

RAILWAY SHIPPING IN SPAIN; EXHAUSTION OF A MODEL AND THE NEED FOR RENOVATION. THE DIFFICULT FUTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION AND EXPOSITION

Shipping and its different methods make up essential elements in the structure and productive system of a territory. The intensity and direction of the flows of traffic are important components in the configuration of spatial morphology. They are connected to the layout of the urban network and to the organization of the economic activities in their production, destination, and consumption. Given their significance, the shipping system requires complete and highly detailed planning in order to ensure its adequate functioning. This process should incorporate the different territorial divisions in a harmonious way.

The *central issue* analyzed here is the shipping of goods carried out via train in Spain. The problem stems from the reduced volume and declining development of the railway system; it presents small values as much in absolute data as in relative. The national and international strategy advises the revitalization of the system. However, that requires a joint planning of grand scope which is not so simple to undertake, especially considering the current situation of economic crisis.

The *objectives* outlined in this article focus on the following points:

- Analysis of the current situation within the global context of the trafficking of goods.
- Study of the essential causes that have brought about the limited utilization of the rail system.
- Enumerate the principle derived consequences for the movement of goods and the connections of the productive system.
- Present a few options and suggestions for change and revitalization.

The spatial frame of analysis covers a national scale as the basic scope, but the European Community is inserted within another broader scope without forgetting a superior geo-strategy.

In order to tackle these questions, a mixed methodology is used. The study of its recent evolution is carried out, which leads to the actual situation. This is examined by means of the task of analysis, centered on the principle implied questioned, and it is completed with synthesis procedures, the only path that enables us to reach a global vision of the complex existing reality.

The progressive reduction of the shipping of goods by train in Spain is produced inside of a global increase in important traffic. This has risen by more than double during the last thirty years. This is due, in part, to its own increase in productive activity. Another part can be attributed to the clear disorganization of the model of transport and production.

So, the interior traffic has passed to enter into account the rate of 8.89% in 1975 to less than 3% in 2010. Also on the international scope its weakening is clear. Within these same dates it has reduced from a modest 1.70% initially to 1.26%. These are almost marginal values. The significant meaning of RENFE is a constant. So much that when it was exercising the state-run monopoly of train transport, that after its liberalization (2005) and resulting functioning as a business operator.

The causes which motivate this descent are complex and of disparate nature. Some contribute, of concise form, to its continuation. Various others are objective. It is the case of the layout of peninsular Spain, which accounts for a certain natural isolation toward neighboring countries. This limits the development of the train. Neither is the rugged terrain nor the interior layout of the country beneficial, and it determines, from the beginning, the initial route of the railway branches. These remain linked, in its turn, through the morphology of the basic network of cities. Such initial elements have been maintained, in great measure, until today, albeit with some slight corrections.

However, the chosen option of the leading role of road travel warns that supported itself in a strategy of short glances, but of common use. In the past few years, enormous malfunction in the system of articulated shipping and the development about it. Only in the last years were significant changes in the position of the politics of shipping noticed, and consequently, in the position of the inversion. So, there is a need to modify the new modal structure of transport. The train now becomes in the destination of the principal sum of inversions in the infrastructure of transports. This distinct change of tendency is already reflected in the Strategic Plan of Infrastructures and Transports (acronym PEIT); trains will receive 43.70% of the inversions and the road system will receive 25.23%. An opposite modulation is the anterior. However, the high speed lines, the principal destinations of those inversions, are positioned exclusively to the transport of passengers. Transport of goods has remained marginal. This confirms that, going forward, one will have to search for difficult connections among the high speed lines and the conventional lines, which maintain marked differences. We are dealing with a clear duality without internal integration.

The principal motivations which are advisable for the improvement of the transport of goods via train in Spain are, in essence, economic, ecological and strategic in nature. The transformations have to be carried out within the European frame, the Union.

In the middle of this context the Ministry of Public Works presented in Madrid (September 29, 2009) its intent to take up the issue. After a year of research (September 14, 2010), they implemented the so-called «stimulus plan for the transport of goods via rail». The objectives of the plan are the following:

- Promote the interconnection and collaboration among different paths.
- Improve the environmental sustainability of the system of transport.
- Promote the cooperation among public administrations, especially through the specific agreements of the General Administration of the State with the Autonomous Communities.
- Promote the deregulation of the market and integrate new actors into the development of the logistical chains.
- Define an efficient and integrated network for the transport of goods via train, highlighting the role of those that are associated with it and the connection with other European networks.
- Give certainty to the market about the definition of the networks and its conditions of operation.
- Improve upon the management and information systems as much as in their operational processes.
- Increase the quality and reliability of the service.

After these basic objectives, the mediate purpose is to increase the quota in the market. The horizon for the application of this plan is 2020. It includes ten big programs, 44 actions, and 100 measurements. The improvement of the announced railway infrastructures are evaluated as 7.512 million Euros. Without doubting the well wishes and truthfulness of these figures, it doesn't appear to be likely to obtain sufficient resources for such inversions. In such a case, one runs the risk that this plan will not be more than a mere declaration of good intentions.

Nevertheless, a few brief references concerning those basic sections that should be transformed support themselves, and about those which are convenient to undertake, in order to eliminate the continued decline of this mode of transport and, where possible, revitalize it.

The *selection of the key ideas* constitutes an absolute priority; it is necessary to prioritize the inversions to carry out. This deals with choosing which paths can fulfill the objective of transporting a major volume of goods, inside of a balanced combination among supply and demand. Its frame of analysis should be the most extensive possible, giving primacy to national interest, but keeping in mind the peninsular geo-strategy within the European Union.

The aforementioned should combine with the configuration of a basic network of operative stretches of goods transport by train in order to catch up with the interior structure. By its own nature, this involves the selection of objectives. The regional interests press for imposing on the national objectives. In this sense, a very complex reality is opened before the proceedings to be carried out.

Likewise, the creation of the logistical units combined with the design of the network for the transport of goods by train should be considered. However, it is easy to understand that the design of a national plan of logistical centers and hierarchies, according to the categories and with their different roles to be carried out, nor is it simple to undertake. The difficulties arise, as much from the technical part of the analysis, design and implementation of the economic duties to invest, as the political aspect inferred in the decisions to make. The search for the necessary interconnectedness is another essential objective.

Before the collapse of train transport of goods in Spain, it is advised to improve the sector, expanding it and balancing it with the road sector. On the contrary, the existing risks

announce serious prejudices for the economy and the environment. But given that almost everything has to be done, the road ahead is very long, wide, and costly. The proposed plans present serious doubts of being viable and able to be fulfilled. The timid proposals that have been made don't seem realistic. The real panorama of the economic crisis is not favourable to face up to all of this. The official frame of the rail sector allows for the participation of private enterprise. Interest stimulates it. Something else very different is that the private investments find sufficient motivation for their participation. The open fronts are quite numerous. There is much to risk with the transformation of our productive system; open questioning is of such complexity that it gives off certain anxiety.