



US AND THEM!

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Abstract:

The modern border concept emerges from the Westphalian Peace. The sovereignty of the State over a territory is delimited by line of political division with territorial expression, which was accepted as indisputable until a few decades ago. Currently, the concept of state suffers two kinds of pressure. On the one hand, we are witnessing a process of affirmation of borders and their shield against the other (s) State (s) or migrations; on the other hand, an ongoing debordering process led both by the European Union and Organizations that have been formed because of economic objectives. Regardless of a bigger or smaller porosity, the border has always been a place for observing and meeting one another. After long periods of time, this interaction leads to the creation of hybrid cultures and complicities are generated by the trade/shopping or other social or political activities. The study of these phenomena has a long tradition in the geographical and sociological literature; however, from the end of the twentieth century, several authors, with different perspectives - structuralist, humanist or culturalist – have focused on the way we see ourselves and evaluate the other, the different one, who is our neighbor but who lives on the other side of the barrier. The Portugal / Spain border, the longest in Europe, has been the target of many works. Sidaway, Amante or Iva Pires have tried to evaluate the feeling of Raianos facing each other from socio-economic data or interviews. In this work, we assess the motivations for the commuting movement of borderer populations (from 400 surveys), essentially focused on cross-border shopping. We conducted 34 interviews with Portuguese and Spanish of a wide range of professions to comprehend the image we build of our neighbors. If trade and leisure/travel are responsible for the movements, the image that the Spanish form of us, Portuguese people, is much more flattering than the reverse. In a moment of rapprochement between populations, due to the elimination

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of barriers, knowledge of the image that people build of the other also becomes an extremely assertive and an acutely planning tool.

Keywords: debordering; Portugal / Spain; border; image of *the other*

1. From border to “Debordering”

The present concept of frontier comes from the Peace of Westphalia (1648). “The Westphalian system – as a conceptual template – ‘refers to the organization of the world into territorially exclusive, sovereign nation-states, each with an internal monopoly of legitimate violence’ (Caporaso, 1996:34, see also Ruggie, 1993, *apud* Blatter (2001:176))”

The sovereignty of a State over a given territory is well delimited by a line of political division with territorial expression, which has been accepted as indisputable until a few decades ago. International politics depended essentially on the States, on their strategic and conjunctural interests. The alliances established never undermined the sovereignty of the States. War was made between states; in World War II, the Allies, although forming a military united group, did not call into question their identity and independence as sovereign states. Even the Soviet Union, at the beginning of the conflict, did not get involved because of the German-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression; safeguarding its independence (and exemplifying the concept of “chaos” inherent in world politics), it entered the War, alongside the Allies and against Germany, only when their independence and their territory were called into question by the Nazi expansion. Nowadays, the concept of State suffers from two apparently contradictory types of pressures. On the one hand, there is a process of asserting the borders with the other adjacent State (s); on the other hand, a process of debordering is under way, led by the European Union and also by several blocks that have been formed, mainly with economic goals.

This type of movement – of dilution of the barrier effect caused by the borders – although denominated Debordering, does not imply the elimination of the political border, symbolic and marked in the map. For several reasons, although the main one is economic, what has been eliminated is military border control, customs, and economic barriers and controls.

“A general debordering of what have up to now been known as national economies is taking place as a result of globalization of economic activities and the formation of a new international economic centers at local (subnational) and regional (transnational) level. Globalization’ here means: the transition from the internationalization of production to ‘global sourcing’; the incorporation of all economic activities into a global relationship of

competition, with increase capital concentration and partial co-operative between major rival associated in strategic alliances; the formation of a world-wide financial market combined with a revaluation of invisible trade (Neyer 1995) and resultant pressure on all states to adjust their own economic structures to a world-wide economic situation"

(Albert, Brock 1995:10)

The border didn't become 100% permeable; it became more selective, especially with regard to population flows.

"Postmodern borders take on a diverse form, being both permeable and close. On the one hand, they keep on framing nation state sovereignty and protect against unwanted intruders, and on the other hand, they allow unhindered flow of recognize individuals into countries."

(Yndigegn, 2011:50)

Besides this aspect, contact between populations in border areas lead to a hybrid culture and similar lifestyles amongst populations of two or more countries, especially when control is diluted and the customs' barrier no longer makes any real sense.

The existence of a border leads to the awareness of a collective and self-identity that is separate from *the other* and national. It is precisely the awareness of the *other* that often reinforces regional or national identity.

"The meaning of Boundaries are thus underline by the fact that identities are produce through these boundaries. They become part of a collective identity, shared memories and the sense of continuity between generations. Identities are often represented in terms of a difference between Us and the Other, rather than being essentialist or intrinsic to a certain group of people."

(Yndigegn, 2011 *apud* Passi, 1998: 49)

In other cases, the political frontier, due to the instability of the historical process, divides human realities that have always been united, as for example some sections of France's border with Germany, Belgium with Holland, Holland with Germany, in Europe; or, in numerous cases, also previously mentioned, in Asia and Africa, fruit of the divisions of the colonial powers.

In the case of very marginalized frontiers, such as the Iberian Peninsula, the depopulation of these regions without the barrier effect may allow the union of sufficient demographic load to justify investments, establish populations and attract new economic and social realities. In this case, the economic spectrum is the factor that

leverages the interactions; even if there is a racial identity, which derives from the regional and particular way of life, national identities are paramount and prevail. In the long term, with the full opening of the border and closer relations, a cross-border regional identity, which is still relatively tenuous, can be strengthened.

The process of debordering can only occur, without raising problems between States, when there is a well-defined superstructure or agreements that rule the normal functioning of the institutions and, at the same time, do not jeopardize sovereignty. The case where the process is most advanced is the European Union; however, there are other blocks where the dilution of the barrier effect is also sensitive, as between the U.S.A. and Canada - (NAFTA including Mexico), MERCOSUR or APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation). In all, the economic factor is decisive.

The long-term objective in the European Union will be to achieve an integrated space functioning as a single block / country, where people and languages coexist; however, and confirming the economic aspect, the most developed sector is currency, customs harmonization and common management of finances through the ECB. In other aspects, such as foreign policy, defenses or social policies, the national assertion overlaps with the collective and separates multifaceted realities, a result of the diversity that politics and history have given to European space for centuries.

Parallel to the global pressures for the processes of debordering, we are witnessing another, apparently contradictory, movement of countries that are in internal affirmation processes, which is built on strengthening the external barriers to these same blocs. In E.U.'s case, where the borders are open since Schengen, there are raising difficulties in the outer limits. Two procedures are taking place within the Schengen limits: on the one hand, there is greater border control along the entire Mediterranean line; to the east, borders remain little porous, but a more individualized policy of each state is carried out with its neighbors, where porosity is related to bilateral links and migratory pressures into the E.U..

In the second case, European policy, and of each particular state, is governed by the establishment of flows, not overly antagonizing relations between States, but not completely weakening the dividing line. Apparently, there's an attempt to establish one, or several, Buffer-states, as are the cases of Belarus, Ukraine or Moldova. Due to unstable domestic political situations and economic difficulties, which are heavily dependent on the European bloc, they accept open borders that are conditioned by the Community's labor needs. Beyond this, for Eastern European states, alignment with Western Europe guarantees them protection against their (still a little 'invading') neighbor - Russia.

On the Mediterranean border, the European Union seeks, on the one hand, to control the flow of the Maghreb population, the Shamel and the Middle East, for internal

security and social peace; on the other, due to the aging of the population and the lack of cheap labor necessary for an increasingly polarized European society, it leaves intermittently open but heavily controlled channels of emigration to meet their needs. This somewhat hesitant position, sometimes animates animosities and further aggravates the internal security problems of the European space. In linking Europe to the Middle East and the Maghreb, all the problems associated with internal security and the ability to intervene, negotiate and protect their interests in this area are the most pressing political challenges facing a debordering policy. On the one hand, it needs open frontiers; on the other hand, it needs to control population flow, for integration and responsiveness to the problems that these populations may bring.

Thus, debordering, as an added value to the more pacified spaces and with strong economic pressures to open the frontiers, faced with an increasingly globalized economy, has a reverse - the apparent need to strengthen and control borders with the *Other*, which is not politically involved in the integration process but wants to enjoy the benefits of economic globalization.

2. On the Alto Alentejo / Extremadura border (Portugal / Spain)

The construction of a frontier region is built on a number of factors: institutional, national, regional and local policy, as well as the existence of communication infrastructures, existence of services and available goods. They are bases without which one cannot begin the construction of the reality of an integrated frontier.

Commerce is one of the activities that provides greater contact and interaction between populations. From this type of contact, relations of all kinds – family and work – are promoted; however, the first and most frequent ones are those related to the trade of first need goods.

Commercial relations between populations provoke and induce face-to-face contact, conversation, mutual knowledge, trust, and create knowledge-friendly environments, not only between individuals, but also ways of being and living. This quality becomes more important when the other is a different reality, that is, when we are in border regions. The possibility of exchanges between peoples, based on their informal commercial contacts and related to the needs of daily life, has the potential to create a hybrid culture, typical of the local. This quality becomes more important when the *other* is a different reality, that is, when we are in border regions. The possibility of exchanges between people, based on their informal commercial contacts and related to the needs of daily life, has the potential to create a hybrid culture, typical of the location. The border, more or less porous, is a differentiating factor of other realities, but also of union and complementarity. Even in the new commercial formats, such as

hypermarkets and shopping malls, the purchase provides human contact and implies at least a minimum knowledge of the other.

We have investigated the frequency of relations between the populations on both sides of the border Portugal/Spain resorting to questionnaires done to consumers. The locations we focused in were Portalegre-Elvas, on the national side, and Valência de Alcântara-Badajoz on the Spanish side.

This survey is directed to obtaining data on the frequency of travel and the reasons that lead people to cross the border in terms of trade, leisure and other reasons (family, work, etc.). In the second part of the survey, the aim is to draw conclusions about the feeling of closeness between the inhabitants and to see how the disappearance of customs control, provided by the Schengen agreements, leads to greater integration in local experiences (or if, on the contraire, the contact and interactions remain the same).

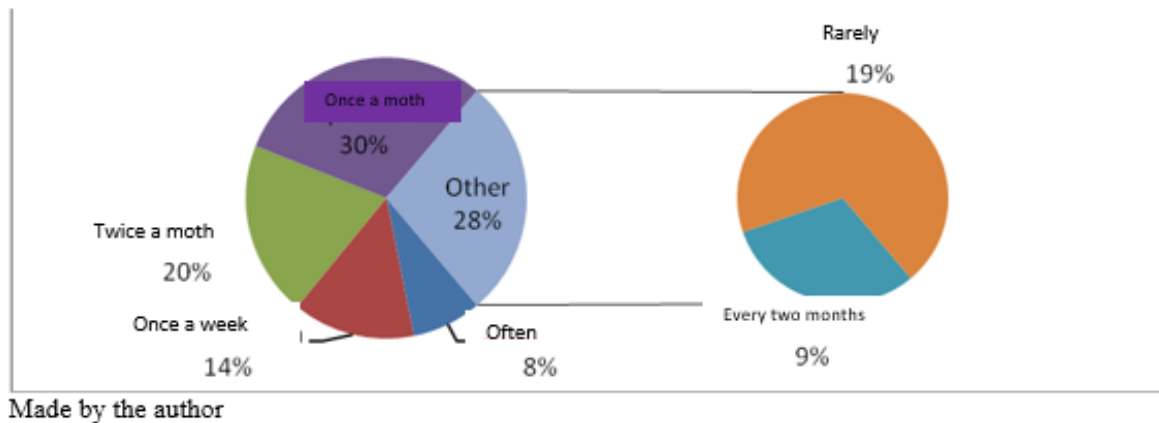
To get a better idea of the regional reality, since the population that moves is very fluid (the border is by definition a place of passage), we have chosen to work with an indefinite “universe” in terms of numbers. Thus, we conducted 400 face-to-face surveys at the points of consumption to obtain a result with an error rate of 4.9%.

We did not take into account the specific demographic weight on each side of the border, since we assumed that we were working with an indefinite universe and distributed surveys between Portuguese and Spanish, approximately 50% for each nationality. Attempts have also been made to maintain a gender balance while at the same time reaching a population that has sufficient autonomy to travel. At the same time, we wanted the enquired population to be able to assess their mobility (individual and as a family) in relation to the existence of customs control. For this, 90% of the sample has the age and conscience to evaluate, with some objectivity, the existence or not of a barrier. Regarding the age structure of the surveys, we focused approximately 80% of the sample in the age groups with greater purchasing power and with more constant habits of mobility and consumption, that is, those aged over 25 and under 65 years of age.

The distribution of the surveyed locations roughly met the demographic weight on the main urban centers on both sides of the border, that is, Badajoz, Portalegre, Elvas and Valencia de Alcântara. Thus, we inquired individuals who went to the main places of consumption of these localities: shopping streets, hypermarkets, El Corte Inglés, Shopping Centers and Portalegre fair.

The first question (How often do you travel to Portugal / Spain?) aims to assess the degree of connection of the populations in the space under consideration, based on the frequency of travel to the neighboring country.

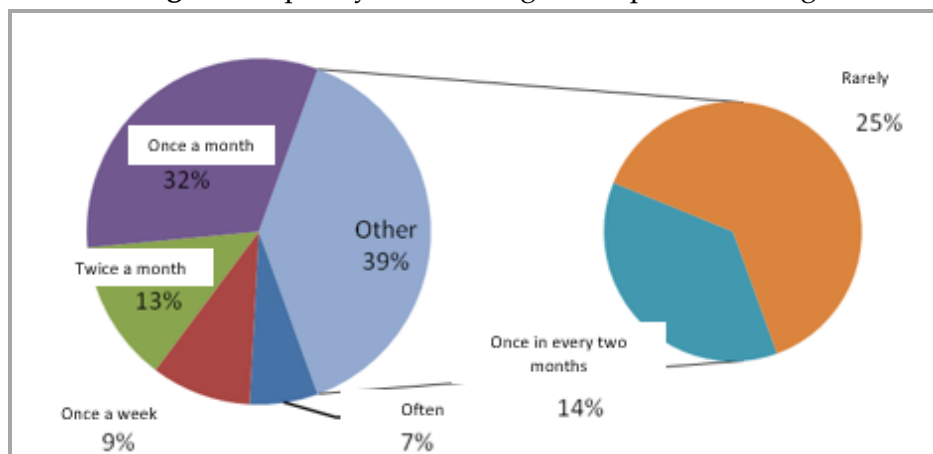
Image 1: Frequency of traveling from Portugal to Spain



There is a high frequency of movement of Portuguese to Spain. 72% of the Portuguese inhabitants in this area move monthly or with a higher regularity. Of these, 22% cross the border one or more times a week. Services, work relationships and friendship may be the reason for this frequency. The remaining 50% go on a fortnightly or monthly basis, which is a sign of a systematic behavior related to family consumption of goods, which, due to diversity, price or quality, justify a few kilometers of travel without barriers or stops, as if they never left their country. Thus, we can infer that people between 25 and 65 years of age maintain regular contact with the inhabitants of the neighboring country.

Private transportation is common, and trips to larger and more important urban centers are, for people in more isolated places, unavoidable to purchase basic products. However, Badajoz presents, due to its size, the existence of commercial, leisure, health and education structures, which constitute a pole of attractiveness for nearby Portuguese localities that, mainly due to the demographic dimension, do not include such equipment.

Image 2: Frequency of travelling from Spain to Portugal



Made by the author.

Comparing with the Portuguese, the data show a lower frequency of movements of Spanish border populations to Portugal. 61% of respondents report that they are traveling to Portugal only once a month, or even less frequently. Spanish are less willing to log to Portuguese border towns. Only 16% of Spanish travel one or more times a week, against 22% of Portuguese.

The explanations can be found in the opposite reasons to those presented for the dislocations of the Portuguese. The Spanish urban centers have equipment and services that respond to the daily needs of the populations. It is also possible to infer the articulation between urban spaces. The existence of a high frequency and regularity of visits implies connections and relations between the urban centers and their populations, in terms of access to goods, services, leisure, work opportunities or family relations. In general terms, we can verify that the experience of the populations is not restricted to the national space, and that the border is not assumed as a barrier. The spaces are understood in a continuous way and not separated by a political and administrative division, which could be restrictive of the mobility, relationships and routine practices of the families.

On what they seek on the other side of the border, we obtained some interesting conclusions. Three common aspects stand out: commerce, amusement/leisure and conviviality. There are some differences: the Portuguese are more attracted by commerce and the Spanish to the fun and leisure. These data point to a normality in the relations and interactions between nationalities, and give an idea of a common experience, in a continuous space.

Table 1: What do you look for in the neighboring country?

Reasons to cross the border	Portuguese	Spanish
Shopping	52,5%	32,5%
Recreation	10,8%	7%
Social Life	5,6%	5%
Tourism	2,3%	14,5%
Restaurants	2%	29,7%
Shows	1,4%	1,5%
Friends or family	2%	6%
Work	3,5%	3,3%
Other	19,8%	0,5%

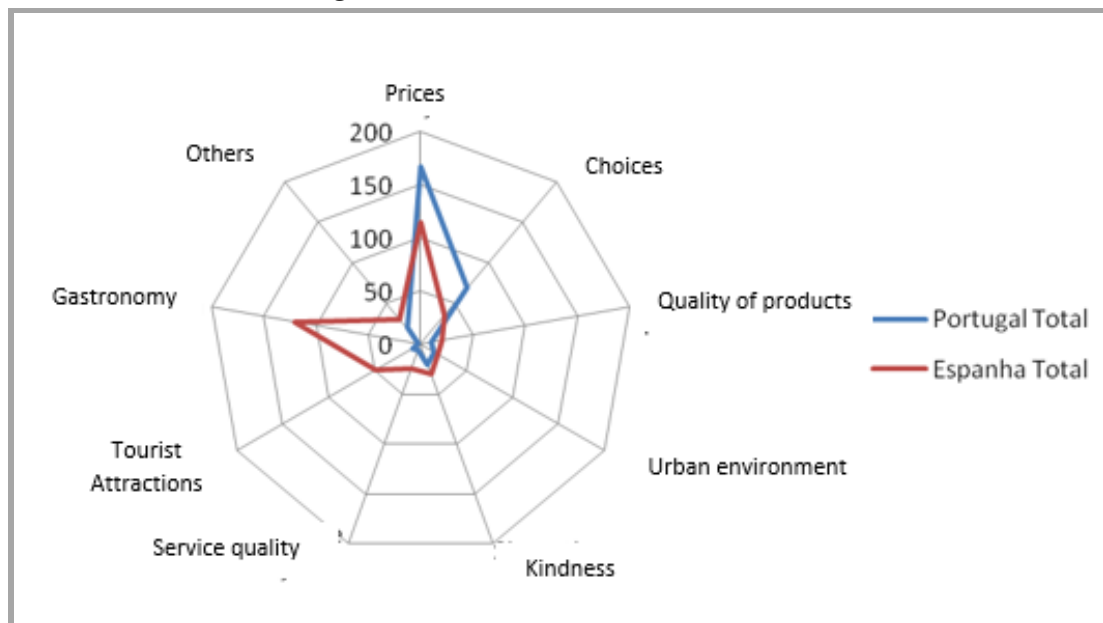
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20% of Portuguese answers point to other reasons and 7% of these seek health care in Spain. Portuguese hospitals are less able to meet the needs of the population. The sizing

of the Spanish units is in line with Portuguese demand. The Spanish seek in Portugal aspects related to gastronomy and tourism.

Border regions only acquire meaning with the support of populations, not institutions. Although with increasing institutional connections and with large amounts of funds coming from PIC INTERREG A, it is the individuals and their social and spatial representations that structure new spaces. Surveys confirm that cross-border shopping is a major element in border relations between the populations of the two countries. Despite the proximity and complicity between populations, Spanish and Portuguese seek different things in the other country. The Portuguese are attracted by price inequality, while the Spanish, in addition to commerce, also seek restaurants and tourism.

Image 3: Motivation for cross-border travel

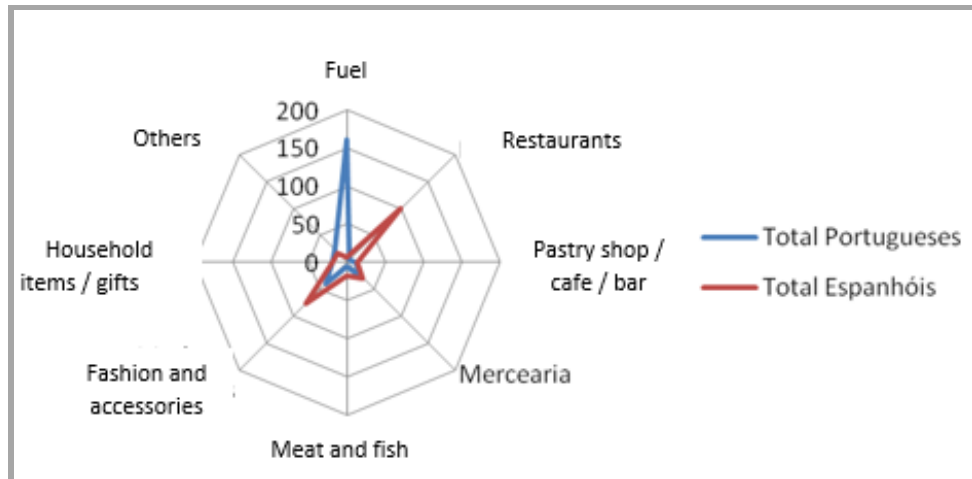


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The main motivation for the trips abroad is coincident – the prices. The Portuguese point out the variety of choice as important, while for the Spanish there are motivations that assume greater relevance, such as gastronomy and tourist attractions.

The fundamental difference between the Portuguese and Spanish populations lies in the practical sense of the trip. The Portuguese move to Spain due to basic consumption needs. Spanish value more "accessories" like gastronomy and tourism. Tourist attractions, choice, friendliness and quality of services present percentages above 10%. The most important variable is gastronomy; our country appears as 'an immense restaurant' for the Spanish populations residing at the border.

Image 4: Comparison of consumption type - Portuguese and Spanish





Made by the author.

In relation to the area of influence and capacity of attraction, Badajoz is the essential nucleus. The city has more population than all other urban centers in the area. This fact allows the existence of more goods, and more specialized services that may not exist elsewhere. Several international franchise shops, along with renewed public spaces and pleasant urban furniture, provide consumers with variety and nice experiences, meeting, at the same time, the tastes of youth and of a social layer with some buying power, which can identify itself with the various available alternatives.

Everything points to the fact that trade is the inducer of interactions that provide mutual knowledge and the sense of belonging to an integrated regional space. The following table shows that there are more common traits than separating points. There seems to be an attitude of good relations within a regional area, and this area is taken as common and provides advantages to the experiences of the populations.

Table 2: Representative Consumer of Polygon Portalegre / Elvas –
Valencia of Alcântara / Badajoz

	Common Traits	Differentiating traits
Portuguese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks for shopping and leisure Frequency of monthly trips (or more frequently) Seeks rapprochement between populations Communicates fluently even with different mother tongue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks mainly cheaper fuel Looks for variety of choice Buys grocery, fashion items and accessories
Spanish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain good neighborly relations The price of goods and services is a factor of attractiveness, motivator of the displacements Does not consider traveling to neighboring localities as a visit abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behave as tourists / visitors Essentially seeks restaurants, tourist attractions and leisure Buys fashion articles and accessories, but also groceries

Made by the author.

3. Populations and the “raiana” location

The second part of the survey examines the Portuguese and Spanish positions regarding the opening of borders and monetary union. A cross-border region involves the mobility of populations in a spatial continuum and without the awareness of political divisions. In the case of Portugal and Spain, the disappearance of customs control may have facilitated travel; however, there are well-defined aspects that differentiate people - the language and culture reflects in a different way of living.

Populations that move in this space without feeling, even if only psychological, the barrier effect, is significant. 70% of the Portuguese respondents do not consider going to the urban centers on the other side of the border a dislocation abroad. The responses of the Spanish population go in the same direction, about 80%. Also, the number of journeys would not change if there was border control, most of the Portuguese and Spanish respondents stated that the existence or lack of control did not change the frequency of travel. The responses reveal a cross-border regional mobility, where the presence of a barrier does not change mobility patterns.

The next questions allowed us to assess how language and currency would be viewed as constraints on mobility. In spite of the notion that different currencies would be an obstacle to trade because of the exchange rate and the greater or lesser degree of access to the desired amounts, the fact is that in the small border centers, very dependent on commercial activity, the two currencies have always been used, with exchange rates established by "direct adjustment".

Regarding the difference in language, the difficulty does not occur, since the inevitable contact with the other provokes a hybrid but useful 'language', which leads to mutual understanding and knowledge. There is almost unanimity about the ease that the single currency implies in terms of commercial activity and, for those who live at the border, language also does not constitute an obstacle to communication. The percentage of the Portuguese and Spanish population that considers the single currency an advantage is sufficiently significant, allowing us to deduce the importance of this factor as a facilitator of relations.

Established relations and trips abroad are mainly the result of the interest of the population in the commerce of the border towns and, without this motivation, the flows would be residual, since cross-border, work or family relations do not have great significance. The populations maintain satisfactory links between themselves, with intensity of relationships between the inhabitants of the border. Despite this reality, the truth is that there is greater sympathy of the Spaniards towards the Portuguese than the opposite. 62.5% of the Portuguese consider their relations with the populations of Spain

positive (good or very good); in the case of the Spanish populations, almost 90% consider their relations with the Portuguese good or very good.

Since the frequency of dislocations abroad is not altered by the existence of an administrative barrier, there is a significant part of the population which does not see a positive impact on their elimination. Free movement undoubtedly brings about increased mobility and the possibility of a greater number of possible interactions between populations; it leaves, however, free access to other activities that concern the inhabitants, such as drug trafficking or other illicit goods, or the passage of individuals that jeopardize the safety of populations. The advertising of apprehensions of illicit goods or of criminals alarms the populations, thus giving a preference to reinforce the authority and the establishment of police barriers in order to create an environment of greater security.

Throughout recent history there has been a solidarity between populations in times of greater difficulty. During the Spanish Civil War, the Portuguese people welcomed refugees and fugitives, as well as bringing to Spain many goods and products of urgent need that, due to the situation of conflict, were not accessible to them through the traditional channels. During the Portuguese dictatorship, it was the Spanish population, with a degree of development and access to goods that did not exist in the Portuguese range, which brought products that did not reach these peripheral populations. The Portuguese clandestine migratory movement of the 60s also owes much to the complicity of populations and sometimes the authorities at the Spanish border. These recent events in history, closely linked to times of internal crises, seem to arouse a sense of mutual help, which during internally less troubled times, such as the present one, diminish in intensity, at least on the part of the Portuguese.

In the end, questions were posed in order to assess the population's feelings regarding the approach of political and institutional parties. There is an expressed desire for institutional parties to move towards greater approximation and cooperation. The reasons given are essentially practical and also reveal a welfare perspective, where the State provides daily necessities. In the reasons pointed out by the populations, there is a feeling that the greater the approximation and cooperation, the greater the advantages and benefits for daily living. However, there are difficulties in realizing the benefits that will follow.

A group of coincident answers of the Portuguese and Spanish populations is related to aspects of joint affirmation towards the European space. 7% of respondents refer to the possibility of common European projects, and of a stronger peninsular space. This may perhaps be understood as the awakening of a sense of peninsular regionalism towards a European Union which seems to be far from the people but which they feel to be responsible for part of their problems.

There is almost unanimity about the advantages of knowing the people on the other side of the border - the other - whatever the problems, the frequency of dislocations, or the comparative advantages that frontier people encounter on the other side. To support the obtained conclusions, in addition to the surveys we conducted 34 interviews with residents of border towns; some were made in small groups, others individually. The main objective was to try to know in greater depth what it means to live on the border, and the main motivations and impressions that people have over each other.

The Portuguese group is made up of 6 male and 10 female members aged between 18 and 65 years. We have tried to diversify the range of occupations in order to obtain different visions and opinions of what it means to live on the border. The Spanish group has a range of ages between 26 and 61 years of age, 6 of which are male and 12 are female.

Table 3: Interviewee occupations

Portugal		Spain	
College/University Student	Retired	College/University Student	Journalist
State Employee		City Hall employee	Employee of the Regional Government of Extremadura
Designer		Cultural Manager	Nurse
Secretary of the Director		Computer Technician	Factory employee
Specialized Technician		Unemployed	Military
Teacher		House Maid	Administrative
Entrepreneur		Entrepreneur	

Made by author.

We organized a *brainstorming* conversation, starting with the words: Spain, Spanish; Portugal, Portuguese.

In the Portuguese group, we have obtained the following words / expressions for Spain: Caramels / Very Good / I would like to be Spanish / Neighbor / Night / Fun / Fast food / Shopping. For Spanish: Very Good / Different social behavior / Cheerful / our brothers / another way of being in life / Noise / Noisy talk / party / joy.

In the first phase of the interviews, some positions were based on “standard” phrases and stereotypes about the Spanish, but in the course of the conversation these were diluted and we concluded they did not correspond to a thought out attitude. There is admiration for the way of being of the Spanish, as well as for the organization and efficiency of services that is not, according to the interviewees, comparable to

Portuguese standards. All the participants said they traveled frequently (several times a week), looking for leisure, fun and shopping of all kinds.

Young people and young adults move in a space that is as familiar to them as their cities. Although they do not feel the trip as an exit of the country, they have the notion that it is a reality different from the Portuguese, and it is always positively characterized.

One aspect the younger ones remark as strange is how a frontier works. Closing hours, impediments in transporting goods, limits on the amount of money transported, are minutiae that are not part of the mental framework of those who move without barriers. The existence of customs control does not even make sense, due to the proximity they feel with the Spanish population and the feeling of belonging to a common space. The non-political boundary does not exist; however, the existence of different realities, in terms of culture and ways of life, attracts the young Portuguese. The experience of the public space and the nocturnal rhythm of life (in relation to the Portuguese schedules) of the populations of Badajoz is a reason of attraction for the young Portuguese. They live in a frontier space, where the existing differences - in structures and essentially commerce and leisure - are mutually exploited. In fact, the lack of border barriers has increased the links between people, especially by the youth that increasingly behave as a homogeneous group.

For younger people, more striking than the language or difference in size of the cities, is the "price frontier" of goods and services - such as mobile phone tariffs or fuel prices of the same brand, separated only by 10 minutes by car. The main motivations of this group, in addition to shopping, are social night life, amusements, fast food and promenade / tourism. Living in Portugal, they can't find a closer alternatives than Spain. Portuguese-Spanish conviviality mitigates any differences - bilingual groups are formed. There are still stereotyped "rivalries" between the Portuguese and the Spanish, but they are only soft jokes, as a pretext for playing games or even inducing more proximity. Both Spanish and Portuguese have several friends of the other nationality, although there are few family relations. For the elders, an identification (even if only a small one) of all those crossing the border, would be a safety factor (at least it instilled in the population that feeling, giving them greater comfort). The single currency is not seen as very positive.

Three attitudes can be distinguished: young people - more integrated and with no concept of barrier; adults, who take advantage of commerce and services; older people (over 60 years old), in which the frequency of trips abroad decreases, and who do not establish connections, on the contraire – they may actually develop some animosity.

In the younger generations and in commercial establishments, bilingualism begins to be very frequent. According to the Spanish teacher, a closer approximation of the Portuguese students to the Spanish ones is evident. In fact, it is already a habit to have school exchanges on both sides of the border, and every school year there are study visits and / or "foreign classes" to Spain and our schools receive Spanish colleagues.

It is unanimous that living near the border, with multiple contacts, provides an idea of others much truer than that of those who live further away. The Portuguese living far from the frontier see the Spanish as tourists, just like any others from diverse backgrounds; the ones living close to the border consider them neighbors, with only a different language, but which can be easily understood. They are part of their daily reality and do not make distinctions about them. For all, proximity, which facilitates knowledge, and frequent contact with the life of Spain, lead us to form an opinion about the *people* and not about a *population*, something that for those who are distant is not likely to happen.

In the initial brainstorming with the Spanish interviewees, the answers obtained were much more praiseworthy for the Portuguese than the interviews with Portuguese. Spanish people also given a much more comprehensive idea of the way they see the neighboring people. For the word Portugal, we have obtained the expressions: gastronomic variety / tourism / neighbor country / golden cod / different language / la Raya / tourist areas lives very well, but also have areas with a lot of poverty / abandonment / solitude / quiet / brother country / countryside.

For Portuguese: Friendliness / good education / equal to Spanish / love their customs and traditions / sympathy / neighbors / reserved and less talkative than Spanish / "rare" (different, unique) / making an effort to understand the Spanish / politer than the Spanish / Portuguese speak quietly, compared to how loud Spanish people are/ brothers.

The Spanish showed an opinion less based on prejudices. They show a genuine interest in Portugal and have an excellent impression of our people. The main motivations for their coming are essentially gastronomy and tourism. They especially like the tranquility and the landscapes. They feel "at home". They point out that living near Portugal leads them to consider the frontier space as continuous. For these inhabitants, being in Portugal or Spain is like being in the same country. All opinions converged on the greater ease that the elimination of customs control represented in travel. However, the frequency did not change significantly and the regularity remained practically unchanged.

A particularly interesting testimony, referring to the experience of proximity that is established at the border: "In Spain there is a phrase that says *"el roce hace el cariño"*

("touch makes love"). The contacts between people, the daily life together, the marriages that take place between people of the two countries give me a different opinion of the Portuguese; the closer relations can generate good or bad relationships but in general I think that the good ones are in greater quantity than the bad ones, or at least it is what I observe in my next reality (...) I have a friend, daughter of a Portuguese mother and Spanish father, who was born in Valencia de Alcântara (border region) and speaks both languages correctly, despite the Spanish accent ... I have another, from Cáceres, who fell in love with Fado and dedicates the "free" time, outside the job, to sing Fados professionally. I know many colleagues, most of them from Extremadura, who go to Portugal a lot for gastronomy, for nature and for learning the language; I even know a family who bought a second home on the Portuguese coast for a summer vacation. Of all of them I have always heard good things about the Portuguese. My brother continues to have a good relationship with the Portuguese family of his ex-wife. When you are a good person, nationality is indifferent. "

Some opinions reveal a shared feeling of nationality - although Spanish nationality is the first, they also feel Portuguese (one of them is even said to be Portuguese and Spanish). In the opinion of the group, the Spanish living far from Portugal do not have a correct idea of our country, nor of the Portuguese people. They look at Portugal as a foreign country and the Portuguese as very backward people. They feel some difficulty in communicating, but appreciate the fact that they are understood and the ease with which the Portuguese speak Castilian. The Portuguese language is referred to as one of the points that the Spaniards most appreciate. Some have even attended Portuguese courses to be more easily connected.

What emerges from the interviews not only confirms survey data, but demonstrates the existence of a process of greater approximation and experience of a cross-border space. Young people up to 50 years of age reveal cross-border attitudes and behavior. They use existing resources, regardless of their location in Portugal or Spain. For the Spanish, the Portuguese side appears as a complementary tourism space (in a broad sense), where and with whom they feel comfortable. For the Portuguese, Spain, apart from being a leisure space, complements and amplifies the supply of goods and services that do not exist on the national side, or that are of better quality and with a wider range of options. In both groups, retail trade and infrastructure linked to leisure and tourism play a key role in cross-border travel, and from these, knowledge and approximation are increasingly enhanced. Young people (up to the age of 30), however, are the group that most seem to have internalized the regional cross-border space as unique, making differences in ways of life or language a reason to exchange experiences and attractiveness of the neighboring country.

The reality that we work on, in this stretch of frontier region, cannot be extrapolated to all realities. The fascination of studying frontier phenomena is their local specificity. Relations between people with different cultural and political inheritances are always unique. Nevertheless, in most cases, the other - which may seem "threatening" or competing - loses its negative charge as knowledge is established and deepened.

At a time when Europe, which itself is a mosaic of distinct life forms and cultures, is experiencing a phenomenon of immigration of dramatically epic proportions, the teachings that the life and dynamics of the border regions, interior to the Union, can provide, are even more important. These teachings cover aspects such as coexistence, knowledge and human relationships that underline the richness of the existence of cultures and ways of being hybrid, always challenging in their novelties.

"El roce hace el cariño"

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