

***Opportunities for the city  
transformation: the right  
to the neighbourhoods.***

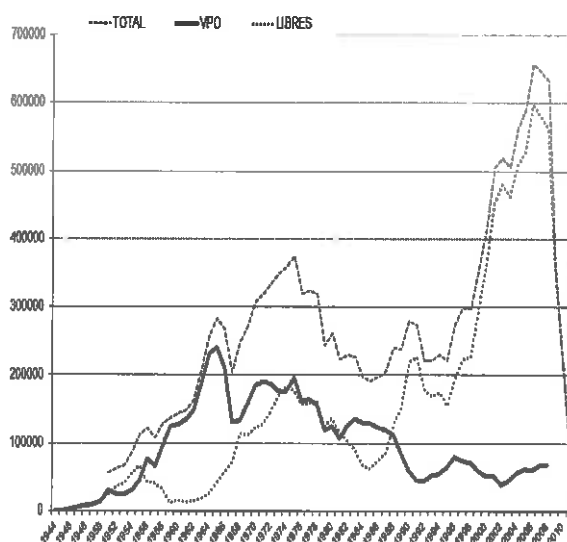
Authors: Carolina García Madruga, Ángela  
Matesanz, Raquel Rodríguez Alonso,  
Rafael Córdoba Hernández, Nerea Morán  
Alonso, Cristina Fernández Ramírez.



## New challenges facing urban versus the system crisis.

### The Spanish urban context inherited

Spanish urban policies have focused, since the 60s, in the growth of cities. This option, which could be valid to cover rural population's needs while were changing into urban population, became the only alternative used by public and private operators. Inside this process, the housing and city construction has become the economic engine of the country, leading to an oversized and underused housing stock that does not guarantee access to the population (RODRÍGUEZ, 2010) and even expellee it, as is the case of many evictions that are taking place in Spain since the beginning of the crisis. Nowadays, in Spain there are 25.2 million homes. It gives a ratio of one house for every 1.86 inhabitants. However, 28% of the total housing stock is for homes that are not used as a residence. There are 3.4 million empty homes. This data do not includes those buildings that have been half-built as a result of the crisis (INE, 2011).





Moreover, the last decade is characterized by a massive residential development hardly been matched with the actual population's needs. Thus, between 2000 and 2011 5.7 million of houses were built, the same amount as during 60s and 70s together. That is, the same amount as during the years of consolidation of cities, with more than 7 million people who moved from the countryside to the city (TAMAMES, 1986).

The bet for this kind of city and building model is also reflected in the statistics of unemployment and labor force. According to data from the Labour Force Survey in the period 2000/2008, between 11% and 13% of the active population was engaged in the construction sector. In the first quarter of 2013 this rate reached 6.3%, the lowest since the beginning of the time series (3rd quarter 1976).

This paper forms part of the "Opportunities in the crisis, to urban regeneration" workshop, develop for the X Biennial of Europeans towns and Town planners, but it must be understood in relation to other paper titled "Opportunity elements for change our cities" which is part of the "City without public Economic Found's workshop. Both papers have a similar structure (developed to challenges and tools) and are focused on the reflection about the urban growth and its relation with the current economic, social and environmental crisis, as an opportunity to rethink about a city transformation and a new management model that allows the city, at least, address the following challenges: the need to rethink the right to the field and the need to rethink the right to the city. In this part of the reflection we are going to focus in the last one.

### ***Analysis fields***

To be able to meet these challenges is essential to articulate an analytical and operational mode. We therefore propose that the analysis should be approached in two scales of interaction (see figure 2):

- Urban scale. The city should be understood not as an autonomous body whose development depends on the exploitation of the resources which supplies rural areas (GARCIA BELLIDO, 1980), if not as a system that integrates both worlds, field and city, and which aim is the balance of the urban metabolism. (RUEDA, 2009).

- Neighbourhood scale. The neighbourhood is the urban area where citizens develop their everyday life (HERNÁNDEZ AJA, 1997). For this condition to be fulfilled, the neighbourhood should be able to support diverse real estate, occupational and demographic structures. That would generate opportunities to participate in various social networks and associations, would provide an urban scale capable of maintaining cognitive ability over the entire urban area, would assure pedestrian accessibility, would establish a network of facilities and public services sized and distributed to facilitate the flow of services and accessibility to them. In this way the neighbourhood could be a social reference space,



having enough variety and complexity (ALGUACIL, 1998).

In addition to the challenges and scale of intervention it's necessary to define the opportunity elements and the tools that could change our cities in each of the former scales.

- Elements of chance. Are the physical supports in which intervention will take place. In this way, and understanding the city as a complex system, in which the urban growth must be related with the needs of citizens but not to the real state market, the urban structure will be the element of chance for the right to the city. At a neighbourhood scale, the elements of chance are the urban environment, the urban voids and urban fringe, and the vulnerable neighborhoods.

- Tools. Understood as a paradigm shift in traditional intervention criteria, are configured as desirable scenarios in the future of physical support in order to meet each of the challenges. In this way, to limit the growth of cities we will need to work for closing cycles and for neighborhood autonomy. To get the right to the field, the tools will be local agriculture, allotments and community gardens, and urban networks. The Right to the City will require the city's urban integration and the urban regeneration of each vulnerable neighborhood.

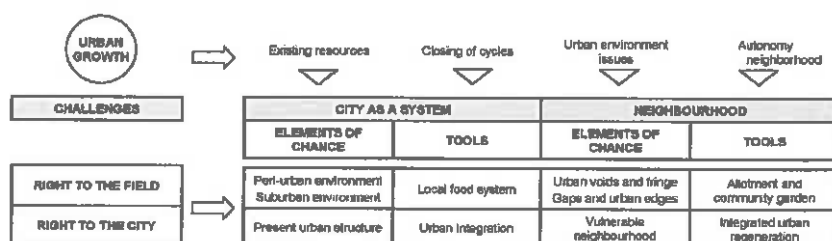


Fig 2. Framework. Source: Prepared by the authors.



## ***The right to the city.***

### ***The consolidated city: opportunities and tools***

We live in an urbanized world that is gradually destroying existing resources. While in recent decades has experienced a rapid process of urbanization, it is also true that in some countries and regions, this growth has been much higher. It is estimated that about 60% of the population will be urban by 2030 and will reach 70% ten years later.

The unlimited development of cities has proven useless from the perspective of social justice and perverse to the environment. The first obstacle to tackle, in the Spanish case, is the framework of urban policy. It dates back to 1956 (during the Francisco Franco dictatorship) when the first "Land Law" was approved; this was based on the growth of the city and also considered, implicitly, that the resources needed for the maintenance of urban life were infinite. The following legislation, even in democracy, has followed a continuity ideological line based on the continuous growth. The consequence is that our regulatory framework does not have enough tools for regenerate or renew the consolidated city.

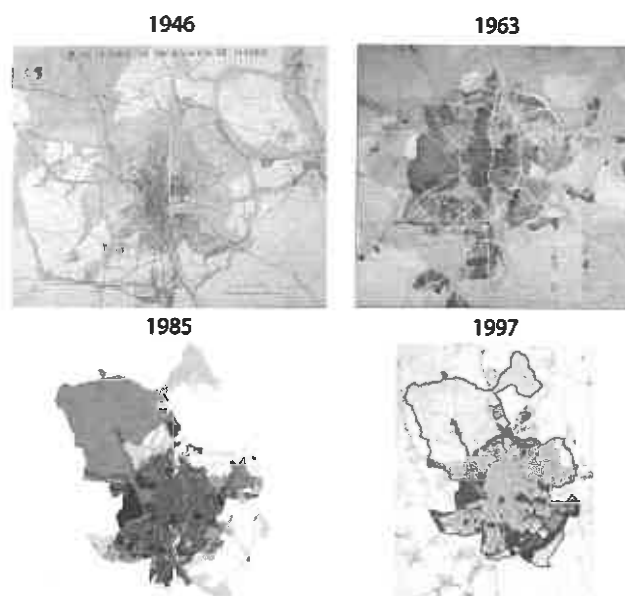


Fig 3. Madrid town planning evolution. Source: Madrid council ([www.madrid.es](http://www.madrid.es))



As we can see in the images above, the planning of the city of Madrid, through half century, has been aimed to structure and design the developable land, leaving aside the management of the consolidate city. It is an example of a city model in which puts ahead the urban growth, forgetting the regeneration of the built environment of the cities.

We can illustrate this circumstance with some data. In 2008, there were 3.36 rehabilitated dwellings for each 1000 inhabitants. That same year, the same standard for newly built homes was 13.6 (MINISTERIO DE VIVIENDA, 2010). According to 2001 Census data, in Spain existed 4 million homes with accessibility problems (buildings with four or more floors without lift), and 2.1 million homes whose conservation status is bad, poor or dilapidated, which represented 19% and 10% of the housing stock, respectively. Furthermore, most of the housing stock is concentrated in underserved urban areas built between 1941 and 1980 (MINISTERIO DE FOMENTO, 2013). In 2011 homes in state of subdeficiency, failure or poor conditions were 1.9 million homes, more or less 7% of the housing stock.

### ***Social needs vs urban satisfiers***

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Cities understood as systems must be set up as physical support that guarantees real access of all citizens to tangible and intangible assets (jobs, human capital, education, housing, neighborhood and domestic relationships, social capital). This requires addressing the city configuration and proposing appropriate urban policies to deal with social, economic and environmental crisis, which will affect more intensely the most vulnerable areas. Urban imbalances and linkages between urban and social vulnerability are visible in these areas. Risk to downward mobility can be increased by the lack of access to the city and to urban assets that can ensure the right to the city on equal terms. These urban assets can be mobilized and managed by individuals, households and communities to decrease their vulnerability, especially in times of need. Therefore they are an opportunity to meet the challenge of acquiring a full right to the city.

Therefore, as set out in "The right to the city" (HARVEY, 2008)

"The democratization of that right, and the construction of a broad social movement to enforce its will is imperative if the dispossessed are to take back the control which they have for so long been denied, and if they are to institute new modes of urbanization" (2008: p.14,15)

Spanish cities changed considerably with democracy from the late seventies and, more particularly, during the following decade. These years settled the regional and administrative foundations for the restructuration and transformation of the major Spanish cities.

In the origin of these urban transformations we find (in the most neglected areas of the city) grassroots movements reclaiming their right to



the city (fig 2), their right to neighborhoods and to be involved in decision-making. With those demonstrations they were able to consolidate minimum standards of quality of life in neighborhoods, achieving a basic public services network to cover the whole city. Nevertheless, there has been an absence of policies aimed at effectively integrate these areas as functional parts of the city. On the other hand, as a result of speculative processes in the real estate market in the former years has triggered, not only urban growth and localized speculation (accumulation), but also abandonment of many of the areas that improved their situation in the eighties (dispossession).



Fig 4. Neighborhood demonstrations during the 70's and 80's in Spanish cities Sources: [www.vallecastodocultura.org](http://www.vallecastodocultura.org), [www.revivelatrininova.tk](http://www.revivelatrininova.tk), [www.contraindicaciones.net](http://www.contraindicaciones.net).

These circumstances have increased urban inequality in Spain; this has meant first the growth of urban vulnerability in the major cities (HERNÁNDEZ AJA, GARCÍA, MATESANZ & MORENO, 2010), and second the appearance of new areas potentially vulnerable in the future.

***The existing urban structure as an opportunity to ensure the right to the city***

From the urban point of view and considering the increasing imbalances in the city, it is necessary to identify those aspects (assets) that can reduce the social, economical, environmental or urban vulnerability, rather than identifying its causes. These assets are means of resistance against adverse events such as the current crisis.

If we focus on the case of the municipality of Madrid, we can identify that the most vulnerable areas are those born as periphery, outside the city, and which now are part of its urban structure.



Fig.5. Socio-spatial distribution of urban vulnerability. Source: Urban analysis of Vulnerable Neighbourhoods of Spain, 2010. (<http://habitat.aq.upm.es/bbv> and <http://www.fomento.gob.es/>)



These areas were fully incorporated into the municipality of Madrid, improving contextual situation during the eighties but maintaining many of the physical and social barriers that conditioned their origin. These pieces are characterized mostly by having a primarily residential use, free blocks, with large open spaces and facilities, public owned land used in addition to local businesses (now obsolete).

The existing urban structure, defined as hardware, is presented as an opportunity, as a system to rethink and re-qualify, so as to achieve the necessary integration and connectivity of different elements and areas within it. Between these areas highlight some neighborhoods that have empty spaces or buildings where is possible to introduce diversity of uses and complexity. It could lead to new centralities that would allow us to define them in terms of opportunity for regeneration and full consolidation of the urban structure.

Starting from this opportunity we understand that for these neighborhoods consolidate their right to the city, it is essential to develop tools for urban integration and institutional expression, of the multidimensional approach to urban vulnerability.

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It is important to understand the urban integration as the balance between concrete elements such as amenities and equipments, mobility, infrastructure and services within the urban structure. Just as important is to rethink the city model, also from the perspective of the urban structure (understood in a complex way, as it was mentioned previously), based on the redistribution in terms of urban centrality and ensuring variety and complexity of the tissues, as well as the conservation of built heritage and identity in each neighborhood. The concept of urban integration could be structured in four basic areas:

- Physical integration, spatial and land use. Remove physical barriers, create balanced sustainable network of infrastructures and facilities and achieve the balance between different land uses (residential and economic activities, cultural, entertainment, etc) with a principal objective, to reach a city for citizens (AJA, ALGUACIL, MEDINA, MORENO, 1997)

- Social and economic integration. Avoid segregation and tackle the territorial dimension of inequality, integrating social strategies and economic strategies, taking into account socio-economical issues as the structure and characteristic of the labour market

- Integrating environmental and spatial wellness. Incorporate green infrastructure networks and open spaces as a structural element, adapting their design to ensure the welfare, universal accesibility and health of citizens.





- Restructuration of real property: get variety of building types and rehabilitate the public and private building inventory (residential, industrial, cultural, etc.) to adapt them to current quality standards, and adapting them to the needs of citizens.

Responding to how the urban integration should redirect the present of the city, the answer is clear. All orientations for the action must have the institutional support (in all levels and areas), as the European Commission, for Communities, propose that:

" the specific urban definitions and solutions, must arise necessarily from the local analysis and from develop specific strategies in each institutional context of each state. The participation, the democratic responsibility and the local capacity, are necessary conditions for an effective subsidiarity. (COM EU 1998)

The development of an integrated approach to urban management is considered essential to solve complex and interrelated problems that arise, and to exploit the urban potential.

"Urbanized society is a society of flows, rather than locations where monofunctional and increasingly specialized spaces break the continuity of the territory and where individuals will be extremely difficult to anchor an identity linked to an increasingly fragmented territory. The city will lose its character of place and integrating function"(ALGUACIL 2006)

***The neighborhoods as an opportunity for the integrated urban regeneration***

Based on the above general considerations for urban structure, we focus on neighborhoods and local elements, noting that in addition to being places where you clearly reflect the effects of the crisis are the main element of chance as urban unit, economic and social of resistance. Aware that changes and improvements at the city level will not be possible without rethinking the urban structure and the city as a whole, we can not forget that major initiatives are taking interest locally.

The attention to existing neighborhoods and their possibilities as elements of change has long started to rise from various local, state, and European administrations through the Integrated Urban Regeneration framework. This is understood as a tool that includes several aspects of rehabilitation (social, economic, environmental and urban aspects), as well as all the agents. In the Spanish case, this has begun to be reflected in some regional initiatives in legislation (such as the Llei 2/2004 of Barris of Catalonia), in local plans (such as the Poligono Sur of Sevilla or the Northern Areas of Alicante), and in state initiatives, as the new State Housing and Rehabilitation Plan.



On the other hand, in parallel to these plans managed by the administration, different citizen initiatives have appeared which, taking advantage of the opportunity that some sites or disused building raise, propose their use and provide the basis for more complex organizational proposals. The number of citizen projects has increased after the deepening crisis and the emergence of the 15M movement, being the Madrid's case exemplary in this regard. In the city centre, small and large lots in which neighborhoods perform various activities ranging from urban gardens, summer theatre, organization of lectures and activities, such as "Esto es una plaza" (fig 07) or "El campo de la Cebada", can be found as well as projects in the periphery area as "San Cristobal Autobarrios".

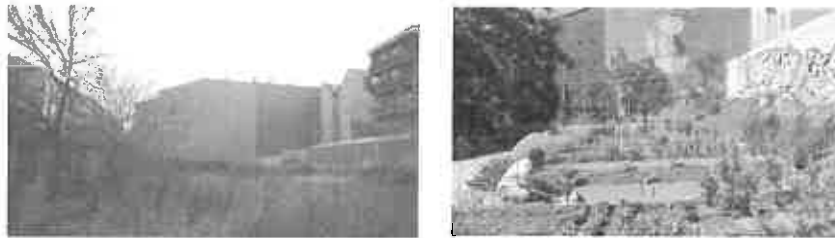


Fig.6. "Esta es una plaza" community garden, Madrid. Before and after community intervention. Source: <http://estaesunaplaza.blogspot.com.es/>

In this moment, given the social and economic conditions, it seems that the time when Urban regeneration, based on the participation of all stakeholders and especially the citizens' initiative, will allow to restore and enhance the element of chance that involve neighborhoods.

Continuing with the example used for the urban structure, after renewal operation in the eighties in the neighborhoods built from 40s to 70s, Madrid local initiatives focused on the historic center renewal. They were primarily intended to resolve the urgent problem of housing in bad condition or poor quality. This initial urgency, coupled with the concern of heritage preservation and tourism potential, led to concentrate public investment in these areas of the cities, appealing to the housing market. So in Madrid, the ARI program (Áreas de Rehabilitación Integral. Program included at State Housing Plan that suppose one of the most important state programs for housing renewal), concentrated the 70% of the operation financed in the period 1992-2001 in these areas. Later, these programs which funded exclusively physical operations (almost exclusively in residential buildings) began to include certain areas of the suburbs. However, with the advent of the crisis, some doubts have raised about the continuity of the program in these areas.



However, in this moment when in many Spanish cities, such as Madrid, the effects of the crisis are getting visible in form of public programs and services withdrawal and abandonment of some areas, citizen groups linked to specific neighborhoods and spaces are launching various local projects. These are ranging from vacant lots recovery, self-management of social centers or organizing alternative economic network that can help to drive change processes.

## ***Conclusions. Proposals for the present city.***

Urban model. The economic crisis has highlighted the exhaustion of the current urban model, based on the expansion and ignoring physical, economic and social problems of the consolidated city. The future of cities will necessarily pass for the conservation and improvement of the existing fabric, incorporating a comprehensive vision of urban processes. Therefore, and to seek a solution in this regard, we propose a series of measures to carry out:

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- Think about potential, rather than in trouble. Any area, despite its difficulties, has its own structure (social, economic, environmental or urban) with their own strengths, so could be integrated into the overall structure

Urban planning and management. The solution goes through a change of vision and model of land management, without this being an increase of budget. It is necessary to redefine the priorities in urban policies and the tools to use.

- This change of model, must go through changing the planning system in Spain with the aim of developing tools to achieve balance between country and city, new tools for the protection and enhancement of rural land and to allow improving the consolidated city

- As has been explained, this change of model, involves moving away from the vision of the city as static and unitary, to understand it as a set of parts, integrated in a constantly changing system, so that the tools must be regulated but also be flexible.

- Social function of property is on the basis of the thought of an urban model which guarantees the right to housing, to the city and to the field. By contrast, a model away from citizens, as is the present, has its origin in the protection of private property in its maximum expression. Citizen participation. The change of vision and model, involves the redefinition of the role to be fulfilled by all agents in the management of the territory.

- High citizen participation in land management as part of the decision-making, starting from the analysis and diagnosis of problems and opportunities, and until the execution of the plans or programs.



- Social responsibility within the actions and proposals of private agents, so the priority will be not only economic returns not related to the social objective of each of the actions undertaken in the city.

Based on the change of vision and urban model and incorporating citizens in the re-building of the city and its right to it, the solution lies in an integrated approach (Fig 7). We must understand the city as a system that articulates the relationship between the different areas, setting out and articulating, from this double scale, a global view, but serving local. It is necessary develop plans and programs involving all stakeholders (neighbors, political, technical, third sector, business ...) and which take account, and act, depending on the needs of the different areas (planning, construction, aspects social, economic and environmental aspects).<sup>1</sup>



Fig.7. Conceptual scheme for ensure the right to city trough the urban regeneration

<sup>1</sup> Thus, the report "State of the World's Cities 2012/2013. Prosperity of cities" remarked that in 2010 the urban population exceeded the rural population and that this situation was not going to be reversed.



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## *Team.*



Córdoba Hernández, Rafael; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM, 2007). Town planner and researcher. Associate Professor of the DUYOT (ETSAM, UPM, 2012). Account with different investigations related with sustainability indicators, urban development and environment whose main ideas have been published through articles in several books and magazines. Currently teaching reconciles with urban planning work in private consulting. He is also a member of the Planning Commission of Ecologists in Action.



Fernández Ramírez, Cristina; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM, 2008). Ph.D. Candidate with a research on the topic of "Peripheries, Sustainability and Urban Vitality" (DUyOT / ETSAM). Member of the Planning Commission of Ecologists in Action of Madrid. She has contributed to the development of several research projects for various administrations and works as urban planner in the private sector.



García Madruga, Carolina; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM, 2007). Master in "Urban and Regional Planning" (ETSAM, 2011), Ph.D. Candidate with a research on the topic of "Peripheries, Sustainability and Urban Vitality" (DUyOT / ETSAM). She is currently developing her thesis on Urban Vulnerability. Since 2004 she has contributed to the development of several research projects and urban consulting in public and private sectors, aimed at the analysis of sustainability in building and urban planning.



Matesanz Parellada, Ángela; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM, 2007). Master in "Urban and Regional Planning" (ETSAM, 2011), Ph.D. candidate with a research on the topic of "Peripheries, sustainability and Urban Vitality" (DUyOT/ETSAM). She is currently developing her thesis on Urban Renewal in Deprived Neighborhoods. Since 2005 she has contributed to the development of several research projects for various administrations, aimed at the analysis of sustainability in building and urban planning.



Morán Alonso, Nerea; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM, 2007). Researcher at the UPM (Department of Urban and Regional Planning). She is currently working in a R&D&I project related to periurban agriculture (PERIURBAN AGRARIAN ECOSYSTEMS IN SPATIAL PLANNING, PAEC-SP), whose outcomes have been published recently in the book URBANISM AND PERIURBAN AGRARIAN SYSTEMS (Simón et al, 2012).



Rodríguez Alonso, Raquel; is architect by the Technical University of Madrid (ETSAM, 2003), Associate Professor of the DUYOT (ETSAM, UPM, 2009). She develops her professional work as urban planner in the private sector. It is currently her doctoral thesis in the doctorate program "Peripheries, sustainability and urban vitality" of the DUYOT (ETSAM, UPM)