

THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPANISH AIR CONECTIVITY (1970-2008)

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The mobility is one of the most relevant characteristics of advanced societies. Though from the beginning of its existence, human being walks and moves, there are so many factors that explain the larger movement of people and goods during the last years to any scale of analysis such as the increase of the population, the reorganization of the productive processes, the increasing volume of commercial exchanges, the disperse occupation of the urban peripheries and the development of the tourist sector.

Current world, inserted in the globalization, is an interconnected reality. If Internet and the TIC have had and have a decisive influence in the trends of the mundialization (Pedreño, 2007), we cannot forget the important contributions that the modern systems of transport and, very specially, the sector of the aviation, they are recovering in this contemporary globalization. Numerous authors have recognized the paper of air transport in the compression temporary space that it characterizes to the current world and, therefore, its protagonism as agent of the globalization (Harvey, D. 1998; Novoa, And. 2003; Pedreño, To. 2007).

This way, air transport, though it has not abolished distances, has reduced drastically the time to save them «allowing not only the perception, but also the materialization of a world that is shrunk: both in the physical accessibility and in the most complex plane of the cultural hybridization» (Cordoba et al, 2008). Hence, some authors speak about the «plasticity of the space» (Gago, 1998), metaphor for which the world can stretch or shrink depending on the technological development of the modes of transportation and electronic existing communications in every moment.

The conception of these airport infrastructures, especially of more important ones, has evolved in a few years, as from simple infrastructures to facilitate the aeronautical operations (landing, takeoff and other minimal needed services); they have transformed in big terminals with functions not only tied with air transport, but complementary and auxiliary to it (Doganis, R., 2001). That is, it has evolved from the airport as an isolated point isolated in the territory towards the relational airport with other transport infrastructures and airport facilities.

But, why are these infrastructures so important nowadays? In global world in which we are inserted, the airports recover an essential function to materialize the own

interconnectivity of the contemporary globalization: to connect territorially with the rest of the world through a direct way. Therefore, it is said that an infrastructure of these characteristics allows providing to the regions where they are of prestige, reputation, centrality, functionality and internationalization (Díez, R., 2010).

The airport Spanish panorama has suffered a deep metamorphosis during the last few years as a consequence of the liberation process of air sector developed at the end of last century. The aeronautical Spanish sector, before the above mentioned process, was characterized for being strongly regular and protected, with access barriers to the market and rates controlled by the Administration.

Nevertheless, immediately after three packages of air transport liberalization, agreed in 1987, 1990 and 1992, the air transport in Spain has lived changes to a dizzy pace due to the freedom of entry and exit, as well as to the free establishment of routes, frequencies, capacities and prices on the part of the airlines registered and certified in any Member state in the European Union.

One of the principal consequences of this important phenomenon has been the increase of the air Spanish connectivity, due to the two-pole structure of 1970 articulated by two dominant centers, Madrid and Barcelona, this phenomenon has evolved into a completely different one. At present, though Madrid and Barcelona keep shaping a governing binomial in the interior relations, there appear new emergent centralities associated with the revaluation of regional centers in the structure of the national territory thanks to the improvement of network highways, development of the high-speed train and the consolidation of the low cost airlines.

Using the coefficient of connectivity as tool of analysis, the evolution of the degree of vertebration between the urban systems (national connectivity) and the increasing participation of many of the Spanish airports in the global scene (international connectivity) is being analyzed in this work, highlighting the incident of the tourism in the above mentioned phenomenon.