Abstract

The farming land around the city of Lleida is one of the most extensive irrigated surfaces on the peninsula, which has been especially active over the last fifty years. A third of the Spanish sweet fruit production, about 10 to 15% of the alfalfa production and a considerable percentage of the cattle industry is located here. Around this production a varied industry has emerged, dealing with fruit, manufacturing products derived from cereals, producing feed for cattle, slaughterhouses etc.

This agrarian system is the base of Lleida’s economic system, which is characterized by an agriculture that exists thanks to the great hydraulic works that made water available. One of these is the Urgell irrigation channel.

The construction of any civil work produces a lot of effects, both directly and indirectly, that organize the surrounding territory. It leads to an arrangement that results from the diverse activities at work in the lay-out of the territory and is clearly an example of the way the socio-economic system reacts to the new situation. What we are dealing with is the function of this sort of infrastructure and the way that it intervenes in the distribution of these activities.

Summarizing, it could be stated that the consequences of a civil project operate in a double way: on the one hand there is the direct influence of the urbanization, an inherent aspect of the project as such, that plays an important role in the growth of the territory and determines where it takes place. On the other hand it leads to a reorganization of the different economic sectors because it creates or changes different productive centers and consumers.

This second effect is the one that modifies more visibly the socioeconomic character of a region. Economic development changes the territory, produces a dynamics that can lead to variation in the demographic and industrial structure and their fluctuations. Its result is a rearrangement of the social space that manifests itself in variations in the hierarchic system of different towns and villages, economic and demographic flows, the possibility to attract investments etc.

Our study treats the influence of the Urgell irrigation channel in the arrangement of the territory of Lleida and how it played a role in the socioeconomic evolution of this region.