

Mobilides, Context Costs and Heritage in Tourism and Leisure Relations on the Border of Central Portugal with Spain

Gonalo Fernandes

Polytechnic Institute of Guarda & CITUR, Guarda, Portugal

goncalopoeta@ipg.pt

Abstract: The persistence of borders has been based on the fact that they are crucial for the reproduction of territoriality and of national identity narratives. In this context, and considering the border as a line that separates, divides and controls the existence of areas/territories, it implies that the effects (context costs) disappear with distance, in addition to the emergence of new meanings and dynamics depending on their accessibility, resources held, forms of settlement and economic activities. The Luso-Spanish border is the most stable and, at the same time, the one with the most critical development indexes, due to its penalising demographic evolution, productive disarticulation and differentiated administrative policies. Tourism development is seen as an instrument for the diversification of economies in peripheral and often underdeveloped frontier regions. These areas have, through their history and natural heritage, resources of great value, of which the international rivers, the classified natural areas, the castles and fortresses, the historical villages, the traditions and festivities, the gastronomy and the presence of different cultures stand out in the central Iberian border. Facing this panorama and considering formal and informal relations, cooperating or competing, we try to identify dynamics and forms of cooperation in the construction of a resilience space, in the face of existing constraints and heritage values held, capable of generating new attractions and functions in the oldest European border. Under favourable conditions, these territories contribute to tourism development in the framework of neighbourly relations and interests. In the case of Portugal central border with Spain, it is possible to speak of a porosity that is historical, with the territory(ies) coming together, either through public policies (EU, national, regional and local), or through private investments. The study aims to analyse and systematise the factors of tourism promotion, the political developments and the permeability of the border, in the construction of a tourism and leisure destination.

Keywords: border, cooperation, mobility, tourism, ecocultural resources, resilience

1. Introduction

Borders can, in general, be understood as regions in which economic and social life are directly and significantly affected by the proximity of an administrative division, whose political, financial and cultural differences imply territorial specificities and pose their own challenges to their management (Fernandes, 2021). Although a physical border may change its meaning and functions, the effects of immaterial barriers may persist in the form of imaginary barriers, incorporating feelings and remoteness that penalize these spaces, requiring the construction of cooperative relationships (Trigal, 2013; Lois & Caballo, 2015). Controlling the movement of people, goods and capital between states is the most relevant function of border management, accompanied by its assertion of sovereignty in terms of its administrative boundaries. The persistence of national borders has been based on the fact that they are crucial for the reproduction of territoriality and national identity narratives (Prokkola, 2008; Medeiros, 2010; Fernandes & Cravino, 2021). In this context, and considering a line that separates, divides and controls the existence of areas/territories on both sides of the line, it implies that the effects disappear with distance, in addition to the emergence of new meanings and dynamics depending on their accessibility, resources held, forms of settlement and economic activities.

Tourism development should be perceived as a tool for the diversification of economies in peripheral and often underdeveloped border regions. Borders are becoming more important for tourism and leisure activities, due to the increase in mobility (infrastructures and policies such as the creation of the Schengen area), cooperation and dissemination of resources and heritage, as well as the incorporation of technologies in the qualification and promotion of these territories, and the control of circulation flows (as seen in COVID-19). These areas have, through history and natural and cultural heritage, resources that promote attraction and development of tourism activities, fostering new attractions and functions, driven by greater mobility and the increased dissemination of tourism resources and services.

Taking as object the Luso-Spanish border between central Portugal and Spain, we try to evaluate the tourist potential of the territory, considering the existing economic dynamics, the tourist resources and services and the forms of cooperation achieved. The aim is to identify and systematise the main assets and strategies that promote tourism and leisure activities in this area and to understand the logics of action for the qualification of resources and the territory promotion. The analysis of the several studies on the socio-economic dynamics of

the Spanish-Portuguese border, the contributions of the cross-border cooperation policies and in particular the development support and funding programmes (INTERREG and POCTEP), as well as the existing territorial enhancement and tourism initiatives, have allowed the development of the study. The construction of a space of resilience, in the face of existing constraints and the heritage values held, extends attractions and new functions. In this context, tourism and leisure induce territorial development and qualification, with significance in heritage preservation and social sustainability.

2. Mobility and exchanges in border territories

Borders represent spaces of separation, with their own identities and imaginaries as a result of their geography, their historical and political evolution and the cultural elements of their communities. They are spaces of exchanges, cultural hybridisms and heritage heritages as a result of their functions, flows and social and economic interactions generated over time (Dominguez et al., 2013; Sofield, 2006). We can consider that the spaces, people and institutions of the border live their quotidian of invading geographical, linguistic, fiscal and political limits. The border corresponds to a territory where, from here to there and vice-versa, more than oppositions and rivalries, mobilities, exchanges and even complicities predominate. In fact, the "conflict" associated with the separation is complemented (or interspersed) by the combination of interests between residents from one side and the other, with the use of context advantages, such as in trade and employment, favoured by price differences, tax burden and prohibitions (Ribeiro & Valente, 2013).

In many cases, geographical positioning has, in time and space, caused or promoted the marginalisation of border peoples, as it is also often a reflection of the unequal distribution of power in the economy and society (Sofield, 2006). Thus, borders assume different roles and meanings as a result of their history, political orientations or geographical characteristics, promoting themselves as spaces of porosity/permeability or containment/barrier.

Cross-border cooperation has been an important instrument to achieve the objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), as well as to implement the objectives of the Lisbon and Rotterdam processes to achieve sustainable growth and territorial cohesion in Europe. Particularly in achieving the objective of cross-border cooperation (ESPON, 2007; Medeiros, 2018), more fluid cross-border relations have been promoted between regional and local governments and administrations along the Spanish-Portuguese border.

Border tourism is characterised by the fact that the destination is the same border and that tourism activity focuses on visiting spaces/attractions that belong to different states. However, its history has generated a remarkable historical and cultural legacy, to which the environmental one is added and which is now proving to be an attractive resource for greater tourism activity (Hernández-Ramírez, 2017; Campesino Fernandez, 2014, 2016). The restrictions arising from the presence of national borders have always had a negative impact on the development of tourism in these regions, generating inertia and mistrust to effectively use the potential of these territories. The structural backwardness in the Luso-Spanish border regions led to the creation of the Operational Programme for the Development of Border Regions (INTERREG) Portugal-Spain, with the Community objective of moving towards greater economic and social integration and convergence within the European Community. It was with the creation of the INTERREG initiative that the Community took on very clearly the need to develop border areas and stimulate cross-border cooperation between neighbouring populations separated for centuries (Lange, 2012; Oliveira, 2005; Policarpo & Mogollón, 2015). However, cross-border cooperation has not achieved its main objectives. There are some difficulties derived from the limitations caused by the strong role played by the States (countries), the great differences and asymmetries that exist, and also their own historical inertia, which continues to feed resistance and fears on both sides of the border (Fernandes; 2021, Calderón, 2015; Salgado, 2010). Uncertainties persist, but connections, approximations and complicities are gained that resources and heritage unite and non-administrative functions foster. The resources remain, the heritage is valued and the smokers and activities that induce demand, self-esteem and income for the border territories are encouraged. In the last three decades we have witnessed strategies of defronteirisation between Portugal and Spain, which have promoted and facilitated mobility between the two sides of the border, and an increase in institutional relations (formal and informal), taking advantage from European Union support and cooperation programmes and the openness of communities and political representatives to the creation of channels for dialogue and rapprochement. Of these processes, the following advances stand out for their importance:

- Increased access and transport infrastructure;
- Reduction of administrative barriers to movement by the Shengan area
- Increased institutional relations and collaoarative projects;
- Creation of specific support programmes for territorial cohesion;
- Increased socio-cultural relations and activities;
- Community awareness of the need to increase formal and informal partnerships and relationships;
- Increased community support infrastructures and equipments;
- Political effort to establish collaborative bases;
- Decrease in the perception of the border as a barrier.

Since the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, the free movement of people has been permitted between the signatory countries, thus fostering the development of the European integration project (Decoville & Durand, 2018). The Schengen area guarantees unrestricted travel within a territory of 26 countries, home to more than 400 million citizens. The Schengen Agreement that set out the gradual abolition of checks at common borders. A Europe without internal borders brings huge benefits to the economy as well, which shows how tangible, popular and successful the Schengen achievement is and the importance it has for the societies and cross border territories (European Commission, 2015). Fosters the mobility between countries and boosts many social and economic activities, generating financial and cultural flows that enrich the regions.

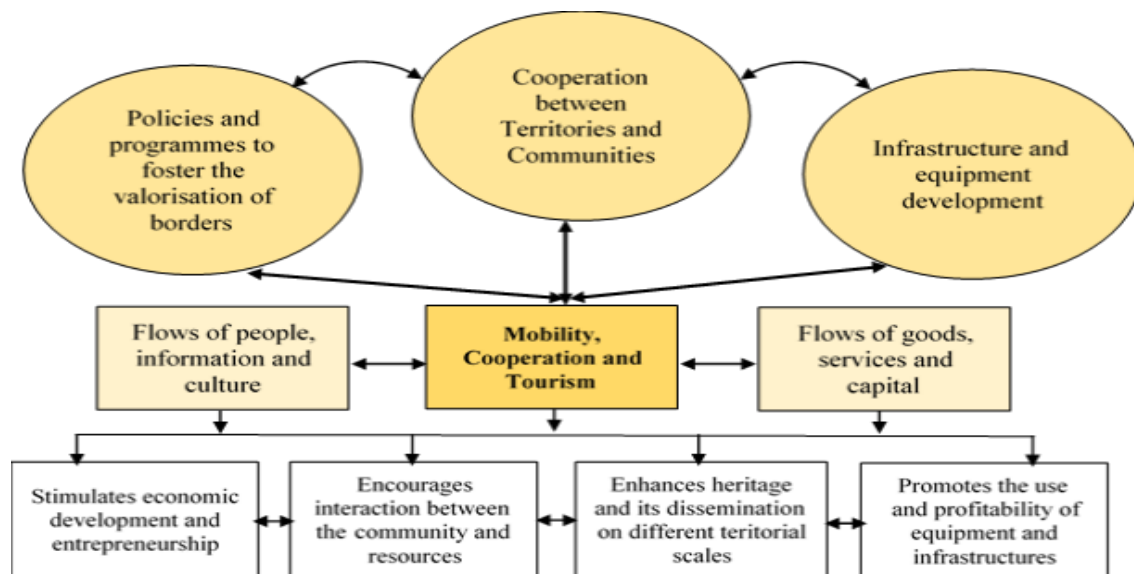


Figure 1: Conceptualisation of the relations of mobility, cooperation and tourism and leisure activities on the border territories (Source: adapted from Fernandes & Carvino, 2021)

Through commercial exchanges, relationships have been fundamentally altered by the incorporation of diverse social connections, cooperative and sometimes in solidarity, which allow their communities to maintain themselves and generate functions for economic and social well-being. The enhancement of heritage and respective identities allows promoting new attractions, supported beyond commercial relations in tourism and leisure practices that tend to be widened and diversified. Cooperation tends to be a vitalising factor, generating instruments that reduce the weaknesses that these lines tend to represent and assume. The development of the conditions for enhancing the territory for a diverse set of natural and cultural heritage resources should be promoted in a framework that ensures the sustainability of the values, natural resources and identity of the territories (Figure 1). In these processes, employment opportunities and socio-professional integration of communities are promoted, as shown by the use of tourism resources, the generation of services associated with natural and cultural resources and the cooperative strategies of local governance and the impulses of the respective communities (population and companies) (CPC, 2014; Fernandes & Natario, 2020, Fernandes *et al.*, 2012). *The income generated by tourism movements between borders can be a catalyst for permanent peace solutions, as both parties realise the benefits and the risks involved. Such an understanding can change the*

attitude and behaviour of local people and businesses over time when the feeling of sharing from the same pool becomes stronger (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019, p.3).

In this context, tourism as a development factor in border spaces has been increasingly recognised over time (Fernandes, 2014; Kovács *et al.*, 2020; Prokkola, 2010), due to the fact that many peripheral border areas hold great potential for the development of tourism and leisure activities. Their heritage is preserved and with authenticities that provide differentiating experiences (a consequence of their relative isolation) and allow the diversification of economies in these peripheral and often underdeveloped regions (Dominguez *et al.*, 2013; Timothy & Saarinen, 2013), so the border constitutes a privileged area for action and support by European Union policies and programmes.

The EU has always understood the importance of strengthening ties between border areas, and one of the priorities of cross-border cooperation programmes is tourism development, which offers a recognised opportunity for border regions to develop common programmes (Tarpai, 2010; Muhi & Remenyik, 2013). There are five major priorities that translate into specific guidelines aimed at the full insertion of these underdeveloped regions into the European space through cooperation programmes between them. In the case of Portugal with Spain, it is possible to recall which priorities were identified. Priority I - Cooperation and Joint Management for the Promotion of Competitiveness and Employment, Priority II - Cooperation and Joint Management for the Environment, Heritage and Risk Prevention, Priority III - Cooperation and Joint Management for Spatial Planning and Accessibility, Priority IV - Cooperation and Joint Management for Socioeconomic and Institutional Integration, Priority V - Technical Assistance to the Cross-Border Cooperation Process. Cross-border tourist destinations thus make a significant contribution to EU regional policy. Their benefits are reflected in strengthening economically less developed border regions by creating new jobs and retaining existing ones. They also help to reduce cooperation reservations on both sides of the border, foster the emergence of European identity, the integration of its inhabitants and cohesion. Cross-border mobility and consumption, which includes all border crossings, regardless of destination, purpose of travel or distance travelled, corresponding to a broader approach than traditional tourism concepts (Mayer *et al.*, 2019).

The temporary movement of people outside their usual place of residence to cities that are adjacent to the dividing line between two countries has various motivations, such as business, leisure, visits to family and/or friends, social events and shopping, among others (Moral *et al.*, 2016). The border territory can act or be converted, in an analogous way, to other well-known tourist and cultural routes or itineraries: historic routes, pilgrimage routes, routes of historic towns, among others. This “appropriation” includes the movements of travellers and tourists and tourism products, supported by the history and heritage at the border. This border tourism would have, in a way, a transversal and integrative character with other tourism products (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-García, 2018). Taking into account the design “Europe without borders”, where the emphasis on complementarity and cooperation prevails over competition (Lima, 2012). Tourism has proved to be a strategic factor in territorial cooperation, especially in inland areas, highlighting in particular its ability to bring together measures that have direct or indirect impact on the four existing axes of action (Promoting competitiveness and employment; Environment, heritage and natural environment; Accessibility and territorial planning; Fostering cooperation and economic and social integration). In this way, the different editions of the INTERREG initiative, first, and the tourism programmes and other programmes at the regional and municipal levels, have co-financed projects and socio-economic initiatives related to tourism, in order to promote cooperation and establish new markets for these regions (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-García, 2018).

3. Methodology

The research is methodologically developed through the documentary exploration of studies on the portuguese-spanish border, the cooperation programmes (in particular INTERREG and POCTEP) and the initiatives/projects developed for the valorisation of resources and territorial promotion in the centre of Portugal with Spain.

In this context, we have tried to systematize the information about tourist attractions (natural, cultural and facilities), development policies and cross-border cooperation and implemented projects. A structured interpretation was promoted, able to assess the contributions to the social enjoyment of the border, the dynamics of mobility in the face of economic and administrative contexts in presence, as well as the formal and informal relationships of governmental entities at local and regional level.

4. Central Portugal border with Spain and the dynamics of cooperation and heritage enhancement

The relations in the cross-border space have acquired a growing importance and increased their influence on the European political, economic and cultural evolution. In the case of the border of Portugal and Spain, it is possible to speak of a porosity that is historical, with approximation of the territory(ies), either through public policies (community, national, regional and local) or through private investments. There is a concern of the regional governmental entities in the promotion of cooperation, in the development of projects and common initiatives and, particularly, in the promotion of entrepreneurship. It is worth highlighting the POCTEP BIN-SAL Empreende projects (2016-20), which streamlined investments and entrepreneurship in order to enhance endogenous resources and services associated with tourism and territorial cohesion, involving municipalities, development associations and HEIs. In general, it can be considered that the border between Portugal and Spain presents (in both countries) very similar characteristics, as it evolves progressively, where regions and municipalities establish partnerships and the border increases its permeability, strengthening the closeness of people and forms of institutional and business cooperation (Figure 2). This border is multi-peripheral in terms of its geographical position, its relationship with the decision-making centres, its capacity to mobilise and valorise resources, and its effective territorial integration and investments, thus presenting structural constraints. Taking this perspective allows us to identify conditions that contribute to the capacity of systems to adapt and evolve and to build resilience. Governance and management issues and the discussions that accompany building resilient tourism destinations continue to be the subject of research in the tourism literature. At the same time they attract increasing attention in fields such as planning, ecosystem management and the protection of areas with special status (e.g. National Park, Geopark, UNESCO World Heritage Site).

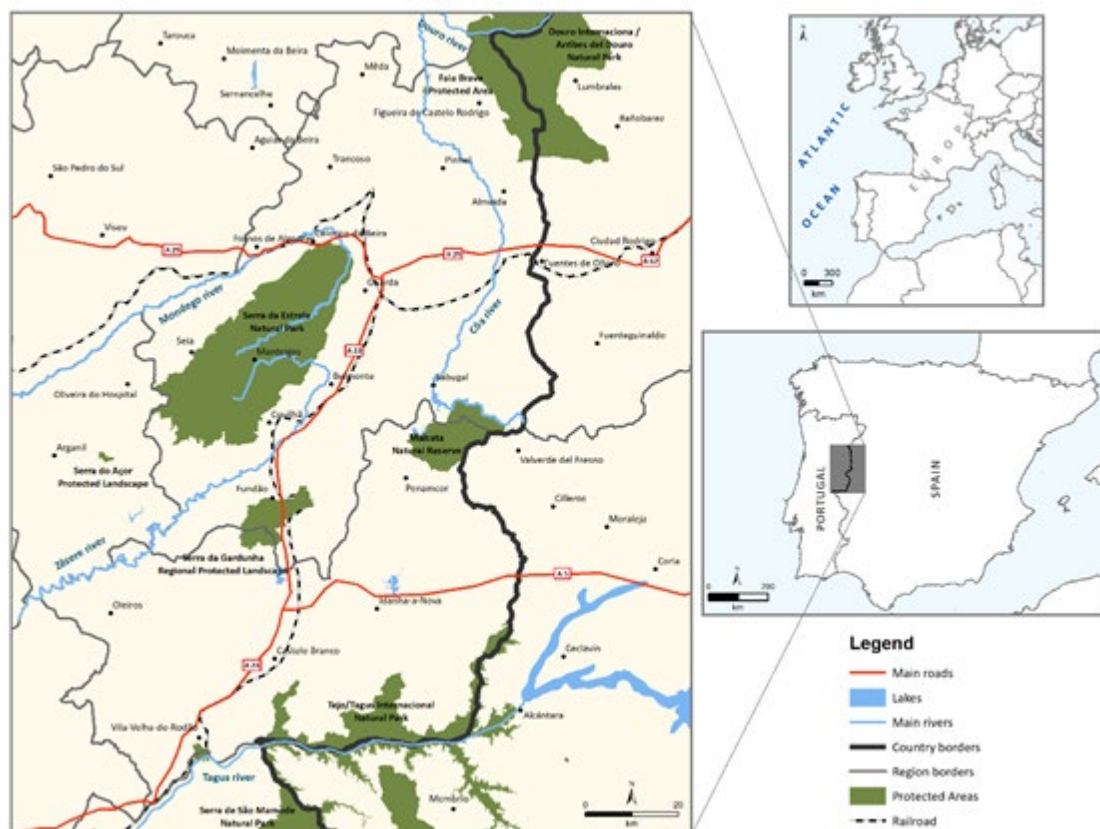


Figure 2: The Iberian Peninsula and the border area between central Portugal and Spain (Source: Compiled by the author)

Both sides of a border are visited and the assets of at least two neighbouring countries are exploited. This includes tourism derived from specific qualities of a border (e.g. differentiated prices of goods and services or distinct cultural identities and practices) and the goal of visiting to experience the area “on the other side”, including tourists and tourist infrastructure, attractions, and spaces that extend or are adjacent to a border (Mansvelt & Hortelano Mnguez, 2010; Campesino Fernandes, 2016). The connotations that this space receives

are diverse and change according to the events, actors involved and policies defined. Due to its meaning and function, the border was historically characterised by a strong militarisation but weak development policies present a historical and natural heritage of great integrity and present an increase in equipment and accessibility, which enhance its exploitation as a visiting space (Mansvelt & Hortelano Mínguez, 2010).

The increased permeability of the border influences the development of tourism infrastructure, associated tourism services and the transformation of the territories on both sides. Political factors can also create problems for cross-border cooperation in tourism by establishing different social and ideological systems that affect not only tourists but also local tourism stakeholders. In this context, it is important to be aware that tourism development has a transversal impact on society-economy-environment, which consequently drives the need to create synergies, which, in border spaces, are faced with greater governance demands. These imply that the actors involved develop concepts of change, grounded in complex and potentially unfavourable territorial relations in the face of the different costs of existing contexts. It is important to distinguish, as Hernández-Ramírez (2017) points out, cross-border tourism and tourism at the border. The first takes as destination a territory larger than the administrative border itself. The territory to be visited would cover a more or less wide space, of transition and boundaries, somewhat lax on both sides of the border and where the fact of the border was felt. Globally, the tourism challenge for destinations is to become robust enough to withstand disturbances and flexible enough to recover or reinvent themselves, contributing to their resilience. This implies a more evolutionary and adaptive perspective, considering and managing tourism destinations as complex adaptive systems (Hartman, 2018).

Relationships, fundamentally through commercial exchanges, have been registering alterations by incorporating diverse social connections, cooperative and sometimes solidaristic, which allow their communities to maintain themselves and generate functions for economic and social well-being. The valorisation of the heritage and respective identities allows promoting new attractions, supported beyond commercial relations in tourism and leisure practices which tend to be widened and diversified. Cooperation tends to be a vitalising factor, generating instruments that reduce the weaknesses that these lines tend to represent and assume.

The connotations that this space receives are diverse and change according to the events, actors involved and policies defined. Due to its meaning and function, the border was historically characterised by a strong militarisation but weak development policies, presents a historical and natural heritage of great integrity and presents an increase in equipment and accessibility, which enhance its exploitation as a visiting space (Fernandes & Cravino, 2021).

It is emphasised that places value their ecocultural assets in order to increase their competitive profile. Heritage stands out as a differentiating resource for the territories and a strategic element in the design of new products aimed at capturing specific segments of tourism demand, fosters the collective identity of the receiving communities, strengthens feelings of mutual aid and cooperation and encourages conservation and sustainable use actions. Thus, heritage valuation becomes a reference factor for local development, capable of generating territorial balance as a result of the attraction it generates and the activities it brings about in its economic and social appropriation, among which tourism and leisure activities take on relevance. At the same time, heritage symbols (castles and bastions, for example), which have constituted life and history on the border and which also represent tourism resources, are strengthened and preserved. This is why the border itself can become a destination and the main attraction for tourists (Mayer et al., 2019; Timothy, 2005).

Thus, in addition to the known tourism products (rural, ecotourism, agrotourism, gastronomy etc.) that can be found in border areas, it is possible to develop a new product, which can be known as “border tourism”, “cross-border tourism” or “tourism on the border”, and which satisfies a very diverse demand, eager to consume the history and heritage of border areas for tourism (Jurado-Almonte & Pazos-García, 2016). Border tourism is characterised by the fact that the destination is located at the same border and that tourist activity focuses on visiting spaces/attractions that belong to different states. The tourist visit is an experience of rediscovering, contemplating and participating in the cultural singularities, as well as the historical heritage, which is sometimes marked by cultural and political confrontations of the past and local hybridisms. Campesino Fernández (2016) distinguishes and emphasises what are potentialities and tourism products for the case of la Raia, or the Iberian border. He states that, for the most part, the natural and cultural heritage of the border remains a “potential resource with attractive and expected profitability” that has not been transformed into tourism products. However, its history has generated a remarkable historical and cultural legacy. The restrictions arising from the

presence of national borders have always had a negative impact on the development of tourism in these regions, generating inertia and mistrust to effectively use the potential of these territories.

The structural backwardness in the Luso-Spanish border regions led to the creation of the Operational Programme for the Development of Border Regions (INTERREG) Portugal-Spain, with the Community objective of moving towards greater economic and social integration and convergence within the European Community. It was only with the creation of the INTERREG initiative that the Community took on very clearly the need to develop border areas and stimulate cross-border cooperation between neighbouring populations separated for centuries (Lange, 2012; Policarpo & Mogoll3n, 2015; Oliveira, 2005). However, cross-border cooperation has not achieved its main goals. There are some difficulties derived from the limitations caused by the strong role played by the States (countries), the great differences and asymmetries that exist, and also their own historical inertia, which continues to feed resistance and fears on both sides of the border (Fernandes, Natario, & Braga, 2014, 2016; Salgado, 2010). In this context, it is necessary to systematise a set of factors and opportunities to be considered for border development:

- Important financing instruments (INTERREG V-A Programme and POCTEP), which will have a special impact on the strengthening of local development structures and the modernisation of economic activities already in place;
- Heritage sites that requires greater awareness and dissemination, namely religious and military monuments and historical infrastructures (bridges, roads and viaducts, among others);
- Enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage which, in addition to its legal protection, will be subject to qualification processes, safeguarding its historical and cultural value, affecting the new functions and uses for which tourism is privileged. To highlight the concerted strategy around Wine, Gastronomy and the UNESCO World Heritage Site and the BIOFRONTEIRA project, framed within the Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency of Cross Border Cooperation;
- Presence of two international rivers, with great ecological value and classified as international natural parks (Douro and Tagus), generates an attraction potential to develop aquatic activities, navigation, active tourism, sport fishing and bird watching, among others;
- Articulation of the cities in constructive strategies to promote the discovery and valorisation of the border heritage – Cencyl Cities Network (The heritage of the Cencyl Cities – includes 440 elements classified as Goods of Cultural Interest and National Heritage);
- The historical border element, with cultural hybridisms, differentiated and complementary commerce and services and the possibility of visiting the old Portuguese and Spanish border posts, taking advantage of the offer and services on both sides of the border;
- The existence of some brands for the promotion of regional products and the promotion of tourism in this territory. To highlight the actions promoted with the name Lat. 60, the gastronomy associated with the wines and meat products of some provinces and municipalities;
- Financing and support for the creation and development of business initiatives related to rural and inland tourism (active leisure and itineraries), which articulate tourist resources and products with the projection of the border.

The relationship between borders and tourism development is complex and manifests itself in many ways. A physical border can form a barrier to tourism flows, or can be crossed almost unnoticed. The permeability of the border, the barrier effects caused by the border, such as regulations for the movement of people and goods, will directly influence tourism and the development of flows of goods and people (Kabakchieva & Vasileva, 2020; Prokkola, 2008; Timothy, 2006;). The tourism activity between the border itself and the territories beyond it is a necessary line of research, on the basis of the new emerging cross-border identities and functions, showing the integration between bordering territories (Mansvelt Beck & Hortelano Mínguez,2016). The potential of tourism– resources of the cross-border area – is significant and diversified, and in most cases, well preserved and capable of generating different attractions (markets) throughout the year. The capacity to foster new activities and services is recognised, generating important socio-economic dynamics for the revitalisation of the border and its communities. It is expected the strengthening of relations between border communities and the increase of social enjoyment of this space, promoting actions of sharing, of exchanges in the construction of a joint strategy of effective promotion of an integrated tourist offer. The articulation between resources, infrastructures and services should promote mobility and territorial cohesion.

5. Conclusions

In the border region of Central Portugal with Spain, we have witnessed a loss of economic dynamism and a negative evolution of the population, which has weakened the territories and their economies. In these scenarios, heritage, natural and cultural resources may contribute to the strengthening of tourism, which, in turn, makes it possible to diversify economic structures and strengthen territorial competitiveness and social equity. The heritage, material and immaterial, of this region, associated with its history, cultural diversity, and natural resources generate relevance and international recognition. They constitute arguments for the construction of a growing tourist function in these territories and foster attractiveness and entrepreneurship. The expansion of tourism stimulates the economy, preserving values and identities and generating new uses and functions. Furthermore, it promotes the consolidation of relations between communities and their mobility along the border, allowing exchanges and the desired sustainability.

Cooperation programmes and institutions have played a key role in channelling financial resources to these territories. In general terms, borders and administrative boundaries are understudied components of tourism mobility, being traditionally perceived as mobility territories for other destinations and not as tourist destinations themselves. The historical recognition of borders, their political relations, cultural hybridisms, historical heritage, and natural resources bring new interests to these spaces and their functioning.

It is essential to capitalize on the natural and cultural resources in the development of tourism and the creation of services, enhancing entrepreneurial and resilient strategies towards the territory. It is urgent to evaluate the strategies, the ongoing initiatives and the effects of the cooperation policies, in order to reconsider the formats of support and development of border regions in peripheral spaces. The border between central Portugal and Spain, as an international space, composed of a vast and valuable heritage, must assume increasing recreational and touristic functions, enhancing neighborly relations and generating international attractiveness.

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