

SPACE, DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN: THE LAST FRONTIER

ESPAÇO, DESENVOLVIMENTO E ACESSIBILIDADE ENTRE PORTUGAL E ESPANHA: A ÚLTIMA FRONTEIRA

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ABSTRACT/RESUMO

Cross-border Regional development is one of the EU current major concerns. These regions are usually less dynamic socio-economically and tend to be peripheral areas in each country. In the last thirty years some of these regions have benefited from new roads, which have mainly been funded through the European financial program of Transnational Transport Networks, TEN-T. Since the beginning of this implementation process and after initial observations on the impacts, some development problems are unexpectedly getting worse. Using socioeconomic data from the Portugal/Spain cross-border area a model able to measure the relation between accessibility and development in this region is being calibrated. This paper is an initial study on the calibration process for some Portuguese municipalities in the border area for the period 1991-2001. This initial study also prepares the setting for a more complete study covering both sides of the border, already including some Spanish data. Do both sides of the old frontier have conditions to overcome their status of 'less development zones'? This is one of the Europe frontiers against future cohesion.

Keywords: Spatial Analysis, Regional Development, Accessibility.

JEL Codes: R15, R42, R58, O18, C31

O desenvolvimento regional nas regiões de fronteira são actualmente uma das maiores preocupações da União Europeia. Estas regiões são habitualmente menos dinâmicas em termos socioeconómicos e tendem a ser áreas periféricas no contexto dos países onde se inserem. Nos últimos trinta anos algumas destas regiões beneficiaram de novas infra-estruturas rodoviárias, financiadas sobretudo pelo programa TEN-T. Desde o início da implementação do programa e após observação dos primeiros impactos, verifica-se que alguns dos problemas de desenvolvimento destas regiões tendem a agravar-se. Usando dados socioeconómicos das regiões de fronteira entre Portugal/Espanha, um modelo capaz de medir a relação entre acessibilidade e desenvolvimento nestas regiões está a ser calibrado. Este artigo é um estudo inicial do processo de calibração para alguns municípios portugueses do norte e centro do país no período 1991-2001. Este estudo inicial também estabelece as bases para um estudo mais completo que abranja os dois lados da fronteira, incluindo já alguns dados espanhóis. Será que estas regiões, em ambos os lados da fronteira, têm condições para ultrapassar o seu estatuto de zonas menos desenvolvidas? Esta é uma das 'fronteiras' europeias contra a coesão.

Palavras-chave: Análise Territorial, Desenvolvimento Regional, Acessibilidade.

Códigos JEL: R15, R42, R58, O18, C31

1. INTRODUCTION

The spatial distribution of activities is the result of opportunities and localization strategies outlined in terms of specific objectives (Ribeiro and Silva, 2010). If we take into account that most human activities involve using and sharing limited resources it is easy to see that the decision processes are complex and involve an important economic component. The acceleration of regional development, particularly in peripheral and border regions – as in our case – seems generally to be associated with substantial capital investment, the allocation of sophisticated technical and scientific resources to production systems, and a thorough renovation of the economy. Building new infrastructure in these areas also leads to significant public investment to make private capital more productive, and it is hoped, therefore, that the expansion of networks and systems will, in the first place, enable firms to operate at lower costs and achieve better performance and, second, mean that the resulting productivity gains will increase the range of regional economic activity. Our geographical working area is considered a peripheral region; it is facing a sharp population decline, weak business dynamics, and its transport infrastructure is referred to as being little in line with the local development needs.

Two characteristics of this type of territory can help us better understand these local needs. First, based on census data, there is a significant trend for the number of young people to fall and the elderly population to increase, with particularly disturbing future implications. In fact, although this is only a reduction in the younger population, it necessarily implies a future reduction in workforce; this trend means that an increasingly small active population will have to support a growing number of elderly people. The region can realistically only establish a trend towards population stabilization if people come from outside, that is, if the territories are attractive, because there is no credible prospect of a change in the sign (negative) of natural increase. And a young potentially active population is essential for regional development.

Second, the topography and water courses (as well as political decisions) have always conditioned the structure of the main road network of the area. This situation has changed very little in recent years. Apart from the delay that has been systematically observed in improving some of the main roads crossing the region – essential to both the permeation of the national territory and to penetrating either side of the border – the capillary network has not been properly addressed by the authorities. These networks are doubly important for the integrated development of the region. From an inside point of view it represents more direct links between Portuguese towns. From a wider strategic point of view, it represents links to neighboring Spanish settlements. This latter issue is fundamental to a cross-border cooperation (CBC) pattern which age-old tradition needs to preserve and enhance in order to improve local economic dynamics.

Accessibility in general and the transport infrastructure in particular are fundamental to the integrated development of any region. To achieve this target it is necessary they exist and act as such. However, although some components have not yet gone beyond the virtual planning stage, the region – on both sides of the border – is already endowed with an interesting range of transport infrastructure. One issue here is that not all of these new or improved roads operate at full use of their capacity (or else they do not do so in network).

While infrastructure construction and the implementation of transport systems in these regions, which are simultaneously remote and border areas, may be guided by the principle of territorial equity, we are also aware that logic should prevail in local claims; any requests for investment of generic utility should be replaced by more selective interests that are easier to support technically and economically.

Whilst it is not possible to eliminate the effects of the past it is nonetheless legitimate to balance any development opportunities in this region with scenarios of more and/or improved accessibility at national, interregional and cross border levels.

These background considerations demonstrate the importance of this subject, although it has not been treated in any depth in the literature.

In fact, recent examination of the most prestigious science databases shows that specific papers devoted to this issue are quite rare, and even fewer have focused on cross-border accessibility, and most of these are qualitative in nature. This paper thus aims to provide some new scientific knowledge about the impact of accessibility on sustainable development. A specific cross-border region between Portugal and Spain has been chosen as a case study, and previous results in similar studies are also used.

First we selected a group of 15 cross-border municipalities and through a classical regression analysis we evaluated the above relationship, considering only these municipalities' access connections within Portugal. Then we repeated the process but added information concerning access connections with Spain for those 15 municipalities. Finally we include some information about Spanish municipalities directly connected to the other side of the border, next to the Portuguese municipalities. These three stages are the focus of this paper.

In a fourth stage this work will be extended to all municipalities on both sides of the entire Portugal/Spain border. This later stage will also be developed within a spatial regression framework, with the addition of the 'location' variable as an explanatory variable for development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considerable investment has been made in new road infrastructure in recent decades. This investment has mainly been supported by the argument that road links are im-

portant tools in improving social and economic cohesion. In Europe the related policies and actions aim to consolidate the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and provide closer links between core and peripheral countries (European Commission, 2007). The positive influence of transport infrastructure (through improved accessibility) in development is a widely accepted concept. But the full validity of this concept has not yet been established. The great majority of studies about how accessibility impacts on development apply on a spatially aggregated basis and use methodologies and models such as cost benefit analysis with production functions (Aschauer, 1989), among others. Rietveld and Bruinsma (1998) and Banister and Berechman (2000) report a wide range of approaches. Research in Portugal uses the same aggregated approaches to show that new transport infrastructure positively affects the global Portuguese economic performance (Pereira and Andraz, 2005). The growing complexity of spatial socioeconomic interactions has recently called for the use of more disaggregated spatial units and the inclusion of the 'location' factor, arguing that the positive effects are weaker when looking at it on a local basis (Mas *et al.*, 1996; Guild, 2000). The use of accessibility indicators is an important step forward, as seen in the works of Vickerman (1995), Button (1995), Forslund and Johansson (1995), Gutiérrez and Urbano (1996) and, more recently, Lopez and Gutierrez (2008) related to important new European transport infrastructures and consolidating the concept of 'potential accessibility'. However, the calculation of accessibility is not enough to measure the way it acts as a development factor. Páez (2004) makes some important advances by using the same type of accessibility indicators as variables in a spatial regression analysis framework supported by the spatial econometrics work of Luc Anselin (1988). Besides Páez, the work of Anselin has inspired great number of contributions since the beginning of the millennium, *e.g.* Mur (2009). The same methodology is now used in recent Portuguese work (Ribeiro, 2009). The number of kilometers of Portugal's network of major roads has increased substantially in the last twenty years (through the TEN-T program), as has happened in many European countries (Santos *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, most of the country felt a huge increase in accessibility but the corresponding improvement in development has not matched expectations, since in many areas population continues to decline (Gaspar *et al.*, 2002). These negative effects are more pronounced in cross-border areas, where a spatial regression analysis is used to explain to what extent the new accessibility achieved by the new roads has affected population growth at municipality level (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2010). Overall, cross-border areas have become increasingly important in the context of European integration, particularly since the recent enlargement. Usually, but not always, peripheral to the main city centers within their country's spatial structure, these regions suffer from chronic development problems (many of them related to centuries of history and changing boundaries). Among other similar programs, the Euro-

pean Commission approved recently (2007) a European program for cross-border cooperation between Spain and Portugal for the period 2007-2013 (<http://www.poctep.eu>). The efforts are now concentrating on improving connectivity and basic infrastructures in the border areas in a new approach aimed at improving competitiveness, promoting employment and enhancing socioeconomic and institutional integration in the border regions. Therefore, it is fundamental to analyze how the existing transport infrastructures can do better to meet those objectives. The scientific background (to the relation between accessibility and development) does not go much further than the literature mentioned above, and on cross-border issues it is extremely recent, largely resulting from recent European funded projects (and mainly qualitative). And there is no article on the application of spatial regression analysis to this subject. In fact, the most prestigious relevant database contains very few articles about cross-border regions, development and accessibility (or transport), (Mesarec and Lep, 2009; Johnson, 2009; Lopez *et al.*, 2009). As Portuguese examples, several articles have examined the same type of issues. For example Silva (2005) and Cavaleiro *et al.* (2009). But again, these important studies consider the availability of direct transport infrastructure as the indicator for development and do not analyze the significance of that potential impact. Globally, there seems to be a lack of scientific research on transport infrastructure impact as a spatial development factor for cross border regions.

3. STUDY AREA, DATA AND METHODOLOGY

At this stage we selected a group of 15 Portuguese cross-border municipalities (Figure 1) and evaluated the above relationship, considering these municipalities accessibility connections within the Portuguese territory, using a classical regression analysis. In future stages we will include data from both sides of the border, always taking the municipality as the unit.

Two sets of variables are needed for the regression: those that could reflect development and those that could induce development. The variables that could reflect spatial development are socioeconomic (*e.g.* population variation, if taken as a good proxy for product data¹). The variables that could induce development (or not) include population literacy (*School Background*) and/or accessibility levels (*Accessibility*); the later one potentially inducing development and closer to transport infrastructure investment. Variables like population variation and population literacy will be collected from current Census data and/or correlated databases². Some of the accessibility models

¹ There is no reliable information on product at municipality level.

² Of interest is the Census Data Collection expected within Portuguese territory for 2011, which means an excellent opportunity to enhance the accuracy of our results.

consider not only these variables, but also the time/distance calculated from digitalized transport networks³. These

transport networks are those appropriate to serve the spatial structure formed by the spatial units selected.

FIGURE 1. THE SET OF 15 MUNICIPALITIES UNDER STUDY WITHIN PORTUGAL MAINLAND

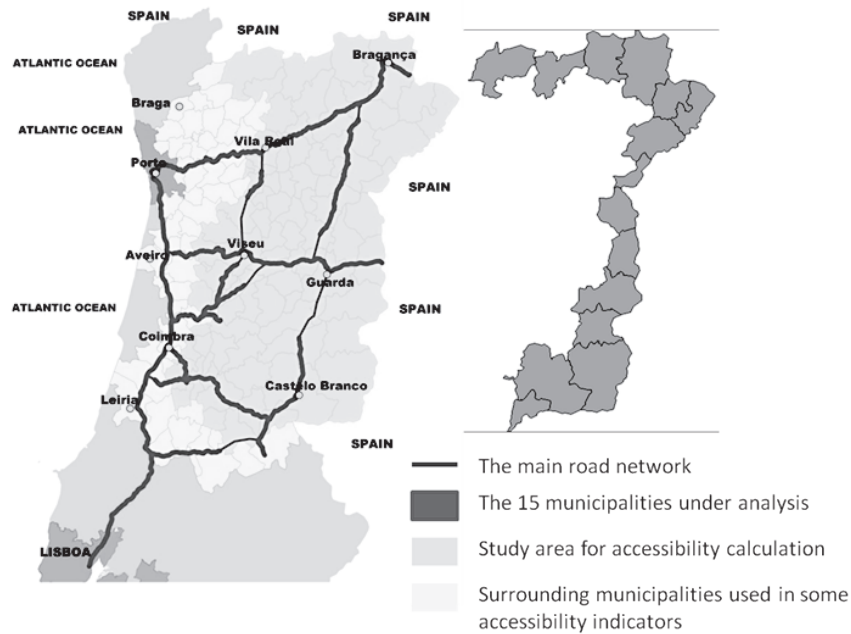


TABLE 1. NUMBER AND TYPE OF CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS OF EACH MUNICIPALITY

| Municipalities (from North to South) | Motorway (T=7) | International Road (T=6) | Interregional Road (T=5) | Surfaced Road (T=4) | Unsurfaced Road (T=3) | Road Subject to Restrictions (T=2) | Railway (T=1) |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------|
| Montalegre | | | | 3 | | | |
| Chaves | | 1 | | | | | |
| Vinhais | | | | 1 | | | |
| Bragança | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Vimioso | | | | 1 | | | |
| Miranda do Douro | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | | |
| Mogadouro | | | 1 | | | | |
| Freixo de Espada à Cinta | | | | 1 | | | |
| Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo | | | 1 | | | | |
| Almeida | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Sabugal | | | | | | | |
| Penamacor | | | 1 | | | | |
| Idanha-a-Nova | | | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Castelo Branco | | | | | | | |
| Vila Velha de Ródão | | | | | | 1 | |

³ Potential accessibility of a municipality is the total activity (population, product, etc.) reachable within a certain distance time from that municipality to the others that are part of a certain study area.

Then we repeated the process but added information on access connections with Spain for those 15 municipalities. For this a new variable was included to add a specific classification to each of the 15 municipalities, according to the number and type of its connections with the Spanish side of the border. Table 1 describes the number and type of all those connections. It also shows a classification we imposed on each type of connection, i.e., from Motorway (T=7) – on the left, to Railway⁴ (T=1) – on the right.

Using all these data a new variable might then be built, arranging the municipalities in order of their importance in terms of the number and type of cross-border connections with Spain, as in Equation 1:

$$\text{Connection } 2010_i = (\text{n.º of Motorways}_i * 7) + (\dots) + (\text{n.º of Railways}_i * 1) \quad (1)$$

This variable, called *Connection 2010*, led to the following classification (Table 2):

**TABLE 2. MUNICIPALITIES
IN CONNECTION 2010 ORDER**

| Municipalities | Connection 2010 (classification) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sabugal | 0 |
| Castelo Branco | 0 |
| Vila Velha de Ródão | 2 |
| Vinhais | 4 |
| Vimioso | 4 |
| Freixo de Espada à Cinta | 4 |
| Mogadouro | 5 |
| Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo | 5 |
| Penamacor | 5 |
| Chaves | 6 |
| Montalegre | 12 |
| Almeida | 12 |
| Idanha-a-Nova | 13 |
| Bragança | 15 |
| Miranda do Douro | 16 |

This variable represents ‘actual’ connections and a special note must be made on that. How can we compare present connections with population evolution between 1991 and 2001? The answer relies on the fact that all the new connections are part of a National Road Plan known since 1985 and therefore able to produce changes associated with the expectations of the local development it generates.

In a final analysis for this stage, we developed the same type of analysis but considering socio economic data from

the other side of the border. Within that purpose, we consider Spanish population growth for the same period (1991-2001), and for the geographical areas in the border with the 15 Portuguese municipalities. In this point we needed to develop a previous geographical analysis aggregating Spanish municipality’s data into artificial geographical areas (that can be compared in size with the Portuguese ones, because Spanish municipalities are generally much smaller).

Besides the variable *Connection 2010* (which is naturally the same for the two sides of the border), we do not have at this stage information about population literacy or detailed accessibility variables for Spain, to develop the exact same type of regression for the Spanish side. Therefore, we calculate a simple accessibility variable (distance time to the national capital – *DistCap*) for both sides of the border, which can be used as a control variable in the Spanish regressions (this variable is taken as ‘actual’ accessibility, in 2010, because it is assumed that the new roads were built during the decade 1991-2001, therefore inducing development during this period).

There will be two more important stages in the near future, as mentioned earlier: to extend this work to all municipalities located in both sides along the entire Portugal/Spain border, adding new variables and afterwards to extend this analysis within a spatial regression analysis framework.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Within the framework of regression analysis and using all data selected for the Portuguese cross-border municipalities under analysis, the modeled relations (between the variables that reflect development and the ones with the potential to induce development) will hopefully add scientific weight to knowledge on significant spatial development tendencies for the region. Accessibility variables enter in the regression as independent ones, therefore as variables potentially able to induce development.

So, as previously mentioned, next points refer: a) to the use of Portuguese socioeconomic and accessibility data, b) to the inclusion of variable *Connection 2010* in the previous analysis, and c) to the use of some available Spanish socioeconomic and accessibility data, keeping *Connection 2010* as a common variable. In this later analysis, the Spanish regression was also compared with the Portuguese identical regression, *i.e.*:

A) ONE ASSUMING A RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH NOTHING EXISTS BEYOND THE BORDER:

$$\text{PopulationPt}_{1991-2001} = f(\text{AcessibilityPt}_{1991-2001}; \text{School BackgroundPt}_{1991}) \quad (2)$$

Where: $\text{PopulationPt}_{1991-2001}$ and $\text{AcessibilityPt}_{1991-2001}$ respectively represent population variation and potential accessibility variation between 1991 and 2001; and the

⁴ Although a railway is not a road access it still exists and adds real connection between on opposite sides of the border.

School BackgroundPt₁₉₉₁ represents the highest education level achieved by the population in 1991.

In a) the following results were obtained (Table 3):

TABLE 3. RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH NOTHING EXISTS BEYOND THE BORDER

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Probability |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| CONSTANT | -22.4829 | 2.0011 | 11.2350 | 0.0000 |
| School BackgroundPt ₁₉₉₁ | 6.0234 | 0.8487 | 7.0969 | 0.0000 |
| AccessibilityPt ₁₉₉₁₋₂₀₀₁ | -0.1790 | 0.0838 | -2.1356 | 0.0540 |

R² = 0,81

Table 3 shows that when high education level increase 1%, population increases too by around 6.02%; but when potential accessibility level increases 1%, the population decreases 0.18%. Which means that besides the fact that all variables are significant, population with higher education in 1991 seems to have more impact on population increase than variations in potential accessibility between 1991 and 2001. Of course a figure of 0.18% is too low, but even so it has a negative sign which it is not a good prognosis for this group of municipalities.

In addition, taking into account its socioeconomic characteristics, this result was expected: if the territory does not have enough infrastructures to ensure welfare the population will try to leave the territory as soon as appears accessibility increases and/or improves.

B) ONE ADDING DATA CONCERNING THE ABOVE MENTIONED CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS:

$$\text{PopulationPt}_{1991-2001} = f(\text{AccessibilityPt}_{1991-2001}; \text{School BackgroundPt}_{1991}; \text{ConnectionPtSp}_{2010}) \quad (3)$$

Where the new variable ConnectionPtSp₂₀₁₀, represents the importance of cross-border connections with Spain, in 2010, as mentioned in Table 2.

In b) the following results were obtained (Table 4):

TABLE 4. RELATIONSHIP INCLUDING CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Probability |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| CONSTANT | -21.2264 | 2.2248 | -9.5409 | 0.0000 |
| School BackgroundPt ₁₉₉₁ | 6.3370 | 0.8730 | 7.2583 | 0.0000 |
| AccessibilityPt ₁₉₉₁₋₂₀₀₁ | -0.2082 | 0.0858 | -2.4269 | 0.0336 |
| ConnectionPtSp ₂₀₁₀ | -0.2517 | 0.2092 | -1.2036 | 0.2540 |

R² = 0,84

The results from Table 4 are similar to the previous case. But, besides the fact that the new variable (Connection₂₀₁₀) is not significant, we may add to the general conclusion that when the cross-border connections are improved by 1%, the population decreases 0.25%. Anyway, we can again see that enhanced accessibility within the Portuguese territory and more cross-border connections will combine to contribute to a decrease of population.

C) ONE ADDING DATA CONCERNING SPANISH POPULATION AND ACCESSIBILITY TO THE CAPITAL:

$$\text{PopulationSp}_{1991-2001} = f(\text{DistCapSp}_{2010}; \text{ConnectionPtSp}_{2010}) \quad (4)$$

In c) the following results were obtained (Table 5):

TABLE 5. RELATIONSHIP INCLUDING SPANISH POPULATION GROWTH, ACCESSIBILITY TO THE SPANISH CAPITAL AND CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Probability |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| CONSTANT | 0.0428 | 0.1568 | 0.2734 | 0.7890 |
| DistCapSp ₂₀₁₀ | -0.0007 | 0.0006 | -1.1855 | 0.2588 |
| ConnectionPtSp ₂₀₁₀ | -9.747497 e-005 | 0.0033 | -0.0293 | 0.9771 |

R² = 0.12

From this analysis we can conclude that neither of the variables used as independent is significant. Accounting for the fact that they are both accessibility related variables, this means that population growth in the Spanish side is both independent from the existence of connections with Portugal and from the distance to the national capital, Madrid. In order to further confirm this result, the analysis was repeated but for Portuguese data:

$$\text{PopulationPt}_{1991-2001} = f(\text{DistCapPt}_{2010}; \text{ConnectionPtSp}_{2010}) \quad (5)$$

So the following results were obtained (Table 6):

TABLE 6. RELATIONSHIP INCLUDING PORTUGUESE POPULATION GROWTH, ACCESSIBILITY TO THE PORTUGUESE CAPITAL AND CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Probability |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| CONSTANT | -12.0262 | 9.9643 | -1.2069 | 0.2507 |
| DistCapPt ₂₀₁₀ | 0.0024 | 0.0365 | 0.0655 | 0.9488 |
| ConnectionPtSp ₂₀₁₀ | 0.1415 | 0.4934 | 0.2946 | 0.7733 |

R² = 0.009953

As in the previous analysis, population growth in the Portuguese side is both independent from the existence of connections with Portugal and from the distance to the national capital, Lisbon.

These results are in line with previous ones. In fact *Connection 2010* never was significant, potential Accessibility was significant but with a inverse relation (the bigger the accessibility the smaller the population growth), and the only determinant variable in Population growth was the School Background of resident population.

Further analyses should investigate deeply these conclusions, measuring more precisely the 'perverse' accessibility effect for cross border regions. For these future analyses, a more accurate definition of comparable geographical areas in both sides of the border is desirable, a work absolutely needed for investigation and for trans-boundary cooperation projects. This is the first and main objective of further steps.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This work's main objective is to start to build a model able to measure the relation between accessibility and development for all the municipalities in the Portugal/Spain cross-border area. This scientific opportunity stems from the observation of huge road infrastructure investment, often indicated as being little in line with the local development needs in peripheral regions that are currently facing sharp population decline and weak business dynamics.

At the same time, and since this subject is of so much importance, it is surprising that very few studies have focused on quantitatively measuring the complex relationship between accessibility and development.

This study has selected the particular case of cross-border regions, since these are usually the most depressed areas in both countries. It will be developed in four main stages and this paper deals with the first three: at first we selected a group of 15 cross-border municipalities and through a classical regression analysis we evaluated the above relationship, considering only these municipalities' access connections within Portugal; then we repeated the process but added information concerning access connections with Spain for those 15 municipalities; in a third stage we will include data on the Spanish municipalities directly connected to the other side of the border, next to the Portuguese municipalities; in a fourth stage this work will be extended to all municipalities on both sides of the entire Portugal/Spain border and a spatial regression analysis will also be included.

So far, the results suggest that increased accessibility within the countries and good connections with Portugal/Spain, respectively, are less relevant for local development than school background, or are insignificant. Moreover, an increase in national potential accessibility or in connection seems to have a negative influence on population increase.

These results show that locally, and particularly for cross-border municipalities, accessibility seems to be quite an irrelevant factor in development.

The concept of new economic geography deals with the distribution of economic activities across space and tries to explain regional disparities by endogenous locations decisions. Of course accessibility is related with physical geography too. But accessibility is not confined to a single definition and depends on several factors. So, while exploring cross border regions in terms of geography a key question is whether or not markets access is measured only by natural distance and geographical features. In fact, nowadays markets access is associated to transport infrastructures as well as telecommunication networks, institutional factors and even political and cultural parameters. Thus the notion of markets access is placed in a broad framework (Dimitris *et al.*, 2010) and the study of cross border regions development do needs an interdisciplinary approach.

The fourth stage of this analysis (see above) will help to consolidate the conclusions that have been drawn in this paper as the launching pad for this important analysis.

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