

# REGIONAL PLANNING: RECENT EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN TERRITORIAL STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

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## INTRODUCTION

Changes in the organisation of states have an influence on territory in the long term, except in some cases where immediate consequences, like those in relation to borders and capitals, are produced. In the long and medium term these transformations can have far-reaching territorial repercussions, such as depopulation or the concentration of population in certain areas.

In relation to Spain and its recent political development the aims of the following observations cannot be open to general interpretation for two reasons: the changes have not been radical, nor is the temporal perspective available for such an analysis. Nevertheless one can appreciate interesting new trends which require consideration.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 introduced an important change in the territorial organisation of the state<sup>1</sup>: with the appearance of the autonomous regions (comunidades autónomas) (regions and nationalities) as a new political level. The integration of Spain into the European Community from the beginning of 1986 is yet another new political phenomenon, very relevant in several aspects, although not yet very significant in the existing territorial order<sup>2</sup>.

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1 In Spanish Geography with **territorial organisation** we mean a political entity divided into levels which correspond to demarcated areas. This meaning is ratified normatively by the Spanish Constitution and included in many other legal instruments.

2 In Spanish Geography we distinguish the expression **territorial order** (the disposition of the regional elements granting a structural value, resulting from the natural structure of geographic space, and from the processes of human intervention in this space) from **regional planning** (the will and action to improve the existing regional organisation) and from the **policy of regional planning** (a specific public function of recent application in Spain and constitutionally attributed to the autonomous regions or comunidades autónomas).

The changes in the territorial organisation of states induce transformations in the territorial order corresponding to the newly created political entities: the formation of new centres of human activity, establishing and reinforcing centripetal trends in the new political fields, the appearance of insufficiently maintained and spacially discontinuous and incoherent border zones, amongst other effects. In Spain the division of territory into provinces and conferring capital cities on these provinces, after something more than a century and a half, has had major repercussions in the existing territorial order in the state as a whole. The dynamics in the spacial concentration of population and wealth, and the formation of the terrestrial communication network have been enormously influenced by an act of government which had in its initial establishment a clear political sense, but also geographic criteria<sup>3</sup>.

The recent organisation of the State into autonomous regions (comunidades autónomas) has also been carried out under political criteria, not yet sufficiently explained and not in agreement with the Spanish regional theories widespread at the time of the decision<sup>4</sup>. Although, subsequently this has not provoked significant scientific debate over the new political map of Spain.

Joining the European Community has not provoked immediate territorial consequences, except in very specific cases<sup>5</sup>. The emphatic community backing of the process of regionalisation is reinforcing an established phenomena. Although its consolidation has gained strength through European regional development funds and other political means, one cannot say that on its own it has had direct consequences on the territorial order, but only through the decisions taken at local, regional and state levels. Development trends have been induced by various community policies such as the incompleted trans-european networks and the very generic territorial strategies. These have been defined (arcs, mountain ranges, development axes) and, though without real repercussions<sup>6</sup>, have an influence on many smaller scale political approaches to the improvement of the existing territorial order<sup>7</sup>.

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3 See QUIROS LINARES, F. (1990): «La división provincial de 1833», en *La regionalització del territori i els ens intermedis*, Diputació de Barcelona.

4 In this sense it would be interesting to read the prologue, written in 1973 by CASAS TORRES, J.M. to the influential work by LABASSE J.: *La organización del espacio*, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local.

5 For example the location of the Community Patents and Trademarks Offices in Alicante and Bilbao.

6 See *Europa 2000. Perspectivas de desarrollo del territorio de la Comunidad*, 1992, Comisión de las Comunidades Europeas, Dirección general de políticas regionales, Bruselas, and *Europa 2000 +. Cooperación para la ordenación del territorio europeo*, 1995, from the same organisation.

7 In the following considerations territorial order is understood to consist of two important parts: the diversity of the areas forming the territory, in this case the autonomous regions, and the territorial structures and systems which provide the Spanish territory with cohesion. This article deals with the foregoing concepts. To examine these factors we will have to take into account the evolution of population, especially of the urban systems, the transport and communication structures, and the space which is considered as being of a special natural and environmental interest. A large number of the instruments of regional planning set up in Europe over the last few years are in agreement on the consideration of these important matters. Thus providing a significant structure to the area where these matters are produced. See as examples the following titles, *La Charte de l'Ile-de-France*, 1991. Conseil Regional Ile-de-France, Paris, or *Piano territoriale regionale di coordinamento de la Regione del Veneto*, 1989, Giunta Regionale, Segretaria per il territorio, Venecia.

## 1. THE URBAN SYSTEM AND THE PROCESS OF POPULATION

The new political order which arose from the 1978 Constitution introduced very significant changes in the upper ranks of the Spanish urban hierarchy<sup>8</sup>. The division of the state into seventeen autonomous regions represents, paradoxically, the reinforcement of the cities of Madrid and Barcelona and obviously of the remaining regional capitals, as well as a large number of medium-sized and small cities.

The city of Madrid acquired a new political-administrative position becoming the head of an autonomous region consisting of just one province (ie the autonomous region of Madrid), and representing 60.5% of its provincial population. This new statute, in addition to Madrid's status as national capital, transformed Spain's most populated urban settlement into the dense nucleus of a **metropolitan region** or a great **city-region**<sup>9</sup> and reinforced its status as an important centre of centralised activity. Despite the fact that the central city, or the municipality of Madrid, is losing population (following a trend of peripheralisation common in the great European city) the urban sprawl had not stopped advancing in its centralizing role, until it reached 88% of the regional population in 1992<sup>10</sup>. Also its functionality in the whole of the state is strengthened: due to the necessarily increased participation of management in public affairs and because of the improvement of the communications network which continues being essentially radial. The growth of Madrid's international role after Spain's admission into the European Community opened new economic, political and international relations granting new quotas of activity to the capital.

The evolution of Barcelona in the last five years is also worth highlighting. The importance and presence of this city in public life as a whole encouraged some of its leading citizens to propose the existence of a double capital system in the function of the State, which should be recognised in political-administrative terms<sup>11</sup>. Several documents and municipal plans have expressed as their main objective the transformation of Barcelona into an outstanding element within the European urban system<sup>12</sup>. This has been followed by important local and metropolitan projects, maintained by the early metropolitan plan of 1976 and further stimulated by strategic initiatives and plans such as Barcelona 92, Barcelona 2000, and Barcelona 2010<sup>13</sup>. Also at the level of the autonomous regions some very relevant decisions have been made for the city; the most important, without doubt, was the abolition of the Metropolitan Council (Corporación Metropolitana) and its substitution by groups of local authorities for the management of public services. Recently the General Regional Plan of Catalonia<sup>14</sup> redefined

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8 See SERRANO, J.M. (1994): «The creation of regions in Spain and its consequence of urban system and its hierarchy», in *Bulletin de la Société Belge d'Etudes Géographiques*, n° 1, pages 31-45.

9 See *Madrid región metropolitana. Estrategia territorial y actuaciones*, 1991, Comunidad de Madrid, Consejería de política territorial; and also SÁEZ GALA, A. (1995): «La comunidad de autónoma de Madrid: una gran ciudad-región», *Situación*, n° 3 Bilbao-Vizcaya, Bilbao, pages 289-303.

10 *Ibidem*, cf. page 290.

11 The Mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, has repeatedly stated this proposal since 1982.

12 See *Eurociudades. Documentos y materiales de base de la Conferencia Eurociudades*, 1989, Centro Internacional de Estudios Urbanos, Barcelona.

13 CARRERAS, C. (1995): «Barcelona, capital de Catalunya y metrópolis europea», in *Situación*, n° 2, *op. cit.*, pages 249-260.

14 *Pla territorial general de Catalunya*, 1995, Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de política territorial i obres públiques, Barcelona. Passed by law 1/1995 on March 16.

the functional metropolitan area, assigning it the objective of regional de-congestion and equilibration, in order to obtain a decrease in population of almost 10%<sup>15</sup>.

In the urban nuclei of the immediate lower ranks of the Spanish urban system<sup>16</sup> several trends can be distinguished. Some autonomous regional capitals have been strongly stimulated by their new political function. This fact is obvious not only in those of small size, in which the regional capital status has had a decisive influence (Merida, Toledo, Santiago de Compostela or Oviedo), but also in those with higher populations (Murcia, Valladolid, Zaragoza, Seville). In a period of de-industrialisation the establishment of the autonomous region's central administrative organisations enables the maintenance of the economic basis of these new or reinforced regional centres<sup>17</sup>.

Other major cities have managed less well in the depressed situation of the manufacturing sector (Bilbao, Gijón), or the stagnation of tourism (Palma de Mallorca, Málaga). The growth of the public services has been widespread, as has greater care and respect to the urban structures and historical heritage, respectively. In general, except in those mainly industrial centres, the evolution of the Spanish city towards the end of the 1970's presents a progressive demography. This evolution stimulated the improvement in the structural functions of the centres, the prevention of the destructive processes in historic cities produced in the two previous decades, and the clear improvement of their social infrastructures and services<sup>18</sup>.

In the different Spanish regions the medium-sized city as a whole exhibits various inequalities: with the exception of provincial capitals, some regions are almost devoid of cities in this ranking of the urban system (Aragon, Castile-Leon, Cantabria, Extremadura) and other regions are well represented in this sense (Andalusía, Catalonia, Galicia). This urban stratum, considered in all of the established theories as redistributing and equilibrating population, has also been strengthened by the existence of the new regional political level. The local presence of the competent administration of regional planning<sup>19</sup> has propitiated the identity and importance, unitary or specific, of this urban ranking. In Catalonia, Basque Country, Andalusia, and Galicia, amongst other autonomous regions, different legal and planning instruments have been established at this level of the urban hierarchy as an

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15 In 1981 this area had 71.7% of the regional population. The plan proposes that for the year 2026 it will have 62.67%, reinforcing its present decreasing trend, illustrated in the 1986 (70.75%) and 1991 (70.37%) figures.

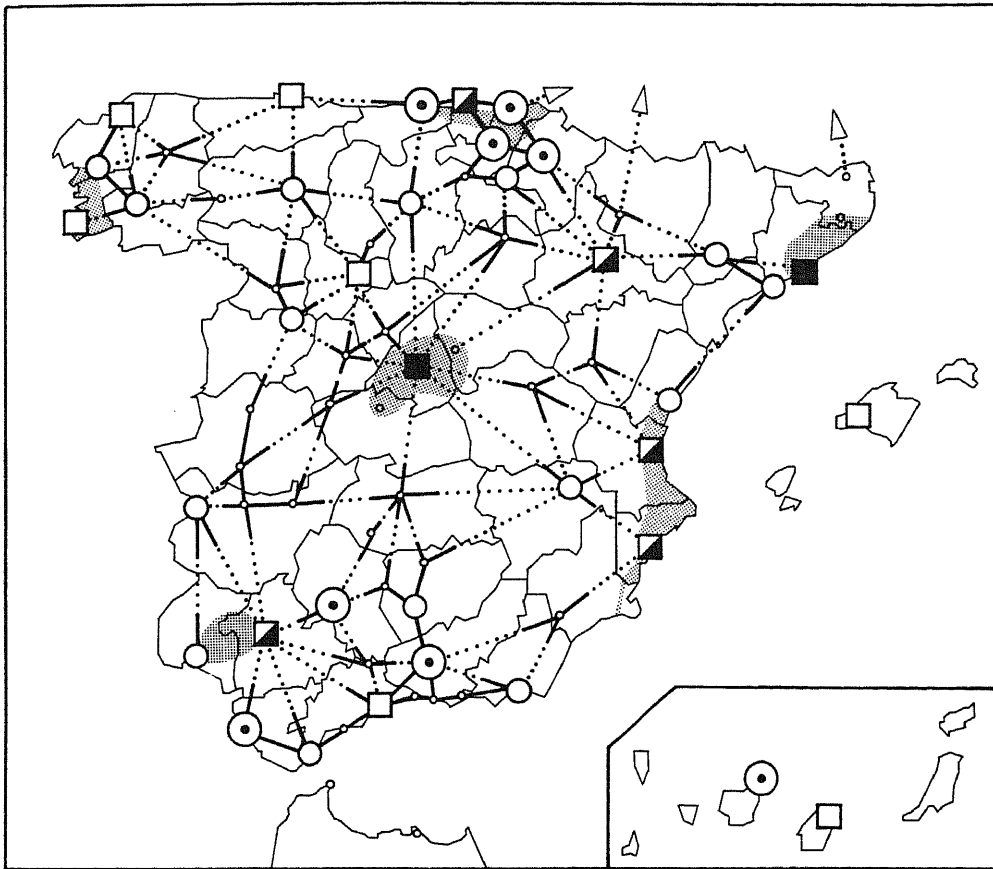
16 There is a significant amount of research on the Spanish urban system but none taking a unitarian approach as a criteria for public work. The national plan for the organisation of the Spanish urban system, conceived with different names in different laws since 1956, has not been completed. Recently, via an unregulated instrument and only as a part of the prior analysis and diagnosis of the proposal, the «basic system for cities» in Spain has been drafted, and which is reproduced in Figure 1. See *Plan director de infraestructuras 1993-2007*, 1993, Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes, Secretaría de Planificación y concentración territorial, Madrid, cf. page 63.

17 In the number of Situación already cited one can find numerous papers on the urban evolution of different Spanish autonomous regions. The references to the positive evolution of Extremadura (A.J. CAMPESINO FERNÁNDEZ), Asturias (R. ALVAR GONZÁLEZ), Aragón (V. BIELZA DE ORY y P. LOU) and Castilla-León (F. MANERO MIGUEL) are worth highlighting.

18 Ibidem. In relation to the aforementioned see the papers by P. SALVA TOMÁS, M. FERRER REGALES and F. ZOIDO NARANJO, in relation to Baleares, País Vasco and Navarra, and Andalucía respectively.

19 The Spanish Constitution (T. VIII. Art. 148) expressly mentions the policy of regional planning and established the possibility that the autonomous regions may exercise this responsibility. All of the statutes instituting the autonomous regions (estatutos de autonomía) have included this function; in this respect some include particular developments and slight regional differences.

# FUNDAMENTAL SYSTEM OF CITIES



- ▨ Urban regions
- International metropolitan areas
- ▧ National metropolitan areas
- Regional metropolitan areas
- ⊙ Main areas of urban development
- High potential urban areas
- Middle cities system for the equilibration of the territory
- ..... Main links

Source: Ministry of Public Works and Transport

administrative body, or as a criteria for carrying out different policies. For example, the location of supra-municipal public services, distribution of incentives to business, setting up activity to stimulate development, etc.<sup>20</sup>. Together these actions are changing the earlier trend redolent in many intermediate urban nuclei which were until recently stagnating or depressed. The positive demographic dynamism of this recent trend should not only be thought of as due to the reduction in migratory movements but also because of the significant change in the urban function of these medium-sized cities<sup>21</sup>.

In the face of the facts described earlier we find the negative phenomenon of the reduced importance of the smaller centres of population, and the practical disappearance of the scattered rural population<sup>22</sup>. The depopulation in vast rural areas represents the abandonment of many less important territorial structures and facilities, and also of the degradation of a great deal of the landscape. Paradoxically, non-rural construction in the non-urban areas is on the increase, occupying road-sides, river-banks and valleys, hillsides and even mountain summits. Although ultimately responsible for their management, the local presence of the regional administrations has not been able to control such negative effects<sup>23</sup>.

### 1.1 Transport and communication structures

The existing communication structure in Spain is much less developed than in other more advanced European countries. If one compares the road networks one may appreciate not only much smaller ratios but also very important qualitative differences. In the case of the railway network only very few dual trackways are available, a fact which represents an important limitation to the possibilities of this means of transport, considered essential in

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20 Catalonia passed a law for the division of its districts (Law 22/87) and establishing the district capitals (cabeceras) of the mentioned areas. In the aforementioned regional plan the medium-sized cities were subsequently taken into consideration in order to complete a complex proposal for the regional equilibration of population. The *Directives for Regional Planning in the Basque Country Autonomous Region* (Basque Government central publications service, Department of town planning and environment, 1994) established a system of settlement, with the district capitals and district capitals of the second order (subcabeceras) as the functional areas forming a part of this system. In 1986 the urban system was formulated in Andalusia, and has been used by the regional administration as a criteria for several objectives, and included in the *Base for the organisation of Andalusian Territory*, (Government of Andalusia, Department of public work and transport), passed by the government of Andalusia in 1990. In Galicia the production of the *Plan for the Development of Districts* is likewise supported by the existence of a significant group of medium-sized cities.

21 In relation to this subject it is interesting to consult the two recent papers: RODRÍGUEZ POSE, A. (1995): «Transformaciones en los sistemas urbanos europeos y españoles durante la etapa postindustrial», *Situación, op. cit.*, pages 129-148, and LÓPEZ ONTIVEROS, A. (1994): «La agrociedad andaluza: caracterización, estructura y problemática», in *Revista de estudios regionales*, nº 39, Universidades de Andalucía.

22 Between 1981 and 1991 the sector of the Spanish population censured as **scattered rural** fell to almost half its original level: from 2, 628,008 to 1,426, 280 people. According to the National Statistics Institute, *Population Census (1981 and 1991) - National Results. General population characteristics*, Madrid 1985 and 1994 respectively.

23 The following phenomenon known inadequately as *suelo no urbanizable* (**land not for building purposes**) has been negative throughout the whole of Spain, despite the creation of planning and legislative instruments, as with the case of the Law 4/1992 of the Generalitat Valenciana, established specifically for this matter.

contemporary European history<sup>24</sup>. For the main cause of this crucial difference one must look to the economic decline of Spain during centuries when the foundations of these networks were established in more advanced neighbouring countries.

This limited provision in the transport structure is vital when considering the existing territorial order, for its major contribution to development is always understood to be the provision of accessibility. The essential internal structure of a territory, its integration or good relationship with neighbouring areas and, definitively, the contribution that geographical space can make towards improved economic and social cohesion, is closely associated with the existence of a well integrated transport system. The attainment of which is an objective far from the present reality in Spain.

In the period that we are considering, this important objective has been reiterated in more specific terms with reference to the requirement for an inter-modal transport system<sup>25</sup>. Additionally, the plans undertaken relating to the different modes of transport in regional areas include objectives at a regional scale via the completion of inter-modal projects<sup>26</sup>. But the deficiencies in this field are so significant that not only are such objectives unattainable in the short and medium term but despite recent decisions and action we have not yet seen any substantial improvement.

The major decision has been made in relation to the development of the road network. The size of the network of roads and motorways has been substantially increased by a considerable amount of public investment<sup>27</sup>, and has greatly improved the state of the road network which is of general interest to the State. The regional administrations have also acted decisively in their major road networks. But the radial nature of the national road network has not yet been transformed, nor has the poor condition of the secondary roads, providing access to smaller population centres, been improved. Definitively, although there have been some evident improvements, it will be some time before a completely homogeneous, fully hierarchical and operational road system is in place.

In relation to the railway network the difficulties are greater. The differences in gauge-width raised the first fundamental decision in the context of the European Community: to adopt the standard community rail dimensions - but only in the high-speed rail network which was thus separated from the rest of the network. The decision was made to act drastically, in the face of the considerable economic losses made by the national company operating the network -on the whole a small network, poor quality, unprofitable and containing many sections of closed track. The railway transport must specialise in both short and

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24 The figures in absolute and relative terms are doubled, or even increased in higher multiples, when the figures relevant to Spain are compared with those of countries like Italy or France. The differences between the numbers of passengers are greater when we consider the national variations in passenger numbers. See *Europa en cifras*, 1992, 3ª edición, Eurostat. Oficina estadística de las Comunidades Europeas, Bruselas, cf. pages 204 and following pages.

25 See *Plan director de infraestructuras...*, op. cit., cf. pages 118 and ss., and 137.

26 For example in the case of the *Andalusia General Roads Plan* (1987, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de obras públicas y transportes). In this field the first documents regarding intermodal transport plans have recently been made available. See *Plan intermodal del área metropolitana de Sevilla. Alternativas de actuación. Documento de síntesis*, 1995, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de obras públicas y transportes (unpublished).

27 Between 1984 and 1993 the total length of high capacity routes has almost tripled from 2,300 to 6,285 kms; the plans of the previously cited *Infrastructure Steering Plan* have been established with a projected final total close to 11,000 kms, cf. page 186.

long routes and in freight shipment<sup>28</sup>. With these considerations the rail system would reduce in size and also in quality, changing from a radial network to become a simpler structure based on prioritised axes. It has been suggested that responsibility for the medium-sized and narrow gauge railways be transferred to the regional administrations (the majority of these are not competent at running such means of transport) or that they be removed from the network. The options chosen, probably occasioned by economic difficulties, will compromise the future spatial development of the means of transport considered as the main alternative to a road network which will always tend to be congested.

The 1978 Constitution allows non-commercial ports to be managed by the autonomous regions, whilst ports of common interest are attributed to the State. In the context of an over-provision of ports, the smaller examples either decline or they are adapted to other uses, mainly recreation. In this same context the major ports compete with one another via expensively improved facilities and management, although the real dynamism of these ports results from external factors. The expectations of the Community and the Spanish institutions for the development of coastal trade are difficult to achieve with the current general lack of integration in the means of transport<sup>29</sup>.

Over the past few years airports as a whole have improved. The growth of the internal and especially tourist demand explains the as yet incomplete transformations. Nevertheless the Spanish airports display much lower accessibility and passenger statistics than the major European airports<sup>30</sup>.

In view of this generally difficult situation relating to all the elements of future transport system, the proposals for improvement and better integration are gaining particular importance. The work on regional planning carried out by the European Community Head Office for Regional Policy is of a mainly prospective and suggestive nature; as we all know, this community policy does not really exist<sup>31</sup>. Essentially such work refers to axes and zones structured within a Europe conceived unitarily. The definition of the trans-European communication network could improve the links between different parts of Europe. Although these proposals as yet have had few real repercussions, their indirect effects are important: they aid the definition of trans-border links, they facilitate the application of Community funds to regional development, for which the requirement is sometimes even greater than for similar proposals from the State<sup>32</sup>. The trans-European networks relevant to Spain are the high capacity roads, railway links (conventional and high-speed) and those networks related

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28 *Ibidem*, cf., page 138.

29 For example see the pamphlet *La Europa de los transportes*, 1991, European Commission, Brussels.

30 The figures relating to the main Spanish airports are more than doubled in the main European airports. See *Europa en cifras...*, *op. cit.*, page 202. On the other hand, only one Spanish airport, that of Barcelona, is connected with its corresponding urban centre by railway.

31 For the first time the expression «Regional Planning» is included in the Community patrimony, specifically in its paper 130 S. This commitment is not developed as an expressed policy, although it is mentioned indirectly in other action and measures such as the trans-European transport networks and the so-called Delors Plan. See *Crecimiento, competitividad, empleo. Retos y pistas para entrar en el siglo XXI*, (White Book 1993, European Commission, Brussels). A recent report of the Economic and Social Committee (29-30/3/95) has proposed the express inclusion of this policy, amongst member states, in the expected reform of the Maastricht Treaty.

32 In the case of the trans-European railway network the Community proposals which refer to Spain are more ambitious than those from the Spanish Central Government.



to energy (electricity and gas). With a consideration of the logic of the larger scale, the improved definition and formation of great territorial axes and corridors is being propitiated.

State proposals relating to the transport networks have gone through an important qualitative change with the formation of the aforementioned Infrastructure Steering Plan (Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007). This instrument includes, despite its conceptual limitations<sup>33</sup>, explicit objectives of territorial and transport network integration, non-existent in the previous policies which were mainly sectoral and less planned. But this plan does not propose a strong and well-founded image of Spanish territory<sup>34</sup>. Although based upon two complementary ideas, equity and efficiency, the more specific proposal of the plan is concentrated upon the eastern seaboard of Spain. On the other hand the necessity of overcoming the radial and centralised nature of the transport network structure, even more necessary after the autonomous organisation of the State, is in part achieved with a circular route traversing the perimeter of the country. However, rather than a network, a more axial vision prevails in the national territory as a whole.

The autonomous regions have begun to develop their own plans and prospective studies. This work includes the transport networks as fundamental elements within regional planning. There have been several contributions ranging from the terminological and conceptual to actual proposals and objectives. But the actual achievements are modest. In this sense the completion of the 362 km longitudinal axis, Seville-Granada-Baza, in Andalusia stands out. It links the west of Andalusia via the Seville-Huelva dual-carriageway with the east via the Baza-Puerto Lumreras junction, and has become the first structural axis in the south of the Peninsula<sup>35</sup>.

## 2. NATURAL SPACES AND THE TERRITORIAL ORDER

The natural organisation of geographical space has a decisive influence in the territorial order. Relief and hydrology have greatly determined the location of human settlement and transport route. Decisions taken in the past continue to be applicable and have determined more recent location and routing. The result as a whole is the existing «spontaneous» territorial order, if we use the adjective that P. LAVEDAN applied to non-planned cities<sup>36</sup>. An order which takes into account the natural characteristics of a specific space affected by each decision, but not unitarily in relation to the territory as a whole.

The general growth of interest in natural and environmental questions is also affecting regional planning, where this interest is being incorporated. But a consensus has yet to be reached on the attainment of this goal. The breadth and generality of environmental territo-

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33 In the Infrastructure Steering Plan «Section 1» is dedicated to the establishment of a general territorial framework. This, however, is confused both conceptually and politically. It does not specify the scale desired at state level for the components of the territorial model, and includes some regional planning guidelines which have been developed without contributions from the autonomous regions, which have been constitutionally given the right to develop this policy.

34 This is the opinion, which is shared by the author, expressed by the lecturer J. GÓMEZ MENDOZA in her formal appearance before the Spanish Parliament's Commission for infrastructures and environment. Unpublished text.

35 See *Autovia del 92. Significación territorial del eje transversal de Andalucía*, 1990, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de obras públicas y transportes, Sevilla.

36 LAVEDÁN, P. (1936): *Géographie des villes*, Gallimard, Paris.

rial policies implies possible frequent discrepancies and overlaps or redundancy. It is necessary to understand that space of great natural and environmental interest can be understood as a territorial structure or system which contributes to providing greater cohesion to the area in question.

This point of view is represented in some recent planning instruments, which propose networks of natural spaces in order to secure certain functions in the territory as a whole: to preserve the environmental qualities of the landscape, to permit representative and indigenous wildlife to thrive, to allow the regeneration of certain natural resources, to make natural spaces accessible to citizens within an established maximum time span<sup>37</sup>.

In Spain «with the state organised into autonomous regions, a general movement of declaration and classification of protected areas has been unleashed»<sup>38</sup> but it is lacking an integrated proposal at state level and in relation to territorial order in the state as a whole.

Some autonomous regions have begun to include this point of view in their regional planning proposals. In Andalusia eight provincial plans for the protection of the physical environment were approved in 1986. These enabled wide areas of natural beauty to be inventoried and classified as *suelo no urbanizable especialmente protegido*<sup>39</sup> (specially protected land not for building purposes). Subsequently the Law of Regional Planning established the need to integrate these spaces, as well as those areas defining sub-regional plans, into a regional territorial model<sup>40</sup>. The general guidelines for regional planning in Aragon (work in progress) include natural spaces in a map entitled *Síntesis, modelo territorial*, but this point is hardly mentioned in the accompanying paper<sup>41</sup>. In Asturias the Plan for the Organisation of Natural Resources has been established to set up a network of natural space<sup>42</sup> which should contribute to the formation of the territorial order required by the Principality. This plan took as a base the previously approved regional guidelines which include a provisional indication of the protected natural areas<sup>43</sup>. The achievements of regional planning in Catalonia over the last decade have recently culminated with the approval by law of the aforementioned regional plan; a generic «proposal for environmental protection» includes natural space as part of the planning process, integrating, as a «territorial sectoral plan», an instrument dedicated to natural spaces which was passed in 1992<sup>44</sup>. Additionally

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37 In the case of the aforementioned planning documents from Ile-de-France and Veneto.

38 See the interesting paper by GÓMEZ MENDOZA, J. (1995): «Desarrollo rural y espacios naturales protegidos», in RAMOS REAL, E. and CRUZ VILLALÓN, J.: *Hacia un nuevo sistema rural*, Ministerio de agricultura, pesca y alimentación, Madrid, cf., pages 381-410.

39 See *Plan especial d protección del medio físico de Almería* (y de las restantes provinciales andaluzas), 1986-1987, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de obras públicas y transportes, Sevilla.

40 *Ley de ordenación del territorio de Andalucía*. Law 1/94, January 11, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de obras públicas y transportes). Cf., Articles 7 and 11 for the definition of regional and subregional plans respectively.

41 See the *Directrices generales de ordenación territorial. Descripción de la estructura territorial. Avance. Mapas*, 1994, Gobierno de Aragón, Departamento de ordenación del territorio, obras públicas, y transportes (unpublished copy).

42 *Plan de ordenación de recursos naturales de Asturias*, Principado de Asturias, Agencia de medio ambiente, 1992 - unpublished copy.

43 *Directrices regionales de ordenación de territorio*, Principado de Asturias, Consejería de medio ambiente y urbanismo, 1992.

44 See the aforementioned *El Plá general territorial... El Pla d'espais d'interés natural de Catalunya* was set up by the Department of agriculture, cattle and fisheries, and the Department of environment.

the regional guidelines of the Basque Country have included this aspect in their planning proposal. From a complete analysis of the physical environment, of the exhaustive zoning of the regional territory according land-use and potential, a proposal for natural spaces has been established which has become the principal part of a regional planning model<sup>45</sup>.

In relation to regional planning one could perhaps cite further examples, but the trend that we deduce from those already cited would probably not change: relevant natural elements have been incorporated lately, but with growing importance, to the definition of territorial models of this scale. The procedures utilised for this purpose and the solutions finally established are different.

Regarding the state as a whole references of this type are more rare. The most significant specific approach that we know in this sense is found in the aforementioned infrastructure plan. This includes an abstract model of the relationship between infrastructures and the environment as well as the reference to an environmental inventory completed for the Plan for Roads, 1984-91, which, quoting directly, provides «essential information on the most suitable corridors for the location of the major traffic axes»<sup>46</sup>. Subsequently the Regional Planning Head Office, which corresponds to the same ministry which established the infrastructure plan, has produced an interesting new piece of work in this regard<sup>47</sup>. The response to the aforementioned community proposals on regional planning includes, together with an urban system and an infrastructural project, the «synthesising elements of the natural and cultural heritage».

Although at the moment this work is wholly generic, we believe that the concepts represented in the community documents are interesting. The aforementioned *Europe 2000+* illustrated that regional planning can contribute to the achievement of objectives on biodiversity established at the environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro. The «open spaces» (mountain summits, wetlands, undeveloped river and maritime shorelines...) could allow the reconstruction of «ecological corridors» or «green belts» and their integration into regional and local plans. This work also highlights the factors of environmental regeneration and the public use of natural spaces close to urban centres. The CORINE landcover database is proposed as an instrument of «enduring regional planning»<sup>48</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Regional planning represents a new focus or approach to the integration of reality. If we use the definition of regional planning established in the relevant European Charter<sup>49</sup> it is necessary to understand that as a discipline regional planning does not yet have a consensual scientific basis and that as an administrative practice or policy it has been introduced very unevenly.

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45 *Directrices de ordenación territorial de la comunidad autónoma del País Vasco*, op. cit.

46 *Plan director de infraestructuras...*, op. cit., cf. page 127.

47 See *Escenario tendencial español. Esquema de desarrollo del espacio comunitario*, 1995. Ministerio de obras públicas transportes y medio ambiente (unpublished copy).

48 *Europa 2000+*, op. cit., cf. page 79 and following pages.

49 European Charter of Regional Planning. Approved in Torremolinos in 1983 by the European Conference for Regional Planning Ministers in the European Council.

The arrangement of the main elements which formulate unitary territories in geographic space is the result of the interaction between the natural environment and a multitude of isolated, or only very slightly related, decisions taken in the past. The majority of current options regarding the location, division and utilisation in geographic space are due to the initiatives of socially concerned groups or individuals motivated by necessity or by specific aspirations.

Interventions by administrations, representing majority or general interests, should be directed towards maintaining common values, eliminating inadequacies, and to promoting more structural action which produces an improved unitary coordination of the space administered. This should represent the best possible contribution from existing territorial resources for the well-being of the citizens and for present and future economic development.

Different administrations direct their action to different elements of the existing territorial order, according to the spatial scale and the political-administrative level at which they carry out these functions. In general this produces a clear gradation in relation to the scale of the interventions, as well as a gradient from the specific to the general, and between connectivity and flexibility in the planning of these functions.

Over the last two decades in Spain urban planning has become more widespread as a means of public control and intervention in the regional order at the local scale. Although its introduction is not complete and is marked by problems. The practice of regional planning above the local level is more doubtful and uneven.

In the previous pages we have tried to summarise the contributions from the autonomous regions, central government and of Community organisations towards the real understanding and transformation in the Spanish territorial order. The most numerous planning contributions have been achieved by the autonomous regions: new political entities which endeavour to draw up spacial models in an effort to retain territorial cohesion. In these works one can detect a certain theoretical convergence related to the areas of great natural importance. But many more contributions will be required before the Spanish political map is complete. On the other hand the existing instruments are not easy to coordinate neither in their procedures or content, nor in their temporal aspects. The main stimulus for the definition of urban systems and the declaration of protected areas has originated in these regional administrations. Whose actions, however, are often more administrative than would seem necessary.

The effective transformation of the territorial structures, in particular those in relation to the creation of a future integrated transport system, is due mainly to the central government of the State. However this political level has not recently assumed the constitutional mandate of the day-to-day responsibility for regional planning. The central government has completed some dubious projects and has not performed in the vital role of coordinator, director, or stimulator in any of the aspects which we are discussing. The prospective and suggestive nature of the work emanating from the European Commission is stimulating the central government to assume this role, but a major initiative is necessary.

Finally, it is important to state that the majority of descriptions and interpretations of the territorial order, as well as the spacial models created for the direction and resolution of policy, originate almost exclusively from work carried out by organisations of the administration or contracted to consulting companies. Scientific or university contributions which would enable the support of alternative plans on a more independent basis are very rare.