

TERRITORIAL HERITAGE AS A TOURISTIC ASSET IN THE «RAYA» OF CASTILLA Y LEÓN BORDERING PORTUGAL

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The Autonomous Community of Castilla y León shares 349 km of its western borders with the Portuguese regions of Centro and Norte. The border extends from the municipality of Hermisende in the province of Zamora to Navasfrías in the province of Salamanca, which is in line with the *mojones* or *mugas* (cairns) agreed on in the «Treaty of Alcañices» or «Concordia of Alcañices» of 12 September 1297. Where rivers divide the border area or *raya*, it is called *raya húmeda* and where the border is located in mountains and penplains the area is named *raya seca*. At the micro level the trans-border space or *espacio transfronterizo* (*Local Administrative Units* or LAU II) consists of 91 administrative units of 4,060.31 km² including 37 municipalities totaling 2,366.27 km² Castilla y León 54 municipalities of the Portuguese fringe with an area of 1,694.04 km². However, the border effect is not only present in its immediate proximity, but also in at some distance in the Districts of Vitigudino and Ciudad Rodrigo in the province of Salamanca, as well as the Districts of Sanabria, Aliste and Sayago in the province of Zamora. Similarly, the border influences life in the Portuguese *raya* in the Districts of Vinhais, Bragança, Vimioso, Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro, Freixo de Espada à Cinta, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Almeida and Sabugal. In sum these supra municipal units (*Local Administrative Units* or LAU I) form a trans-border area of 15,901.25 km².

The border area of Castilla y León is situated in the periphery of both the national territory and its own region. The marginal situation on the western edge reflects remoteness from the centers of administrative and economic decisions and reinforces the idea of its position in the 'periphery of the periphery' of the European Union. In addition much of the area is sadly lacking accessibility and connectivity across the border due the presence of gullies and canyons. As a consequence isolation has resulted in 'confined spaces' or *culs-de-sac*. During many centuries the subsistence economy based on agriculture and forestry has persisted due to locational handicaps, enclosure and internal obstacles. The continuity of a way of life adapted to a difficult rural environment and the absence of basic services up to the second half of the past century has provided the image of a de 'backward' and

‘depressed’ area, equivalent to ‘underdevelopment’. More recently innovative views on the development of these disadvantaged territories have resulted in alternative plans and initiatives to use local touristic resources such as cultural heritage.

The diversity of the physical environment and the rich cultural heritage are the building blocks of a strategy of economic revitalization, which may generate an increase in tourism. With respect to the natural resources the landscape variety expressed in mountains, piedmonts, trenches, peneplains and valleys coincides with the variety in flora and fauna protected by European, national and regional laws. The conservation of nature is now compatible with socioeconomic development, as vast areas along the border are now protected, respectively the *Red de Espacios Naturales Protegidos* (REN), *Red Natura 2000*, *Zonas de Especial Protección para las Aves* (ZEPAs for the protection of birds) and *Lugares de Interés Comunitario* (LICs). At present the natural reserves at the Spanish side of the border are *Lago de Sanabria y alrededores* and *Arribes del Duero*. In addition, the reserves of *El Rebollar* and *Sierra de la Culebra* started a procedure to obtain official protection in 1992 with a Plan of natural resource management (*Plan de Ordenación de los Recursos Naturales* PORN). The procedure is still under way. At the Portuguese side of the border two Natural Parks mirror the Spanish ones, namely *Montesinho* (74,100 ha), *Douro Internacional* (85,150 ha) and the Natural Reserve of *Serra da Malcata* (16,348 ha).

Siega Verde features as cultural heritage of great prehistoric value recognized as World Heritage Site by UNESCO on 1 August 2010. *Siega Verde* is an extension of the Portuguese archeological site of Vale do Côa. Furthermore the Heritage of Cultural Interest (*Bienes de Interés Cultural* or BICs) range from primitive Neolithic settlements and concomitant sculptures of boars to castles, fortresses, religious monuments (monasteries, convents, sanctuaries, chapels and churches) and civil buildings (town halls and palaces). A special mention in the Catalogue of Heritage have respectively the railway from La Fuente de San Esteban to La Fregeneda, due to its construction characteristics in the river beds and slopes, the historical sites of Ciudad Rodrigo, Fermoselle, Puebla de Sanabria, San Felices de los Gallegos and Villardeciervos. The Catalogue also mentions Santa Cruz de los Cuérragos (Manzanal de Arriba) as an ethnological entity and an urban core displaying the traditional architecture of the Sierra de la Culebra in the District of La Carballeda.

With respect to the nonmaterial cultural heritage some local customs have survived, as well as dialects of Galician, Portuguese or Leonese origins like *rebollano* or *palra d’El Rebolla*. Relevant customs are festive rituals and fairs with music, dance and gastronomic events. These resources respectively include the *Fiestas declarada de Interés Turístico Nacional y Regional*, e.g. the *Fiestas tradicionales* like the *Carnaval del Toro* (1965) and *La Charrada* (1991) in Ciudad Rodrigo, *El Noveno* (2005) in San Felices de los Gallegos, *Viernes Santo* (2011) in Bercianos de Aliste, *Romería de los Viriatos* (2010) in Fariza and *Los Carochos* (2002) in Riofrío de Aliste. Also the Holy week in Bercianos de Aliste in the municipality of San Vicente de la Cabeza is recognized as Nonmaterial Cultural Heritage. In the festive calendar are featuring respectively Winter masquerades, carnival and cross-border pilgrimages. During August the villages of the District of Sabugal celebrate the *capeias raianas*, bullfights with a significant symbolic

content associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood. However, today the *capeias* also function as a link that unites migrants with their roots. Finally smuggling forms part of collective memory. It is known as *descamino*, which took place through hidden paths cross the borders, beyond the views of the guards.

The territorial heritage has oriented the public and private sectors to ecotourism in the natural reserves and to cultural and active tourism, exploiting resources that have remained unused until recently. Within each of these types of tourism new demands have created an innovative offer of active tourism. In this respect tourism in the *raya* has been reinvented. As such it is a significant addition to the a traditional types of tourism, based on the beauty of landscapes and border crossing in order to purchase products at lower prices or to enjoy a meal.

The practice of ecotourism or tourism in natural reserves is supervised by Park managers who recommend roundtrips through sign-posted paths and organize environmental education. The opportunities for nature tourism have increased because of the emergence of infrastructure and business, which subsequently promote geological tourism (*geoturismo*), health and spa-oriented tourism, ornithological tourism, observation of wild animals (wolf spotting and listening to the bawls of the deer) and river tourism. Similarly products have been created for visiting monuments, archeological, linguistic, literature, religious and festive tourism, let alone mycological and gastronomic tourism based on local wines and olive oil. The firms specialized in active tourism work on the land (trekking, MTB routes, etc.), on the water (boat trips and boat rental), with animals (trips on horse or donkey back, the latter of the zamorano-leonés specimen) and adventures. Within the range of touristic activities, the innovative ones that have emerged are related to the observation of wild animals, such as bird watching, mycological tourism and the centers and tracks for biking.

As an epilogue one may qualify the *raya* as a territory with a 'geographical disadvantage'. However, the *raya* has some great natural and cultural resources that has the potential to attract visitors and to generate overnight stays. After many years of hard work it is not yet possible to perceive the border area as a 'tourist destination' with a specific label of 'border tourism'. Tourists approach the border because of the conglomerate of products and 'microproducts' that have spontaneously emerged. Taking into consideration a horizon of 2020 in the near future, some actions of coordination and strategic planning are required at the level of Districts and trans-border space in order to achieve a substantial 'border tourism'.