



HOW TO THINK ABOUT NATIONAL IDENTITY IN BORDER ZONES? AN ANALYSIS FROM TWO SETS OF BRAZILIAN-ARGENTINE TWIN CITIES¹

COMO PENSAR A IDENTIDADE NACIONAL EM ZONAS DE
FRONTEIRA? UMA ANÁLISE A PARTIR DE DOIS CONJUNTOS
DE CIDADES-GÊMEAS BRASILEIRO-ARGENTINAS

COMMENT PENSER L'IDENTITÉ NATIONALE DANS LES
ZONES FRONTIÈRES? UNE ANALYSE DE DEUX ENSEMBLES
DE VILLES JUMENTES BRÉSILIENNES-ARGENTINES

Maristela Ferrari – Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná – Cândido Rondon – Paraná – Brasil

maristela7ferrari@gmail.com

Abstract

The border area is a geographic space that emerges from the territorial political demarcating the boundary between two national states; it lies at the confluence between two territories based on two national identities built within the opposition between “the and others”. But, far from being the only geographic political space, marked by the national identity and territorial belonging, the border area is also social and cultural space. Therefore, also refers to the idea of connection between two territories. Thus, the border area can be thought of as a place that reflects not only the division and the identity/alterity, because if people have multiple identities, the same can be said of places. These places were impregnated with colors that can reveal themselves in the most diverse forms of links or contacts between two officially established identities, among which we produce exchanges not only material but also immaterial, like the cultural. The purpose of this article is to analyze the processes of construction of national identities in a segment of the frontier zone brazilian-argentina and border practices front national identities officially established, notably in the twin cities Dionísio Cerqueira (SC)/Barracão (PR)/Bernardo de Irigoyen (MNES) and Santo Antonio do Sudoeste (PR)/San Antonio (MNES). The work was divided into two parts: the first analyzes the processes of construction of national identity by national states; the second part analyzes how the border inhabitants perceive the national identity and it is appropriated.

Keywords: Border Area. National Identity. Twin Cities. Cross-Border Interactions.

Resumo

A zona de fronteira é um espaço que emerge da demarcação do limite político-territorial entre dois Estados nacionais; ela se encontra na confluência entre dois territórios fundados sobre duas identidades nacionais construídas dentro da oposição entre nós e os outros. Mas, longe de ser apenas um espaço político-geográfico, marcado pela identidade nacional e pertencimento territorial, a zona de fronteira é também espaço social e cultural. Portanto, remete igualmente à ideia de ligação entre dois territórios. Assim, a zona de fronteira pode ser pensada como um lugar que não reflete apenas a divisão e a identidade/alteridade, pois, se as pessoas têm identidades múltiplas, pode-se dizer o mesmo dos lugares. Esses lugares estariam impregnados de cores que podem revelar-se nas mais diversas formas de ligações ou contatos entre duas identidades oficialmente instituídas, entre as quais se produzem trocas não apenas materiais, mas igualmente imateriais, como as culturais. O propósito deste artigo é analisar os processos de construção das identidades nacionais num segmento da zona de fronteira brasileiro-argentina e as práticas fronteiriças frente as identidades nacionais oficialmente instituídas, notadamente nas cidades- gêmeas Dionísio Cerqueira (SC)/Barracão (PR)/Bernardo

de Irigoyen (MNES) e Santo Antonio do Sudoeste (PR)/San Antonio (MNES). O artigo está dividido em duas seções. A primeira apresenta os processos de construção da identidade nacional pelos Estados nacionais. A segunda analisa como os fronteiriços percebem a identidade nacional e dela se apropriam. Por fim, tecemos algumas considerações das quais resulta a afirmativa de que não há como negar que os habitantes fronteiriços nascem sob uma identidade geográfica, uma identidade nacional que indica o território de pertencimento, sendo que os fronteiriços não a negam, mas, em muitos aspectos, a manipulam, principalmente para barganhar interesses particulares. A manipulação das identidades nacionais em zona de fronteira, normalmente, ocorre frente à busca de serviços públicos gratuitos e limitados, como os da saúde.

Palavras-chave: Zona de Fronteira. Identidade Nacional. Cidades-Gêmeas. Interações Transfronteiriças.

Résumé

La zone frontalière est un espace qui émerge de la démarcation de la frontière politique territoriale entre deux États nationaux; elle c'est à la confluence de deux territoires fondés sur deux identités nationales construites dans l'opposition entre « nous et les autres ». Mais, loin d'être un simple espace politique géographique, marqué par l'identité nationale et l'appartenance territoriale, la zone frontalière est aussi un espace social et culturel. Par conséquent, il renvoie également à l'idée d'une connexion entre deux territoires. Ainsi, la zone frontalière peut être considérée comme un lieu qui ne reflète pas seulement la division et l'identité / l'altérité, car si les personnes ont plusieurs identités, on peut en dire autant des lieux. Ces lieux seraient imprégnés de couleurs pouvant se révéler sous les formes les plus diverses de relations ou de contacts entre deux identités officiellement établies, parmi lesquelles se produisent non seulement des échanges matériels mais également immatériels, tels que des échanges culturels. L'objectif de cet article est d'analyser les processus de construction des identités nationales dans un segment de la zone frontalière entre le Brésil et l'Argentine et les pratiques frontalières auxquelles sont confrontées les identités nationales officiellement établies, notamment dans les villes jumelées Dionísio Cerqueira (SC)/Barracão (PR)/Bernardo de Irigoyen (MNES) et Santo Antonio do Sudoeste (PR)/San Antonio (MNES). Le travail était divisé en deux parties: la première analyse les processus de construction de l'identité nationale par les États nationaux; la seconde analyse la manière dont les sujets frontaliers perçoivent l'identité nationale et se l'approprient. À la fin, nous faisons quelques considérations qui donnent lieu à l'affirmation de quoi on ne peut nier que les habitants de la frontière naissent sous une identité géographique, une identité nationale qui indique le territoire d'appartenance, et les frontaliers ne le nient pas, mais, à bien des égards, ils le manipulent, surtout pour troquer des intérêts particulier. La manipulation des identités nationales dans les zones frontalières se produit généralement lorsque l'on recherche des services publics gratuits et limités, tels que les services de santé.

Mots clés: Zone Frontière. Identité Nationale. Villes Jumelées. Interactions Transfrontalières.

Introduction

Political-territorial boundaries are historically instituted to define the sovereignty of a political entity, symbolically surround the territory of competence of a national state, distinguish the internal from the international, provoke the discontinuity between national norms and codes, and create differentiated identities. It is true that no society, whether economic, political or social, could be organized without territorial limits since the laws that organize and govern a national territory need limits. Drawn over the terrain, the political-territorial boundaries assume a symbolic load by the national symbols arranged there (boundary lines, flags and others) and create diverse functions (taxes, control, etc.), are

elements that participate in the closure and organization of national territories (Guichonnet; Raffestin, 1974). The national territory then becomes the place of sovereign political representation, an undeniable exercise of power and identity cohesion, in which people identify and recognize each other by their characterization between *us* and *others*. It is within this territory that national identity is being constructed in opposition to others or what is external to their political and territorial limits. But it is alongside these political-territorial boundaries, with an eminent sense of political and identity division, that border areas emerge, spaces that coalesce the boundary in which the interests of neighboring populations cohabit. (Velasco-Graciet, 1998).

However, if the territorial political limit causes discontinuity, separating political entities and populations, generating identity discourses and giving rise to two different cultural landscapes, the border zone brings them together, it is a contact point that channels relationships, and a space in which its coherence is ensured by interactions between actors on both sides of the international boundary. Therefore, instead of the classic idea of a division between two groups that are built on the relation of identity/otherness, the frontier zone can be thought of as a space that refers to the idea of a connection between two national territories. A place that not only reflects division and identity/otherness, because if people have multiple identities, but the same can also be said of places. These places would be impregnated with colors that can be revealed in the most diverse forms of connections or contacts between two officially established identities, between which material and immaterial cultural exchanges take place (Claval, 2007; Massey, 2000).

Abandoning the classic concept of territory to reflect on national identity in the border zone, Augé (1992, p. 33) warns that it is necessary to “[...] doubt absolute identities, both collectively and individually”. For this author, “[...] individuals, as simple as we can imagine them, are never able to stand in relation to the total order that underwrites their place; they express the totality only from a certain angle” (Augé, 1992, p. 33). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to analyze how national identity is constructed in a segment of the Brazilian-Argentine border and what are the practices of frontiers in front of these national identities. What role does the international boundary play on border inhabitants? Are material

and immaterial transboundary interactions elements that strengthen identity/otherness?

The article is divided into two sections. The first presents the processes of national identity construction by national states in a segment of the Brazil-Argentina border. The second analyzes how frontiers perceive national identity and how it appropriates it. To analyze these geographical and cultural issues, we resort to theoretical analysis and field research. In the field research, we tried to get closer to the historical geography of the place and, in this sense, the testimonies of the border subjects were fundamental, that is, inhabitants of the border zone, notably those of the Brazilian-Argentine twin cities. – Dionísio Cerqueira (SC)/Barracão (PR)/Bernardo de Irigoyen (MNES) and Santo Antônio do Sudoeste (PR)/San Antonio (MNES) –, located in the extreme west of Santa Catarina, southwestern Paraná and northeast of the Province of Misiones (Argentina).

We conclude by showing that border areas are not just spaces that bear international boundaries or places of separation of two national identities and that to understand them it is necessary to go beyond the vision of subjects with different national identities, in this case, simple Brazilians and Argentines: it is necessary to meet the border subjects with multiple identities. The study also reveals that frontiers appropriate national identities and plays with them in accordance with their individual or collective interests, sometimes for their own benefit, sometimes in collaboration with the political centers of power.

National identity construction processes in the Brazilian-Argentine border zone (1903 to 1930)

The border zone in the extreme west of Santa Catarina, the southwest of Paraná and northeast of the province of Misiones, officially emerges from the establishment of the political-territorial boundary between Brazil and Argentina. Before that, space could not be characterized as such, as it was the territory of indigenous groups, an area that was part of the imagined project for the creation of the Guarani Republic. (XVII and XVIII). It can be said that the linearity of this border segment is relatively recent - dating from 1895 - and, like all political and territorial boundaries, it also has corporeal materiality only in cartography. On the ground it is

distinguished by the course of the Peperi-Guaçu and Santo Antônio rivers, between which is the dry line that extends for approximately 22 kilometers of land exactly between the two sets of twin cities Dionísio Cerqueira/Barracão/Bernardo de Irigoyen and St. Anthony of the Southwest/San Antonio (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 - Brazilian-Argentine Border Zone Scheme and Twin Cities



Source: Compiled by the author (2011).

Figure 2 - Brazilian-Argentine border zone location



Source: Compiled by the author (2011).

If we establish a reference parallel between the other segments of the Brazil-Argentina border from the west of Paraná to the south of Rio Grande do Sul, we will find that the border area analyzed here is totally different from the others. Its differential is not only in the uniqueness of the international boundary that allows easy access between the two neighboring territories but also because in it lies the only dry passage between Brazil and Argentina, in which the Brazilian territory in continuity with the Argentine presents no natural physical ruptures. Another feature that distinguishes such a border area is the troubled twin cities, nonexistent in the other segments along the Brazil-Argentina border.

Although the dry line had been on maps since 1895, when the international boundary between Brazil and Argentina was defined, it would only be marked on the ground in 1903, when the outline would be represented by boundary landmarks. But even before 1903, the date that the borderline on the ground was created, it was already noted the presence of insignificant settlements there, consisting mostly of descendants of Paraguayan Guarani Indians and Brazilian caboclos who worked in the extraction of wild yerba mate in Brazilian lands. Examples of such clusters: Barracón/Barracão (today Dionísio Cerqueira/Barracão/Bernardo de Irigoyen) and San Antonio/Santo Antônio. For example: in 1903, Dionísio Cerqueira (SC), Barracão (PR) and Bernardo de Irigoyen (MNES) formed a single population cluster called Barracão/Barracón by both Brazilians and Argentines, a name that originated from the construction of sheds for storing yerba mate. Proof of this is that in 1903, when the boundary marking commissions, made up of Brazilians and Argentines arrived there, as they began measuring the terrain to draw the international dry line, they realized that the small cemetery built there involved land from both countries, that is, part of it was in Brazilian territory and part of it in Argentine territory. To avoid friction with the locals, especially with the families of the dead buried there, the Argentine Limits Commission unofficially granted about 200m² of land in favor of Brazil. Later, this sacred ground became the international cemetery. This is an example that leads us to reflect on how the frontiers perceived the national identity in the place because instead of naming a Brazilian cemetery they chose to call it the international cemetery.

That physical and social integration of Barracón/Barracão draws the attention of the Brazilian Limits Commission and, at the end of the

demarcation of the dry line and the establishment of border markers, in 1903, General Dionísio Cerqueira elevates the Brazilian settlement to the category of village, a way to reinforce Brazil's national identity and sovereignty in that border area. The village was renamed Dionísio Cerqueira in honor of his services. In 1917, at the end of the territorial dispute between Paraná and Santa Catarina, the village would receive a new territorial political limit, giving rise to another cluster that in Santa Catarina's lands was renamed Barracão, a name that remained until 1938, when it was renamed Dionísio Cerqueira, leaving the side on Paraná with the old name Barracão. The Argentine side remained under the name of Barracón until 1931, when it was renamed Bernardo de Irigoyen (MNES), in honor of the Argentine lawyer who acted on the issue of boundaries between Brazil and Argentina. Thus, from a single cluster, the territorial-political division between countries and states gave rise to three small clusters that later evolved into twin cities: Dionísio Cerqueira/Barracão/Bernardo de Irigoyen. In them, the degree of physical and social integration is expressed today by the urban fabric itself that intertwines over the international boundary, forming true conurbation.

San Antonio/Santo Antonio also formed a single cluster, but this one, unlike Barracón/Barracão, would not receive as much political attention from the Brazilian-Argentine Limits Commission, as there was already an element considered as a divisive factor.: the Santo Antônio river, a "thread" of flowing water that now represents the international line, so there was no concern in changing the name of those clusters, only the Brazilian side in the 1950s would add the name of the Paraná region, leaving Santo Antônio Southwest. However, unlike the eyes of the political boundary commission, the inhabitants of that cluster did not see the small river as a factor of separation or impediment of any relations. Regardless of their nationality, they were free to move and settle their homes where it suited them best. In fact, shortly after the passage of the Brazilian-Argentine Limits Commission, the inhabitants of San Antonio/Santo Antonio do Sudoeste, without prior authorization from Brazil or Argentina, built a wooden bridge over the Santo Antonio River. According to former residents, this would have been the first physical bridge link between Brazil and Argentina. Therefore, like Dionísio Cerqueira/ Barracão/Bernardo de Irigoyen, it is difficult to separate the socio-territorial evolution of San Antonio/Santo Antônio from the

Southwest, and even if there is a “trickle” of running water representing the international boundary, urban networks intertwine today, over the limit, proving old physical-social gathering. This union was being established by the flows and a network of daily social relations, which allowed to unite the territoriality that had been divided politically.

Therefore, from 1903, the political-territorial boundary between Brazil and Argentina divided the small clusters constituted there. In addition to changing the names of the small settlements in Barracón/Barracão, to create a sense of socio-territorial belonging, the relations between the residents themselves would be modified. In the face of the institutionalized international boundary, relations that were once between neighbors would be with neighbors who became foreigners. Thus, the international boundary began to differentiate the Brazilian territory from the Argentine, creating a discontinuity between national norms and codes and giving rise to spaces with different national identities. Following the demarcation of the international boundary, Argentina will immediately install national symbols and equipment, such as flags, schools, registry offices, among others, to nationalize that Argentine border segment.

The political ideology of the Argentine state was to strengthen the national identity of the borders that were mostly indigenous descendants of Brazilian Guarani and Caboclos. At that time, Argentina firmly believed that national identity was created thru education. To put this objective into practice, the Argentine national state instituted national public schools, equipped with political-ideological aid, because it is through the schools that the states pass on their ideologies. Moreover, it is through schools that the official language teaching of a country takes place, and in the view of national states, teaching is not only a means of communication but also an expressive form in the formation of national identity. For this reason, in 1909 the first national school in Barracón (today Bernardo de Irigoyen) was instituted. Already in 1931, another school was installed in San Antonio. In addition to schools, civil registry offices were implemented.

On the Brazilian side of the border, however, the issue of national identity and socio-territorial belonging would only become a concern of the state 26 years later. Apart from the name of the village Dionísio Cerqueira, the only indications of Brazilian sovereignty were the border markers, but, given a situation of physical-geographical isolation and political-economic marginalization, these markers would have no meaning for the border and

soon became shrouded by vegetation. There were no national symbols, public schools or even civil registry offices that denoted that region was an area of Brazilian sovereignty.

After the passage of the limits commission, Brazilians living there began to live as segregated from Brazil, totally on the margins of the national state, especially in matters of public policy, such as education and health. Indeed, until the mid-1950s, in common sense, Brazilian identity had a pejorative connotation, being attributed almost exclusively to caboclos. The descendants of German, Italian, Lebanese immigrants, among others, residing there, even if they were born in Brazilian territory, did not identify themselves as Brazilians, on the contrary, they identified much more with the identity of the country of origin of their ancestors.

As there were no civil registry offices, children born in Brazilian territory were registered in Argentina, and boys, when they were of age, even living in Brazilian territory, were summoned to serve in the Argentine army. In addition, as there were no schools, Brazilian children studied at schools on the Argentine side. And certainly in the view of the national state, this was a denationalization since Brazilian children learned important symbols and dates from the neighboring country and were unaware of the history and symbols of their own country, and, of course, they learned to read and write in their neighbor's language. Thus, the Argentine schools, instead of strengthening the national identity and creating the otherness, became spaces of immaterial cultural interactions, since the Brazilian children of that border segment studied in Argentina. Years later, such interactions would be viewed by the Brazilian national state as illegal, and the border zone was characterized as a totally denationalized space of Brazil and of uncertain identity.

Only after 1929 did the Brazilian national state begin to implant public schools and a civil registry office, among other facilities, in order to create a sense of socio-territorial belonging and national identity. But, contrary to what one might imagine, neither the institution of the international boundary nor the political ideologies of the two national states were factors of identity strengthening and separation from those twinned clusters. The border populations continued their system of relations, regardless of the territorial boundary. In that border segment, the representation of the international boundary did not have the same political and ideological meaning as national states. The border area had

been transformed into a place of reunions, exchanges, and transactions of all kinds, which leads us to think that, in these places, everyday practices and representations may oppose a whole national political idea of concepts of boundary, territory and socio-territorial belonging.

It can be inferred that the emergence of national identity is a political work of national states and every individual at birth must have a document indicating which territory he or she belongs to, a document which, consequently, also indicates their national identity. In this sense, territorial belonging is, in the conception of national states, an identity reference (Vainer, 2008; Raffestin, 1993). But it is possible to think that the border zone does not only reflect two national identities, because, as we have already indicated, if people have multiple identities, but the same can also be said of places. (Claval, 2007; Massey, 2000). The border segment analyzed here shows that there is not only the Brazilian and the Argentine, there are other groups that can carry multiple identities, because there live descendants of Guarani and Kaingangues Indians, Caboclos, Gauchos, Italians, Germans, Poles, Russians, Arabs, Lebanese, Swiss and others, which interact both through material and immaterial exchanges, and can promote a mixture, neither meaning the formation of a single identity nor creating the alterity between national identities.

Border practices against national identities (1903 to 1929)

Despite the territorial political division and the attempts of national states to strengthen national identities, border dwellers would make those spaces true spaces for integration. It would be the same as thinking about the process of cutting and mending: while national states cut the territories with boundaries differentiating the internal from the international, the borders, with the thread of material and immaterial exchanges, are promoting the sewing together of the territories. However, this mending is not done immediately, it is done throughout the history of the borders, history lived and built not only by economic and trade alliances but with links of solidarity, affection, social and cultural exchanges that link longer and longer-lasting because they are part of a life trajectory lived in the border area.

Thus, in opposition to national political ideologies, the frontiers were building a socio-territorial ensemble uniting the two sides of the

boundary by everyday not only material but also immaterial cross-border interactions, such as social and cultural, which in some way contributed to integration of small population clusters located at the confluence of the international boundary and which later evolved into the twin cities Dionísio Cerqueira/Barracão/Bernardo de Irigoyen and San Antonio/Santo Antônio do Sudoeste.

What is striking in the geohistorical aspect of these twin cities is that although the political ideologies between Brazil and Argentina tried to separate them and strengthen national identities, the frontiers were forming a network of cross-border kinship so close that until around 1940 it was practically impossible to separate Brazilians from Argentines. The daily contacts and practices between the two sides of the boundary often resulted in marriage, which promoted the mix that, in the eyes of power, located at the center of national scales, would be a true zone of identity uncertainty. Obviously, the interactions that were being woven there between the frontiers contradicted the policies and ideologies of the central power of the national scales and also a discourse about national identity and territorial belonging.

Starting in 1929, with the implementation of national equipment on the Brazilian side, including schools and civil registry offices, one would think that all children born on the Brazilian side were registered in Brazilian territory. However, field research revealed that the birth records of Brazilian children in Argentina were not merely the result of the absence of such equipment in Dionísio Cerqueira, Barracão and Santo Antônio do Sudoeste: there were also particular interests of the borderers themselves, who aimed at binational properties and also the establishment of commercial establishments on both sides of the border. For this reason, there were Brazilian families who chose to register some children in Argentina and others in Brazil; The opposite is also true because when civil registry offices appeared on the Brazilian side, many Argentine families also registered some children on the Brazilian side. How does one think about national identity faced with these practices?

By way of example, we can mention here a Peronist, resident in Barracão (PR). The son of Brazilians, he was born and registered in Bernardo de Irigoyen in 1922. This was because his father, in 1917, migrated from Clevelândia (PR) to Bernardo de Irigoyen to work as a bookkeeper for the yerba mate company CREGI Sociedade Ltda., which

harvested herbs from Palmas (PR) to Barracão (PR). In 1924, after quitting work at that Argentine company, his father returned to Brazil to live in the Barracão cluster, where his Argentinian-born son would spend his childhood and adolescence. As he had no school on the Brazilian side, like the other Brazilian children, he was educated in Bernardo de Irigoyen.

Already at the age of 18, even residing in Brazilian territory, was called to serve the Argentine Army. In the army in Buenos Aires, he remained for two years and it was there that he became a convinced Peronist. After leaving the army, he continued for two more years in Argentina and worked in commerce. Later his father fell ill and he returned to Brazil, residing in Barracão, where he would work in various activities of the private sector. He even worked in the construction sector of the city of Barracão, as a kind of accountant and head in charge of paying 360 employees at ARBRA, a large logger of mixed Brazilian-Argentine capital in the Tateto line (now Flor da Serra). It was there that, in 1946, with a group of fugitive doctors from Germany, he learned the skill of “bone-setting” and later became an “orthopedist” on both sides of the international border.

What is curious about this report is that this border divided his life between the two sides of the international boundary, including the working life, as he also worked at Bernardo de Irigoyen as a kind of “veterinarian” of the breeders and was even a candidate for councilman. in that little Argentinian town. Without detailing here all his life, rich in examples to understand the question of national identity in the border area, at the end of the field interview, we question: — Do you define yourself as Brazilian or Argentinian? Amid laughter he responds: — *I am an international man!* The example of this border resident is not unique, it represents and summarizes many other examples and shows us that, regardless of the sense of national identity, border subjects, due to daily practices with their neighbors, are formed with multiple values, which is particularly evident in the interviewee’s response when he defines himself as an “*international man*”, because he does not choose either Argentine identity or Brazilian identity: he chooses both.

On the other hand, its response could be interpreted as an identity manipulation to bargain certain rights on both sides of the boundary, which in the eyes of the central power of national scales can be seen as an illegal act. National identity is an invention of national states, so every

individual at birth must be registered since birth registration becomes a document of territorial belonging, which ensures rights and duties to a citizen. The territory is, therefore, an identity reference (Vainer, 2008; Raffestin, 1993). But it may be thought that regardless of the national identity values that frontiers internalize or carry, they often forge their national identity to actually bargain certain rights on both sides of the international boundary, notably the right to free public services such as hospital doctors, among others. But we must take into account the real social and political conditions of the border areas and remember that, historically, national states with centralizing policies have had their backs to the border spaces, a fact that is still reflected in Brazil's border zones with its neighbors. , where a large part of the population is still on the sidelines of many public policies of national states.

Beginning in 1950, the political-territorial limit, in that Brazilian-Argentine border segment, began to be invested in a greater political and fiscal control. Since then, enforcement would become stricter on the movement of people and goods, but this has not meant the disruption of material and immaterial cross-border interactions. However, economic-commercial interactions that were not previously considered illegal would have connotations of misleading contraband, as they took place outside the path of enforcement, a way of circumventing the law. Thus, when someone was arrested across, the boundaries, in order to release the prisoner, soon appealed to the historical and cultural resources of that border area by arguing a common sense of identity. In this regard, it is interesting to note the testimony of a former mayor of Santo Antônio do Sudoeste, who partly reveals how this worked.

Here the cities are twins right, there is this little river Santo Antônio, but never shared anything! Here, in the past, life was all in common, all in common! So, once I was called by the Gendarmería de San Antonio for a meeting, there was a problem, they arrested a Brazilian there, he was a young boy, but they arrested for no reason, so they sent for me and I went there. At the time I was mayor. Then I got there and asked: what happened? They: - He was arrested because he was smuggling²! They talked, they talked and I just listened, right. Then I said: - Listen, why did you arrest this boy? Just because he was taking five pounds of flour and ten extra pieces of soap? This is no reason to arrest the boy! We are one body here, we have no division! Do you know what Santo Antônio river means to us? It is an artery that connects the two countries, we are one

body! Then one gendarme looked at the other and said: – He's free, he's free, let him go, let him go! This is how I made them realize that they were committing an injustice and the boy was released without any problems! (field study, 2008)

The above statement is a small sample of how frontiers are positioned in relation to national territorial norms: for or against them. On the other hand, it also reveals that, in opposition to the territorial norms of each national state, frontiers, even though they are subject to a national identity, recognize themselves as belonging to a single territoriality constructed by transfrontier interactions, notably by immaterial ones, such as: family and kinship ties, friendship and crony ties, among others that unite them through a history built on the site, not by Brazilians and Argentines, but by the borderline subjects. Thus, in reflecting on national identities in a Brazilian-Argentine border segment, we could immediately think of the existence of identity conflicts and the strengthening of otherness between *us* and *others*. But as we get closer to the border zone and the borderline subjects or inhabitants, we realize that they do not carry only one national identity, they carry multiple identities. Marital alliances create the mix and, in many moments, they define themselves as international subjects, do not deny their national identities, but play with them to justify common informal practices, but condemned as transgressive practices of national territories.

Final Considerations

The border zone is not only space with international boundary and two national identities, but it is also a particular geographical environment, that is, a space that channels relationships and is a point of contact and material and immaterial exchanges. In the daily geography of the border area, notably the twin cities, there are routine social and cultural practices among friends, relatives and family members. The forms of social connections that arise in this particular environment are innumerable, from those generated by economic-commercial practices to those generated by the absence of public or private services, such as health, for example, or those generated by immaterial values, such as solidarity, affection, feelings, and that generate links and constant mobilities between one side and the other of the limit. Thus, we may think that, in a frontier zone,

national identity is not built or strengthened in a friendship relationship, because it depends fundamentally on a relationship of alterity between *us* and *others*. Rather, it depends on enemies, not friends. Obviously, the alterity between *us* and *others* is clearly verified in the centers of power of each national state.

Twin cities have particular forms of organization that combine two spatial logics - local and national - in which the frontier subject, whether individual or collective, works with the legal and the illegal. It is the place where the geography of the border dweller flourishes. From this perspective, we can consider that the border zones, notably those formed by twin cities, are places that are not only formed by the territorial political rationality of the national states, but also by the spaces charged with meaning for those who inhabit or attend there.

Finally, there is no denying that border dwellers are born under a geographical identity, a national identity that indicates the territory of belonging, and the frontiers do not deny it, but in many ways manipulate it, mainly to bargain particular interests. The manipulation of national identities in border areas usually occurs in the pursuit of free and limited public services such as healthcare. Even today, identity games, albeit on a smaller scale, follow the same logic of the past, especially when it comes to the search for free public services, such as hospital and dental care, and this can be seen not only in the twin cities analyzed here, but throughout the border segment of the far west of Santa Catarina, the far west of Paraná and the west of Paraná, bordering regions with Argentina and Paraguay. However, as indicated above, it must not be forgotten that historically, national states have had their backs to border spaces. A fact that still persists in Brazil's border areas with its neighbors, where a significant part of the population remains on the margins of many public policies of national states. In this sense, in many respects, it is found that social and economic vulnerability leads border dwellers to counteract territorial norms and laws and to manipulate their own identities for little benefit, notably health and education services. In general, it can be considered that national states have a historic debt to border populations to fully integrate such populations into national health, education, and social and economic development policies.


Notes

1 This article is part of my doctoral dissertation defended in 2011, developed with the help of scholarships. CNPq (2007 and August of 2009 - 2010) and CAPES (Interuniversity Exchange Doctorate Scholarship from October 2008 to July 2009).

2 In the 1950s, Santo Antônio do Sudoeste and San Antonio was not a qualified border point for trade and tourism, and although it was up to Brazil to oversee the amount of current consumer goods and merchandise entering the country, the Argentine national Gendarmería imposed the amount of products that could leave the country, who had products or goods above allowed was considered a smuggler.

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Maristela Ferrari – Graduated in Geography, with a master’s or doctoral degree from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. She is currently a professor of undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Geography at Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná – campus Marechal Cândido Rondon. She is also a member of the Border, Territory and Environment Study Group at the same institution.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1010-7202>

Received for publication on XXX, 2019

Accepted for publication on XXX, 2019

Published on XXXX