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# Common Regional Development Strategies on Iberian Territories - A Framework for Comprehensive Border Corridors Governance: Establishing Integrated Territorial Development

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## Abstract

Although the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) has made a considerable contribution to increasing transport infrastructure and improving transport services, it still often seems that border regions have reduced accessibility compared to central regions. The Iberian border regions of Alto-Alentejo (Portugal) and Badajoz (Spain) were analyzed. Studies conducted in the Iberian territories confirm some of these regions' unsustainability and the non-impact on the inhabitants' quality of life. Also, a few questions arise: *Can we verify the change in methods and measures used by development strategies? Is it necessary to acquire a more comprehensive view of corridor flows and interactions through common regional development strategies for managing development corridors? Will we influence the change of the methodological approach to be strategic and that it does not imply a corridor only in terms of the flow and mobility of people and goods, but also the search for the causes of movements in growth corridors?* So, infrastructure and connectivity planning, regional economic development, and land use planning are critical contexts in developing territorial policies in the planning of development of corridors and their integration into development processes. This study proposes a framework for strategic corridor governance to increase accessibility and regional equity.

**Keywords:** regional development, corridor, accessibility, governance, sustainable planning

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) strategies and territorial governance arrangements are essential to use territories to use external funding

opportunities to finance their vision of their community or territory's future. However, it is not so simple to apply in practice. Although the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) has made a considerable contribution to increasing transport infrastructure and improving transport services, it still often seems that border regions have reduced accessibility compared to central regions. The Iberian border area along the border regions of Alto Alentejo (Portugal) and Badajoz (Spain) was analyzed, where border regions still appear to be less accessible compared to the central regions despite the considerable contributions of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in terms of equipped with transport infrastructure.

In order to activate all the potentials of border areas in recent decades, EU policies are aimed at increasing cross-border cooperation [1–4].

Common regional development strategies on Iberian territory can be a new framework for comprehensive border corridors governance and situating integrated territorial development. The present research will be presented some hypotheses and new ways *“to generate policy-relevant insights into the interactions and flows occurring within growth corridors”* for a well-planned long-term sustainable territory.

In their discussions on cross-border planning, Peironi and Denert in [5] emphasize the importance of EU regions having their institutional policy towards border regions.

These areas are very often internal peripheries, and their activation can be facilitated by various cross-border interactions that can be planned within common strategies [1–3, 5–8].

Furthermore, building a strategy should identify the issues associated with an area's inner peripheralization and understand the triggers and drivers [9]. Here we made a summary of the data corridor and policy and recommendations measure that can be useful for corridor collaboration, territorial development, and comprehensive corridor governance.

## **2. Common regional development strategies and governance across borderlands**

A policy to enhance or modify the process of peripheralization needs a centered intervention philosophy and relevant combined implementation structures formed within the local, territorial and national governance methods, and demands to be practical, using current policy frameworks and convenient “levers” to perform influence. Besides, a particular focus should then be set on those means thriven by ineffectual connectedness of some form because this differentiates an inner peripheries (IP) from other typologies of the bordering region. The difficulty then is to obtain drivers that can cause a development at an advanced stage and turn around the “spiraling-down” methods of interior boundaries. Although each of the three IP thoughts has distinguishing features, they have, in general, a focus on the requirement to improve various kinds of connectedness [9].

Diverse investigations have analyzed the different kinds of multi-level governance in terms of European integration [10–12]. Multi-level governance formats are necessary for vertical and horizontal coordination between decision-making bodies at different levels and sector policies to manage links between different governance processes, develop multisectoral coordination on local, regional, national, and European actors [6].

Territorial management systems are consequently essential to maintain the development of regional administrations' organizational and flexibility capabilities,

both individually and collectively. So, in a period of enhanced mobilities, the above-mentioned organizations are required to produce a living space capable of handling the in-and outflows of persons - i.e., transitional economy; thus, it is possible to valorize human and financial capital of its citizens - i.e., residential economy; also, to mobilize extra-local networks to create new knowledge encouraging community growth. A relevant characteristic of territorial governance is the regions' capacity to manage external funding possibilities to finance their perception of their society or territory's future [13].

Territorial strategies set specific indicators to check if the regional development is on track. Firstly it should operate primarily through "soft" means, such as the provision of regional analysis and collaboration.

Almost all management levels influence the development of the corridor, so the planning of the growth corridor requires a comprehensive approach to data and their sources to better understand the mutual interactions. Consequently, targeted big data analysis and EGCs were designed to establish the evidence-based plan in European growth corridors joining the TEN-T transport infrastructure network [14].

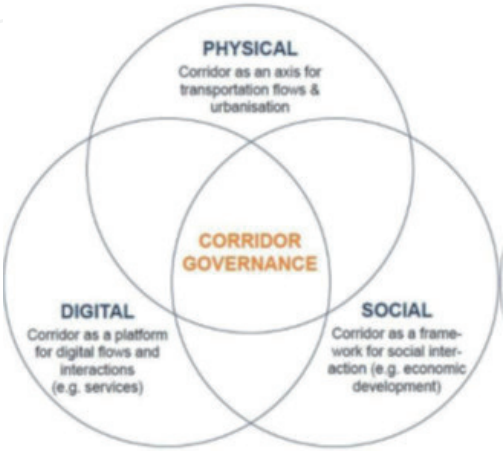
For a broader perception of the synergies within the growth corridor, traditional data references are sufficient, yet more comprehensive, new sources for more comprehensive corridor management [14].

In this regard, the issue is seen from different perspectives for managing growth corridors, carrying into account three coinciding dimensions of development (**Figure 1**) [14].

Contextually, we should consider three dimensions: (a) the physical dimension indicating transportation progress and urbanization; (b) the digital dimension recognizing digital flows and interplays as a significant part of corridor functions; and (c) the social dimension surveying the corridor as a framework for social synergy [14].

So, it is fundamental to progress from data management to data management based on perspicacity received from data and designing the basis for regional development management.

In this regard, **Table 1** presents the categorization of critical flows and interactions, which are extremely important to corridor governance and decision-making, with models of the kinds of data sets that appeal to each type of flow and interaction.



**Figure 1.**  
*Conceptual framework for broadening the perspective of corridor functionalities [14].*

Dimension	Interactions/Flows
Physical	Customer Flows
	Daily Commuting
	Student Mobility
	Tourism & Leisure Flows
	Business Travel Flows
Social	Research Cooperation
	Trade Interaction
	Inter-Firm Cooperation
	Family/Social Interactions
	Student Interactions
	Planning Cooperation
Digital	Purchase flows
	Network traffic flows
	Monetary flows
	Communication flows

**Table 1.**  
*Categorization of example data sources for corridor development (shortened version) [14].*

The Data-Based Territorial Management Strategy and the action plans are the first proposed measures through corridor cooperation, governance, and territorial development. One of the proposed models is also to establish and foster collaboration and partnerships [14].

**3. The Iberian border territory along the border regions of Alto Alentejo (Portugal) and Extremadura (Badajoz-Spain)**

Most of the cross-border region, Sparsely Populated Area (SPA), as well as Alto Alentejo (Portugal) and Extremadura-Badajoz (Spanish side of the border), are located at the margins of the administrative boundaries, small villages poorly connected by road infrastructure, weak urban network, low-density settlement, continued population losses and poor access to public transportation what isolates these settlements from the other surrounding areas.

In fact, SPAs can be schematized as a disorder of inadequately related local economies and communities, physically - i.e., secondary transport infrastructure; institutionally - i.e., loss of inter-municipal cooperation; or functionally - i.e., reduction of commuting beyond municipal borders. For example, in the Spanish case, constant SPAs can be observed along the borders of NUTS2 regions. Also, SPAs could attempt to ‘reconnect’ these populations across geographical borders to properly create a decisive mass of economic and social bonds from within, developing their collective ability to solve joint difficulties and unlock shared possibilities [13].

Contextually, **Table 2** represents of difficulty and obstacles in coordination and comprehensive border corridors governance based on modern studies (see: [10–13]), where have been and highlighted the common regional development between Portugal and Spain.



Common regional strategy	Challenge and obstacles in coordination and comprehensive border corridors governance: establishing integrated territorial development
Transnational coordination	Increasing number of new initiatives
	Setting up a territorial monitoring system
	Better macro-regional institutional cooperation
	Increasing number of regional stakeholders contributing to the implementation process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of qualitative shifts of the political agendas</li></ul>
	Marketing and advertisement strategies are not coordinated
	The Euro-city is fertile to attract tourism and cultural activities
	Political - Strategic Several infrastructures are duplicated in nearby areas/territories
Political coordination and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unemployment rates are still high in the territory</li></ul>
	Planning cooperation
	Integration of Common regional strategy objectives in domestic and European documents/projects, in particular regarding sectoral policies
	Number of strategic projects
	Continued population losses and poor access to public transportation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Several infrastructures are duplicated in nearby areas/territories</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharing resources should be considered to avoid duplication</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of political commitment towards crossborder areas goals and EU standard's</li></ul>
Cross-sector coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transparency and political commitment should be increased</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Common Master-Plans and long-term objectives should be considered</li></ul>
	GDP/ per capita values are considerable low
	Increasing horizontal coordination activities
	Unemployment rates are still high in the territory
	Data-Based Territorial Management Strategy
	Viewing the corridor as a framework for social interaction.
	Common activities and projects increasing number of actors, networks, meetings, projects
	Better tourism and Business Travel Flows
	The issue of connectivity can be related to the upgrading of communication and transport systems (CTS) to support the development of both extra-regional and intra-regional relations.
	Strengthen the evidence base for evidence-based planning in European growth corridors connecting to the TEN-T transport infrastructure network
Multi-level coordination	Participation of all levels
	Involvement of political stakeholders, e.g. the ministers meeting
	Increasing citizen engagement
	Increase transparency on multilevel governance structures and political governmental techniques.
	Improve institutional capacity, economic efficiency, competitiveness, inclusion and sustainability principles

**Table 2.**  
*Challenge and obstacles in coordination and comprehensive border corridors governance: establishing integrated territorial development.*

#### **4. Discussion and conclusions**

In general, CBC planning reveals a loss of engagement at the local, regional, and meso-level, which need to be more actively included in the EU and macro-regional level. This is an extra obstacle to borderlands' successful regional development [9–11, 13]. Thus, it can also be assumed that at this level of CBC planning, there is a shortage of soft, resilient forms of governance which demands a tremendous political commitment as well as the use of already learned lessons regarding coordination and management at different levels that could be applied in this particular case study. The EU funds numerous projects and strategies on the Iberian Peninsula. However, in addition to all these projects and strategies along the Portuguese-Spanish border, several obstacles should be considered for further better territorial and sustainable development [10–22]. Some of them are presented in **Table 2**.

The development of a common regional strategy needs all members' involvement in the decision-making process to succeed all obstacles in coordination and comprehensive border corridors governance to establish integrated territorial development [1–3, 7, 8]. A case study of the CBC project in Iberian territory was presented to understand better the barriers to well-developed joint regional growth in Iberian territory. Several studies have already been conducted, which allowed us to analyze and evaluate outcomes. Border areas, which are also sparsely populated, should certainly support the EU in terms of flexible policies to enable their sustainable development.

Moreover, this study also aims to be useful for policymakers in moving from traditional data sources in the formation and planning of growth corridors to new, more comprehensive data sources that will give better results in preparing joint territorial development strategies in CBC areas [14].

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#### **Conflict of interest**

“The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

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