

Chapter 13

The Mercosur Waterway as a Cooperation Strategy Between Brazil and Uruguay

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the territorial policies for the implementation of the Mercosur Waterway. The study contributes to the existing gap regarding the repercussions of the territorial policy of the Mercosur Waterway. The context is set around the Brazil/Uruguay border within its relations to South America and Mercosur. Authors analyze the cooperation in the scope of Mercosur with its developments and obstacles. The Border Strip between Brazil and Uruguay is analyzed, and the Mercosur Waterway as a Brazil-Uruguay integration strategy is commented. Commercial relations between southern Brazil and Uruguay are closely connected to their productive basis dependent on production, commodities, and imports, where cargos are not regular. The strategic meaning of the Waterway still needs to be reinforced in an integration context since efforts have not yet been sufficient so that it could be prioritized in the strategic agenda of the countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Proximity between Brazil and Uruguay has gained strength in the end of the 1980's, as their political systems were redemocratized and both countries started to prioritize their relations with the South Cone and South America. In this context, the creation of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) had an important role, contributing to define the South Cone as a region of commercial flow and relative political integration among the countries, different from the Andean region, which is marked by militarization and disputes.

The border between Brazil and Uruguay stretches along 1.068,4 kilometers, of which 749 km are rivers, channels and lakes, and 320 km are land (PUCCI, 2010, p.27). In the last few decades, although not continuously, the region has been object of public policies and governmental programs from both sides of the border as for instance, the Program for the Promotion and Development of the Border Strip (PDFF), in effect in Brazil from 2008 to 2011, and the Border Integration Policies Program, created by the Uruguayan government from 2006.

Presently, territorial policies have receded due to the political and economic context, and the current measures have been especially aimed at the infrastructure area. These measures are structured by the Initiative for the Integration of South-America (IIRSA), managed by South-American Council for Infra-structure and Planning (Cosiplan), political and strategic organization which is part of IIRSA, created in August 2009.

The Mercosur Waterway structuring project is a constituent part of the IIRSA-Cosiplan portfolio. It corresponds to project 27, which is classified as Multimodal Transportation in the System Merin and Patos Lagoon (*Transporte Multimodal en Sistema Laguna Mérin y Laguna dos Patos*), originating from the Agreement between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay about River and Lake Transportation in the Waterway Uruguay-Brazil (*Acuerdo entre la República Federativa de Brasil y la República Oriental del Uruguay sobre Transporte Fluvial y Lacustre en la Hidrovía Uruguay-Brasil*), signed on 30th July 2010 in Santana do Livramento, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It consists of the reactivation of river and lake transportation of cargo as well as passengers through the Waterway formed by Merin Lake, Patos Lagoon and their tributaries. The project consists of works of dredging, signaling, combined studies, construction of ports in Uruguayan territory and also measures for the regulation of immigration, customs and sanity, among others (Cosiplan/IIRSA, 2018).

Although most of the Merin Lake is located in Brazilian territory, it is set on the border between the two countries, and the Waterway can benefit the flow of local production, stimulating the integration between Brazil and Uruguay. To present the analysis of cooperation in the cross-border region between Brazil and Uruguay, the

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