

SUMMARY OF ARTICLE: [HTTPS://DX.DOI.ORG/10.12795/REA.2022.I44.08](https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/rea.2022.i44.08)

Andalusia, the Trans-European Transport Network and public transport and territorial cohesion policies. The Malaga-Seville territorial axis

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KEYWORDS

Red transeuropea de transporte
Políticas públicas
Cohesión territorial
Andalucía

The article focuses on trans-European transport networks and their influence on territorial cohesion in Andalusia, on the Malaga-Seville axis. The aim of this research is to analyse the evolution of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in the Malaga-Seville territorial axis, both in terms of public transport policies and in terms of territorial cohesion, especially regarding the railway network.

The main hypothesis of the study is as follows: the development of the TEN-T has contributed, on the one hand, to greater territorial cohesion and better logistics and transport articulation, both at an intra-regional and inter-regional level, within Spain and the European Union (EU) as a whole, and, on the other hand, to the strengthening of the Seville-Malaga territorial axis. The qualitative methodology used in the article is based on a systematic literature and documentary review. The qualitative research carried out here has mainly drawn on primary sources such as official documents from public bodies of the Andalusian Regional Government, the Spanish central government, and the European Union; articles in specialised scientific journals; doctoral theses. Secondary sources have also been used to expand on the studies used as primary sources.

With regard to what this work can contribute to the knowledge on territorial, logistic and transport structuring that the TEN-T in Andalusia can bring about, the following two aspects are considered: TEN-T have a clear positive effect on the deepening of territorial cohesion in Andalusia; in order to achieve the aim of territorial cohesion in Andalusia, it is necessary that the public administrations, at their three main levels (autonomous and state, within Spain, and community, within the European Union), work in the same direction and have a joint plan for the most appropriate development of the infrastructures necessary to achieve this structuring. Thus, the article aims, as an element of novelty and usefulness for future approaches and further study of the subject, to show the cohesive effect that the development of the TEN-T can have on the logistics and transport network of Andalusia, especially on the territorial axis formed by Seville and Malaga.

Regarding the results of the research, the fact that the TEN-T can become a mechanism for economic, social, and territorial cohesion and development demonstrates that the peripheral nature of a territory such as Andalusia does not necessarily correlate with its isolation. In fact, the potential of modes of transport such as ports in Andalusia is directly linked to the strategic use of the Andalusian region as a logistical interface,

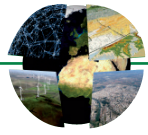


as a major port that connects, on the one hand, economically expanding North Africa with southern Europe and, on the other hand, both sides of the Atlantic strip. What is currently considered an obstacle or limitation (Andalusia's territorial location in relation to the rest of Spain) may become, under certain technical, social, economic, and political conditions, an opportunity for territorial and logistical development. TEN-T, because they enhance synergies between different territories under common policies, are likely to become alternative development poles. To this end, it is essential that the territorial imbalances that have arisen over the last few decades in Europe are definitively resolved. Logistics and transport networks have not yet been fully exploited; despite the boost they have received thanks in part to the TEN-T.

The results of this study suggest that the possibility of the successful deployment of TEN-T in Andalusia coincides with Andalusia's potential road, rail, port, and airport capacities. However, this would imply overcoming the traditional radial development model. Although it is true, on this point, that the major modernisation of infrastructures undertaken with the 1992 Expo had a generally positive impact, the fact is that it continued to be largely subordinated to radial development, with its centre in Madrid. Hence the window of opportunity that the development and completion of the Mediterranean Corridor could provide. Andalusia, in this respect, could constitute one of the alternative transversal axes that do not necessarily run through Madrid, but, for example, through the entire Mediterranean arc, with all that this would imply at an economic and social level. And, within Andalusia, the possible territorial axis formed by Malaga and Seville could become even more important within the set of transversal axes that would have the Mediterranean arc as their centre. A city like Malaga, with optimised transport intermodality, could become the capital of the southern Mediterranean and create synergies with the other two major Mediterranean capitals in Spain: Valencia and Barcelona. All of this in connection with Seville, which would continue to have an important specific weight due to its capital status, its infrastructures, and its geographical location. About the specific shortcomings of the modes of transport for Andalusian territorial cohesion, our results confirm the shortcomings of the Andalusian rail network, which is undoubtedly the most important, together with the port network, for the highest level of logistical development in Andalusia. The weight of the Andalusian railway sector in freight transport is still low, but this is not a specifically Andalusian phenomenon, but rather that of Spain as a whole, which continues to have a freight transport model in which road transport continues to be the main mode of transport, in contrast to what happens in other European countries. In any case, the Andalusian railway panorama is far from optimal, as shown by the case of Seville-Malaga, which still does not even have a direct high-speed connection.

In conclusion, the TEN-T have been and continue to be a fundamental tool for territorial cohesion in Andalusia. However, their development is insufficient and not very uniform. Likewise, there are still major shortcomings in the common transport policy regarding the territorial rebalancing of the Union, particularly in peripheral regions such as Andalusia, which continue to suffer from certain shortcomings and deficits in terms of access to strategic logistical points and to the Union's central markets. One of the great unresolved issues, both for greater territorial cohesion in Andalusia and for strengthening the link formed by Malaga and Seville, is the development of the Atlantic and Mediterranean corridors. The latter has a potential which has not yet been fully exploited and which could contribute to strengthening the Seville-Malaga axis. Although it has not yet been fully resolved, considerable progress has been made on the problem of continuity between the various economic centres in Andalusia, mainly, but not only, between Malaga and Seville, which are the region's two main economic engines. In this respect, the motorways of the sea can play a multiplier role which is currently not sufficiently developed. Of the modes of transport that have been fundamentally affected by TEN-T policies (road, rail, and port), it is the rail network that has made most progress. However, as of April 2022, there is still no direct high-speed connection between Malaga and Seville. If this situation is not reversed, neither territorial cohesion nor the establishment of the Seville-Malaga axis will be able to reach its maximum level of development.

As for the Malaga-Seville axis, each of the cities can, in a sort of division of labour between the two, take advantage of their potential and achieve a logistical, economic and social synergy of greater projection than at present. It is also sufficiently clear that the level of collaboration between the different public administrations is totally insufficient and incoherent since there are actions and plans that contradict each other. There



is therefore a need to strengthen and harmonise public intervention in collaboration with the private sector. Our research shows that the development of the TEN-T has contributed to greater territorial cohesion and better logistics and transport articulation, both at intra-regional and inter-regional level, within Spain and in the European Union (EU) as a whole, which is the main hypothesis of our work. Likewise, the influence of the TEN-T on territorial cohesion in Andalusia has been high, although it has shown certain shortcomings which have already been pointed out. As for the potential axis between Seville and Malaga, the great unresolved issue is still the high-speed rail connection between the two capitals.

Regarding the limitations of this research, we would like to highlight the difficulty in finding quantitative information on transport plans and their implementation for the territorial axis formed by Seville and Malaga. Finally, we suggest as a future line of work the critical analysis of the scope and real impact of the high-speed development in Andalusia in general and in the Malaga-Seville axis, in relation to the Andalusian, Spanish and European objectives regarding a new sustainable, competitive, and efficient transport policy. In view of the above, we consider that the research carried out shows the decisive role of the TEN-T for the territorial structuring of Andalusia, especially for the creation of the axis formed by Seville and Malaga, as well as the need for public administrations to act with greater coherence, diligence and efficiency to work in the same direction that favours the whole of Andalusia and, particularly, two of its great logistic and economic engines such as Malaga and Seville.