There is a risk that investments in secondary transport systems can be "...Improvement of co-operation between transport policies at EU, national and regional level" (ESDP, p. 28).


13 Transport network nodes become a reference point for both industry strategies (at the level of production and logistics) as well as territorial organisation by administrations that have jurisdiction in matters of town and country planning.

14 The issue of financing infrastructure plans opens up other questions of major importance, such as the role that has to be played by private initiatives, the relation between the public and private sectors, and also, in the public sphere, of the relations between the different levels of government (financing models, fiscal federalism, etc.).

15 For further details regarding territorial cooperation initiatives at a European level, see Fainó and Payá (2004). On relations between territorial cooperation and cohesion, see Fainó and Payá (2005).

16 Although the future Objective 3 "European territorial cooperation: promoting the harmonious and balanced development of the Union territory" (IEC, 2004), only represents 4% of the funds (to be distributed between trans-frontier, trans-national and interregional cooperation), it translates as the opportunity to receive additional financing in the new programming period as well as the possibility of modifying not only the objective but also territorial development planning methods.

If we remember that one of the EU’s guidelines was precisely that of consolidating these kinds of spaces by promoting territorial and, in particular, trans-national cooperation, and we relate this idea to the objective of territorial competitiveness, then we can better understand the nature of the future Objective 3.

When it comes to trans-frontier cooperation and those regions where the conditions for trans-frontier cooperation already exist, funds will have to be directed towards priorities that could generate added value to trans-frontier operations by bringing about a transition from simple economic penetration from one of the sides of the border to a true trans-frontier economic system. To achieve this aim the following are considered necessary: improving competitiveness resulting from innovation, R+D, setting up material networks (infrastructure) and non-material networks (services), and developing the feeling of belonging to a trans-frontier community (redesigning the mental maps).

Territorial connectivity and integration are thus variables positively related to territorial cohesion. In turn, trans-national cooperation provides a strategic profile for achieving major EU territorial objectives, contributing to better EU territorial integration. One of the EU tasks is to facilitate trans-European integration stimulating the development of connectivity of zones and networks which are important for Europe. The mid-term evaluation by Interreg IIIb, carried out in 2004, already emphasised the crucial role of trans-national cooperation programmes and projects for European territorial integration and cohesion.

It has also been stated that cities and regions make use of trans-national cooperation as a string factor, attracting investments and integrating them into the networks (Conference on Trans-national Cooperation, Berlin, November 2004). In these spaces a series of structuring projects would be developed, among which the Commission proposes: trans-European transport corridors, natural hazard prevention, water management at river basin level, integrated maritime cooperation and R+D networks innovation.

To achieve this greater legal base referred to in the document, the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (IEC, 2004) envisaged creating two new instruments, the New Neighbourhood Instrument (NI) and the Cross-border Regional Authority, later renamed as the European group of territorial cooperation (EGTC) to make it clear that it not only dealt with trans-frontier cooperation but also transnational and interregional cooperation.

The EGTC is seen as "a cooperation instrument at Community level for the creation of cooperative groupings in Community territory, invested with legal personality... An EGTC should be able to act, either for the purpose of implementing territorial cooperation programmes or projects co-financed by the Community... or for the purpose of carrying out actions of territorial cooperation which are at the sole initiative of the Member States and their regional and local authorities with or without a financial contribution from the Community". (Regulation (EC) 1082/2006).

The recent decision by the French government serves as a good example: they have decided to postpone until 2030 the link construction work that would connect high speed trains from both sides of the Pyrenees (Serra Ramoneda, 2006), despite the many, diverse and reiterated efforts (Arco Latino, Comunidad de los Pirineos, meetings and agreements between cities on both sides of the frontier) to stress this situation.

See the ESPON 1.1.1 Project Final Report;
opinions that were stirred up among specific bodies and institutions from the Mediterranean axis.

To begin with I have to point out that the Mediterranean axis as such does not exist. It does not exist from an administrative or bureaucratic point of view, yet it does have a very real economic basis, with a demonstrable flow of exchanges and shared geo-economic interests (Boira, 2003 a, b, c). This distinction between an “imagined” territory but with “tangible” bases, and a “potential” territory with “real” economic dynamics, is one of its weaknesses and, perhaps, one of the explanations for its near insignificant role and influence on the map drawn up by the proposal for trans-European transport networks (TEN-T), at least up until 2010, when it will be reviewed. This explains the reality of the Mediterranean axis’ exclusion from the trans-European transport network, however it also explains its predicament. The inability to articulate a combined response to transport network designs that do not take into account the needs of this macro-region is illustrated by the corpus of allegations and reports put before Europe by different administrations and institutions from the autonomous communities concerned (in particular Catalonia and Valencia, but also Murcia and Andalusia), as we shall see later. Thus, the Mediterranean axis has materialised as a result of an accumulation of testimonies, but there are no stable structures (not even of an interim nature) to provide it with a tangible form or support.

1. Trans-European Networks and the Mediterranean Axis

The concept of Trans-European Networks (TEN) was already acknowledged in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) as an instrument designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion and allow the free movement of goods and people. It was later taken up again in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam and the 2001 Treaty of Nizza and other official documents that modified the basic European Union treaty. In 1993, the Copenhagen European Council gave a major political boost to TENs by recognising their potential to create employment and promote economic growth. Decisions were made to promote trans-European networks in three areas: energy, telecommunications and transport. European policy continued to give importance to the TENs through periodically revised Community guidelines, and in 2003 launched the growth initiative whose objective was to accelerate public and private investment in network infrastructures with programmes such as “Quick-Start” for priority projects. As for transport networks (TEN-T), its history is relatively easy to establish (see table 1), at least regarding the most relevant milestones. In 1990, the possibility of coordinating European high-speed train networks had already been explored, and first-draft plans adopted for combined transport networks (road transport and navigable waterways). However, it was not until the 1994 Essen European Council that a list of 14 major priority projects in this field was not drawn up. From this point on, the path embarked upon has not been an easy one, with agreements reached by the Commission and reports from the ad-hoc groups it has created.

2. From the first document on European high-speed rail systems (1990) to the Essen priority projects (1994)

On December 17, 1990, the European Community Council passed a resolution1 which included various considerations on the European high-speed train network, ruling in favour of the need to set up an inter-operative network and pointing out, for the first time, what it considered to be key stretches in this new European network (see table 2). Two of the fourteen stretches included are relevant to the Iberian Peninsula: Madrid-Barcelona-Perpignan and Oporto-Lisbon-Madrid and Vitoria-Dax (two options of the same stretch). According to Ellwanger and Wilkens (1994), together with this proposal, a “Master Plan for the European High-speed Rail Network 2010” was approved, part of which is illustrated by map 1.

Although this document and list refer only to high-speed rail systems, some of these ended up being added to later lists used by the High Level Groups and Councils. It was in this way that a fact was consolidated: the influence of high-speed transport in subsequent European infrastructure maps, perhaps at the cost of overlooking to a certain degree less visible yet key passenger and merchandise transport infrastructures, and, in the case of the Mediterranean axis, even more useful than high-speed passenger transport.

The next step was at the Brussels European Council of 25 November 1993, when two High Level Groups (HLG) were created: one dedicated to information networks presided over by Commissioner Bangemann, and the other dedicated to transport and energy networks, under the charge of Vice-President Henning Christophersen. The latter drew up a report which was used to define the first formal list of strategic projects for trans-European transport networks; a list which was ratified in 1994 by the European Councils of Corfu (June) and Essen (December). In effect, on the island of Corfu in 1994, the go-ahead was given for eleven strategic projects for Europe plus three originating from initiatives already begun, or about to begin, in Northern EC countries, Ireland and the UK. The origin of the eleven projects that were approved in Corfu (and later in Essen) set out by the HLG of 2003 and 2005 thus had their precedent, i.e. the Christophersen Group. Resorting to this kind of ad hoc commission (three in ten years) has been a feature of the development of the TEN-Ts.

In effect, this High Level Group, which last met on June 3, 1994, drew up a report which served as a basis and model for restructuring projects in later years. Created at the request of the European Council of 1993 to the Commission, this group brought together a representative from each member state; acting on behalf of Spain were J.A. Zaragoza, Secretary of State for Territorial Policies and Public Works, and the minister José Borrell (who held the post of Public Works since 1991). The ensuing report listed 34 projects classified into three groups according to which stage they were at. The first group (11 projects) comprised those projects which were almost completed or were going to begin within two years. The second group (10 projects) comprised initiatives whose acceleration seemed possible and would not go beyond 1997, while the last group (13 projects) comprised plans that required more time to be carried out or further studies. As regards Spain, there were three projects in this list: the high-speed train Madrid-Barcelona-Perpignan and Madrid-Vitoria-Dax and the Lisbon-Valladolid motorway (first group) and the Valencia-Saragossa-Somport road corridor (third group). It should be noted that the high-speed project had already appeared in 1990 in the Council document relating to the development of a European high-speed train network. As we see it, the Christophersen document is of key importance, as the inclusion at the highest priority level of the high-speed train beginning in Madrid and running both to the Mediterranean and to the Atlantic (along with the Valladolid motorway also “central”) has subsequently determined all the European Union’s lists of priorities regarding TEN-Ts in Spain practically until 2006.

As the Christophersen report reflects, the final list came as much from a small list drawn up in the 1993 White Paper on growth, competitiveness and cohesion, as, and especially, the priorities promoted by the member states2. In effect, some priorities appeared succinctly in the 1993 White Paper on growth: “new strategic trans-frontier (Bremer rail link, Lyons-Tune rail link, Paris-Barcelona-Madrid rail link, Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow motorway link), improving connections between the various transport modes (... and improving interoperability and efficiency of networks...”)3.

Based on the Christophersen Report, the European Councils of Corfu and Essen (both held in 1994) ratified the lists of priorities mentioned above. That is they limited themselves to those selected in the first group and, therefore, focused on, in the case for Spain, the high-speed links from Madrid and on the Lisbon-Valladolid motorway. As of Corfu 1994, the Valencia-Aragon axis disappeared from the official documents published by the European Union.


There were two important events in 1996 when it comes to understanding the
The viability of project number 3 and will
mitigate the shortage of the corridor: “This extension (...) will improve a rail axis leaving aside the Mediterranean left no doubt about the idea of establishing between Montpellier and Nîmes. The Barcelona-Montpellier) concerning a high-capacity rail network to a European scale and the high-capacity rail network crossing the Mediterranean axis (see map 4). Among the modified projects in 1996 we find number 8, which affects Spain. At the Dublin European Council in December 1996, and at the request of the governments of Portugal and Spain (the latter then under the José María Aznar administration as of May the same year, priority project number 8 (the Lisbon-Valladolid motorway) becomes a “multi-modal link between Portugal and Spain and the rest of Europe”, thus adding to the project’s aspirations and magnitude. The 1996 Decision 1.692 clearly increases the number of projects for the first time since Essen to 30, with a series of inherent ramifications for each one. As regards Spain (see table 3), we now find two already familiar projects: number 3 (the High-Speed train running from Madrid to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean) and number 8 (the old connexion between Lisbon and Valladolid - extensively modified). In the case of the former, new connexions were specified, i.e. Lisbon/ Oporto-Madrid. The Mediterranean axis as such —understood as running from the French border to Murcia or Andalusia— only features as a general note about the Mediterranean sea motorways and the inter-operability of the high-speed rail system in the Iberian Peninsula Madrid-Levante and Mediterranean, with no further references. As I have stated before, the 1996 Decision 1.692 was amended in 2001 (May and October) and in 2004. In May 2001 sea ports, inland ports and intermodal terminals were added to the list of projects and some of the criteria for defining priorities were modified. In October 2001, the Commission once again proposed some modifications in the light of White Paper on Transport and the Gottenberg European Council proceedings. In the document that was approved the following were definitively incorporated as a specific project: the high-capacity rail network crossing the Pyrenées, the transformation of the Iberian network to a European scale and the incorporation of project number 3 (Madrid-Barcelona-Montpellier) concerning a high-speed mixed line of transport of freight/rail between Montpellier and Nîmes. The arguments put forward by the Commission left no doubt about the idea of establishing a rail axis leaving aside the Mediterranean corridor: “This extension (...) will improve the viability of project number 3 and will put an end to the rail bottleneck between Montpellier and Nîmes, which will allow for guaranteeing the “continuity of a rail motorway between Seville and the north of Europe” (italics are mine) (see map 2). In April 2004, Decision 1.692 was modified again extending the period for implementing some of the projects to 2020 (it had previously stated 2010) and defining 30 priority projects in the light of the Van Miert report which I shall look at next. In effect, the most important revision of the TEN-T was carried out when, at the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003, a second High Level Group on transport infrastructures was created by the European Commissioner Loyola de Palacio, presidented over by the ex-Commissioner Karel Van Miert. Its objective was clear: “to identity the priority projects for the trans-European transport networks in an enlarged European Union”. The results of the research by the Van Miert Group was presented in the summer of 2003 and classified priorities into four major lists: List 0, List 1, List 2 and List 3. The first group, List 0, comprised those projects already underway and which were forecast to be completed before 2010 (in essence, the projects defined in Essen 1994 and Dublin 1996). List 1 comprised the priority projects forecast to begin before 2010 (including the Galileo satellite communication project). List 2 comprised the long-term priority projects, and List 3 comprised other important projects for territorial cohesion in Europe. None of these lists included the Mediterranean corridor as such (see map 3). As I pointed out earlier, in April 2004, the European Parliament and the Council modified the 1996 Decision 1.692 to establish the 30 definitive projects, approved based on the recommendations of the Van Miert Group. It was the confirmation of the priority projects that had emerged more than ten years earlier and in which the Mediterranean axis did not figure in a unitary or cohesive manner. The last step to date which affects the Mediterranean axis and the TEN-T is the 2005 proposed extension of the European networks to the neighbouring countries7. This is not really a modification of the priorities, but it is a clear basic reaffirmation regarding strategic thinking that extends these networks towards the countries bordering on the European Union. The decision to create a new High Level Group (the third, after the 1994 Christophersen Group and the 2002-2003 Van Miert Group) was adopted by the European Commission after a ministerial seminar in Santiago de Compostela in June 2004. The group was created in September of the same year with the mission of studying “the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions”. The person named as president was the ex-Commissioner for Transport, Loyola de Palacio. Although, as I stated earlier, the De Palacio Group was not assigned the mission of reforming the TEN-T, the establishment of axes of communication between the European Union and its neighbouring countries (especially the north of Africa as regards how it affects the Mediterranean axis), meant a consolidation of the “map” that defines the future of transport in Europe and documentary evidence of the corresponding insignificant role of the Mediterranean axis since the 1990s. The De Palacio Group presented its report on December 7, 2005, which clearly established some connexions between the TEN-T projects and initiatives to be carried out in the north of Africa to improve communications. Analysis of the maps included in this report once again revealed the non-existent role of the Mediterranean axis (see map 4). Among the work carried out by this group, in April 2005 a meeting had been called with external assistance to evaluate the strategic lines of this report. When the report was presented there was a second public comment period, and it was then that a wave of criticism arose from a variety of bodies and institutions from the communities that comprise the Mediterranean axis.

4. The reactions to the 2003 and 2005 High Level Groups reports

The reports published by the Van Miert and De Palacio HLGs generated an irregular range of reactions. In the summer of 2003, the Valencian press —in particular the Valencian newspaper Levante-El Mercantil/Valenciano and the magazine El Tiempo—, published articles on this subject, including the opinions of experts on the subject and underlying the risk resulting from the marginalisation of the Mediterranean axis in these published reports8. The resulting controversy, for example in the Catalan weekly magazine El Temps, prompted the publication of a letter aimed at clarifying the situation sent by Gilles Gantelet, spokesperson for Loyola de Palacio, which attempted to demonstrate that the Van Miert report did not marginalise the Mediterranean axis9. It should be pointed out that there were no major reactions either from among those governments affected or corporate associations. It was a very different matter, however, in 2005 regarding the report released by the HLG chaired by De Palacio and, particularly, what happened in the time period allocated for public debate in 2006.

In the latter case it is important to point out how in 2005, and in reference to the report on the extension of the TEN-T to EU neighbouring countries, only six people from the Spanish State, representing five institutions or associations, took part in the public debate sessions on the report that the De Palacio Group was drawing up at that time. It is somewhat curious to note that these six people came from the Mediterranean axis communities: Catalonia, the Autonomous Community of
Valencia and Murcia. In fact, the institutions or associations that were present at the debate in April 2006 were the Tarragona Port Authority, the Barcelona Provincial Council, the Valencian Autonomous Community Government (via its delegation in Brussels), the region of Murcia (also via its representative in the European capital) and the private association FERRMED, which promotes a high-capacity freight railway corridor which runs from the Mediterranean coast to the heart of Europe.

It is interesting to observe that less than a year later (with the De Palacio report already published and approved), 32 people actively participated in the debate on March 28, 2006 (after the public comment period which had ended on March 10), of which 27 were representatives from regions of the Spanish Mediterranean Area: Catalonia, the Valencian Autonomous Community, the Balearic Isles, Murcia and Andalusia. Clearly there was a somewhat untimely reaction from the Mediterranean axis. This reaction was evidently late, albeit energetic. Those thirty odd people assigned to take part in the sessions to be held in Brussels represented institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia, the Autonomous Community of Murcia, the association FERRMED, various representatives from the Autonomous Governments of Valencia and Catalonia, the Council of the Valencian Chambers of Commerce, the Alicante Port Authority, the Government of the Balearic Isles, the Government of Andalusia, the Port Authorities of Valencia, Castellon and Andalusia, and so on.

But even more interesting than the specific individuals or institutions that attended that debate were the allegations or reports that different institutions sent to Brussels within the Commission’s public comment period on the De Palacio Report. A simple list of those who presented allegations provides us with a real panorama of the reactions generated in the Mediterranean area. In table 4 we can see the breakdown of the documents submitted by regions from the Autonomous Governments of Valencia and Catalonia, the Council of the Valencian Chambers of Commerce, the Alicante Port Authority, the Government of the Balearic Isles, the Government of Andalusia, the Port Authorities of Valencia, Castellon and Andalusia, and so on.

To facilitate readability I have grouped them by autonomous community (figure 1) and by organisation (figure 2).

After analysing these reports, one can arrive at some conclusions. The first is a concern openly expressed by all the documents submitted by regions from the Mediterranean axis concerning the marginalisation of the Mediterranean axis in the De Palacio report, with the exception of the Government of Andalusia which (as opposed to the Andalusian Chambers of Commerce Council) made no expressed demand regarding this matter. At this point I would like to take the liberty of quoting some of the documents sent to Brussels in view of the European Commission request:

“...A fundamental connexion has not been included: the Mediterranean Corridor, which presently directly links the North of Africa (via Algeciras) to the trans-European transport network, running along the entire Mediterranean coastal strip of the Spanish Peninsula to France, then continuing to the rest of Europe.” (Chamber of Commerce of Barcelona).²

“...the Spanish Mediterranean Axis has been totally overlooked (...) [this] has a bearing and a negative impact on the radial nature of Spanish communications (...) [this] rules out the possibilities offered by multi-modality.”¹⁰ (Chamber of Commerce of Murcia).

“...it cannot be understood why there is no development of a Mediterranean axis that would run from Barcelona to Algeciras passing through Valencia, Alicante, Almeria, Granada and Malaga (...) there is no justification for why the TEN has only one axis of penetration in Andalusia, the one running from Madrid to Seville, when in Portugal there are three lines of penetration networks and a number of others in Benelux” (Andalusian Chambers of Commerce Council).¹¹

“...[the] Mediterranean corridor has no importance for the European Union (...) The Group has undervalued the Mediterranean corridor as a bias for the division of development and cooperation with the North African countries (...) it does not provide any solution for the macro-region of the Mediterranean Spanish Arc (...) the proposals of the Group damage the interests of the Mediterranean macro-region.” (Valencian Community Chambers of Commerce Council).

“...the non-inclusion of the project [the Mediterranean axis railway] would represent a threat to the territorial competitiveness of the regions it crosses...”¹² (CIERVAL-CEOE)

“Following the priority rail axes in the report, the continuity of this network through the Spanish Mediterranean is interrupted, being re-routed towards the centre of the country [Spain] and Portugal, leaving the periphery ports and regions in the East and Northeast of Spain isolated (...) what is missing is that the HLG (High Level Group) has not considered in its totality the stretch of the FERRMED axis, which in addition to connecting the north of Europe with the south (...) addresses the sea and inland ports (...) We consider the study by this HLG concerning motorways of the sea to be insufficient...”¹³ (Alicante Port Authority).

“...the five major trans-national axes stated [by the High Level Group] have devastating implications for the Valencian Community, as they discriminate unacceptably against our region.”¹⁴ (Castellon Port Authority).

“With regard to this matter it is our consideration that throughout the successive revisions of the TEN network there has been a consolidation of a radial philosophy and concentration of axes which has taken shape since the beginning of the 1990s in this area of transport policies.”¹⁵ (Valencia Port Authority).

“Surprisingly, there are not TEN-T priority projects including intermodality requirements for other important Mediterranean ports such as Marseille and Valencia, in spite of their enormous traffic volumes (...) The Eastern Region of Spain seems to be mis-considered in the European transport guidelines for [the] next transport planning...”¹⁶ (Spanish Road Association-European Union Road Federation).

“Examination of the list of the European Union’s 30 infrastructure priority projects reveals that goods shipped by rail in the Mediterranean Corridor has not been sufficiently taken into account and as a whole is not considered as a trans-European network priority project.”¹⁷ (Autonomous Government of Catalonia)

“The list of eligible stretches has to be re-opened with the aim of including projects which, although not included in the 30 that were selected in due course, are now crucial (...) and it seems unquestionable that the enormous impact that the rail connection with the Maghreb via the Straits would have (...) would be seriously diminished if there were no fast exit towards Europe via the Mediterranean corridor.”¹⁸ (Valencian Community-European Region Foundation)

“The southeast axis proposed by the High Level Group does not include the Spanish Mediterranean Axis, which is a constantly developing economic area of vital importance...”¹⁹ (Government of Murcia).

“This document creates a major vacuum regarding the European Mediterranean Arc (...) between Barcelona and Algeciras (...) by fragmenting the Spanish Mediterranean Arc it contradicts all the previous European Union recommendations.”²⁰ (Valencia City Council).

“A number of aspects of the proposals put forward by the High Level Group are insufficient and inadequate (...) what is necessary is a review of the omission of possible axes that would favour communication between the south and east of Europe without the need to pass through the centre of the continent...”²¹ (Autonomous Government of Valencia).

As can be seen, the common denominator in these arguments reinforces my idea of a Mediterranean axis macro-region de facto
The document put forward by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia made a pertinent point by proposing a more flexible way of considering the issue: “It is our consideration that, as such, this document reflects a lack of coherence due to the fact that for Europe the projects in question are based on internal European relations, whilst for the countries in the south those axes under consideration are those which are at the service of relations with their neighbouring countries. This lack of coherence could be redressed by defining European projects that effectively contribute to extending the trans-European network and to relations with neighbouring countries. The Spanish Mediterranean freight rail axis would then be an option to be taken into account.”24 What is apparent is that the fact that the Mediterranean corridor was not among the TEN-T list of 30 projects hardly justifies that it should not be considered ideal for other purposes, as for example the connexion with North Africa. This very argument was put forward by the Valencian Autonomous Government, via its Valencian Community-European Region Foundation in Brussels, citing the document itself: “Now when attempting to design an intercontinental axis which links the North of Africa and Europe, a constraint emerges, as the Mediterranean corridor, not numbering among the 30, is not an option. This brings us to the absurd situation in which trains arriving at Algeciras from Morocco (…) would have to follow a route to Figueres via the Mesteta.”24

5. Consequences of the TEN-T design: investments from 1986 to 2002

The design of the TEN-Ts, in addition to marginalising the Mediterranean axis as seen in the projects maps and lists, has had a far more worrying consequence: focusing investment from Europe destined for TEN-Ts in regions of Spain other than the Mediterranean axis, particularly Madrid. Based on my calculations in an internal document drawn up in 2003 at the initiative of Ignasi Villalonga de l’Institut d’Economia i Empresa Igna i Villalonga I was able to conclude that 43 % of the funds and subsidies related to the TEN-Ts destined for Spain in the period 1986-2002 ended up exclusively in projects related to the Madrid Community infrastructures, 7.8 % for Catalonia and 9.6 % for Madrid. By extension, 37 % of the TEN-T subsidies for Spain ended up being used on radial rail axes (Madrid-Valencia or Madrid-Barcelona) and only 6.5 % used for the Mediterranean rail corridor, Valencia- Barcelona. In short, the Madrid Community was directly or indirectly, rewarded by to the extent of 80% of the funds designated for the TEN-Ts in Spain in the period 1986-2002.25 Of these amounts designated extraordinarily to the centre of the peninsula both the high-speed axes Madrid- Seville and the radial axis to Valladolid, Valencia and Saragossa took precedence. Clearly, the TEN-T policy has increased the concentration of funds in operations that has not tempered, not even by a stretch of the imagination, the traditional radial the design of Spanish infrastructures.

6. Conclusion: the change of the “bottom up” methodology and the 2010 revision horizon

As we have seen, the construction of the Trans-European Transport Network from 1990 to 2006 has slowly adhered to a methodology which has faithfully reflected the spirit of European unification in recent decades: an attempt to increase cohesion – in this case, territorial–, of Europe, but from bases and employing methods in which the influence of the member states has been a decisive and determining factor. The development of the TEN-T and subsequent lists or priority projects has responded to practical “confederal” thinking rather than a federal spirit. The 1994 Essen decision and that of the Commission ten years later (2004) to establish a series of priority projects (fourteen in the former and thirty in the latter) has determined subsequent development up until very recently, as we have seen, has been based on aspects that, in spite of statements and criteria put forward, was much more a response to the interests of the member states and a reflection of their particular view of “national” territory than to construct real territorial cohesion at a European level. This is the only explanation for the marginalisation of the TEN-T from a space such as the Mediterranean axis which concentrates a major nucleus of economic activity to which one can add its role as a sea outlet linked to the North of Africa.

I am not alone in my criticisms based on the maps and distribution of funds related to the TEN-T. The Van Miert Report of 2003 itself (page 70) recommended modifying the methodology for defining priorities in a paragraph which, unfortunately, has had few repercussions (italics are mine): “In view of the integration of the trans-European transport network, the bottom up approach is no longer sufficient in itself: it must be supplemented by a more specific methodology which has faithfully reflected the spirit of European unification in recent decades: an attempt to increase cohesion – in this case, territorial – of Europe, but from bases and employing methods in which the influence of the member states has been a decisive and determining factor. The development of the TEN-Ts in Spain in the period 1986-2002 ended up exclusively in projects related to the Madrid Community infrastructures, 7.8 % for Catalonia and 9.6 % for Madrid. By extension, 37 % of the TEN-T subsidies for Spain ended up being used on radial rail axes (Madrid-Valencia or Madrid-Barcelona) and only 6.5 % used for the Mediterranean rail corridor, Valencia- Barcelona. In short, the Madrid Community was directly or indirectly, rewarded by to the extent of 80% of the funds designated for the TEN-Ts in Spain in the period 1986-2002. Of these amounts designated extraordinarily to the centre of the peninsula both the high-speed axes Madrid- Seville and the radial axis to Valladolid, Valencia and Saragossa took precedence. Clearly, the TEN-T policy has increased the concentration of funds in operations that has not tempered, not even by a stretch of the imagination, the traditional radial the design of Spanish infrastructures.

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As we have seen, the construction of the Trans-European Transport Network from 1990 to 2006 has slowly adhered to a methodology which has faithfully reflected the spirit of European unification in recent decades: an attempt to increase cohesion – in this case, territorial–, of Europe, but from bases and employing methods in which the influence of the member states has been a decisive and determining factor. The development of the TEN-T and subsequent lists or priority projects has responded to practical “confederal” thinking rather than a federal spirit. The 1994 Essen decision and that of the Commission ten years later (2004) to establish a series of priority projects (fourteen in the former and thirty in the latter) has determined subsequent development up until very recently, as we have seen, has been based on aspects that, in spite of statements and criteria put forward, was much more a response to the interests of the member states and a reflection of their particular view of “national” territory than to construct real territorial cohesion at a European level. This is the only explanation for the marginalisation of the TEN-T from a space such as the Mediterranean axis which concentrates a major nucleus of economic activity to which one can add its role as a sea outlet linked to the North of Africa.
with the issue of TEN-Ts were set up by means of adding representatives from the states. In the case of the Van Miert High Level Group (created at the end of 2002), the representative from the Spanish state was Antonio López-Corral, Director General for Economic Programmes – Ministry of Public Works, who at that time counted on the minister Francisco Alvarez Cascos (from the conservative Partido Popular). Each member state was entitled to one representative, and in addition we can add observers from acceding countries plus one representative from the European Investment Bank. Similarly in the setting up of the Loyola de Palacio High Level Group (autumn 2004), once again there was a designated representative for each member state, plus others from acceding countries or those geographically neighbouring on the European Union. Once again, a representative from the Spanish Ministry of Public Works, this time under the ministry of Magdalena Álvarez (from the PSOE – Spanish Socialist Party), namely Pablo Vázquez (Director of Transport Forecasts and Studies), was elected to represent Spain, and accompanied by Pilar Castro, Ministry chief. With this kind of methodology, and that of the Commission’s initiatives it was left in the hands of member states and, consequently, to their territorial logic. It is hardly necessary to point out that in states such as Spain, with a strong centralist tradition and radial perspective of infrastructures, there was a faithful continuation of these very principles when transposing to a European scale. There is no other way to explain why not even List 2 of the Van Miert Report included the Mediterranean corridor from Algeciras to France (and beyond both towards the south and north) linked to the dynamic ports of the West Mediterranean. Let us not forget that this list identified projects with “a particularly high European added value”.

The fact is that the much sought after economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union, which the TEN-T attempted to achieve, has rested on the articulation, sometimes forced, of individual projects presented by the various member states. Whenever Europe has proposed a list of priority projects or has drawn up a map, it has done so based on material provided by high-ranking civil servants or public officials from the member states’ central governments. In my view, this fact reveals, on the one hand, the weakness of the European Union to achieve a structure that is not just a mere appending of states (and of their interests), and on the other hand, explains the scant relevance the Mediterranean corridor has had in this history of the TEN-Ts. All in all, the TEN-Ts have been established in a way that is closely related and linked to the view that each state has contributed to the Commissions, European Councils or High Level Groups. In this way, in the case of Spain, as we have seen in this analysis of the projects selected as well as the investments made up until 2002, TEN-Ts have meant the marginalisation of the Mediterranean corridor (with the corresponding doubts as to whether its inherent high-orth standing with respect to the European centre of gravity will be addressed in the future), the transposition to a European level of the principles of radially of the traditional Spanish conception as regards infrastructures and the increase of the “…radial character of Spanish communications, increasing the well-established existing concentration of Spanish transport…” (as stated in the document by the Murcia Chamber of Commerce20 during the public comment period for the De Palacio Report in 2006). Only thus can one understand why the Mediterranean corridor, which hosts a major part of economic activity, logistics and transport in Spain, has not been taken into consideration in any of the TEN-T priority projects from 1990 to 2006, with the exception of a general mention about the sea motorways and the convertibility of Spain’s railway network into high-speed systems, issues which, not being of a minor nature, have not reached the same degree of realization as other projects that have been singled out for special treatment.

Looking ahead to the review in 2010, nobody could now argue that there is a lack of strategic objectives regarding the Mediterranean corridor. What is needed is a coordination between all the governments, associations and institutions within the Mediterranean axis, from Andalusia to Catalonia in this case, embracing the Valencia Autonomous Community, Murcia and the Balearic Isles (and which does not rule out the French regions affected), so that this economic major-region can rely on, as of then, priority projects for the cohesion of the European Union and the development of the economic potential of this façade of the Mediterranean. The coordination of efforts, a clear definition of strategic objectives and priority projects at the level of the Mediterranean corridor and a decisive policy of information directed towards Madrid and Brussels must be objectives that guide the actions of the societies and economies implicated in the years that remain until the review of the TEN-T.

PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Jean-Claude Tourret

1. The challenges in southern Europe

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) recommends the establishment of an international “economic integration zone” in southern Europe, integrating the major European poles from Seville, through Valencia, Barcelona, Lyons, Marseilles, Genoa, Milan, Rome to Naples, which could act as a counterweight to the regions of central Europe. In specific terms, this strategy involves the implementation of a competitive transport system in this area, which can provide an effective and long-lasting guarantee for the circulation of people and goods.

However the problem of transport has become an obstacle in the Mediterranean today. Mountain ranges (the Apennines, the Alps, the Massif Central and the Pyrenees) divide the region and are a significant hindrance to the circulation of flows. As a consequence, land networks are discontinuous, have very little continuity and are highly saturated, which is a disadvantage compared to northern Europe, an area which is much better equipped from this point of view. As a consequence, the costs of north-south or east-west transport in this region are among the highest in the world.