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## THE CHANGES IN POPULATION AND URBANIZATION OF THE BORDER AREAS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

The paper deals with the changes in population and urbanization of the areas adjoining the state borders of Spain and Portugal. These borders, as is well known, are one of the most stable in Europe and well incorporated in the cultural landscape. The border areas include all first-degree administrative units which are in direct contact with the land state border.

The provinces of Spain adjoining the border cover an area of 145,481 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 28.8 per cent of Spain's total area and 29.5 per cent of its continental part. The border districts of Portugal occupy an area of 56,632 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 61.7 per cent of the country's total area and 63.8 per cent of its continental part.

The social and economic development of a country depends to a large extent on the population: its size, distribution, rate of increase and structure. A large number of inhabitants can mean, among other things, that the country has a high intellectual and economic capacity, whereas a rapid population increase may show that the country is in good economic condition and that it is highly attractive to the immigrants. A slow population increase, and in particular depopulation processes, are typical of the areas characterized by economic depression.

Urbanization is very important for economic development of the area. Towns, especially big cities, fulfill a number of development-promoting functions and urbanization, being usually the result of economic development, is a significant element of social and economic transformations.

### CHANGES IN POPULATION OF BORDER AREAS FROM THE MID-19TH C. TO 1991

Starting from the first, official census (censo oficial) which was carried out in 1857, the population in Spain has shown a systematic though varied increase in periods of time between particular censuses. In the years 1857-1991 the population in Spain increased from 15,454.5 thousand to 39,297.1 thousand

inhabitants (an increase by 154.3 %). In the continental part it increased from 14,957.8 thousand to 36,913.5 thousand (by 146.8 %). In the period under investigation there was an absolute increase in population also in the provinces adjoining the border (from 3,913.7 thousand to 6,720.1 thousand, i.e. by 71.7 %), yet in all the investigated periods population increase was lower here than in the continental part of Spain. Because of that the share of 13 border provinces in population distribution of the continental part of

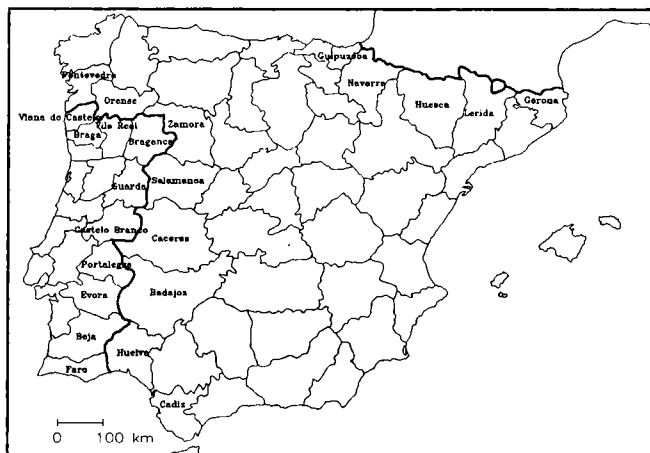


Fig. 1. Border provinces of Spain and districts in Portugal

Spain decreased slowly but systematically. It decreased from 26.17 per cent in 1857 to 24.58 per cent in 1900, 22.79 per cent in 1930, 21.47 per cent in 1960 and 18.20 per cent in 1991.

However, in different parts of Spain adjoining the border the situation varied considerably. In the provinces adjoining the border with Portugal the population increased in the years 1857-1991 from 2,194.8 thousand to 3,324.8 thousand (by 51.48 %), i.e. to a lesser extent than in all border areas. The population in the provinces bordering on Portugal was increasing until 1960, when it attained the number of 3,617.3 thousand inhabitants. In the next decades a small but systematic population decrease was observed, to reach 3,331.0 thousand in 1970, 3,328.3 thousand in 1981, and 3,324.8 thousand in 1991. In effect, the share of the provinces adjoining the border with Portugal in the total number of inhabitants of the continental part of Spain decreased from 14.67 per cent in 1857 to 14.51 per cent in 1900, 13.78 per cent in 1930, 12.45 per cent in 1960, and 9.01 per cent in 1991.

In Spanish provinces adjoining the border with France the population increased in the years 1857-1991 from 1,328.7 thousand to 2,298.9 thousand, i.e. by 73.0 per cent. However, the periods of population increase alternated several times with periods of population decrease. Thus, for in-

stance, in the years 1857-1877 and 1887-1897 a population decrease was observed. In other periods between the censuses there was a population increase in France-bordering Spanish provinces, and in the years 1950-1970 the increase was substantial. Generally, the share of the provinces adjoining the border with France in population of the continental part of Spain decreased from 8.88 per cent in 1857 to 6.23 per cent in 1991. This systematic decrease was observed until 1950 (6.15 %), in the next two decades there was an increase (6.48 % in 1970) to be followed by another decrease.

The population of the province of Cádiz, adjoining the border with Gibraltar increased in the years 1857-1991 from 390.2 thousand inhabitants to 1,096.4 thousand inhabitants, i.e. it increased almost three times (by 181.0 %). The population increase was observed here in all investigated periods between the censuses except in the years 1920-1930. The share of that province in population of the continental part of Spain increased from 2.61 per cent in 1857 to 2.97 per cent in 1991.

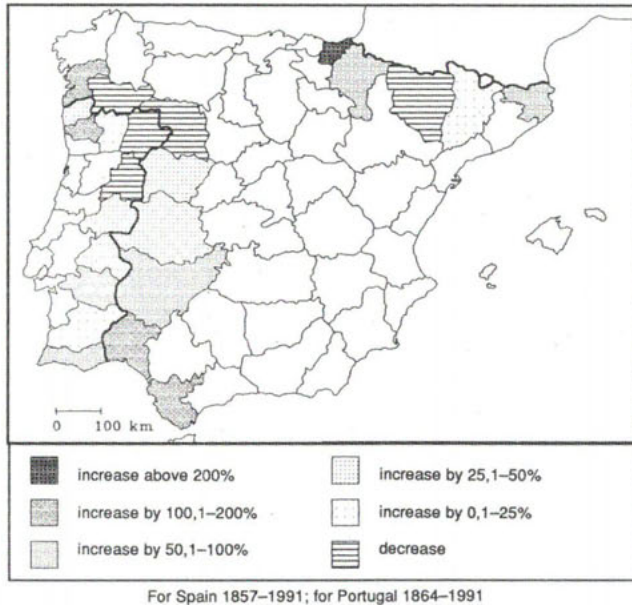
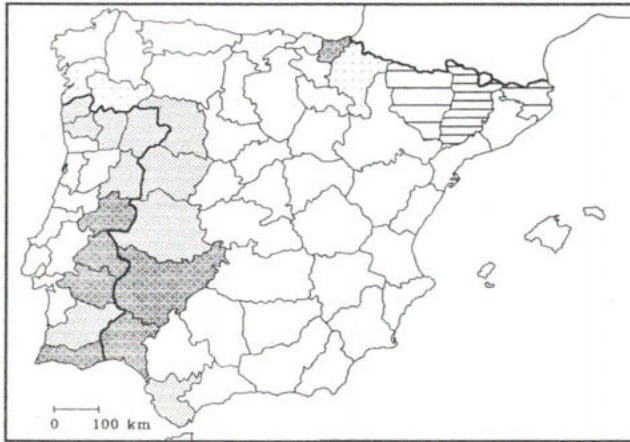


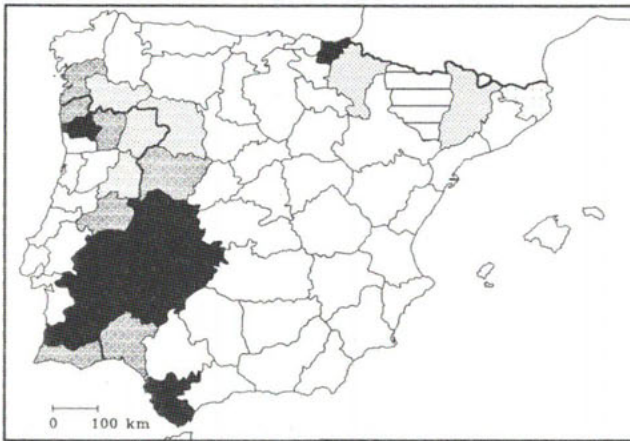
Fig. 2. Changes in number of population in border areas from the mid-19th century to 1991

Population increase in the areas adjoining the borders varied depending on the geographic situation of administrative units with regard to the seashore. Generally it can be said that it was much bigger in the border provinces situated at the seaside (*marítimo-fronterizas*) than in other border provinces (*fronterizas*). In the former in the years 1857-1991 the population increased by 148.1 per cent, in the latter it increased by a mere 26.2 per cent. In addition, in the *marítimo-fronterizas* provinces a popula-



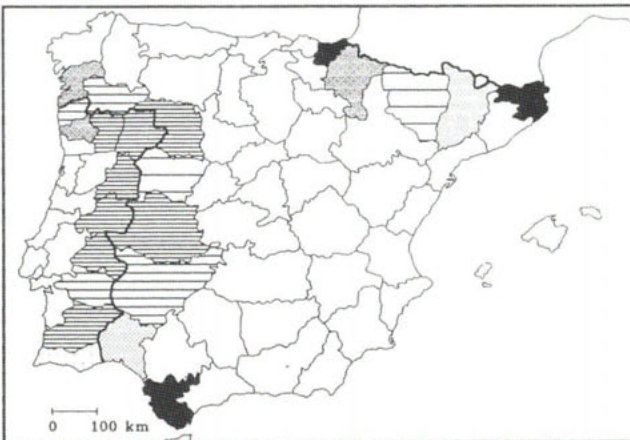
- increase above 50%
- ▨ increase by 25,01–50%
- ▧ increase by 10,01–25%
- ▩ increase by 0,01–10%
- ▭ decrease by 0,01–10%
- ▮ decrease by 10,01–25%
- ▯ decrease by 25,01–50%

**Fig. 3. Changes in number of population in border areas from the mid-19th century to 1900**



- increase above 50%
- ▨ increase by 25,01–50%
- ▧ increase by 10,01–25%
- ▩ increase by 0,01–10%
- ▭ decrease by 0,01–10%
- ▮ decrease by 10,01–25%
- ▯ decrease by 25,01–50%

**Fig. 4. Changes in number of population in border areas in the years 1900-1950**



- increase above 50%
- ▨ increase by 25,01–50%
- ▧ increase by 10,01–25%
- ▩ increase by 0,01–10%
- ▭ decrease by 0,01–10%
- ▮ decrease by 10,01–25%
- ▯ decrease by 25,01–50%

**Fig. 5. Changes in number of population in border areas in the years 1950-1991**

tion increase was observed in all the periods between the censuses, whereas in the frontier provinces the number of inhabitants has been systematically decreasing since 1960. A relatively high population increase in the years 1857-1991 was characteristic of the *marítimo-fronterizas* provinces both as concerns the provinces adjoining the French border (an increase by 156.0%) and those adjoining the Portuguese border (an increase by 120.6%). In the frontier provinces of both border-regions the increase was several times smaller (by 28.0% and 25.3%, respectively). In both border-regions the *marítimo-fronterizas* provinces are characterized — apart from a relatively big population increase — by its systematic increase in all the periods between the censuses, whereas in the frontier provinces there were periods of a population decrease. In the provinces adjoining the French border the phenomenon of depopulation was observed in the years 1857-1877 and 1887-1897, whereas in the frontier provinces adjoining the Portuguese border the population has been systematically decreasing since 1950!

In 1991 the mean population density of the provinces adjoining the borders was equal to 46.2 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. it was smaller than in the whole country (77.8 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup> and almost two times smaller than in the remaining provinces of the continental part of Spain (87.0 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). Such low value of population density is mainly due to the fact that a small number of people inhabit the provinces adjoining both the Portuguese border (36.3 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>) and the French border (49.6 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). There are large disproportions in population between the frontier border provinces (26.9 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>) and the *marítimo-fronterizas* provinces (119.9 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). In 1991 the highest population density was observed in the provinces: Guipúzcoa (338.7 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>), Pontevedra (198.1) and Cádiz (148.5). The lowest population density was found in the provinces: Zamora (13.6), Huesca (14.0) and Cáceres (20.5 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). As a result of migration of the population to the regions of Spain which were better developed economically the population of five provinces adjoining the Portuguese border (Zamora, Cáceres, Orense, Badajoz and Huelva) and of one province adjoining the French border (Huesca) was smaller in 1991 than in 1950, and in Zamora, Orense and Huesca it was even lower than in 1857!

In the years 1864-1991 the population of Portugal increased from 4,188.4 thousand inhabitants to 9,846.0 thousand inhabitants, i.e. by 135.1 per cent. In the same period of time the population in the continental part of the country increased from 3,829.6 thousand to 9,356.5 thousand (by 144.3%). The districts adjoining the border were characterized by a much smaller population increase (an increase by 48.7%) in comparison with the remaining districts of the continental part of the country (an increase by 224.7%).

Unlike Spain, where the population had been increasing systematically over all the periods between the censuses, in Portugal in the years 1960-1970

a considerable population decrease was observed due to mass emigration (to Brazil, France, Republic of South Africa, the U.S.A., Venezuela, Germany, and Spain). The process of depopulation of the country was particularly grave in the years 1964-1973, when the number of people decreased from 9,135.7 thousand to 8,978.2 thousand). It was halted after the Pink Revolution when several hundred thousand people returned to Portugal from its former colonies in Africa (the so-called *retornados*). Yet Portugal has remained a country where emigration is high. Only in the years 1966-1987 over 1.4 mln people left Portugal, going on permanent emigration, of which about 60 per cent went on legal emigration and the rest — on clandestine emigration. Due to a slower rate of population increase in the districts adjoining the border in comparison with the remaining districts, situated in the continental part of the country, their share in the total number of inhabitants has been decreasing systematically. It decreased from 45.67 per cent in 1864 to 42.85 per cent in 1900, 38.47 per cent in 1950, and 27.80 per cent in 1991. In some periods between the censuses the population inhabiting the districts adjoining the border decreased. Such a situation occurred for instance in the years 1911-1920, when a large number of the Portuguese emigrated to America, and in the years 1950-1960, 1960-1970, and 1981-1991 which was due to the fact that many people moved to the districts situated by the Atlantic Ocean or emigrated to the countries of Western Europe.

In the years 1864-1991 considerable differences were observed between the people inhabiting the border districts situated by the sea, in which the population increased almost two times (by 97.3 %), and the border districts of the interior in which over a period of 125 years the population had increased by a mere 18 per cent. Population decrease in the border districts situated by the sea was observed in the years 1911-1920 and 1960-1970, whereas in the border districts of the interior the phenomenon of depopulation occurred in the years 1911-1920 and has been continuing since 1950. Depopulation was particularly high in the 1960s, when the number of inhabitants in the above districts decreased by 22 per cent.

The districts adjoining the border are less populated than the other administrative units. The mean population density of the border region (45.9 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>) was almost two times lower than the mean national population density (107.2 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>) and almost five times lower than the population density of the remaining districts of the continental part (210.1 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). Similarly as in Spain, there were large disproportions between particular parts of the border region as far as population is concerned: the mean population density of the border districts situated by the sea was almost five times higher than the mean population density of the border districts of the interior (135.1 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup> against 27.0 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). The most densely populated districts in 1991 were: Braga (277.7 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>) and Viana do Castelo. The mean population density in those two districts was

higher than the mean population density for the continental part of the country. The least densely populated districts were: Beja (16.3 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>), Potalegre (220), Évora (23.4), and Bragança (23.7 persons/1 km<sup>2</sup>). In eight out of ten districts adjoining the border the population in 1991 was smaller than in 1950, and in the districts of Guarda and Bragança it was even smaller than in 1864!

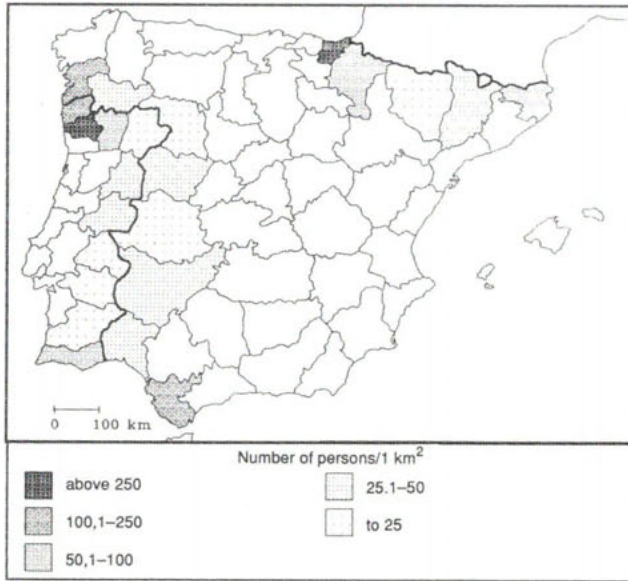


Fig. 6. The population density in border areas in 1991

#### URBANIZATION OF THE AREAS ADJOINING THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE BORDER

In the years 1970-1991 the number of towns (municipal units of over 20 thousand inhabitants) in the Spanish provinces adjoining the Portuguese border increased from sixteen to nineteen. Eight towns were situated in the province of Pontevedra, five in Badajoz, two in Cáceres, and one town (the capital) in each of the remaining four provinces.

Most of the towns have 20,000-30,000 inhabitants, there are also many towns having over 100,000 inhabitants and it is interesting to note that in the years 1970-1991 a process of concentrating urban population in those bigger towns has been observed.

The Spanish provinces adjoining the Portuguese border are weakly urbanized. In the years 1970-1991 urban population increased there from 961.5 thousand to 1,328.0 thousand, and the degree of urbanization increased from 28.9 per cent to 39.9 per cent. The growth of urbanization was not so much the result of dynamic development of the border towns, but rather of depopulation

of rural areas. The marítimo-fronterizas provinces were characterized by a higher degree of urbanization (48.1 %) in comparison with the fronterizas provinces (34.5%). In 1991 the most urbanized provinces were: Pontevedra (56.1% urban population) and Salamanca (43.8%); the least urbanized provinces were: Cáceres (27.0 %) and Orense (29.0%).

In Portugal in the years 1940-1981 the number of towns in the districts adjoining the Spanish border increased from fifteen to eighteen. In three border districts situated by the sea there were 8 towns, and in seven districts of the interior there were 10 towns.

Portuguese towns are small (11 towns with a population below 20,000) and only one town with a population of over 50,000 inhabitants (Braga — 63,000 inhabitants in 1981, 135,200 inhabitants in 1986). The greatest part of urban population is concentrated in towns of less than 20,000 inhabitants, but such towns are gradually losing significance (75.4% in 1940, 42.5% in 1981).

Emigration to the districts situated by the Atlantic Ocean (Setúbal, Lisbon, Porto) and to the countries of Western Europe resulted in depopulation not only of rural areas, but of the towns as well. In effect, in the years 1940-1950 a population decrease was observed in four towns of border districts, in the years 1950-1960 there was a population decrease in three towns, in the years 1960-1970 — in eight out of 16 towns existing at that time, and in the years 1970-1981 — in two towns.

In the years 1940-1981 the number of urban population in the border districts increased from 210.5 thousand to 366.6 thousand, i.e. by 74.1%, whereas at the same time in the continental part of Portugal a twofold increase was observed. The greatest increase was observed in the districts in which new towns appeared.

The districts adjoining the Spanish border are among the most weakly urbanized in Portugal. Although the per cent share of the population living in towns has been increasing (7.4% in 1940, 7.9% in 1950, 8.8% in 1960, 12.0% in 1970, 13.8% in 1981), yet it is still very small and remains almost three times smaller than the degree of urbanization in the remaining districts situated in the continental part of the country (37.3%). The most urbanized border district in 1981 was that of Faro (24.1%). On the other hand, in three districts the degree of urbanization did not exceed 10 per cent (Viana do Castelo, Guarda, Bragança).

## CONCLUSIONS

The border areas on the Iberian Peninsula, as compared with the remaining administrative units of Spain and Portugal, are characterized by smaller population, lower rate of population increase, and also by depopulation which has become particularly intensive in the last decades. The situation is most unfavourable in the areas adjoining the Spanish-Portuguese border, where in



the years 1950-1991 the number of inhabitants decreased in 13 out of 17 administrative units (in Portugal in 8 out of 10 districts; in Spain in 5 out of 7 provinces). The process of depopulation seems to be particularly grave in the mountainous, northern areas situated along the Spanish-portuguese border (Guarda, Bragança, Zamora, Orense) and also in Huesca (near the French border) where the number of inhabitants is now smaller than in the middle of the 19th century.

The demographic situation of the administrative units in both border regions varies depending on geographic situation. It is clearly seen that the provinces (districts) which, being situated near the border, are also situated by the sea, are in a better position than those situated in the interior of the country. The negative processes are not so strong there, and sometimes do not occur at all.

The areas adjoining the border are also among the least urbanized ones where as a rule there are no big towns or cities. At the same time those areas are least developed economically on the Iberian Peninsula. Practically the only big investments there are water reservoirs, dams and hydro-electric power plants built on the frontier rivers, mainly the Duero (Douro). The border pass pasts and increasing tourist traffic have little effect (except in seaside areas) on economic activity and development of tourism in the border areas.

Emigration of the population from border areas is due to many complex phenomena, among them: a growing polarization between individual regions of Spain and Portugal as far as social and economic development (mainly industry) are concerned; high disproportions between the standard of development of both Iberian countries in comparison with the highly developed members of the European Union; better access to information, which means that people are well aware of the present economic situation and growing disproportions of development; and greater possibilities of emigration to the countries of Western Europe.

In spite of advancing integration of the countries of the European Union it seems doubtful if the border areas, and the Spanish-Portuguese border areas in particular, take part in these integrational processes. At this stage of investigations it can be said that the border areas do not form any economic region. Certainly, it is too early yet to draw any far-reaching conclusions, as both Spain and Portugal have been members of the European Union for a very short period of time. However, it can be said today that the effect of integration is much bigger for both countries in global scale, and also for other, better developed regions of the Iberian Peninsula than for border areas.

