

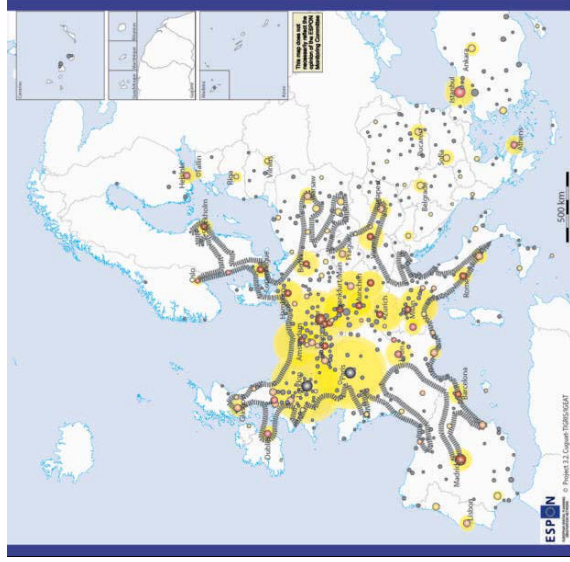
THE MEDITERRANEAN CORRIDOR IN THE HORIZON OF 2025. FLOWS, INFRASTRUCTURES AND GLOBAL SCENARIO.

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It is not easy in the present to predict what will happen within fifteen years. There are many unknown factors and possible variations, especially now, in such changeable times. Europe, has, however, always tried to offer possible future scenarios for the Union and its territories and we can benefit from them. A successful example of this forecasting is the ESPON report (the *European Spatial Planning Observation Network*) entitled *Scenarios on the territorial future of Europe*, a territorial vision of the continent for the year 2030. This document offers a global framework for the different European regions and for the emerging economic and territorial groups, such as the Mediterranean axis. But the ESPON experts do not offer a single future scenario. They offer three. Indeed, they leave the future possibilities open in accordance with a series of economic and political criteria or decisions by the main players. In this respect, the first reflection that we can make on the Mediterranean Corridor (in actual fact an ambivalent expression which could refer both to a group of territories along the Mediterranean shore of Spain, and to a corridor of communication infrastructures which connect it) is which of the three scenarios is most convenient for us and what we can do to move towards it.

FIGURE 1. THE THREE ESPON SCENARIOS

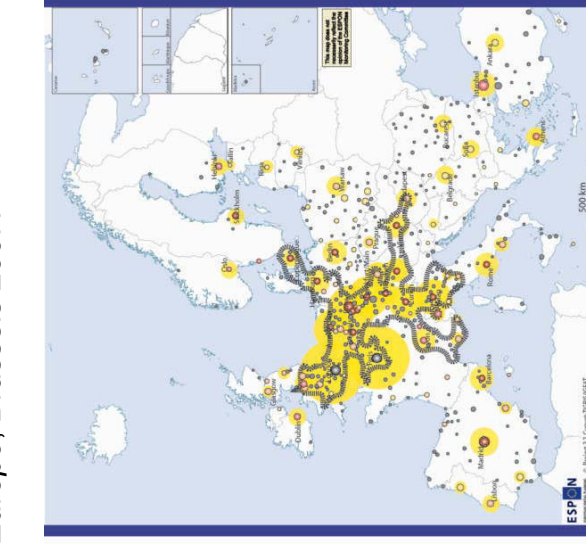
Three future scenarios for the territories of Europe. Source: ESPON. *Scenarios on the territorial future of Europe*, Brussels 2007.



**Trend Scenario:
Spatial structure and urban hierarchy in 2030**

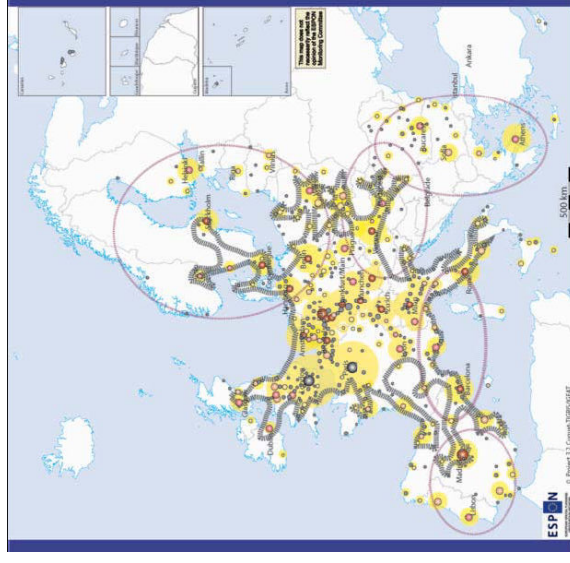
Urban typology:

- Global City
- European Engine
- Strong MEGA
- Potential MEGA
- Weak MEGA
- Regional/local City



**Competitiveness-oriented Scenario:
Spatial structure and urban hierarchy in 2030**

- Attraction and polarisation potential of metropolitan area
- Area of concentration of flows and activities
- Emerging peripheral integrated zone



**Cohesion-oriented Scenario:
Spatial structure and urban hierarchy in 2030**

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In a scenario dominated by the maximization of the economic competitiveness of Europe (competitiveness-oriented scenario), the Mediterranean axis remains outside the most dynamic areas of the continent, which are concentrated in the central core of the Union. In a second scenario where everything continues as it is (trend scenario), a tentacular presence of the Mediterranean axis is appreciated, as a “natural” corridor from Spain to Europe, but without extending its influence to the south or to the peninsular centre. A sort of cul-de-sac of European prosperity. In the third scenario, dominated by investments aimed at increasing the territorial cohesion of Europe (cohesion-oriented scenario), the Mediterranean corridor grows and becomes wider, connects with other axes of prosperity, extends to the south and, at the same time, as we can see on the map, a sort of ellipse of relations is created with the south of France and north-centre of Italy, balancing the weight of the European centre and north. Although it is not the time to discuss this document in depth, it is worth knowing that these three scenarios provide different starting situations (we could say global frameworks) for our territories which should be analyzed in detail (especially the political, economic and budgetary decisions which are hidden behind each of them) in order to obtain a global framework with a horizon of the next fifteen or twenty years.

However, the best way to know where we are going is often to see from where we have come. In the history of societies, there are certain subjects which appear recurrently. In the case of the Valencian and Catalan societies and in relation to the communication infrastructures and, beyond that, what we can call “the geopolitics of proximity” (a network of relations of all kinds and of especially economic and demographic flows which affect the territories), the idea of a corridor of activities, of people, of goods, of relations and communications, also of ideas, Mediterranean, coastal and with extensions toward the heart of Europe and toward Africa, has always been present. It is no exaggeration to talk about the Via Augusta as a sort of glorious antecedent of the A-7 motorway. Indeed, one of the essential characteristics of the Valencian and Catalan geopolitics has been the meridian boost (north-south axis) above the parallel one (east-west). This is maybe even more obvious in the Land of

Valencia, an elongated territory in which the north-south routes have acted, in the words of a master of geographers, as the country's "main street". In this movement of history in a meridian direction, a fundamental, age-old movement, modern events have only accentuated and intensified the direction.

There is a not very forced line, which would unite the arguments for which the Mediterranean Motorway was built (it is necessary to read the reports of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development from 1962) and the arguments in favour of a Mediterranean goods railway, as defended in 2008 by the association Ferrmed. If we carry out the exercise of reproducing some paragraphs from the report which, on 3 August 1962, Eugene R. Black sent to Mariano Navarro Rubio, Franco's minister of finance, on behalf of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, we will see that in relation to the provision of infrastructures things have hardly changed: "*The only important part of new construction which will probably be necessary in the near future is the motorway on the east coast, a modern road with limited access, with a new route along the coast of the Mediterranean from the French border to Murcia, with a length of 730 kilometres*". And he continued to explain the reasons for this recommendation: "*At first sight there are powerful reasons in favour of the construction of this road. It would cross areas with maximum density of traffic in Spain and where the movement is increasing with the greatest speed. It goes through important industrial and agricultural areas and serves some of the country's most important tourist areas*". As we have already said this is not at all bad as a technical definition of the Mediterranean axis. Nowadays we could use similar arguments to justify a modernization of the infrastructures and a decent Mediterranean corridor sensitive to the recommendations of the European Union as regards the type of transport: we are faced with one of the areas with the highest densities of transit and in which the growth has been high in recent years (we only need to see the data that we provide below) and which concentrates important industrial, agricultural and tourist areas of the state.

The adventure of the 21st century will be, with very similar arguments, to work for the creation of a railway corridor now (the road was forty years ago). It is curious that now, more than four decades after the motorway affair, it is another American, like Eugene Black in 1962, who shows us, if it is necessary,

the new vision of the world to which we need to adapt. This is the vision of the modern world presented, for example, by the American guru Richard Florida, among others in the magazine *Time* (July 2006) or in his last book *Who's your city?* (2008). Florida does not doubt that the future world will not involve areas, or surfaces (the states, in short, and this is in accordance with another of the benchmarks of the new economy and modern business marketing, Kenichi Ohmae, the author, among others, of *The End of Nation-State: how economics will soon reshape the world*, 1995), but rather lines, corridors, paths of activity and of communications. The world will be a geometry of vectors and not of areas and this is a major change: the way of representing the world in the 19th and 20th centuries was, basically, zonal, for which you only need to see the old geographic atlases with homogeneous coloured areas which represented sovereign territories. On the contrary, in the 21st century a cartography of lines will dominate. And it is in this vectorial geography that we will have to include the future forecasts for the Mediterranean corridor.

The delay in the modernization of the Mediterranean corridor for us as Valencians and Catalans is beginning to be worrying. It should be recalled that it has been approximately every hundred years that the transport and communication corridor between Valencia and Barcelona, the two central elements of the Hispanic Mediterranean façade, has been modernized. But we should not have to wait that long this time. It was in the summer of 1868 when the railway communication between the two capitals was completed, on crossing the River Ebro thanks to an iron bridge in Tortosa. However, it was not until 1882 that the railway extension to France (through Port Bou) was possible. A hundred years after this first impulse, in the 1970s, the Mediterranean motorway came into operation. And we should not have to wait until 2070 to see the third major modernization of the corridor completed: a European gauge goods track which will connect the western Mediterranean economies of the Iberian Peninsula with extensions to the south and to the north.

If we are talking about forecasts, it is not difficult to obtain an idea of what we can expect in the coming years if we do not modernize the transport network of the Mediterranean corridor (both road and rail, and without losing sight of Short Sea Shipping). We can demonstrate this with data.

We shall now talk about the AP-7 motorway and the sections between Alicante and Barcelona (Barcelona-Tarragona, Tarragona-Valencia and Valencia-Alicante), and analyze the daily mean intensity (IMD), that is to say, the mean number of heavy and total vehicles using them. The following table summarizes this information:

Table 1. IMD 1990-2007 of the Mediterranean Motorway Alicante-Barcelona

Section	Heavy traffic		% increase	Total traffic		% increase
	1990	2007	1990-07	1990	2007	1990-07
BCN-TG	7,099	13,125	84 %	40,618	66,217	63 %
TG-VLC	2,191	5,454	148 %	12,501	25,110	100 %
VLC-ALA	982	2,433	147 %	12,027	29,411	144 %

Source: Ministry of Public Works, On-line bulletin May 2008. Own preparation.

As we can see, in the last seventeen years the growth in traffic has been tremendous, more than one hundred per cent in the majority of sections and higher for heavy traffic than for the total. The queues at the tolls of the Mediterranean motorway in the summer are a result of this, but also other less visible signs or with less media power, such as the daily congestion in hours of work lost around the big cities, the accidents, the tolls that have to be paid to use it or the pollution generated. We do not know how the motorway transport demand will grow in the future, but it is obvious that, with a view to 2025 (that is, in some seventeen years), growth similar to that experienced in the last seventeen would be of concern.

The truth is that many factors lead us to think that the relations between the economies of the Mediterranean axis (especially the Catalan and the Valencian) and those of the latter with Europe will not come to a standstill. Let

us look at data from the recent period 2001-2005, both in millions of euros and in thousands of tons.

Table 2. Trade bound for Catalonia from the Land of Valencia 2001-05

	Toward Catalonia from the Land of Valencia					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	04-05
Millions euros	5,138	3,841	4,435	3,849	5,315	+3.4 %
In tons	5,002	5,079	5,508	5,263	5,720	+8.7 %

Source: Statistics provided by C-Intereg. Own preparation.

Table 3. Trade bound for the Land of Valencia from Catalonia 2001-05

	Toward the Land of Valencia from Catalonia					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	04-05
Millions euros	8,287	8,561	7,545	7,895	7,980	+1 %
In tons	4,693	5,831	5,316	5,784	6,231	+7.7 %

Source: Statistics provided by C-Intereg. Own preparation.

The increase in tons transported between the Catalan and the Valencian economy was especially intense in the five-year period 2001-05: between 8% and 9% in just five years. In other words, almost three million tons more of goods moving between the Catalan and the Valencian economy between 2001 and 2005. To this we should add that, according to the most recent data, the two economies are each other's main client and supplier, thus establishing a flow of the first order in the Iberian Peninsula as regards interregional trade (and transport).

It is not just, however, a question of roads. At least the railway, ports and airports are other elements of interest to the Mediterranean corridor. Without going any further, RENFE's Mediterranean corridor served over 2.5 million passengers in 2005. Since 1995, the growth has been of a million passengers,

and the line's income per passenger has tripled, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Data for RENFE's Mediterranean corridor 1995-05

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Passengers	1,548	1,682	1,931	2,267	2,301	2,319	2,543	2,469	2,462	2,430	2,503
Income	21,630	20,940	27,190	36,150	40,890	46,046	53,738	56,988	60,844	62,046	66,301

Source: Inebase. Passengers in thousands of travellers and the income for passenger transport in thousands of euros

Of the 2.5 million passengers in 2005, over half corresponded to the connections between Alicante and Barcelona on the Euromed, Arco and Talgo services. Just between the two capitals, the passenger figure is almost one million a year, with an occupancy rate of 95%. The service from Valencia to Barcelona (Euromed) was inaugurated on 16 June 1997 and in ten years the passenger figures have exceeded ten million passengers. In financial terms, this "Mediterranean" line (one of the company's Main Lines) has gone from a turnover of 21.630 billion euros in 1995 to 66.301 in 2005 (Statistical Bulletin of the Ministry of Public Works - RENFE. May 2008). It is not a bad statistic to have tripled the passenger transport income in ten years.

Finally, we should talk about the flows with the rest of Europe which, at present, are mainly at the two ends of the Pyrenees, in Catalonia and the Basque Country. According to the most recent data from the National Statistics Institute (INEBASE), for 2004, the rail transport volume generated by Catalonia and the Land of Valencia to the rest of the Europe of 15 members represented 36% of total Spanish transport. There are similar figures for road transport: over a third of the transport to the rest of the countries of the Europe of 15 members and 70% of the transport to other countries.

All these data show us, with more or less historical perspective, the need to modernize and develop the communication infrastructures of the Mediterranean corridor, both on a "regional" scale (interregional in this case), and on a state and European scale. And it is precisely on these two scales that the work should be most intense.

Looking at the coming years, we need to implement measures to ease congestion on the AP-7 toll motorway, such as a project already begun (only in the Land of Valencia) for a free dual carriageway parallel to the motorway. We

are referring to the La Plana dual carriageway. Work would moreover need to be carried out on the high-speed connection foreseen in the plans of the Ministry of Public Works and which is currently only outlined up to Castellón from the south and up to Tarragona from the north. The intermediate section from Castellón-Tarragona is a pending issue. Finally, work would be needed on the development of a European gauge goods railway axis (such as the project defended by the association FERRMED), to connect the whole western Mediterranean coast with the centre and north of Europe and, at the same time, to link up with the port logistic spaces of major shipping centres such as Valencia, Sagunto, Tarragona and Barcelona.

To achieve these objectives, it would be necessary to work in three strategic directions: firstly, to forget forever the radial design of the state infrastructures. It would thus be necessary to make progress with the idea of “federal infrastructures”, understood not as infrastructures that a supposed federal government (or central, in our case) would have to pay for, but rather as the materialization of a way of understanding the major communication and transport structures of Spain. Secondly, it would be necessary to strengthen the cooperation between the governments involved in the Mediterranean axis and coordinate the respective strategies in relation to at least the infrastructures. And, thirdly, to work on the modification of the infrastructure plans that both the Spanish government (through the PEIT) and the European working calendar (commission of trans-European transport networks) foresee for this Mediterranean area.

As for the material conception of the “map” of infrastructures, it is very important to break with the centralizing inertia of a radial design. The conception of this map of “federal” infrastructures is equivalent to decentralized but inclusive infrastructures, linked to the basic territories but with the capacity to be connected and organized on different scales, which combine flexibility, creativity and sustainability and which respond to the realities and needs of the territories that they cross and at the same time open up to the rest. This was even present in the March 2008 election campaign, when the Deputy Prime Minister of the Spanish government undertook to include the existence of a decent railway corridor for the Valencia-Barcelona line in the Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan (PEIT). This decision is welcome.

In the second case, the coordination of actions is important. At present, in addition to the current PEIT (Ministry of Public Works), in Catalonia there is the PDIF (planning of the Catalan railway network), the Catalan Road Plan (1985, renewed in 1995 and in force until 2005), the Transport Infrastructure Plan of Catalonia (PITC 2006-2026), the Territorial Plans (the General Plan is currently being reviewed) and, in the Land of Valencia, the Strategic infrastructure Plan (PIE, 2004-2010), the Territorial Organization and Protection of the Countryside Plan (2004), the II Road Plan, in addition to the planning by the provincial councils and the territorial action plans (PAT) which, on a subregional scale, the Valencian government wants to launch in 2010.

Finally, at present and in relation to Europe, the horizon is 2010, having lost, for the moment, the possibilities of including the Mediterranean axis in the TEN-T European strategic transport and communication plans (for an extensive account of this affair see our work from 2007¹). In 2010, the European Commission will review the strategic projects for the trans-European transport network with European subsidies and this will be the time to back the importance of the Mediterranean railway corridor as one of the essential elements of the geoeconomic map of the European Union. The path is free: it should be recalled that during the Commission's public call in June 2006 to hear the opinions of European institutions, societies and citizens on the priority trans-European infrastructure programmes, there were numerous interventions (especially from the communities of Catalonia and the Land of Valencia, but also from the Balearic Islands, Murcia and Andalusia) critical of the marginalization of the Mediterranean axis. Therefore, with a view to the review of the European Union's priorities in 2010, the unanimity of the societies of the Mediterranean axis is already a fact.

¹ Boira, J.V. (2007) El eje mediterráneo y las redes transeuropeas (RTE-T): Historia de un desencuentro. De la cumbre de Essen (1994) a la dimensión exterior (2006). In: "Planificación de infraestructuras y territorio. El arco mediterráneo". *Papers*, no.44. Journal of the Barcelona Institute of Regional and Metropolitan Studies.