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EU23
SPANISH PRESIDENCY
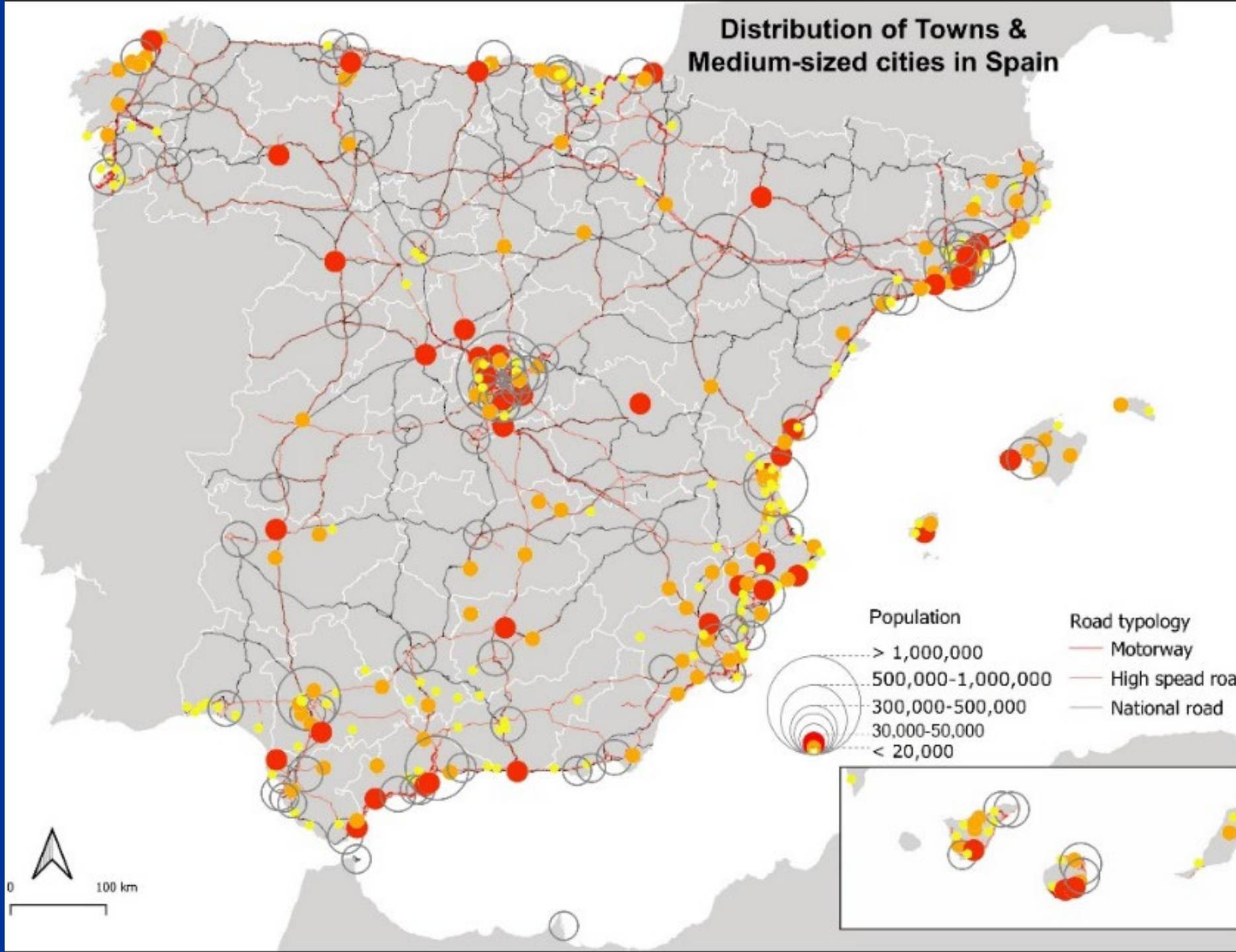COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

ESPON Seminar
Small and medium-sized cities in Europe

15-16 November 2023 in Cuenca, Spain

Small and medium sized cities designed by and for the citizens
Erika Jaráiz Gulías
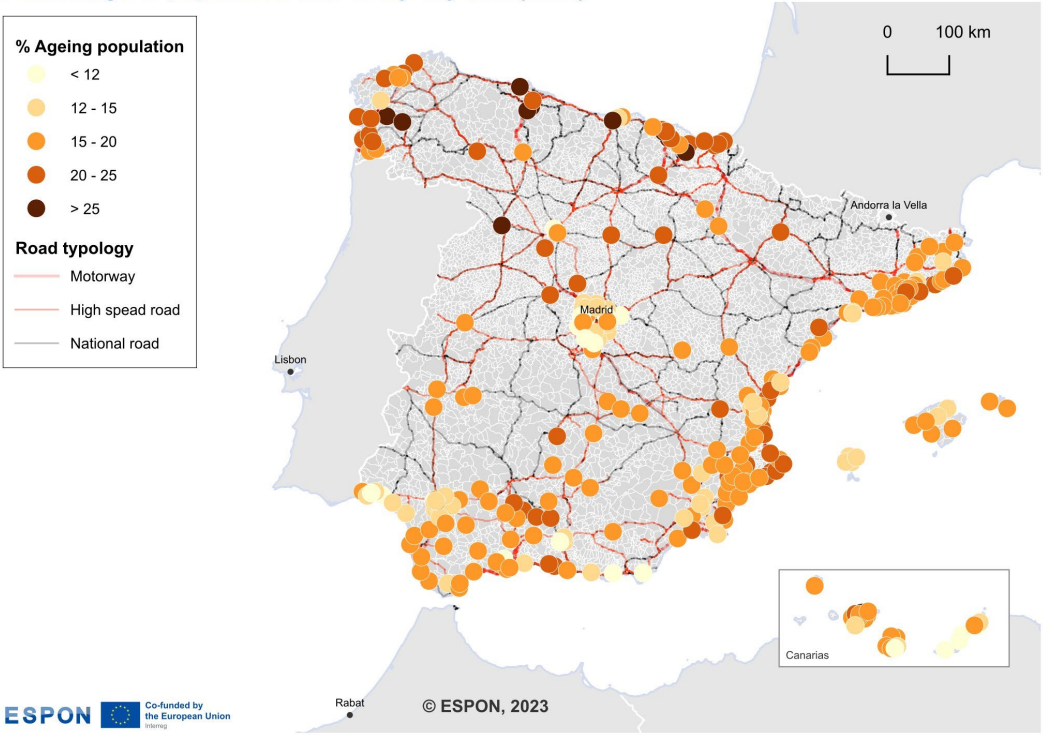*Associate Professor University of Santiago de Compostela*

The case of Spain

Distribution of Towns & Medium-sized cities in Spain

Population
- > 1,000,000
- 500,000-1,000,000
- 300,000-500,000
- 30,000-50,000
- < 20,000

Road typology
- Motorway
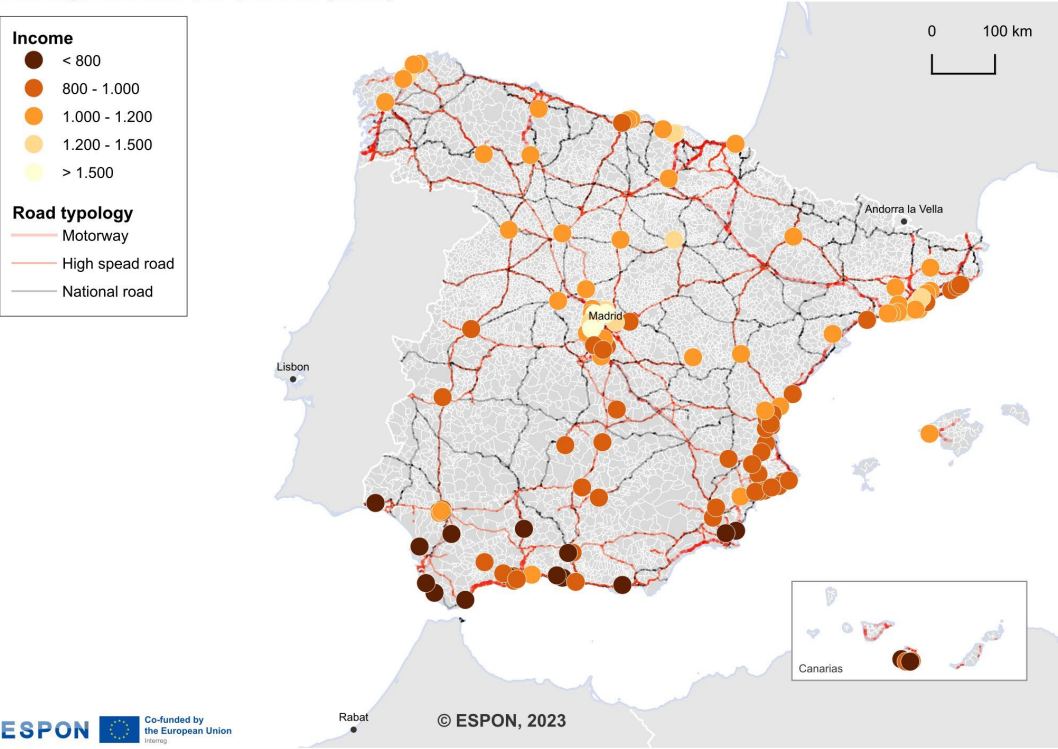- High spead road
- National road

100 km

Spanish urban system: spatial and social fragmentation

▪ Intermediate cities became the receptors of much of the urban growth that has taken place over the last forty years in Spain, assuming a strategic role in territorial articulation.

▪ Intermediate cities allow for exchange and human relations much better than in big cities, because they have not lost the capacity to **connect people**.

▪ Types of SMSTCs: LOCATION MATTERS

- **Monocentric medium-sized cities**
- **Bicentric medium-sized cities**
- **Polycentric urban areas**
- **Medium-sized** cities linked to the large-city metropolitan areas.

- cities linked to other large cities.
- coastal areas (mainly tourism)
- inland cities, which usually coincide with the provincial capital (industrial economic sector)

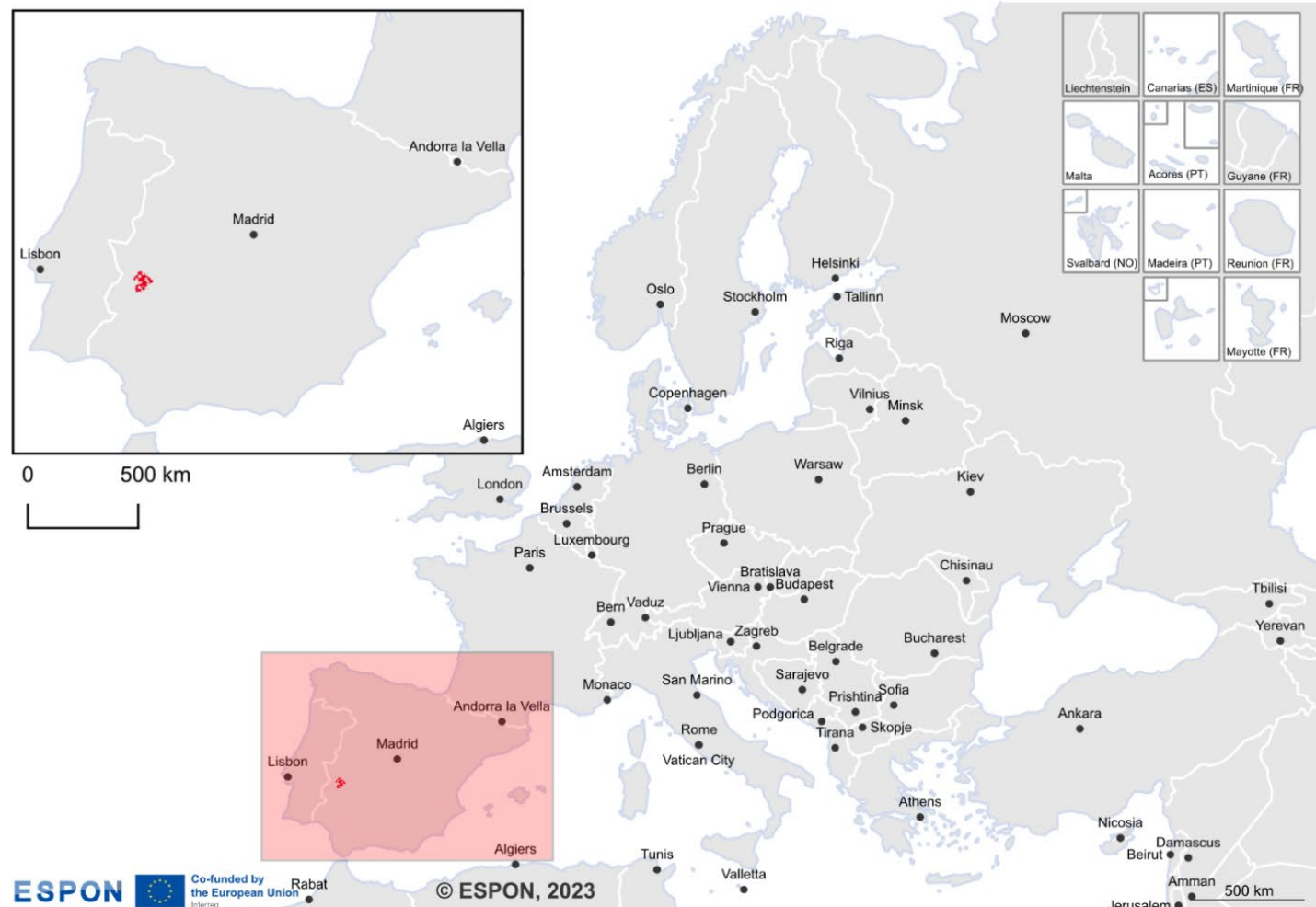## Percentage of population over 65 by city size (2021)

% Ageing population
- < 12
- 12 - 15
- 15 - 20
- 20 - 25
- > 25

Road typology
- Motorway
- High spead road
- National road

0   100 km

Andorra la Vella

Madrid

Lisbon

Canarias

Rabat

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Territorial level: LAU (2020)
Source: Small and Medium Sized Cities in Spain, 2023
Origin of data: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), 2021
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Average income per person (2021)

Income
- < 800
- 800 - 1.000
- 1.000 - 1.200
- 1.200 - 1.500
- > 1.500

Road typology
- Motorway
- High spead road
- National road

0   100 km

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11/15/2023

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Mérida:
a different kind of success story

Location of Mérida in Spain

Territorial level: NUTS 0-2 (2016). LAU (2020).
Source: <ESPON SMT&C>, 2023
Origin of data: EUROSTAT, 2023
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The city of Mérida

- Important roman colony of Emerita Augusta

- Significant archaeological remains.
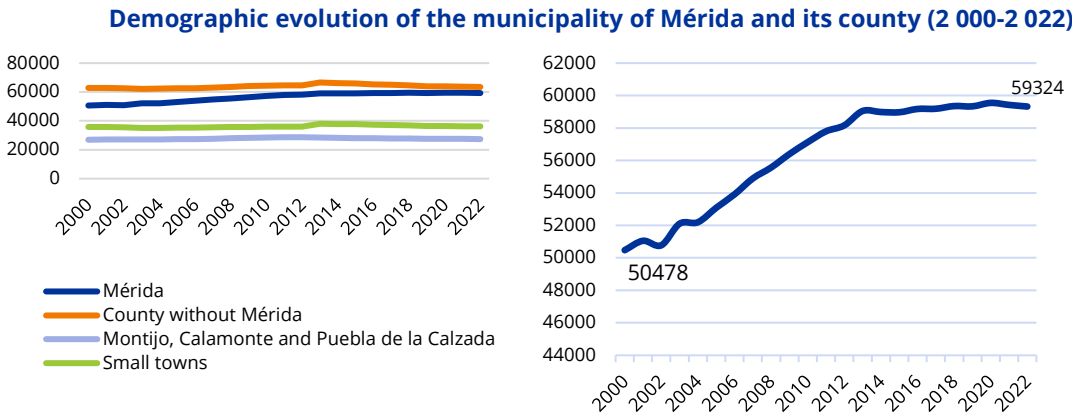
- 59,324 inhabitants in 2022.
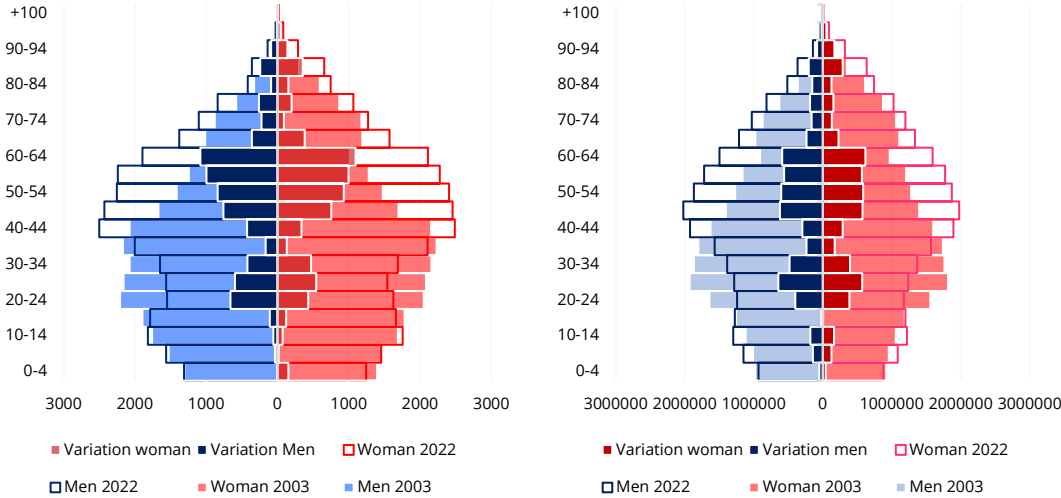

Source: Mérida city council

Key facts

- Designation of Mérida in 1 983 as the capital of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.

- Declaration of its archaeological site as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1 993.

- Since 2000, Mérida has gained nearly 9,000 inhabitants.

- large territory (865 km2)

- population density of 69.58 inhabitants/km^2

Demographic evolution of Mérida

Demographic evolution of the municipality of Mérida and its county (2 000-2 022)

Mérida
County without Mérida
Montijo, Calamonte and Puebla de la Calzada
Small towns

Origin of data: National Institute of Statistics, 2022

Evolution of the Spanish population 2 003-2 022. Evolution of population of Mérida 2 003-2 022

Variation woman ▪ Variation Men ▫ Woman 2022
Men 2022 ▪ Woman 2003 ▪ Men 2003

Variation woman ▪ Variation men ▫ Woman 2022
Men 2022 ▪ Woman 2003 ▪ Men 2003

Economic activity

- Tourism is the most important economic activity in Mérida.

- Average expenditure per tourist (77.78€) per tourist per day, about 20€ more than the medium tourist expenditure in Extremadura.

Amount of tourists in Mérida 2 017-2 019
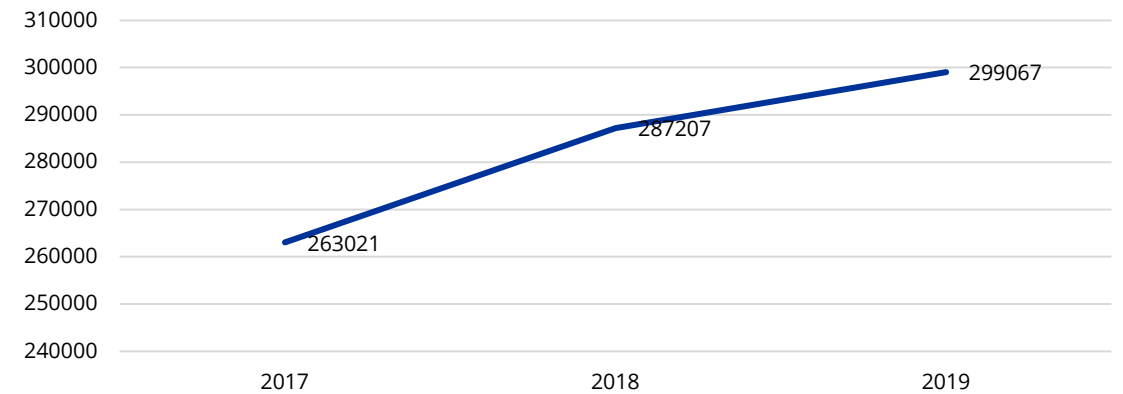
Origin of data: Touristic Observatory of Extremadura, 2023

Attracting European Funds

European projects according to population size and position of Mérida

	ERDF projects 2 007-2 013			ERDF projects 2 014-2 020		
	Mean	N	SD	Media	N	SD
20 000 to 30 000 inhabitants	84.03	159	90.845	46.16	159	51.029
30 000 to 50 000 inhabitants	125.53	106	114.795	86.26	107	133.734
50 000 to 75 000 inhabitants	332.90	50	697.058	155.52	50	302.031
Total cities	137.50	315	303.248	77.04	316	151.665
Total Mérida		1 068			1 926	

Data Source: Ministry of Finance and the Civil Service
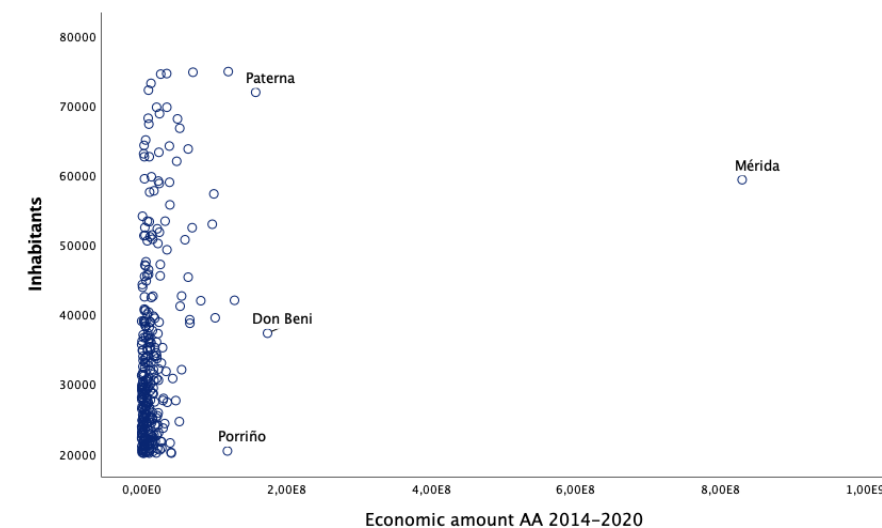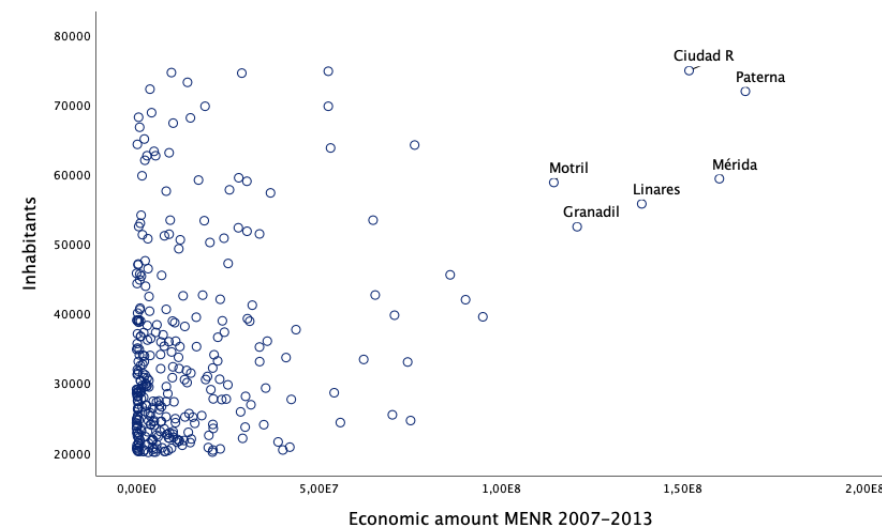
Amount of funding from Regional Development Funds of the SMSTCs according to population size and the position of Mérida[1]

	ERDF projects 2007-2013			ERDF projects 2014-2020		
	Average	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
20 000 to 30 000 inhabitants	9 411 001.4	159	13 120 711.5	9 945 400.96	159	13 365 915.4
30 000 to 50 000 inhabitants	13 674 132.9	106	20 192 097.5	17 397 690.6	107	25 903 501.4
50 000 to 75 000 inhabitants	32 641 246.5	50	44 995 859.8	46 878 085.7	50	117 548 563.5
Total cities	14 532 919.5	315	24 589 792.3	18 312 582.0	316	51 283 138.9
Total Mérida		159 959 424.18			829 514 707.12[2]	

Data Source: Ministry of Finance and the Civil Service

Conclusions

- Own economic and sustainable model

- Successful attraction of European funds

- Integration and social cohesion.

- Clear commitment to sustainability, accessibility and connectivity (15´´ city)

- Controlled urban development

- Good public services offer, also for the functional área.

- Designed by and for people

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Elaboration of a statewide map of SMSTCs to identify which are specifically those cities that we call intermediate and which we intend to foster.

- Identification of the criteria that define intermediate cities according to variables such as:

  - the number of inhabitants

  - their dependence on a large city

  - their influence on smaller urban centres

  - the volume of services they provide or the distance that separates them from other cities.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Understanding SMSTCs as sustainers of smaller population centres, which are articulated in their surroundings, refers to three areas of action:

  - The provision of basic public services, health, education, etc...

  - The connectivity and logistics services (transport and digital connectivity). The existence of a national digitalisation policy for the whole territory has proven to have a very positive effect on the level of access to the Internet for SMSTCs inhabitants.

  - Private, commercial, financial and leisure services that meet the "quality of life" needs of citizens are very important

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Creation of functional areas for the purpose of policy design and implementation could be a good practice.

- Creation of industrial and commercial land in the surroundings of SMSTCs is also a successful way to foster their economic development and ultimately population fixation.

- Specific funding lines conducted to strengthen their development.

- At the local level, the technical and administrative capacities of municipal employees should be reinforced, by training them to the planning and design of public policies and to fundraising, as in the case of Mérida, without depending on supramunicipal entities.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make SMSTCs the ones with the highest quality of life, promoting accessibility in a 15 min. city model, as we have also seen in the case study of Mérida.

- To foster the connectivity and the coordination of SMSTCs could benefit from the creation of networks of SMSTCs, but it is very important also to stimulate competitiveness between cities, so they have external incentives for their development.

Thank you!

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