managed through the centuries, was shaped based on the Treaties of Zamora (1143), Badajoz (1267) and Alcañices (1297), pacts that essentially delimited the border as it is known today. The signing of the Treaty of Lisbon (1864)<sup>5</sup> and the Border Accord (1926)<sup>6</sup> ultimately created its current shape.

Early in the Spanish-Portuguese border's formation, desires held by the emerging realms of Portugal and Castile to establish clear borders (and areas of influence) were evident (Calderón, 2010). In the case of Portugal, the establishment of borders presupposed the state's consolidation as a sovereign political entity relative to its powerful and aggressive Castilian neighbor. Thus, the border materialized as a decisive vehicle for the construction of Portuguese national identity as an instrument that would guarantee the country's security and territorial integrity.

It is not thus unsurprising that the new "Portuguese identity" was infused with an obvious anti-Castilian and, by extension, anti-Spanish bias (Cairo, Godinho and Pereiro, 2009). Likewise, the establishment of the Portuguese-Castilian Strip formed distinct areas of influence in areas of culture, linguistics and identity, differentiating each border zone's (as opposed to the opposing boundary) characteristic language, "culture" and "identity."

### *Interactions of conflict: no man's land*

As a defensive barrier, the Iberian Strip has acted, since its origins, as a space for meetings and failed meetings (Antunes, 2008; Medina, 2006) and as a battlefield and *no man's land* between Castile and Portugal, which resolved disputes in this territory. This accounts for the abundance and prominence of military installations on both sides of the Strip.<sup>7</sup> Fortresses served as watchtowers from which to monitor and counter enemy movements in attempts to curtail potential invasions.

These fortifications and bastions notably accentuated defensive-offensive military uses of the territory, provoking a consequent depopulation of borderlands due to a lack of safety. This depopulation will notably affect the peripheral or ultra-peripheral character of Spain-Portugal border regions.

A series of warlike confrontations between Portugal and Castile began in 1247 and continued until 1801. Conflicts were especially virulent during the Portuguese War for Independence (1640-1668) and the War of Spanish Succession (1703-1714), devastating and depopulating vast border areas (Medina, 2006). Disputed territorial zones known as *Contiendas*<sup>8</sup> or *Reyertas*<sup>9</sup> (Martín, 2003) were the subjects of the most representative Spanish-Portuguese border conflicts. These zones were undefined with respect to their "identity" and did not officially belong to either country. This "mixed" status rendered them immune to Spanish and Portuguese laws, which could neither penetrate nor prosecute fugitives of justice, delinquents,

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<sup>5</sup> Boundary Treaty of September 29, 1864, which addresses the area spanning the mouth of the Miño River to the Caya River confluence with the Guadiana between Spain and Portugal.

<sup>6</sup> Agreement of June 29, 1926 between Spain and Portugal that delimits the border between the two countries from the Cuncos River confluence with the Guadiana until the point at which the latter flows into the sea, ratified on June 17, 1927 (Gazette of June 29, 1927).

<sup>7</sup> Including the Portuguese bastions of Almeida, Elvas, Estremoz, Campomaior, Marvão, Castelo de Vide, Évora, and Monsaraz, which counter the Spanish fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo, Olivenza, Badajoz, and Forte de Concepción and the castles of Alburquerque, Alconchel and Valencia de Alcántara.

<sup>8</sup> Including the "Contienda de Moura" and "Contienda de Olivenza."

<sup>9</sup> Including those of "Valencita" or Valencia de Mombuey, "Villanueva del Fresno," "Alconchel" and "Barcarrota."

and deserters in these zones, as there was a customary tradition of asylum in these enclaves; this situation continued until the second half of the eighteenth century. Within this environment of non-definition, the Lisbon Treaty of 1864 (United Nations, 1982, p. 250) adopted a Solomonic approach by assigning disputed zones to each litigant in the most equitable manner possible in an attempt to satisfy both parties.<sup>10</sup> However, as both parties were not entirely satisfied, non-defined zones that were not allocated through this Treaty were definitively assigned in 1893 through the Commission on Frontiers (1926).<sup>11</sup>

***Human, social and cultural interactions: hybridizations, miscegenation "mestizaje" and complicities***

Reflecting this border of separation and exclusion between the Iberian states, there existed a border space of interaction between residents on either side of the border. That is, the Strip, in addition to being a barrier, served as a threshold for human and commercial interactions between residents on either side of the frontier, acting as a space of convergence and cooperation where border populations could interact daily. It was a border of coexistence and complicity based on pressing daily needs despite state directives (Medina, 2006; Antunes, 2008). These daily interactions manifested in phenomena of cultural hybridization, social osmosis, and economic and commercial intersection.

***Socio-cultural hybridization: languages (falsas) , mixed village (povos) and restricted area (coutos)***

From a linguistic perspective, cultural hybridization is represented through so-called "border lingos." Transitional Portuguese and Spanish dialects including "barranqueño," "fala," "mirandés" are found in particular border enclaves (Medina, 2006). "Riodonorés" is also spoken in the Zamora border zone, and Cedillo and Herrera de Alcántara are spoken in Cáceres (Carrasco, 1997).

Phenomena of Portuguese-Spanish social and human hybridization are personified, on one hand, through processes of cross-border migrations such as those of Spanish communities in Portuguese lands (the case of Barrancos) and vice versa (the cases of Taliga and Olivenza). On the other hand, such phenomena are found among peculiar territorial figures addressed in the Lisbon Treaty of 1864, including the *Povo Promiscuo* [Mixed village] and *Couto Misto* [Restricted area]. The "povos promiscuos,"<sup>12</sup> localities that were ambiguous or undefined with respect to their "national association" to Spain or Portugal (United Nations, 1982, p. 247) eventually formed part of Portugal after 1864 (García, 1998).

The *Couto Misto* [Restricted area] formed a sort of "no man's land" along the border between Spain and Portugal, with an approximate area of 27 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of fewer than one thousand residents. The area was composed of three population centers (Santiago, Rubiás and Meaus), which are currently under Spanish sovereignty and situated to the south of the Orense (García, 1998).

The restricted area's peculiarity rested in its strong degree of autonomy and near "sovereignty" with respect to both Iberian crowns. Achieving *status quo* (United

<sup>10</sup> Consequently, article XXII of this treaty divided the territory of the Reyertas in half. The Reyerta of Onguella was thus divided into two areas: the Reyerta de Arriba, which was allocated to Portugal, and Abajo, which was allocated to Spain. The Reyerta of Arranches was divided into thirds, with Spain allocated two-thirds and with the remaining third allocated to Portugal.

<sup>11</sup> The Border Commission assigned halves of the so-called "Dehesa de la Contienda," an un-delimited, 123 km zone, to the Portuguese *concelhos* de Barrancos and Moura (Portugal) and Onubian municipalities of Aroche and Encinasola.

<sup>12</sup> The Treaty cites *povos promiscuos* of Soutelinho, Cãmedo and Lama-Darcos, centers situated along the border between the Spanish municipalities of Oimbra and Verín and Portuguese *Concejo* of Chaves.

Nations, 1982, p. 246) self-government (“Leyendas y curiosidades,” 2005), residents elected their own mayor and judges, which were jointly supervised by the Bishop of Orense and the civil administrator of Braga. This system of “mixed sovereignty” produced a series of “notorious” privileges for its residents relative to their immediate neighbors in Portugal and Spain (“Leyendas y curiosidades,” 2005), such as exemption from military service, exemption from taxes, the free trade of certain products that were “stagnant” at the time (such as salt), freedom of cultivation (such as tobacco), and free choice of Spanish or Portuguese nationality through marriage (García, 1998).

The *Couto Misto* also enjoyed the right of asylum for fugitives (Cairo, 2009; Kavanagh, 2009) of either Portuguese or Spanish justice (García, 1988). It also enjoyed a “privileged road” running between Spanish and Portuguese territory by which its residents could travel and conduct business that was inviolable to respective border guards.

Like other manifestations of Spanish-Portuguese border ambiguity, in the human and social arena, there existed so-called “twin centers,” or towns divided into Portuguese and Spanish jurisdictions.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, within this “Portunhol” border duality were localities that changed nationalities, as in the case of San Felices de los Gallegos, formerly a Portuguese town.

Finally, we cite “particularly ambiguous” centers that, located within highly varied sections of the border, have existed in a state of duality almost until this day. This was the case of the so-called “Casas de la Duda,” a small village situated between Valencia de Alcántara (Cáceres, Spain) and Portalegre (Alto Alentejo, Portugal). The town’s “dudosos” [questionable] residents can choose their nationality by registering with either Valencia de Alcántara or Portalegre (Rubio, 2007; “Curiosidades,” 2012).

### ***Economic and commercial interactions***

In the economic sphere, traditional border interactions have manifested in various areas. The common use and exploitation of natural resources, a practice clearly rooted in customary practices rather than practices common along the Strip, such as the joint use of grassland and arable land between Rionor (Spain) and Rio d’Onor (Portugal) (“Un país,” 2006), serves as an example. Other fundamental areas of cross-border economic interaction over the centuries have included legal commercial traffic (local border commerce) and illegal traffic (smuggling).

Smuggling is certainly the most important form of interaction (Duarte, 1998) characteristic of the border economy of the Strip, as it has been a substantive and historical reality within these areas (Duarte, 1998; Melón, 1999) that extends beyond the purely economic to that of a true “lifestyle” (Cabanas, 2006b; Cáceres and Valcuende, 1996; Cruz-Sagredo, 2010; Freire, 2001; Kavanagh, 2009; Medina, 2004; Pinheiro, 2004). Smuggling is used as an alternative or complementary lifestyle to daily farming activities that is necessary (if not unavoidable) for the majority of residents along the Strip, given their poor (or wretched) living conditions and lacking prospects (Antunes, 2008; Cabanas, 2006b; Cruz-Sagredo, 2010).

Smuggling in the Strip has had significant social impacts given the “social networks” necessary to carry it out. Such activities are supported by “gangs” and individuals in border towns, with significant participation from women. Their

<sup>13</sup> As in the case of the Portuguese Rio d’Onor (Tras os Montes, Portugal) and Spanish Rionor (Zamora, Spain) and in the case of the villages of Marco (Portalegre, Portugal) and El Marco (La Codosera, Badajoz, Spain), Rabaça (Portalegre, Portugal) and Rabaza (La Codosera, Badajoz, Spain).

continuation also relies on connivance (if not complicity) among a large segment of the border population and administrative and police authority indifference on both sides of the border. Thus, it appears evident that *"the practice of smuggling was a culturally accepted activity"* (Cabanas, 2006a; Freire, 2001; Kavanagh, 2009, p.164; Pinheiro, 2004). Smuggling in the Strip may even be viewed as a commercial channel alternative to the traditional market, as the export of Portuguese coffee roasters (Medina, 2004) was accomplished through specialized gangs dedicated full-time to these tasks. Smuggling was thus used as a means of large-scale export. Kavanagh (2009) notes, for example, that Portuguese wolfram<sup>14</sup> was legally exported (via smuggling) from Spain to Germany during the Second World War.

Long-standing small-scale border commerce involving interchange through convenience and necessity between small contiguous localities situated on both sides of the Strip (De la Montaña, 2005) experienced a certain degree of expansion from 1890-1980. However, with the disappearance of border controls for people and merchandise (Carrasco, 2001) and the development of cross-border transport and communication (and the subsequent acceleration of transport flow), a decline in this type of activity has occurred (Kavanagh, 2009), and such activities may disappear in coming years.

### ***Interstate relations: with backs turned to one another***

Until Portugal and Spain's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986, interstate relations between the two Iberian states were largely stagnant (Reis, 2007). Suspensions between the two states produced a habitual *modus operandi* towards "living with ones back turned to surrounding neighbors" (López, 2005). However, this phrase represents more than a descriptive metaphor for a situation of reciprocal ignorance, as it synthesizes all encounters and failed encounters that have characterized Spanish-Portuguese state interactions (Fonte, 2007).

Despite their close geographic positioning, Portugal and Spain, formally friends, have rarely interacted. Hence, the act of "drawing closer" was not void of difficulties or historical prejudices (Kavanagh, 2009 and 2011).

An impetus for change, and historic change in particular, lay in the incorporation of both Iberian countries into the European Common Market, which dismantled customs barriers, eventually giving way to the Europe of Schengen (1992), which enabled free passage from one country to the other. This succession of social innovations within a brief period (1986-1992) caused a Copernican turn in the dynamic border. Until this point, the Portuguese-Spanish border was limited in this area to border commerce (and smuggling), with the exception of the great highways.<sup>15</sup> With the exception of border axes and local markets situated along or near the border (Valença do Minho, Miranda do Douro, Vilar Formoso, Elvas, Vila Real, etc.), the Iberian Strip was not known to support interchange, unlike other middle-European borders oriented toward cooperation such as the Belgian-Dutch, Dutch-German, and Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) border regions. In contrast, the Portuguese-Spanish border was very much skewed toward

<sup>14</sup> Also known as tungsten, which is used to galvanize steel for military material.

<sup>15</sup> From south to north of the border: Ayamonte (Spain)-Vilar Real do Santo Antonio (Portugal); Badajoz (Spain)-Elvas-Campo Maior (Portugal); Fuentes de Oñoro (Spain)-Guarda (Portugal) situated on the N-620, one of the principal routes of communication between Portugal, Spain and France; Verín (Spain)-Chaves (Portugal), Tuy (Pontevedra, Spain) and Valença do Minho (Viana do Castelo, Portugal), axes that have always maintained a commercial tone of interchange, with their importance in the territorial border hierarchy rising considerably (population, levels of economic activity, etc.) after the "revolution" of interactions (economic, cultural, touristic) that have taken place between both countries since 1992.

“non-cooperation” (Caramelo, 2002; García Flores and Mora Aliseda, 2005; Gaspar, 1993). This is largely attributable to the economic structure of most border areas (and their annexed socioeconomic configurations) and continental agro-forest-pastoral peripheries or ultraperipheries in this region (Calderón, 2010; López, 2005), characterized by few dynamic urban centers, raw materials producers, rural and dispersed populations with low buying power, and high levels of poverty (De la Macorra, 2005). This lack of solvency for united (or rather, combined) demand provoked this tendency toward non-cooperation or purely local-Strip cooperation, a situation that appears to have deep historical roots (Hinojosa, 1998). Though, according to Medina (2008), existing polemic and divergent positions on this issue are notable (Melón, 1999; Val Valdivieso, 1987).

### **The arrival of cross-border cooperation. The policy of cross-border cooperation within the institutional context of the EU**

#### ***Cross-border cooperation in the Iberian Strip. The role of INTERREG***

The socio-institutional innovations discussed above provoked a significant change in life within the Strip, introducing in 1992 a new phase of cooperation and approximation between “neighbors” who had not traditionally interacted (Medina, 2009). This change in climate gradually translated into an attitude more favorable to understanding and interaction. These relations promoted more fluid cross-border relations between central Portuguese and Spanish governments and between regional and local administrations along the Spanish-Portuguese border (although the latter have always been interested in cross-border issues) from 1996 onward, spurring numerous cross-border cooperation initiatives<sup>16</sup> (Castro, 2011; Medina, 2009; Pires ad Pimentel, 2004;). These initiatives addressed a broad spectrum of entrepreneurial, cultural, linguistic, touristic, administrative and environmental topics and issues of border territory management.

These initiatives have given rise to new “cross-border institutions” for the administration of cross-border programs and initiatives, including the so-called “Office for Cross-Border Initiatives” (Corrales Romero, 2006). This organization serves as a commission for cross-border coordination<sup>17</sup> that stimulates Portuguese-Spanish border spaces through projects and initiatives financed through European funds and programs (Medina, 2009).

In addition, there has been an obvious increase in commercial flows across the Portuguese-Spanish border. Portuguese-Spanish import/exports have doubled (Medeiros, 2011). Likewise, there is greater Spanish and Portuguese presence on either side of the border, whether in terms of environmental and eno-gastronomic knowledge of the “other” territory (Castro, 2011) or in terms of investment opportunities, business opportunities and commercial opportunities (Antunes, 2008; Corrales, 2006). However, it should be noted that in macro terms, increased Spanish investment in Portuguese land appears to have affected border zones only marginally due its concentration in metropolitan centers of central Portugal (Pires and Teixeira, 2002). Nonetheless, one can observe a promising increase in Spanish investment projects in some Portuguese border municipalities (Pires and Teixeira, 2003). Likewise, while the number of Portuguese companies operating in Spain remains low, this figure has increased relative to the past (Medeiros, 2009).

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<sup>16</sup> Understood, according to Eusebio Medina (2009), as a habitual and quotidian relational modality on both sides of the border; an “ordinary” rather than extraordinary modality.

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation, created in 2006 to assist with the creation of actor networks and the management of common cross-border projects, is especially important.



These “flourishing” initiatives of Portuguese-Spanish cross-border cooperation have been supported through generous financing from Structural Community Funds (The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), such as the Cohesion Fund, and equally generous community initiatives and programs, including INTERREG<sup>18</sup> and, to a lesser degree, the program Liaisons Entre Activités de Développement de L'Economie Rural (LEADER).<sup>19</sup>

INTERREG has played a significant role in incentivizing investment in Spanish-Portuguese border zones through various multiannual programs, including Program INTERREG II (1994-1999), a 552 million € (758,448,000 USD) initiative to spearhead multiple cross-border projects and activities in Spanish-Portuguese border areas (ARFE, 1997). INTERREG III (2000-2006) made available 807 million € (1,108,818,000 USD) for the financing of cross-border activities (Mora, Pimienta and García, 2005). Finally, for the period of 2007-2013, INTERREG IV invested 267,405,976 € (367,415,811 USD) in Portuguese-Spanish cross-border cooperation. These investments are heavily affecting border areas, especially in the realm of highway infrastructure for transport and communication through the building and improvement of bridges, roads, highways, railroads and telecommunication systems.

***New cross-border policies of cooperation in the EU institutional context: POCTEP (2007-2013)***

In sum, community regional policy<sup>20</sup> efforts to overcome existing obstacles to Portuguese-Spanish cross-border cooperation are evident. Within the political-institutional context of the EU, cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation has become integrated within “new” European regional policies that, in operative terms, simplify the three former objectives of Structural Funds: 1) convergence, 2) regional competitiveness and employment and 3) European territorial cooperation. The latter includes the three territorial areas of cooperation (cross-border, interregional and transnational) (European Commission, 2007).

Cross-border cooperation was of particular relevance to programs from 2007-2013 due to the successes of the European INTERREG initiative. A new framework of European cross-border cooperation includes, in addition to level III regions (*Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques* [NUTS] III) situated along interior land borders, exterior land and maritime border regions (Rojo, 2009).

Following these new directives, the Operative Program of Cross-Border Cooperation between Portugal and Spain 2007-2013<sup>21</sup> accounts for 17 NUT III border areas<sup>22</sup> with a surface area of 136,640 km<sup>2</sup> (23.5% of the Iberian region) and a population of 5,474,225 inhabitants (10% of the total population of the two states) (Joint Technical Secretariat (STC, in Spanish) 2013).

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<sup>18</sup> INTERREG was launched as INTERREG I from 1989-1993 and continued as INTERREG II from 1994-1999, as INTERREG III from 2000-2006 and as INTERREG IV from 2007-2013.

<sup>19</sup> A specific rural development program for EU mountain zones.

<sup>20</sup> Offered as a priority of regional policy, the promotion of territorial cooperation focuses on aspects of territorial cohesion and cooperation. The goal of territorial cooperation gains special relevance in the new Cohesion Policy of 2014-2020 in connection with the importance ascribed to cohesion through the Treaty of Lisbon.

<sup>21</sup> Approved by the European Commission on October 25, 2007, POCTEP 2007-2013 promoted the development of border zones between Spain and Portugal, reinforcing economic relations and existing networks of cooperation between the five areas defined in the program.

<sup>22</sup> The 17 NUT III border areas are divided along both sides of the Strip in the following manner: Portugal (10): Minho-Lima, Cávado, Alto Trás-os-Montes, Douro, Beira Interior Norte, Beira Interior Sul, Alto Alentejo, Alentejo Central, Baixo Alentejo and Algarve; Spain (7): Pontevedra, Ourense, Zamora, Salamanca, Cáceres, Badajoz and Huelva.

In turn, the 17 NUT III areas are distributed over defined areas of cooperation across five geographical regions: the Northern Region - Autonomous Community of Galicia; Northern Region - Autonomous Community of Castile and León; Center Region-Autonomous Community of Extremadura Region of Alentejo; and Region of Alentejo-Autonomous Community of Andalucía-Region of Algarve (2013). The program prioritizes the integrated development of resources of historical and cultural patrimony, urban management, electronic governance, the joint use of collective equipment, and the improvement of transport networks and services, the environment, and cross-border energy, among other issues<sup>23</sup> (STC, 2013).

### **Reflections and conclusions: contradictions, ambiguities and willingness to succeed; the effects of processes**

Can a border be de-activated? There is no straightforward answer to this question. Borders within the European community represent "living products of history," whose historical dimension endows them with a structural (rather than conjunctural) character that implies strong *border inertia*, as if demarcated with indelible ink that is difficult to erase.

For the Spanish-Portuguese border, a process of border de-activation has occurred since 1986 that follows European cross-border narratives inherent to community integration and EU construction. Coordinates of this process of integration have as a *conditio sine qua non* overcome or removed existing obstacles through the neutralization of internal EU borders via basic fields of action. Thus, Spanish-Portuguese border deactivation has been driven by high-level European institutions since the late 1980s. This was made possible through investment and capitalization propitiated through community funds and programs and through INTERREG in particular. These programs have played a key role in promoting investment and capital accumulation in Portuguese-Spanish border territories. *Pro-cooperation* efforts of public administrations, and particularly local and provincial efforts, must also be acknowledged.

Although an evaluation of milestones accomplished over the last two decades may be premature, one can identify the development of numerous cross-border initiatives, projects and programs in Portuguese-Spanish border territories.

The outcomes of these initiatives and efforts appear significant in terms of overcoming existing obstacles (more in terms of tangibles than intangibles) to greater Portuguese-Spanish socioeconomic integration. However, they are insufficient in addressing border de-activation (and its consequences) given the structural and historical character of this problem.

In this sense, impact evaluations (which are obviously partial) (Márquez, 2010; Medeiros, 2009) show great advances in highway infrastructure that support territorial economic integration between Spain and Portugal but not necessarily cross-border connections within border regions (Márquez, 2012). Such highway advances are highly visible (and tangible) along coastal border regions (and especially in Galicia positioned between *Minho* (Portugal) and *Galicia* (Spain)) and, to a lesser extent, in the southern region between *Algarve* (Portugal) and *Andalucía* (Spain). Highway axes, and the *Badajoz-Elvas* axis especially, have been strongly reinforced through community fund investments, although modern, high-speed railway connections are still pending (Medeiros, 2009).

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<sup>23</sup> Within the framework of POCTEP 2007-2013, the first convocation approved 81 projects for cross-border cooperation, planning a total investment of 179.5 M€ with an EU/FEDER aid endowment of 129.5 M€.

In various other aspects, the results, although interesting, remain ambiguous with respect to border de-activation and cultural and human interaction (rather superficial eno-gastronomic- and tourism-based, among others). Much remains to be done in the administrative and cultural fields and in local and regional regulations, Office of Cross-Border Initiatives (GIT) competency potentiation, etc. (Medeiros, 2009).

It cannot be denied that the Spanish-Portuguese border forms a clear dividing line between Spain and Portugal, maintaining solidity through the centuries and playing a key role in the formation of Portuguese national identity. In cultural, linguistic, emotional and social terms, the border has reinforced stereotypical visions of the "other." Portuguese suspicions of the Spanish are perfectly encapsulated in Portuguese figures of speech such as '*De Espanha, nem bons ventos, nem bons casamentos*' [From Spain, neither good winds, nor good marriages].

This cultural and social divide has shaped border interactions on both sides of the "Iberian Strip." In this sense, processes of hybridization and mixing characteristic of other European borders are less prevalent in the Portuguese-Spanish case. Rather, identities are territorially circumscribed along a predetermined border and are of little importance in geographic and demographic terms, as in the cases of *Falas*, *Povos Promíscuos* and *Couto Misto*.

Thus, the presence of Portuguese-speaking communities in Spanish territory and vice versa has more to do with emergent changes and the border line (in the case of the Olivenza, Táliga or San Felices de los Gallegos Portuguese-speaking groups) than with voluntary choices or decisions made by these communities. Likewise, in qualitative terms, Spanish-Portuguese hybridizations appear to have arisen from more ambiguous decisions characterized by a lack of decision-making. Thus, these processes are more residual in character, exhibiting features of historical, cultural or anthropological curiosity.

Concerning traditional economic interactions, legal interactions have been of little consequence, limited to local-scale border commerce. In contrast, illicit transactions (smuggling and other forms of illegal trafficking) have been of considerable importance, possibly with more social than economic importance. However, as they are based on mutual complicity, such interactions are driven by necessity. Further, because they are carried out in an "invisible" and "silent" manner, they are not reflected in social constructions, reinforcing the border's importance in social imagination.

Such historical obstacles have not helped facilitate development and cross-border cooperation in the Iberian Strip. However, cross-border initiatives and projects are addressing more fields of activity. Most importantly, they are shaping the borderlands by habituating people, companies and institutions through daily contact with the other side, combining efforts with "others" to improve social welfare and broadening the scope of border population interactions. In turn, one's country no longer ends at the border but extends beyond the frontier.

Within this context of cross-border dynamism, fiscal and financial difficulties experienced in Iberian states, and particularly those of contracting budgets (and subsequent cuts in public spending) and cross-border cooperation dependence on community Structural Funds (which appear to have diminished in recent iterations), may have a lethal effect on Portuguese-Spanish cross-border initiatives. National and European scale efforts must promote cross-border cooperation, as a decline in public investment liquidity (due to European Commission contraction policies) could have a devastating effect on several Spanish-Portuguese cross-border cooperation

projects and initiatives, possibly reversing (as they cannot be consolidated) achievements so arduously attained in recent decades.

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