Two sides of the river

At the beginning of the 1990s, I detected an extensive and persistent reference to the construction of borders around Europe, firstly in activities related to ethnic minorities’ rights in Great Britain. This quickly spread to various other activist issues as well as to the other older European countries. Additionally, this would include the new European construct, which would finally unify many states of Southern Europe. The EU made successive attempts to guarantee justice without inner borders and with free circulation. The result was the control of outer borders and the control of movement related to asylum, immigration and the fight against criminality. Over time, the construction of a Fortress Europe would highlight these issues.

In the Hague Programme (approved in November 2004), the agenda leaned even more towards the construction of Fortress Europe. The policy of immigration and the externalization of borders had been included previously. This was mainly achieved by defining a balanced migration approach, which would cover: the fight against illegal immigration and the re-admission policy, and return of migrants. All of these would form an overarching and integrated management of the external borders of the Union as well as the establishment of common procedure regarding asylum.

Many journalists, activists and scholars have worked on the impact of this, using various approaches, but with the emphasis always on European closure as, for example, in the context of the Strait of Gibraltar and its related topics, which ended up by obscuring other
real issues. I specifically refer to the contemporary abandonment of the European internal borders as areas of investigation in the globalization era.²

In the first place, the general context of the chapter reconsiders aspects of the reiterative, contemporary change of borders. In this, I shall draw up some lines of enquiry, which not only correspond to the collapse of borders but also to the particular reconstruction of them. I include again the hypothesis of an articulation between the external and internal borders of the EU and the internal borders to the Union. Additionally, I also make reference, in the case of the Spanish State in particular in this chapter, to its relationship with the Portuguese State. This search for the border nexus responds to three concerns that seem pertinent to a future projection of the notion of ‘Fortress Europe’:

(i) The need to integrate a holistic vision of the border, which includes present-day borders from contemporary categories that have existed throughout the twentieth century. Here, I refer to the notion of memory that I shall address in the chapter on the Catalan border. However, this work on historical memory and the search for memory sites on the borders, along with the itineraries of exile, needs to refer back to the time of the Civil War and beyond. Although this period needs to be integrated, we also need to take into account the situation at the border in the decades prior to Spain’s integration into the EU.

(ii) To think about an articulation of borders. Such an extensive interpretation also needs to consider the varied spatial interpretations in the context of globalization. I have reviewed the literature, which has already underlined this need to some extent. For example, Foucher’s (1991) work on dyatopic analysis (group of scales) with a synthropic analysis (all phenomena considered on the same scale).

(iii) To reflect again on the present situation of internal borders, since they have ceased to be used for customs control and particularly as they seem to operate in many other, clandestine ways. We could easily open up many lines of enquiry that lead to deeper issues such as: Why does prostitution develop in these areas? Why do some border villages have large-scale police stations? Is it a coincidence that some foreigner holding centres are