

# PAPERS 44 INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND TERRITORY. THE MEDITERRANEAN ARC

## PRESENTATION

The exploration of the relationship between infrastructures and territory in one the axis that articulates the Spanish and European territory, the Mediterranean Arc, was the objective of the course organised by the CUIIMPB (*La planificación de las infraestructuras y el territorio. El arco mediterráneo*, November 2005), coordinated by Carme Miralles-Guasch, director of the IERMB, and Ángel Aparicio, director of the CEDEX. The underlying thesis of three days of sessions was the change of paradigm that has been occurring in recent years in relation to the challenge of providing infrastructures with a territorial dimension from a dialectic perspective, with more emphasis on synergy and interrelations, and through the inclusion not only of physical and economic variables, but also of social and environmental ones. And although territorial dynamics are processes that in their genesis, development and implantation imply long-term time arcs, they cannot ignore the need to relate territorial scales of variable geometry. An example of this is, unquestionably, the Mediterranean Arc.

This was the origin and the conceptual framework that was the inspiration for issue 44 of *Papers* magazine on the Mediterranean Arc, understood to be a spatial axis in which different territorial scales are interrelated and in which there are some infrastructures (constructed or planned) that differ greatly from what could be defined as a multilevel network. In its analysis of this European space, the magazine features the collaboration of several specialists from a variety of origins, namely Turin, Marseille, Valencia and Barcelona, and different disciplines.

The first article, by Francesc Carbonell and Josep Báguena, analyses the process of constructing the Mediterranean Arc as a counterbalance of the influence of northern territories in Europe; this is a bidirectional process because it stems both from the European Commission and from the Mediterranean regions, the objective being to reach a consensus in terms of key policies on supraregional scales. One of these policies is undoubtedly that of transport and infrastructures, a matter that appears in all of the articles in this issue of *Papers*.

Francesca Governa explores the vision of infrastructures as being trans-scale territorial projects that should not only be conceived in relation to the geographic/geoeconomic/geopolitical scale that justifies their construction, but also through

lesser and multiple hierarchical scales. She bases her analysis of the relationship between infrastructures and territory on the concepts of *territorial congruence* and *multilevel government* to guarantee that planning is carried out by all of the agents in the territory. Along similar lines of argument, Joaquín Farinós, in relation to the accessibility requirements of infrastructures in all of the territories of the EU, promotes the need for planning activities to be coherent and to consider inter-modal integration as a guarantee of local development and territorial cohesion. He analyses the Mediterranean Arc as an example of the specialisation of territories in polycentric Europe and underlines three key aspects for the success of the project: technical capacity, the mobilisation of agents and political leadership.

In his article, Josep Vicent Boira analyses how, despite the cohesion of the Mediterranean Arc and its strong business and social relations, there has been a loss of political interest in its physical materialisation. He presents several reasons for this (the limited interest of the EU, the lack of permanent institutional organisation in the region) that, combined with the system of assigning projects in the EU, in which national interests are rewarded ahead of criteria on a European scale, have prevented the axis from being consolidated. Meanwhile, the concept of a radial Spain has not benefited the development of the north-south axes that structure the peninsula.

Jean-Claude Turret emphasises in the fifth article the importance of consolidating a common transport network in order for the Mediterranean Arc itself to be more internally coherent. However, he is aware of the existing dysfunctions in the network of infrastructures located along the Western Mediterranean coast, especially concerning railways, and the political difficulties of the unitary conception of infrastructures beyond the state level.

## THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN ARC: A TWO-WAY STREET

Francesc Carbonell  
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### Introduction

Over recent decades, Europe has been interpreted from various spatial

points of view, which have ranged from representations based on the predominant centre-periphery differentiations of the 70s, to others based on the identification of axes, arcs and “bananas” which cover extensive regions of the continent to, finally, those which are based on a system of network relationships. The representation of a networked Europe, which is necessary to understand the growing degree of complexity in which the territorial relationships are played out on the continent, should not lead us to forget, however, the existence of articulating axes, especially appropriate in the design and provision of transport and communication infrastructure.

In this sense, many of the EU initiatives aimed at favouring an increase in territorial competitiveness and a reduction of imbalances (European Territorial Strategy), the design and prioritization of trans-European transport (TEN-T), as well as those arising from the territories themselves in the form of the constitution of supra-regional areas (Euroregions, Working Communities) are focussed on addressing functional realities that cross state borders. On some occasions, these realities are recognised and organised in the form of Euroregions. On other occasions the simply form strongly integrated axes which contribute to articulate the set of European territories from a functional point of view.

The Europe of axes and Euroregions becomes, therefore, a necessary reality both in order to have territories with sufficient critical mass to develop a system of relationships which require larger scales to articulate the European space. In this context, the Mediterranean Arc becomes, due to its population size, economic activity and its strategic situation between the continent and the Mediterranean, a key element that has to be interpreted as a unit and provided with the infrastructure which will guarantee it functions as such. In order to understand what the Mediterranean Arc means today, we need to determine and understand the process of definition and, moreover, focus on the elements which have acted as catalysers for its opportunities and potential as an articulating space for the European continent.

To address this question, we will review, first, the origins of the formulation of the idea of macro regions in Europe and, in particular, the determining role played by EU policies, both those directly responsible (perspectives of territorial planning on a continental scale, new criteria for regional